

A detail from Sandro Botticelli's painting 'Primavera'. The central figure is Mars, depicted as a muscular, bearded man with long, wavy brown hair and a beard. He is shown from the waist up, shirtless, with a red sash draped around his waist. His right hand is raised to his head, and his left hand is placed over his chest. He is looking towards the viewer with a serious expression. The background shows a stone wall on the left and a landscape with a body of water, a small boat, and distant hills on the right. The overall style is characteristic of the Italian Renaissance, with fine lines and a focus on anatomical detail.

BOTTICELLI
AND RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

MASTERWORKS FROM THE UFFIZI



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AND RENAISSANCE FLORENCE



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Edited by Cecilia Frosinini and Rachel McGarry

Minneapolis Institute of Art

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Botticelli and Renaissance Florence:

Masterworks from the Uffizi

An exhibition organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Gallerie degli Uffizi

Curated by Cecilia Frosinini and Rachel McGarry

Minneapolis Institute of Art

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CATALOGUE

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Directors’ Foreword

Sandro Botticelli emerged as a leading artist of the Italian Renaissance, a time characterized by a new awakening of art, culture, and learning. In Botticelli’s hometown of Florence and beyond, this rebirth was inspired by a desire to reconnect with the ideals of a classical past, and to put humankind at the center of a new worldview. As we emerge from the last two years of the pandemic and the simultaneous quest for a new social order related to social equity and racial justice, we look with interest to Botticelli, who with infinite imagination and independence of spirit created a new visual language by adapting Greek and Roman antiquities—then being unearthed regularly in Italy—and using these models to represent sacred subjects in a worldly fashion. Beauty, Botticelli felt, should be a moral aspiration for all humankind. His approach became the basis for artistic expression for centuries to come.

The exhibition *Botticelli and Renaissance Florence: Masterworks from the Uffizi* examines the artistic production of this highly admired artist against the backdrop of new scholarship and, incredibly, a selection of classical antecedents. Thanks to an unprecedented collaboration between the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence, this exhibition evokes the vibrant atmosphere of patronage and creativity in fifteenth-century Florence within the context of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints. For the first time, significant paintings and drawings by Botticelli are displayed together with the ancient sculptures that inspired them. The relationship between ancient Roman and Greek art and Renaissance art has been strongly debated in literature, but never before have we benefited from the physical juxtaposition in an exhibition of Botticelli’s works with such classical examples. The outstanding comparisons to be seen here demonstrate how antiquity was a source of inspiration for Botticelli and other artists in the fifteenth century. This collaboration has also enabled both museums to reassess works in their collections and together present them through the lens of new research and important findings. In addition, an important sculpture dating to the first century BCE is being lent from a private Chicago collection, marking the first time it has been reunited with other works from the Medici collection in more than 500 years.

Under the leadership of Rachel McGarry and Cecilia Frosinini, who together with Roberta Bartoli conceived the project, a team of experts from all over the globe has studied anew all the works in the exhibition, resulting in

extraordinary observations and many important discoveries. We are deeply grateful to them all. The collaboration between Mia and the Uffizi has been an exceptionally fruitful experience, one that has lent deeper meaning to the artworks in both collections.

An undertaking of this magnitude requires the talents, expertise, and support of many, many people. We extend our deepest thanks to JPMorgan Chase and the Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Foundation for the lead sponsorship of this magnificent exhibition. Generous support for the catalogue is made possible by Marla Kinney through the Ronald and Eva Kinney Family Foundation. We are also grateful for the generous exhibition support of Pohlad Companies and Twin Cities Performance Ferrari, and for the additional support from Christie’s. This exhibition is also supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

We sincerely hope that you will be inspired by the presentation of these works and the value of looking to the past to understand our present, and relish the fact that we again can think about sharing treasures from around the world. This exhibition enables us all to explore the immense creativity and spirit of discovery that characterizes the Renaissance, and in the process reconnect our museums to our devoted communities as we all emerge from the pandemic. In these fraught times, such marvelous works of art are not only portals of discovery and inspiration, but also sources of comfort and reflection.

Katherine Crawford Luber

Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President
Minneapolis Institute of Art

Eike D. Schmidt

Director
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi

Preface and Acknowledgments

The artist Sandro Botticelli enjoys enormous popularity all over the world: his fame is not confined to academic studies, as is often the case for artists even of his stature in the history of art. Equally anomalous is how Botticelli is not a prisoner of cultural barriers that typically separate Western civilization from Eastern civilization: the many exhibitions devoted to him across the globe reflect his unconditional attraction to visitors everywhere.

Botticelli and his canonical paintings—above all, those perceived as representations of timeless feminine beauty—have influenced a diverse set of fields well beyond the visual arts, as seen, for instance, in fashion, film, and advertising. His paintings, furthermore, regularly arouse popular interest about the meanings of the poetic themes he treated or the lives of the characters he represented—the clients or subjects in his works who crossed his path. This is sometimes transformed into legend, as seen, for example, with the female figure in his paintings with light eyes and flowing hair, who in the past was naively considered to be a portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, a famous Florentine beauty. Or, above all, many in the past speculated about the mythic lords of Florence, the Medici, who were often anachronistically interpreted as romantic protagonists of stories of love and death.

This exhibition starts from the undeniable charm evoked by the name of Botticelli, an artist who embodies in the eyes of the public an entire era, the fifteenth century; and who symbolizes an entire city, Florence, which was the cradle of the Renaissance, and brought the artistic movement to its greatest splendor. It is not by chance that Botticelli was also considered one of the central artists in his lifetime, as demonstrated by the elite taste that dominated Florentine culture (and politics), particularly of the Medici family, for whom he frequently worked.

The challenge we propose, however, is to go beyond the surface of his most famous works, which have essentially become icons, and follow a path that allows the visitor to enter the cultural, social, and domestic climate of the time.

The first stage of our journey is an aspect not yet covered in exhibitions on Botticelli, which is to focus on the close ties between the artist’s culture and models from ancient Greece and classical Rome, which were broadly at the root

of the whole society of his time. Thanks to the exceptional loans from the Gallerie degli Uffizi, as well as the antiquities from the Minneapolis Institute of Art’s collection, the exhibition allows us to consider which ancient works were available to fifteenth-century Florentine artists directly, and what, instead, might have been known through the mediation of drawings, engravings, or repetitions by other artists. Additionally, an important loan from an American private collection makes it possible to highlight the importance of the so-called Garden of San Marco, where the ancient art collection of the Medici was displayed. This was also an open place of learning, an informal school for artists to study ancient art, a place that, according to the sources of the time, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo also frequented.

References to antiquity emerge in the works on display as cultural inspiration, but the transmission of classical models and mythological subjects could also be understood in a spiritual sense. In a society pervaded by religious faith, classical allusions expressed moral examples or complex allegorical symbolism. The motifs derived from antiquity were also frequently reinterpreted as pagan fables in domestic contexts, as seen in patrician residences and the production of household furnishings and objects. An exceptional instance of this is the *forziere*, or wedding chest, from Mia’s collection. Such pieces of furniture were commissioned on the occasion of important dynastic weddings; in this case we have an extraordinarily well-preserved example, almost unique for its structural and decorative integrity (fifteenth-century furniture is almost always remodeled or modified). New research has made it possible to identify the coats of arms. The possibility of seeing it next to painted *spalliere*, that is, furnishings on the walls of palaces of the time, presents the opportunity to appreciate the integration between painting, sculpture, and decorative arts, especially as high-profile artists were often called upon to produce objects such as these.

Focusing the exhibition on works by Botticelli and his circle also provides us an opportunity to better understand the religious upheaval of the time. Botticelli, closely tied to the rediscovery of classical mythology, was also sensitive to the movements that were beginning to question the pomp and splendor of the Catholic Church and seek a spiritual, ascetic recovery of Christianity’s roots. This is especially visible in the late period of the artist’s career.

Another complex manifestation of religious faith in this era can be seen in the sacred celebrations, especially the festivals and parades that wound through city streets, which can rightly be considered the forerunners of modern theater. Included in the exhibition are two significant paintings dedicated to the subject of the Adoration of the Magi, one by Botticelli and one by Cosimo Rosselli, which will allow us to relive these occasions. We can try to identify the most influential people of Florence of the time among the men portrayed as the Magi or as bystanders, in a sort of treasure hunt that clearly must have also appealed to the artists' contemporaries.

The Florentine elite—merchants and bankers—loved to be portrayed in these reenactments as well as independently. Noble houses were filled with portraits, of which there is a rich selection on display here. Portraits could evoke the creation of a family pantheon, based on the Roman tradition of ancestors who became family gods. In these paintings, physiognomic realism and social customs coexist with idealizations. Even women, while absent from the historical reenactments of the Adoration of the Magi, were frequently represented in Florentine portraiture. They were shown with particularly refined clothing and jewelry, as the intended function of these portraits was often related to marriage customs.

Finally, the exhibition gives an account of the typical mode of transmission of artistic culture within the workshops of the fifteenth century. While in the generations preceding Botticelli, bottegas had essentially been places of technical apprenticeship, during the period of his career, workshops began to assume a broader role of transmitting culture. Instruction and learning were based mainly on drawing, both as a practical exercise and as an object of study, with designs copied from one generation to the next. There are many precious drawings on display that serve to exemplify this dual function of drawing in the fifteenth century.

This catalogue represents an extraordinarily cordial collaboration among many leading scholars. The following essays and entries reflect recent scholarship written by experts who have dedicated their entire careers to the study of the fifteenth century, and, more generally, to early Renaissance and ancient art. They are responsible

for many innovative contributions present throughout the exhibition, pearls of interpretation, jewels of stylistic or iconographic interpretation, grains of historical wisdom. Their work and enthusiastic curiosity have shown that Botticelli and the Renaissance are subjects that still allow many discoveries. We are indebted to each of our contributors: Roberta Bartoli, Annamaria Bernacchioni, Rebekah Compton, Luba Freedman, Matteo Gianceselli, Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli, Tom Henry, Lorenza Melli, Alessandro Muscillo, Jonathan K. Nelson, Fabrizio Paolucci, Daniela Parenti, Nicoletta Pons, Tom Rassieur, Eike Schmidt, and Carl Brandon Strehlke.

The preparatory stages of the catalogue were also occasions for new scientific research on the conditions of the works and related investigations, which clarified aspects never before addressed on materials and techniques, and attributions and autograph status. For all this and more, in this manner most inadequate, given the value of their contributions, we must thank the management of the Gallerie degli Uffizi for supporting this critical work, and a plethora of colleagues who worked behind the scenes: art historians, historians, archivists, conservation scientists, and restorers. We gratefully thank you.

Above all, we must thank Eike Schmidt, Director of the Gallerie degli Uffizi, and Katie Luber, the Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Their remarkable leadership and vision enriched this exhibition at every stage. They share a deep knowledge of and passion for the art and subjects under consideration here. We are grateful for their thoughtful contributions and the unwavering support of their staffs, especially in these challenging times.

It has been a pleasure to collaborate with the exceptional staff at the Gallerie degli Uffizi. It would be impossible to thank all of our Florentine colleagues involved in this project. We would like to give a special thanks to Monica Alderotti, Ilaria Bartocci, Alessandra Griffo, Simona Pasquinucci, Giovanna Pecorilla, Susi Piovaneli, and Patrizia Tarchi. In the Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, Maria Elena De Luca, Laura Donati, and Maurizio Michelozzi were especially helpful with our research and with curatorial advice.

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This publication is the result of a dedicated team of individuals. Such are the times that we met together only virtually, but we could count on each person to work around the clock to get the job done. We would like to express our gratitude to our wonderful editor Mary Christian, our talented book designer, Matthew Rezac, as well as Jim Bindas for overseeing book production and keeping us on schedule. We wish to thank Ian Karp for assisting with research and obtaining images and permissions, and Josh Lynn for his meticulous work in digital production.

A heartfelt thanks to the Ronald and Eva Kinney Family Foundation, and Marla J. Kinney, for the generous grants that helped make this catalogue possible. A special thanks to Contessa Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti for graciously supporting the partnership between the Uffizi and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

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Lastly, this exhibition and catalogue would not have been possible without the brilliant contributions, imaginative vision, and unstinting energy of our dear colleague and friend, Roberta Bartoli.

Cecilia Frosinini

Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence

Rachel McGarry

Elizabeth MacMillan Chair of European Art and Curator of European Paintings and Works on Paper, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Notes to Reader

Unless otherwise noted, buildings and locations referenced are in Florence. All dates are according to the Gregorian (modern) calendar (in Botticelli's time the Florentine new year began on March 25).

Dimensions

Height precedes width, followed by depth for three-dimensional objects.

Provenance

Brackets identify dealers. A semicolon separating owners signifies that the object passed directly between them; a period denotes a possible gap in the ownership history. Lugt numbers refer to Frits Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes* (Amsterdam, 1921), a supplement (The Hague, 1956), and the online edition, <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr>. A Lugt number following a collector's or institution's name indicates that the collector's mark is inscribed on the drawing or mount.

Sources

The following are the primary sources for reconstructing the provenances of the Uffizi drawings (see bibliography for full citations):

Baldinucci 1687

When "Baldinucci 1687" is listed in the provenance of a catalogue entry it is certain that it was in the group of Baldinucci's *Nota*, that is, when the number of sheets in Baldinucci coincides with that of Pelli 1775–93, or when a precise and unambiguous description of the sheet in Pelli is listed in the same position corresponding to Baldinucci's volume. Instead "? Baldinucci 1687" is noted when it is probable that the sheet was in the group of Baldinucci's *Nota*, but it cannot be confirmed.

Pelli 1775–93

Lagrange 1862

Ferri 1881



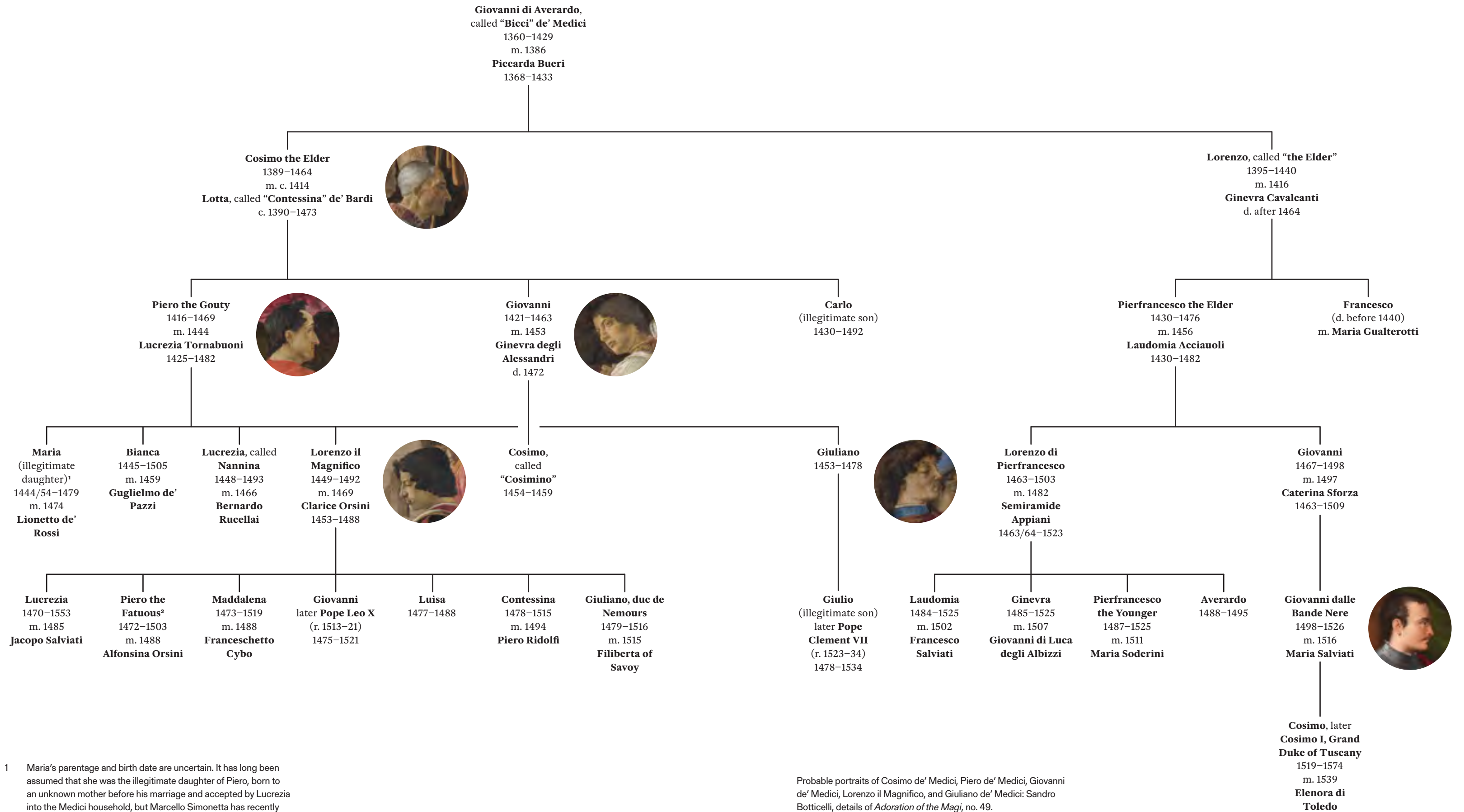


Map of Renaissance Florence

Francesco and Raffaello Petri, *View of Florence with the Chain* (detail), 1887, tempera on canvas, 49¼ × 54¾ in. (125 × 138 cm), Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. This painting copies a fifteenth-century woodcut attributed to Francesco Rosselli, now in the Kupferstichkabinett, Staatlichen Museen, Berlin

1. Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore
2. Andrea del Verrocchio's workshop, on Via dell'Oriuolo
3. Cosimo Rosselli's and Domenico Ghirlandaio's workshops on "delle fondamenta" (now Via del Proconsolo)
4. Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio)
5. Santa Croce
6. Future site of the Galleria degli Uffizi, built by Grand Duke Cosimo I de' Medici as government offices (*uffizi*), 1560–81
7. Ponte Vecchio
8. Santo Spirito
9. Bridge of Santa Trinita, near site on Arno where Botticelli's father worked as a tanner
10. Church of Ognissanti
11. Botticelli's house and workshop, on Via del Porcellana
12. Guild of the Physicians and Apothecaries, which included painters (as they buy, sell and handle pigments), on Via de' Lamberti
13. Santa Maria Novella
14. Palazzo Medici (now Palazzo Medici Riccardi), on Via Larga (now Via Cavour)
15. Convent of San Marco
16. San Marco Sculpture Garden

Medici Family Tree



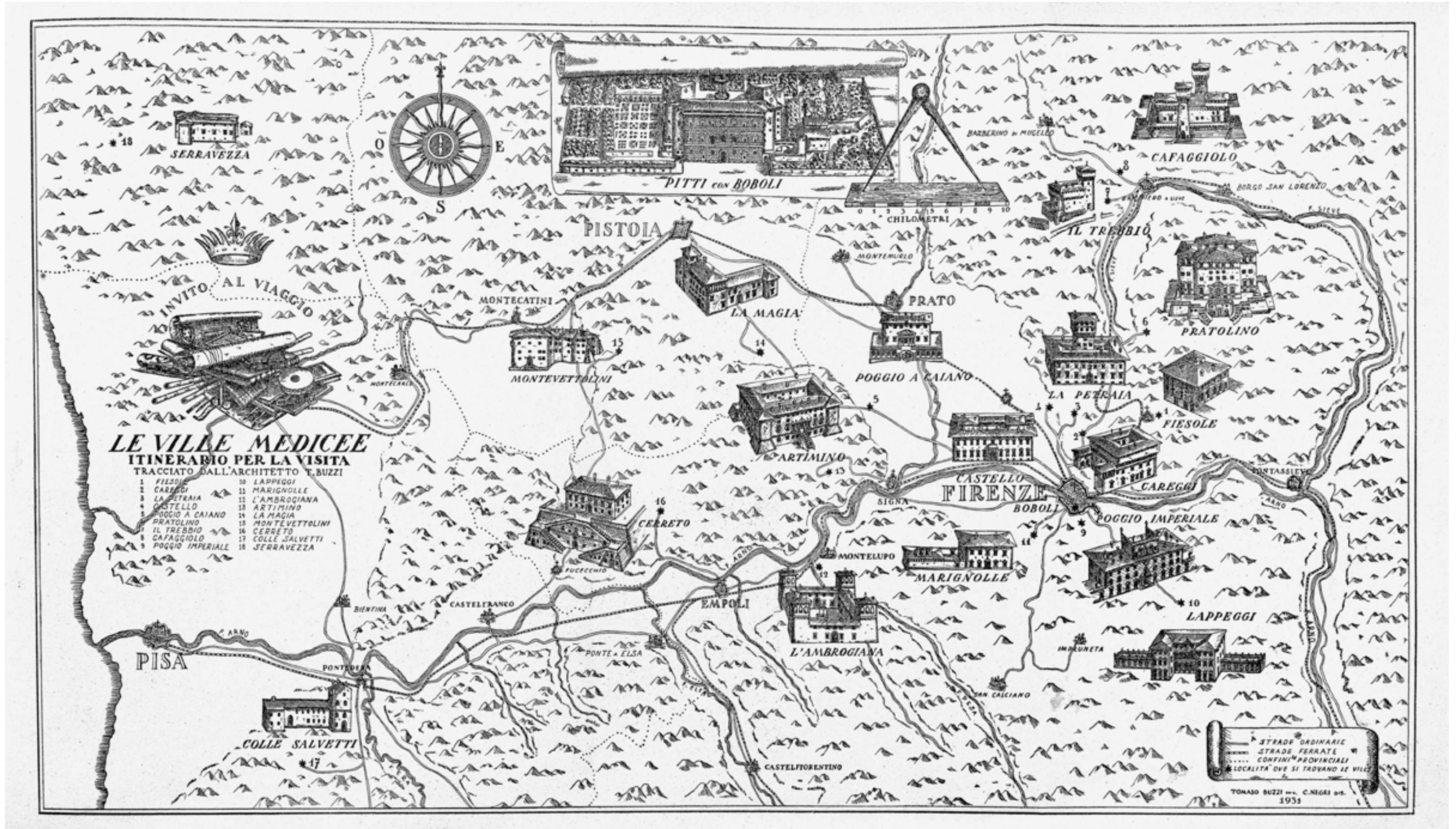
1 Maria's parentage and birth date are uncertain. It has long been assumed that she was the illegitimate daughter of Piero, born to an unknown mother before his marriage and accepted by Lucrezia into the Medici household, but Marcello Simonetta has recently proposed that Maria was the illegitimate daughter, instead, of Lucrezia and Count Vernio de' Bardi; see Simonetta 2006.

2 Piero's nickname "il Fatuo" ("the fatuous" or "the vain") was later translated to the kinder Peter the Unfortunate.

Probable portraits of Cosimo de' Medici, Piero de' Medici, Giovanni de' Medici, Lorenzo il Magnifico, and Giuliano de' Medici: Sandro Botticelli, details of *Adoration of the Magi*, no. 49.

Portrait of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere: Attributed to Carlo Portelli, detail, c. 1565, oil on panel, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund, 70.45.

Map of the Medici Villas



Tommaso Buzzi, *The Medici Villas (Le Ville Medicee)*, 1931, lithograph, 26 x 42 1/2 in. (66 x 107 cm), Università degli studi di Firenze, Biblioteca di architettura.

ESSAYS

Finding Sandro Botticelli

Rachel McGarry

At the time of Lorenzo il Magnifico de' Medici, which was truly a golden age for people of intellect, there flourished Alessandro, whom we call Sandro.

—Giorgio Vasari, 1568¹

The six-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sandro Botticelli is just two decades away. Born in Florence around 1445, this celebrated Renaissance artist has been the subject of thousands upon thousands of books and essays by authors hoping that their approach—biographical or iconological, aesthetic or psychological, documented or hypothetical—will explain him. Botticelli has inspired scholars to devote their lives to him, poets to publish sonnets about him, and patrons and artists to marvel at, covet, and emulate him. Today, nearly six hundred years on, one may ask what is left to say. Intriguingly, Botticelli remains an enigma.

A stunning trove of paintings and drawings survives, testifying to Botticelli's singular genius and achievements. They are the prized objects of any collection in which they appear, with the largest concentration in the artist's hometown of Florence, particularly in the Gallerie degli Uffizi. Together, these works present seemingly endless clues to Botticelli's career and life. But efforts to reconstruct them have led to many fanciful and romantic interpretations over the centuries. As Ernst Gombrich observed in 1945, Botticelli's work "allows us to project into the strangely ambiguous expressions of his figures almost any meaning we wish to find. . . . This haunting character of Botticelli's physiognomies not only permits but demands interpretations. These puzzling and wistful faces give us no rest until we have built a story around them."² Gombrich noted that Léon Rosenthal had made the same observation fifty years earlier, yet countless contradictory theories and myths about Botticelli and his works have continued to be advanced, accepted, rejected, or repeated. The artist left no writings, and surviving commentaries by direct contemporaries are rare, although always laudatory. For instance, commentators made note of various works by him in Florence and Rome, often describing them as "*belle più*" (more beautiful) or "*bellissima*" (the most beautiful).³ The fifteenth-century poet Ugolino Verino compared Botticelli to the greatest painters of ancient Greece, writing "Apelles should not be offended by being put on par with Sandro, whose name the whole world knows," and "Sandro should not be deemed less worthy than Zeuxis in painting."⁴ Another contemporary, the poet and scholar Agnolo Poliziano, an important member of the Medici circle, gives us a snapshot of Botticelli's personality; his *Detti piacevoli* (Pleasant sayings, c. 1477–82) remarks about the artist's sense of humor, love of company and drink, and fear of marriage.⁵ These tantalizing eyewitness testimonies are all too brief. Newly discovered documents have shed further light on his career and family background. Yet we must live with the reality that a complete picture of Botticelli's life and career and the meanings behind his more mysterious paintings will always elude us. We can only speculate about his intentions, intellectual interests, religious faith, desires, loves, aspirations, proud moments, regrets and failures, worries, idiosyncrasies, and habits.



Fig. 1. Sandro Botticelli, *The Trials of Moses*, detail, 1481–82, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

Giorgio Vasari, who published the first biography of Botticelli (Florence, 1550; extended and revised, 1568) forty years after the artist's death in 1510, speculated aplenty, yet his speculations present more questions than answers.⁶ He recorded many precious details about Botticelli's background and output that might otherwise have been lost, some of which he based on a manuscript written by an anonymous Florentine biographer known as Anonimo Gaddiano, probably from around 1540.⁷ Vasari's account freely invented certain aspects of the artist's character that cannot be substantiated. In his telling, Botticelli was an eccentric, with some flaws that hindered his sustained success and financial security, including a lack of focus, laziness, and reckless spending, and additionally a tendency to be reigned by a "bestial" nature (*bestialità*), a criticism omitted from the 1568 edition.⁸ While this might seem to undermine the artist's accomplishments, Vasari also commended his many gifts and exceptional works. He praised, for instance, the *Adoration of the Magi* (no. 49) as one of Botticelli's greatest and most important paintings, writing, "It is not possible to describe the beauty that Sandro displayed in the heads," which Vasari admired for their variety—different attitudes, angles, and expressions suited to the young and the old, "including all those imaginative effects to show the perfection of his skill. This is absolutely a most admirable work, beautiful in its coloring, *disegno*, and composition; today every artist stands and marvels at it." As Botticelli included portraits of the Medici as the three kings and their retinue, Vasari's admiration of their faces in the painting may have been strongly conditioned by a desire to please Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–1574). Vasari's highest praise, perhaps not coincidentally, was reserved for the grand duke's namesake, Cosimo



Fig. 2. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, detail with self-portrait, c. 1474–75, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture. See no. 49.

the Elder (see Medici Family Tree), who kneels “overcome with tenderness kissing the foot of our Lord,” which Vasari called “the most lifelike and natural portrait” of him to exist.

In this esteemed panel, we can also glimpse the artist himself: it is his only self-portrait and his only known lifetime image (fig. 2). Botticelli depicts himself as handsome and confident, even slightly aloof, standing rather prominently in the right foreground, and serving as one of the painting’s interlocutors, looking directly at the beholder, as Leon Battista Alberti had advised, to invite the spectator in. Vasari credited the *Adoration* as winning the artist great fame at home and abroad, enough to attract the attention of the pope, who would later invite the young Florentine to work in Rome. Vasari alleged that when Botticelli went to Rome, he immediately squandered his large papal payment, an anecdote told perhaps to conjure up an image of a genius who does not care about money.

Vasari’s account of the artist’s sense of humor echoed Poliziano’s, as Vasari noted “Sandro was a very pleasant person and played many jokes on his pupils and friends.” The importance of wit as an expression of intelligence in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence should not be underestimated.⁹ In describing Botticelli’s achievements, Vasari stated that his works were painted with “mastery and diligence” and he “strove to surpass all other painters.” It is thus shocking to learn midway through the biography that late in life Botticelli suffered in poverty and would have starved without the aid of Lorenzo de’ Medici (one of the artist’s principal patrons). We are told that he abandoned his work after becoming a follower of the Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), and Vasari concluded Botticelli’s biography with this cruel passage: “At last, when he was old and useless, and was forced to walk with two crutches because he could not stand upright, he died infirm and decrepit, at the age of 78 . . . in the year 1515.” Vasari got many facts wrong, including the year Botticelli died (1510), his age (probably sixty-five) and Lorenzo il Magnifico’s charity (since Lorenzo had died eighteen years earlier, in 1492). Yet Vasari may have been correct about his assertion that Botticelli died a poor man. His sole surviving brother, Simone, and his nephews renounced the artist’s inheritance,¹⁰ which may indicate that Sandro had many debts.¹¹ Even as new evidence indicates that Botticelli remained active in the 1490s—throughout the time Savonarola was in power—and demand for his work continued into the first decade of the sixteenth century, this sad fate seems to hang over his life (see Appendix A, Chronology).

Botticelli’s modest beginnings make the artist’s legendary talents for visualizing the complex humanist Neoplatonic ideas and the revival of classical art and literature—cultivated at the very upper echelons of Florentine society—all the more extraordinary. The son of a leather tanner, the artist known as Sandro Botticelli was born Alessandro Filipepi in Florence around 1445, the eighth of nine children of Smeralda (c. 1403/4–after 1469 / before 1480) and Mariano Filipepi (c. 1393–1482).¹² They were older parents even by today’s standards. With a large family and humble means, it is unlikely the parents had the time to nurture Sandro’s gifts, no matter how prodigious. Yet as one of the youngest in a large family, he undoubtedly benefited from the affection and tutelage of his older siblings, especially the connections afforded him through his brothers’ careers. His father practiced the malodorous

trade of processing raw animal hides into leather along the Arno river, near Florence’s bridge of Santa Trinita. The family’s tax returns (*catasti*) record frequent moves from one rental property to another within Florence. These documents, filed by the head of household, determine tax owed based on a family’s debts, properties, incomes, dependents, dependents’ incomes, and mouths to feed, including grown children and grandchildren. The Filipepi’s uncertain finances stabilized in Sandro’s late teens, when Mariano and Smeralda were able to purchase a house for their growing, extended family in 1464, in the Florentine parish of the Ognissanti, in the district of the Unicorn. It is here that Botticelli lived and worked most of his career.

In piecing together Botticelli’s education, we can see from the Filipepi *catasto* of 1458 that Sandro was attending school at thirteen and was sickly (“sta all[eg]ere ed è malsano”).¹³ The eldest son, Giovanni, then thirty-seven and working in banking, likely completed this tax return and appears to have assumed financial responsibility for their elderly parents. These financial records remind us that offspring were formally calculated as either contributors to the household income, such as Sandro’s older brother Antonio, recorded as working as a goldsmith and earning a salary of 25 fiorini, or as financial burdens (that is, “mouths,” a word used to indicate that they ate and did not earn), such as young Sandro, who was studying and unwell, or other children below working age, as well as wives and daughters in general, especially if they required a dowry.

Vasari added a bit of color to this period of Botticelli’s life, noting that as a boy, “while he learned everything with ease, he was always discontented in school, whether it was reading, writing, or arithmetic, so his father, worried and in despair about his son’s eccentric, whimsical brain, apprenticed him with a goldsmith.” Chronicled nearly a century after Botticelli’s boyhood, such details must be taken as part of Vasari’s campaign to establish a pattern of impulsive, idle behavior in Botticelli from the first paragraph of his biography on him. Yet, nothing in the crumbs of information that scholars have gathered about the artist’s youth or background as a tanner’s son would point to the brilliance and virtuosity to come. Botticelli’s mature paintings represent the highest artistic expression of the learned, humanist culture nurtured at the court of Lorenzo il Magnifico. That such astounding evocations of this dense philosophical milieu were produced without the formal study of Latin, ancient Greek, and classical literature and philosophy is impressive. Botticelli’s education was typical of artists of the time; even Leonardo defined himself as an “*omo senza lettere*,” a man without letters, meaning he had not attended university or studied Latin. Nonetheless, Vasari described Botticelli as having a deep interest in literature—“a sophisticated person, he made a commentary on part of Dante”—albeit for a project, we will see, that consumed too much time, in Vasari’s view. Botticelli imbibed Florence’s vibrant intellectual currents and interest in antiquity organically, while also likely benefiting from the knowledge and guidance of his patrons and Florentine scholars.

Botticelli’s brief training as a goldsmith was probably facilitated by his brother Antonio, who, after being listed in the 1458 *catasto* as a goldsmith, later became a *battiarmento*, or silver beater (a specialist who gilded frames, panels, furniture, and other decorations—such as golden halos or punch work in panel



Fig. 3. Maso Finiguerra, *Seated Youth Drawing*, pen and wash, lead white, over black chalk on tinted red paper, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 5 in. (19.4 × 12.5 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 115 F.

paintings). The nickname Botticelli that the Filipepi brothers assumed may have come from Antonio's profession: *battiloro* was also called "*battiarmento*" and "*battigello*." Alternatively, the name may have been inherited from Sandro's eldest brother, Giovanni, who worked as an intermediary at the bankers' guild (Arte del Cambio) and provided key connections for Sandro at the start of his painting career. It has been suggested that Giovanni was called "*botticello*," or "little barrel," either because he drank liberally or had a big torso.

The name of Botticelli's master and the length of his apprenticeship are uncertain, but it presumably began when he was around thirteen or fourteen. The prominent Florentine goldsmith Maso Finiguerra (1426–1464) has been proposed as his first teacher, since the Finiguerra family had many ties to the Filipepis and lived in the same neighborhood.¹⁴ A noted draftsman, Maso would have been ideal to introduce Botticelli to the principles of *disegno* (drawing and design), the cornerstone of the arts in Florence. Maso's many extant figure drawings reflect his dedication to the practice of life drawing. His *Seated Youth Drawing* (fig. 3) is characteristic in its candid approach and the concise, lithe pen lines that model the form—qualities evident in many of Botticelli's drawings (see, e.g., nos. 6, 7). The inscription on the Maso sheet reads, "I want to be a good draftsman and become a good architect." While perhaps added later, as suggested by Lorenza Melli, the declaration would have resonated with the artists in Maso's shop and with Florentine artists, architects, and craftsmen in the decades to come.¹⁵ Maso created a vast figural repertory to consult for his nielli (engraved metalwork with blackened metal filling) and engravings, and also for the intarsia (inlaid woodwork) designs he produced for woodworkers. Botticelli, too, would design figurative marquetry decoration, in the 1470s and 1480s (Pisa Cathedral and Palazzo Ducale, Urbino).¹⁶ Regardless of which goldsmith guided the teenage Botticelli, he would have begun learning *disegno* by copying his master's drawings, studying sculptures and other three-dimensional objects, studying geometry, and drawing the live model. As an inexperienced *garzone* in the workshop, he would have been called upon to pose as well, but as Maso's study reminds us, models also stole moments to draw.

Botticelli's stint with the goldsmith was presumably brief, as he seems to have begun an apprenticeship with the Florentine painter Fra Filippo Lippi (c. 1406–1469) in about 1459, when he was fourteen. He likely stayed between five and seven years.¹⁷ Lippi, a Carmelite friar, was one of the leading painters of Florence, and during Botticelli's apprenticeship was also busy decorating the high altar chapel of Prato Cathedral. Lippi's Prato frescoes (see fig. 27.2)—the compositions, the luminous palette, the depiction of movement—deeply affected Botticelli's development. The first paintings by the young artist borrow liberally from Lippi, but rather than being exact copies or hackneyed imitations, they are creative adaptations. The master's revered *Madonna and Child with Angels* painting and drawing (c. 1465, no. 25, fig. 25.1) were particularly influential for Botticelli and his contemporaries in their depiction of a loving and very human relationship between the Madonna and Christ child. Lippi brought the holy scene down to earth, depicting Mary as a warm, contemplative young mother who seems to foresee the fate of her chubby infant son. Botticelli's early *Madonna and Child in Glory*

with Angels (c. 1467–69, no. 26), likely commissioned by the bankers' guild, reflects Lippi's distinctive vision, down to the baby's curly blond hair, transparent swaddling cloth revealing his belly-button, and fat little feet. Unlike Lippi, however, Botticelli presented the Virgin and Christ child floating in a luminous cloud of angels. Using a generous application of gold pigment, he depicted the holy pair as a heavenly vision, a source of divine light. He also developed a painting technique distinct from his master, combining tempera with oil, for instance, and investing more time in the preliminary stages of a design.¹⁸ (In addition, Botticelli's paintings follow the underdrawings more closely compared to Lippi, who was constantly altering his compositions at the painting stage.) Even so, Lippi's influence persisted. Botticelli's late *Saint Augustine in His Study* (c. 1494, no. 35) was mistaken by Vasari for a work by the master and discussed among those small pictures by Lippi cited as having exceptional grace and beauty.¹⁹

Botticelli probably left Lippi's studio in about 1464 or 1465, but certainly by 1466, when Lippi went to Spoleto to fresco the apse of the cathedral. Master and teacher must have remained close, because when Lippi died suddenly in Spoleto in 1469, his young son, Filippino Lippi (c. 1457–1504), then twelve years old, returned to Florence and trained with Botticelli. Filippino had been born in Prato, when Botticelli had started working with his father. Filippino's parents, a friar and a nun, had eloped, had two children, and were released from their monastic vows by the pope, but never officially married. Botticelli and Filippino collaborated closely throughout the 1470s.

Before Botticelli began taking on assistants and apprentices as an independent painter in about 1467 or 1468,²⁰ he likely frequented the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488), the accomplished sculptor, goldsmith, painter, and draftsman. Verrocchio's studio attracted the most ambitious young artists in Florence in this period—Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, and Lorenzo di Credi. They worked in varying capacities, some arriving as apprentices, some entering as journeymen, as Botticelli may have done. (Leonardo's decade-long stay, which extended into his early years as an independent painter, suggests that there was much to learn and benefit from in Verrocchio's shop.) Like the Pollaiuolo brothers (see nos. 41, 55), Verrocchio worked across various mediums and devised exciting innovations and new approaches, including experimental drawing techniques. He exerted tremendous influence on artists who passed through his shop (see, e.g., nos. 2, 6, 14, 44, 45, 58), ultimately transforming drawing practice in Florence.²¹

Verrocchio's influence on Botticelli was immediate and enduring. Botticelli's paintings from the late 1460s, such as the *Guidi Madonna* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples), and *Judith and Holofernes* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), are in direct dialogue with contemporary paintings by Verrocchio. Botticelli inherited striking elements from the master's painting style that lasted too, such as Verrocchio's elaborate drapery folds, voluminous forms, sharp lines, and gleaming surfaces (even employing mordant gilding on leaves so they glisten).²² We also see Verrocchio's impact in the evolving Botticelli figural canon: his idealized adolescent male angels and saints with their flowing locks and chiseled features (see, e.g., *Madonna of the Magnificat*, fig. 13) are unimaginable without Verrocchio and his handsome *David* (fig. 4). Verrocchio's

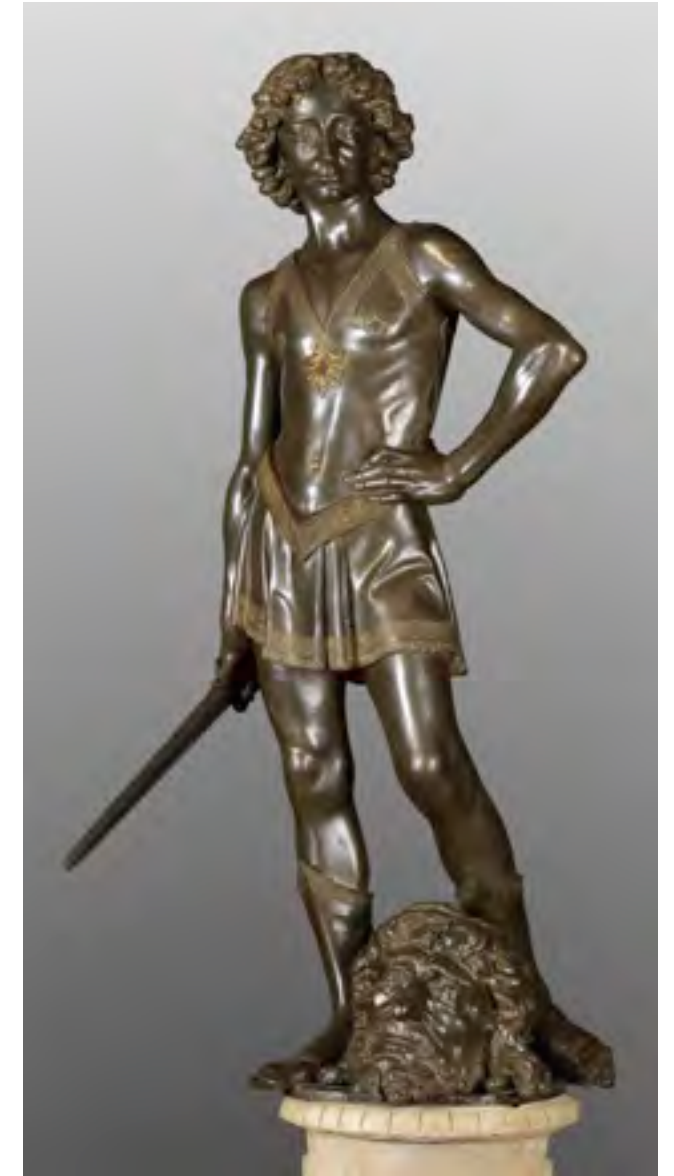


Fig. 4. Andrea del Verrocchio, *David*, c. 1466–69, partially gilded bronze, height 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (120 cm), Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. 450B–451B.



Fig. 5. Sandro Botticelli, *Fortitude*, 1470, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 65¼ × 34¼ in. (167 × 87 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1606.



Fig. 6. Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Charity*, c. 1469–70, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 66¼ × 35½ in. (168 × 90.5 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 499.

lively shop also fostered healthy competition among an exceptional talent pool. As Andrew Butterfield writes, “Throughout [Verrocchio’s] career, he regularly sought to outshine his peers by making works that displayed more artistic innovation and greater technical skill.”²³ Botticelli’s works of the 1470s reflect a similar drive for excellence.

In 1470 Botticelli executed *Fortitude* (fig. 5) for Florence’s Tribunale della Mercanzia, the powerful body that oversaw matters of the guilds. The painting commission had originally gone to Piero del Pollaiuolo, but he had fallen behind schedule, completing just one of the requisite seven virtues, *Charity* (fig. 6), in the space of a year. In its splendor, illusionism, and exquisite finish, *Fortitude* far surpassed Pollaiuolo’s work. As a result, Pollaiuolo was spurred not only to complete the other allegories in a timely manner, but also to incorporate certain aspects of Botticelli’s paintings. He adopted a new, brighter palette, deeper spaces, greater volume of forms, more luxurious details, and more dynamic poses. The tribunal may well have anticipated that hiring Botticelli would improve the quality and effort they had expected from Pollaiuolo. The intervention was contrived by Tommaso Soderini, a Mercanzia board member and a close associate and relative of the Medici (an uncle of Lorenzo and Giuliano by marriage). Just how the young and unproven Botticelli gained entrée to Soderini is not known. The artist may have originally competed for the commission or he may have been recommended by Verrocchio, who seems to have vied for the project with his drawing *Faith* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, 208 E), but by the following year was probably occupied with his bronze *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (see fig. 45.1), for Orsanmichele, also a Mercanzia commission.²⁴ Another proposal is that the Vespucci may have recommended Botticelli. The wealthy family, which included the navigator Amerigo (1451–1512), lived near the artist and had close family connections; they may also have helped Botticelli secure the *Madonna and Child with Angels in Glory* commission from the bankers’ guild.²⁵ Whatever precipitated his luck, Botticelli made the most of it. The public triumph established him as one of the leading talents of his generation. And pleasing Soderini may have brought him to the attention of the Medici.

Important commissions steadily followed, including numerous major altarpieces. His first is probably the so-called Sant’Ambrogio altarpiece (c. 1470, see fig. 30), a *sacra conversazione* (sacred conversation) with the Virgin and Child enthroned and surrounded by saints. The inclusion of Saints Cosmas and Damian, the patron saints of the Medici, depicted kneeling and identified in prominent inscriptions in the foreground, suggests that the patron was a member of the Medici family or circle, but further details about the commission are not known. (Saint Francis’s presence indicates that the painting was likely destined for a Franciscan church before being moved to the Benedictine nuns’ church of Sant’Ambrogio.) The complex, multifigured work, measuring approximately 67 by 76½ inches (170 by 194 cm), was Botticelli’s largest to date. While Lippi’s sustained influence is visible, Botticelli opted for a simplified composition for his monumental figures—three of whom engage in direct eye contact with the spectator. Following convention, Botticelli gave prominence to the Madonna and Child by making them larger relative to the other figures.

The celebrated *Adoration of the Magi* (c. 1474–75, no. 49), the altarpiece praised by Vasari, represents a more mature moment in Botticelli’s early development. Here the holy figures recede into the middle ground and greater emphasis is given to the crowd of witnesses. These include Botticelli’s self-portrait, as well as portraits of members of the Medici family as the three Magi and witnesses (see the essays by Cecilia Frosinini and Carl Brandon Strehlke in this volume). The older man looking outward with gray cropped hair and a light-blue coat is likely Guasparre del Lama, who commissioned the work for his family altar in Santa Maria Novella. While Lama did not have direct ties to the Medici, he wanted to include prominent family members, living and dead, as a political homage to Florence’s unofficial ruling family. Botticelli’s gifts as a portraitist are further demonstrated in independent portraits dating from the early 1470s (no. 52; see the essay by Carl Strehlke in this volume). In *Youth with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder* (c. 1470–75, see fig. 39), Botticelli is again called upon to convey a patron’s allegiance to the Medici family. Here he represented an unknown sitter holding a medal of Cosimo the Elder (d. 1464), grandfather of Lorenzo il Magnifico (see Medici Family Tree); the painted medal is made of stucco, which Botticelli incorporated into the panel painting.²⁶

The first artwork scholars can point to as an undisputed Medici commission is a banner Botticelli painted for Giuliano de’ Medici (1453–1478), the younger brother of Lorenzo, for a ceremonial joust held in Florence’s piazza of Santa Croce in 1475. The monumental banner, now lost, represented the goddess Pallas Athena (Minerva), armed with her helmet, lance, and shield with a Medusa’s head. (Botticelli’s later painting *Pallas and the Centaur* [c. 1482, no. 1] was quite different, showing the goddess taming a lustful centaur and wearing a dress adorned with foliage.) The banner was described in detail in contemporary accounts, including the poem *Stanze per la Giostra di Giuliano de’ Medici* (Bologna, 1494) by Poliziano.²⁷ The descriptions of the banner suggest that Botticelli reprised Giuliano’s Pallas figure in the intarsia design of *Pallas Armed*, made for Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino (fig. 7). Poliziano’s poem immortalized Giuliano’s victory at the joust and his virtuous, platonic love of a young married beauty, Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci. The poem and joust gave rise to the idea that Botticelli represented young Simonetta as an idealized Pallas in the lost banner and led to repeated identifications of Simonetta’s likeness throughout Botticelli’s oeuvre—in portraits,²⁸ nudes, and mythological paintings. This fueled the lore from the nineteenth century that *la Bella Simonetta* was Botticelli’s lifelong muse.²⁹

Poliziano’s poem, composed between 1475 and 1478, was never completed. An outpouring of grief in Florence followed the premature deaths of its two protagonists: Simonetta, in 1476, at about twenty-two or twenty-three, and Giuliano, in 1478, at twenty-four. Giuliano was murdered in the Pazzi conspiracy, on April 26, 1478, during Easter Mass in Florence’s cathedral. Lorenzo il Magnifico was also targeted but survived his serious injuries, escaping the attackers and locking himself in the sacristy. The conspiracy was organized by Florence’s patrician Pazzi family, as well as the archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, and the nephew of the pope, Girolamo Riario. It was advanced with the implicit support of Pope Sixtus IV and Federico da Montefeltro, with the



Fig. 7. Giuliano da Maiano, after a design by Sandro Botticelli, *Pallas Armed*, c. 1476–80, detail of door with intarsia, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino.



Fig. 8. Sandro Botticelli, *Annunciation*, 1481, fresco, 95% × 218 in. (243 × 555 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. depositi 201.

goal of ousting the Medici. In the aftermath, the Florentines sided overwhelmingly with the Medici. The conspirators were tried and executed by hanging. Botticelli, now securely within the Medici circle, was called upon by the Florentine government to fresco defamatory portraits of the executed criminals on a wall of the Palazzo della Signoria. His paintings of the conspirators at the gallows were a dire warning to enemies of the Medici, and remained in this public space until the Medici were expelled from the city in 1494. Botticelli and his workshop were also hired by the Medici to paint a number of memorial portraits of Giuliano; the defining example is often considered to be the panel at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.³⁰

By 1480 Botticelli was running an active workshop with three assistants, according to the *catasti* of the three young men's families (see Appendix A). In addition to numerous painting commissions, he was active designing intarsia, engravings (no. 43), embroidered liturgical vestments, and tapestries. Vasari, who prized Botticelli's drawings and collected them himself, wrote that his draftsmanship "was exceptional and there were many [drawings] that all the craftsmen sought to obtain after his death." In 1481 Botticelli completed the important fresco *The Annunciation* for the orphan hospital of San Martino alla Scala (fig. 8), setting the monumental scene in a splendid Florentine garden and interior, with a marble floor, carpet, *all'antica* columns, a bed with an elaborate headboard, sumptuous pillows and drapery, and a bed covering whose transparency is rarely seen in the medium of fresco.

In 1481 Botticelli was summoned to Rome, along with Pietro Perugino, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Cosimo Rosselli, to fresco the walls of the newly completed Sistine Chapel. The commission was part of a grander diplomatic mission aimed at strengthening strained relations between the Medici and Pope Sixtus IV after the Pazzi conspiracy, and between Florence and the Papal States allied with Naples, which had been in conflict since 1478. The four painters called from Florence, joined by Luca Signorelli, Biagio d'Antonio, and many assistants, completed a vast decoration campaign in 1481–82 that involved sixteen monumental wall murals (four frescoes on the short walls of the chapel were later painted over), and an upper register with fictive architecture and portraits



Fig. 9. Sandro Botticelli, *The Trials of Moses*, 1481–82, fresco, 137 × 220 in. (348 × 558 cm), Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

of early canonized pontiffs. Twelve scenes represented the life of Moses and Christ, and Botticelli was responsible for three of these murals, *The Temptations of Christ*, *Moses Punishing the Rebels*, and *The Trials of Moses*, as well as some of the papal portraits above.³¹

Botticelli's complex painting of Moses's trials (fig. 9), features Moses in no less than seven episodes, which the artist harmoniously knitted together in a lush, hilly landscape. Depicted in a bright yellow robe and green cloak, Moses is easily identified across the narrative. At the center of the scene stands a large oak tree, a clear reference to Sixtus IV's family, the della Rovere (the name meaning "oak"), and their coat of arms, which Botticelli highlighted with eye-catching gilded leaves, acorns, and bark. This towering tree is nestled in a grove of orange trees; the oranges evoke the red-orange *palle* (balls) of the Medici arms. Botticelli has pictorially conjured in this one detail the hoped-for peace and reconciliation between the two families as well as Florence and the Papal States.

Botticelli alluded to another of Sixtus's diplomatic successes in the lower-left corner of the fresco depicting Moses leading the faithful out of Egypt to the Promised Land. The group includes two African men in blue turbans, painted in precious lapis lazuli (see fig. 1).³² They presumably represent a small Ethiopian delegation recorded in Rome between November 1481 and about February 1482, just as the Sistine frescoes were under way.³³ Biagio d'Antonio also depicted a couple of the dignitaries in an adjacent fresco, *The Crossing of the Red Sea*.³⁴ Six Ethiopian Christians had come to meet the pope, traveling to Rome via Egypt and Jerusalem. Sixtus received them warmly, and they stayed for three months as his guests, in the meantime founding an Ethiopian church in the city and establishing diplomatic relations. Botticelli's portrayal of a bearded Ethiopian man looking directly at the



Fig. 10. Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, c. 1482, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 81½ × 125½ in. (207 × 319 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8360.

spectator—the only figure in this fresco to do so—is suggestive of a portrait. His white shawl and purple cape embroidered with gold indicate that he is probably a priest, perhaps the Ethiopian emperor’s chaplain, Antonio, as he was called at the papal court.³⁵ Botticelli represented him as the scene’s interlocutor, engaging the viewer with his story and inviting them into the painting.

Botticelli’s mature style is revealed in these three important frescoes. Not only are they filled with an exquisite level of detail—in costume, hair, accessories, architecture, and setting—but the artist’s distinctive cast of idealized men, women, and children has become more established. Botticelli inherently understood how to meld ancient prototypes with contemporary fashions and style. Moses seated and poised to remove his shoes before approaching the burning bush, for instance, recalls the ancient *Spinario* sculpture (no. 5), which Botticelli had studied (no. 6). The daughters of Jethro standing at the well in white robes represent a key early example of the artist’s developing nymph figure type. The maidens’ elaborate hair; floating, clinging drapery; and graceful, dancelike movements reflect Botticelli’s careful study of ancient sculpture (no. 13). His keen interest in rediscovered ancient art, which had begun in Florence, was nourished through his close association with the Medici and their circle. These relationships undoubtedly brought him into direct contact with the Medici family antiquities collection held in their palace and displayed at the garden of San Marco (see the essay by Fabrizio Paolucci). Lorenzo’s holdings would only grow in the coming decade. The time in Rome clearly renewed Botticelli’s interest in classical art and exposed the artist to the city’s ancient architecture. In *Moses Punishing the Rebels*, he incorporated a ruin inspired by the Arch of Constantine, depicting it with luminous gilding and black marble.



Fig. 11. Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c. 1485, tempera on canvas, 68⅞ × 109⅞ in. (173 × 279 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 878.

His work on the Sistine Chapel was interrupted in late February 1482 when news of his father’s death likely precipitated a brief trip home. By summer the painter was probably back in Florence for good, where he was to experience the greatest success of his career. Amid commissions for major altarpieces, deluxe devotional paintings and portraits, he executed the mythological paintings that define his reputation today: the *Primavera* (fig. 10), *Pallas and the Centaur* (c. 1482, no. 1), and the *Birth of Venus* (figs. 11, 12).³⁶ The three works are exceptional for their novel interpretations of pagan subjects, their beauty, their large scale, and their nuanced meanings. They reflect a sophisticated knowledge of classical texts (Ovid, Homer, Horace, Lucian, Martianus Capella) and ancient art (*Venus Pudica*, *Three Graces*, *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*; centaur reliefs and sculptures, and ancient gems). They are laden with symbolism, including specific Medici emblems—orange groves, laurel leaves, interlocking diamond rings. Both the *Primavera* and *Pallas and the Centaur* are generally thought to have been commissioned by Lorenzo il Magnifico for his young cousin, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, on the occasion of his marriage to Semiramide Appiani in 1482 (or their engagement in 1480). Both paintings are later recorded in the Medici Palace of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco and his brother Giovanni, on Via Larga: the *Primavera* is inventoried in 1498 as installed above a *lettuccio*, or daybed, and the *Pallas and the Centaur* recorded in 1516 (or possibly as early as 1498). The paintings were subsequently moved to the Medici Villa at Castello, which belonged to heirs of Giovanni di Pierfrancesco. They are noted there, along with Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century.³⁷ While it is usually assumed that Lorenzo il Magnifico was the patron of the *Birth of Venus*, the circumstances of that commission remain



Fig. 12. Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, detail, c. 1485. See fig. 11.

uncertain. The large picture, about three-quarters the size of the *Primavera* panel, is executed on canvas, like *Pallas and the Centaur*, which is about half the size of the *Primavera*. The different mediums, sizes, and dates of these paintings suggest they were not commissioned together nor intended to be installed in one space.

The *Primavera* narrative is usually described as follows: the wind god Zephyr at the right descends upon the maiden nymph Chloris, his future bride, who is transformed (before our eyes) into the goddess Flora. She is adorned head to toe in flowers, her drapery gently floating as she strides lightly forward, strewing flowers from the bounty of blooms in the fertile cloak she holds around her belly. At least 138 different plant species have been identified in the garden.³⁸ The goddess Venus, regal and serene, stands amid the densely foliated arbor whose festivities will soon be interrupted by her son Cupid, flying blindfolded overhead, ready to shoot his next arrow. Meanwhile, the Three Graces, who may instead represent the Hours (*Horae*), dance in a circle, changing time, weather, seasons, and nature.³⁹ At the far left stands the messenger god Mercury, stirring the clouds with his caduceus.

Such an ambitious work certainly required careful study and a long preparatory drawing process, but only two surviving studies can be related to the composition: a small head study of a youth in the British Museum, recently connected to Mercury by Melli,⁴⁰ and a figure study of *Pallas* (no. 2), which relates to Venus. The *Pallas* drawing includes her attributes—it is a subject Botticelli and his workshop treated many times—yet among his extant paintings the figure's pose and dress resonate most closely with the figure of Venus in the *Primavera*. The Uffizi sheet has been pricked for transfer, indicating that it was copied by the artist or his workshop, or both. Botticelli may have done this to rework the existing *Pallas* drawing into a study of Venus; his workshop would also develop the figure into a later tapestry design.

The *Primavera* iconography is so complex that many scholars believe that Botticelli must have benefited from guidance beyond his likely patron, Lorenzo il Magnifico, however learned he may have been. It has been suggested that the poet and scholar Poliziano had a hand in formulating the poetic, layered representation of love and nature. Even if Botticelli had such a source of expertise, as the range of literary references and philosophical allusions implies, he distinguished himself in the representation. There are other works by Florentine artists with complex iconography, classical allusions, and elusive meanings that suggest that advisors and patrons may have helped guide the subject and interpretation. Few expressed the learning and ideas nurtured at the Medici court in as compelling a way as Botticelli, although Signorelli's *Court of Pan* (c. 1489–90, destroyed 1945, formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin) and Piero di Cosimo's *A Satyr Mourning over a Nymph* (c. 1495, National Gallery, London) come close.⁴¹

Botticelli's elusive and dazzling *Pallas and the Centaur* evokes seemingly endless meaning. It can be viewed as a proto-feminist work representing female power, physical and moral, in its depiction of a goddess effortlessly subduing a lascivious male beast, who seems to submit to her hair pulling with humiliation and little protest. In this volume, two very different interpretations are offered by Rebekah Compton and Alessandro Muscillo (see nos. 1, 3). Is this an allegory to encourage Lorenzo il Magnifico and the Medici to overcome disorder and uncivilized nature and foster peace, wisdom, and the arts and sciences—virtues

nourished by Minerva? Or does the picture represent the virgin warrior princess Camilla from Virgil's *Aeneid*, who was celebrated in fifteenth-century Florence as a role model for brides and the embodiment of female virtue, chastity, and love?

In the *Birth of Venus*, Botticelli revived a subject popular in ancient art (most famously in a lost painting by Apelles): the goddess of love and beauty, born a grown woman who rose from the sea. Botticelli depicted Venus nude and larger than life, her idealized figure standing atop a scallop shell blown to shore by Zephyr, who floats above her with his bride Chloris in his arms (fig. 12). Flora rushes to greet Venus and clothe her naked body, which the goddess has modestly, though unsuccessfully, tried to hide. Her pose is reminiscent of the classical marble *Venus Pudica* (modest Venus); her pale flesh even seems to imitate the stone. Botticelli diverged from the ancient prototypes in the goddess's narrow proportions; he favored sinuous contour lines to describe her form, lines echoed in her golden locks. Botticelli painted her hair with fluid strokes of gold pigment while allowing the tresses to caress her body and chastely cover parts of it.

Botticelli's invention of a new feminine ideal is fully formed in the three Uffizi allegories. Combining classical sources, both artistic and literary, with contemporary fashion, he created a personal, inimitable vision of beauty, one he could use as goddess and allegory, Madonna and muse. Botticelli's archetype appears graceful, fair, peaceful, dignified, modest, empathetic, and young, but also mature and omniscient—the embodiment of virtue and spiritual transcendence. She is also versatile. In the pagan mythologies, she is ethereal, seeming to float into the earthly realm as if attended by gentle breezes. (In his drawing *Pallas* [no. 2], we witness the final refinement of this fluttering variant.) When adapted for Christian themes, Botticelli gave the figure heft and weight; his Virgin Marys appear magisterial, imposing, solid, immovable.

While the outsized reputation Botticelli enjoys today derives from his mythological painting, those works were not as well known during his lifetime, since they were held in private collections. His preeminent standing in the fifteenth century was instead largely due to his popular and influential treatment of sacred subjects, his many altarpieces in Florence, and his countless devotional paintings. His splendid tondi (circular-format paintings) of the Madonna and Child with angels struck a chord in Florence, with elite and ordinary patrons alike, as discussed by Annamaria Bernacchioni (no. 31). His *Madonna of the Magnificat* tondo (fig. 13), striking in its refinement and finish, is clearly an expensive commission and marks a peak in the genre. The painting presents a novel interpretation of an age-old subject. As Roberta Olson noted, Botticelli seems to reference the *Tazza Farnese* (Farnese Cup), an ancient sardonyx agate relief in the Medici collection (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli), in the harmonious arrangement within the circular composition of the figures, gestures, and gazes, which activate the tranquil scene with points of interest and movement.⁴² This elaborate carved Hellenistic gem was one of the most prized possessions in the Medici collection, and Botticelli's allusion to it here might indicate the tondo was commissioned by the family. (Botticelli would quote the *tazza* again more literally in the floating figures of Zephyr and Chloris in his slightly later *Birth of Venus*, also presumed to have been made for the Medici.)



Fig. 13. Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna of the Magnificat*, c. 1483, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, diameter 46½ in. (118 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890, no. 1609.

Not all of Botticelli's production of religious paintings was for this high end of the market. Testifying to the popularity of his devotional paintings are the great number that survive (see nos. 31, 34), both autograph and workshop versions—with six surviving replicas of the *Madonna of the Magnificat* alone. His students, followers, and contemporaries found success working in this vein, appropriating Botticelli's models directly, or working more freely in his style, as with Filippino Lippi's *Feroni Madonna* (early 1480s, no. 30) and Francesco Botticini's Pitti tondo (early 1490s, no. 32).

Botticelli and his workshop were engaged in other painted decorations for Florentine palaces in these years, especially *spalliere*, "shoulder-height" panel paintings installed as wainscoting, often above *cassoni*, or benches, or as headboards. An important surviving group is the four panels depicting the *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (three in the Museo del

Prado, Madrid; one in Palazzo Pucci, Florence). They were executed in 1483 on the occasion of the marriage of Giannozzo Pucci and Lucrezia Bini by Botticelli and his workshop, likely with the participation of Bartolomeo di Giovanni and Jacopo del Sellaio (see nos. 37, 38, 46, 47).

Also during the 1480s, a time of exceptional creativity for Botticelli, he made one hundred drawings based on Dante's *Divine Comedy* (c. 1308–20)—one for each canto. The ambitious series mostly survives, with eighty-five drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, and seven in the Biblioteca Vaticana.⁴³ Lively and imaginative, the drawings depict Dante's journey through Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise. Botticelli's drawing of canto 30 of *Purgatory* (fig. 14) reflects the artist's sensitive reading of the famous poem. The sheet describes the point after Dante has tearfully said goodbye to his faithful guide and companion, Virgil, and has ascended higher into Purgatory, where he finds Beatrice, his long-lost love and all-knowing spiritual guide. She will guide Dante to Paradise and divine salvation. In the drawing, she gazes upon the forlorn Dante from her triumphal, griffin-led chariot. Botticelli closely followed the text, representing Beatrice in the vast procession described in canto 29, which includes the symbols of the evangelists, the seven female virtues, the apostles Peter and Paul, the four doctors of the Church, and the twenty-four elders of the Old Testament. Dante's references to the "scattering of flowers upward and around," Beatrice's crown of "Minerva leaves," and the olive branch she holds in her hand resonate with Botticelli's mythological works of the 1480s. The evocative feeling of these paintings is also reflected in the series, where Botticelli poetically evoked the emotions Dante wrote about: confusion, fear, sadness, astonishment, happiness, and love.

The series, executed on parchment, is usually dated to about 1480–95. The ninety-two extant drawings exist in varying degrees of finish, from preparatory metalpoint studies to elaborate scenes outlined in pen and ink or colorful gouache. Many motifs and figures have echoes in Botticelli's paintings, particularly those from the late 1480s and early 1490s. The Medici cousin Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco—il Popolano—apparently supported the *Divine Comedy* undertaking, as we learn from Anonimo Gaddiano. He noted that Botticelli illustrated "the story of Dante on sheepskin for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco which was a wondrous thing."⁴⁴ The drawing series is especially valued today since so few of Botticelli's studies survive, even though he was a prolific and celebrated draftsman.

Botticelli had taken up Dante's poem before, designing illustrations for a deluxe edition published in Florence in 1481 by Niccolò di Lorenzo della Magna, with commentary of Cristoforo Landino (no. 43). The engravings, attributed to Baccio Baldini, seem to have encountered publication issues and were delayed, and the project was only partially completed, with just nineteen prints made. Vasari discussed the project, writing that the effort "consumed much of [Botticelli's] time so that he was not working, which brought infinite disorder to his life. He had many of the drawings printed, but in a bad manner, because the engraving was poorly done." Botticelli can hardly be blamed for the uneven quality of the prints, of which he seems to have designed only a few, or the decision of the printer to abandon the project. Vasari must have not seen the brilliant expanded series on parchment for



Fig. 14. Sandro Botticelli, *Purgatory 30: The Earthly Paradise, Beatrice in the Chariot of the Church*, illustration of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, metalpoint, pen and brown ink on parchment, 12¾ × 16¾ in. (32.5 × 47.5 cm), Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, cod. Hamilton 201.

the Medici when he criticized Botticelli's Dante project. The studies demonstrate that Botticelli's powers of invention continued to flourish in this later period.

In 1492 Lorenzo il Magnifico died. His son and successor, Piero il Fatuo (literally meaning "Peter the Vain", but often translated into English as Peter the Unfortunate) inherited a much-depleted Medici bank and faced escalating political and economic challenges. The rise of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, a zealot reformer, threatened Medici rule. Savonarola's sermons against immorality and luxury had earned him an enormous following, and ushered in an ascetic age in Florence. When King Charles VIII of France invaded Italy, Piero mounted a weak resistance and surrendered, quickly losing the support of Florence's citizens. He was forced to flee in November 1494. (The Medici antiquities collection in the garden of San Marco was looted.) After the French troops entered the city and peace was made, Savonarola emerged as the de facto ruler of the new republic. In 1497 he and his followers organized a notorious "bonfire of the vanities," a practice not uncommon in the day in Europe to mark the passage from Carnival to Lent. On Florence's Piazza della Signoria, thousands of objects were burned: books, artworks—sculptures, paintings, and drawings with naked figures, including possibly works by Botticelli—musical scores, lutes, dice, mirrors, elegant clothes, and other luxury items. On May 12, 1497, Savonarola was excommunicated by the pope, and in 1498 he was tried for heresy, sentenced to death, and burned at the stake.

The political strife and religious fervor of the 1490s dramatically altered the art market. Botticelli continued to work, but his paintings—especially the religious ones—began to reflect the more



Fig. 15. Sandro Botticelli, *Calumny of Apelles*, c. 1495, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 24 × 36 in. (62 × 91 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1496.

austere spirit that had overtaken the city. This change seems to have been partly driven by a sincere personal spiritual awakening influenced by Savonarola and his followers, called the *piagnoni* (the weepers), which included his brother Simone. His *Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist* (c. 1500, no. 34), with its spare composition and somber tone, reflects this new intensity of religious feeling. Botticelli's altered style and output were also a response to the realities of the market. Devotional paintings were still in demand, but less so at the high end of the market. The times called for less sumptuous, less costly works, a category that Botticelli handed over largely to his workshop. There are two workshop pictures of the same size that copy Botticelli's *Madonna and Child* (see figs. 34.1, 34.2), suggesting that his assistants used a cartoon to expedite the production of copies after his picture. The astringent simplification and severity of many of Botticelli's later religious works are also reflected in the workshop paintings *Flagellation* and *Way to Calvary* (c. 1505–10, see nos. 15–16).

Botticelli produced some elaborate, if smaller paintings during the Savonarola years, such as the jewel-like *Saint Augustine* (c. 1494, no. 35) and the highly sophisticated *Calumny of Apelles* (fig. 15). Based on a celebrated painting by Apelles known from ancient literary sources, the work depicts Calumny—who is accompanied by the allegories of Fraud, Deception, and Spite—dragging a victim of slander by the hair. They bring the defamed man to King Midas, whose advisors are Suspicion and Ignorance. At left a naked female figure representing Truth has just been glimpsed by Repentance. The work is filled with novel conceits, nuanced meanings, and abundant detail, especially in the gilded mythological reliefs. Also noteworthy is Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity* (fig. 16), where demons



Fig. 16. Sandro Botticelli, *Mystic Nativity*, c. 1500, oil on canvas, 42¾ × 29½ in (108.6 × 74.9 cm), National Gallery, London, NG1034.

lurk beneath the lyrical revelatory scene not unlike the Dante *Commedia* drawings with the terrifying creatures prowling in Inferno and transcendent spirits in Paradise. Another distinctive late painting by Botticelli is the apocalyptic *Mystic Crucifixion* (c. 1500, Fogg Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge). On the right, little devils hurl burning torches down on earth, and an angel in white wields a sword to slay a small animal, perhaps a marzocco, the lion that is the symbol of Florence. Under the blue sky at left is Florence, saved by the sacrifice of Christ and the almighty God the Father blessing the city from above, as well as by penitence, as symbolized by Mary Magdalen at the foot of the cross, whose desperate prayers drive a white fox to flee from her red cloak. The complex religious allegory, filled with novel symbolism and terror, seems to reflect the enduring influence of Savonarola's dire preachings on the painter, even after his execution.

Botticelli continued to work for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, who remained in Florence during the republican period, in addition to the *Divine Comedy* drawings. Documents indicate that the painter was engaged at the Medici family villa in Trebbio in 1495 and possibly 1496 (see Appendix A). Botticelli's purchase of a country house with his brothers in 1494 and his recommendation to Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, by her agent as an "excellent painter" to work on her *studiolo* in the ducal palace in 1502,⁴⁵ demonstrates his extended activity. In 1504, Botticelli served on Florence's prestigious art committee to help determine placement of Michelangelo's newly completed *David*, although his preferred destination near the duomo entrance did not gain favor with the group (see Appendix A). New documents from 1505 record Botticelli being awarded a commission to paint a large *Pentecost* altarpiece (now a fragment, *Descent of the Holy Ghost*, Birmingham) for the Confraternity of Santo Spirito in Montelupo.⁴⁶ The contract called for the painting to be more than 15 feet high, making it Botticelli's most ambitious panel painting in terms of scale. Although the commission was outside Florence and the payment of seventy gold florins was relatively modest, the project contradicts Vasari's characterization of Botticelli as an indolent worker with a long period of decline.

Nothing is known about Botticelli's activities between this 1505 commission and his death in 1510. We do not know whether his later circumstances were precipitated by a health crisis or professional and financial setbacks. His style had certainly fallen out of fashion in the first decade of the sixteenth century, and the next generation—Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael—had transformed art in Florence and beyond. Few in Botticelli's generation had kept up with the revolutionary changes, the notable exceptions being Perugino (c. 1450–1523) and Luca Signorelli (c. 1450–1523). Botticelli and the golden age of Lorenzo il Magnifico were now a distant memory, and on this major fact Vasari was right.

NOTES

- Vasari 1568, 470.
- Gombrich 1945, 11, where he cites Rosenthal 1897 as pointing out this quality of Botticelli's paintings "in a lecture which deserves to be better known."
- Libri di Antonio Billi* is a partial copy of an early anonymous manuscript, now lost, c. 1506–15; see Horne 1908, 343, doc. 1.
- Ugolino da Verino, *De pictoribus et sculptoribus florentinis* (c. 1488–91) and *De illustratione urbis florentia* (c. 1502–4); see Baldassarri and Saiber 2000, 208–9.
- Poliziano, *Detti piacevoli*, 200, 328, 366.
- Vasari 1568, 470–75.
- Stapleford 1995, 397–408. Anonimo Gaddiano, in turn, relied partly on an earlier manuscript now lost, but known from a partial copy called the *Libri di Antonio Billi* that was begun as early as the first decade of the sixteenth century.
- Patrizia Zambrano, "Botticelli et Vasari: Points et réflexions sur la biographie du peintre," in Paris 2021, 44–55 (with extended discussion and bibliography).
- See, e.g., Boccaccio's *Decameron*, in particular, and his stories about the painters Giotto (6.5), Bruno, and Buffalmacco (8.3–9, 9.3–5); the stories of Franco Sacchetti (1330/35–1400) (Stegman 1908); and the *Novella del grasso legnaiolo* (Novel of a fat woodcutter) probably written by Antonio Manetti (1423–1497), which tells of a fantastic joke orchestrated by Brunelleschi and Donatello against an artist friend of theirs. The author wishes to thank Cecilia Frosinini for sharing her many insights on this subject.
- Cecchi 2008, 12, 370, docs. V–VI. The contents of Botticelli's studio were not officially inventoried, so his drawings may not have been gathered together and preserved as intellectual property, a standard practice of artists' families. Cecchi has suggested, however, that his artistic legacy may have passed to his nephew Mariano (1473/74–1527), who was active as an artist and in other related trades.
- Repudiating an inheritance was not rare in the period, and there were other reasons to do it besides debt, such as to evade taxes, or if the deceased had no assets. Kuehn 1992, 484–516.
- Horne 1908 (1980 ed.), 2–9, 345–46, doc. VII; Cecchi 2005, 12–27.
- Horne 1908, 3. Most scholars have followed Horne's reading of the ambiguous phrase "*all[eg]ere*" (see, e.g., Acidini Luchinat 2001, 11; Cecchi 2008, 15); Mesnil 1938, n.p., suggested that "*allegare*" might allude to the manipulation of metals.
- Debenedetti 2021, 16–23; Debenedetti in Paris 2021, 26.
- Melli 1995, 81, no. 68.
- Cecchi 2008, 110, 114–20, 128–31, 136, 177.
- Anonimo Gaddiano, c. 1540 (see Horne 1908, 343–44); Vasari 1568, 471.
- Galassi 1985, 206–15; Buzzegoli and Kunzelman 1987, 63–73; Holmes 1999, 15; O'Malley 2014, 14–15.
- Vasari 1568, 389.
- In 1469, about the time Filippino entered Botticelli's studio, Mariano Filipepi reported in the family *catasto* that Sandro is a painter and "works at home when he wishes"; Horne 1908. In 1470 Benedetto Dei noted that Botticelli has his own workshop (see Appendix A, Chronology).
- Lorenza Melli, "Verrocchio the Draftsman: Model and Maestro," in Washington 2019, 87–100.
- Dunkerton and Syson 2010, 4–41.
- Washington 2019, 9.
- Bartoli 1999, 31; Cecchi 2008, 100.
- Gert Jan van der Sman, "Botticelli's Life and Career in the District of the Unicorn," in Mariani and Van der Sman 2015, 187–90; see Parenti, no. 26 in this volume.
- Buzzegoli and Marchi 1992, 48.
- Warburg 1932/1999, 90, 109, 144; Dempsey 1999, 30; Cecchi 2008, 120, 128–29, 177n53. Medici sixteenth-century inventories also record Botticelli's banner as well. There is a related drawing by Botticelli in the Ambrosiana, Milan, and woodcut by an unknown artist for a later edition of Poliziano's *Stanze per la Giostra* (Florence, c. 1500); see Debenedetti in Paris 2021, 140–41, no. 23.
- Vasari described one of Botticelli's portraits of a woman in profile in the Medici collection as depicting an unnamed mistress of Giuliano (Vasari 1568, 474), who is often taken to be Simonetta Vespucci and identified with Botticelli's *Allegorical Portrait of a Woman* in the Städel Museum, Frankfurt.
- Allan 2014.
- Walmsley, Noelle, and Hartwig 2019, 3–33.
- Nesselrath 2003, 39–69.
- Maria Ludmila Pustka and Marco Pratelli, "Sandro Botticelli in Sistina: Buon fresco e uso della pittura a secco," in Gasparotto and Gigli 2006, 93–104.
- Bonechi 2011, 121–35 (with bibliography and primary sources on the Ethiopian delegation).
- See Gnisci 2015, 18–23; and Bonechi 2011, 126n17, for discussion of a possible third member of the Ethiopian delegation in Biagio's painting.
- Bonechi 2011, 125–26, on a historical Ethiopian figure of Antonio; he suggests instead that he might be represented as the African figure kneeling in prayer in Biagio d'Antonio's *The Crossing of the Red Sea*.
- Botticelli's *Mars and Venus*, c. 1485, National Gallery, London, could also be added to this group.
- The paintings are noted at the Medici Villa at Castello, likely first by Anonimo Gaddiano, c. 1540 (see Horne 1908, 343–44), although with a vague description; Vasari 1550, 492; Vasari 1568, 472; and the 1598 inventory of the property; Shearman 1975, 12–27.
- The Gallerie degli Uffizi cites 138 plant species in their gallery and web labels. Levi-d'Ancona 1983 identified 21 species of flowers; the estimate of 500 species frequently referenced in popular media cannot be substantiated.
- Hatfield 2009, 13–15.
- Melli in Frankfurt 2000, 101–2.
- Henry 2012, 82–86; Marcelli 2012, 27–29, 36–38.
- Roberta J. M. Olson, "Botticelli's Madonna of the Magnificat: New Discoveries about its Iconography, Patron, and Serial Repetition," in Mariani and Van der Sman 2015, 120–55.
- See Schulze Altcapenberg in Rome 2000, 2:38–289; and Schulze Altcapenberg and Keller in Berlin and London 2000–2001.
- Anonimo Gaddiano, c. 1540; see Horne 1908, 344.
- Francesco Malatesta letter to Isabella d'Este, September 23, 1502; Zambrano and Nelson 2004, 625, doc. 22.
- Louis Waldman, "Botticelli and His Patrons: The Arte del Cambio, the Vespucci, and the Compagnia dello Spirito Santo in Montelupo," in Hatfield 2009, 105–35. Based on the contract, Waldman estimates the original size of the *Pentecost* altarpiece may have been 467 by 292 cm; the Birmingham fragment measures 209 by 232 cm.

Artists' Workshops in Fifteenth-Century Florence

Cecilia Frosinini

The Guild Corporation System

By around the early fourteenth century, Florence had reached the climax of her development. Of this there are numerous clues: the population had grown to between 90,000 and 130,000 inhabitants; the circuit of city walls was one of the most extensive in Europe; the project to build the largest cathedral in Christendom was under way; the gold florin was the standard currency all across Europe; the merchant class was so strong that in 1300 Pope Boniface VIII declared it the quintessence, or “fifth element of the universe.” Even after Florence was struck by such catastrophes as the collapse of the international Bardi and Peruzzi banks between 1343 and 1346, and the effects of a bubonic plague epidemic that decimated the population, the city’s wealth did not vanish and in fact it rebounded, thanks to the affirmation of a new ruling class in which merchant bankers and entrepreneurs played an increasing role, none more strikingly than the Medici, who in the course of a few decades rose to become de facto rulers of Florence (fig. 17).

We possess a charming and vivid chronicle, replete with information about Florence, the *Cronica*, begun in 1473 by Benedetto Dei (1418–1492), one of the Medici company’s agents. The text gives details about the economic and business life of Florence, its flourishing commercial firms, and its merchant and banking exchanges and networks that reached across the world known to Europeans. Among the evidence of the city’s wealth, Dei lists thirty-three goldsmiths’ workshops, thirty-one painters’ workshops, twenty-six sculptors’ workshops, eighty-four workshops of wood inlayers, and fifty-four workshops of masters working stone and marble. Further, we know from the tax declarations submitted to the city’s revenue service (the *catasto*) that in 1480 no less than 656 heads of families were actively working in artistic professions. These numbers reflect the high regard in which art was held in the years following the rise to power of Lorenzo de’ Medici, called il Magnifico (1449–1492). This was a time when the arts were a profitable career choice for many, and it coincided with Sandro Botticelli’s youth through his most important works.

The social and commercial importance of artistic professions in Florence was nothing new; it had its roots in the late-medieval city, the Florence that Dante in the *Divine Comedy* was reminiscing as still “within the ancient circle of walls” (“*dentro de la cerchia antica*”). Ever since that time, the city was regulated politically and economically by a rigid governmental structure, dominated by the craft or professional associations—social corporations, or bodies, in short, guilds, known as the *arti*. Initially there were seven such associations representing the most significant professions in terms of the management of the economy and culture of Florentine society: the guild of the judges and notaries, the merchants’ guild, the bankers’ guild, the wool guild, the silk guild, the guild of physicians and apothecaries, and the guild of furriers. The members of these major guilds (*arti maggiori*) were the city’s



Fig. 17. Francesco and Raffaello Pettrini, after a woodcut attributed to Francesco Rosselli, *View of Florence with the Chain*, detail, 1887, painted on canvas, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. See pp. xii–xiii.

entrepreneurs, importers of raw materials, exporters of finished goods, bankers, tradespeople and professionals of a high level, all of whom had an education or cultural background not limited to the exercise of their professions. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, after uprisings and other social pressures spurred the extension of participation in government to the lower classes, fourteen guilds were added. These so-called middle and minor guilds (*arti medie e arti minori*) may be listed by profession: bakers, hotel keepers, woodworkers, linen makers and purveyors, used-goods dealers, masters of stone and wood, butchers (including fish vendors), shoemakers, beltmakers, leather workers (*correggiai* and *galigai*), oil purveyors, and grocers (makers and sellers of cured meats and cheese), wine sellers, armorers and sword smiths, locksmiths, and ironworkers. None of the more strictly artistic professions ever attained a level of political and economic importance to merit the creation of a guild of its own. Instead, these professions were attached to the existing guilds they were most naturally related to, as established by those guilds. The Florentine republic, which owed its foundation and continued existence to wealth created in the trades, sought to keep the guilds stable and balanced among one another; hence any expansion to include additional crafts was bound to be justified essentially by the raw materials utilized: for example, painters were in this context defined as spicier apothecaries “who buy, sell, and handle . . . pigments.”¹ It was thus not long before the year 1300 that artistic professions entered one of the major guilds, as some records indicate, and this must be seen as a sign of upward mobility, a move toward political representation and some social welfare as guaranteed by the republican constitution. Therefore, the guilds receiving these new professions were, in effect, an umbrella association with power over the management of all activities and crafts connected in some fashion to artistic production.

Thus, we find the metal founders, goldsmiths, and jewelers enrolled in the silk guild; the painters, after about 1295, matriculated into the guild of physicians, apothecaries, and haberdashers. Architects and sculptors, instead, generally belonged to the minor guild of the masters of stone and wood.

There was also a law behind the admission of the artistic professions into the existing guild corporations. It was foreseen by the wide-ranging regulations (or *ordinamenti di giustizia*) that the highest city official, the standard bearer of justice (*gonfaloniere di giustizia*), in the person of Giano della Bella, had introduced in January 1293. The thrust of the new laws was to severely limit the powers of the landowners' aristocracy and to favor the nascent merchant class: the rising middle and upper classes sought greater political weight to match their new, solid wealth by making legal representation dependent upon the guilds, since only men enrolled in guilds could hold public offices.

Belonging to a guild brought important advantages but also responsibilities. Guild statutes and other measures strictly defined and regulated these obligations, beginning with membership dues, to be paid annually. To practice a profession required mandatory enrollment in the appropriate guild. The fee, six florins in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was a heavy one, particularly for those who were starting a new profession. It is not surprising that craftsmen sought various means to limit the heavy hand of the guilds, above all to avoid paying dues. For example, a "paternal benefit" clause allowed sons and other direct paternal descendants an exemption from matriculation fees. Clearly, this provision also preserved family continuity in the profession, from father to son, a continuity we see time and again in the society of the period and in artistically important lineages, such as the Lippi, Ghirlandaio, and Rosselli families. It could also happen that, to avoid the tax, some craftsmen used the "paternal benefit" to enroll in guilds that did not govern their craft. Thus, the painter Cosimo Rosselli (no. 50) enrolled in the guild of masters of stone and wood as the son of a "master of masonry."

Occasionally we encounter a double matriculation, with a second guild added to the craftsman's primary activity. A craftsman might choose this if he came upon an important opportunity or commission that would outweigh the disadvantages of the additional fee. For example, the registers of the guild of the masters of stone and wood show that many painters joined it, probably to permit them to exercise specialized work as a *forzerinai* or *cofanai*, that is, a painter who dealt specifically with the decoration of furniture. Beside such considerations, there were probably also political reasons. The elevation of the major guild of the physicians and apothecaries over the course of the fifteenth century, and its increasingly exclusive membership, probably meant that artists working more on the craft side of the field would have found a better chance of qualifying for positions in the minor guilds.

The Reality of the Trades

If we rely solely upon guild laws and regulations in attempting to reconstruct the trades in the late-medieval and Renaissance periods, we would have only a partial view of the working world. Those rules express a political and official vision of society and business rather than reflecting reality. Thus we must bridge the gap between the regulatory norms established in guild statutes and the actual daily work that took place inside the workshop.

To do this we must draw upon two types of source material, both of which still survive in copious amounts in Italian archives: legal documents, on the one hand, and what we know as business documents, that is, the account books and similar records belonging to individual workshops. In addition, private and personal

records complement these official ones. Documents of this kind offer unique and direct evidence concerning materials, working methods, and commercial relationships. Specifically, we have account books (regrettably, always partial), which are related to particular commissions; workshop inventories; tax declarations (the *portate al catasto*); legal documents; registers of the city office of the Pupilli, which protected orphans of minor age, and thus drew up scrupulous inventories of the assets left by the deceased parent (in some cases listing work equipment); the so-called workshop books (*libri di bottega*) of artists, essentially ledgers of professional activities that carried legal value and which the guild magistrates could audit. Finally, and fully in the private sphere, were the memory books or *ricordanze*, essentially diaries that center on the working life of the author and are strewn with interesting facts and insights into daily life. Two of the best known of the fifteenth century are those of the painters Neri di Bicci and Alesso Baldovinetti (the manuscript of the latter is lost but known from an early twentieth-century transcription). There are also memory books of goldsmiths, apothecaries, and people working in other artistic trades. Regrettably, no writings by Botticelli are known or have survived, so we are forced to rely on scattered documents as well as the embellished and fictionalized biography by Vasari, written about fifty years after the painter's death.

By combining and cross-checking this wealth of documentation, moving between the official and the private realm, yet well within the actual working process, we can reconstruct work habits, common approaches and attitudes, and, above all, a highly articulated and flexible working practice far from the rigid guidelines of the guild statutes. As we have seen, one priority of the guild system was to monitor with great care and control the system of production within its jurisdiction. Although weakened politically in the second half of the fifteenth century after the consolidation of Medici power, the guilds nonetheless continued to dictate the rhythms and methods of work in the various professions. It is for this reason that all the Florentine guild statutes have long, detailed lists of the materials and objects that only guild members could make, sell, or keep on their premises—these lists are found in the first pages of the guild statutes dating back to the fourteenth century.

Guilds also legislated the materials permitted for craft products in order to ensure consumers that an object made by a Florentine chain of production met established requirements and guaranteed their quality by the republic itself, through the guilds. The guild corporation also had the function of protecting its citizen workers from competition of workers coming from elsewhere in Italy and Europe. Foreigners, besides paying a much higher tax, were also required to have two Florentine masters vouch for them and their skills in a hearing before the guild's own tribunal.

Even the transmission of technical knowledge and technique fell under the jurisdiction of the guild. Attempts were made from the first half of the fourteenth century to establish norms for training, although, as we have seen, this aspect of the craft was inevitably closely tied to traditional, often familial, networks.

The Workshop

The center of both the craft and learning was the workshop, the site where artistic production as well as the sale of the product took place (the Italian word *bottega* still designates both a store and a workshop). The space was generally a sort of warehouse



Fig. 18. *Artisans in Their Workshops*, illumination on vellum, from *De Sphaera*, c. 1470, manuscript Lat. 209, fol. 12r, Biblioteca Estense, Modena.

with an opening onto the street, and artists could economize on rent by freely deciding whether to set up their working space at home or to move it around as suited the commission and as indicated by the patron—whether in a church, convent refectory, or other space. For example, in the 1480 tax records, Domenico Ghirlandaio’s father asserted that his son “is a painter here and there, he does not keep a shop,” while, in the same year, both Cosimo Rosselli and Botticelli were “painters working from home.” We even know that Botticelli kept his workshop at this time in the house of his father, who declared of his son, “he is a painter, and he works at home when he wishes,” implying that in certain circumstances he was at work elsewhere.

Depending on the artist’s activity, the workshop had to have spaces suitable to the quantity and scale of work, to the number of assistants engaged, and to the display of wares on sale to prospective buyers. Leon Battista Alberti, in his treatise on architecture written close to 1450, counseled one to keep the workshop “more presentable than the living room” and well located and arranged so as to “attract buyers” (fig. 18).²

The neighborhood location was important. From early medieval times the guilds widely encouraged workshops and related commercial activities to be clustered near one another, a pattern that allowed the guild easier controls and also nurtured competition among rival colleagues in close contact. Indeed, the toponymy in most late-medieval European cities reflects the crafts carried out in specific streets and neighborhoods. Therefore one might have chosen between paying a higher rent to locate one’s workshop in a more upscale area to be closer to clients, or utilizing ground-floor spaces of one’s own house to avoid rent altogether. This led to the flowering of artistic enclaves in fifteenth-century Florence. The main zone for painters was today’s Via dei Calzaiuoli, then called Corso dei Pittori or “Painter’s Street,” strategically positioned between the religious center, the *duomo* (cathedral), and the political center, the Palazzo Vecchio (or Palazzo della Signoria). Then, as now, this was a prime high-rent district. Not surprisingly, artists set up workshops in other areas of the city center. A few blocks west of the Palazzo Vecchio and Ponte Vecchio, in the district of Borgo Santi Apostoli and Via delle Terme, near the Arno, workshops were maintained by the painters Gherardo Starnina, Giovanni dal Ponte, lo Scheggia (Masaccio’s brother), and Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli. Nearby, in Via di Pellicceria (named after the furriers, *pellicciai*, who also had their activity there), workshops were kept for fairly short intervals by the painters Biagio di Antonio, lo Scheggia once more, and Jacopo del Sellaio. Another group of painters including Masolino, Bicci di Lorenzo and later his son Neri, Benozzo Gozzoli, and Jacopo del Sellaio established themselves south of the Arno, close to the Carmine church: a zone of lower-income residents but in close proximity to important commissions from the mendicant orders of the Carmelite and Augustinians, and lay confraternities in the neighborhood. Returning north of the Arno, another working-class street was Via del Porcellana, between the Ognissanti church and the Porta al Prato, where Sandro Botticelli kept his workshop in a building adjoining the residence of his entire family. Crowded with pupils and visitors, it was a busy and noisy place that was social and full of humor and pranks, as Vasari recounts in the broad strokes of his biography.³ This account is confirmed by the notary *ser* Lorenzo Violi (1465–1556)—who in

the 1490s became a follower of Savonarola—in a memoir, where he said, with a hint of criticism: “in Botticelli’s workshop there was always a proper academy of slackers.”⁴

A final major enclave of painters to be recognized is the so-called *alle fondamenta* in what is now Via del Proconsolo, the street connecting the cathedral to the Palazzo del Bargello, where both Cosimo Rosselli and Domenico Ghirlandaio kept workshops in their homes. Perhaps it is no accident that they were not far from the very large workshop of Verrocchio, in Via dell’Oriuolo close to the duomo, where the painter and sculptor moved in the 1470s.

At the head of the workshop was the master, that is, the craftsman officially recognized as a practicing member by enrolling in the guild and paying a registration tax. The matriculation fee varied, depending on where the craftsman was from, that is, if he was a citizen, an inhabitant of the suburbs, a native of the *contado* (the Florentine countryside), or a foreigner. Nonetheless, it was the keystone through which the guilds (and hence the republic itself) protected its citizens and by the same token discouraged foreigners from entering the closed precinct of communal life.

Only the master could sign contracts, and only the master bore the economic and legal responsibility for the work made under his name. The workshop might include salaried members. They occupied a lower social position than the master, regardless of their craft abilities. Such workers were quite simply unable to sustain the expenses connected with matriculation and running a business on their own, and many spent their whole lives in this position. Some adopted this role simply out of convenience, once again to elude the heavy expenses of the guild. Thus we come across people who matriculated at an advanced age, either because they suddenly lost the legal coverage provided by a lenient workshop master, or because their activities had gained such visibility that the control of the guild was inescapable.

A remarkable case in point is Botticelli himself, who matriculated only in 1499, at the age of fifty-four. His reasons for finally giving in are probably related to the loss of the protections he had enjoyed, first from the Medici (forced into exile after 1494) and the city’s elite, and then from the political party associated with Fra Girolamo Savonarola. Following his brother Simone, who was a fervent disciple of Savonarola, Botticelli probably entered the Dominican preacher’s circle, which disbanded after Savonarola was condemned to death and burned at the stake on May 23, 1498, in Piazza della Signoria.

However, Sandro Botticelli had been registered with the Company of Saint Luke since 1472, when he was twenty-seven. The Company of Saint Luke was a religious and social association for the city’s painters. Such associations of devout laymen flourished in all cities of medieval Europe, often in relation to a professional calling or centering upon some particular form of Christian devotion. Saint Luke was widely taken to be the patron saint of painters, as a legend identified the apostle as the first to have painted a portrait of the Virgin Mary. Needless to say, Christian beliefs and practices were of great importance in the society of the time, but this type of association also offered craftsmen opportunities to socialize and to provide mutual support, particularly in the event of hardship.

In the workshop, a special place was occupied by the pupil (*discepolo*), the young boy and then adolescent who was officially recognized as being trained in the craft and serving his

apprenticeship. The pupil enjoyed a social status of some weight, as he was required to matriculate in the guild and, consequently, he had a career path already set out to become, at the end of his training, a master himself. The guild took the transmission of knowledge and artisan practices seriously, going so far as to codify the duration of the apprenticeship and restrict each master to one pupil at a given time, forbidding a master to steal an apprentice from another master. The pupil was hired by the terms of a private notarized contract, and, by the fifteenth century, through a private agreement stipulated before witnesses. The contract set out reciprocal duties. The master was obliged to teach his craft to the youth; the pupil was not to leave the workshop setting for the duration of the time contracted for; the pay rate was scaled to increase over time.

The various clauses of the guild statutes regulating the activities in the workshop applied equally to the pupil and to the other laborers. Neither one was allowed to sell any objects produced in the master’s shop without permission. This prohibition reveals that the workshop produced completed objects that were sold to clients, and also that the apprentices and assistants were not merely executing minor parts of the master’s work, but also forming a coherent working team capable of producing replicas of major works to be sold to clients of modest means and expectations. In the second half of the fifteenth century this category of buyer became an important source of revenue for workshops. It finds an amusing reflection in an anecdote related by Vasari: Botticelli and several assistants pranked Biagio, another assistant, by dressing up the figures in a tondo Biagio had painted as a replica of one by Botticelli, which the master ends up selling to a client for the substantial sum of six gold florins.

A workshop might also hire personnel by the day (or day’s work) in order to complete extra tasks or meet pressing deadlines. This is known to have happened to Botticelli. For certain unspecified projects for the Medici (perhaps for their villa at Careggi), three workers were employed by the day for a total of fifty-seven days, along with another person for sixteen days (paid in cash and wine), and a *fattore*, or overseer.⁵

It must be added that from the contemporary documents it is clear workshops often had more young people who were employed under the false title of *garzoni* but in reality were learning the craft, free of the guild taxation that was levied on the pupils.

Artists’ Companies

While working as an artist could provide a good income, there could also be many financial downturns in a society without economic compensation in the event of illness, physical incapacitation, or clients who failed to pay. Masters from all guilds sought to redress the heavy risks posed by life’s chances through the tactic of setting up temporary partnerships with colleagues. Known as companies, or *compagnie*, membership in these associations normally had a duration of three years, which was renewable, and were essentially economic relationships. Such temporary partnerships were grounded in an initial shared investment, of equal parts or varying percentages, which in time would yield profits or losses, according to the percentages of the contributions of each partner. The partners, or *compagni*, might share the workshop or not, or collaborate in specific operations, or not. These were personal choices not bound by any regulations. Two main principles

guided the company's business: to increase the capital put into the business (whether in the form of cash, human resources, or assets), and to guarantee an equitable redistribution of profits and losses.

Only those matriculated with the same guild could form such a company. When a project was labor-intensive or called for artists working in different crafts (and belonging to different social levels), this requirement might have been a heavy limitation. For example, it was not always possible to subcontract a complex structure or elaborate inlays from a woodworker. Likewise, woodcarvers could not always find painters of a certain prestige willing to take on the role of painting their sculptures. Such needs grew as commercial networks expanded, as the demand for works of art grew, and as artists sought to gain work by any means and wherever possible, pressing craftsmen and artists to seek loopholes in the barriers between themselves and the market. Considering the many types of work that straddle two art forms or crafts—such as painted *cassoni*, or wedding chests (nos. 40, 46, 47); illuminated manuscripts, or the many forms of sculpture in gesso, wood, or terracotta (especially figurative); it seems clear that the market eroded the rigid separations imposed by the guilds. And this situation is probably the reason why, over time, the ranks of those matriculating as painters with the guild of physicians and apothecaries included a growing number of highly specialized craftsmen. We refer to the painters of chests, furniture, woodworkers, gold-leaf beaters, *orpellai* (specialists in tinsel ornamentation), painters of *naibi* (playing cards), mattress makers, whitewashers, stationers, and painters of gesso objects. Moreover, the pressures of competition were already pushing artists to specialize in one or more subspecialties, to judge by records that tell us of one Antonio di Dino, a “haberdasher who primes wooden panels,” of Michele di Ramondo, “who manufactures azure pigment,” or of Bernardino di Antonio, paintbrush maker. It was hard to identify common criteria applicable to such a variety of trades, and by the years before 1500 the guild corporations seem to have given up any attempt to do so.

Botticelli's working environment offers a good example of this system and the breakdown of rigid rules in the face of the reality of the work and commercial practice. Among the pupils and collaborators were the young Filippino Lippi, documented as Botticelli's *garzone*; Jacopo di Domenico Foschi; a certain “Iacopo di Sandro,” mentioned by Vasari;⁶ Jacopo di Francesco (a painter who worked with the aged Botticelli at the monastery of Monticelli); one Biagio, again mentioned by Vasari, perhaps identifiable with Biagio di Francesco Pacini;⁷ and Giovanni di Benedetto Cianfanini.⁸ To these names must be added those of two collaborators or perhaps partners, Jacopo del Sellaio and Bartolomeo di Giovanni, who in 1483 worked with Botticelli on the project of wainscoting panels (*spalliere*) representing the story of Nastagio degli Onesti, from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Moreover, from surviving artworks it may be possible to reassemble the personal style of artists, identify those artistic personalities as having trained with Botticelli, and sometimes even connect this reconstruction to records of the period.

NOTES

- 1 “qui emunt, vendunt et operantur . . . colores,” C. Fiorilli 1920, 44.
- 2 Alberti 1485/1833, book 5, chapter 18, 178–79.
- 3 Vasari 1550: “They say that Sandro was a very pleasant and witty person, and pranks and witticisms were always being made in his workshop, where the endless series of young men he always had learning the craft would indulge in horseplay and jokes with each other.” (“Dicesi che Sandro era persona molto piacevole e faceta, e sempre baie e piacevolezze si facevano in bottega sua, dove continuamente tenne a imparare infiniti giovani, i quali molte giostre et uccellamenti usavano farsi l'un l'altro”).
- 4 Horne 1908, 360; Violi c. 1538–45/1986.
- 5 Horne 1908, 361.
- 6 Waldman 2001, 17–36; Daly 2021, 66–75.
- 7 Bartoli 1999, 9.
- 8 Pons 1996, 50–53.

The San Marco Sculpture Garden and the Origins of the Medici Collection of Classical Marbles

Fabrizio Paolucci

But thinking on what my father said, and joining together in my memory things I had heard with things I had seen, the garden on the Piazza San Marco in Florence seems to me very like the Belvedere garden situated in the place between the papal palace and the Belvedere in Rome.
—Baccio Bandinelli¹

The sculptor Baccio Bandinelli used the words in this epigraph to describe the gardens of San Marco, where Lorenzo de' Medici had assembled a celebrated collection of classical sculpture. In the autumn of 1494, more than fifty years before Bandinelli wrote these lines in his *Libro del disegno* (Book of drawing),² the garden had been sacked by Florentines outraged that their city had suddenly been ceded to King Charles VIII of France.³ Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo's son, was directly responsible for this political default and had been forced to flee Florence, fully aware that his family's assets would be confiscated and dispersed. The artist and art historian Giorgio Vasari wrote that, regrettably, the "many and beautiful antiquities that Lorenzo had collected"⁴ in the garden of San Marco would not escape this fate. Thus the collection of classical sculpture, which had been built up over almost a century, was dispersed, a collection so exceptional in the number and quality of pieces that even many decades later Bandinelli felt compelled to compare this lost museum to the Vatican Belvedere, where Pope Julius II (r. 1503–13) had gathered the finest pieces unearthed in Rome.⁵ Bandinelli went on to write that Lorenzo de' Medici, anticipating the pope's display by more than thirty years,⁶ "made a *raccolto*, started by old Cosimo de' Medici, of the most beautiful figures of marble that could be obtained,"⁷ giving the ancient sculptures new life, as they were displayed with cartoons and drawings by Renaissance artists. As is well known, Lorenzo envisioned that a select group of young people would, through daily confrontation with these excellent works, perfect themselves in the art of sculpture and drawing under the guidance of Bertoldo di Giovanni, a pupil of Donatello, who worked in the garden as keeper and restorer of the "antiques."⁸

The garden of San Marco, a true and proper *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden), comprised two buildings and two open spaces,⁹ and was situated next to the Dominican monastery of San Marco. It became the leading place in Florence where one could admire the excellence of ancient sculpture and carry out research on celebrated classic models. We know, for example, that the young Michelangelo, Pietro Torrigiani, Francesco Granacci, probably Leonardo da Vinci, and any number of other Florentine artists studied the Roman marbles there.¹⁰ Unfortunately, these marbles were never catalogued or included in Lorenzo's

postmortem inventory of 1492,¹¹ so it is only with much difficulty and considerable uncertainty that we are able to identify some of the sculptures that embellished the famous San Marco garden, one of the first gardens of antiquity in Renaissance Italy.

The quality of the collection, which we can reconstruct with a certain accuracy, resulted from the singular and often innovative choices made by the Medici throughout the fifteenth century. The Medici family sculpture collection was begun, as Bandinelli attests, in the first half of the century by Cosimo the Elder (see Medici Family Tree). At the time, antiquities sought by collectors were almost exclusively gems, cameos, coins, medals, and small bronzes. Marble statues were mainly used, especially in Rome, to decorate the architectural facades of houses and other buildings, as were such ancient spoils as epigraphs, columns, and architraves.¹² Cosimo's unusual decision to collect sculptures and treat them as precious artifacts to be preserved and admired in a courtyard or garden was, Vasari recalls, due to a suggestion by Donatello.¹³ This seems plausible considering the leading role Florentine sculptors played in the history of collecting classical marbles. The inventory of sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti's collection of antiquities, published only recently,¹⁴ reveals that the master owned fourteen such works that were in his studio, including ancient bronzes and marbles, some of which later entered the Medici collections.¹⁵ Other contemporary colleagues of Ghiberti seem to have collected in a similar vein. Francesco Scalamonti, biographer of the antiquarian and humanist Ciriaco d'Ancona (1391–before 1457), recalls that in Donatello's studio one could see "noble statues, and many images of bronze or marble both new and old derived from them" ("statuarios nobiles, pleraque vetusta novaque ab eis edita ex aere marmoreve simulacra").¹⁶ The Sieneese sculptor Jacopo della Quercia is known to have owned an ancient bronze head of an old man and two nude figures, also in metal.¹⁷ For these artists, such relics of classical art served as illustrious models from which to draw inspiration and also to aid in teaching. The didactic role of ancient art is an idea Lorenzo il Magnifico fully shared with his creation of the "school" of San Marco.

Cosimo the Elder, while not neglecting the glyptic collection of carved or engraved gems—holdings expanded upon by his son Piero¹⁸—nonetheless took Donatello's advice and turned his attention to classical sculpture. As early as 1438, this Pater Patriae (father of his country) had managed to secure a statue from Rhodes through Andreolo Giustiniani, a Genoese nobleman who resided on the Greek island of Chios, as well as coins and marble heads.¹⁹ Purchasing antiquities from across the Aegean must have been an exception for Cosimo, however, as his collecting activity seemed to be directed mainly toward the Roman market. According to Vasari,²⁰ the many antiques arriving from Rome included a "most beautiful Marsyas of white marble" ("bellissimo Marsia di marmo bianco"), identifiable today with a statue of Marsyas in pavonaz-zetto marble in the Gallerie degli Uffizi, with additions now persuasively attributed to Mino da Fiesole (fig. 19).²¹ The Roman market may have also yielded some ancient portraits,²² not unlike the ones Cosimo's younger son, Giovanni, eagerly sought there in the 1450s.²³ These heads, statues, and portraits, however, only hinted at the great army of ancient marbles that the Medici would go on to acquire in the second half of the fifteenth century. These marbles formed a foundation to which the pride and fame of the future Medici collections would be linked.

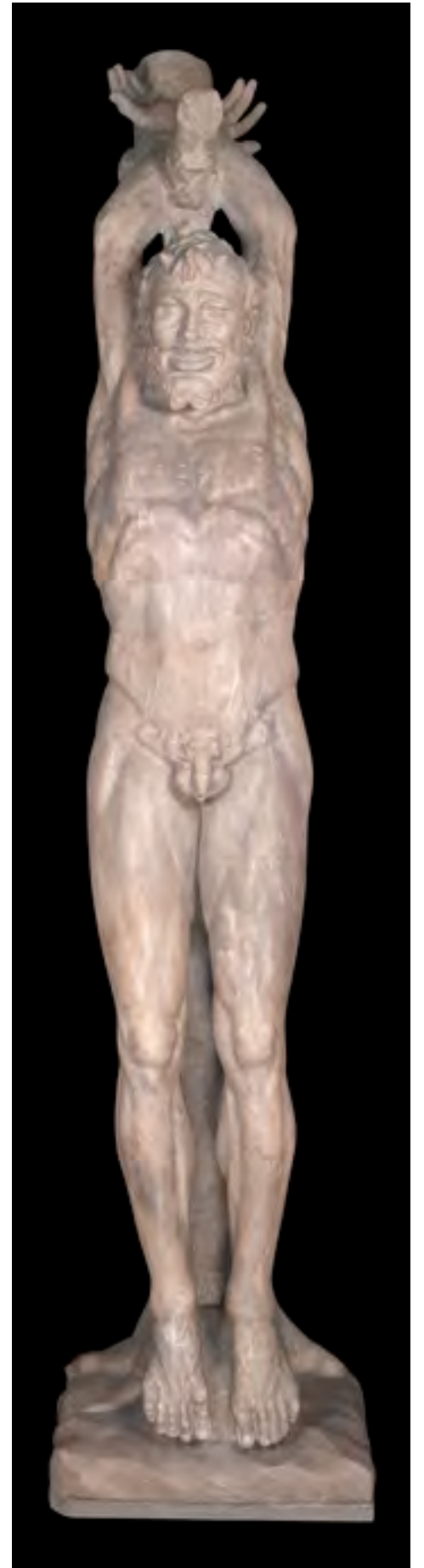


Fig. 19. *Marsyas*, Roman, c. second century CE, body: ancient, of fine marble from Asia Minor; head: addition by Mino da Fiesole (c. 1429–84), pavonaz-zetto marble, height 96½ in. (245 cm) overall; 72½ in. (184 cm), ancient, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.



Fig. 20. *Portrait of Gaius Caesar* (nephew of the emperor Augustus), Roman, 20 BCE–4 CE, Greek marble, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.



Fig. 21. *Portrait of Agrippa* (admiral and supporter of Augustus, married to the emperor's daughter, Julia), Roman, 63 BCE–12 BCE, Greek marble, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.

As we have seen, Lorenzo il Magnifico, in particular, carried on the collecting tradition begun by his grandfather, without neglecting the glyptic collection either.²⁴ The original collection of gems and cameos had already been enlarged with the purchase of Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan's collection,²⁵ but it attained even greater stature in 1471, when Sixtus IV (r. 1471–84) ascended to the papal throne. As bankers to the popes, the Medici were able to acquire masterpieces belonging to the library of the pope and humanist Pius II (r. 1458–64).²⁶ Lorenzo's enthusiasm for collecting is evident in a letter he wrote in 1471, upon his return from Rome: "I brought two antique marble heads with the likenesses of Augustus and Agrippa . . . and further I brought our carved bowl along with many other cameos and medals that were bought at that time."²⁷ The bowl ("la nostra scudella") to which he refers is the renowned Farnese Cup, or *Tazza Farnese* (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli), an absolute masterpiece of Hellenistic hard-stone relief carving.²⁸ Even with this treasure in hand, the attention the young Lorenzo also paid the two marble portraits is noteworthy.²⁹ It is now possible to identify these with two works today in the Uffizi that depict Gaius Caesar and Agrippa, the celebrated admiral and son-in-law of the emperor Augustus (figs. 20, 21).³⁰ The heads are so similar in style that they were probably carved in the same workshop and for the same context, where they were likely both found some time in the fifteenth century.³¹ As was noted by the scholar Luigi Beschi,³² the two portraits were promptly reproduced in two tondi by the Florentine artist Giovanni della Robbia, which are datable to the 1520s (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).³³ This provides indisputable confirmation of the fame of these marble portraits in Florence during this period.

At some point during the 1470s or 1480s, Niccolò Valeri³⁴ and the architect and sculptor Giuliano da Sangallo³⁵ brought to Florence from Naples some unidentified portraits representing Hadrian, Agrippina, Faustina, and Scipio Africanus, along with a sculpture of Venus and a rare sleeping putto in black marble. Lorenzo's voracious appetite for antique marbles was such that he allowed himself to obtain stolen objects that were particularly coveted, as in 1488, when a sculpted head of a boy preserved in Ostia was stripped from the house of Archbishop Niccolini and then reappeared in Lorenzo's collection.³⁶ Although it is possible to reconstruct the acquisition history of many works secured by Lorenzo during these hectic years, for many others we can only ascertain their presence in his collection. An example is a bronze horse head listed in the 1495 report of confiscated Medici properties (fig. 22). It was mentioned as being in the garden at the Medici Palace on Via Larga, where it remained until the early nineteenth century.³⁷ This exceptional bronze, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, probably dates to the late classical period.³⁸ A bronze horse's head possessed by Lorenzo, which he donated to Diomede Carafa of Naples, is clearly modeled after the bronze in Florence and was also long thought to be ancient. A recent rereading of archival documents,³⁹ however, confirms that the splendid Naples bronze was created by Donatello. The work, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, was part of an equestrian monument of King Alfonso V of Aragon intended for the Castel Nuovo in Naples that was never completed.

The satyr Marsyas of pavonazzetto marble, the bronze horse's head in Florence, and the two marble portraits would have been the pride of any Roman collection of the fifteenth century. Today



Fig. 22. *Horse's Head*, second half of the fourth century BCE, probably made in a workshop in southern Italy or Sicily, bronze. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze.

they represent the most significant visual evidence we have of the "pioneering" phase of the Medici's antiquities collecting,⁴⁰ of which the integral part was displayed in the garden of San Marco. In the absence of inventories and precise descriptions of the "good ancient figures of marble" ("buone figure antiche di marmo") that populated the green expanses, walkways, and interiors of the *bortus* of San Marco,⁴¹ attempts have been made to identify what might have been there in other ways. Scholars have searched for echoes of the lost works in laconic hints present in contemporary documents, in the work of the artists who frequented the garden, and in the descriptions handed down to us in the sources.

In this effort to identify the unknown works, decisive contributions have come from the rich established mythology that surrounds the young Michelangelo and the years he frequented the San Marco garden. The classical sculptures he might have seen there are parsed from the evident influence those models might have had on his first works. There is no question that



Fig. 23. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths (Centauromachy)*, c. 1490–92, marble relief, Casa Buonarroti, Florence.

Michelangelo was part of the small group of young pro-Medici artists welcomed at Bertoldo's school, not least because a 1494 letter refers to him as "the garden sculptor" par excellence.⁴² Indeed, it is very probable that it was in San Marco that Michelangelo executed his *Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths* (fig. 23).⁴³ While the subject matter of this marble relief was inspired in part by the contemporary poet Agnolo Poliziano,⁴⁴ the composition is indebted to sculptural prototypes in the late Hellenistic style, works characterized by the twisted, spiraling motion of figures in space. An example is the ancient statue group *Three Satyrs Wrestling a Serpent* that, as we shall see, was probably among the marbles preserved in Lorenzo's garden (no. 18).

In the last quarter of the quattrocento it was not uncommon to find in Florentine art a close interdependence of literary model, classical prototype, and artistic production. One of the most eloquent reflections of this is Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles* (see fig. 15), in which the artist sought to reprise the famous ancient painting of Apelles, known from the description of the ancient writer Lucian of Samosata and recounted by Leon Battista Alberti.⁴⁵



Fig. 24. *Sleeping Cupid*, Roman, second century CE, marble, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.

After all, Botticelli had learned the fundamental value of classical antiquity during his time in the workshop of master Filippo Lippi, who freely inserted elements from ancient Greco-Roman iconography into Christian contexts. We need only to look at the Salome in his *Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist* frescoes (1452–66) in Prato Cathedral (see fig. 27.2).⁴⁶ Her form clearly derives from the ancient iconographic type of the dancing maenads (no. 13), a source to which Botticelli's *Three Graces* in the *Primavera* owe much as well (see fig. 10).

It is widely assumed that a sleeping cupid was displayed in the San Marco garden,⁴⁷ from which Michelangelo would have drawn inspiration in 1495, producing a forgery so accurate and compelling that it was bought by Cardinal Raffaele Riario as an ancient marble.⁴⁸ Despite many efforts in recent decades, scholars have been unable to identify Michelangelo's work with certainty.⁴⁹ Even though the sleeping child or cupid was a common subject in antiquity (no. 33), Luigi Beschi reasonably identified Michelangelo's prototype as the statue that has resided in the Tribuna of the Uffizi since the sixteenth century (fig. 24).⁵⁰ Recently it has been suggested that this statue is itself a sixteenth-century work, a copy of the ancient Laurentian marble that inspired Michelangelo.⁵¹ Even so, the style and typology of the small Uffizi sculpture falls within the parameters of the Roman middle imperial period and remains the most likely candidate for the sleeping cupid in Lorenzo's garden that was given to him by Ferrante of Aragon in 1488.⁵²

Perhaps one of the best-known stories about the legendary early work Michelangelo did in San Marco concerns the faun mask he made. Inspired by an ancient head of a "faun who already

Fig. 25. *Mask of a Faun*, c. 1490, copy in gesso, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.



Fig. 26. *Cupid with a Bow*, second century CE, Roman copy after a late Hellenistic original of second-first century BCE, marble, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.



appears old, with a long beard and laughing face” (“in vista già vecchio, con lunga barba e volto ridente”),⁵³ the young artist produced in a matter of days an imitation that won him praise and a playful remark from Lorenzo.⁵⁴ It is almost impossible to identify which faun’s head Michelangelo was looking at; dozens flowed into the Medici collections, and the description handed down to us is so generic that it could apply to any number of works from antiquity. Greater effort has been devoted to identifying Michelangelo’s mask,⁵⁵ but there has been no consensus given the lack of documentary evidence. Traditionally, the work has been recognized as a relief that for centuries was preserved in the Uffizi, and formerly was in the collection of canon Apollonio Bassetti, where already at the end of the seventeenth century it was described as “by Michele Agnolo Buonarroti, his first work” (fig. 25).⁵⁶ This hypothesis is difficult to confirm since the marble was lost in 1944, during World War II, but recent studies have made a case for origins in the fifteenth century⁵⁷ and have left open the possibility of Michelangelo’s authorship.⁵⁸

It was the scholar Arnold Schober⁵⁹ who recognized as one of Lorenzo il Magnifico’s sculptures the statuary group of *Three Satyrs Wrestling with a Serpent*, formerly preserved in Graz, Austria, and now in a private collection in Chicago (no. 18).⁶⁰ Those “three beautiful little fauns on a small marble base, all three encircled by a large serpent” was described by the agent Luigi da Barberino in a letter to Lorenzo in 1489.⁶¹ The work had been unearthed near the convent of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, in Rome, in an area where Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the future Pope Julius II, had reserved the exclusive right to excavate. The small marble, with its unusual subject and distinctive sculptural quality close to the late Hellenistic school of Rhodes, was obtained by Lorenzo’s

emissaries in Rome who were connected to a clandestine excavation; the operation also included buying the silence of those involved in the transaction.⁶² It is very likely that this work was displayed in the San Marco garden. The evident echoes of this singular sculpture are seen in the aforementioned *Battle of the Centaurs* relief by Michelangelo,⁶³ confirming the hypothesis that it was precisely in the elite academy of Lorenzo that artists had the opportunity to study this precious classical model.

To this formative period, when Michelangelo was closely engaged with ancient art in Lorenzo’s sculpture garden, has been attributed a statuette of a boy archer (now on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).⁶⁴ The work depicts a figure in an unstable stance, with a strong rotational pose. A possible confirmation of the attribution may come from a small sculpture of a putto archer in the Medici grand-ducal collections since the late sixteenth century (fig. 26).⁶⁵ The putto, dating from the middle imperial period, is quite similar to the sculpture alleged to be by Michelangelo, and may have been the inspiration for the young artist. Recently returned to the Uffizi collections, the putto could have belonged to the nucleus of the Medici antiquities collection. The scholar Anna Maria Massinelli recognized⁶⁶ that the smaller-than-life-size marble must be the “small figure of a child who looks to be about ten years of age, missing the arms and part of the legs, with the head pressed to his trunk” described in a letter sent to Lorenzo il Magnifico by Nofri Tornabuoni from Rome in February 1489.⁶⁷ Massinelli’s brilliant hypothesis would seem to be borne out by the state of conservation of the Uffizi sculpture, which retains the head on the torso, while the arms and parts of the legs are post-antique additions. That these features are repeated in the work ascribed to Michelangelo—which, likewise is missing the arms and lower legs—combined with its prestigious provenance, makes for a compelling case. Placing this marble in Lorenzo’s garden could also explain how other artists came upon the subject. A young archer of bronze dating to the late fifteenth century⁶⁸—attributed to Jacopo Bonacolsi, known as Antico, whose study of the Laurentian collections is attested to in other works⁶⁹—seems to have been inspired by this same ancient statue, most recognizable in such details as the wavy hair tied over the forehead.

As we know, the Medici family palace, a short distance from the San Marco garden, also contained a sculpture garden. We cannot thus be certain whether a life-sized sculpture of a figure wearing a toga resided at the palace or San Marco. The ancient sculpture was discovered while crews were digging the foundation for the Gondi Palace in Florence and donated by Giuliano Gondi to Lorenzo in 1490 (fig. 27).⁷⁰ The news, reported by G. B. Uccelli, notes simply that the statue was transported to “the garden of Lorenzo il Magnifico,” a concise description that suggests the Medici garden par excellence in the city.⁷¹ Thus, the Claudian-era sculpture may have remained until the Medici collections were sacked in 1494, at which point it was recovered by the first owners, the Gondi, to decorate their family palace, where it still stands today.

Little more can be said about the sculptures that crowded the paths of the garden of San Marco, or whether they were systematically arranged in the buildings there. With so few works traceable to the original setting, it is nearly impossible to reconstruct the methods of display or identify dominant iconographic themes.



Fig. 27. *Portrait of a Man Wearing a Toga*, known as “*Consul Macrino*,” Roman, mid-first century CE, marble, Palazzo Gondi, Florence.

The sources, even setting aside the conventionality of their judgments, are unreserved in expressing their admiration of the sculptures in the garden,⁷² a fact that seems counter to the recent hypothesis of Caroline Elam⁷³ that San Marco served as a sort of clearing house in which works damaged or needing additions or restoration were kept before being sent to the elite spaces of the palace on Via Larga. Certainly there can be no doubt that the San Marco garden was the first such green space in Florence in which antique statuary played a dominant role.⁷⁴ Vasari mentions the existence of a garden full of antiquities belonging to Leonardo Salutati, bishop of Fiesole, around the middle of the fifteenth century,⁷⁵ and antiquities were not lacking in the gardens of the Pazzi, the Martelli, and the Braccesi.⁷⁶ But no collection of the period, save perhaps in Rome,⁷⁷ had a more varied and prestigious concentration of marbles. This we know from even the few San Marco works that have come to light.

What is indisputable is the legacy of this treasure house of classical antiquity and the incalculable role it played in Florentine culture in the second half of the century. There is no document recording that Botticelli ever visited Lorenzo's garden, but the artist's profound investigation of classical art and his undeniable familiarity with the Greco-Roman repertory cannot be explained except in the cultural context promoted by Lorenzo de' Medici, who also knew how to make a powerful instrument out of the recovery of ancient culture to celebrate and promote his own leadership. Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* (c. 1482, no. 1) is among the clearest examples of this bending of iconographic language and classical forms to celebrate a political event, in this case the marriage of Lorenzo's cousin Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco.⁷⁸ Approaching classical art in a creative, dialectical manner far different from the referential detachment that would assert itself in Italian culture in the following decades, artists such as Botticelli found—in the gems, sculptures, and bronzes that Lorenzo il Magnifico meticulously collected—models that could be interpreted with a new vitality and contemporaneity. In the process, they overcome those long-revered standards of absolute formal perfection.

NOTES

- Baccio Bandinelli, *Libro del disegno*, as quoted in Waldman 2004, 904.
- For the date of the manuscript to the years immediately after 1550, see Waldman 2004, 898.
- Elam 1992, 50–51; Elam, "Custode and Capo: Bertoldo di Giovanni in Lorenzo de' Medici's Sculpture Garden," in New York 2019, 118.
- Vasari 1568/1878–85, 8:141.
- For the origin and history of the Belvedere Courtyard, see Frommel 2000.
- Lorenzo acquired ownership of the garden around 1475: Elam in New York 2019, 113–14.
- Waldman 2004, 903.
- Elam 1992, 59–60; Baldini 2013, 13; Cox-Rearick 2013, 323–24, Elam in New York 2019, 111. For Bertoldo's activities as a restorer of antiquities, see now Elam in New York 2019, 122.
- Acidini Luchinat, "La 'santa antichità,' la scuola, il giardino," in Borsi 1991, 157; Elam 1992, 44–46; Baldini 2013, 59–60. For the precise location of the garden, see Elam in New York 2019, 109–10.
- For a list of the artists who frequented the garden of San Marco, see Baldini 2013, 12–23; Elam 1992, 58–60; Elam in New York 2019, 123–25.
- Elam in New York 2019, 118.
- Settis, "Il collezionismo di sculture antiche: gli inizi," in Florence 2015a, 19–26.
- Vasari 1568/1971–78, 220.
- Carl 2019.
- Carl 2019, 280–90.
- Scalamonti 1996, 70.
- Weiss 1989, 212n7.
- Gennaioli, "La collezione di gemme dei Medici nel XV secolo," in Florence 2010a.
- Beschi in Athens 2003, 49.
- Vasari 1568/1971–78, 539–40.
- Caglioti 1993, 22–26; Saladino 2009, 88–89.
- Fittschen, "Ritratti antichi nella collezione di Lorenzo il Magnifico ed in altre collezioni del suo tempo," in Fubini 1996, 8; Agosti-Farinella in Florence 1992b, 22n10.
- Agosti-Farinella in Florence 1992, 22n10.
- For Lorenzo de' Medici's collection of ancient sculptures, see Beschi 1983, 161–76; Beschi, "Le sculture antiche di Lorenzo," in Garfagnini 1994, 291–17; Fittschen in Fubini 1996–97; Saladino 2006; Corti and Fusco 2006, 29–65; Saladino 2009.
- Gennaioli in Florence 2010a, 22–27.
- Gennaioli in Florence 2010a, 24.
- As cited in Pannuti, "Formazione, incremento e vicende dell'antica raccolta di glittica medicea," in Florence 1973, 4.
- Florence 2001b, 94–96n11.
- Gáldi 2009 46.
- Beschi 1983, 165; Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 302–3.
- Fittschen in Fubini 1996, 9.
- Beschi 1983, 165–67.
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 34–45. By a similar method, Klaus Fittschen has suggested that Lorenzo's collection also included the *Cicero* in the Gallerie degli Uffizi, belonging to the portrait type reproduced in a glazed terracotta tondo from the workshop of Benedetto and Santi Buglioni (Fittschen in Fubini 1996–97, 22, pl. 10.3). This identification is improbable because the *Cicero* is first recorded in the Medici collections in 1669.
- Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 301.
- Parronchi 1981.
- Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 301.
- Beschi 1983, 163.
- Mario Iozzo in Florence 2018, 234–38.
- Athens 2003, 198–200.
- Gino Corti and Laurie Fusco catalogue forty-three marbles traceable to Lorenzo's collection: Corti and Fusco 2006, 106–7.
- One of the fullest descriptions is that included by Vasari in his life of Pietro Torrigiani: "The earlier Lorenzo de' Medici had [Torrighiani] stay in the garden on Piazza San Marco in Florence owned by that magnificent citizen, a garden so replete with ancient and good sculptures, that the loggia, the pathways and all the rooms were adorned with good ancient figures in marble and in painting." ("[Torrighiani] fu da Lorenzo Vecchio de' Medici tenuto nel giardino che in su la Piazza di San Marco di Firenze aveva quel magnifico cittadino, in guisa d'antiche e buone sculture ripieno, che la loggia, i viali e tutte le stanze erano adorne di buone figure antiche di marmo e di pitture."), Vasari 1568b, 256.
- Quoted in Baldini 2013, 15.
- Baldini 2013, 23.
- Elam in New York 2019, 112.
- Mendelsohn, "The Transmission of Antique Beauty and Proportion to Renaissance Art: From Sculpture to Painting" in Athens 2003, 99.
- Gregori in Athens 2003, 116, fig. 14.
- Acidini Luchinat in Borsi 1991, 160; Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 311–12.
- The circumstance, recorded by the sixteenth-century sources on Michelangelo, is also confirmed by a letter written by the artist himself in July 1496; see Corti and Fusco 2006, 45.
- For a summary, see Corti and Fusco 2006, 230n67.
- Muscillo in Rome 2014, 145–46.
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 52.
- Muscillo in Rome 2014, 145–46.
- Condivi 1553, 11.
- "It came to pass that [Lorenzo] though praising the work, yet bantered with him as with a boy, saying 'Oh, you have made this Faun old but you left him a full set of teeth. Don't you know that old folks of such an age are always missing one or two?'" ("[Lorenzo] avvenga che lodasse l'opera, nondimeno, motteggiando con lui come con un fanciullo, disse 'Oh, tu hai fatto questo Fauno vecchio e lasciatigli tutti i denti. Non sai tu che a' vecchi di tal età sempre ne manca qualcuno?'"), Condivi 1553, 11–12.
- See the summaries of Corti and Fusco 2006, 54–58; Cox-Rearick 2013.
- Inventory of the Bassetti collection, redacted October 21–27, 1699: ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 1026, c. 164.
- Frommel in Florence 1999, 33–34, no. 15.
- Cox-Rearick 2013, 325.
- Schober 1937, 83–93.
- Beschi 1983, 168n32; Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 312–13; Settis 1998, "Laocoonte di bronzo, Laocoonte di marmo," 133–34; Corti and Fusco 2006, 52–53. Apart from a cast preserved in Graz, Austria, this work resurfaced only in 2010, when it was sold at auction at Sotheby's in New York as part of an Austrian family collection. The sculpture has been on loan to the Art Institute of Chicago from 2012 to 2015 and 2016 to 2022.
- Document published in Corti and Fusco 2006, no. 110.
- We can infer that Lorenzo bought the marble group because a little over a week after the sale was proposed to Lorenzo one hundred ducats were paid to Giovanni Ciampolini, the Roman middleman mentioned by Luigi da Barberino as the person then owning this work; see the record published in Corti and Fusco 2006, 309.
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 52–55.
- Weil-Garris Brandt in Florence 1999, 300–307n39. The sculpture, on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, since 2009, is on loan from the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
- Paolucci in Florence 2013c, 386, no. 20. The sculpture, belonging to the reserves of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, has recently been returned to the Gallerie degli Uffizi, where it is now displayed in a gallery dedicated to ancient art and the garden of San Marco.
- Massinelli 1991, 125–26.
- Document cited by Corti and Fusco 2006, 309n112 ("fighuretta d'un putto che mostra circa a 10 anni, manchali le braccia e parte delle ghambe; la testa resta apicchata allo 'nbusto").
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 56, figs. 39–42.
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 141–43.
- Satzinger 1995, 160–65.
- Uccelli 1858, 94.
- See, for example, the description given by Vasari in *Ragionamenti*, composed in 1567: "Lorenzo aveva fatto fare il giardino ch'è ora in su la piazza di S. Marco, solamente perché lo teneva pieno di figure antiche di marmo . . . e tutte eccellenti."; see Vasari 1568/1878–85, 8:117–18: "Lorenzo had made a garden that is now on Piazza San Marco, only to fill it with ancient statue of marble . . . and all excellent."
- Elam 1992, 50–51; Elam in New York 2019, 120.
- Elam 1992, 64.
- Lives of Giuliano and Antonio da Sangallo, Vasari 1568/1878–85, 4:270.
- Corti and Fusco 2006, 193.
- For Rome, see Parisi Presicce, "Michelangelo a Roma: il dialogo con la scultura antica," in Rome 2014, 44–51; for other sculpture gardens in Italy and Europe, see Corti and Fusco 2006, 192–93.
- Baldini, "In the Shadow of Lorenzo the Magnificent: The Role of Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici," in Athens 2003, 278.

The *Adoration of the Magi* as Political Iconography

Cecilia Frosinini

Lorenzo, first-born son of Piero de' Medici, grandson of Cosimo the Elder, and heir to the family fortune, was born on January 1, 1449, and baptized on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany, in the church of San Marco. Given that baptism was conventionally expected to take place promptly after birth, usually within two days at most, it is possible that in Lorenzo's case this was deliberately delayed in order to coincide with the feast of the Magi, and was thus attuned to the spirit of the Medicean construct of identifying the family with these mysterious holy figures of the pagan world.

Popular Feast Days and Their Representation in Art

As was the case in many late-medieval cities, the Florentine year was punctuated by religious feasts that were used by the dominant oligarchy to enhance their power through complex modes of identification and substitution. There were numerous occurrences of public spectacles, associated with either religious celebrations or secular events, involving either chivalric and paramilitary processions or civic ceremonies, such as official receptions of illustrious guests. Above all, they included competitive games like the *pallio* (horse race), jousting, tournaments, feast days of patron saints and *sacre rappresentazioni* (pageants of sacred scenes) that involved the populace not only as spectators but as actors.

In Florence, a sense of these popular celebrations has been transmitted through a number of diaries and chronicles written between the second half of the fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries. In his *Cronica* of about 1472, Benedetto Dei lists eighteen festive events, including four different *pallii*, five *sacre rappresentazioni*, a joust, a game of *palla grossa* (an ancestor of soccer), four patronal feasts, and a secular one (carnival, recorded as “*fiesta delle mummie e delle maschere*,” or mummery and masquerades).¹ In 1451–52 Benedetto Dei himself held the role of “*festaiolo di San Giovanni*,” that is, an officer of the institution organizing the activities planned for the feast in question.

Some of these feasts were itinerant or processional, and wound their way around various parts of the city. An account of the *fiesta di San Giovanni* (honoring John the Baptist, the chief patron saint of Florence) is also given by Goro (Gregorio) Dati (1362–1435)—a silk merchant, politician, and chronicler—in his *Istorie fiorentine* (after 1409), with a description of the display of the finest products made by all the *arti* (guilds), which on that occasion included painted panels. This also underlines the civic character of the major Florentine religious feast.² The collective experience of these feasts must have given local and foreign spectators the impression that the city prospered in a perfect balance of material and spiritual values. Clear evidence of this demonstrative aspect, which was political in itself, appears in the narratives of Dati and Dei. The latter, for example, concludes his list of feasts with an exhortation to Italians of various places and visitors from other nations to compare what could be admired in Florence during these events with the experience of their own places of origin.³

Beyond the vivid descriptions of the chroniclers, these feasts and spectacles are echoed in a very significant way in painted sacred narratives—grand mural cycles and altarpieces—which from the early 1400s increasingly featured groups of bystanders who were actually real likenesses. This modernization of sacred history was certainly not far removed from the phenomenon of contemporary feasts, processions, and representations, which saw the direct participation of citizens and, in particular, the city's elite.

The inclusion of contemporary figures in painting found four types of expression, all connected with *sacre rappresentazioni* and festive street events in which ordinary people took part as actors or extras. The first of these, already well established, was the most traditional, with the donor present at the foot of the sacred image; the fifteenth century saw a true incorporation of such figures within the scene, although their individual identity was clearly maintained.

Then there were representations of social events, either real or symbolic, prototypically exemplified in the fourteenth century by the *Good Government* frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1338–39. The 1400s introduced emphatically recognizable figures in such scenes, set in realistic places.

A third type saw the appearance of contemporary individuals in the sacred narrative as bystanders, involved to varying degrees in the painted event, but—more importantly—often identifiable.

Finally, an individual identity could be superimposed on the sacred character: a *doppelgänger* typical of multiple theatrical approaches, widely used by the dominant elite to assert themselves under false pretenses.

An early example of all four types is provided in the work of Masaccio (1401–1428), who simultaneously expresses the various forms of inclusion and the conceptual distinctions behind each of these choices. For example, in the naturalistic portraits of the patrons of the *Trinity*, frescoed in the church of Santa Maria Novella, he transformed the traditional depiction of donors at the foot of the sacred scene into real, almost historical participation in this epiphany of the central mystery of the Christian faith.

In the lost *Sagra*, described in detail by Vasari⁴ and known through partial copies or true echoes in contemporary painting, Masaccio painted the consecration of the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, which had taken place in 1422. According to all the early sources, the fresco included portraits of numerous people of that period who had actually been present at the ceremony. The so-called *Libro di Antonio Billi* (written c. 1516/30) in fact refers to the work as “a most artful procession” (“*una processione con grande artificio*”),⁵ underlining its association with a *fiesta*, which evidently characterized many public events in Florence.

In the same church, the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, probably painted between 1424 and 1426, show many contemporary citizens appearing as actors in the stories of Saint Peter. The “treasure hunt” for portraits has led to the identification of several well-known individuals, including Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti, Donatello, and perhaps Masaccio himself, in a self-portrait next to his colleague Masolino.

Another instance takes us once again to Santa Maria del Carmine, where, according to Vasari, Masaccio went one step further, lending the features of a contemporary individual to a saint: the now-lost figure of Saint Paul, painted full length at

the entrance to a chapel “near the bell ropes,” had the recognizable features of Bartolo di Angiolino Angiolini, a well-known Florentine who had held important public offices, portrayed with “a truly awe-inspiring look” (“una terribilità tanto grande”).⁶

When a decade later Leon Battista Alberti, in his *De pictura* (*On Painting*, published in Latin in 1435 and in Italian in 1436), recommended that artists should have their sacred scenes include portraits of known people so as to enliven the narrative and prompt their beholders’ curiosity,⁷ he was no doubt referring to these works, which were already well known and appreciated, and he insisted on the public function of such representations, which became increasingly frequent in sacred art, in tandem with the establishment of politically inspired *feste*.

The Feast of the Magi and the Medici

The present exhibition includes two important paintings, one by Botticelli and the other by Cosimo Rosselli, of the *Adoration of the Magi*. Significantly, they are both displayed in the section of this volume dedicated to portraiture, underlining the propagandistic and personal goals increasingly reflected by this iconography in the quattrocento.

As one of the feasts and processions that lay at the heart of Florentine social life, the feast of the Magi began to take on an ever more important stature at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as we learn from early sources, especially the *priorista* Pagolo (Paolo) di Matteo Petriboni (c. 1394–1444). In January 1390 there is already a record of celebrations honoring the feast of the Magi, and the devotion to it appears to have been introduced to Florence by Baldassarre degli Ubriachi, a merchant, politician, and artist in the field of ivory objects. His ties to the subject of the three Magi were obviously based on the fact that his own name was that of one of the kings (Balthasar), but other, more complex reasons lay behind the spread and popularity throughout Florence of this veneration of the Magi. It may have been grounded in the legend that identified them as pilgrims, and thus particularly apt as tutelary figures for the traveling merchant class, which formed the city’s elite; and it was perhaps also associated with the explicitly lordly aspect of this form of observance, prompted by the numerous medieval legends that embellished the bare bones of the Gospel narrative.

The feast of the Magi centered itself within the system of Florentine religious celebrations, in which true liturgy was substituted by *sacre rappresentazioni* that soon became itinerant performances, emerging from churches and spreading into civic spaces and turning into expressions of popular rallies. Moreover, the procession of the Magi was not limited to the day of the Epiphany, replicating its distinctive event—a dramatization of the journey of the three kings—during other feasts, especially on the eve of the most important one of all, the *festa di San Giovanni*.

In the first surviving record, in 1390, mention is already made of the procession, proving that it was considered central to the feast of the Magi from the very beginning.⁸ Only a few years later, in 1408, the event was recognized by the governing *Signoria* as being of public interest, to the extent that it received offers of candles and tapers. The first references to a lay confraternity dedicated to the Magi comes in 1417, when the organization of the feast was financed by the Republic of Florence, given the event’s excessive cost.

However, the confraternity was not officially founded until September 19, 1426. From that moment on there are no further mentions of the church of Santa Maria Novella, where devotion to the Magi had originated, but rather the Dominican convent of San Marco, which from the start had been where the procession concluded with a representation of Bethlehem. The feast was so important, drawing so many spectators, that the streets along the procession’s path were punctuated by richly adorned stands and benches for the use of the city’s most influential people.

The involvement of the Medici in the activities of the Confraternity of the Magi begins with the displays organized as a medium for family propaganda in 1439. In that year, Cosimo’s brother Lorenzo wrote a letter requesting a costume for a man from the countryside whose role in the sacred performance was to impersonate the Armenian king’s ambassador to the emperor, thus providing clear evidence of Medici participation in the organization of the feast.⁹

In 1439 the procession of the Magi, with performances that took place in “*edifici*” (edifices), or mobile, ephemeral structures that were set up in various parts of the city, made a special impact during the Saint John’s Day celebrations held on the occasion of the arrival of Eastern dignitaries for the Council of Florence. It was this event that marked the definitive establishment of the Medici family on an international level too, and this milestone gains even greater importance if one bears in mind that it happened only five years after Cosimo’s return from exile to Florence (1434); it was Cosimo (with his extensive finances) who convinced Pope Eugenius IV to move the venue of the Church Council from Ferrara to Florence. It is clear, therefore, that the greatest significance was sought for every event connected to the council, such as the pope’s consecration of Florence Cathedral on March 25, 1436, immediately after the completion of the dome (albeit without its lantern): “towering above the sky, great enough to cover all the Tuscan people with its shadow,” as Alberti described it.¹⁰ The solemn public recognition of Cosimo on the occasion of this consecration is reflected in a story told by the poet Feo Belcari (1410–1484): indulgences for the remission of sins to souls in Purgatory, granted by the pope on special occasions, were extended from a period of five to ten years of grace thanks to the insistence of Cosimo.¹¹

Among the events worthy of note in these years, and which lent ever-increasing prominence to the public association of the Medici with the Confraternity of the Magi, was the consecration of the church of San Marco, the brotherhood’s meeting place. The ceremony took place in the presence of Pope Eugenius IV, the entire college of cardinals, numerous bishops, and prominent citizens of Florence on Epiphany Day 1443. The rights to the main chapel of the church had been acquired by Cosimo for 500 gold ducats from the preceding patrons, the Caponsacchi; he had entrusted the great architect Michelozzo (1396–1472), a loyal member of his entourage who had been with him during his exile in Padua and Venice, with the entire restructuring of the church and convent, which was probably begun in 1437. Within the convent building, Cosimo had reserved for himself a double cell for periods of meditation, with a representation of the Adoration of the Magi frescoed by the Dominican painter Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455). Among the figures following the Magi are some “Moorish” characters, who begin to make an appearance



Fig. 28. Fra Angelico, *Adoration of the Magi*, detail, c. 1440–41, fresco, cell 39, Museo di San Marco, Florence.

in Italy in this very period (the work is datable to 1440–41); but with respect to other paintings, here these characters are not only servants but also important dignitaries, and one of them holds an armillary sphere (fig. 28).

Over the high altar of the church stood the great quadrangular painting, also painted by Angelico, with a *sacra conversazione* that included the two Medici saints, Cosmas and Damian, depicted with the features of Cosimo and his son Piero (fig. 29; see Medici Family Tree). The shift from representing patrons to their identification as sacred figures was now complete. Soon enough, Florentine citizens in front of the altarpiece would have found themselves praying before the image of Cosimo and Piero, in a syncretism that fused the real and the supernatural.

Something similar was to occur a generation later with the so-called Sant’Ambrogio altarpiece now in the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, painted by Botticelli in about 1470 (fig. 30). In this *sacra conversazione*, too, the saints in the foreground kneeling at the feet of the Virgin are Cosmas and Damian, as in the San Marco altarpiece. But here Cosmas is a portrait of Lorenzo il Magnifico, turning toward the beholder, while Damian could be a portrait of his brother Giuliano.

It is significant that in 1446 the feast of the Magi on the Epiphany was reintroduced among the city’s celebrations by the government of Florence, at the behest of Cosimo the Elder, who was by now in a secure position of power through a form of crypto-*Signoria* government. In that year, he and his younger

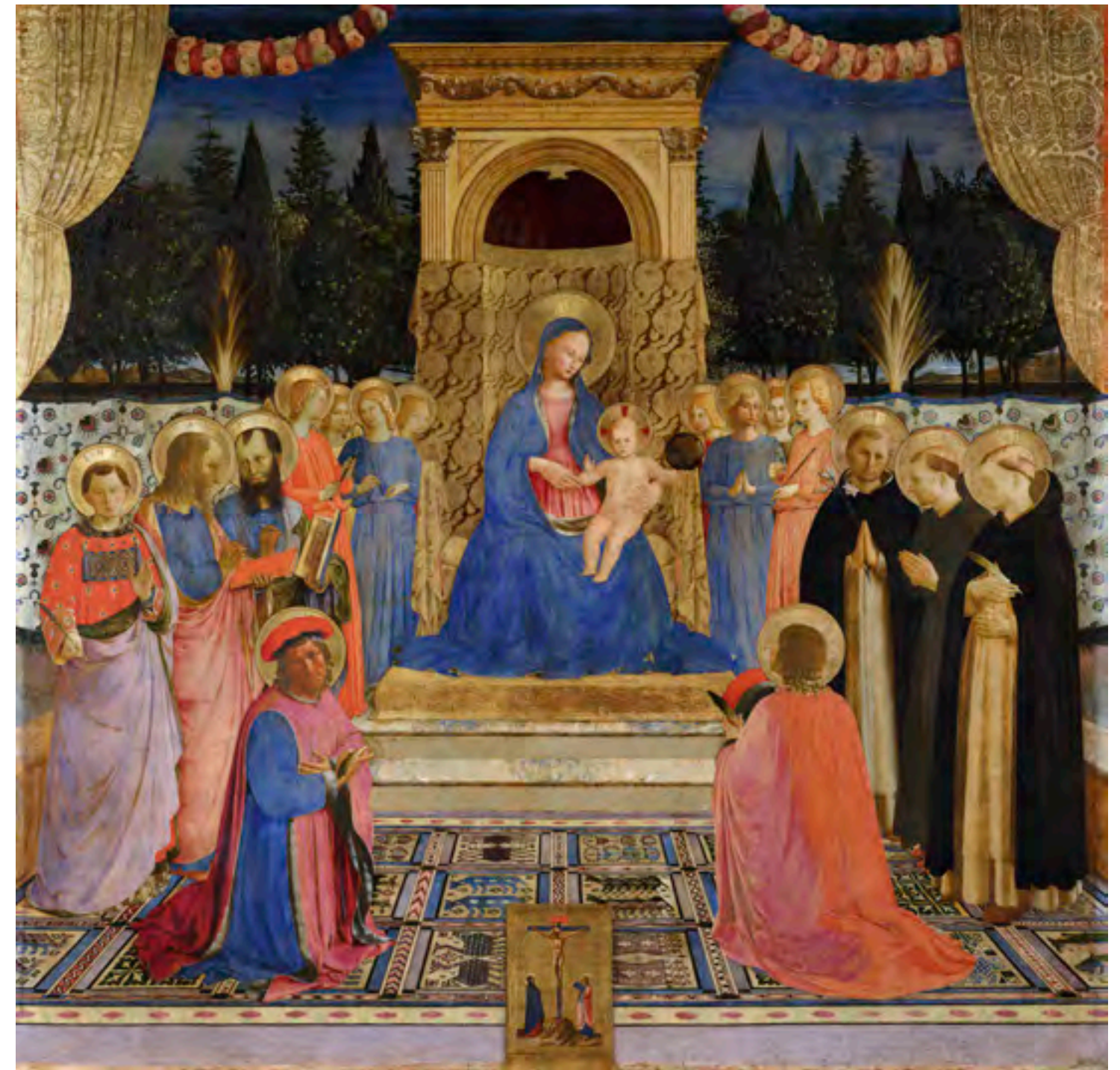


Fig. 29. Fra Angelico, *Pala di San Marco*, tempera on poplar panel, 91% × 89% in. (233.5 × 227 cm), Museo di San Marco, Florence.

son Giovanni were two of the ten *festaioli* in charge of the organization of the feast. These also included Michelozzo, certainly for the part relating to the so-called *ingegni*, or grand machinery that served to simulate apparitions, miracles, and ascensions. In the meantime, membership of the confraternity had increased: seven hundred horsemen were counted in the procession of 1446; almost all were of high social standing—thus making the Confraternity of the Magi one of the most powerful in the city.

In 1447 the city’s financing was more generous, which meant that with the addition of Medici sponsorship the brotherhood’s operations were ensured. Cosimo’s son Giovanni was again *festaiolo* on this occasion. Since the person who effectively ran the event could impersonate whichever character he liked, the Medici made a substantial investment. In adopting this approach, the family was following the strategy already used by other powerful Florentine clans between the end of the 1300s and the



Fig. 30. Sandro Botticelli, *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints Mary Magdalen, John the Baptist, Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Alexandria, Cosmas, and Damian* (Sant'Ambrogio altarpiece), c. 1470, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 66 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 76 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (170 × 194 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8657.

1430s, and which had clear ties to the feast of the Magi, if not to the confraternity itself. Consider, for example, the grandiloquent commission given by Palla Strozzi to Gentile da Fabriano for the *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece (1423) in the sacristy of Santa Trinita, a multipurpose space, as it was both the funerary chapel of the Strozzi family and a sort of semipublic library.¹² The altarpiece contains likenesses of the patrons as participants in the sacred events, and thus departs from the scheme of a normal altarpiece, becoming a form of representation (and thus display) of art and spectacle; but no one had yet embodied a patron in the figure of a saint.

In the early months of 1445 Cosimo had commissioned Michelozzo with the construction of his new palazzo (completed in 1459) on the Via Larga, the street that led to San Marco, and which was partly lined with Medici properties that were later demolished. As a special privilege granted by Pope Martin V in 1422, the palace had a large chapel in which Mass could be celebrated daily. The chapel's decoration was not begun until July 1459 with a cycle of frescoes painted by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1497), the closest pupil and collaborator of Fra Angelico.



Fig. 31. Chapel of the Magi, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence.



Fig. 32. Benozzo Gozzoli, *Journey of the Magi*, detail, 1459, fresco, Chapel of the Magi, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence.



Fig. 33. Benozzo Gozzoli, *Journey of the Magi*, detail with self-portrait, 1459, fresco, Chapel of the Magi, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence.

The sumptuous interior (fig. 31) has a floor made of inlaid white marble, gray granite, and green serpentine, culminating in a centrally placed grand disc of porphyry, with imperial symbolism that could scarcely have escaped anyone's notice, all of it material repurposed from ancient *spolia*.

Cosimo's wish was to have the walls represent the procession of the Magi, the very subject sponsored by the Medici probably since his return from exile in 1434, and the feast in which they had invested so much in both organization and production, not just financially but also and above all with regard to their own image and the spread of their crypto-noble role. The three kings are accompanied by a rich, exotic procession of men, horses, and other creatures, winding its way through a hilly landscape, as recounted in the ancient legend. Some of the faces in the cortege are of well-known, identifiable individuals including members of the family, allies, and friends. The three generations of the Medici can be recognized through emblems and physical resemblance: Cosimo, his sons (including Carlo, illegitimate but raised within the family) and three grandsons, Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Cosimino (fig. 32). There is also a self-portrait of Benozzo Gozzoli, who is recognizable thanks to the name on his cap (fig. 33).

The Chapel of the Magi, with its wealth of historical, political, and symbolic references (though over-didactically so) became the manifesto for Medici ambitions. Here the unprecedented phenomenon of appropriating a religious theme and turning a feast into a social paraliturgy by the most important family in the city reached its zenith. Even if the chapel was never opened to the public, it was frequented by ambassadors, papal legates, and great foreign dignitaries, and indeed Cosimo liked to receive them here, as was the case with Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Palazzo Medici was the true—albeit undeclared—locus of power in Florence.

In the same year as the frescoes were begun, 1459, the Sforza visit was marked by the first official appearance of ten-year-old Lorenzo at the head of a *brigata*, a band of young people from the Florentine elite who paraded and then joined in an *armeggeria* (a chivalric game with weapons) on the Via Larga. The pageant was followed by a chariot drawn by white horses with the first staging of a *Triumph of Love* in Florence. In reality, Lorenzo's precocious public appearance was an ostentation of power conveyed with apparent innocence through theatrical performance, and it anticipated the management of the public event by Piero, his father. After Cosimo's death in 1464 the running of the feast of the Magi passed to Piero, who was second to none in culture and desire for affirmation. In 1466 and then again in 1469, the feasts were used to smooth out internal social tensions and instability prompted by the death of the head of the family, and to assure non-Florentines that the city was united in the face of any possible attack.¹³

The cavalcade of the Magi in 1469 marks the entrance on the scene, as regards both public spectacle and politics, of Lorenzo il Magnifico, then twenty. He was presented as heir and future successor of his grandfather Cosimo at the helm of the Medici clan and of the city itself. What followed, one after another, could truly be called dynastic spectacles, with costly events produced with pomp and circumstance in the early part of the year. In addition to the feast of the Magi, the joust celebrating Lorenzo and the grand ceremony of his wedding took place in June: it was a weighty investment sought by Piero de' Medici to demonstrate the political and financial stability of the Medici and Florence.

Lorenzo: A Turning Point

The end of 1469, already a dramatically eventful year, saw the death of Piero de' Medici and the rise of Lorenzo, which led to a series of changes in the management of both political power—with no further need for dissimulation, unlike his predecessors—and with popular *feste*. Feasts now quickly began to lose their civic and republican character in favor of a more demagogic approach that aimed to obtain popular approval; this was also achieved through Lorenzo's own literary talents, which he used in crafting openly aristocratic content. He skillfully succeeded in providing entertainment for all social classes, neatly separating it from its old religious content. Now carnivals, jousts, games, and military parades were the order of the day. In particular, he organized activities aimed at the city's youth, and there exists an exemplary description of the carnival he sponsored in 1491, with his eleven-year-old son Giuliano, the future duc de Nemours, in the role of "*festaiolo*." Three beautiful luncheons ("tre belle colizioni") were organized for the boys, with "cialdoni," "berlingozzi" (baked sweets and cakes) and Trebbiano wine, and the reciting of a piece written by Lorenzo himself, who presided over the event.¹⁴

The truth of the matter was that the pageantry and luxury of these *feste* increasingly expanded the gap between social classes, relegating a substantial part of the population to the role of spectators, while the actual performative function was concentrated among ever fewer individuals.

In the meantime, Florence saw the spread of an entire iconographic constellation of Adorations of the Magi incorporating the Medici family and all its generations, with an unsettling transition from the living to the dead. These commissions from the Medici themselves, or from people paying tribute to them, were carried out by major artists.

Before 1445, Domenico Veneziano painted a tondo with the *Adoration of the Magi* (now in Berlin), in all likelihood for Piero "the Gouty." In about 1475, Sandro Botticelli created a painting of the same subject, financed by the wealthy Florentine banker Giovanni di Zanobi del Lama, a Medici acolyte, for his chapel in the church of Santa Maria Novella, with members of the first two generations of the Medici family—Cosimo, Piero, and Giovanni—impersonating the three Magi themselves (see no. 49).

In the same period, Cosimo Rosselli provided what may have been the most faithful representation of Medici processions beyond the private walls of the family palazzo, in a panel painting with a possible provenance from the Palazzo Vecchio and now in the Uffizi (see no. 50). Here the Medici appear more modestly, so to speak, among the bystanders, perhaps due to the possible embarrassment their depiction as Magi might have caused in a public forum. But here one sees another form of identification, now civic rather than personal: Florence, in the background, sits atop a hill like a new Jerusalem, adopting a theme that would very soon be used (and abused) by Girolamo Savonarola.

Another treatment of the subject is recorded in the posthumous inventory of Lorenzo's goods in 1492. Among the items in his bedroom was the large tondo with the *Adoration of the Magi* by Fra Angelico and Filippo Lippi (now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, inv. 1952.2.2), a work perhaps commissioned by Cosimo the Elder.

Finally, two paintings likely commissioned by the other Medici branch (that of the Popolani) for the monks of San Donato

a Scopeto and now both in the Uffizi—the unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* by Leonardo da Vinci (1481–82) and that of 1496 by Filippo Lippi, made to substitute Leonardo's never-completed panel—include likenesses of Pierfrancesco and his sons Lorenzo and Giovanni.

Lorenzo il Magnifico was a member of various confraternities other than that of the Magi; his presence is documented in the brotherhoods of San Domenico, Sant'Agnese, Gesù Pellegrino, the Compagnia de' Neri, Santa Maria della Croce al Tempio (whose statutes he reformed in 1488), and San Giovanni Evangelista. His intention with such involvements was to maintain popular favor, but these were only surface endorsements, bestowed while he used a parallel track to gradually strip confraternity activities of their original religious significance. One instance of a pro-Medici club was the so-called Buca di San Paolo, whose members included not only Lorenzo but many of his companions, such as the poet Agnolo Poliziano (1454–1494), who was also tutor to his sons, and Ser Nicolò di Michelozzo (1444–1526), son of the architect, who held the position of notary and secretary first to Piero and then Lorenzo de' Medici.

The Compagnia dei Magi, in line with Lorenzo's aspirations and interests, was close to contemporary Neoplatonism. Among the brotherhood's members were prominent figures in the Medici cultural circle, such as the humanist scholar Cristoforo Landino (1424–1498), the poet Luigi Pulci (1432–1484), and the Greek scholar and historian Donato Acciaiuoli (1429–1478). The philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), founder of the Florentine Neoplatonic Academy, appears to have been invited to preach on the progress of the devout individual—imitating that of the Magi—toward the glory and bliss of paradise. Indeed, Ficino wrote his sermon *De stella magorum* (1482) making use of certain themes such as the ancient wisdom (*prisca theologia*) of the Chaldeans possessed by the Magi, who were regarded as the first astrologers.

For Lorenzo, notwithstanding his utilitarian policy toward Florentine confraternities, the brotherhood of the Magi remained what could be called a family affair. Beyond the academic slant he sought to give it, elevating its intellectual activities, evidence of this policy appears on two other occasions. In 1478, after the Pazzi conspiracy, in which his brother Giuliano was assassinated, Lorenzo suspended all the confraternity's public events as a sign of mourning, and maintained this arrangement for a decade.

Finally, when Lorenzo himself died at Careggi on April 7, 1492, his body was moved, before the official funeral, to the "chonpagnia di San Marco,"¹⁵ that is, the Confraternity of the Magi, thus closing the circle of his life with a pause before his fellow brothers. He had been one of them from the moment of his baptism, celebrated in San Marco, right up to the funeral wake held in the brotherhood based in that church.

NOTES

- 1 Dei 1984, 92–93.
- 2 Dati 1408/1735, 85.
- 3 "O Roman, Neapolitan, Venetian, Milanese, Genoese, Sieneze, Ferrarese, Lucchese or any other Italian: just try to compete with these festivals and this city of Florence! Or even any Levantine, Syrian, Cypriot, Rhodian, Sicilian, Marchigian, or Romagnole! Tell me of another city that has a quarter of such festivities!" ("O romano, o napoletano, o viniziano, o milanese, o genovese, e sanese, o ferarese, o lucchese, e ogni altro italiano: fare paraone a dette chose e a detta città fiorentina! Ed exiandio o levantino, o soriano, o cipriotto, o rodigiano, o ciciliano, o marchiano o romagniatto! E sappiate mi rachontare un'altra città che vi si faccia la quarta parte di questo"); see note 1.
- 4 "He portrayed therein countless citizens in mantles and hoods, following the procession, including Filippo di Ser Brunellesco in wooden clogs, Donatello, Masolino da Panicale, . . . Antonio Brancacci, who had him paint the chapel, Niccolò da Uzzano, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, and Bartolomeo Valori. . . . He also portrayed Lorenzo Ridolfi, who at that time was the Florentine Republic's ambassador in Venice" ("E vi ritrasse infinito numero di cittadini in mantello et in cappuccio, che vanno dietro a la processione; fra i quali fece Filippo di Ser Brunellesco in zoccoli, Donatello, Masolino da Panicale . . . , Antonio Brancacci, che gli fece far la cappella, Niccolò da Uzzano, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, Bartolomeo Valori il vecchio. . . . Ritrassevi similmente Lorenzo Ridolfi, che in que' tempi era ambasciadore per la Repubblica fiorentina a Vinezia").
- 5 Antonio Billi 1892.
- 6 Cited in both editions of the *Lives*, Vasari 1550 and Vasari 1568: Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, Florence, 1966–97, 3:108.
- 7 Alberti 1485/1833, book 3, chapter 56: "where the face of some well-known and worthy individual appears in a narrative, even though there might be other more appealing and perfectly described figures, that well-known face will attract the eyes of anyone looking at the story" ("ove poi che in una storia sarà uno viso di qualche conosciuto e degno uomo, bene che ivi sieno altre figure di arte molto più che questa perfette e grate, pure quel viso conosciuto a sé imprima trarrà tutti gli occhi di chi la storia riguardi").
- 8 Anonymous diary, 1381–1401, cited by Hatfield 1970a, appendix 1, 144.
- 9 Kent, 1987, 10.
- 10 "erta sopra e cieli, ampla da coprire con sua ombra tucti e popoli toscani"; Alberti 1485/1833, from the prologue with the dedication to Filippo Brunelleschi.
- 11 Saalman 1980, 276.
- 12 da Bisticci 1976, 2:146–47.
- 13 *Libri de temporibus suis*, written by the Dominican theologian Fra Giovanni di Carlo between 1480 and 1482; cited in Hatfield 1970a, doc. 9b, appendix, 148–51.
- 14 *Ricordanze* 1906, 15–16.
- 15 De' Rossi 1786, 274–75.

Botticelli's Faces

Carl Brandon Strehlke

Turning right on entering the main portal of Santa Maria Novella in Florence in the late 1470s, the visitor would be greeted by a marble pavilion framing Sandro Botticelli's lunette fresco of the Virgin kneeling in prayer before the newborn baby Jesus with a toddler John the Baptist making a symbolic appearance as he saunters in from the side. Our churchgoer would have to get close to view the painting on the altar below, which depicts the Gospel event commemorated eleven days after Jesus's birth, called the Epiphany or the Adoration of the Magi. One of the centerpieces of the present exhibition, the painting is now in the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence (no. 49).¹ Not only are its overall dimensions much smaller than the fresco, the figures are too. Instead of four actors plus ox and ass, there are now thirty-nine, plus two horses, all in a style so refined that the lunette seems out of place.

Let's call the visitor Smeralda Donati (fig. 34). She is in her thirties, married to Viviano Brandini, and a mother of a sixteen-year-old apprentice goldsmith. She heard that the panel was full of portraits, a veritable panoply of Medici power. As it was set in a magnificent group of intarsia panels, she would have to step right up to the altar table to see the cavalcade of faces. But it was easier to make sure that no friars were watching her than to get into the Medici palace to see the walls of the family chapel frescoed by Benozzo Gozzoli in 1459 with the clan and their retainers dressed in their finest as part of the regal retinues. There, the founder of the dynasty, Cosimo the Elder, rides a brown mule next to his son Piero on a white mount (see fig. 32 and Medici Family Tree). Walking besides them is a Black servant like the ones—free and enslaved—then attached to many Florentine households and possibly also the serving woman accompanying Smeralda.

In the Botticelli, the two women easily recognize Cosimo, who had died in 1464. Here he is not himself, but a king. In strict profile, he impersonates the eldest magus, Melchior, kneeling before the Virgin, grasping the babe's feet. The two other Magi, Caspar and Balthasar, are also on their knees. They stare at each other with their covered golden goblets of frankincense and myrrh in hand. Caspar, with jet-black hair, loose jawl, and a jagged profile, must be Piero, who died in 1469. If Smeralda had seen the frescoes in the Medici palace or the men themselves, she would have realized that their features look nothing like how Gozzoli painted them. The personages in the frescoes resemble the naturalistic portraits that Italian merchants began bringing home from Bruges in the 1430s and continued to do so in the following decades. If she had been able to take a glimpse at the high altarpiece of San Marco, which was not accessible to women, she would have seen that even Fra Angelico had painted Saint Cosmas as if it were simply a portrait of the real Cosimo rather than a holy man whom no one knew from a millennium before.

In the *Adoration*, Balthasar is a beautiful youth with serious mien. That cannot be Cosimo's other son, Giovanni, who died before his father, even though that has been his identity ever since Giorgio Vasari described the picture in his 1568 *Life of Botticelli*. It's certainly Lorenzo. Yes, he is prettified, but look long enough,



Fig. 34. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Woman*, identified as Smeralda Brandini, c. 1470–75, tempera on panel, 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (81.1 × 41 cm), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acc. no. CAI.100.



Fig. 35. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, detail with two youths, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 882. See no. 49.

and he has that prominent Medici jaw. Piero and he engage in a silent conversation, each touching their chests with gestures of “me” and “you.” The power is being passed down to Lorenzo. Carefully groomed for it, he accepts the responsibility. Here we have the de facto head of the city.

How about his brother, Giuliano, who was four years younger? In 1475 he was the golden youth of the moment. In January he won a jousting trophy riding into the lists with a horse sent from the duke of Urbino. At the victory ceremony, he was presented with Orso, a magnificent steed sent by the king of Naples. Is Giuliano that puff-chested youth on the far left next to the two horses, leaning on his sword (fig. 35)? Another youth, hanging on his shoulders, is sometimes improbably identified as the poet Angelo Poliziano, who wrote the *Stanze per la giostra*, a poem about the tournament. Smeralda would have seen plenty of those bantering types in the square before the church. Indeed, they can be found on any Florentine street today in the same pose—kids hanging out with nothing much to do. The serious-looking man next to them seems to say: “be less full of yourselves.” Does he point to the Holy Family or the three generations of the Medici portrayed as the kings? Giuliano has got to be with the rest of the clan. Indeed, there he is the man with the flat jet-black hair depicted by himself and in the most pensive of poses (fig. 36). Because he stands out from the crowd like no one else in picture, he has often been considered Lorenzo himself.

Could Lama’s *Adoration* have been finished after April 26, 1478, when Giuliano was killed in the cathedral during Sunday Mass in a plot known as the Pazzi conspiracy? Lorenzo narrowly escaped and took ruthless revenge against the perpetrators. On July 21 Botticelli was paid for having frescoed over a doorway of the Palazzo Vecchio portraits of the executed plotters spinning in their nooses. Lorenzo also ensured his brother would not be forgotten. Botticelli fixed his image in a memorial portrait, of which the primary version is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (fig. 37), depicting a Giuliano that is identical in features and mien as his doppelgänger in the *Adoration*.

Strategically placed behind Giuliano in the *Adoration* and looking out at the viewer is the picture’s patron, Guasparre di Zanobi del Lama. He was an official of the bankers’ guild (Arte del Cambio), who got the rights to the chapel in 1469, when he was about fifty-eight years old. The painting is usually dated before January 1476 because that year Lama was fined and expelled from the guild for fraud. However, he was never exiled and he may have wished through this painting to suggest a loyalty to the Medici. There is no reason why it must date before his disgrace.

Besides Lama, the only other one turning outward is the man at the far right with penetrating gray-green eyes (see fig. 2). Because of his stance, he seems much taller than any of the other figures, and except for the Virgin, he is the only true blond. He has been identified as the artist, but there are no other images of him to be sure of this. The woodcut of Botticelli illustrating his biography in Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives* (1568) comes from another source and shows an older man. If a self-portrait, Botticelli is clearly lining himself up with Florentine artistic precedents, as the portrait mirrors that of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, on the other side of town (fig. 38). Gozzoli had also placed himself in the train of the magi in the Palazzo Medici, but in his flat-footed way, he signed his name

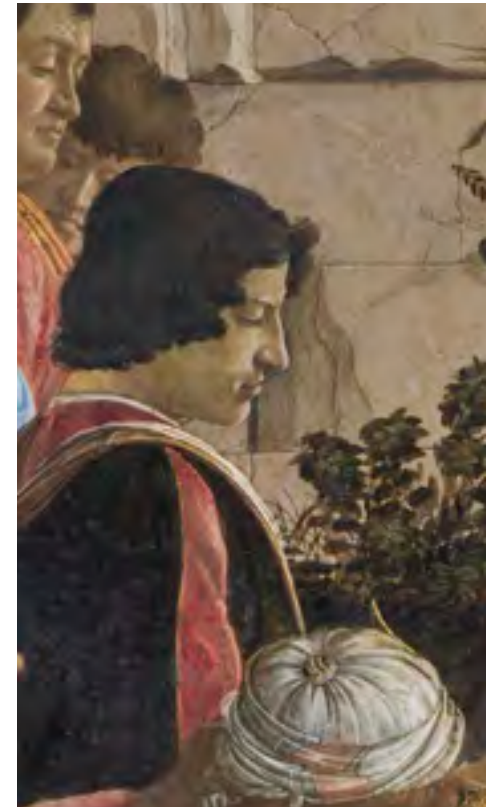


Fig. 36. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, detail, reversed, figure identified here as Giuliano de’ Medici, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 882. See no. 49.



Fig. 37. Sandro Botticelli, *Giuliano de’ Medici*, 1478/80, tempera on panel, 29¾ × 20¼ in. (75.5 × 52.5 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, acc. no. 1952.5.56.



Fig. 38. Masaccio, *Enthronement of Saint Peter at Antioch*, detail with Masaccio, Leon Battista Alberti, and Filippo Brunelleschi, 1425–26, fresco, Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.

in gold on his red cap so there could be no mistaken identities (see fig. 33). Botticelli's master, Fra Filippo Lippi, painted his self-portrait in the *Coronation of the Virgin* for the high altar of Sant' Ambrogio, so in the *Adoration*—if the figure indeed depicts Botticelli—the artist was mirroring his teacher. Lippi portrayed himself with his head resting on his hand, whereas Botticelli enveloped his hands in the long yellowish cloak that is reminiscent of the robes that Renaissance painters often put on biblical personages. The waves of drapery are similar to the voluminous cape of the humanist figure about to be drowned in Uccello's famous fresco of the *Deluge* in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella.

The Brancacci cycle had been populated with contemporary portraits, but as its patron, Felice Brancacci, had opposed the Medici and been exiled, any that had been of the Brancacci or their allies had been purposively destroyed when in 1458, the Florentine government, then under Medici control, ordered all emblems of enemy families be removed. Botticelli would have first known the fresco with the portraits chiseled out and must have tried to fill them in, perhaps by studying another (now lost) fresco by Masaccio in the convent's cloister known as the *Sagra*, in which the leading members of the city had been portrayed in public procession. Power plays against works of art must have been deeply disturbing to him, but his self-portrait in the *Adoration* proclaims not only his arrival on the scene and his placement in a revered tradition, but his alliance with the Medici.

Our Smeralda Donati might have noted that the Virgin was the only woman in the painting. This was not the opportunity to see Medici women: Contessina de' Bardi, Cosimo's wife, who died in October 1473, or Piero's Lucrezia de' Tornabuoni, or Lorenzo's Clarice Orsini. Neither are Lorenzo and Giuliano's sisters, Maria, Bianca, and Nannina, there. This is an all-male world, but it represents two sides of that world: three generations of serious statesmen on the right and the golden youths of jousts and girl-chasing on the left. A drawing exists of the two boys on the far left in which their heads are only sketched in, suggesting that the artist delineated their features on separate sheets as well as perhaps in independent portraits like the youth depicted in the Galleria Palatina (no. 52). That teenager is anonymous to us now, but undoubtedly Botticelli's homoerotic sensibilities for male beauty give a particular charge to the depiction. The boy is fixed in the flowering of his youth; male heads endowed with the confidence of adolescent swagger become a trope in Florentine portraiture for many generations. The imagery reflects the opening of Lorenzo de' Medici's ballad celebrating carefree youth:

Youth, 'tis so beautiful
But it flees fast
You want some fun, go right ahead
Tomorrow there's no telling²

Much of Lorenzo's early poetry, which he started writing as a teenager, was composed for his *brigata*, an informal gathering of youths who hung out together, hosted parties, played pranks, drank too much, and were obsessed with the opposite sex. The *Simposio, ovvero i Beoni* has eighteen lines on Botticelli's heavy drinking, clearly indicating that he was part of that inner circle although of middling class and a painter.³ In the long-standing fluid manner of Florentine society, artistic talent trumped humbler



Fig. 39. Sandro Botticelli, *Youth with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder*, c. 1470–75, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, gilded stucco, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (57.5 × 44 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1488.

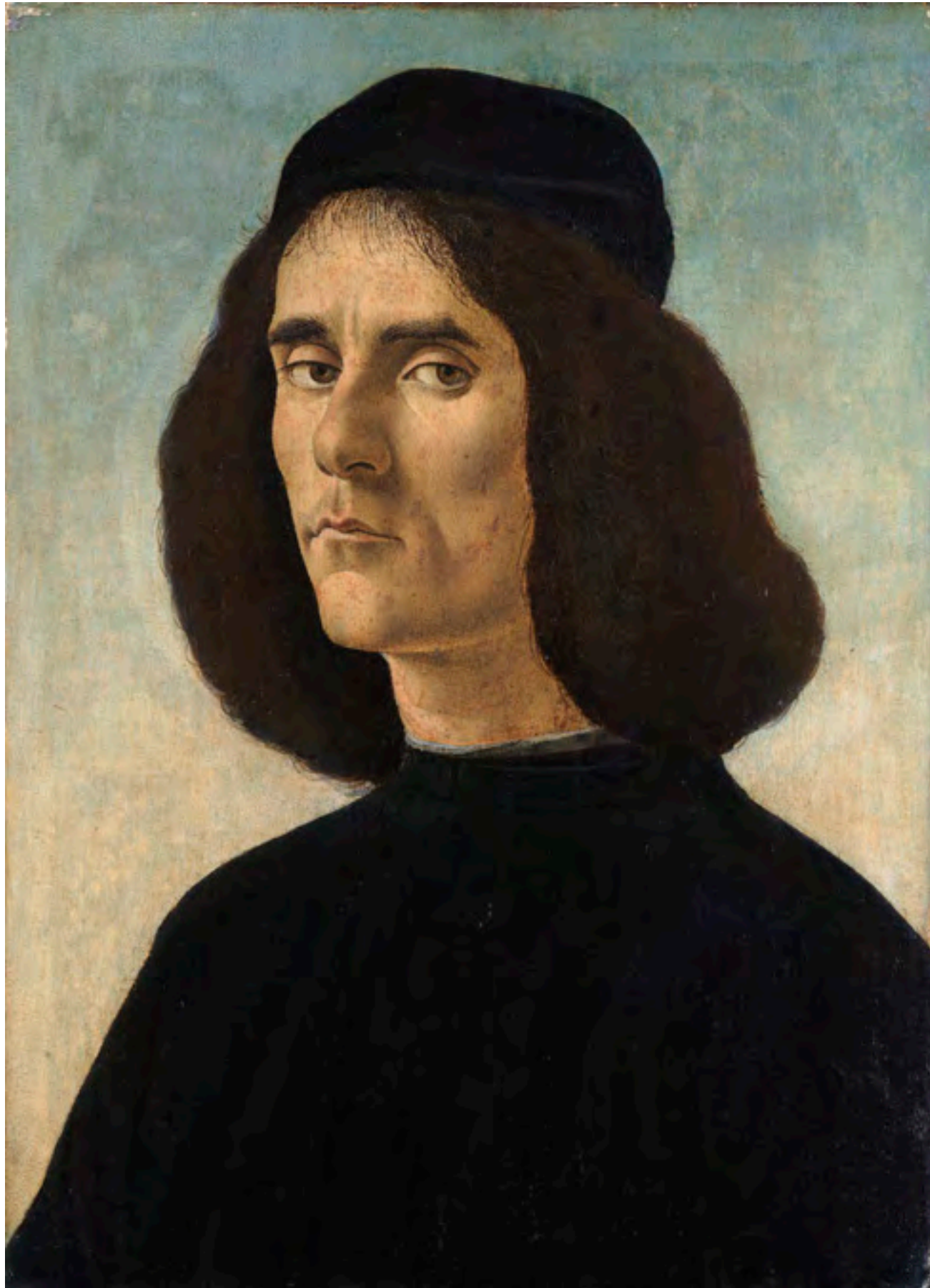


Fig. 40. Sandro Botticelli, *Michele Marullo*, c. 1500, tempera on panel, transferred to canvas, 19¼ × 13¾ in. (49 × 35 cm), Guardans-Cambó Collection, on deposit Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona.

origins. The poet-revelers allied themselves with real poets like Luigi Pulci and Angelo Poliziano, and Lorenzo's love poetry was firmly anchored in the Florentine tradition of the *dolce stil nuovo* of Dante and the conventions for love verse established by Petrarch.

No real woman could probably hold up to the idealization of the written verses, but in Lucrezia Donati, Lorenzo's youthful ardor, we have a flesh-and-blood woman who inspired poetic, physical, and spiritual longing in Lorenzo.⁴ Her husband, Niccolò Ardinghelli, was often away on business. Lucrezia became the muse of Lorenzo's *brigata*, which in 1466—already a year into her marriage—even organized a celebration in her honor in the Sala del Papa in the convent of Santa Maria Novella. Lorenzo could not attend because he had been sent on a diplomatic mission to Rome by his father. In 1469, the year of Lorenzo's marriage, he had gone into a joust in Piazza Santa Croce bearing Donati's standard, painted by Andrea del Verrocchio, in which the figure of nymph may have borne her idealized features. A drawing in the Gallerie degli Uffizi shows a similar banner, and a head study in the British Museum, London, seems to be of the same woman.⁵ The design was easily adaptable, as is evident by its appearance in reverse in *Fortitude*, also in the Uffizi, that Botticelli painted in 1470 for the audience hall of the Tribunale della Mercanzia (the commercial court).

Like Lorenzo de' Medici, his brother Giuliano went into his joust bearing the standard of a lady-love. Painted by Botticelli, it depicted Pallas Athena, the same goddess as in Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1). She was painted in the image of Giuliano's muse Simonetta Vespucci, a Genoese noblewoman from the house of Cattaneo, whose grace enchanted the Florentine *brigata* of that day. Simonetta's features were as elusive as Lucrezia's—as indeed are those of other objects of Florentine love poetry, like Dante's Beatrice or Petrarch's Laura. The women were undoubtedly idealized. Botticelli's pennant is lost, but the drawings and cartoons that Botticelli had used for it were kept as working tools for other projects so that a near copy of it appears in a tapestry (fig. 2.5, private collection) woven after 1491 for a French client, and in two works from the mid-1480s: a drawing showing a female profile on one side and Pallas Athena on the other (fig. 2.6, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), and the famous panel of an allegorical female figure, invariably known as the *Bella Simonetta* (Städel Museum, Frankfurt-am-Main).

Even for his portraits of men, Botticelli did not abandon the common workshop practice of reusing drawings and cartoons to create new images. The process is obvious in the repeated portraits of the dead Giuliano de' Medici. Another good example is the *Youth with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder* (fig. 39). It probably represents a goldsmith displaying his work and also his loyalty to the Medici.⁶ Take away the impressive long hair and his face is based on the same drawing as the supposed self-portrait of Botticelli in the *Adoration*, down to the cleft in the chin, the cast of the eyes, and the sitter's distinct proper right profile. Twenty years later the same outlines were used for the head of Michele Marullo (fig. 40). Why not soften the features a bit and reemploy the head for a woman? This is what Botticelli did for the female portrait (see fig. 34) in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Actual individual portraits of the Medici lady-loves Lucrezia Donati and Simonetta Vespucci do not exist. Would they have turned out to be like the London portrait that, based on an



Fig. 41. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Nera Corsi Sassetti*, detail, 1485–86, fresco, Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence.



Fig. 42. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule*, detail with Angelo Poliziano, 1485–86, fresco, Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence.

inscription on the windowsill, is identified as our Smeralda Donati? Born around 1439, Smeralda must have been kin to Lucrezia, but exactly how is not known. The painting shows a relatively mature woman. She greets the viewer at an open window in her day clothes and in her personal space in a private loggia off a chamber of her house. She has opened the shutter and steadies herself with a hand against the casement. It has a touching intimacy that the idealized portraits were incapable of achieving and cleverly subverts the double standard for portraits of women, even if the male portraits can be just as idealized. It was rare that Botticelli had to deal with the specificity of an actual face, as he did for Federico di Montefeltro when he provided a cartoon of the duke's features for the intarsia of the studiolo in Urbino. Otherwise, Botticelli is almost incapable of not beautifying his men. Compare the memorial portrait of Giuliano with the medal that Bartolomeo di Giovanni struck commemorating the Pazzi conspiracy. There, the Medici brothers look like thugs.

We started with the *Adoration of the Magi*, hardly mentioning that it was a religious picture, because it seems more like a dynastic manifesto that celebrated the passage of power from one generation to the next. This was not only a Medici obsession. Fra Angelico's *Deposition from the Cross* (Museo di San Marco, Florence) for the Strozzi family chapel in Santa Trinita showed Lorenzo Strozzi at the foot of the cross and his father Palla holding symbols of the Passion.⁷ The younger Strozzi had just gotten married after having won a jousting trophy. In that same chapel, there was Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi*, in which portrait-like depictions of the Strozzi family were included in the three kings' retinues just as in Gozzoli and Botticelli. Before the Medici, the Strozzi had been the leading family of Florence and its richest. They had also been the principal rivals of Cosimo de' Medici, who in a traumatic political upset had its leading members exiled. Cosimo realized the potency of the Strozzi artistic commissions and picked up on the theme of the Adoration of the Magi for including portraits of his own regime in the family palace.

Managers of the Medici banking operations, Francesco Sassetti and Giovanni Tornabuoni, imitated their employers' example by having Domenico Ghirlandaio populate the frescoes of their chapels in Santa Trinita and Santa Maria Novella with portraits. Ghirlandaio ran the other large workshop in Florence at the time of Botticelli. His clients were much less misogynistic than the Medici in that female family members were depicted. In both chapels, there are portraits of the patrons and their wives (fig. 41). In the Tornabuoni Chapel, identifiable women accompany the Virgin and Saint Elizabeth in the *Visitation* and assist in the *Birth of the Virgin* as if they were in the richly adorned chambers of their own homes. Ghirlandaio set several scenes of the Sassetti cycle in Florentine public spaces, and his self-portrait shows up among a group of men witnessing a posthumous miracle of Saint Francis in the square in front of the church. It is a portrait of the city and of its leading citizens. Compare Ghirlandaio's heads, such as that of the poet Poliziano (fig. 42) with those by Botticelli in the *Adoration*. The fresco dates to the mid-1480s, about a decade after the Botticelli, but the specificity of the depiction, with Poliziano's distinct nose, haircut, and beard stubble—indicative of Ghirlandaio's interest in Netherlandish portraiture—could not be further from Botticelli's tendency toward idealization and his bad habit of reusing cartoons even for portraits. Exceptions

to his beautifying impulses are relatively few, particularly in his early production. One surviving example is the *Male Portrait* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, which has a summary architectural setting and a face in movement with arched profile.

Botticelli underwent a more reflective period in the 1490s, possibly in response to political events: the preaching of the mesmerizing Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, the death of the artist's patron Lorenzo de' Medici (1492), the exile of the Medici (1494), and the execution of Savonarola (1498). Botticelli's brother was a close follower of the friar; it seems the painter was as well, even if he had probably seen some of his works go up in flames in Savonarola's bonfire of vanities.

In the early 1500s Botticelli painted two male portraits that seem to reflect this changed atmosphere: Michele Marullo (fig. 42), who died in a drowning accident in 1500, and Lorenzo de' Lorenzi (Philadelphia Museum of Art), a medical professor who committed suicide in 1502.⁸ They were probably posthumous commissions by the sitters' widows. The tragic deaths made the artist confront realities that could not be completely exorcized through prettifying. The unkempt image of Marullo, a wild adventurer and poet, reaches the same psychological intensity as the woman in the picture in London. In the female portrait, her character is conveyed less by actual facial expression and physical verisimilitude than her position within the domestic architectural setting. Despite using an earlier scheme for the outlines of Marullo's face, Botticelli conveyed its power through the silhouette against the background and the intense gaze of the eyes in the manner of Antonello da Messina, Italy's greatest portraitist of that time, whose works for Venetian and Sicilian clients the Florentine must have somehow seen.

We must conclude this essay by asking an art-historical question that could be applied to all of Botticelli's art, not only his portraiture. Are changes in his style reactions to the pressures of a society in tumult or are they responses to looking at the art of colleagues from both inside and outside of Florence?

NOTES

- 1 For the portraits, see Hatfield 1976. On the Lama Chapel, see Giovanni Giura, "La seconda età della pittura in Santa Maria Novella," in De Marchi 2016, 140–43. For Botticelli as a portraitist, see Patrizia Zambrano, "Sandro Botticelli and the Birth of Modern Portraiture," in Debenedetti and Elam 2019, 10–35.
- 2 Author's translation. For the original, Attilio Simioni in *Medici 1913–14*, 2:249.
- 3 Chapter 6, lines 58–75. Attilio Simioni in *Medici 1913–14*, 2:180–81.
- 4 On Lorenzo's poetry for Lucrezia, see Dempsey 1992, esp. chapters 3 and 4.
- 5 The drawing (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 212 E), attributed to Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci, may have been for the 1475 joust. See Dempsey 1992, 136; and Carmen Bambach in *Florence 2019*, 192.
- 6 On the possible sitter, see Nicoletta Pons in *Paris and Florence 2003–4*, no. 34, 220–23.
- 7 Strehlke, "From Nofri Strozzi to Lorenzo di Palla Strozzi: The Taste of the Florentine Oligarchy, 1417–1438," in Pasut and Tripps 2008, 169–76.
- 8 Strehlke 2019.

CATALOGUE



1

Art *all'antica*: Virtue, Passion, and Pleasure

During the Renaissance, particularly in Florence, where the intellectuals that populated the court of Lorenzo il Magnifico had a precise aim of giving a new life to ancient Greek philosophy, pagan subjects were charged with new meanings, interpreted as moral examples, and infused with complex allegorical symbolism.

The focus of this section is one of Botticelli's most iconic paintings, *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1), which perfectly embodies this characteristic attitude. In fact, it represents the pagan goddess Pallas/Minerva, who stands for reason and feminine wisdom, taming the centaur, the mythological lascivious half man-half horse who symbolizes here male aggressiveness and base instincts. The preparatory drawing depicting the goddess, which was pricked to transfer the design to another support, constitutes a very precious testimony of the artist's creative processes and methods (no. 2), whereas a sculpture like the splendid Minneapolis *Dancing Faun* (first century CE, no. 4) might have been among the models from which Botticelli took inspiration for the impressive six-pack abdomen of his centaur and its slightly twisted pose. The ancient marble *Centaur* from the Gallerie degli Uffizi, dating from the second century CE (no. 3), shows the rediscovery of antiquity as a source for themes, figures, and forms, including inspiration for less elevated, fantastical subjects.

For the set of values of the time, even Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, would embody not only physical perfection, but moral perfection as well. Her body, often shown only lightly covered, would have been seen as a mirror of spiritual enlightenment or as an example of detachment from worldly needs. Lorenzo di Credi's *Venus*, who modestly tries to cover her breast (no. 10), offers a Renaissance version of the ancient Greek type of the *Venus pudica* (Venus of modesty), to which Botticelli also looked when creating his famous *Birth of Venus* (Gallerie degli Uffizi). A statue such as the *Crouching Aphrodite* (second century CE, no. 9) would have offered fifteenth-century artists an ingenious solution to hide nudity while capturing the physical beauty of the female form. Sometimes Renaissance painters and sculptors had direct access to antiquities, which were a source of cultural inspiration; other times their knowledge of ancient art was mediated through drawings, prints, or the works of other artists. The ancient Roman marble *Spinario* (no. 5), or the boy pulling a thorn from his foot, was a well-known model that was copied and referenced throughout the centuries. Botticelli shows his fascination with the subject in a delicately highlighted drawing (no. 6).

—Roberta Bartoli

Sandro Botticelli

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

***Pallas and the Centaur*, c. 1482**

Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on canvas, 81½ × 58¼ in. (207 × 148 cm)
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, Inv. Depositi no. 29

PROVENANCE: Palazzo Medici on Via Larga of Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Florence (1516 inv. "la figura con una minerva e j° centauro"; "la Figura con una minerva e centauro in tela e asse drito"); Medici Villa di Castello, Florence (since c. 1540; 1598 inv. ["nel salone del palazzo vecchio" of the villa], 1638 inv., 1649 inv. [c. 32], 1761 inv.); Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (1830–1922); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since 1922; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ridolfi 1895, 1–5; Berenson 1895, 469–75; Frothingham 1908, 438–44; Horne 1908, 159–63, app. 2, 349–50, docs. XVI–XVII; Gombrich 1945, 52–53; Shearman 1975, 12–19; Smith 1975, 35–37; Meltzoff 1987, 168–73; Lightbown 1989, 146–52; Acidini Luchinat 2001, 166–70; Pons in Paris and Florence 2003–4a, 32–37; 238–43, no. 39; Paris and Florence 2003–4b, 32–34; Pons in Paris and Florence 2003–4b, 122–27, no. 11; Cecchi 2005, 200–205; Deimling in Hatfield 2009, 63–104; Frankfurt 2009, 82, 214–17, no. 26; Poletti in Acidini 2009, 138; Sbaraglia 2013, 295–310; Rošner and Roth 2017, 115–43; Cheney 2020, 187–216.

Sandro Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* is a large-scale tempera painting depicting a maiden warrior halting a centaur before a stone gate and meandering coastline. The exact identity of the two figures, however, remains a mystery. When the painting was rediscovered in 1895 at the Palazzo Pitti, it was identified by Enrico Ridolfi as *Pallas and the Centaur* based on Giorgio Vasari's description of a 1475 tournament standard designed by Botticelli for Giuliano de' Medici (Ridolfi 1895, 1–5). A 1516 inventory similarly refers to the figures in the painting as "Minerva and the centaur." The maiden warrior's attributes, however, do not align perfectly with those of Pallas Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and warfare, who traditionally carries a Medusa-emblazoned shield and pointed spear. A new identity for Botticelli's maiden was proposed in 1975 when the 1498 inventory of the Medici Palace, owned by Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, was discovered.

The 1498 inventory identifies the painting's figures as Camilla and a satyr and locates it in a room adjacent to the chamber of Lorenzo, above a door that leads into an antechamber ("Uno quadro di lignamo di supra l'usso di

l'antichamara nel quale è depinto Chamilo con uno satilo, est.–l. 40–." Shearman 1975, 25). This inventory also lists Botticelli's *Primavera* (see fig. 10) as hanging above a *lettuccio*, or daybed, in the same room. Although the compiler of the inventory misidentifies the centaur as a satyr, and the placement of such a tall vertical painting above a door is unusual, the identification of the female as Camilla is intriguing. As John Shearman noted, Camilla was a virgin warrior princess, described in Virgil's *Aeneid*, who fought bravely in the Trojan war and carried "the pastoral myrtle tipped with steel" and "a stout battle axe" (Shearman 1975, 18–19; Virgil 1918, 58–59, 280–81). Furthermore, as revealed by Barbara Deimling, Camilla was a popular heroine in Florence during the 1470s and 1480s, when numerous commentaries were written on Virgil's *Aeneid* (Deimling 2009, 63–104). Cristoforo Landino, for example, upholds the Volscian princess as a decorated, swift, and noble warrior dedicated to both Diana and Minerva. Notably, Landino singles out the myrtle plant, the "herb of Venus," as one of Camilla's attributes (Landino 1596, 1369–70).

In his painting, Botticelli emphasizes the chastity, strength, and beauty of Camilla

not only through her pose and gesture but also through her garments and attributes, which contribute to his rendering of allegory. Familiar, as he was, with Florence's textile industry (through his brother's membership in the Arte della Seta, the weavers living in his neighborhood, and his own embroidery designs), Botticelli was well versed in using emblems, colors, and plants to characterize his figures, enliven sensorial viewing, and symbolize allegorical concepts (Compton 2021, 92–128). Camilla, for example, wears a luminescent day dress (see page 73) woven from purified, refined white silk and ornamented with a pattern of interlocking diamond rings. A well-known Medici emblem, the diamond ring appears in nuptial art and textile designs, including a fifteenth-century fragment (fig. 1.1) now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In book 37 of his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder describes the diamond as an "unconquerable force" that "dispels attacks of wild distraction and drives groundless fears from the mind" (Pliny 1952, 211). On Camilla's dress, the smooth, pyramidal facets of the one-point diamonds sparkle with reflected light, emanating the stone's fortifying virtues. Two large diamonds are



Fig. 1.1. Italian, probably Florentine, Fragments of a textile with Medici emblems, c. 1492, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



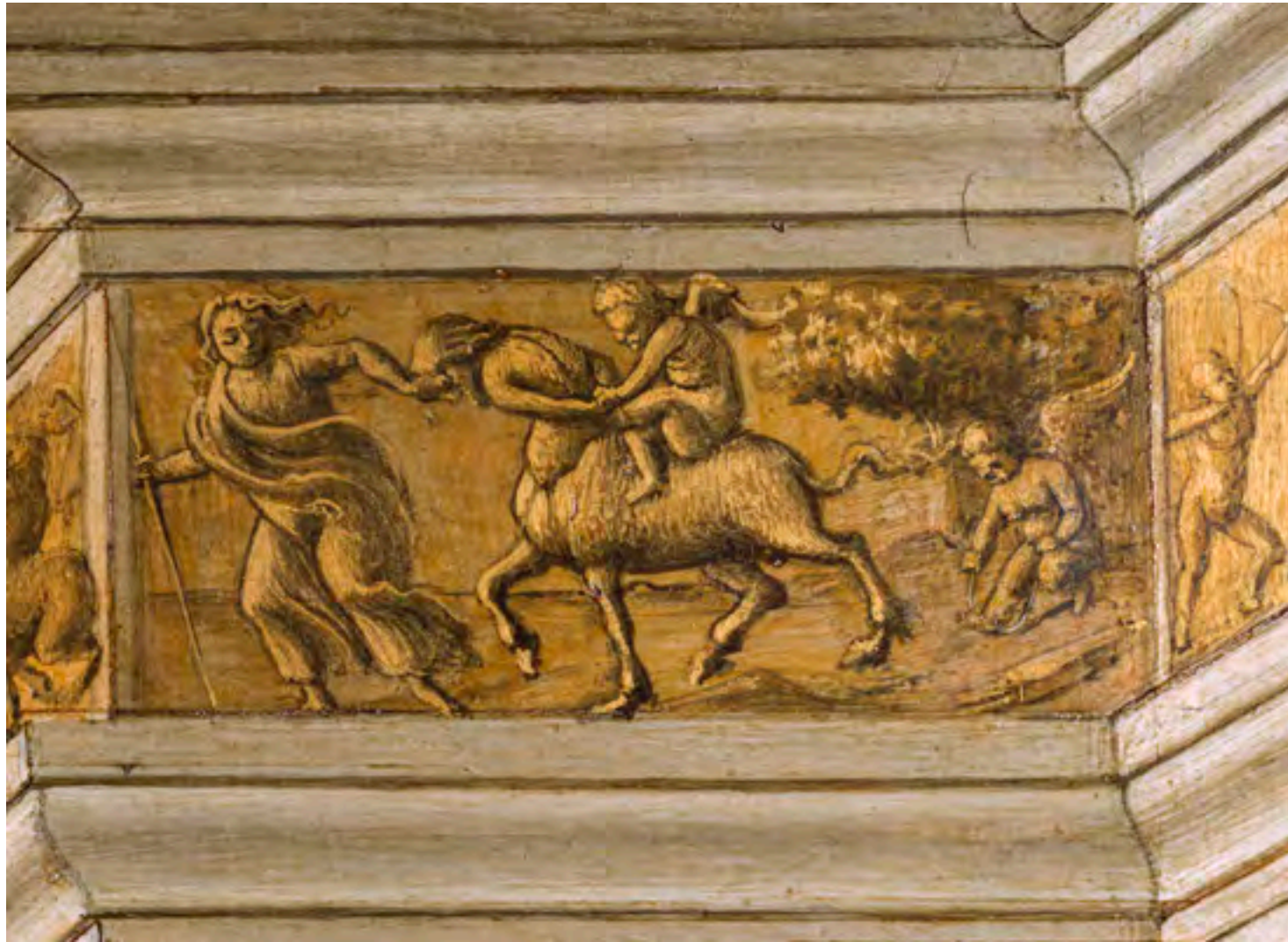


Fig. 1.2. Sandro Botticelli, *Calumny of Apelles*, detail, c. 1495. See fig. 15.

set within golden acanthus leaves and define the horizontal axis of Camilla's breasts. The rings intersect on the dress to form vesica shapes, which mark the union of two circles. Created around 1482, the painting most likely celebrates the wedding of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco to Semiramide d'Appiano, whose father was the lord of Piombino and whose family possessed iron mines on the island of Elba (Cecchi 2005, 200–202).

Like the scintillating diamonds, the verdant mantle that adorns Camilla's body enhances and protects her beauty, and its fabric recalls verdure textiles owned by Lorenzo and Giovanni that appear in the 1498 inventory (Shearman 1975, 25–26, nos. 25, 59). A temperate color associated with physical and spiritual benefits, the green hue of Camilla's mantle frames the verdant vine that encircles her arms, chest, and head. With its nimble branches and paired foliage, this plant resembles myrtle (*M. communis*), which grows in Venus's garden in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Myrtle is an ancient apotropaic plant, described by the Roman noble Marco Antonio Altieri as "inimical to every violence" (Altieri 1995, 76). Its evergreen color symbolizes nature's fecundity, and its virtues were

harnessed in early modern pharmacology to produce anti-inflammatory, moisturizing medicines as well as fragrant, aphrodisiacal serums (Mattioli 1984, 137–38; Boccaccio 2011, 1:394–95). In the painting, the winding myrtle simultaneously shields and sensualizes Camilla's body.

Although the identity of Botticelli's maiden remains a mystery, much evidence exists to suggest that she is Camilla, the Volscian warrior princess who fought "like an Amazon" and slaughtered a multitude of Trojan soldiers, whom Virgil lists by name (Virgil 1918, 280–85). Armed with a diamond-studded halberd, Camilla stands guard before a rugged stone gate (Lightbown 1989, 146–52). Is she protecting the boundary to a seaside castle, to a wedding banquet, or to the verdant, enclosed garden of Venus? Indeed, centaurs were known for wreaking havoc at weddings, most famously for attempting to abduct the bride and other guests at the wedding of King Pirithous of the Lapiths. In Botticelli's painting, Camilla grasps the centaur by a lock of hair and directs him away from her domain. With his eyes fixed on her upper torso, the hybrid creature turns his lower equine body, reaches across his hairless

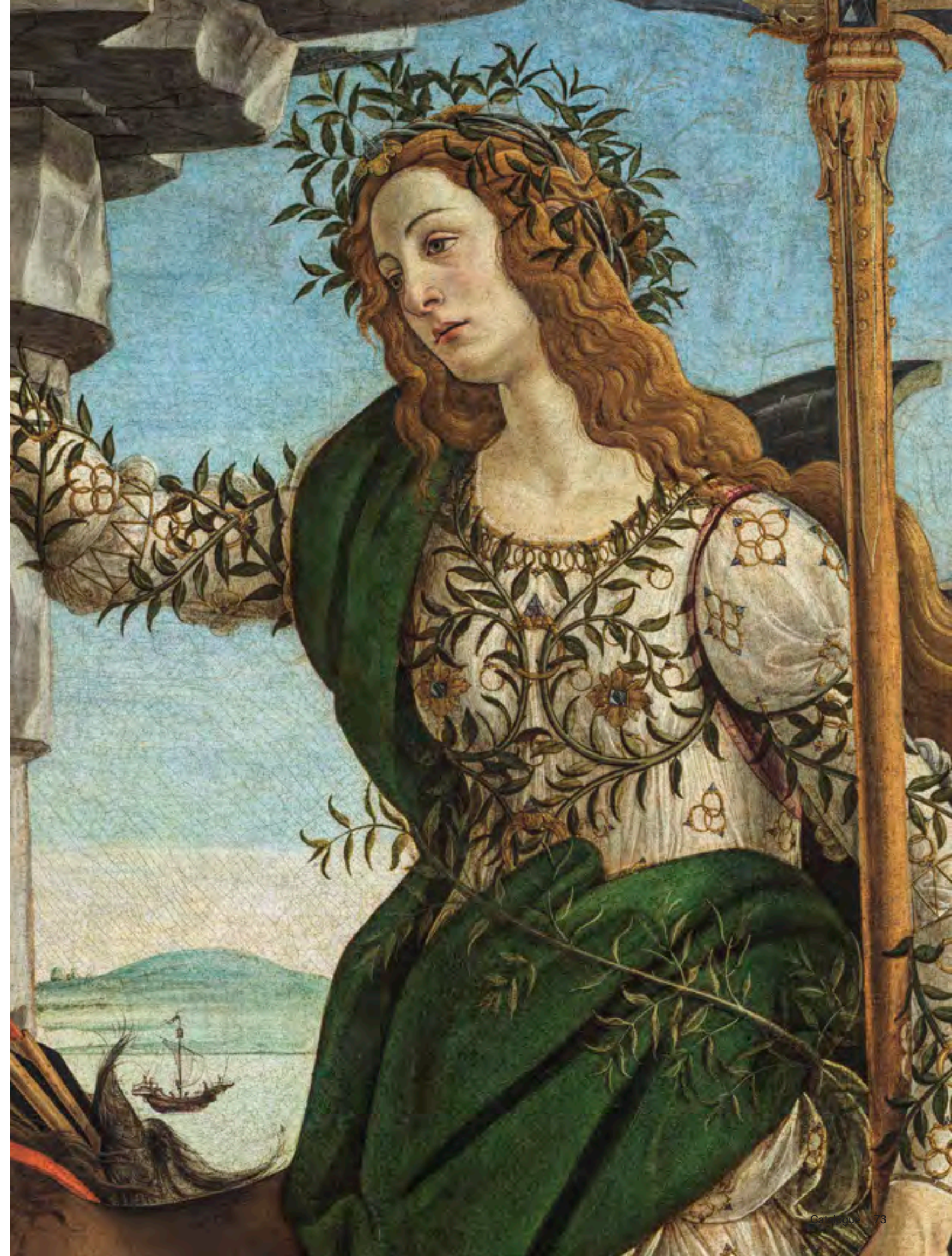


Fig. 1.3. Detail of no. 1.

chest, and fingers the air, as if touching the diamonds on Camilla's breasts. With his other hand, he clasps a double bow, which undulates to mimic the curves of the maiden's hips and buttocks. The centaur's gestures suggest erotic fantasies. As Arthur Frothingham and Stanley Meltzoff argued, the outcome of Camilla's meeting with the centaur is suggested in the architectural frieze of Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles* (see figs. 15, 1.2; Frothingham 1908, 438–44; Meltzoff 1987, 168–73). In this scene, a female drags a centaur away by a lock of hair as Cupid binds his arms. The narrative allegorizes love freed of lust. Set within a protected harbor, the poignant interaction between woman and beast in Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* declares a similar message, celebrating the power of beauty and virtue to halt irrational, unconscious passions from disturbing the peace.

—Rebekah T. Compton

Sandro Botticelli
Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Pallas (recto), *Study of Architectural Decorations* (verso), early 1480s

Black chalk, pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, heightened with lead white, on paper partially tinted pink with red chalk, squared in black chalk or leadpoint (underneath figure), outer contours of figure or drapery pin-pricked (recto); pen and brown ink (verso); 8¾ × 5½ in. (22.2 × 13.8 cm)

INSCRIBED (at lower left in pen and ink):

Sandro Botticello. di

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 201 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Balducci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Botticelli); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Horne 1908, 162–63; Wittkower 1938–39, 194–202; Sinibaldi in Florence 1960, 4–5, no. 20; Pouncey 1964, 283–84; Petrioli Tofani in Forlani Tempesti and Petrioli Tofani 1972, no. 15 (with bibliography); Lightbown 1978, 166–67, D14; Caneva in Florence 1992a, 272–74, no. 14.3; Ames-Lewis 1995, 52–53; Bambach 1999, 128–29, 419n10; Ciseri in Rome 2000, 1:192–93; Cecchi 2005, 202; Bonato in London and Florence 2010–11, 176–77, no. 37; Deimling in Hatfield 2009, 65–66; Zöllner 2005, 283, 86; Schumacher in Frankfurt 2009, 218–20; Debenedetti and Zambrano in Paris 2021, 125, 155–56.



Fig. 2.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, detail, c. 1482, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8360. See fig. 10.



Fig. 2.2. Sandro Botticelli, *Study of Architectural Decorations*, verso of no. 2.



Fig. 2.3. Sandro Botticelli, detail of no. 2, recto.



Fig. 2.4. Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, detail, c. 1482, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8360. See fig. 10.



Fig. 2.5. French manufacture, after design by Sandro Botticelli, *Minerva Pacifica*, 1492–1532, wool and silk tapestry, 101 × 52 in. (257 × 156 cm), private collection.



Fig. 2.6. Botticelli workshop, *Study of a Female Figure (Pallas/Minerva)*, pen and wash, lead white, and black chalk on red prepared paper, 13 3/8 × 9 in. (34 × 23 cm), Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, inv. WA 1863.613, verso.

This precious drawing captures Botticelli's early conception of a new feminine archetype, a graceful, ethereal nymph figure who appears in his pagan mythologies in the 1480s, such as *Primavera* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) and *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1). Her elegant, sinuous stance, wavy hair, and air-borne, clinging drapery create the impression of melodious motion, as if attended by gentle breezes, and she seems to float lightly on the tips of her toes.

The study depicts Pallas Athena / Minerva, goddess of war, wisdom, and arts, identified by the helmet in her right hand. Instead of her other traditional war attributes (armor, spear, and shield with Medusa's head), she holds an olive branch, and is thus the bearer of wisdom, peace, and abundance. (Athena brought olive trees to Athens, making her patroness of the city named for her.) Botticelli treated the subject of Pallas many times: in the joust banner painted for Giuliano de' Medici (1475, lost) and an extant drawing likely related to that work (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan), as well as in the paintings *Pallas and the Centaur* (c. 1482)

and *Calumny of Apelles* (c. 1495, see fig. 15), the latter featuring her in a gilded relief in the foreground. The goddess also appears in drawings and tapestry and intarsia designs by Botticelli's bottega (fig. 7).

The Uffizi *Pallas* study resonates most directly with the Venus in Botticelli's *Primavera* (fig. 2.1, Ferri 1881). Her pose and dreamy gaze are almost identical, and the details of her dress and sandals are similar, too. The fluttering movement and transparency of the drapery in the drawing have more in common with the floating dresses of Venus's retinue, however, than this goddess's red mantle. One surprising detail in the sheet is the beads dangling from the drapery, sketched above Pallas's right foot, which resemble the pearls adorning Venus's mantle (figs. 2.3, 2.4). We see Botticelli working out his ideas, first with black chalk and then with a pen, to reinforce selected lines, followed by wash and white heightening to model the forms and correct and cover changes. His experimentation with head position and facial expression resulted in two options that, remarkably, share an eye. The sheet records

Botticelli's refinement of the proportions of the arms, breasts, and waist, and extensive reworking of drapery folds.

Squaring lines have been inscribed underneath the drawing media, indicating that they were applied before the figure was drawn (as opposed to over a completed study to guide in transferring or enlarging the design). Bambach suggested that Botticelli may have used the grid here as a drawing aid in the method described by Alberti (*De pictura*, 1435), and later by Leonardo in his notebooks (c. 1490–92, Paris ms A, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France). Reportedly invented by Alberti, the practice calls for a frame to be covered with thin fabric and squared with large threads, which is then placed before the object to be drawn. The artist describes on squared paper the forms as they appear in the corresponding grid. This method helped artists translate three dimensions into two and more accurately judge proportions and perspective.

The present drawing was pricked, rather summarily, for transfer. The outermost contours of the figure and drapery were outlined,

as was part of the helmet. The head tilting farthest was pricked; the more upright one was not. Some additional prick marks outline the area between the left arm and body, from the index finger to the shoulder. Most details, however—facial features, hair, fingers, legs, drapery folds, olive branch—were not pricked for transfer.

This design was recycled within Botticelli's workshop for a later tapestry commission for Count Guy de Baudreuil, woven in France (fig. 2.5) when he was abbot of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois, 1492–1531 (Henige n.d.). Baudreuil may have traveled to Italy in service of Charles VIII during the French king's military campaigns of 1494–95. His choice of subject and artist could have been inspired by seeing Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* in the Florentine palace of the French-aligned branch of the Medici family, brothers Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco (Cecchi 2005). Francesco Laurana's *Minerva Pacifica* medal, made for the French duke René d'Anjou and his wife, Jeanne de Laval, in 1463, also probably influenced the tapestry (Wittkower 1938–39). Botticelli's shop may have only

been responsible for the Pallas figure, with the overall tapestry design composed in France (Lightbown 1978). A Botticelli workshop drawing of Pallas in Oxford (fig. 2.6), an enlarged and slightly simplified iteration of the Uffizi study, records a transitional step between Botticelli's invention and a lost studio cartoon. (Some details that the Oxford study repeats from the present drawing that are missing in the tapestry, such as the rounded shape of Pallas's thighs, confirm it is not a copy after the weaving.) The Pallas in the Oxford drawing and the tapestry have the more upright, unpricked head from the Uffizi study, whereas the tilted head and neckline of the *Primavera* Venus follow the pricked example. Bonato observed that the present drawing was pounced so that it could be replicated at the same scale, and Pons noted that another drawing similar to this must have existed as the model for the *Primavera* Venus. Perhaps this drawing was initially replicated for Botticelli to develop the figure without Pallas's attributes into Venus. This would have been the first of many instances in which the present drawing served Botticelli and his shop.

Dating the Uffizi drawing to the time of the tapestry commission (after 1492) seems untenable as the two works are so distant in conception and purpose. The many signs of experimentation and reworking in the Uffizi sheet indicate that it records a moment of invention rather than a derivation of a figure invented a decade earlier. Many scholars have persuasively supported a date in the 1480s (Petrioli Tofani 1972, Caneva 1992, Zöllner 2005), not only because of its ties to Botticelli's *Primavera* and *Pallas and the Centaur* of that decade, but for stylistic reasons as well.

The architectural studies on the verso (fig. 2.2) cannot be connected directly to any of Botticelli's works, although elements vaguely recall the fictive pilasters, capitals, entablatures, and ornamented friezes in the wall frescoes of the Sistine Chapel (1481–82) and the San Martino alla Scala *Annunciation* (1481).

—Rachel McGarry

Ancient Roman

Centaur, c. 150 CE

Italian marble, 42 1/8 × 38 1/4 × 15 in.
(107 × 97 × 38 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, Inv. S. Marco e Cenacoli, n. 610

PROVENANCE: Probably from Rome, but already in Florence in the first half of the seventeenth century. Palazzo Pitti (ground-floor *salotto*), Florence (by 1638–57); Galleria degli Uffizi (West Corridor), Palazzo degli Uffizi (from 1657)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Saladino in Florence 2003, 608, no. 152 (with bibliography).



Fig. 3.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Calumny of Apelles*, detail, c. 1495, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture. See fig. 15.

The head of this centaur has been reattached and the nose is a later restoration. Other modern reintegrations are the arms, the hind legs from the thighs down, the front legs from halfway down the hocks, part of the horsetail, and the lower part of the support and the base. The left hand holds the fragment of an object to be interpreted as part of a bow. These interventions have been attributed to the sculptor Francesco Mochi (1580–1654), who was paid in 1627 for the reassembly and restoration of several sculpture fragments owned by the Medici, among which the centaur is explicitly listed (ASF, GM 432, c. 207r–v [1627], see Capecechi, Marzi, and Saladino 2008, 59).

The statuette goes back to a figure type produced from the second century BCE by workshops active in Pergamon and vicinity, attested in many Roman replicas and variants (Saladino 1998, 387–88). The modeling and articulation of the head would favor a date for the Florentine statue around 150 CE. In it, the centaur is shown rearing up, his head displaying animal ears, and he has two tails, one just above the horsetail, at the base of his human spine. The pose may suggest that the work was originally paired with another centaur (Saladino 2003, 608). Whether such a display was purely decorative or had another function remains uncertain. Building on an early Etruscan/Italic tradition that includes centaurs among liminal beings, Virgil places them at the entrance to Hades, as guardians of the infernal gates (*Aeneid* 6.286; see Maturo 2014, 33–34).

Indeed, the hybrid nature of the centaur, whose body combines human and animal elements, locates him at the border of the

human and bestial, between order and disorder, and imbues him with an ambivalent character. In the imagination of the ancients, the centaur appears both as wise, like Chiron, teacher of the famous Achilles, and as violent, guided by baser instincts. This is seen in Nessus, who tried to abduct the wife of Hercules, and in the inebriated centaur Eurythus, a guest at the wedding of Peirithous, who attempted to rape the bride and set off the battle between the centaurs and the Lapiths—a story recounted famously by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 12.210–535) and treated in countless other exceptional works of literature and art. The Renaissance promoted the image of the brutal centaur in particular, often represented as an example of irrational, uncivilized nature who could be tamed only through culture and art. This is the role played by centaurs in the set of five paintings by Piero di Cosimo that show a kind of Lucretian early humankind, which are now divided between museums in New York, Oxford, Hartford, and Ottawa (Centanni 2017, 453). Among the most striking Renaissance depictions of centaurs are those by Botticelli, and chief among them is the Uffizi *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1). The Medici symbol of diamonds woven into the dress of the centaur-tamer Pallas, and the link to a contemporary Latin poem by Poliziano (*Sylva in Scabiem* 295–300), allow one to see in this scene a further layer, a generalized allegory of Lorenzo il Magnifico, the true protector of political harmony in the city of Florence, nicknamed the “balance needle” by later historians for his ability to maintain peace in Italy in his day (Centanni 2017, 453).

But centaurs reappear in other works by Botticelli in different manners and techniques. When around 1490 Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici enlisted the artist to illustrate Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Rome 2000), the hybrid creatures serve as custodians in Botticelli’s drawing of the circle of the violent (*Inferno* 12; Ardigò 2012, 141–47). Several centaurs return in the *Calumny of Apelles*, a work honoring the creative power and liberty of artists, where they reveal the creature’s full symbolic complexity (see fig. 15). In the tiny fictive relief at the right of the panel, above the head of the judge, a centaur is subdued. A woman with a lance pulls him by the hair while a cupid pins his hands behind his back; the centaur’s pose and iconography resemble those of the present marble (see fig. 1.2). In another scene, on the base of the judge’s throne, Botticelli even recreated a famous ancient painting of a centaur family (fig. 3.1). The original work, painted by Zeuxis sometime between 420 and 380 BCE, is lost, but was described in the second century CE by Lucian. Zeuxis showed a female centaur with two centaur children, one nursing at her human breast and one, like a colt, nursing under her belly. Botticelli reprises this witty ancient pictorial invention (see Horne 1908, 261). He makes the children face in opposite directions, evoking in an amusing and appealing way the duplicity or the duality of the centaur.

—Alessandro Muscillo



Ancient Roman

Torso of a Dancing Faun with Kroupezion,
first century CE
Greek marble, 26 × 16⅜ in. (66 × 39 cm)
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Putnam Dana
McMillan Fund, 70.39

PROVENANCE: Unknown, probably from Italy (Ghisellini 2018, 71). Private collection (?), North Africa (until 1969; his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Roudillon [*commissaire priseur*], Paris, 1969, to Calmann); [Hans M. Calmann, London; 1969–70; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art]

SELECTED REFERENCES: Michaelis 1882, 632, no. 42; Strong 1908, 10, no. 9, pl. 6; Brinkerhoff 1965, 33n21; *Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin* 1970, 82; Hill 1974, 107, no. 1; Schneider 1991, no. XIV, 11; Habetzeder 2012, 156, no. 22; Ghisellini 2018, 71, no. X; Habetzeder 2021, 457, no. 27, fig. 14a.

This torso is a good-quality replica of a statue type showing a dancing faun tapping musical time with a *kroupezion*, a clapper worn on the right foot. This type, known from just under forty surviving statues, shows the figure raising the right arm and lowering the left arm. This statue is missing the head, the arms, and the legs just below the start of the thighs. Elements permitting us to recognize the Minneapolis torso as a faun of the *kroupezion* type include the extension of the external oblique muscles on the right side and the corresponding contraction on the left, the folds over the abdomen, the outward push of the sternum, a small tail at the base of the spine, and the direction of the limbs suggested by the parts that remain. The dating is suggested by the rendering of the muscles and the treatment of the pubic hair.

In 1909 Wilhelm Klein paired this statue type with another, also known in many replicas, representing a nymph removing her sandal. In fact, he recognized the two figures on the back of a coin from the time of the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 CE) that was minted at Cyzicus, on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara near present-day Istanbul (Habetzeder 2021, 420, fig. 1). Klein called the postulated group “Invitation to dance,” and he related its playful and ornamental character to other sculptures dating to circa 175–150 BCE.

This reconstruction was widely accepted but has been questioned over the last thirty years (see, e.g., Ridgway 1990 and Stähli 1995). The same two statue types also appear on a previously unknown coin type, minted at about the same date as the other

coin discovered at Pautalia in Bulgaria (Habetzeder 2021, 420, fig. 3). In the latter, the figures come into physical contact. Either the two characters hold one another’s hand (von Mosch 2007, 101–4) or, according to another interpretation, the male seeks to remove the drapery from the lower body of the nymph, who strives to hold onto it (Habetzeder 2021, 440). Such liberties in representing the models require caution in considering the coins as certain documents of the original composition, since they may not be faithful reflections of the original; that said, the pairing of the two figures on coins makes it likely that at some point the two statues in the round were in fact coupled, even though not necessarily originally conceived of as a group. Since statue groups of second-century BCE Greek art favored a frontal presentation of the forms, the marked extension in three dimensions of these faun and nymph types has supported the claim they were developed as two separate works in the third century BCE (Falaschi 2007, 46–47).

The best-known copy of the faun of the *kroupezion* type is in the Uffizi (inv. 1914, no. 220); a sixteenth-century restoration added a pair of hand cymbals. Two bronzes, formerly in Wiesbaden and Bucharest, and recorded only in old photographs, seem to reprise the arrangement of the Uffizi figure, but contribute little to understanding it (Habetzeder 2012, 137, figs. 6, 7, 149–51, raises doubts that these are ancient works). Nor is the marble replica discovered in the Keramaikos at Athens (Athens, Keramaikos Museum, inv. 8071) more reliable, because although the left hand survives, it rests upon a support, an



Fig. 4.1. Reverse of no. 4.

interposition best explained as a structural addition needed by a marble copy of a bronze. In the coin images where the small scale limits any detail, the faun appears to snap his fingers. In short, until more complete replicas come to light, the exact placement of the faun’s hands must remain an open question.

Renaissance artists were greatly struck by the sensual vitality of numerous varied ancient faun images, often in frenzied music making with percussion instruments and flutes. One of the most impressive images that seems to assimilate the form and spirit of ancient dance scenes is the *Dance of Nude Figures* mural that Antonio del Pollaiuolo painted between about 1460 and 1475 in fresco and *al secco* technique at Villa La Gallina at the hamlet of Arcetri, just outside Florence. Pollaiuolo’s five figures, their bright shapes, and the jagged contours standing out from the background seem to beat a dance measure with jaunty steps moving briskly in a wild, ecstatic dance. For each of these dancers Pollaiuolo drew upon an ancient faun figure, most likely known from sarcophagus reliefs showing a Dionysiac scene, but stripping them of their clusters of grapes and musical instruments, and fitting the bodies instead with expressive individualized faces and caps of Renaissance hair. In effect, Pollaiuolo has represented men of his own day dancing with the same free and wild inebriation of the followers of Dionysus, god of vine and wine (Gelussi 2005, 413–17).

—Alessandro Muscillo



Spinario, late first century BCE–early first century CE (?)

Greek marble with Carrara additions,
33½ × 22½ × 12¼ in. (84 × 57 × 31 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1914 n. 177

PROVENANCE: Unknown. Rome (?) Villa of Poggio Imperiale, Florence (by 1624); Galleria degli Uffizi collections, Florence (since 1780; 1943–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Mansuelli 1958, 148–49, no. 118 (with previous bibliography); Zanker 1974, 71, no. 6; Saladino 1983, 88–89, no. 39; Monaco in Florence 1996, 160, no. 44; Monaco in Florence 2003, 650, no. 180.

The head and neck, the right hand and wrist, the toes of the left foot, the right leg from below the knee, the lower part of the rocky support, and some smaller pieces probably have sixteenth-century restorations. The arms and right knee are original and were reattached.

The statue's surface was reworked at a later date so extensively as to compromise any attempt to date it on grounds of style and workmanship, though a dating in the early imperial period (late first century BCE–early first century CE) seems plausible. It shows the figure of a nude boy seated on a rock, removing a thorn from the sole of his left foot, with the left leg sharply twisted to rest on his right knee. The Uffizi marble figure is one of eight early replicas of the subject, constituting what scholars have called the *Spinario* type (Zanker 1974, 71–72). The most famous exemplar is a bronze made around 50 BCE, today in the Musei Capitolini in Rome (Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. 1186) and the inspiration of many copies, from medieval times onward. In fact, unlike most ancient bronzes known today, which were rediscovered after a long period of oblivion, this work seems to have been on public display almost without interruption. Recorded outside the Lateran palace in Rome already in the twelfth century, the bronze *Spinario* was moved to the Campidoglio in 1471 when Pope Sixtus IV gave it to the people of Rome, along with other ancient bronzes (Bober–Rubinstein 2010, 235). The Capitoline statue may well have directly inspired the restoration and integrations of the present version, which shares with it the long wavy locks of hair, collected in a small knot over the forehead. Among the ancient copies, the Florence *Spinario* is particularly close to the Roman bronze in the anatomical rendering and strong contrast between the modeling of the torso and the skinny arms, as well as the similar depiction of the spine.

Only two replicas still have the original head, the bronze *Spinario* and a marble copy now in the British Museum, London (inv. 1880.0807.1), but each shows a different typology. In the bronze *Spinario* the head resembles works of the Severe style of ancient Greek art (500–450 BCE), while the natural pose and the strong three-dimensional quality of the body agree with late Hellenistic works. It may be worthwhile to recall that a caricatured version of the *Spinario* from Priene dates to the second century BCE. The coexistence of such different elements and styles in the Capitoline *Spinario* has led some scholars to suggest that it was made later still, dating to around the first century BCE, by an eclectic artist who combined a peculiar mix of styles (Zanker 1974, 71–75). The inconsistency of manners has even led others to propose a date much later in late antiquity or the Middle Ages (Moreno 1994, 2:678–79).

A bucolic context is suggested by the rocky base and the naturalness of the subject, occupied with the mundane activity of personal foot care. The original work may have depicted a shepherd boy: in fact, a replica in Cherchell, Algeria (Archaeological Museum of Cherchell, inv. S 140) shows the shepherd's attributes—staff and panpipes—and he is accompanied by a dog. Another possibility is that the *Spinario* originally represented a mythological shepherd such as Endymion, Triptolemus, or Adonis. A recent hypothesis would anchor the work in imperial Roman visual propaganda of the late first century BCE, seeing in it an image of Ascanius (also known as Iulus), the son of Aeneas and grandson of Venus, head of the Julian Roman familial clan, or gens Julia, to which Julius Caesar and Octavianus Augustus belonged (Parisi Presicce 2005; Mantua 2008, 306–9).

During the Middle Ages, after the *Spinario* type had occasionally been used as a symbol



Fig. 5.1. Filippo Brunelleschi, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, detail, 1401, bronze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, inv. Bargello Bronzi 209.

of sin and lust, it begins to appear in representations of the months of the year as March, by an association of the thorn-pulling with the spring pruning of trees and vines (Dalli Regoli 2013, 71–72). Even in the late fifteenth century, the anonymous author of the *Antiquarie prospettiche romane* calls the bronze *Spinario* “Marzo della Spina” (Agosti and Isella 2004, 17, 88–90). Probably it was around this time that the antiquity of the statue and the medieval link to March were fused into an entirely contrived legend in which a shepherd boy named Gnaeus Martius saved Rome from an imminent Etruscan attack by running to warn the Roman Senate, all the while with one foot pierced by a thorn (Haskell and Penny 1981, 308). The *Spinario* reappears in Brunelleschi's relief of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* presented in the competition for the commission of the monumental bronze north door of the Florence Baptistery, a truly transitional work of art marking the passage from International Gothic to early Renaissance style (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, fig. 5.1). There, again in a rustic setting, the *Spinario* figure appears as a servant of Abraham on the left of the composition, and he aptly conveys the pain and fatigue suffered in journeying to the remote place of sacrifice in the mountains. Artists from the Renaissance to the contemporary have been struck by the dynamic pose of the *Spinario*, in which the bends and twists of the chest, arms, and legs describe triangular shapes (Dalli Regoli 2013, 77–78; Andersen Funder 2019). Botticelli was no exception, and he studied this *Spinario* pose in a drawing in metalpoint with white heightening (Gallerie degli Uffizi, no. 6), probably a life drawing of a studio assistant modeling the ancient pose.

—Alessandro Muscillo



Sandro Botticelli

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Two Male Nude Figures, c. 1475–1482

Metalpoint, heightened with white, on buff prepared paper; 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 7 in. (19.3 × 17.8 cm)
 INSCRIBED (on verso in graphite): 394 esp. / Anon. fior. Sec. XV

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 394 E

PROVENANCE: Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930; Ferri 1881, as anonymous Florentine, fifteenth century)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli 1975, 99, no. 71; Dalli Regoli in Florence 1992a, 63, 69; Sisi in Florence 1992a, 45–46, no. 2.4; Forlani Tempesti 1994, 7–8; Ciseri in Rome 2000, 1:184–85, no. 5.13; Melli in Frankfurt 2009, 302; Melli in Rome 2011, 88, no. 5; Faietti 2012; Casoli 2015, Progetto Euploos, Uffizi, <https://euploos.uffizi.it/scheda-catalogo.php?invn=394+E> (with bibliography; consulted June 4, 2020).



Fig. 6.1. Sandro Botticelli, *The Trials of Moses*, detail, 1481–82, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

Life drawing was a fundamental workshop practice for painters, sculptors, and goldsmiths in fifteenth-century Florence. Often the models were workshop assistants, arranged in a variety of poses, nude and draped, usually featured as single figure studies—with two, three, or four to a sheet. This drawing exercise helped artists hone their draftsmanship and expand their figural repertoire. In this study, Botticelli drew two nude models, one seated and examining his foot, the other standing. The first has the unmistakable pose of the *Spinario*, or boy pulling a thorn. The sculpture is known in at least eight ancient replicas (no. 5), with the bronze in Rome (Musei Capitolini) being the most renowned. If its eclectic style has puzzled scholars, its charm and timelessness—depicting a handsome youth engaged in the everyday activity of caring for his foot—has captivated artists through the ages. Renewed interest in ancient art in the Renaissance not only inspired artists to take up mythological subjects and idealized forms, but also nurtured interest in less elevated subjects like this. No classical work in Rome was copied more (Bober and Rubinstein 1986), and across media—in drawing, print, bronze, and marble (Haskell and Penny 1981).

Botticelli's interest in the *Spinario* was more artistic than antiquarian, as was typical in the period (Ames-Lewis 1981). He did not try to capture the sculpture's style or details—the boy's angular facial features, trim locks, soft adolescent body, or the rocky seat. Instead, the work provided an interesting, canonical pose to explore with a live model. With his knees, feet, and head thrust forward, his shoulders

rotated, and his hands occupied, the boy conveyed movement despite being sedentary. For his study, Botticelli chose an older, stronger model for the thorn puller and focused on articulating the contours of his muscles, particularly his large calves, biceps, and shoulders. He also deftly described the figure's bone structure; the knees, ankles, elbows, hips, and chin are concisely outlined and have substance and texture. Close attention is given to the model's individual features—his disheveled hair and prominent turned-up nose—so that he lives and breathes on the page.

The standing figure is drawn in a similar manner. The figure's confident stance, with feet firmly planted apart, left arm bent, and hand on hip, are reminiscent of celebrated works of contemporary Florentine sculpture, Donatello's marble *David* and *Saint George* and Verrocchio's *David* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence). The lightly sketched object in the figure's right hand, suggestive of a short sword, further recalls Verrocchio's sculpture (Dalli Regoli in Florence 1992a). Botticelli's modeling of the musculature with white heightening is remarkable in its tight touch and skillful relief, especially the tightly chiseled abdomen, chest, and shoulders.

Despite its exceptional quality, this drawing has only recently received careful consideration and appreciation (Sisi in Florence 1992a, Ciseri in Rome 2000, Cecchi 2008, Melli in Rome 2011, Casoli 2015). Traditionally, it had been catalogued as a work by an unknown fifteenth-century Florentine artist. Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli were the first to associate it with Botticelli and his circle, and Sisi the first to recognize it as autograph.

Sisi also noted that the thorn puller might be referenced in Botticelli's fresco *The Trials of Moses* in the Sistine Chapel (1481–82, see fig. 9), in the scene of Moses sitting down to remove his shoes before approaching the burning bush (fig. 6.1). There are many differences between the fresco and drawing, but there are resonances, too, particularly in the angle of the head, loose hair, and sense of absorption.

Ancient sources like the *Spinario* proved eternally fresh for Renaissance artists, providing imagery that could be continually reworked (Faietti, 2012). Botticelli's works of the 1470s and 1480s demonstrate a deep study of antiquities and reflect the culture nurtured by Lorenzo il Magnifico in Florence—a culture steeped in classical art and literature, including the Medici antiquities collection in the garden of San Marco (see the essay by Paolucci in this volume).

The *Spinario* was well known to Florentine artists: Forlani Tempesti counts at least six Tuscan drawings from the fifteenth century inspired by it. Botticelli's life study is not dependent on direct contact with the famous Roman *Spinario*, but seeing it in 1481–82 may have stimulated his interest. In searching for ideas for the Sistine frescoes, a new consideration of this enduring work, along with the celebrated sculptures in Florence, may have been inspiring to him.

—Rachel McGarry



Sandro Botticelli
Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Study of Three Draped Male Figures Standing (recto), Study of Three Draped Male Figures, One Seated and Covering His Face, Two Standing (verso), c. 1470–85

Metalpoint heightened with lead white, and a few passages of pen and ink, on reddish-plum prepared paper; 8 7/8 × 10 5/8 in. (20.6 × 26.9 cm) INSCRIBED (on verso at lower left corner in pencil): 283 E

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 283 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687, as Ghirlandaio; Pelli 1775–93, as Domenico Ghirlandaio); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Berenson 1903, 1:117, 2:41, no. 797; Ragghianti 1960, 54; Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli 1975, 74, no. 3; Cadogan 1976, 37–38, no. 34; Petrioli Tofani 1986, 125; Sisi in Florence 1992a, 52, no. 2.10; Ciseri in Rome 2000, 1:186–87, no. 5.14; Pons in Florence 2004, 266, no. 47.



Fig. 7.1. Circle of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Four Draped Men Standing*, silverpoint heightened with lead white on buff prepared paper, 9 × 13 1/4 in. (23 × 33.5 cm), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NMH 63/1863.

Six male figures fill this double-sided sheet. The studies were drawn in metalpoint, the favored medium for life drawing in Florence in the second half of the fifteenth century. Mastery of the human form required not only knowledge of anatomy, but also the ability to show bodies in motion. This reflected Alberti's belief that artists should visualize expression and narrative through the movements and gestures of their figures. On this sheet Botticelli has depicted models in a range of active poses—both natural and rhetorical—and in various drapery. On the recto, the youth at left stands in a stalwart pose with his feet firmly apart (a stance associated with strength and soldiers), the left arm akimbo, head turned right, eyes raised, and right arm elevated—a gesture supported with the aid of a tall stick. A long mantle skims his armored breastplate before it wraps around his waist. The two slightly older figures at right assume a contrapposto stance, with their weight shifted to their right foot. Beyond this similarity, differences in gestures, clothing, hair, and facial expressions introduce countless adjustments, with each part of the body affected by even minor changes. Botticelli explored further alternatives of pose and drapery on the verso; the seated figure covers his face as if he is crying, his presence seemingly subsumed by his cloak and hat. He examined the figures from different viewpoints as well, angling their bodies in ways that create new interest. Botticelli applied lead white broadly to describe the fall of light on forms, illuminating drapery folds in particular; the contrast is more intense on the verso, where the reddish-plum tint is darker (and perhaps less faded).

Only a tiny proportion of drawings produced in fifteenth-century Florence survive today. Of those, figure studies like the present sheet are quite prevalent (Forlani Tempesti 1994). Their high survival rate demonstrates the widespread practice of life drawing, and also affords us a peek into workshop practices around 1460 to 1490. Such studies were used for multiple purposes, serving the artist and his studio as a repertory of stock figures to be adapted, shared, and passed down as intellectual property to heirs—thus helping to ensure their preservation (Chapman in London and Florence 2010–11). The present sheet typifies this category of drawing in its format, size, style, and three-tone drawing technique. Attributing works within the group is complicated due to the prescribed practice of the day and generalized purpose of the drawings.

In their seminal study on life drawing in quattrocento Florence, Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli gathered studies of this type across collections (e.g., Florence, Berlin, Lille, Stockholm [fig. 7.1])—works with different attributions, by numerous hands, and often depicting the same models. Dalli Regoli noted that together the drawings show that masters and disciples engaged “elbow to elbow” in teaching, collaborating, and “plagiarizing” one another in making these life studies and making use of them. Uffizi 283 E, now indisputably attributed to Botticelli, had traditionally been ascribed to Domenico Ghirlandaio until Berenson (1903) assigned it and an assemblage of sixty-seven studies to Domenico's brother Davide Ghirlandaio. It was a problematic attribution based more on drawing type and a perceived lower quality

of the group than any firm evidence, since Davide's individual works are mostly a matter of speculation (Popham and Pouncey 1950). On the issue of quality, however, it is worth remembering that these kinds of sketches were made quickly—witness how roughly Botticelli described the hands in the present drawing. They were not demonstrations of virtuosity, nor intended for public display. They were an exercise made to capture in a few lines figures in action, and viewed as new entries in the workshop thesaurus for artists to use on future projects. As Carlo Sisi recognized (in Florence 1992a), Botticelli seems to have done just that with the three figures on the recto here, later adapting them for the niche sculptures in his painting *Calumny of Apelles* (c. 1495, fig. 15). This would seem to confirm Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli's attribution, which has recently gained favor with scholars who observed the same fluid, rhythmic quality of the metalpoint and the nuanced highlights found in other Botticelli drawings (Ragghianti and Dalli Regoli 1975). —Rachel McGarry



Filippino Lippi

Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Three Figure Studies (Standing Men), (recto),
Two Figure Studies (Seated Youth and Man),
 (verso), mid-1480s

Both sides: metalpoint heightened with lead white on gray prepared paper, 7¾ × 11 in.
 (19.7 × 27.8 cm)

INSCRIBED (in brown ink on verso, in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hand):
ridolfo d[e]l ghirlandaio

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 141 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Pesello Peselli); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Bambach in New York 1997, 164, no. 31; Melli in Florence 2006b, 139–43, no. 26.



Fig. 8.1. Filippino Lippi, *Two Seated Men*, mid-1480s, metalpoint heightened with lead white on gray prepared paper, 9½ × 9¾ in. (23.9 × 24.8 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, Florence, inv. no. 171 E, verso.

The figure studies on the recto and verso of this sheet allow us to look over the shoulder of Filippino Lippi and inside a Florentine workshop. The drawings form part of a large body of works, most datable to the 1470s and 1480s—produced primarily in the workshops of Filippino, his teacher Sandro Botticelli, and their contemporary Domenico Ghirlandaio—which share a number of key characteristics. All depict a series of unrelated figure studies, usually two or three per side, carried out in metalpoint on carefully prepared paper. Typically, the models were boys or young men. Among the three hundred sheets of drawings attributed to Filippino and his circle—a larger number than for any other fifteenth-century artist before Leonardo da Vinci—only a couple seem to have been made from female models. Some of the models may have been workshop assistants, as often assumed, but others were probably paid. At times, the same figure appears in more than one drawing; the young man sleeping on the right, on the verso, reappears in the same location of another drawing by Filippino (fig. 8.1), which was perhaps made at the same time.

In the present sheet, as in nearly all figure studies, we see models in three basic types of poses: a highly mannered stance; in the midst of action; or at rest, either seated or resting on a staff. Most often, as in this case, the poses cannot be related to a specific subject, much less a painted figure, though the standing men with heavy drapery recall, in a general way, the bystanders in the *Adoration of the Magi* (no. 49) and other works. Rather than being made for a particular commission, these drawings served as part of an artist's training,

In this way, he (or more rarely she) could develop a series of poses and drapery studies that could be developed for painted figures.

For these sheets, artists used a stylus with a silver or lead tip, which left an indelible mark and, in comparison to pen and ink, was difficult to modulate. The technique encouraged deliberation and precision, with an emphasis on outlines. Shading is created through a series of parallel lines or cross hatching, both of which appear on this sheet. Together with the use of white highlights, this meticulous technique created an extraordinary sense of volume, especially in the heavy draperies. In the 1480s, however, Filippino learned to convey an exquisite dynamism, far exceeding that found in works by Botticelli or Ghirlandaio. We find this, for example, in the man standing on the right and holding a stool with his right hand and lifting up his left. Filippino's use of a seemingly light touch, together with squiggles in metalpoint and zigzags in highlights, almost give the impression that the man moves before our eyes. Unlike the two figures nearby, his hair is not constrained by a cap, and his locks capture the turn of tilt and turn of his head. He shifts his weight to his right leg, solidly planted on the ground, as he bends his left knee, a convincing arrangement that contrasts with that of the central figure. Here we cannot quite understand the relationship between the legs, stool, and groundline, giving the impression that the sketch unites several different moments.

The two figures on the recto appear in a pen-and-ink drawing in Dresden (Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. C.18). This work, in a different

technique, provides more information about workshop practice. Though previously attributed to an unknown student of Filippino, it has been recently and convincingly ascribed to Giuliano da Sangallo or his circle. This sculptor-architect also made copies of other drawings by Filippino as well as works by Botticelli and others. Evidently, these sheets circulated outside of Filippino's workshop. The Dresden drawings show that Filippino's two figures were considered worthy of being reproduced, presumably for their complex poses. In addition to sketching after live models, artists also made copies after other drawings. The Dresden sheet and other reproductions of extant drawings by Filippino remind us that even modest and overlooked sketches can provide a record of lost works by the master.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Ancient Roman

Crouching Aphrodite, second century CE (?)
Italian marble, 31½ × 20½ × 13¾ in.
(78 × 52 × 35 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1914 n. 188

PROVENANCE: Probably Rome. Villa Medici, Rome (? from the late sixteenth century, documented in 1671, until 1770; transferred to Florence; Cecchi and Gasparri 2009, 384); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (by 1784; 1943–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Mansuelli 1958, 83–84, no. 54 (with bibliography); Haskell and Penny 1984, 472–76, no. 85; Monaco in Florence 1996, 154–55, no. 41; Paolucci in Tokyo 2008, 267, no. V-10; Cecchi and Gasparri 2009, 384, no. 685; Ghisellini 2009, 672, no. 14.

In this work, an early-modern, probably sixteenth-century, restoration supplied the head, the right breast, the right arm below the forearm and left arm from the bracelet, the left leg from the thigh, and the left foot and the shell it rests on. The extensive reworking of the marble surface hinders a full assessment of the quality of the Uffizi statue, but a working hypothesis would place its creation not earlier than the second century CE.

The motif of the naked woman in a crouching position appears in vase paintings already in the sixth century BCE, in scenes of girls and nymphs bathing. It was elaborated in three-dimensional form in the Hellenistic period as a representation of Aphrodite. That the present work copies a Hellenistic original is suggested by the naturalism of the figure's pose: the strong rightward torsion of the form, the sense of instability suggested by the arms crossed over the breasts and the asymmetrical stance of the legs and bent right foot, as if the goddess might be about to stand.

These qualities suggest a date in the second half of the third century BCE for the original sculpture this work copies. The great success of this motif in Roman art is testified today by at least forty ancient sculpture replicas, mostly marble, but some in bronze and terracotta, as well as numerous reproductions in relief, on lamps and engraved stones.

In the nineteenth century the lost original sculpture was identified with the "Venus in the act of washing herself" described by Pliny the Elder as displayed in the temple of Jupiter Stator near the Portico of Octavia in Rome (*Nat. Hist.* 36.35). The text of the following lines in Pliny is corrupt. Reinach interpreted

the text as mentioning the name of a sculptor, "Daedalsas" (or "Doidalses"), which he interpreted as the Bythinian variant of the name Daidalos. The latter name, in turn, agrees with that of a sculptor recorded as active around the third century BCE at the court of king Nicomedes I of Bithynia (Reinach 1897). Reinach's reconstruction has been widely accepted, although alternative explanations have been advanced (for a review of the question, see Richter 2016, 41–48). It is undeniable that the dating based on style coincides closely with this reading of the textual source, and also that the figure type spread in Asia Minor already in the second century BCE, as attested, among other things, by coins struck in the Pontus region, Paphlagonia, and Bithynia much later, between the second and third centuries CE (Delivorrias 1984, 106, nos. 1041–43).

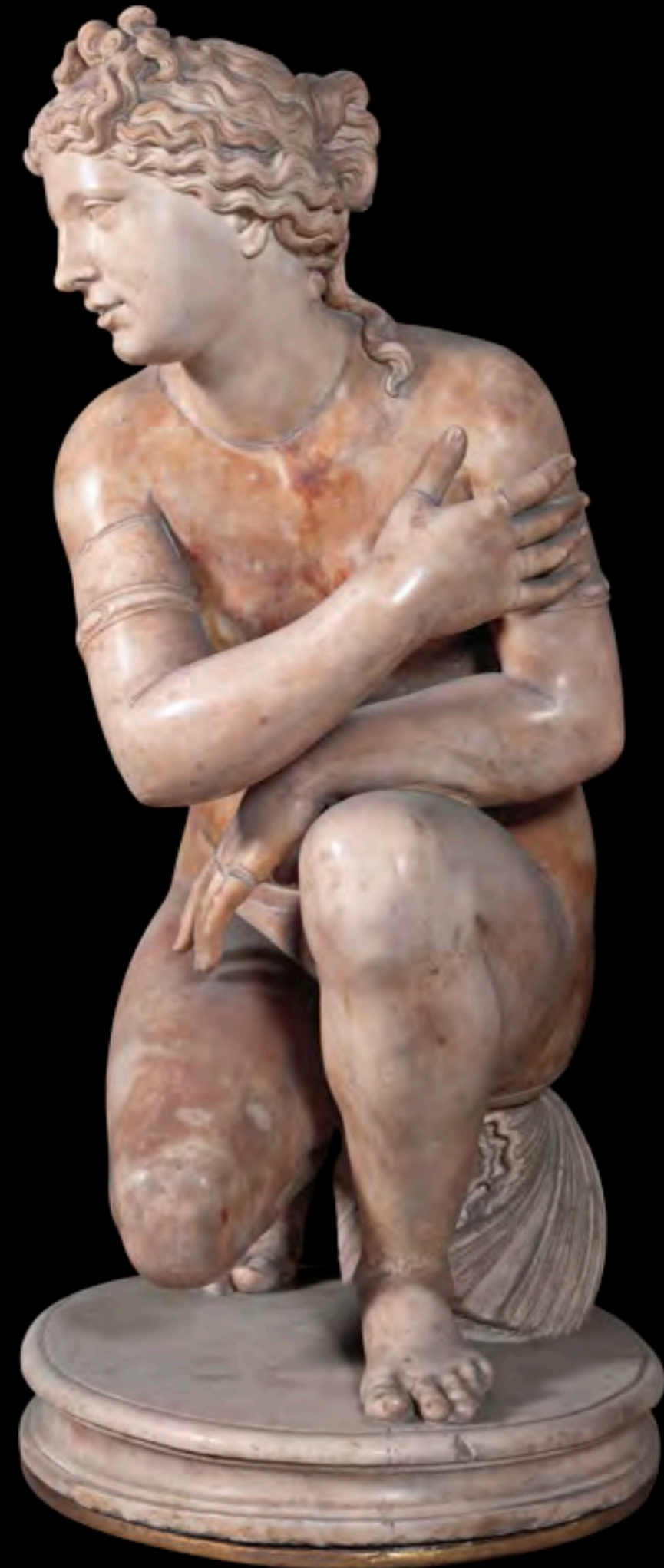
Reinach made a further seductive hypothesis. If we identify Nicomedes I of Bithynia with the Nicomedes recorded as seeking in vain to acquire an *Aphrodite* by Praxiteles from the citizens of Cnidos, in exchange for the cancellation of the city's debt (*Nat. Hist.* 36.21), Reinach suggested that the original *Crouching Aphrodite* might have been the work commissioned by the king as consolation for the Aphrodite he could not obtain.

Already admired in antiquity, the *Crouching Aphrodite* inspired Renaissance artists as well (see Richter 2016, 135–96). Echoes of this figure type begin to appear by the end of the fifteenth century in drawings and small bronzes derived from the ancient marble copies then known and in important antiquarian collections. Two examples, both having the

advantage of being complete, include the statue in the British Museum in London (inv. RCIN 69746), which had belonged in succession to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Isabella d'Este, and then Charles I of England (Bober and Rubinstein 2010, 67–68), and the one in the Museo del Prado in Madrid (inv. 33-E), recorded in Rome in the late fifteenth century (Schröder 2004, 270). One of these could have been the reference that guided the sixteenth-century restorer of the Uffizi statue: its early modern head has the same hairstyle that the copies show the original possessed, with hair collected in a topknot and falling in two long thin locks of hair at the back of the head (Cecchi and Gasparri 2009, 384).

Among the most striking Renaissance reappraisals of the *Crouching Aphrodite* motif are a *Kneeling Leda* by Leonardo da Vinci, as recorded in fascinating studies in a drawing, and Raphael's *Esterbazy Madonna* (c. 1508, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. 71). Raphael's painting was long thought to be the only reuse of the Aphrodite type for an image of the Virgin Mary (Vinci 2001, 108–9, no. II.2.), but it has recently been suggested that a reprise of the *Crouching Aphrodite* appears as the Virgin in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel (1537–41; Richter 2016, 201–17).

—Alessandro Muscillo



Lorenzo di Credi

Florence 1456–1537 Florence

Venus, c. 1490Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on canvas 59½ × 27¼ in. (151 × 69 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 3094

PROVENANCE: Villa Medicea, Cafaggiolo (until 1869). Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (1893–1954; 1940–48 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge); Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence (from 1954); Palazzo Davanzati, Florence (1956–59; transferred to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1959)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ridolfi 1893–94; Jacobsen 1935, 413–15; Clark 1956, 104; Dalli Regoli 1966, 138; GM in Berti 1979, no. P908 343; Debenedetti in Paris 2021, 166–67, no. 32; Nesi 2022, 11n4.

Although Lorenzo di Credi made a specialty of painting bland *Madonna and Child* figurations, his production and that of his entourage did not neglect antique subjects. The superb study of a young man of Apollonian beauty wearing a laurel wreath, in Los Angeles (J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017.77) is clear evidence of this. From early in his career, Lorenzo seems to have been sensitive to the question of the nude in antiquity, as indicated in study 398 E at the Gallerie degli Uffizi, in which the figure is posed similarly to that in the sculpture *Apollino*, a Roman copy of a fourth-century BCE Greek original. The canvas at the Gallerie degli Uffizi also seems to have roots in another celebrated antique prototype, the *Venus pudica*, the prototype of which dates back to Praxiteles and an example of which was probably known in Tuscany in the late fifteenth century. The presentation of the goddess on a parapet also evokes the constant connection with the Florentine sculpture. Its heroic nudity is, in this sense, somewhat reminiscent of Donatello's revolutionary sculpture *David* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence), executed some fifty years before.

The tight framing, however, can be traced to exemplars developed within Sandro Botticelli's studio, starting with his *Birth of Venus* (see fig. 11). With a rather important contribution from his prolific bottega, Botticelli had, in fact, borrowed his central figure from his masterpiece, which was then placed in a setting entirely stripped of all narrative references in at least three known variations (fig. 10.1; Galleria Sabauda Turin; Geneva private collection). Lorenzo took up these sensual derivatives. Although the figure is turned in the opposite direction, the upper part of the goddess's body follows the lines of these different models. Even the sinuous drawing of the feet seems to correspond to

that of the Botticellian prototypes, with the characteristic "Greek foot." Lorenzo reuses the idea of luminous highlights in the hair, as in the Berlin painting, and the draping delicately highlighting Venus's nudity is similar to the Turin canvas. The relationship between the Uffizi canvas and the Botticellian imaginary cannot be easily determined: did Lorenzo have direct access to Sandro's cartoons or variations? More broadly, these links testify to a shared sociability in Florence, explaining daily exchanges and relationships. In this sense, we might suppose a free and opportunistic reinterpretation by Lorenzo di Credi after undoubtedly fashionable models.

However, Lorenzo inscribed his image even more firmly in contemporary society. He somewhat turned away from his compatriot's ethereal idealization and toward a more prosaic portrayal, related to the *belle donne* (beautiful women) figures then in style. His Venus's features are taken from those of a delicate facial study (Albertina, Vienna, inv. 4870) probably drawn from life. The divinity's hairstyle perfectly reproduces the codes of the period: the hair is separated into two equal masses on either side of the forehead, strands fall freely on the temples, and the rest of the hair is swept back in a chignon, as can be seen in numerous portraits executed at the time.

The obvious presence on the canvas of traces of *spolvero* (pouncing charcoal through a pricked image to transfer it to the canvas) also implies that this imagery fell within the context of studio practices. The composition therefore may have been easily replicated to supply a lively market for mythological subjects, notably in the Medician circles that Lorenzo di Credi had frequented since his youth (the canvas was in fact found in the Villa de Cafaggiolo). The Laurentian milieu stands out as highly influential: Lorenzo il Magnifico was appealing to the greatest artists of the moment to decorate his villa in Spedaletto with frescoes on mythological subjects. We also know that his cousin, Giovanni di Pierfrancesco, was prominent in the field as Filipepi's enlightened patron. He was one of the most brilliant promoters of this genre, as borne out superbly by the *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* (see figs. 10, 11). This interest, both humanist and commercial, was transmitted by Botticelli to his student Filippino Lippi, whose studio also offered many mythological subjects on independent panels (*The Centaur* at Oxford and its back with a *Birth of Venus* painting, and *Two Muses* at Minneapolis, no. 20, executed by his later collaborator, the Master of Memphis).

—Matteo Gianeselli



Fig. 10.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Venus*, c. 1485–90, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*), 62¼ × 27 in. (158.1 × 68.5 cm), Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, inv. no. 1124.



Possibly Baccio Baldini

Florence c. 1436–1487 Florence

The King of Goats: A Satire on Cuckolds,

c. 1460–64

Engraving, 7 × 10 in. (17.9 × 25.2 cm) (plate),
10 × 16¼ in. (25.4 × 42.6 cm) (sheet)INSCRIBED: *nomitira cbella ragone / cbella novvole**a'vsto ballo ve / gniera maritomio / perzegarti legiora**percharita avti / gliivo zegare**queste elviaso digalisia cbe vivo / omorto licbon- viene andare**zega pian compagno mio / cbila caiipa efigliuolo didio**fallo veni / r binasi**glie piv cbmiibeechacci**imiciamo incbopa / eldietto none mio**itazoiivo perche tvai / rotto lecborna**cbinone morto morira / cbinone becho vengiiira**izonno ire debechi ebecho zon ciamato / aonor debe- cbi zono incoronato*

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Charles A. Cleveland and Janet and Winton Jones in memory of Thirza Jones Cleveland, P.99.15.1

PROVENANCE: Johann Georg Zobel I von Giebelstadt, Prince Bishop of Bamberg (1543–1580), Bamberg, Germany. [Antiquariat Konrad Meuschel, Bad Honnef, Germany, until 1999; sold to Theodoli]; [Olimpia Theodoli, London; 1999]; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art

SELECTED REFERENCES: Hind 1938–48, 73–74, no. A.II.23; Zucker 1993–94, 265–67, no. 2403.124; Zelen 2015, 3–11, 36.

In this engraving, goats, people, and hybrids of the two seem to act out a play on stage. The dialogue is arranged somewhat like that in a comic strip. To the right, a wizened goat wearing a crown sits on a fanciful throne decorated with horns and goats' feet. Presiding over his court, he holds a scepter with a distinctly phallic head. The inscription beneath him says, "I am the King of Goats [*becci*= he-goats or bucks], and Goat I am called; I am crowned in honor of the Goats." He calls out, "Let him come before me." To the goat sawing the horn from a kneeling man's head, he says, "Saw gently, my comrade, whoever escapes it is a child of God." So, what is "it?" "It" is cuckoldom—the state of having a wife who has sexual affairs with other men. From antiquity on, goats have been associated with lust, and goats' horns with cuckoldry. *Becco* means both "he-goat" and "cuckold" in Italian, and *cornuto* means both "horned" and "cuckold." So, when the king says that he is crowned (*incoronato*), he also engages in word play.

The king's sympathetic attitude toward the man whose horn is being sawn off reflects the fatalistic verse below the kneeling youth, "He who is not dead will die. He who is not a goat will become one." The youth lacks wisdom, for his scroll reads something along the lines of "He is more goat than I." The odd spelling (the triple *E*, for example) adds to the irony, since he seems to bleat his remark.

The brazenly nude woman appears to want a reconciliation: "To this ball I would come, my husband, to saw off your horns." Despite her embrace, the young man does not trust her, "This reason, which is not her will, will not entice me." Given that he has already sprouted two sets of horns, he may be right. The kneeling man with a detached horn in his hand unburdens himself to his confessor goat, "I plead guilty." The goat absolves him, "I absolve you, because you have broken your horns," to which the man replies, "The sin is not mine."

The complicated feelings of the man being absolved by the goat may be explained by a tale told of Cosimo de' Medici by Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–1498) in his manuscript compendium of biographies. A man came to Cosimo seeking advice about what to do regarding his doubts about his wife's fidelity. Cosimo paused and said, "As to the horn which seems to you to be growing on your head, you had better swallow it, and then take a walk by the town wall. Then halt at the first ditch you come to, and, having brought up the horn, throw it into the ditch and bury it so that no one may see it." The man understood that he had let his doubts get the better of him and stopped questioning his wife's integrity. Perhaps all men become cuckolds because they imagine themselves so, and the man absolved by the goat has decided not to doubt his wife.

At the upper right of the image is another message, perhaps from the king, "This is the way to Galicia, where living or dead, it befits him to go." Galicia is a reference to the great site of pilgrimage and penitence, Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain, which fifteenth-century Florentines called Sancto Jacopo di Galitia.

The antecedents of the texts in this engraving have not been found, but given the nature of the stagelike setting and the interaction of the figures, one suspects that this may be based on an actual play that brimmed with satire, bawdiness, and moralizing themes.

As is often the case with early Florentine prints, the authorship of *The King of Goats* is uncertain. In terms of style and technique, this engraving belongs to the Fine-Manner group of Florentine origin. The idiosyncratic letter forms—the *z*, the *b* for *B*, the *¶* for *Q*—in the *King of Goats* inscriptions are also found on a series of the planets and the Fine-Manner set of prophets and sybils. These prints have been attributed in the past to Maso Finiguerra and are sometimes attributed to the poorly documented Baccio Baldini.

The Minneapolis Institute of Art's impression is printed on sixteenth-century paper. The only other impression known to us is in the Albertina in Vienna.

—Tom Rassiour



Unknown engraver

Florence, fifteenth century

Virgil the Sorcerer, c. 1460s

Engraving, 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 12 in. (21.8 × 30.5 cm) (plate), 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29.2 × 42.6 cm) (sheet)
 INSCRIBED: *es sendo lamatina / chiaro gorno / ilpose int / erra cons / vo grande / schorno ; vere chepoi checonsua gran s / apiensa contra acostei / mando aspra sente / sa*

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Richard Lewis Hillstrom Fund, P.99.14.1

PROVENANCE: Johann Georg Zobel I von Giebelstadt, prince-bishop of Bamberg (1543–1580), Bamberg, Germany. [Antiquariat Konrad Meuschel, Bad Honnef, Germany, until 1999; sold to Theodoli]; [Olimpia Theodoli, London; 1999; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art]

SELECTED REFERENCES: Campretti 1895, 325–39; Hind 1938, 43–44, no. A.I.47; Zucker 1993, 86–87, no. 2402.040; Zelen 2015, 3–11, 36.

In the Middle Ages, many legends arose in which the celebrated ancient Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE) had magic powers. This engraving presents one such story of deception, humiliation, and retribution. In the legend, Virgil is smitten with a young princess but she has become weary of his attention. To make a point, she invites him to her chambers, saying that she will raise him up to her window in a basket by night. He eagerly agrees to the plan. When he arrives at her tower, the basket is ready. He steps in and up he goes. But suddenly it stops. She leaves him hanging there until daybreak, mocking his predicament. This is where the engraving picks up the story. At left, high up in a tower, the princess holds Virgil suspended in the basket for all to see. The inscription above tells us that on this clear morning she then placed him on the ground with a great scorn.

The right side of the image presents Virgil's revenge. Here he has used his magic powers to extinguish all the fires of Rome, except for one smoldering coal that he has placed in the princess's vagina. The emperor appealed to Virgil to restore the fire. Virgil demands that the princess must stand naked and elevated in public, where torches are thrust at her to be rekindled. Here the inscription tells us that he has used great knowledge to send her ill will.

Virgil released the princess only after four days of suffering, after which the emperor condemned him to death. On the way to his execution, Virgil asked for a pail of water to drink. When it arrived, he jumped headfirst into the pail and vanished.

The unknown author of the print clearly places the action in Rome. In the background, we see the Colosseum, and to the right, the Arch of Constantine. In the Middle Ages, the Frangipani family held control over those two monuments, and their family tower, which still stands, has sometimes been called the "Torre di Virgilio."

Virgil in the Basket is one of many tall tales that grew up around the poet in Naples, where his ashes were interred in a tomb that increasingly became a pilgrimage site as the stories proliferated. The stories seem to have originated not among the literati but among the working masses. Not surprisingly, they often contain elements of earlier stories. The theme of ancient philosophers and young ladies is not just about lust; it reflects an age-old topos, representing the conflict between the intellect and nature. Before its application to Virgil, the story of the basket was told of Hippocrates. The part about the revenge was told of Heliodorus in the eighth century, and similar tales have been traced

to ancient Greece and Persia. Such stories eventually became grist for later authors, and the inscriptions on the present engraving are adapted from *Contrasto della Donna* by the Florentine poet Antonio Pucci (c. 1310–1388).

This engraving of unknown authorship has been part of the inconsistent group often assigned to Baccio Baldini. The hatched shading along the contours suggests that the engraver was in some sense a follower of the Master of the Vienna Passion. This rare print is known in just two impressions, in the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden. Stylistically, the work fits with prints believed to have been made in the 1460s, but one should bear in mind that this engraver may have been working a little later in a slightly outdated manner. Mia's impression is printed on sixteenth-century paper and comes from an album of prints that had been owned by prince-bishop of Bamberg, Johann Georg Zobel (1543–1580) and was rediscovered in the 1990s. The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a cruder variant of the composition. Both versions may hark back to a lost source.

—Tom Rassiour





The San Marco Sculpture Garden and Antiquities in Renaissance Florence

Lorenzo de' Medici, called il Magnifico (the Magnificent), was the de facto ruler of Florence. His power was immense and not just in politics, but also financially, as heir of a vast banking empire with branches in all Europe. Like his father and grandfather, Lorenzo was an avid collector of Greek and Roman sculpture, which he gathered in a picturesque setting not far from his palace, in the San Marco garden, named for the nearby Dominican convent of San Marco. From there may come the marble group *Three Satyrs Wrestling a Serpent* (no. 18), lent from a private collection in Chicago and reunited after many centuries here with works from the Medici collection. The satyrs are arched and tense in the effort of the fight and their crouching poses may have been the compositional source for Luca Signorelli's *Allegory of Fertility and Abundance*, exhibited near the marble (no. 19). Even the idea of realizing the painting in grisaille—painted monochrome—as if it were a sculpted group, shows the painter's intention to re-create an “antique” look and pay homage not only to Lorenzo de' Medici's golden age, but to his famous collection as well. The first-century BCE relief *Dancing Maenads* (the maenads were nymphs devoted to Dionysus) was known during the Renaissance (no. 13). Such reliefs had an enormous impact on the imagery of the time and were the origin of the prevalent nymph figure, who was shown with similar floating, clinging drapery. This influence is evident in the exquisite drawing by

Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Young Woman Pouring Water from a Pitcher* (no. 14), as well as in many feminine figures, perhaps most famously the women painted by Botticelli in his *Primavera* and *Birth of Venus* (see figs. 10, 11), among other paintings. The garden was not only a splendid place to display the collection (unfortunately dispersed in 1494, two years after Lorenzo de' Medici's death), it was also an informal academy where artists, under the guidance of the sculptor Bertoldo di Giovanni, could study precious antiquities. It was attended by Leonardo da Vinci and the young Michelangelo, among others. We can infer that Botticelli, being a favorite of Lorenzo il Magnifico, knew the collections in the San Marco garden well, although his presence with the other pupils is not documented. In this section we again find evidence of Botticelli's interest in Greek and Roman sculpture, which he also studied and adapted for Christian subject matter. This is evident even in later works produced in the early sixteenth century—a decade after the dispersal of the Medici antiquities collection. In the *Flagellation*, for instance, by Botticelli's workshop (no. 15), Christ's body reflects the influence of classical sculpture like the Minneapolis ancient *Male Torso* (no. 17), which, in turn, derives from the famous *Apollo of the Omphalos*, a Greek sculpture of the fifth century BCE.

—Roberta Bartoli

Ancient Greek, neo-Attic

Relief with Dancing Maenads,

late first century BCE
Pentelic marble, 23 ¼ × 38 ¼ × 4 ¾ in.
(59 × 97 × 12 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1914, n. 318

PROVENANCE: Unknown. Riccardi collection, Florence; Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since 1825; see Saladino 2000, 23)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Mansuelli 1958, 40–41, no. 15 (with previous bibliography); Fuchs 1959, 74, 79–80; Bieber 1977, 110; Saladino 1983, 20, no. 5; Pollitt 1986, 171–72; Grassinger 1991, 120, no. 7a, 123; Touchette 1995, 73–74, no. 21; Donohue 1998–99, 20; Paolucci 2014; Paolucci 2020, 26–32.

The marble surface has no breaks, only minute chips and some abrasions that are particularly concentrated in the faces of the first and second figures on the left, obliterating them. Studies made during a restoration in 2013 brought to light extensive traces of early gilding. In many areas there are traces of gold leaf or red ocher bole, which was used from ancient times into the Middle Ages and later to prepare the surface for gold leaf; these traces show that gold was applied to the pinecone and the tendrils around the thyrsus (the staff tipped with a pinecone) held by the central woman, to the edges of the draperies, and to the *armilla* (bracelet) and the fillet worn by the figure with a tambourine. Traces of gold on the right pilaster suggest that the relief's entire carved architectural frame was gilt so as to make the relief stand out when originally installed as a decorative element on a wall. The same examination also found traces of polychromy in the iris of the only figure whose original face is visible, and on the clothing of the central figure, which originally was colored with bright cinnabar red pigment.

Framed by two narrow pilasters supporting a plain architrave, three women carry out a wild dance, their movements echoed and amplified by draperies that open in fanlike pleats, wavy shapes drawn with a crisp calligraphy that also enhance the underlying forms with a suggestive effect of transparency. They are maenads, or bacchantes, followers and priestesses of Dionysus who, during the ritual festivals of the god, abandoned themselves to free dances in a state of ecstasy. The first two figures on the left hold the halves of a dismembered young goat in their left hands, and brandish a knife and thyrsus, respectively, in their right hands. The other maenad turns in the opposite direction and beats time on a tambourine with her right hand raised.

The maenads, whose elegant draperies are rendered in more linear than three-dimensional form, seem to have an

iconography of dancing that was developed in an archetype of the later fifth century BCE, to judge by comparisons with the reliefs of the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis in Athens and those of the Temple of Apollo Epicurus at Bassae, in the Peloponnese, a dating that is corroborated by similar representations on metal vessels and vase paintings from about 410 BCE onward. The popularity of this subject in ancient Roman times is attested by many copies in a variety of objects. Maenads appear on marble bases, altars, candelabra, *oscilla* (small disks or plates in marble, with reliefs on both sides, designed to be hung), reliefs, sarcophagi, and marble vases—altogether, in nearly seventy different objects dating from the first century BCE through the third century CE. This pool of copies allows us to recognize nine different maenad figure types, six of which can be retraced to a prototype from classical Greek art, and three of which were developed later. It is thought that in the original depiction, in Athens, the maenads decorated either the reliefs of a base of a monument honoring the victory of *The Bacchae* by the playwright Euripides in a literary competition held in 406–405 BCE (Fuchs 1959, 72–91), or else the podium of a cult statue of Dionysus, such as that by Alkamenes in the god's sanctuary, near the theater dedicated to the god at the foot of the Acropolis (Touchette 1995, 25–30). The Florence relief shows three of the six maenad figure poses invented in the fifth century, in a compositional scheme widely adopted by the neo-Attic workshops producing sculpture for the Roman art market in the early period of the emperor Augustus.

The flowing movements in ancient maenad depictions and the virtuosity with which they are drawn is revived in the studies and finished works of Renaissance artists, who readily deployed the model for a variety of subjects. Thus, the wild votaries of Dionysus inspired figures of angels, as in one of the classicizing reliefs by Agostino di Duccio for the Tempio Malatestiano (the church of Saint Francis) at Rimini representing *Saint Sigismund Traveling to Agauno*, for the chapel dedicated to this saint (1453–54, now Civiche raccolte d'Arte, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, inv. 1089). In other works quattrocento artists exploited the sensuality of the original maenad, and it is little surprise that they inspired small- and large-scale images of Salome's "Dance of the Seven Veils" before Herod, as in Filippo Lippi's fresco in the duomo at Prato (1452–65) or in the predella panel by Benozzo Gozzoli in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (1461–62; inv. 1952.2.3). To Botticelli we owe one of the most inspired reuses of the ancient figure type, in his *Calumny of Apelles* in the Gallerie degli Uffizi (c. 1495, fig. 15). Here, in one of the many fictive reliefs, a small maenad is shown on a pilaster base directly behind the central figures of the allegorical group, in which the personification of Calumny, flanked by the figures of Deceit and Fraud,



Fig. 13.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Calumny of Apelles*, detail, c. 1495, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture. See fig. 15.

drags an innocent youth toward an enthroned judge with donkey ears. The maenad is thus placed at the center of the scene, just in correspondence with the innocent man wrongly accused (fig. 13.1). Moving diagonally in the same direction, hands holding up a tambourine, with her irrational fury she seems to further incite the violence of the scene's protagonists (Faietti et al. 2019, 111–12).

—Alessandro Muscillo



Domenico Ghirlandaio

Florence 1448–1494 Florence

Young Woman Pouring Water from a Pitcher,
1485–90Pen and brown ink on paper; 8½ × 6½ in.
(21.8 × 16.7 cm)WATERMARK: two axes, crossed, inscribed in a circle or shield (3.6 cm diam.); close to Briquet 11636 (Lucca 1486) or 11637 (Pistoia 1490)
INSCRIBED (on recto in pen and brown ink, lower right corner): *F. giovani egondo* (on verso, in graphite): 289 esp. / *D.o Ghirlandaio / Corn. 61*

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 289 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Balducci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Mantegna); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ames-Lewis 1983, 258–61; Petrioli Tofani 1986–87, 128; Bambach Cappel 1990, 496; Bartoli in Florence 1992a, 76–77, no. 2.31; Bartoli in Rome 2000, 205, no. 5.25; Cadogan 2000, 294, no. 83; Kecks 2000, 153; Dalli Regoli 2007, 21–59; Sassi in London and Florence 2010–11, 222–23, no. 58; Faietti 2014, 58–59; Chrzanowska 2018, 177–91; Kárpáti in Budapest 2019, 53–55.

In his 1568 *Lives of the Artists*, Vasari proclaimed Domenico Ghirlandaio “one of the most important and excellent artists of his age, he was made by nature to be a painter.” Vasari also singled out his exceptional draftsmanship, especially the judgment of his eye in drawing Roman ruins without the aid of a rule, compass, or measuring tool. Ghirlandaio’s extant drawings testify not only to his prodigious skills, but also to an impressive breadth of techniques and approaches—rigorous pen and ink figure studies, lively compositional sketches, abstract *primi pensieri*, exquisite portraits in metalpoint (no. 54) and black chalk.

This accomplished pen-and-ink figure is a study for a maidservant in *Birth of the Virgin*, part of Ghirlandaio’s monumental fresco cycle in the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1485–90 (fig. 14.1). In the painting, she is pouring fresh water for the newborn Mary, dutifully rushing to the foreground to help. The scene unfolds in a grand Florentine palazzo, filled with exquisite decoration, including a charming *all’antica* frieze with putti, and noblewomen in fashionable fifteenth-century clothing. In the company of these formal patrician onlookers, the ardent young woman animates the scene with her sense of purpose, fleeting movement, and swirling dress.

We see Ghirlandaio showing off his superb, fluid pen work. Rapid calligraphic lines define the figure’s body, head, dress, and cascade of fluttering drapery, while controlled, fine crosshatching delineates the extensive passages of shadows (Faietti 2014), as do some fuller inked lines (Kárpáti 2019). In contrast, light, tremulous strokes convey areas of light on her face and skirt, and on the shimmering stream of water poured from her pitcher.

The essential qualities of the final figure are distilled in the sheet. Her intent expression, three-quarter pose, movement, weight placement, accessories, and lively drapery pattern are established here, as is the direction of light (planned for the chapel’s window at right). Only a few small adjustments can be noted, like the foreshortening of her right arm in the fresco and modification of her sleeves and shawl. This water carrier is one of hundreds of figures Ghirlandaio invented for his mural cycle, testifying to the extraordinary preparation required for such a vast commission. Across the chapel, he reprised this figure as the maiden delivering fruit and wine in the *Birth of John the Baptist* and as the beautiful Salome dancing at *Herod’s Banquet*. Considerable changes to both figures, such as the basket of fruit on the maiden’s head and Salome’s energetic leap with arms raised and more flourishing drapery, suggest he made drawings specifically for them as well.

Ghirlandaio’s fluttering maidens are inspired by a repertoire of ancient marble reliefs (Dalli Regoli 2007), such as the Uffizi’s *Dancing Maenads* (late first century BCE, see no. 13). Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, and Filippo Lippi before them (see fig. 27.2), are among

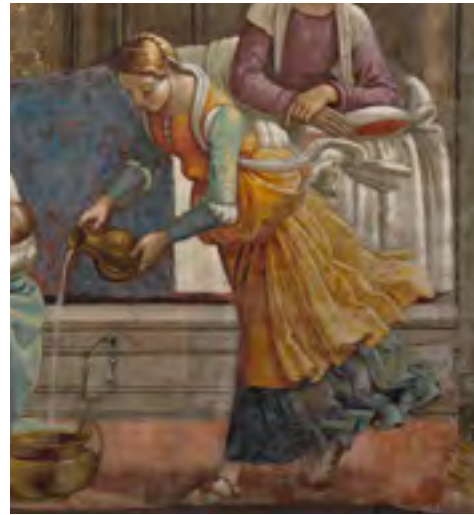


Fig. 14.1. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of the Virgin*, detail, c. 1485–90, fresco, Tornabuoni Chapel, church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

the artists who adapted this figure type and her flowing, clinging drapery in myriad ways, but especially to enliven scenes and evoke the curves of the female form in pleasing, harmonious ways. The Uffizi relief, which shows the maenads dancing with scraps of a dismembered goat and a large knife, alludes to the more violent aspects of the ancient Bacchic cult and its revelries. Euripides’s tragedy *The Bacchae*, first performed in Athens in 406–405 BCE, tells the grisly story of King Pentheus ripped apart by his mother and her fellow Dionysian followers in a frenzied state of ecstasy. This celebrated play may have inspired the first dancing maenad reliefs. Thus the figure type was seen as particularly suited to depictions of Salome dancing before the decapitation of John the Baptist. More often, however, fifteenth-century artists dispelled the violence of the ancient prototypes. Ghirlandaio transposes the pagan source so that the flowing drapery and enchanting movement become expressions of feminine grace, innocence, and virtue, here in a figure serving the infant mother of Christ. Although fulfilling a rather mundane task, Ghirlandaio’s water carrier is elevated by this formal vocabulary. She became one of his most admired figures, appearing in countless reproductions and copies, dating from Ghirlandaio’s day (see Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, inv. 725) to Manet’s (*Musée du Louvre*, Paris, inv. RF 30343r).

—Rachel McGarry



15, 16

Workshop of Sandro Botticelli
Florence 1445–1510 Florence

The Flagellation, c. 1505–10
Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on canvas, transferred from panel, 52 × 42 3/4 in. (132 × 107 cm)

The Way to Calvary, c. 1505–10
Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on canvas, transferred from panel, 52 3/8 × 42 1/8 in. (133 × 107 cm)
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 nos. 5876, 5877

PROVENANCE: Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (before 1881; 1881 inv. no. 324); Museo d'Arte Medievale e Moderna, Arezzo (from 1937); Gallerie degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1993)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Colnaghi 1928, 106n63, 144n33; Zeri 1985, 136; Pons in Florence 1992, 137.



In the first painting two tormentors carry out the flagellation of Christ inside a courtyard. The second shows the left portion of a scene of Christ bearing the Cross; the scene is set just outside the gate of Gennath, along the walls of Jerusalem, where a soldier wearing elegant armor and a red mantle orders a man to pull Christ by a rope. Christ is not visible in the scene because the canvas has been cut down, but the hem of his robe is visible. The stones on the ground call to mind the painful journey and the stoning of Christ after leaving the judge's palace, at the start of the path to Golgotha. The right half of the scene is the *Christ Carrying the Cross* now in the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick; the drapery of the weeping Virgin in the panel in Canada continues in a bit of drapery in the lower part of the Uffizi panel. A third canvas in the series of scenes of the Passion, also at Fredericton, shows the *Resurrection*.

The circumstances of the original commission of these canvases is not known. They may have been part of the decoration of an important lay confraternity in Florence, such as the confraternity of the Croce al Tempio, also known as the black-clothed flagellants, who took on the task of assisting people condemned to death, accompanying them on their final walk to the hanging grounds outside the eastern walls of the city. Another possible patron was the Company of Saint John Baptist and of the Passion of Christ, also known as the Scalzo, whose members walked barefoot in processions with the crucifix. Confraternities such as these were lay associations dedicated to prayer and to the good works of piety and charity. Their headquarters—in churches, oratories, and hospitals across the city—were often embellished with artworks and altarpieces.

Critics concur that these scenes were painted by the workshop of Botticelli, to whom we can only assign the design of the

composition. The execution falls short of Botticelli's brilliance, though it relates to the master's late style. The works may even postdate Botticelli's death in 1510. The two panels show some stylistic affinities with the nameless author of the Botticellesque panel of *Three Saints* in the Florentine church of San Felice in Piazza. A nearby resident of San Felice was one Jacopo di Francesco di Domenico, who died in 1527, and is documented as an important follower of Botticelli. None of his works has yet been identified; perhaps this urban connection offers a clue to the painter of these scenes.

—Annamaria Bernacchioni



Ancient Roman

Male Torso

200 BCE–200 CE

Greek marble, 34¾ × 25 × 14½ in.

(88.2 × 63.5 × 36.8 cm)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Sweatt Foundation in Memory of William R. Sweatt II and Lucien S. Strong, Jr., 57.40

PROVENANCE: Unknown. Private collection, Switzerland (sold to Loewi); [Adolph Loewi, Los Angeles, 1957; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art]

SELECTED REFERENCES: Berger 1958, 11–12nn20–21; Arias 1965, 340; Shissler 1970, 52–53; Lipshultz 1988, 24.

The larger-than-life-size torso is missing the head and most of the neck, the arms from below the shoulders, and the legs, with one continuous break at the level of the pubic area. On the back, a portion of stone was broken away in the area of the left shoulder blade. Traces of struts remain on the figure's right thigh and just below his left hip; these correspond to structural type of supports connecting the arms to the body that were routinely employed when bronze originals were copied in the heavier medium of marble, to add stability. From the shape of the muscles at the base of the neck we may deduce that the figure's head was turned to the right, and the torso tilts the same way, with the corresponding shoulder lowered. The fold of the groin on the figure's right side rises higher; this, the way his left leg is placed, and the shape of the gluteus muscles all suggest that the figure's weight rested on the right leg, with the opposite leg drawn back slightly. The positions of the now-fragmentary struts and the way the arms are broken just below the armpits suggest that both arms were held close to the body, the right arm perhaps slightly away from the chest.

Ernst Berger recognized that it shares several features with the so-called *Warrior* at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli (inv. 2262). The two works share the shape of the pubic hair, the way in which the central line of the thorax

ends at the top of the chest, the separation of the pectorals, the point of attachment and the angle of the strut on the right thigh. The position of the fracture on the left shoulder blade of the Minneapolis torso even coincides fairly closely with the position where the plume of the helmet touches the shoulder in the Tivoli statue. However, Berger also pointed out that these two statues belong to distinct typologies, since in the Minneapolis torso the figure's shoulders have a more pronounced inclination, the anatomical transition from neck to shoulder is sharper, and in general the modeling of the forms is less articulated and less subtly modulated. Interestingly, Berger's article pointed to a male torso in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome (inv. n. 115170) as deriving from the same prototype as the Tivoli *Warrior*, and that torso is quite close to the Minneapolis marble even in such details as the disposition of the shoulders and the way these transition to the neck; the torso in Rome differs only in a less sensitive modeling of the anatomy (Berger 1958, 6, 11–12n21). Later studies identified these three sculptures as replicas of a single statue type (Arias 1965, 340) that can be traced back to a monumental statue group carved by the illustrious sculptor Pheidias around 450 BCE, dedicated by the Athenians to the warriors who had fallen in the Battle of Marathon forty years earlier. This group was described in the

second century CE by Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, 10.10.1). The dating of the archetype of the present work to around 450 BCE, moreover, would be confirmed by comparisons that scholars have made with other statue types of that period, such as the *Apollo of the Omphalos*, the *Amelung Athlete*, and the lost *Zeus* by Myron (Giuliano 1979, 216).

While we are unable to identify the subject of the Minneapolis torso with certainty now, it is pertinent to note that the ancient Roman copyists themselves applied the statue type to a variety of subjects. This is best illustrated once more at Hadrian's Villa, in the sculptural decoration of the Canopus area (118–38 CE). Here, around the northern bend of the pool, not far from the *Warrior* already mentioned, the identical statue type is employed in a second marble statue—in this case identifiable as the god Mercury, thanks to the addition of a pair of winged sandals (inv. 2257; Anguissola 2012, 115–16).

While the overall modeling of the torso led earlier scholars to date the work to the second century BCE, the extensive use of a bow-operated hand drill, visible in the treatment of the pubic hair, would push the dating of the torso—or at least some reworking of the piece—down to the second century CE.

—Alessandro Muscillo



Three Satyrs Wrestling a Serpent

first century BCE

Marble, 25 ¼ × 31 ½ × 14 ½ in.

(64.1 × 80 × 36.8 cm)

Private collection, Chicago

POSSIBLE EARLY PROVENANCE: Excavated at the Monastery of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, Rome (February 1489); Giovanni Ciampolini, Rome (1489); probably sold, through Luigi di Andrea Lotti di Barberino and Giovanni Nofri Tornabuoni, to Medici; Lorenzo il Magnifico Medici, Medici sculpture garden of San Marco, Florence (1489–92); by descent (until 1494/95, Medici sculpture garden collection dispersed)

PROVENANCE SINCE 1857: Wilhelm Aloys Maximilian Neumann, Graz, Austria (until c. 1857); private collection, Austria (from 1857); by descent, Austria (until 2010; sale, Sotheby's, New York, June 11, 2010, no. 29; to private collection); private collection, Chicago (from 2010)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Schober 1937; Corti and Fusco 1991, 9–10, 13; Beschi in Garfagnini 1994, 312–13; Settis 1999, 20–21; Corti and Fusco 2006, 24–27; Lorenz 2013, 380–83; Jeličić-Radonić 2016, 14–16.

In a letter dated February 13, 1489 (1488 by the Florentine calendar), Luigi di Andrea Lotti di Barberino, secretary and collaborator of Lorenzo il Magnifico, described to his patron several antique works of art that had recently been dug up in the area of the monastery of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, Rome (Conti and Fusco 2006, doc. 110). Among these there stood out a statue group of “three beautiful small fauns on a small base, of marble, all three encircled by a large serpent, which in my judgment are most beautiful, and such that to hear what is said among other things it seems they breathe, cry out, and lash out with certain wondrous gestures; the one in the middle seems almost to sink down and breathe out his last breath” (“tre belli faunetti in su una basetta di marmo, cinti tutti a tre da un grande serpe, e quali meo iudicio sono bellissimi, et tali che del udire la boce in fuora in ceteris pare spirino, gridino et si fendino con certi gesti mirabili; quello del mezzo videte quasi cadere et espirare”). The asking price of fifty ducats was to guarantee to Lorenzo the silence of the two finders of the valuable group, who had discreetly excavated in total secrecy one night, breaking the prohibition to explore this area that Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the future pope Julius II, had claimed for his own archaeological excavations. The marble group is mentioned in a second letter written a few days later to Lorenzo il Magnifico by the antiquarian Giovanni Nofri Tornabuoni,

where it is described still more precisely, and also provides its length, two *braccia* (arms), the equivalent of about one meter and twenty centimeters (Corti and Fusco 2006, doc. 109).

No further sources of that time confirm that Lorenzo did in fact purchase the group, but the echoes of the work's iconography in Florentine art of the second half of the fifteenth century, including the celebrated engraving *Battle of the Nudes* by Antonio del Pollaiuolo (see no. 41; Fusco 1984), seem to prove that the sale went through and the statue group reached Florence, where it most likely was displayed in Lorenzo's statue garden near San Marco. As scholars have long observed, the *Centauromachy*, carved by the young Michelangelo in the years when he worked intensely in Lorenzo's garden, contains figures that are among the closest emulations of this model (see the author's essay in this volume).

Recently, doubts have been raised about the identification of the present marble now in Chicago with the group acquired by Lorenzo il Magnifico. In fact, it has been called into question that the measurement of the three satyrs falls short of those given by Nofri Tornabuoni of the group found in the fifteenth century, and nineteenth-century reports place the find spot of the Chicago marble not in Rome but at Salona (Jeličić-Radonić 2016, 14–16), an ancient city not far from Spalato (Split) in Dalmatia (for the whole question see Lorenz 2013). According

to this hypothesis, the marble statue group retrieved in 1489 would have had a subject similar to the present object, but was larger by about a quarter, and remains unidentified or lost. Certainly, groups with the same iconography but in smaller-than-life-size format are known from the late Roman Republican era (first century BCE), to which the present group may be dated, and indeed a small group of two satyrs fighting with a serpent was found near Porta Tiburtina in the late nineteenth century (Vorster 1999 290n38).

Despite the authoritative views of some scholars, who have doubted that this sculpture group is an ancient work (see, e.g., Schneider 1990, 366), it seems most likely that this splendid marble reflects a taste for late Hellenistic art, associated with Rhodes and Asia Minor, that was assiduously cultivated in the Roman world in the first century BCE. The expression of suffering and the instability of movement relate this group closely to the *Laocoön*, a masterpiece of Hellenistic art. Moreover, the Chicago statue offers valuable evidence of a rare iconographic model that, through the present work or another very similar one now lost, strongly marked Florentine artistic culture in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.

—Fabrizio Paolucci



Luca Signorelli

Cortona c. 1450–1523 Cortona

Allegory of Fertility and Abundance,

c. 1512–15

Oil on panel, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 42 in.

(65 × 113 cm; painted area 58 × 105 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 n. 3107

PROVENANCE: Corazzi collection, Cortona (by 1858); Carlo Tommasi, Cortona (by 1866–94; sold, January 30, for 700 lire, to Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1894; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Crowe & Cavalcaselle 1866, 28; Mancini 1903, 71; van Marle 1937, 78; Cortona and Florence 1953, 81, no. 41; Scarpellini 1964, 141; Henry and Kanter 2002, no. 106, 231–32 (with further bibliography); Athens 2003, no. VI.8, 254–55; Beijing and Rouen 2006, no. 28, 297–98; Henry 2012, 276–77; Rome 2019, 130 (ill.), 134.



This distinctive grisaille was first recorded in 1858 in a private collection in Signorelli's hometown of Cortona. It passed to the Tommasi collection in Cortona shortly before it was acquired by the Uffizi in 1894. The subject is allegorical. The female figure on the left may be Abundance, or perhaps Ceres (the ancient Roman goddess of fertility), and holds a cornucopia, a traditional attribute of both. She balances a naked baby boy on her thigh, while another nude infant boy looks back toward her as he advances to embrace a young male adult, who is also nude apart from a thin belt of vine leaves and grapes. He can probably be identified as Bacchus/Dionysus, the ancient God of wine, and he reaches forward to place a crown onto the head of Abundance/Ceres. A second female nude sits on a rock on

the right and contemplates a plate or basket of fruit. The allegory's meaning is obscure but has been related to fecundity and fertility, and its secular tone establishes that this picture was produced for a domestic setting.

It may have functioned as a bedhead, where it would have been appropriate as an allegory of fertility. The panel appears to have been extensively cut along its bottom edge, which has an unusually large unpainted area; if the planks it was originally painted on had been of equal widths, this unpainted area would have been even larger and might have formed part of the structure of a bed, or been covered by the mattress.

The picture evokes a mythological past in which figures sat around naked or dressed only in loose cloaks or fronds of vine leaves. This

evocation of a bucolic antiquity is enhanced by the decision to paint the scene as a monochrome grisaille, which is suggestive of a shallow relief sculpture in stone (and may also have been intended to blend into a domestic interior). This type of subject also played toward Signorelli's recognized strengths as a painter of nude figures—a skill that was celebrated in the *Lives of the Artists* (1568) by Giorgio Vasari, where Signorelli was assigned a prominent position as the last artist of his second age of painting; effectively as the artist who ushered in the era of Raphael and Michelangelo. The seated nude on the right is especially fine and recalls Signorelli's frescoed keystone in the Vatican Stanze and a drawing *Apollo Playing a Lyre* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, inv. 130 F), which might also have been intended for the Stanze.

The iconography and patronage has been examined by Lisa Venturini (Athens 2003) and Milena Pannitteri (Beijing and Rouen 2006). The latter argued for an erudite patron, close to Medici circles, and implicitly dated the picture earlier than other scholars. It is a difficult picture to date—there is no external evidence that offers any assistance, and Signorelli's style was remarkably consistent over his long career. Nevertheless, a dating in the years soon after 1510 (c. 1512–15) seems more probable to this author. At that date Signorelli was increasingly to be found in Cortona, working for patrons who could not command his attention at an earlier date, when he was favored by the Medici and a series of popes and cardinals. There were well-read patrons in Cortona as well as in the

larger centers of Florence and Rome, and the provenance from Cortona is likely to indicate that it was painted for the city. In addition to considering local patrons, it is also possible that the picture was painted for one of Signorelli's own children or grandchildren, and that the possible references to fertility might have been a personal expression of his hopes for the future of his family.

—Tom Henry

Workshop of Filippino Lippi (Master of Memphis, probably Bernardo di Leonardo)

Active in Florence, late fifteenth century–sixteenth century

Two Muses (Erato and Melpomene),

Early sixteenth century

Oil and tempera on panel, 11 × 8½ in.

(28.1 × 21.4 cm)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Putnam

Dana McMillan Fund, 67.28

PROVENANCE: [Giuseppe Bellisi, London, before 1940]. Rex Beaumont (?), Belvedere House, Ireland (until 1965, sale, Christie's, London, November 26, 1965, no. 120, ill., as "Workshop of Filippino Lippi"; to Arcade); [Arcade Galleries, London, from 1965]. [H. Shickman Gallery, New York, until 1967; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art]

SELECTED REFERENCES: Nelson in Nelson and Zambrano 2004, 558, no. 40.1 (with bibliography); Nelson 2022.

This panel represents two of the nine muses, the female figures from ancient Greek and Roman mythology who both embodied and inspired the liberal arts and sciences. Erato, the muse of Music, plays an enormous lyre, although the string instrument never reached this size in antiquity or the Renaissance. A melancholy Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, leans on the base of the instrument and holds the mask that identifies her. This group faithfully reproduces the lower-right-hand section of the altar wall of the Chapel of Filippo Strozzi (church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, fig. 20.1). This fresco, from 1495–97, forms part of a cycle by Filippino Lippi, then the leading painter in Florence. The chapel decorations as a whole were praised and influential, but the two muses evidently had a special appeal for Filippino's contemporaries. They also appear in an early sixteenth-century engraving by Cristofano Robetta (for this artist, see no. 51). The present painting was made by a member of Filippino's workshop now known as the Master of Memphis, previously called the Master of Tavernelle and once associated with a student of Filippino named Niccolò Cartoni. This master painted many works based on Filippino's drawings; a document relating to one of these works, a *Coronation* from the early 1500s (Musée du Louvre, Paris), has recently permitted a probable identification with a certain Bernardo di Leonardo. In the *Two Muses* the painter added the bright colors, given that Filippino's prototype is monochrome, and simplified drapery folds, both features found in many of his other works.

In the fresco and panel, a Latin inscription below the fantastic instrument indicates that the muses played for deo max[imo] (the greatest God). In the chapel, another inscription above this group translates as "Formerly to the departed spirits, we now sing to the best and greatest God." This somewhat cryptic phrase suggests that now that the pagan era is over, the frescoed muses pay homage to Christ—the panel presumably carried the same meaning. Some churchmen of the day would not have approved. The Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola, who had a great impact on Botticelli, objected to polyphonic music and organs in churches and even announced, "I will not listen to the songs of your lyre."

Filippino based his Erato on an ancient relief from the *Sarcophagus of Nine Muses* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). He copied her accurately in a drawing (British Museum, London), but for the fresco he added a mask, the standard symbol of artifice. Unlike any other ancient or Renaissance muse, Erato steps on her attribute. This unexpected gesture evidently conveys her scorn for artifice. In contrast, Melpomene holds her attribute so we can see two cords, and thus the muse shows that the mask, so important for theater, is ready for use. Filippino's novel depiction of masks suggests artifice can be negative, but also serve an essential role in spectacles and, by extension, in images.

In the sarcophagus, Erato plucks a small lyre with her fingers. In the fresco, panel, and engraving, however, she uses a plectrum, thus exhibiting the playing technique indicated in some obscure ancient texts. This



Fig. 20.1. Filippino Lippi, *Two Muses*, detail from altar wall, 1495–97, fresco, Chapel of Filippo Strozzi, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

highly erudite detail was praised in 1581 by the music theorist Vincenzo Galilei, father of the astronomer Galileo. Galilei also suggested that Filippino was "helped by some scholar of the rank of a Poliziano." The most famous humanist of the day, Poliziano had no known ties with Filippo Strozzi, and both died before this fresco was begun. Moreover, the wealthy banker showed no interest in recondite ancient texts. Filippino's eldest son Alfonso, however, had a solid classical education as well as a documented interest in theater; he was also an opponent of Savonarola. Most probably, after Filippo's death in 1491, Alfonso worked together with Filippino to develop the Strozzi Chapel iconography, including this unique representation of the muses. A learned Florentine probably commissioned this panel shortly after the chapel decorations were completed, in 1502. The size and the subject, a reflection on the nature of artifice and imagery, indicate that it was made to adorn a scholar's study. The panel and fresco express a central interest of Renaissance humanists: to express values celebrated in the Christian era though figures inspired by antiquity.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Ancient Roman

Cinerary urn with dedication to Decimus Aemilius Chius and Hortensia Phoebe,

50–100 CE

Marble, 18¾ × 11½ × 7¾ in.

(48 × 28 × 19.4 cm)

INSCRIPTION: *dis manib[us]/ d[ecimi] aemili/ cbi et/ hortensiae / phoebes* (To the deified souls of the late Decimus Aemilius Chius and Hortensia Phoebe)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 62.20a–b

PROVENANCE: Outside the Porta San Pancrazio (“fuori di San Pancrazio”), Rome (J. Séguier, BNF, Ms. Lat. 16932); Villa Doria Pamphilj, Rome (by 1666; BCS, Ms. K III.3, f. 502; Fabretti 1699, 600, no. 11); [Mathias Komor, New York, until 1962; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1962]

SELECTED REFERENCES: CIL 6:11033 (with previous bibliography); *Art Quarterly* 1962, 262, 265; Vermeule 1981, 264, no. 222; Boschung 1987, 100, no. 711; S. Priuli in Panciera 1987, 114n502; Sinn 1987, 271; New Haven, San Antonio, and Raleigh 1996–97, 202–3, no. 155; Bodel-Tracy 1997, 131.

This cinerary urn was reassembled from original fragments at an unknown date and part of the right posterior corner of the base is a replacement. The gabled lid has palmette-shaped acroteria and a tympanum with a bird pecking fruit, and was probably carved in the seventeenth century.

The chest of the urn, in the shape of a tall parallelepiped with a profiled base, has reliefs on three sides and a plain back. A ram’s head crowns the upper part of each corner, and a garland with laurel leaves and berries is draped from each ram’s horn, so that a garland extends horizontally across each of the three sides. Beneath each garland, birds peck at the berries, two birds on the front and one on each side. On the short sides a second pecking bird appears above the garland, over which is represented a ceremonial dish or *pat- era* on one side and a pitcher on the other side.

A Gorgon head dominates the center of the frontal relief. Completing the decoration are two sphinxes on each of the front corners, while eagles on the corresponding back corners turn their heads back to peck at garlands. Ram’s heads, a common motif in urns and altars, allude to the practice of sacrificing this animal to the gods of the underworlds, such as Dis Pater and Vediovis, and as head of the flock, the ram was also connected to the ancestor cult and was a symbol of protection.

A positive value and an apotropaic function also apply to the Gorgon’s head and sphinxes, which were popular in this context (compare, for example, Sperti 1988, 51, 58). The garlands satisfy a wish to surround burial places with living plants and flowers, which also appear in funerary epigrams, and the birds also evoke an idyllic setting. The garland is woven of laurel, an evergreen, alluding to immortality (Sinn 1987, 56–57).

Above the Gorgon’s head appears an inscription carved on a field inset within a sculpted rope frame. The dedication, in five lines, has precise lettering: in lines one and three the words are separated by triangular-shaped periods and the forms of the *I* are raised above the other letters. The urn is dedicated to Decimus Aemilius Chius and Hortensia Phoebe and it once contained their ashes. Their relationship is not stated in the inscription, but it has been conjectured that they were husband and wife (New Haven, San Antonio, and Raleigh 1996–97, 203). The surnames of Chius and Phoebe are Greek and make it likely that they were a freedman and a freedwoman (on the diffusion of these two surnames in Roman society, see Solin 2003, 647–48, 314–15). The pairing of the man’s *praenomen* and *nomen*, Decimus Aemilius, recurs in some thirty epigraphic attestations in seventeen funerary texts, which in turn

makes it likely that the present urn belonged to the Aurelian cemetery just outside the city walls (Panciera 1987, 113–14n498). A modern replica of the inscription in the Museo Civico at Catania (CIL 10:1089*) differs from the original in the wording, orthography, and placement of the letters.

The decorative motifs of the urn allow a dating in the second half of the first century CE, in the Flavian age of Roman art (a date to 75 CE is suggested by Vermeule 1981, 264, while a date of the inscription alone to the first half of the second century CE is suggested by Solin 2003, 315, 648).

Ancient urns, altars, and sarcophagi supplied Renaissance artists with a copious repertory of decorative motifs that were applied in all manner of works and contexts, both sacred and profane. A particular example of this taste for classicizing or *all’antica* decoration is the funerary chapel of Bartolomeo Colleoni at Bergamo (1470–76), where Giovanni Antonio Amadeo deployed a rich panoply of such motifs, for instance, in the ram’s heads, garlands, and sphinxes carved in relief on the pilasters of the monument.

—Alessandro Muscillo



Filippino Lippi

Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Two Studies of Ancient Motifs (Grotteschi),

1489–93

Pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk; 8 × 5½ in. (20.1 × 13.5 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1634 E

PROVENANCE: Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930; Ferri 1881 cat.)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Cecchi in Florence 1992a, 256–57, no. 12.14.



Fig. 22.1. Filippino Lippi, *Studies of Ancient Motifs (Grotteschi)*, 1489–93, Pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk, 7½ × 4¾ in. (19.1 × 12 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1633 E.

This drawing, together with another sheet very similar in style and technique in the same collection (fig. 22.1), represents decorative motifs inspired by ancient Roman paintings. Here they are arranged into two vertical structures resembling extremely elaborate candelabras, adorned with vases, goat heads, putti, horses, female heads, a framed panel painting, and a riot of zoomorphic decorations. Similar motifs also enrich the fictive framework of Filippino Lippi's frescoes in the Carafa Chapel in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome (1489–93) and the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Florence (1494–1504). The latter cycle even led Giorgio Vasari to write in 1550 that Filippino was the first to introduce to Florence the type of decoration known as *all'antica*, that is, in the style found in ancient reliefs and paintings. Although exaggerated, this claim reveals Filippino's exalted reputation just a few decades after his death. The drawings provide clues about how the artist developed his ideas.

During his extended sojourn in Rome, far longer than those of Botticelli or most of their Florentine contemporaries, Filippino had an extraordinary opportunity to study not just fragments of ancient sculptures and buildings but also the recently discovered wall paintings in Emperor Nero's Golden House (*Domus Aurea*). This remained buried under the Baths of Trajan, so the excavated area resembled a cave (*grotto*); as a result, the murals were known as *grotteschi*. The term applies more generally to all fanciful (or

"grotesque"), *all'antica* decorations that mix animal, human, and plant forms, just as we see on this sheet.

A booklet written in the mid-1490s offers us an amusing but believable image of artists in Rome, lowering themselves into a hole in the ground to see the remarkable ancient paintings. These murals, painted in what we now call the Third Roman style, display an aesthetic fundamentally different from what Filippino and his colleagues had studied in Florence. Given their admiration for all things ancient, we can only imagine their surprise when encountering works by artists who had no interest in clear narrative, symmetrical compositions, or one-point perspective. Instead, the paintings have an abundance of ornamental details combined with highly confusing spatial arrangements. Filippino's drawings help us recapture what late fifteenth-century artists found of interest and value in Roman art. We are very far from the aesthetic of the Neoclassical movement, which in the eighteenth century celebrated the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of antiquity, to quote the influential art historian of that era, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. In the early 1500s, Michelangelo and Raphael found inspiration in the monumentality of ancient works. A generation earlier, however, Filippino seemed most impressed by the countless fragments of paintings, sculptures, and architecture, most unclassified and unstudied, and how these details could be recombined into *all'antica* decorative patterns.

The rapid touch in Filippino's drawings after the antique, and the fantastic elements he often added, distinguished the artist from most of his contemporaries. These studies can be divided into four broad categories: (1) accurate studies, of which we have very few; (2) free copies; (3) variations on ancient motifs; and (4) depictions of models in poses inspired by Roman monuments. Naturally, some sheets cannot be neatly classified under one heading or another, but these groupings indicate some of the ways in which Filippino and other Renaissance artists used ancient sources. The present drawing falls into the third category. Although inspired by the decorations in the Golden House, there are no exact matches to extant ancient paintings. All the surviving drawings by Filippino related to those murals are free copies, although he probably made faithful reproductions as well. It has even been suggested that the *Codex Escurialensis*, the most celebrated Renaissance notebook of drawings after the antique, reflects accurate studies, now lost, made by Filippino. Nevertheless, the similarities in subject matter between the *Codex Escurialensis* and Filippino's works probably indicates that many artists in fifteenth-century Rome studied the same ancient monuments. The verve of Filippino's sketches after the antique, not their accuracy, helps us understand why the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini and others still praised and collected Filippino's drawings in the mid-sixteenth century.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Filippino Lippi

Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Saint Martin Dividing His Cloak,

1490–94

Pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk; 15 × 3 in. (38.3 × 7.6 cm)

WATERMARK: two keys crossed, stem formed with single stroke, circle rings, close to Briquet 3837

INSCRIBED (in brown ink on the cartouche above the niche): *s. marti / nus*

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 1169 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Piero del Pollaiuolo); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Nelson in Nelson and Zambrano 2004, 460–61, 590–91, no. 45.d.2; Nelson 2022.



Fig. 23.1. Filippino Lippi, *Virgin and Child with Saints Martin, John the Baptist, Catherine of Alexandria and Two Donors* (Nerli altarpiece), 1493–94, oil and tempera on panel, 67¼ × 71¾ in. (170.6 × 182.5 cm), church of Santo Spirito, Florence.

This drawing, attributed to Filippino Lippi by all scholars, represents the most famous event in the life of Saint Martin, identified by the inscribed tablet. The standard written source for this and most other Christian images was Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. The thirteenth-century text explains that in the fourth century, when Martin was a member of Emperor Constantine's elite cavalry bodyguards, he was in the French city of Amiens on a cold winter day and "met a poor man all naked, to whom no man gave any alms. Then Martin drew out his sword and carved his mantle therewith in two pieces in the middle, and gave that one half to the poor man, for he had nothing else to give to him, and he clad himself with that other half." The next day, Martin dreamed that Christ appeared in the cloth he had given the beggar. Filippino shows the soldier on horseback as he holds up his long sword and prepares to divide his thick mantle. The artist positioned this article of clothing, literally central to the narrative, so it separates the saint from the scantily dressed beggar, who looks up in gratitude. The compressed setting within a niche, combined from the view from below, creates the startling impression that the richly attired horse is about to step in the observer's space. The drawing reveals both Filippino's inventive use of perspective and dramatic flair.

The coat of arms of the Nerli family, in the lower part of the sheet, and the style and subject all indicate that the drawing relates to Filippino's *Virgin and Child with Saints Martin, John the Baptist, Catherine of Alexandria and Two Donors*, an altarpiece still in the Nerli Chapel of the church of Santo Spirito, Florence (fig. 23.1). From two anonymous but reliable sources, both written in Florence in the early sixteenth century, we learn that the kneeling figures portray Tanai de' Nerli and his wife, Nanna Capponi. The chapel, we read, also included a stained-glass window, now lost. The unusual shape of this sheet corresponds to that of windows from other chapels in Santo Spirito. The highly finished quality of the drawing suggests that Filippino made it for Nerli for the patron's approval. The craftsmen could then use it to transform the clear, bold forms into pieces of colored glass. The architectural setting relates not to the story of Martin but the prominent niches in Filippino's painting, and especially the shape of the chapel itself.

The centaurs at the bottom of the sheet and winged angels, swags of greenery, and candles at the top reveal Filippino's careful study of ancient paintings and marble reliefs during his Roman sojourn (1489–93), also found in no. 22. Most scholars agree that Filippino painted the Nerli altarpiece soon after he returned to Florence in 1493. Moreover, Filippino seems

to have made a short trip in Milan the same year, given that the pose of the Holy Children in the altarpiece reflects an invention that originated in Leonardo da Vinci's Milanese workshop. In the same period Filippino painted his *Saint Jerome* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), a work inspired by Leonardo's painting of the same subject (Pinacoteca, Vatican City). The beggar in this drawing exhibits some similarities to Filippino's *Jerome*, though it is possible that the artist made this sheet when he was still in Rome.

Already in November 1490 Nerli began making yearly donations to the church of Santo Spirito on the feast day of Saint Martin. He probably acquired his chapel there in 1455, but only in 1493 did he join the Santo Spirito *opera* (board of works), and soon after, he completed the decoration of his chapel. Nerli's devotion to Martin was not unusual in Florence but might relate to the patron's own life. Though born in Florence, Tanai spent many years in France, where his father held important positions at the court of René d'Anjou. Over a millennium earlier, Martin was raised in North Italy, converted to Christianity, and moved to France. Filippino's drawing records an event from the saint's life there and constitutes one of the few surviving studies for a stained-glass window from fifteenth-century Florence.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Raffaellino del Garbo

Barberino Val d'Elsa 1466–1527 Florence

Allegory, mid-1490s

Oil on panel, 11½ × 8¾ in. (29 × 22 cm)

INSCRIBED: *Nulla Deterior Pestis Quam**Familiaris Inimicus*

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8378

PROVENANCE: Guardaroba Medicea, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (by early eighteenth century–1919); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1919; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Morelli 1890, 124; Konody 1908, xxi; Berenson 1932b, 285; Scharf 1935, 111–12, no. 59; Neilson 1938, 135–36; Berti 1979, no. P867, 332; Nelson 1996; Nelson in Cecchi 2011, no. 39, 192–93.



Fig. 24.1. Raffaellino del Garbo, *Virgin and Child*, c. 1490, oil on panel, 50 × 28 cm, Musée de Tessé, Le Mans, inv. 10.30.

This *Allegory* was long considered to have been painted by Filippino Lippi. It is not a surprising attribution, as the work presents certain characteristics associated with Lippi's repertoire. The luxuriant fabric draped around the old man on the right takes up a typology included in Lippi's catalogue since 1475–80, further amplified in the last decade of the century (*Madonna and Child*, formerly Kaiser Friedrich-Museum, Berlin). The facial features also correspond perfectly to the Filippinesque canons: the adolescent displays a slightly cold beauty, similar to the Strasbourg *Angel* (Musée des Beaux-Arts); the figure on the right is reminiscent of Filippino's portrayals of older people, such as the characters in the sacred legend in the Strozzi Chapel at Santa Maria Novella. The rocky landscape dotted with a few tufts of grass can be likened to the one in the *Adoration of the Magi* at the National Gallery in London (fig. 51.1).

However, as Alessandro Cecchi emphasizes (reported in Nelson 1996), the work's affectation places it, rather, in the manner of Raffaellino del Garbo, who was in Filippino's studio. In fact, Giorgio Vasari notes that "the student had so fully taken on the master's style that many could not tell the difference." We can observe this in the *Portrait of a Man* in London (National Gallery), which presents deep affinities with the *Allegory*. The refined

manner, similar to that of an illuminator, in Raffaellino's paintings in the 1490s (fig. 24.1), is very recognizable. Here, too, the painter does not hesitate to enhance his miniature painting with gold. The architectural allusions, however, are utterly personal—notably, on the right, the fantastical reconstruction that, despite its spectral appearance, is clearly related to the fiction developed in the *Pietà* in Munich (Alte Pinakothek). The red drapery, certainly in the Filippinesque mold, nevertheless corresponds to Raffaellino's own practices, as confirmed by the perfect analogy with the *Study of Draped Figure* at the Musée du Louvre, Paris (Inv. 9861).

The iconography of the panel is complex. An adolescent boy, whose features are repeated according to the archaizing codes of continuous narration, is entangled with a snake. An elderly man holding a lightning bolt, making him easily identifiable as the god Jupiter, looks on. The rest of the episode, however, remains cryptic. The inscription, which seems to transcribe the young man's words, "No plague is worse than an enemy in the family," no doubt contains the key to interpretation.

Jonathan K. Nelson (1996) hypothesizes that the image is a warning addressed to Piero the Unfortunate, in the context of tensions that arose within the Medici family before the invasion of Florence by Charles VIII in

1494. Piero Lorenzo de' Medici, who was only twenty-two years old at the time, found his power threatened by a conspiracy fomented by his cousin, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, whose symbol was the snake. The ermine in the center was an allusion to the close ties between Piero, Lorenzo de' Medici's son, and the kingdom of Naples, whose King Ferrante had made the small mammal his emblem. This would apparently justify the presence of Filippo Brunelleschi's dome in the background. As for the laurel tree, it might, by its tone, refer to the symbolic protection of Lorenzo il Magnifico or, more generically, to the Medici banking family.

In the literate and humanist context of the time, this painting attests to the fashion for political allegory, which the Medici particularly appreciated. Donatello's *David* and *Judith* provide examples of this, as do studies executed later by Leonardo da Vinci, such as the famous scene with a dog and an eagle drawn on paper (Royal Collection, Windsor), which apparently alluded to the meeting between Pope Leo X and King François I of France. Given the taste for hermeticism, enhanced by the emblematic and the syncretic, one can easily imagine such a metaphor on display in the sibylline setting of a *studiolo*.

—Matteo Gianceselli





Sacred Beauty

The artworks presented here were in large part made for private devotion and consumption. They are small religious panels, mostly destined to decorate the home, particularly the bedroom. In addition, there are some examples of works commissioned by institutions. Botticelli's *Madonna and Child in Glory with Angels* (no. 26) is thought to have come from the Arte del Cambio (the bankers' guild), judging from its nineteenth-century frame, which is decorated with golden florins all around and is presumed to copy the original. It is an early work with delicate colors, a symphony of grays, still indebted to the style of his master Filippo Lippi, whose drawing for the famous *Madonna and Child with Angels* in the Gallerie degli Uffizi is exhibited nearby (no. 25). Also by Filippo Lippi are the panels with the Annunciation, Saint Anthony Abbot, and Saint John the Baptist, small doors of what was probably a cupboard in a sacristy (nos. 27, 28).

The two magnificent tondi are a typically Florentine format that recalls the shape of ceremonial birth trays (*deschi da parto*) and of many round window frames and other decorative elements in the architecture of the city from the time of the architect Filippo Brunelleschi and onward. Those in the exhibition were surely commissioned for patrician homes or palaces, where they were hung in the bedroom. The *Adoration* by Francesco Botticini (no. 32), a prominent artist in fifteenth-century Florence, is set in a sumptuous terraced garden with an elegant balustrade. The amiable group of heavenly figures somehow conjures up the gathering of a loving family with many children of all ages. Botticelli's tondo, the *Madonna of the Roses* (no. 31), was executed, as his late works, with the help of pupils who

followed his design and instructions. The result evokes a real family playing in a garden, with the young angels fussing like elder siblings around the Christ child. The figures are set against a marvelous hedge of roses, which is a symbol of both the Virgin Mary and, for their thorns, of the Passion of Christ. These paintings, placed in the bedroom, were meant to bestow upon the inhabitants numerous descendants and a happy continuity of the family lineage. Roses appear also in Botticelli's poignant *Madonna with Child and the Young Saint John the Baptist*, probably for a large palace or a small private chapel, which clearly prefigures the later event of the Descent from the Cross—and in this case, the prickly flowers recall the crown of thorns (no. 34). The *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist* by Filippino Lippi, Botticelli's assistant in his early years and faithful to his master's style, is a *colmo da camera*, one of the paintings made by the artists for the open market, to meet the demand of wealthy citizens who wanted to decorate their homes and bedrooms (no. 30). It is an exquisite scene full of narrative episodes in the background, showing the growing influence of Netherlandish art in Florence, which was admired for its wealth of detail.

At the center of this section is a marble sculpture depicting a Cupid lying asleep on a lion's hide (no. 33), a work very similar to one recorded in the antiquities collection of Lorenzo il Magnifico in the San Marco garden. In Renaissance Florence, where classical art was venerated as perfect, this was a model to look to for representations of the infant Christ in religious paintings like the ones shown here.

—Roberta Bartoli

Filippo Lippi

Florence c. 1406–1469 Spoleto

Madonna and Child with Two Angels (recto), c. 1465; *Penitent Saint Jerome Kneeling before an Altar, Accompanied by a Lion*, and *Study of Decoration* (verso), 1455–60

Metalpoint heightened with lead white on ocher prepared paper (recto); metalpoint, brown wash, heightened with lead white, over black chalk, on red prepared paper (verso); 12¾ × 9½ in. (32.6 × 23.9 cm)

INSCRIBED (in graphite on verso at lower center in nineteenth- or twentieth-century hand: 184 Esp[osizione] Filippo Lippi

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 184 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687, as Fra Filippo Lippi; Pelli 1775–93, as Filippino Lippi); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Petrioli Tofani 1972, no. 9; Rook in London and Florence 2010–11, 114–15, no. 12 (with bibliography); Faietti in Florence and Venice 2019, 116–117, no. 3.1.

One of few surviving drawings by Filippo Lippi, this is an exceptional example of his skill as a draftsman. It is closely related to a celebrated painting of the same subject, also in the Uffizi, the so-called *Lippina*, also known as the *Madonna of the Pearl*, a painting that was undoubtedly a remarkable commission for private devotion (fig. 25.1). The scene, a mystical interpretation of biblical texts, shows a kind of celestial vision in which the infant Christ is being presented to Mary as her spiritual spouse. The exquisite painting, datable to around 1465, immediately garnered great admiration and became an iconographic model for fellow Florentine artists, first among them, the young Sandro Botticelli. Botticelli was a member of Lippi's workshop during the six or seven years Lippi worked between Prato and Florence (1459–66) and when the panel was probably painted.

The most striking difference between the drawing and the related painting is the absence of the stone window that frames the figures in the painting and opens onto an airy landscape, in accordance with Leon Battista Alberti's influential idea that a painting presents "a window open upon the world" (*On Painting*, 1435). In the drawing the background and source of light are not defined, and strong highlights in white are applied to accentuate the three-dimensional relief of the bodies. Lippi draws the Virgin absorbed in prayer with her hands folded, the infant Christ leans toward his mother with tender affection. Two angels hold him up and bring him closer to his mother; one stands at the back, his face partially hidden under Jesus's arms; the other, in the foreground, turns toward the onlooker in a natural pose and smiles. Fra Filippo frequently deployed such figures to engage the spectator with the scene. Scholars have identified this as one of a number of drawings often referred to as *chiaroscuro*, in which the artist translated three-dimensional qualities of sculptures by contemporaries such as Donatello and Luca Della Robbia into the graphic medium, with a precise rendering of light and shade.

The exact function of this drawing has been debated by scholars. Some view it as a preparatory drawing for the painting, while others, mainly in the twentieth century, considered it to be a later derivation after the painting, made in the Lippi workshop. No serious doubts have ever been raised about Lippi's authorship of the drawing, and it can be confirmed, thanks to scientific analyses that reveal many pentimenti in the drawing, as well as changes compared to the Uffizi painting, differences that are implausible for a mere copy. Besides the drawing having neither the window frame or landscape, the volute of the wooden chair in the drawing is oriented in the opposite direction in the painting. Also the placement of the legs of the child and the arm of the angel were moved in the course of the drawing's execution. It has been noted that the first sketches of these



Fig. 25.1. Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Angels* (also known as *Lippina* and *Madonna of the Pearl*), c. 1465, tempera on panel, 36¼ × 25 in. (92 × 63.5 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture.



Fig. 25.2. Workshop of Filippo Lippi, verso of no. 25, *Penitent Saint Jerome in the Desert Accompanied by a Lion*, 1455–60.

forms are closer to their appearance in the painting. It can therefore be assumed that Lippi personally reworked the composition, adjusting the drawing after the painting to create an exact model, with variations for the use of his workshop. Given this hypothesis, the finished drawing would not have been created before 1465. The image on the verso, of the penitent Saint Jerome with a lion, appears to be earlier, and is not a certain work of Lippi's.

—Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli



Sandro Botticelli
Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Madonna and Child in Glory with Angels,

c. 1467–69

Tempera on panel, 47¼ × 26 in. (120 × 66 cm)
(unframed); 65¾ × 38½ in. (166 × 98 cm.)
(framed)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria
delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 n. 504

PROVENANCE: Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo
degli Uffizi, Florence (before 1784; 1784 inv.
719; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence
for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Lightbown 1978,
18–20 cat. B3; Pons 1989, 57, no. 19; Cecchi
and Del Serra in Berti and Petrioli Tofani
1995, 27–28, no. 5; A. Cecchi, *Botticelli*, Milano
2008, 102; Waldman in Hatfield 2009, 104–6;
Dombrowski 2010, 62–66; Mariani and Van
der Sman 2015, 182–201, especially 187.

This sacred image presents a celestial vision with Mary, queen of heaven, seated on a throne of cloudlike angels, identified variously by scholars as cherubim (Lightbown 1978), or seraphim (Dombrowski 2010). The angels and the golden rays that stand out from the background outline a mandorla, or *vesica piscis*, a symbol of the apotheosis associated since early Christianity with Christ and the Virgin. The composition, devoid of any references to space apart from the volumetric forms of the figures themselves, recalls the abstract settings of images of the heavenly Madonna of Humility popular in the fourteenth century. The redolence of the archaic devotional imagery probably accentuated the sense of the painting's sacredness for the devotee. Burn marks on the left side, in the area of the angelic mandorla and the Virgin's robe, no doubt due to candles, and masked by later retouching, speak of a painting that was the object of profound devotion over the centuries. This unearthly or supernatural character of the composition contrasts with the very human and tender depiction of Mary, who turns a preoccupied glance upon her son, appearing to foresee his destiny. Jesus, who seems to abandon himself in his mother's embrace, has his lips parted and his right hand raised in a classical oratory gesture. The figures are illuminated by a light source coming from the right, which models the volume of the bodies of the child and his mother, whose lap is slightly foreshortened. Decorations of mordant gilding on the surface pick out the right side of the features of the cherubim. It is hard to tell if the direction of the light source related to the painting's

original location; its small size suggests that it adorned a small altar or served private, domestic devotion.

It is believed that the sacred image was part of the collected properties of the guilds (*arti*) and the tribunal of the *arti* (the Tribunale della Mercanzia), whose assets were merged into the chamber of commerce, and subsequently, in 1782, taken to the Uffizi (Lightbown 1978). The city's guilds, of medieval origin, oversaw the trades and professions and played a central role in Florence's economic, political, and cultural life until the fifteenth century. They also sponsored important artistic commissions. Images of the Virgin Mary, whether painted or sculpted reliefs, were usually found in guild headquarters, and most guilds were also patrons of altars, chapels, and churches in the Florentine territory. The gilt disks on a red field decorating the frame of the painting recall the coat of arms of the bankers' guild (Arte del Cambio), leading to the conclusion that the work was produced for this corporation. In truth, the tabernacle-shaped frame does not seem to date to the time of the painting, but it may very well reprise the original frame (Cecchi and Del Serra in Berti and Petrioli Tofani 1995; Waldman in Hatfield 2009). A commission by the Arte del Cambio, furthermore, might have been awarded to Botticelli through the Vespucci, his neighbors in the Unicorn district of Florence and a family of notaries with professional ties to the guild (Waldman 2009; Van der Sman 2015).

Attributed to Botticelli since the late nineteenth century, this painting is generally considered to be an early work by the master,



Fig. 26.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with Angels*, c. 1468, tempera on panel, 33½ × 25¼ in. (85 × 64 cm), Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, inv. 1890 n. 3166.

one of his first commissions as an independent artist after departing the workshop of Filippo Lippi, who left Florence in 1467 to undertake a major fresco commission in Spoleto. The full-bodied figure of the child, whose robust form makes him hierarchically larger in scale than his mother, is closely related to Filippo Lippi's Madonna imagery. Details such as Jesus's dreamy glances, his curly hair, and the Virgin's pensive face and delicate features are also very Lippiesque. Small-format paintings of the Virgin were a typology very appropriate for a young and little-known master, and other images in this class by Botticelli beg comparison with the present work. One of the closest of these is the *Madonna and Child with Angels* in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence (fig. 26.1), which shares, among other things, the motif of the cherubim throne. The present painting has frequently been compared to Botticelli's 1470 painting *Fortitude* (fig. 5; see Lightbown 1978; Cecchi 2008), revealing that there are some weaknesses in the overall orchestration of the *Madonna and Child* composition, and also in the drawing of the cherubim mandorla, which suggest it was painted by a slightly less-experienced artist.

—Daniela Parenti



Filippo Lippi

Florence c. 1406–1469 Spoleto

Virgin of the Annunciation and Saint Anthony Abbot***The Angel of the Annunciation and Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1455–59**

Tempera on poplar panel; top and bottom images: 22 × 9 in. (56 × 23 cm), 22 × 9 in. (56 × 23 cm), 22 × 9½ in. (56 × 24 cm), 22 × 9½ in. (56 × 24 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890, nos. 8356, 8357

PROVENANCE: Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence (until 1919; inv. Masselli 1855 nos. 211, 224); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1919; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ruda 1993, 187, 333, no. 40, pls. 107–8; Mannini in Paris 2009, 120–23, no. 15 (with bibliography); Tartuferi in Benassai et al. 2014, 124–26.

These two paintings belonged to a single complex; the origin and intended use are not known. The vertical format of both panels, each made of a single plank of poplar, makes it likely that they were the doors of a reliquary cupboard or the shutters of an altar or a pipe organ, a hypothesis that seems to be confirmed by some traces of lost fittings. After the original structure was taken apart at an unknown date, the panels were cut along the lower edge. Each panel has its original gilt frame and is divided by a gilt molding into two vertical scenes, each containing one holy figure. Elements uniting the fields are the soft azure background, suggesting sky and more naturalistic than the traditional gold ground, and the presence of veined marble steps of different colors below each figure. In the upper register of the panel on the left is shown the Virgin of the Annunciation. Prayer book in hand, she draws back with timorous surprise at the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove. Here the setting is less abstract than in the other panels, as the Virgin stands in front of a very essential bed, depicted in sharp foreshortening. The *lettuccio*, or daybed, was an important furnishing in the homes of affluent Florentines in the period; it provided both storage and seating,

and could be laden with cushions for a daytime nap. In more elaborate examples, the *lettuccio* was placed on a wooden platform and equipped with a high back that was decorated with inlaid wood or paintings. The cornice projecting from the top of the elaborate seat also supplied a convenient shelf for objects.

The lower panel depicts a monumental Saint Anthony Abbot, shown as an elderly bearded monk, with two of his distinctive attributes, a bell and his tau-shaped staff. In the upper register of the panel on the right, an elegant Archangel Gabriel bows slightly and holds out a white lily as he presents his news. Below, Saint John the Baptist, wearing his customary camel-skin tunic and holding a wooden processional cross, is shown frontally with his hand raised in a blessing gesture.

While the two panels are unmistakably Lippesque in style, heavy repainting and the general state of conservation have affected their reception and made it difficult to assess the degree of Fra Filippo's involvement in their execution. Some scholars have fully recognized the authorship of the friar, while others have attributed the paintings to workshop assistants using drawings by the master. Recently the autograph character of the panels has been confirmed by comparison with



Fig. 27.1. Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*, c. 1450, tempera on panel, 46 × 68 in. (117 × 173 cm), Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome.





Fig. 27.2. Filippo Lippi, *Herod's Banquet*, detail, Salome dancing, 1461, fresco, Duomo, Prato.

the figure types in the *Funeral of Saint Jerome*, a large panel painted by Lippi for the jurist Gimignano Inghirami at the beginning of the artist's stay in Prato (1452–53).

It is plausible to suppose that these panels were among the works that Lippi painted during the winter season, when the low temperatures and humidity prevented him from carrying out the frescoes in Prato Cathedral. During the colder months he and his workshop turned their energies to producing altarpieces for local churches and a great variety of other minor works, including banners, panels for the Ceppo Nuovo (the city charity that assisted the poor), and coats of arms for the *podestà*, the city magistrate, who was Florentine. After Prato was conquered by Florence, in 1350, it was administered by a Florentine magistrate, the *podestà*; this regime was remarkably significant for the fact that the city was subject to a “foreign” power.

Restoration work undertaken in 2010 made it possible to appreciate these panels' original quality and Lippi's working process,

although some weaknesses confirm workshop collaboration. The modulated chromatic range is more apparent; the execution is highly refined, with volumes built subtly with glazes and ultra thin white lead highlights applied to faces and clothes. The range of colors includes some composed with costly pigments—azurite with touches of lapis lazuli for the blues, transparent red lake, and gold to pick out details of the hems. Scientific analyses show pentimenti and variations in the underdrawing, revealing a working method that can be seen in other panels and frescoes by Fra Filippo, whereby he made continuous minor revisions and rethought the composition and figures in the course of his work.

On a stylistic basis, the panels likely date to the mid-1450s, a period corresponding to Lippi's first Prato period (c. 1452–59). The figure of the Virgin, with her delicate face and absorbed expression, and the elegant archangel, compare closely with the *Annunciation* in the Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome, a fully autograph work by Lippi painted around

1450, which also shares the unusual placement of Gabriel on the right side (fig. 27.1).

Botticelli, who trained with Lippi for six or seven years, was probably in his shop when the master was active between Prato and Florence. Young Sandro was a *garzone* (workshop boy) of about fifteen when Lippi and his collaborators were painting *Herod's Banquet* and *Funeral of Saint Stephen* (1461) frescoes in the lower section of Prato Cathedral. The monumentality of these works, the atmospheric organization of space, the sparkling colors (with details in gilt wax highlighting passages of the fresco and tempera surface), and the dynamic linearism of the dancing Salome (fig. 27.2) left a lasting impression on Botticelli.

—Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli



Filippino Lippi in the workshop of Botticelli

Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Head of a Young Woman in a Cap, early 1470s

Metalpoint heightened with lead white on paper tinted reddish pink, 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (24.5 × 18.4 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1153 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687; Pelli 1775–93 inv., as Botticelli); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Swinburne 1875, 326; Bambach in New York 1997, 108, no. 9; Lorenza Melli in Rome 2011, 106, no. 11.



Fig. 29.1. Workshop of Botticelli (Filippino Lippi), *Head of a Young Woman*, early 1470s, metalpoint with white highlights on reddish paper, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (21.4 × 17.3 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1156 E.

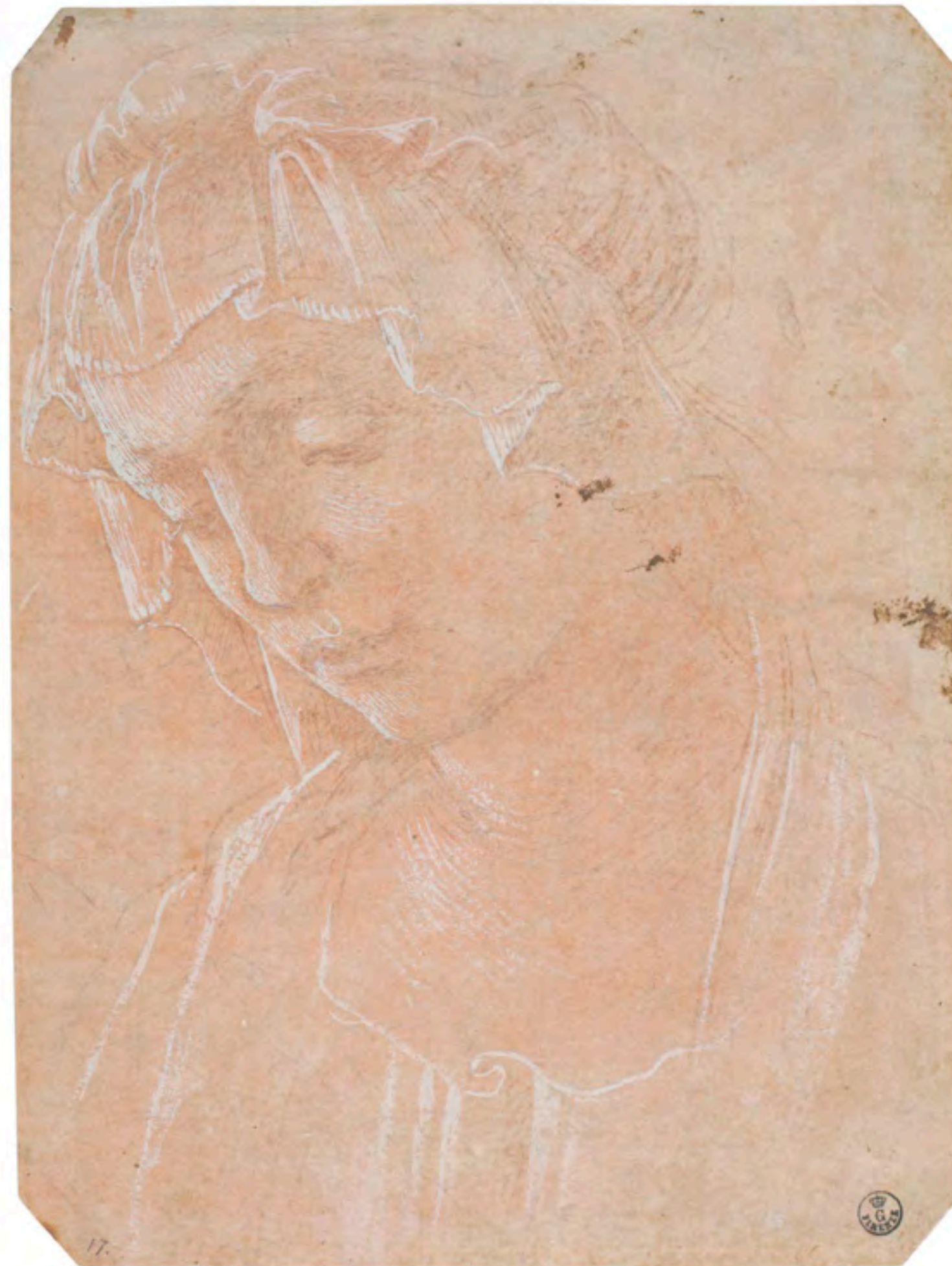
This sheet, together with another drawing in the same collection (fig. 29.1), comparable in subject, style, size, and technique, and perhaps originally part of the same sketchbook, provides a rare opportunity to see Filippino Lippi as a draftsman when he was still a student in the workshop of Sandro Botticelli. In both works, the facial types and even the approach to lighting recall Botticelli's paintings from the 1470s, although the two sheets should not be seen as preparatory sketches for panels. The present drawing, most probably a study for a downcast Madonna, exhibits undeniable similarities with the *Guidi Madonna* (c. 1470, Musée du Louvre, Paris), and the companion sheet evokes the Venus in the *Primavera* (c. 1478, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence). Nevertheless, the somewhat heavy-handed use of the metalpoint and especially the white highlights, and an uncertainty in some details, such as the lips of this figure and the folds of her dress, indicate that the drawings were made not by Botticelli himself, given the highly subtle outlines and shading found in early head studies by the master draftsman. We find close parallels in both the technique and facial type in early works by Filippino, who is documented in Botticelli's workshop in 1472. This gives us an approximate date for these sheets, though Filippino might have made them a couple of years earlier or later, and surely before his superb composition study for the

Adoration of the Magi (no. 51). Whatever their exact date, these drawings evince how large-scale studies of heads formed an essential part of a Renaissance artist's training.

It has not been observed that the first published reference to the drawings seems to be a remarkable essay by the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Notes on Designs of the Old Masters at Florence." First published in 1868, then reprinted in 1875, this long, detailed, but forgotten article then constituted the longest published analysis of the drawings by both Botticelli and Filippino. More importantly, this highly sensitive analysis had a direct impact on the essay dedicated to Botticelli published in 1870 by Walter Pater, a work that transformed the relatively obscure artist into an international superstar. Swinburne was a close friend of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, who surely shared with the poet their interest in Botticelli. The poet expressed a special appreciation for Renaissance drawings. Shortly before his visit to Florence in 1864, hundreds of sheets were placed on public view at the Uffizi for the first time. The letter *E* in modern inventory numbers indicates that a sheet had been exhibited (*esposto*). This applies to the present work and its companion, which were once catalogued as Botticelli by the museum and surely exhibited. For the English poet, drawings provided far more insight into Botticelli than his paintings, then covered with thick layers of yellow varnish. "The dull and dry quality of this thin

pallid colouring," Swinburne wrote about Botticelli's works on panel, "can here no longer impair the charm of his natural grace, the merit of his strenuous labour. Many of his single figures are worthy of praise and study." The first drawing he mentions, "[t]he head of a girl with gathered hair," probably refers to the Venus-like figure. The present drawing is most likely praised as follows: "The Virgin with veil bound up is among the gracefulest and purest of his many studies in that kind." These studies by Filippino thus played an important role in the rebirth of appreciation of Botticelli in the late nineteenth century.

A generation after Swinburne, a study appeared in 1899 by Bernard Berenson, then making his reputation as the greatest specialist of paintings and drawings of Renaissance Florence. Alas, he argued that the present drawing, the *Adoration of the Magi*, and several other sheets and panels were by an artist similar to Botticelli but "more dainty, subtler" and graceful than Filippino. Berenson baptized his invented artist the "Amico di Sandro," a "friend of Botticelli," but after a few decades Berenson finally conceded that nearly all the works by this imaginary figure were made by the young Filippino. That attribution has been universally accepted, but given the probable date of the present drawing, it seems most appropriate to consider it a product of Botticelli's workshop by his finest student. —Jonathan K. Nelson



Filippino Lippi

Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist (Feroni Madonna), early 1480sOil and tempera (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 39³/₈ × 22⁷/₈ in. (100 × 58 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, Inv. San Marco e Cenacoli no. 114

PROVENANCE: Feroni Collection, Florence (mid-nineteenth century). Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (by 1880)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Zambrano in Nelson and Zambrano 2004, 253, 353–54, no. 36.



Fig. 30.1. Filippino Lippi (?), *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist*, early 1480s, oil and tempera (*tempera grassa*) on panel, Museo di Palazzo Davanzati, Florence, inv. no. 324.

Nothing is known about the early history of this Nativity scene before the mid-nineteenth century, when it was already in the Feroni collection in Florence, but the size and shape indicate that it originally decorated a home, most probably the bedroom of a Florentine merchant. It represents one of the most popular subjects in Florentine art: the Christ child adored by the Madonna and Saint John the Baptist, patron saint of the city. No documentation survives for most works of this type, though an important example by Botticelli (Musei Civici, Piacenza), which provided a general prototype for Filippino's, has been linked to a 1477 payment. In both works, Mary and the young John kneel on a grassy field filled with flowers, where Christ lies on his mother's robes, and a watery landscape extends into the background.

In contrast to large paintings, which were always made on commission, many small-scale works like this were produced for the open market. Artists demonstrated their creativity by adding details to the standard format and iconography. Filippino shows Jesus resting on ears of wheat, which had appeared prominently in Botticelli's early *Madonna* in Boston (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum); this refers to the Eucharistic wafer consumed during the Catholic Mass. The child holds a cardinal, which in many Renaissance paintings alludes to Christ's death and resurrection. The humbleness of the setting is accentuated by the broken-down manger with an ox and

donkey, who chomps on some hay. A large gap in the back wall offers an unexpected glimpse at grazing sheep on green hills. Earlier Nativity scenes by Botticelli and others often include a manger but not the three small scenes in the left background. On a distant hill we see the three Magi (also known as the three Kings), who kneel as they observe the star that will lead them to the Christ child. At the base of the cliff they rest, and further down the road one on horseback advances in front of two camels. Both the Nordic flavor of these delightful details, inspired by early Netherlandish paintings, and the highly articulated organization of the natural setting evince the distance between this artist and Botticelli, who Leonardo da Vinci criticized for his "very sorry landscapes."

On stylistic grounds, the painting can be attributed to Filippino and most probably in the early 1480s, though it has been dated slightly earlier or later. The Virgin's facial type and the interest in small background scenes have parallels with Filippino's documented Bernardi altarpiece of 1482–83 (Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California), though the strongest similarities are with two undated paintings from this period, now in London (National Gallery): the *Adoration of the Magi* (see fig. 51.1) and *Madonna and Child with Saint John*. Until 2003, when a thick layer of yellow varnish was removed from the *Feroni Madonna*, most Filippino specialists had ignored the work, or

ascribed some or all of it to Filippino's workshop. In part, this reflects the widespread but erroneous belief that first-rate artists produce only uniformly superlative works. Certainly this pleasing painting has some awkward passages. John appears too large, to judge from his proximity to the Virgin, and the donkey standing nearby does not seem to have a body. Filippino also depicted unconvincing spatial relationships in other early and uncontested works, such as the *Three Archangels* (Galleria Sabauda, Turin), *Madonna and Child with Saint Anthony and a Friar* (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest), and the right-hand group in the *Story of Lucretia* (Galleria Palatina, Florence).

We also have no evidence that students painted figures in any of Filippino's early works. Sometimes Renaissance masters delegated the backgrounds to their assistants, but in this painting, the landscape contains the most delightful passages. Here we find the "strange fancies" and "ingenuity" that Giorgio Vasari, writing in 1550, found throughout Filippino's works. Filippino and his contemporaries must have appreciated the overall design of the *Feroni Madonna*, given that several variations were produced by the artist's students and followers. One of these (fig. 30.1), with a different background but very similar figures, and a slightly adjusted position of Saint John, might even be a damaged original by Filippino himself.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Sandro Botticelli and workshop

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

***Adoration of the Child with Angels (Madonna of the Roses)*, 1490–1500**Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, diameter, 43¼ in. (110 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria Palatina, Pitti Palace, inv. 1911, Oggetti d'arte no. 750

PROVENANCE: Palazzo Granduca, Livorno (by 1861–69; 1861 inv. no. 67); Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (from 1869)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Padovani in Chiarini and Padovani 2003, 2:94, no. 125; Baldini in Padovani 2014, 157–58, no. 34; Cecchi in Mariani and Van der Sman 2015, 50, 55.



Fig. 31.1. Sandro Botticelli, *The Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*, 1495–1500, Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) and gold on canvas, 48 × 23¾ in. (122 × 80.3 cm), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, NG 2709.



The tondo was adopted in antiquity as a sculpted decoration applied to ancient Rome architecture, especially triumphal arches. The circular shape developed as a popular format in the Renaissance, most frequently in large works in marble, terracotta, and painted wood, often with frames richly carved with classical motifs. Displayed in the bridal chamber of Florentine palaces, tondi showed Marian subjects that augured well for the fertility of the couple, in particular, scenes of the Nativity and Adoration of the Magi. Some splendid examples date to the first half of the fifteenth century, including a tondo by Domenico Veneziano (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), the Cook tondo in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, begun by Fra Angelico and completed by Filippo Lippi, and Lippi's tondo in the Galleria Palatina, Florence, made for the palace of Leonardo Bartolini Salimbeni, an ambitious merchant who was also the patron of the celebrated series of panels of the *Battle of San Romano* by Paolo Uccello (c. 1438; Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; Musée du Louvre, Paris; National Gallery, London).

In the second half of the fifteenth century this format grew increasingly popular, as attested by surviving paintings, as well as documents and inventories of the workshops of Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, and Domenico Ghirlandaio. Among the major

masterpieces of the genre are Botticelli's *Madonna of the Magnificat* (fig. 13) and the *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, both in the Uffizi. In the present work, Botticelli shows the Virgin adoring the child in a garden of delights, natural and spiritual—a garden whose form and plants derived from biblical and medieval texts, probably the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (c. 1325) that rephrases the Song of Solomon to symbolically comment on the Virgin's nature. The Christ child reclines on a flowering meadow in the presence of four angels, and in the background a rose bower stands out against the clear sky of the Tuscan countryside. Interestingly, two distinct layers of fabric separate the child from the ground, a fold of the Virgin's mantle and a fold of the angel dressed in red. Subtly but clearly the two layers symbolize the dual nature of Christ and the hypostatic union that Jesus Christ incarnates, being both fully God and fully man. This is symbolized by pure spirits, like the angels, and his human body, born of Mary.

The group of angels and the rose bushes, which seem to sprout from the angels themselves, entwine to create a shelter from the outside world, which vanishes in the distance. Within this protective circle the angels enfold the holy mother and child, and also the real beholders, who join around in prayer before the image, completing the circle and echoing

the round format of the tondo. Part of the success of the painting lies in the transmission of such elevated symbolism in an accessible, tender scene suitable for a work destined for a domestic setting, and perhaps meant to mark the birth of a child. The angel on the far right, who looks playfully from behind the shoulder of a companion, adds to this informal air of familial warmth. This painting is popularly known as the *Madonna of the Roses*, the flower symbolizing the purity of Mary, the thorns the Passion of her son and possibly also her sorrows.

The painting's design was constructed by combining cartoons—full-size preparatory drawings—used in other works, including the autograph *Virgin Adoring the Child in a Rose Bower*, datable to between 1495 and 1500 (fig. 31.1).

Since the early 1470s Sandro Botticelli's workshop was located on Via del Porcellana, not far from the church of Ognissanti, and was frequented by Filippino Lippi, Bartolomeo di Giovanni, and many other students and collaborators, some of whose artistic output has yet to be identified. In the present work, the hand of a possible collaborator of the master is difficult to distinguish, as the workshop assistant so admirably conformed to the design and style of Botticelli himself.

—Annamaria Bernacchioni

Francesco Botticini

Florence 1446–1497 Florence

***Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist and Angels*, 1490–95**Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, diameter 48½ in. (123 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, inv. Palatina no. 347

PROVENANCE: Leopoldo de' Medici, later cardinal, Pitti Palace, Florence (before 1663–d. 1675; 1663/64 inv. [ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 725, c. 98v]; 1675 estate inv. [ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 826]); Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (1676 inv.; 1940–43 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Venturini 1994, 83, 125, no. 67; L. Aquino in Padovani 2014, 164–69, no. 36.

**Fig. 32.1.** Francesco Botticini, detail of no. 32.

This tondo is striking for its complexity and elegance. The commission is unknown, but the work must have decorated the bedroom of a member of a wealthy Florentine family, as patrician palaces were the usual destination for works of the tondo format. Although some early gallery inventories list the work as by Filippino Lippi or Botticelli, critics now agree that it is by Francesco Botticini, an artist who showed a distinctive capacity to develop and elaborate the pictorial inventions of major artists of his time. Botticini began as an apprentice in the artistic and craft workshops of Florence's central Borgo Santi Apostoli. The *Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist and Angels* is filled with many symbols of Christian redemption. The scene is set within an enclosed garden, or *hortus conclusus*, and it is also a garden of delights, alluding to the purity of the Virgin, a rose without thorns, or without sin, depicted together with the young Saint John the Baptist in the act of adoring the holy child. They are in the presence of angels, one of whom throws rose petals, picking up on a popular Florentine tradition for the feast day of Corpus Domini. Red and white roses punctuate the whole composition, pointing to the incorruptible sanctity

of Christ and the Virgin, the white roses alluding to purity and innocence, the red to the Passion of Jesus. Equally symbolic are the animals. The goldfinch, with red plumes above and below the eyes and its thorny habitat, refers to the Baptism, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ; the lizards, creatures that wriggle out from hibernation in nooks that bask in the sun, may represent the search for salvation in the light of divinity.

The scene, a charming blend of youthful animation and a serene meditation upon the mystery of the Incarnation, is set on a terrace surrounded by a low marble balustrade made up of elegant turned columns. On the riser of the bench runs a festoon motif in low relief crowned by shells, elements clearly recalling the classicizing architecture of Giuliano da Sangallo and demonstrating a familiarity with the latest *all'antica* language. The shell, too, was a symbol of life, fertility, and rebirth, all concepts fundamental to Christianity and the birth and resurrection of Christ.

In the background of the painting there is a stretch of mountains framing two valleys (fig. 32.1), each with a lake ringed with castles and tiny towns (and, on the right, a stone-walled bridge crossing a tributary river). The

buildings, with their steep roofs and pointed towers, are northern European in form. Vignettes of rural life dot the highlands: a shepherd playing bagpipes with his flock and shepherd dog; a peasant couple on their way home walk with a dog and carrying a lamb slung from a staff. These bucolic scenes, again reflecting the taste for Flemish art, also show an affection for life in the countryside, where many Florentines of the patron's class owned farmland and villas.

This tondo is the finest example of Botticini's many works with this subject matter in this format. The artist repeated these works with little variation; two examples are paintings in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and in the collections of the Cassa di Risparmio, Florence, which contain analogous Flemish-style staffage and buildings. Botticini's imagery shows important parallels with the pictorial style and compositions of Botticelli, no doubt stemming from the fact that both artists worked at an early age in the workshop of Verrocchio.

—Annamaria Bernacchioni



Ancient Roman

Sleeping Cupid, second century CELuni marble, 15 × 33⁷/₈ × 16 1/2 in.

(38 × 86 × 42 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1914 n. 167

PROVENANCE: Unknown; Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from the early eighteenth century)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Mansuelli 1958, 140, no. 107 (with incorrect inventory number), fig. 109; Söldner 1986, 629, no. 60 (with bibliography); Becatti 2018, 84.

Parts of the feet, the right knee, the nose, the penis, and part of the right wing belong to a restoration made probably in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. A break is located near the right wing, and traces of an integration that is no longer extant appear around the knot of hair atop the head.

The statue depicts a sleeping nude boy with wings, partially reclining on a cloth draped over a rocky surface; his head rests on his left shoulder and is held by his corresponding hand, while the other hand rests on the head of a small sleeping lion, positioned diagonally. A torch lies on the ground next to the boy. This figure connects to Hellenistic iconography of the Sleeping Eros, known from about 180 extant marble replicas, which are datable to between the first and the fourth centuries CE and elaborated in many figure types. The Uffizi Cupid belongs to the group of copies of the so-called Hypnos typology, which date to the second half of the first century, and whose examples frequently show two small wings on the sides of the head, a detail missing in this work but present in another statue of the same subject in the Uffizi (no. 169/1914; on the Hypnos typology, see Söldner 1986, 96–103).

Many ancient epigrams introduce a sleeping Eros/Cupid to contrast the dangerous power of love embodied by the god and the peaceful state of sleep that he enjoys. The lion shown here alludes to love's dominance over even the most dangerous animals. An epigram attributed to Plato speaks of Eros sleeping next to a fountain; this and other ancient literary references, together with the presence in some of the statues of cavities made for the passage of water, reveal that many such works decorated fountains. Still other copies bear attributes that indicate they were made for a funerary context, with funerary symbolism such as the butterfly, a symbol of the soul; poppy seeds, evocative of a deep, deathlike sleep; and the lizard, which, for its supposed winter hibernation, was linked to death or resurrection. Finally is the symbol of the torch, represented in the marble here. A telling comparison is seen in a replica sculpted on a sarcophagus lid at Copenhagen (Nationalmuseet, inv. 1023). This confirms that the sleeping Erotes were employed in funerary contexts, often to commemorate children. Scholars now suggest that this subject was initially adopted in purely decorative settings, suiting the taste for representations of daily life that underlay the invention of this

imagery in Hellenistic art, and only later was it employed for funerary purposes (see, more recently, Becatti 2018, 81–92). The modeling of the body and the hair and the geometricizing drapery folds can date the present statue to the Antonine period.

Probably the most famous reprise of the sleeping Cupid since ancient times was the lost marble that Michelangelo carved in 1495–96. The artist was probably inspired by an ancient sculpture recorded in the Medici collections, which arrived in Florence in 1488, sent as a gift to Lorenzo il Magnifico from the king of Naples, Ferrante II of Aragon, and today may reasonably be identified with yet another *Sleeping Cupid* in the Uffizi (inv. 392/1914; see Muscillo 2014). Some Renaissance artists appear not only to have assimilated and developed the iconography of the ancient model, but also to have recognized its allusion to death, applying the pose to Christian figures. An example by Botticelli is the *Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child* (see fig. 31.1), in which the sleeping child seems to allude to Christ's death (Clifford 2000, 3).

—Alessandro Muscillo



Sandro Botticelli
Florence 1445–1510

***Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1500**

Tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on canvas; 52¼ × 36¼ in. (134 × 92 cm)
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 n. 357

PROVENANCE: Giulio de' Medici, palazzo on Borgo Pinti, Florence (until d. 1670; estate inventory, July 15 [ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 781, c. 34] no. 916, "un quadro in tela alto b.[racci]a 2½ largo b.[racci]a 1½ entrovi dipinto la Mad.na e Giesù che abbraccia S. Gio. B.a con ornam.to tinto nero rabescato d'oro con fiori dipinti al nat.le"); Palazzo Pitti, Florence (from 1670; 1813 inv. [ASF, Imperiale e Real Corte 4694, 1810–21, c. 1165] no. 8355, as by Botticelli; 1815 inv. no. 325; 1943–44 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Lightbown 1978, 2:139 no. C45; Padovani in Chiarini and Padovani 2003, 93, no. 122; Pons in Paris and Florence 2004, 216–17, no. 18; Eclercy in Frankfurt 2009, 332–34, no. 70; O'Malley 2013, 113–14; Baldini in Padovani 2014, 149–52, no. 32; Cecchi 2015, 48–51; Spike and Cecchi in Williamsburg and Boston 2017, 162–64, no. 28; Debenedetti and Gianceselli in Paris 2021, 210–13, no. 49.

The traditional theme of the Virgin and Child with saints is considered in an original way in this composition, with Mary standing and bending forward as she hands her son to John the Baptist, also a child, who embraces him tenderly. The subject of the meeting of the two children does not appear in the New Testament, but was developed in apocryphal texts such as the *Life of John the Baptist* by Serapion, and various medieval devotional texts, such as the fourteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, which tell of the meeting and embrace of the two children at the time of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. Beginning in the fifteenth century, the subject became one of the most popular themes for domestic settings, a context for which the Palatine Gallery painting was probably made. John the Baptist, patron saint of Florence, was widely venerated in the city, and within a household, the subject of the holy youths served as a helpful model in the education of children (Eclercy 2009). The painting is set outdoors, in front of an arbor of roses, a flower with symbolic associations for both Mary and Christ that recurs in the settings of many of Botticelli's paintings. Further details extend the work's symbolism. The figure of Christ, with half-closed eyes and half-naked body, is held in the arms of the Baptist in a pose that foreshadows the deposition of the adult Christ from the cross, an allusion underscored by the small processional wood cross that the Baptist holds in alignment with Christ's head. The painting thus presents



Fig. 34.1. Sandro Botticelli and workshop, *Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist*, tempera and oil on canvas, 51½ × 36 in. (130.7 × 91.4 cm), Barber Institute Art Gallery, Birmingham, inv. 43.10.



Fig. 34.2. Workshop of Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with the Young John the Baptist*, tempera and oil on canvas, 54 × 36¼ in. (137 × 92 cm), Champigny, church of Saint-Félix.

a profound meditation on the humanity of Christ and his sacrifice for the redemption of humankind, which is underscored by the melancholy in the expressions of the faces.

Recent research places the work in the collection of don Giulio di don Antonio de' Medici (1617–1670), in his residence in Borgo Pinti in Florence (Baldini in Padovani 2014); from there it passed to the Guardaroba Medicea (documented in the Medici collection by the administrative office that inventoried and cared for the extensive movable holdings [chattels] of the family, such as their art and furnishings). The painting's connection to Sandro Botticelli, also found in early museum inventories, has never been doubted. The scholarly discussion, instead, has focused on the dating of the painting and how much of it was actually executed by him.

There is general agreement that the apparent simplicity of the composition, with the space filled almost entirely by elongated, monumental bodies, as well as the devout and pietistic tone and reduced palette of blue, red, and green tones, would associate the painting with Botticelli's late activity, after 1490. The compositional and formal simplification pursued by Botticelli, and reduction of ornament and precious details, seem likely a response to the taste of patrons who were less wealthy and sensitive to the sermons against luxury and excess of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola. Botticelli met such demands by making smaller-scale paintings, often on canvas, which was much more economical than

panel (O'Malley 2013). The most recent studies have favored a more advanced date, given the similarities to the *Pentecost* of the Museum and Art Gallery at Birmingham, Alabama (inv. 1959P31), commissioned in 1505 (Spike and Cecchi 2017; Debenedetti and Gianceselli in Paris 2021). Dating it to the first decade of the sixteenth century would also uphold the claim that the embrace of the holy children reflects Leonardo da Vinci's idea in the cartoon for a painting depicting the Virgin and Child with Saint John and Saint Anne, made for the Santissima Annunziata church in Florence (see Pons 2004).

Botticelli's composition must have met with success, as is evidenced by the existence of two reversed replicas—now at the Barber Institute Art Gallery in Birmingham in England (fig. 34.1), and in the church of Saint-Félix at Champigny (fig. 34.2)—both on canvas and similar in size, very likely developed from a single cartoon (Debenedetti and Gianceselli in Paris 2021). Moreover, studies of Botticelli's workshop have shown that the artist had a large number of collaborators and granted them use of his models and cartoons. The present work was relined at an early date and because of that treatment the surface is somewhat impoverished. For this reason, the painting has long been considered a product of the Botticelli workshop (Lightbown 1978; O'Malley 2013), but a series of recent studies maintains that it is largely autograph (Padovani 2003; Pons 2004; Eclercy 2009).

—Daniela Parenti





The Renaissance Interior: A Setting of Virtue and Magnificence

During the Italian Renaissance, patrician homes and palaces often had a *studiolo*—a small study—where one could retire to carry out intellectual activities. Botticelli sets his Saint Augustine in such a room, completely engrossed in thinking and writing, seated at his desk in a vaulted space elegantly decorated with fictive reliefs (no. 35). His theological struggle, revealed by the device of a suddenly drawn curtain, is vividly depicted by the discarded papers on the floor. Saint Augustine is the protagonist of the scenes in the predella of the Barbadori altarpiece by Filippo Lippi, represented within a wooden hutch with his books and inkstand, and transfixed in a vision of the Trinity made visible in the three faces of the infant Jesus (no. 36). Wood was often used in interiors to reduce contact with the cold, humid stone floors and walls, so rooms might be sheathed with wainscoting, which was sometimes decorated with subjects appropriate to the purpose of the space. The large painting of the allegory of Justice, which comes from the headquarters of the wine-dealers' guild in Florence, was set in the upper section of a wainscoting, high and visible to everyone, to show the impartiality of the guild's administration (no. 39). It was painted by Biagio d'Antonio, who in 1481–82 was sent to Rome with Botticelli and other prominent Florentine artists to decorate the walls of the Sistine Chapel.

Chests were important objects in household furnishing. Used to store clothes, objects of value, and family documents, they were generally commissioned for weddings

and kept in bedrooms. They were usually decorated with painted panels on the front and sides, or with gesso reliefs, as we see in the splendid example from the Minneapolis Institute of Art (no. 40). This chest is a true rarity: almost entirely intact, it is all gilded, with punching and stippling that might have sparkled in candlelight, and with the coats of arms of two families from the Tuscan city of Lucca. At the center of the front panel are the figures of the four Cardinal Virtues—reminiscent of Botticelli's nymphs—triumphing over scenes of seduction and combat—the latter inspired by Pollaiuolo's famous *Battle of the Nudes*, also exhibited in this section (no. 41). From a painted chest, now dismantled, come the two panels by Jacopo del Sellaio with scenes from the Book of Esther, where the characters are represented—as was customary in the fifteenth century—in contemporary clothing and settings (nos. 46, 47). From these examples we witness typical interiors of Florentine palaces. We see, for example, sculpted busts decorating the pediments above doorways and portals. These sculptures sometimes represented family members, but more often the Christ child or the young Saint John the Baptist, to be models of virtue and educational images for the youth in the household. The lively terracotta *Saint John the Baptist* by Benedetto da Rovezzano (a pupil and collaborator of Michelangelo) might have served that same instructive purpose (no. 48).

—Roberta Bartoli

Sandro Botticelli

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Saint Augustine in His Study, c. 1494Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*)

on panel, 16 1/8 × 10 3/8 in. (41 × 27 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890, no. 1473

PROVENANCE: Bernardo Vecchietti, Villa Il Riposo, Florence (by 1568–d. 1590); Vecchietti family, Villa Il Riposo, Florence (1590—at least 1730); Ignazio Hugford, Florence (by 1767—at least 1771). Piero Pieralli, Florence (until 1779; sold, May 18, for 24 scudi, to Granduca collection; Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since 1779; 1784 inv. no. 513; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Pons in Paris and Florence 2003–4, 138–39; Paoletti in Acidini Luchinat 2009, 216–17; Ciani Cuka 2019, 117–24.

During the Renaissance, small-scale paintings with sacred subjects like this one were intended for private devotion. They could be easily transported, taken on trips by their religious or lay owners to use as a devotional object in the ritual of prayer—fundamental to life at the time—to pray for protection and salvation of the soul. A fictive curtain opens to show Saint Augustine of Hippo, bishop, writer, doctor of the church, celebrated theologian, and one of the great Christian thinkers of all time, who was from North Africa and lived much of his early life in Italy, where his beloved mother, Saint Monica, died. He is depicted in his studio: a small space with a barrel-vaulted ceiling, a type of architecture influenced by ancient Rome.

The front wall of this space is decorated with foliage garlands and medallions, upon which appear the profiles of Roman emperors in classicizing style. Books line the shelves to the left, and the background is decorated with an illusionistic bas-relief tondo depicting the Virgin and Child, as if to continue the Roman fashion of the emperors' heads, but to surpass it through the true faith. The dark setting and light effects impart an austere, intimate character to the scene. Augustine is wholly absorbed in the act of writing. He sits at a desk on a slightly raised platform—to separate it from the cold floor—and underneath

his bishop's mantle he wears the tunic of his own Augustinian monastic order. The floor is strewn with torn pages and used pen quills. These discarded items convey the intense struggle of any author. They may conceivably have a more specific reference, namely, one of his late works, the *Retractions* (*Liber retractationis*), a comprehensive review of his massive written output, confirming or revising his views on many points of doctrine. If so, the torn pages might represent textual passages and ideas discarded in the last stages of a lifelong inquiry that profoundly shaped Western thought and culture (Ciani Cuka 2019).

This is at least the third representation Botticelli painted of Saint Augustine in his study. His fresco in the church of the Ognissanti in Florence, which was the parish church of Botticelli and his patrons, the Vespucci, dating to the early 1480s, is one of the most celebrated of all images of the saint. A much smaller image, in the predella of the altarpiece the *Coronation of the Virgin with Saints*, painted for the convent of San Marco (now Gallerie degli Uffizi) is an intensely spiritual work of his late period, close in style to the *Calumny of Apelles* (see fig. 14). The choice and treatment of the subject in the present painting can be related to the climate of religious fervor in Florence in the mid-1490s, when the republic was led by the

Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, whose sermons attacked the moral and spiritual decline of society and of the Church itself. His proverbial bonfires of the vanities were public burnings of luxury goods, musical instruments, and artworks of profane subjects that the friar and his followers viewed as sinful. Savonarola's intransigency and drastic attempts to raise moral principles led him to being excommunicated and condemned as a heretic, and being burned at the stake in Florence's Piazza della Signoria in 1498. Botticelli, like many other Florentines, was profoundly affected by the friar's sermons, which provoked in him, as in many other Florentines, a crisis of doubts and fears about life and religious thought, precisely the same troublesome questions about faith and mystical contemplation that also assailed Augustine, a teacher of spiritual life. It does not seem amiss to see in this small panel a palimpsest of Florence's spiritual crisis, and it may be no accident that Vasari recorded the work, though much later (1568), in the villa of Bernardo Vecchietti, a powerful politician belonging to a wealthy merchant family that for a time had sided with Savonarola's spiritual vision.

—Annamaria Bernacchioni





36

Filippo Lippi

Florence c. 1406–1469 Spoleto

Barbadori Predella with *Miracle of Saint Frediano Diverting the River Serchio, Announcement of the Death of the Virgin, Saint Augustine in His Study*, c. 1437–39

Tempera on panel; 10¼ × 22¼ in. (26 × 56.5 cm), 10¼ × 36¼ in. (26 × 93.5 cm), 10¼ × 22½ in. (26 × 57 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 8351

PROVENANCE: Barbadori Chapel, sacristy of Santo Spirito, Florence (until 1810); Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence (1810–1919; inv. Masselli 1855 no. 85); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1919; 1940–48 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Meiss 1945, 175–81; Ruda 1993, 101–15, 392–96; Tartuferi in Forlì 2007, no. 10–12 (with bibliography); Kuwabara 2015, 39–50; Pagnotta 2013, 193–216.



Fig. 36.1. Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Angels, Saint Augustine, and Saint Frediano* (Pala Barbadori), 1437, tempera on panel, 82 × 96 in. (208 × 244 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris.

These three panels formed the predella of Filippo Lippi's altarpiece *Madonna and Child with Angels, Saint Augustine, and Saint Frediano*, a great masterpiece of his early mature period, now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (fig. 36.1). It was painted for the Barbadori chapel in the Augustinian church of Santo Spirito, the major church in the Oltrarno quarter of Florence, that is "across the Arno," where the Barbadori family resided. In his 1411 will, Gherardo di Bartolomeo Barbadori made a bequest to erect a funerary chapel in honor of Saint Frediano, who was the titular saint of the parish in this quarter. Barbadori was a member of the lay confraternity of Orsanmichele, the most important and wealthiest confraternity in Florence, and, having no children, he bequeathed his inheritance to the brotherhood. Lippi's altarpiece was commissioned by Barbadori's executors, the *Capitani di Orsanmichele*, who governed the important religious association and managed the immense wealth it inherited from members' estates. As mandated by the city government, the confraternity was to use part of their capital to decorate major Florentine churches. The Barbadori chapel was built in the sacristy of Santo Spirito following Barbadori's death in 1429, and in 1437 the *Capitani* paid Lippi 40 florins (an extremely large sum) for the execution of the altarpiece. The main panel was installed in the funerary monument so that the painted balustrade and stone floor opening in the foreground would have appeared as an illusionistic extension of the real tomb below.

While the conception of the three predella scenes is entirely Lippi's, they were probably executed with the assistance of his workshop. These vivacious scenes, slightly more naturalistic than the main panel, are unified by the treatment of light and space, with a single, almost supernatural, light source and the strong one-point perspective of the central scene. In the sober architecture and solemn figures swathed in bulky draperies, Lippi echoes the monumental art of Masaccio.

The first scene shows a famous miracle by which Saint Frediano, bishop of Lucca, as the legend goes, turned the raging river Serchio into a new channel to the sea, thereby saving the city from flooding. The saint, shown wearing a bishop's miter and cope, occupies the entire height of the panel. With a long rake, he furrows a new river bed to divert the Serchio, which flows right next to Lucca. The city is represented synoptically, in medieval fashion, as a section of fortified walls.

In the central scene, the kneeling angel announces to the Virgin Mary her impending death, while the Apostles rush to see her and bid their last farewell. Saint Peter arrives behind her, followed by two other apostles led by angels; on the opposite side Saint John the Evangelist kneels, his head bowed. The story of the episode relies on the *Golden Legend*, a medieval compilation of stories of the saints, assembled around 1260 by Jacopo da Varagine (also known as "da Varazze"). The choice of scene aligns with the funerary function of the chapel itself.

The angel, a very beautiful youth with elegant long wings, presents the Virgin not with the palm of the Paradise that he usually brings, but with a lit candle. This motif was unusual in Italy, but common in Flemish painting, such as the work of Jan Van Eyck and the Master of Flémalle, known to Italian merchants and artists interested in northern art (Meiss 1945). It was part of the last rite to present the dying with a lit candle and probably relates to the religious activities of the Compagnia (confraternity) of Orsanmichele, which attended to its members in their last hours and oversaw their funerals.

The third panel is filled with symbolic allusions relating to the spirituality of the Augustinian order to which the convent church belonged. Saint Augustine—doctor of the Church and author of many religious writings, including an autobiography—receives a luminous vision of the Trinity while intent upon writing on a scroll. The saint, shown with monastic haircut and the

dark habit of the Augustinian hermits, has his heart pierced by three golden arrows, symbolic of Christ's transfixing love, as described in the saint's autobiography, the *Confessions*. This iconography of the Trinity, represented in the form of a head with three adjoining faces, was common in fifteenth-century Florence, most prominently in a carving by Donatello and his artistic partner Michelozzo, in the marble tympanum of the niche of the Mercanzia at Orsanmichele. In the detailed description of the desk, Lippi's close attention to detail reflects again his early interest in Flemish painting, which in the 1430s, is earlier than other Florentine painters.

—Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli

Bartolomeo di Giovanni

Florence, documented 1488–1501 Florence

Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Poisoned Wine***Saint Maurus Saves Saint Placidus*, 1485**Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 13 × 12 3/8 in. (32.6 × 31.5 cm) each
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 nos. 1502, 3154***Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Poisoned Wine***

PROVENANCE: Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, Florence (until 1825; transferred, April 15, to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1825; 1825 inv. suppl. no. 2344; 1940–48 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

Saint Maurus Saves Saint Placidus

PROVENANCE: Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, Florence (until c. 1900; transferred, April 1, to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from c. 1900; 1940–44 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Berenson 1903, 17; Fahy 1976, 137–38; Pons in Florence 2004, 86–89; Masini 2006, 77; Staderini in Boskovits 2011, 42–46; Daly in Paris 2019, 136–37.

Both *Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Poisoned Wine* and *Saint Maurus Saves Saint Placidus* entered the Gallerie degli Uffizi, but in two different periods (1825 and 1900), a circumstance that for a time was reflected in divergent critical assessments. Berenson's attribution to Bartolomeo di Giovanni has never been questioned since it was proposed in 1903. Two further scenes from the life of Saint Benedict (Alana Collection, Delaware), relate to the Uffizi panels in style, format, and iconography.

In the first Uffizi scene, Benedict of Norcia defeats an attempted poisoning by monks of the community of Vicovaro, who were resistant to his monastic rule. When Benedict blessed the poisoned glass of wine, the glass shattered. The second scene depicts Saint Maurus rescuing his fellow monk, Saint Placidus, after Benedict warned Maurus that his friend was drowning in the lake at Subiaco. The Alana Collection panel *Saint Benedict Exorcizes a Demon from a Monk* (fig. 37.1) shows a dissolute monk reproached by Benedict, who strikes him with a rod to free him from the devil. In the last, rarely depicted episode, *Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Hidden Flask* (fig. 37.2), a friar brings only one of the two flasks of wine meant for Benedict. When the thief opens the stolen wine, a venomous snake comes out of the bottle.

These works are usually identified as predella panels, a hypothesis open to doubt given the format, measurement, type of wood support, and the scale of the figures. Alternatively, the panels might have adorned some kind of ecclesiastic furniture, similar to the silver chest or Armadio degli Argenti painted by Fra Angelico and Alesso Baldovinetti (Museo di San Marco, Florence), which was designed to hold ex votos and relics and subsequently was dismembered and dispersed. Otherwise, the four panels might have formed part of a larger altarpiece with the scenes from the saint's life flanking a standing figure of Benedict, a format that was rare in the quattrocento, but occasionally adopted, as in the *Saint Anthony with Scenes from His Life* by the Siennese artist Guioccio Cozzarelli (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence).

The chronological order of the episodes shown, as they unfold in the life of Saint Benedict written by Saint Gregory the Great, is as follows: Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Poisoned Wine; Saint Benedict Exorcizing a Demon from a Monk; Saint Maurus Saves Saint Placidus, and Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Hidden Flask. This grouping allows us to note that the first two panels share an architectural setting in dark colors, while the other two scenes are set in open landscapes, which dictate lighter colors and shadows. The light source in all



Figs. 37.1–37.2. Bartolomeo di Giovanni, *Saint Benedict Exorcizes a Demon from a Monk* and *Saint Benedict and the Miracle of the Hidden Flask*, 1485, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 13 × 15 1/2 in. (33 × 39.4 cm) each, Alana Collection, Delaware.



four of the panels comes from the left, with shadows on the right side of the forms.

Bartolomeo was a specialist in painting figures in small formats such as predellas, chests, and panels for domestic settings. He is recorded as carrying out just this type of work, in the 1480s, for the workshops of Domenico Ghirlandaio and Sandro Botticelli. The present panels date to the same decade. There are resemblances to the *Banquet of Nastagio degli Onesti* (1483, Museo del Prado, Madrid), painted by Bartolomeo as a major collaborator on a commission given to Botticelli; and also, in the architecture, to the predella painted by Bartolomeo in 1488 for Domenico Ghirlandaio's altarpiece of the founding hospital of Florence (Museo degli Innocenti, Florence).

A clue to the original destination of these panels may lie in the provenance of the Uffizi panels, since the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, the chief city hospital, was the destination for artworks sent from various places and periods. Among the many sources was the great Camaldolese monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli, which had been joined in the sixteenth century with the convent of San Benedetto at Porta Pinti. It may be significant that Bartolomeo is documented working for the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli at the end of the fifteenth century.

—Nicoletta Pons



Biagio d'Antonio

Florence c. 1445–1516 Florence

Allegory of Justice, c. 1472

Tempera on panel, 51½ × 34¼ in. (131 × 87 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 n. 4665

PROVENANCE: Magazzino del Sale e del Tabacco, Florence (until 1863); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (1863–1923); Palazzo dei Capitani di Parte Guelfa, Florence (1923–1977); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1977)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Bartoli 1999, 30–31, 184–85; Giorgi in Florence 2013b, 178–79 (with bibliography).

Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues, together with Temperance, Prudence, and Fortitude, while Faith, Hope, and Charity constitute the three theological virtues. The depiction of these virtues as female personifications, each associated with a symbolic attribute, developed in the Middle Ages and continued into the Renaissance. The full set of virtues was viewed as presiding over human morality and affirming an elevated model of human behavior. For this reason, images or cycles of the virtues adorn public monuments of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence, two of the most celebrated being the reliefs on the south Baptistery door by Andrea Pisano (1330–36) and the seven panels for the tribunal of the Mercanzia, the city agency overseeing commercial practice. These panels were painted by Piero Pollaiuolo in 1469–70, save for the personification of Fortitude, a work of the young Botticelli; this set of images established an influential model for later artists. In the present work, Biagio d'Antonio reprises the lofty formulation of Piero's model: Justice is shown as a young woman seated on a throne formed of clouds.

She bears the twin attributes of the scales, symbolic of equity in the application of law, and an unsheathed sword, symbolic of suitable punishment for crime. Her foot rests on a globe whose surface shows the seas, landforms, rivers, and cities, denoting that she rules over earthly justice only, while the heavens are ruled by divine judgment. This work was part of a commission of the wine dealers' guild (Arte dei Vinattieri), headquartered in Palazzo Bartolomei, on Via Lambertesca, in the heart of Florence. Representing the guild's patronage is the corporation's coat of arms, a shield bearing a chalice, placed at the lower edge of the painting and flanked by the arms of the *Popolo* (a red cross on a white field) and the city of Florence (the lily); these two last city shields are repeated in the upper corners. The narrow, vertical panel was known as a *cornice* (frame), and was employed to decorate the upper levels of the wooden furnishing of a wall. This panel almost certainly, together with companion images of Virtues, crowned the stalls seating the consuls of the guild corporation who met for formal deliberations, to guide their activities. As the

guild of the Vinattieri was concerned with all trade involving wine, and as the consuls were called upon to adjudicate business and administrative disputes, the image of Justice offered a kind of guarantee that the loftiest ideals would be respected in such matters.

Biagio painted a similar but much smaller image of Justice on the side panel of one of the two *forzieri* (wedding chests) painted for the Morelli-Nerli spouses (Courtauld Institute Gallery, London), a work documented to 1472 and executed jointly by Biagio and his partner on the project, Jacopo del Sellaio. As the two depictions are similar in pose, facial features, and the arrangement of drapery, it seems likely that the large panel executed for the winemakers' guild also belongs to the same time. The artist's style in this period was still close to that of Filippo Lippi, the inspiration for the physical attributes of the female figures and for the soft and pale colors of the *Virtues* shown in both the Uffizi and the London works.

—Roberta Bartoli



Unknown artist
Lucca

Wedding chest (*casone*), 1475–85

Poplar wood with gilt and painted gesso decoration, 33 × 70 × 27 in. (83.8 × 177.8 × 68.6 cm)
Minneapolis Institute of Art, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 16.747

PROVENANCE: Elia Volpi, Palazzo Davanzati, Florence (until 1916, his sale, American Art Galleries, New York, November 23, 1916, no. 438, to French & Co. for the Minneapolis Institute of Art)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Townsend and Guglielmetti 1916, no. 438; Bartoli in Chiarugi 2018, 34–40n5.





Fig. 40.1. Unknown engraver, Florence, *Fighting Beasts Viewed by Soldiers*, 1470–80, engraving, 7¼ × 12½ in. (19.8 × 32 cm), British Museum, London, inv. 1841,1211.4.



Fig. 40.2. Unknown artist, Lucca, Wedding chest (*cassone*), 1480 (with later additions), Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence.

This Renaissance wedding chest (*a cassone* or *forziere*), practically intact, is among the best preserved in the world: the interior even contains fragments of the original fabric lining protecting the clothes kept inside, and it has the original lock. On each of the short sides is painted a garland encircling a sunburst, while traces of decoration with small red carnations survive on the cover. The forms of the scenes on the front are in relief, modeled in gesso and then covered with gold leaf and stamped with rosette-shaped punches across the entire surface.

This is a luxury object, produced to celebrate a marriage and designed to adorn the bedroom of the couple whose family crests stand on candelabras resting on bases in the form of leopards: to the left (the heraldic dexter), as was customary, the groom's coat of arms, to the right the bride's. Until now, the crests have never been identified, but there can be no doubt that the crest on the left is that of the Cenami (a rampant lion, red, on a field of gold), while that on the right belongs to the Balbani (gilt eagles on silver bend, upon a red field). These were two of the most prominent families of Lucca, a prosperous

Tuscan city between Florence and Pisa, most famous for the manufacture and trade in silks, exported across Europe and particularly favored in Flanders. Regrettably, archival records remain to be found about the marriage between a Cenami groom and a Balbani bride sometime around 1475–85. This date is suggested by the style of the figures, which reveal the influence of the prints of Pollaiuolo and his followers in those years, and also of Botticelli's paintings.

On the left is shown a combat with clubs between two monstrous creatures, half lion and half satyr (given the pointed ears and snub noses). This is a version of the ferocious fight to the death made popular in the prints of Antonio Pollaiuolo and his circle, for example in that by a Pollaiuolo collaborator showing a centaur fighting a half-human, half-lion creature before two soldiers (fig. 40.1), an image surviving in six impressions, and in the justly celebrated *Battle of the Nudes*, a masterpiece by Antonio Pollaiuolo that was noted and copied in many parts of Italy (no. 41). Clearly, the modeler of the figures of the Luccese wedding chest was directly inspired by Pollaiuolo's prints in both subject matter

and the poses and anatomy of the combatants, whose torsos are tautly bent back in the struggle. On the right, a centaur with a lascivious air gallops while embracing a young woman who is calmly seated on his back, holding aloft a lighted torch. The subject is probably derived from an ancient example representing the abduction of Deianira (see, for instance, a detail with the same group of figures in Jacopo Bellini's drawing RF 1476, 4, Musée du Louvre, Paris) and here transformed into a different scene. The female figure is probably Demeter, Roman goddess of the harvest, who brings prosperity and civilization to humankind, celebrated by Boccaccio (*On Famous Women*, 1361–62, book 5), and by the French humanist of Italian origin, Christine de Pizan, in her *Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–5). The latter writes, "Thus, thanks to this woman [Demetra], the world was led away from bestial living conditions to a rational, human life" (Pizan c. 1364–1430/1982, 76) and also "thanks to her [Demetra] men have been brought out of ignorance and led to knowledge" (78). It is quite possible that Christine de Pizan's book was known to the cosmopolitan merchants of

Lucca, who had dealings in northern Europe, and indeed one branch of the Cenami was very active in France from the fourteenth century; Boccaccio's book was of course very widely celebrated. Surely, just as in Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1), here too Demetra embodies reason, and by bestriding the centaur and dominating his bestial power, she represents the civilizing impulse and the knowledge and prosperity it brings.

This narrative gives great and striking importance to women and to a woman's role in the family, and this meaning is complemented by the figures of the four Cardinal Virtues positioned at the center (from left to right, Temperance, Justice, Fortitude, and Prudence). They are represented as maidens in the manner of classicizing nymphs, with the rippling gossamer draperies that accent their slender bodies, in the manner familiar from Botticelli's work. Since these figures are enclosed by the two coats of arms, the viewer is led to understand that only within the bond of matrimony can these Virtues govern and allow one to dominate both the blind violence associated with males (as shown on the left, not by accident next to the groom's

shield) and the feral and savage instincts as Demetra does with a centaur (next to the bride's shield).

The richness of this piece of furniture lies not only in the elegance of the reliefs and the sophisticated message, infused with references to antiquity. If we imagine the chest in its original setting, illuminated by the light of candles and torches, the figures would have stood out strongly against the luminous golden background, scintillating with the waves of thousands of stamped impressions. It is without doubt the work of a highly expert craftsman, who uses the form and structure used for such boxes in Siena (and the work has until recently been identified as Siennese; see Bartoli in Chiarugi 2018, 40n5). Scholars have not identified a body of wedding chests made in Lucca, but this example in Minneapolis can be related to one now in a private collection in Mantua (see Chiarugi 2018, 34–41), also with the shields of the Balbani, this time with those of another powerful family of Lucca, the Burlamacchi; in this case the object can be firmly dated to the 1465 marriage of Paolo Balbani and Caterina Burlamacchi (see the family tree in Biblioteca

Statale, Lucca, Fondo Baroni, Ms 1103, n.p.). As the Mantua and Minneapolis chests share structural elements (for example, in size and in the forms of the moldings), it is likely that both were made in Lucca, and perhaps originated in a single workshop that served wealthy local clients.

It is possible that the Minneapolis *cassone* set the trend for a series of works that appear to be derived from it, as the scenes, with their strong Pollaiuolesque (and Botticellesque) flavor, seem to have generated a certain interest. The front of a *forziere* (wedding chest) in the Museo Stefano Bardini in Florence (fig. 40.2), in fact, repeats the scenes, reversing them and rearranging the Virtues. In this work, however, the forms are less crisply defined and the figures are as much as a centimeter smaller, both effects that are usually explained by the repeated reuse of stamps or molds. A third *forziere* with the same motifs, now in the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (inv. 1930.366), is inferior in execution to the other two and perhaps of later date.

—Roberta Bartoli

Antonio del Pollaiuolo

Florence 1431/32–1498 Rome

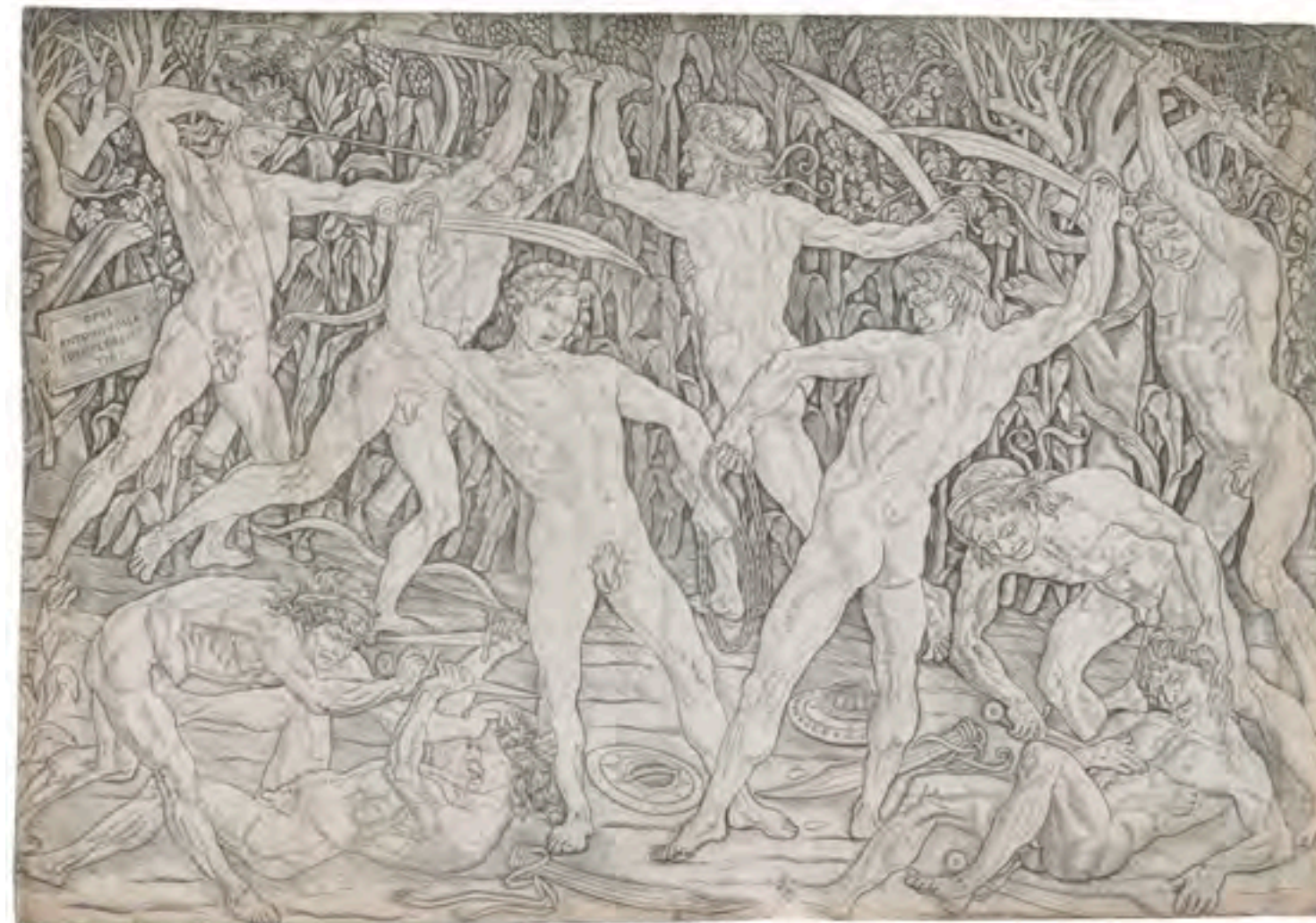
Battle of the Nudes, c. 1470Engraving, 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (39.7 × 57.1 cm)
(irregular sheet)SIGNED IN PLATE: *opus antonii
pollaiuoliflorent/tini*Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of
Herschel V. Jones, P.68.246

PROVENANCE: Unidentified collector (Lugt 2880); [Frederick Keppel & Co., before 1925 (June); sold to Jones]; Herschel V. Jones, Minneapolis (by 1925–d. 1928); his daughter, Tessie Jones, in lifetime trust, New York (until d. 1968; bequeathed to the Minneapolis Institute of Art)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Hind 1938, 1:no. D.1.1; Panofsky 1945, 95–96, no. 931; Langdale 2002, 25–61, 80, no. 37; Wright 2005, 176–81, 506–7, no. 4; Marini in Padua 2006, 270–72, no. 60; Donati in Milan 2014, 178–79, no. 9; Melli 2022, 227–33, under no. 27, 247, under no. 29.



Fig. 41.1. Paduan engraver after a drawing by Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Gigantomachy*, engraving, first state, 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (36.4 × 55.2 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 25.2.23.



The *Battle of the Nudes* is the first signed copperplate engraving of the Renaissance. The name of the author and engraver appears in a *tabula ansata* (tablet with handles) hanging on one of the trees bordering the scene: *opus antonii pollaiuoliflorent/tini*. The ten powerful nude men are equipped with swords, daggers, axes, a bow, a chain, scabbards, and shields lying on the ground; their hair flows freely or is bound with a fillet. Mostly they fight hand to hand: two fallen figures appear at the left; in the right corner a standing man helps a wounded man, holding up his head; and two single figures appear on both outer edges. The figures fight on barren ground, while the background shows fields of millet and trees, framed to either side by olive trees with grapevines, heavy with fruit, entwining their trunks. The choice of the varied, meager weapons does not seem to possess precise iconographic elements helping to identify the battling men. The two central warriors who tug at one another by means of a chain have been adduced in support of an identification as the Gigantomachy, the battle of Hercules and the Olympian gods against primeval giants (Hind 1938), but it has also been identified as an episode from ancient Roman history, Titus Manlius Torquatus Taking the Necklace from the Gallic Chieftain (Panofsky 1955). In the latter case, this engraving might have been one of a series of historical episodes surviving in drawings, copies, and fragments of the same dimensions, and meant to have been engraved (Melli 2022, no. 27). One such drawn composition is in Harvard University's Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts (inv. 1940.9), never engraved

by the artist but at least copied by an artist from Padua (fig. 41.1). There is an account of an early presence in the Paduan Squarcione's workshop (before 1468) of a Pollaiuolo cartoon with nude men (*unum cartonum cum quibusdam nudis Poleyoli*) that could be referring to one or both of the mentioned compositions. Other scholars interpret the work as an allegory, of both human morals and the mores of some early culture, otherwise reading it as a figural invention in the antique style rather than a specific subject taken from ancient history (Wright 2005). Whether the work has a textual basis or not, the composition is a product of the Renaissance imagination, of Antonio del Pollaiuolo and of his systematic and pioneering study of the human anatomy and its movement, contriving an intense display that pairs striking poses and taut musculature with violent actions and movements. This print is the emblematic performance of the role of the nude in Renaissance art, combining the interest in anatomy and the depiction of motion, while connoting classical subjects such as Pollaiuolo's Labors of Hercules for the Medici Palace, from which two miniature replicas are in the Uffizi. This print spread these values far beyond Pollaiuolo's city.

The copper engraving was a new artistic form. It developed in Florence in the ambient of cultivated goldsmiths, principally Finiguerra, Pollaiuolo and Baccio Baldini, who had exploited the art of niello, a special kind of engraving on silver with ink or similar substances filling the grooves, and from which the first trial prints were made. The next step was to use plates of copper, less

prized as a material and a more ductile and elastic metal that resisted a higher number of impressions. In the *Battle of the Nudes* Antonio del Pollaiuolo maneuvered the engraver's burin with the sensibility of a goldsmith; the contour lines are crisp and decisive, the shading of the bodies was achieved with fine parallel strokes, making a light zigzag motion, or return strokes. The Minneapolis print is one of about fifty impressions of the second state of the print, while only a single impression of the first state survives, in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Compared to the Cleveland print, here we see some reworking of the plate and parallel hatchings added at various places, most clearly in the inner thigh muscle of the warrior holding an axe on the right, which are not in the first state and not typical of Pollaiuolo's handling of the burin. It may be deduced that the reworking of the plate was thus by another artist, but using the same burin and done soon after the first state, so therefore by a collaborator in Pollaiuolo's workshop (Langdale 2002). A dating before 1470 (Wright 2005) is needed to explain the visual quotes from the subject in miniatures and other works by Venetian artists (Armstrong 1968). Nonetheless, a later dating has been suggested on the basis of comparison between Pollaiuolo's technique and that in contemporary engravings from Padua and from the circle of Mantegna (Marini 2006).

—Lorenza Melli

Francesco Rosselli

Florence 1448–before 1513 Florence

The Samian Sibyl, c. 1480–90

Engraving, 7 × 4½ in. (17.6 × 10.5 cm)

INSCRIBED (on the scroll):

*ecce veniet dives et pauper nascetur et
bellve adopabunt*

INSCRIBED (beneath image):

*echo cbe presto neverra qveldie
che lvcera letenebre serrate
escoglerassi nodi e profetie
dellagransinaghoga rilascate
saran lelabbra delle gente pie
vedrassi ere deviventi eralpate
elvenir svo ingrenbo averginvera
che così mostra el cielo e ognispera*
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of
Herschel V. Jones, P.68.94

PROVENANCE: Ambroise Firmin-Didot,
Lugt 119, Paris (until d. 1876; his sale, Hotel
Drouot, Maurice Delestre, Paris, April
16–May 12, 1877, no. 1704). Louis Galichon
(1829–1893), Lugt 1060, Paris. [P & D
Colnaghi, London]; [Knoedler & Co., New
York, until 1926; sold to Jones]; Herschel V.
Jones, Minneapolis (1926–d. 1928); his daugh-
ter, Tessie Jones, in lifetime trust, New York
(until d. 1968; bequeathed to the Minneapolis
Institute of Art)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Hind 1938, 153–61,
179, no. C.II.6Bi; Zucker 1993–94, 1:159–64,
207, 2:38–41, 66–7, no. 2404.053 S1.

Long a part of ancient Greek culture, sibyls (prophetesses) were folded into Christian lore as foretelling the coming of Christ. Images of prophets and sibyls are frequent in Florentine art toward the end of the fifteenth century. This engraving of the Samian Sibyl belongs to a set of twelve sibyls that is closely related to a set of twenty-four prophets. These sets were probably issued in the 1480s by Florentine engraver Francesco Rosselli, who was probably responding to the popularity of earlier sets attributed to Baccio Baldini. Usually Rosselli seems to have tried to update and improve on Baldini's efforts, but for the *Samian Sibyl*, he hewed closely to Baldini's design (fig. 42.1). Both Baldini's and Rosselli's sets seem to have sold quite well. We know this not from an abundance of surviving examples—indeed they are rare today—rather from the fact that the copper plates wore out and had to be reworked to extend their life.

In this engraving, the Samian Sibyl's scroll proclaims: "Behold he will come rich, and will be born poor, and the beasts will adore him." She sings her verses: "O behold, soon there will come that dawn, / Which will light up the closed darkness, / And untie the knots and the prophecies / Of the great synagogue. Loosened / Will be the lips of the pious, / Having seen the living and palpable king, / And his coming in the womb of a true virgin, / As heaven thus knows and shall desire."

Rosselli based his inscriptions on Baldini's, mostly updating the orthography to align with the increasing classicism of Florentine culture. The source of Baldini's texts is not certain. The proclamation on the scroll seems to date back to now-destroyed frescoes in Rome, possibly painted by Masolino and Uccello in the early 1430s. The frescoes featured some three hundred famous personages, among them twelve sibyls. Even though Baldini is unlikely to have seen the frescoes, both Masolino and Uccello were active in Florence, so knowledge of their work could have been available to him through the city's artistic and intellectual networks.

The verses beneath the image come from a mystery play ascribed to Feo Belcari and performed in 1471 at San Felice in Piazza, a Florentine church on the south side of the Arno. The play opens with the archangel Gabriel calling upon prophets and sibyls to give their predictions of the virgin birth. With some minor changes, the words of the Samian Sibyl are those found on Baldini's and Rosselli's engravings. The play culminated with the Annunciation to the Virgin (when Gabriel tells Mary that she will bear a child), but Baldini accompanied his prints with a Nativity scene.

Knowledge of the ancient sibyls was preserved in the writings of the early Christian author Lucius Caelius Firmianus Lactantius, whose *Divinae Institutiones* (c. 304–13) cites the Roman scholar Marcus Varro (116–27 BCE) as the source of his information on sibyls. Lactantius's work first appeared in print in 1465. That it reappeared in eight further



Fig. 42.1. Attributed to Baccio Baldini, *Samian Sibyl*, c. 1470–80, engraving, 7½ × 4¼ in. (18 × 10.8 cm), British Museum, London, inv. 1895,0915.58.

Italian editions within fifteen years accords well with the popularity of engraved pictures of the sibyls.

In ancient Greece, sibyls sang their predictions at various shrines. In antiquity, their number rose to ten. They were identified not by personal names but by the locus of their activities: in the case of the Samian Sibyl, the island of Samos off the west coast of modern-day Turkey. Samos was a center of trade, a producer of fine wines, a place of learning—home to the mathematician Pythagoras and the astronomer Aristarchus, the first to propose a heliocentric cosmos. The wealthy island had a great temple complex dedicated to Hera, sister and wife of Zeus, active from the eighth century BCE into the fourth century CE. Nearby was a shrine to Apollo, where the sibyl held forth. Christianity absorbed the sibyls, and their number increased to twelve, perhaps to match the number of Christ's Apostles or to be half the number of the prophets.

—Tom Rasseur



Attributed to Baccio Baldini
 Florence c. 1436–1487 Florence
 Possibly after Sandro Botticelli
 Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Dante and Virgil with the Vision of Beatrice,
 1481–83

Engraving, 3¼ × 6¾ in. (9.4 × 17.2 cm)

INSCRIBED: *per me*

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of
 Herschel V. Jones, P.68.103

PROVENANCE: [P & D Colnaghi, London];
 [Albert Roullier, Chicago]; Herschel V. Jones
 (Minneapolis, until d. 1928); his daughter,
 Tessie Jones, in lifetime trust, New York
 (until d. 1968; bequeathed to the Minneapolis
 Institute of Art)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Hind 1938, 99–110,
 no. A.V.2(2); Dreyer 1984, 111–15; Dunlop
 1993, 29–42; Zucker 1993–94, 1:222–27, no.
 2403.094; Keller in Berlin and London 2000–
 2001, 327–34; Böniger 2021, 75–82.

Dante Alighieri's masterpiece was the *Divine Comedy*, a poem in three parts, exploring the damnation of Hell, the purification of Purgatory, and the heavenly rewards of Paradise. *Dante and Virgil with the Vision of Beatrice* illustrated the second canto of the *Inferno* for Cristoforo Landino's commentary *Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante* (Florence, 1481). At left, we see the bearded Virgil reproaching Dante for deeming himself unworthy to enter the afterlife. At center, Virgil then recounts that he had been resting in Limbo when a beautiful woman named Beatrice came to him and bade him to guide Dante on his journey. With renewed courage, Dante begins his voyage. We see the entrance to the underworld, marked "*per me*"—"through me"—the thrice-repeated opening to the third of the epic's one hundred cantos.

Although he had been banished from the city, Dante (1265–1321) came to be a hero of Florentine culture by the mid-1400s. In 1302, Dante found himself on the wrong side of political affairs and was expelled. A few years later he began the *Comedy*, later deemed "divine" by the poet Boccaccio (1313–1375). Written in vernacular Florentine Italian rather than Latin, the poem became a popular sensation, circulating widely in manuscript and read aloud publicly. The lectures of Cristoforo Landino (1424–1504), professor of rhetoric and poetry at Florence's university, elevated Dante's reputation in his hometown. That the poem had been published in five

Italian cities but not in Florence seemed wrong. Worse, the commentaries were from the fourteenth century and written by non-Tuscans, whom Landino considered barbarians. On December 24, 1480, Landino signed a contract to produce an extensive commentary on the *Comedy*. Using the notes for his lectures, he worked quickly, and on August 30, 1481, he ceremoniously presented the city council with the not quite finished work—not quite finished because the presentation volume lacked illustrations.

Landino, the printer Niccolò di Lorenzo della Magna, and the underwriter, Florentine merchant Bernardo d'Antonio di Ricciardo degli Alberti, had planned an unusually sumptuous volume with one hundred engraved illustrations—one for each canto. In the mid-sixteenth century, Giorgio Vasari wrote, "Botticelli, being a man of inquiring mind, made a commentary on part of Dante, illustrated the *Inferno*, and gave it to be printed; on this he wasted much of his time and brought infinite disorder to his life by neglecting his work." Commissioned by Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, after around 1480–95 Botticelli did indeed prepare one hundred drawings for the *Divine Comedy*, of which ninety-two are extant (Berlin and the Vatican, see fig. 14). Their relationship to the engravings for the Landino edition is not straightforward. In some cases, the engraver seems to have relied on Botticelli's drawings; other times, he improvised. In the case of the

present engraving, *Dante and Virgil with the Vision of Beatrice*, Botticelli's design for the second canto is one of the eight lost drawings, so we cannot say how the engraver developed the composition. The woman's flowing gown and graceful posture, however, offer a hint of Botticelli, although obscured by a coarse engraving technique. Baccio Baldini is generally cited as the engraver, but he is such a shadowy figure that uncertainty remains.

In 1483 Landino wrote that twelve hundred volumes had been published. Niccolò planned to print the engravings on the same sheets of paper as the text, but no copy has more than three engravings printed this way, and no copy has more than nineteen engravings in all. The plates were typically printed on separate sheets and pasted into the volume because no printing could be done once the sheets were folded and gathered. What caused the project to stop at nineteen illustrations? Perhaps Niccolò's recurrent financial problems, Baldini's death in 1487, or a turn of Botticelli's attention.

Although the illustration program was not achieved as planned, the book successfully forged a stronger link between Florence and Dante. Landino's text became the standard commentary for the remainder of the century. It was frequently reprinted, and five editions included woodcut illustrations, the first nineteen of which were based on the engravings of the 1481 Florentine edition.

—Tom Rassiour



Lorenzo di Credi
Florence 1456–1537 Florence

***Astronomy*, 1480s**

Metalpoint, brush and brown wash, heightened with lead white, pen and brown ink; 15½ × 10¼ in. (39.3 × 26 cm)
INSCRIBED (on verso in graphite at center of sheet): *493 esp. / Credi*; (at lower edge): *N. 11 / Dom. Ghirlandaio / 493 E /*
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 493 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Balducci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Domenico Ghirlandaio); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ferri 1881, 30; Berenson 1903, 1:47–48, 2:no. 681; Degenhart 1931, 46–47; Dalli Regoli 1966, 61, 160, no. 129; Petrioli Tofani in Florence 1992a, 90–91, no. 3.7; Rossi in London and Florence 2010–11, 192–93, no. 44; Melli in Washington 2019, 87–99; Bambach 2019, 1:296–97, 335–37, 2:253; Nesi 2022, 11n4.



Fig. 44.1. Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1510, tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 40 × 28¾ in. (101.8 × 72.9 cm), Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, 39.9.



Fig. 44.2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Three Studies of the Virgin and Child, Seated*, c. 1478–80, pen and ink over leadpoint, 8 × 6½ in. (20.3 × 15.6 cm), British Museum, London 1860,0616.100, verso.

Lorenzo di Credi's exceptional drapery studies have long been admired, with a few actually being mistaken for the work of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Vasari wrote:

"As Lorenzo took such pleasure in Leonardo's manner, he learned to imitate it so well that no one came closer in perfection and high finish, as seen in many of his drawings. . . among which are those made from clay models covered with waxed linen drapery and liquid clay, imitated with such diligence and infinite patience, one can hardly believe it" (Vasari 1568, 131).

After sketching this figure in metalpoint, Credi tinted the lower part of the sheet with brown wash, then meticulously layered pen, brown wash, and white gouache, sometimes darkening highlights to achieve a seamless transition similar to his polished painted surfaces. Using this broad range of tone, he described the fall of light on a dynamic topography of drapery folds—hills, valleys, shallow ripples, and light-catching plains. To the left of this textile landscape is a natural one, with a rocky patch of earth and clump of slender trees loosely described with the brush. The faint rendering of the figure's upper half heightens the impact of the drapery's dazzling finish and provides an aesthetic contrast appreciated in antiquity—as noted, for instance, in descriptions of Apelles' unfinished *Venus of Cos*—which reemerged in Renaissance Florence (see Bambach 2019 on writings of Pliny, Cicero, Alberti, Agostino Vespucci, and Leonardo on

the subject). The figure is *Astronomy*, identified by the armillary sphere. The faintness of this attribute made it easy to adapt the study to other settings, such as Credi's *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* (c. 1510, fig. 44.1) and the Virgin's mantles in tondi by Credi and his shop (see, e.g., Gallerie degli Uffizi inv. 1890 3244).

Credi and Leonardo learned to draw drapery in the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, where the novel technique described above by Vasari first emerged, of arranging fabric dipped in clay over structures. The practice of drawing drapery and sculpture from different angles—evident in the vantage point in this sheet—also reflects Verrocchio's influence (see Uffizi 443E, 444E, 422E). Verrocchio's studio taught that three-dimensional objects offered infinite contours to draw, a lesson that helped hone technical skills and generate ideas.

When Credi adapted the present figure for his *Madonna and Child* painting, the sculptural effect of *Astronomy* was lost. The Virgin is represented more frontally, turning to look at the kneeling Saint John. Her lap is also more foreshortened, and her left leg no longer recedes in shadow (Dalli Regoli 1966). This conventional approach suggests that the painting came later than the drawing, likely c. 1510, when Credi's production was more repetitive.

The date of the drawing would seem either to be circa 1478–85, when Credi worked closely with Verrocchio as his student and collaborator (and before Leonardo left for Milan

in 1483), or circa 1500–1506, after Leonardo returned to Florence. Leonardo exerted tremendous influence on him in both periods. Scholars have dated most of Credi's other drapery studies to the earlier period. Also in support of this date is the possible influence of a cohesive group of Leonardo's drawings from circa 1478–83 that depict armillary spheres (rare in the period), female figures and allegories in landscapes, and figures sketched in similar poses (Codex Atlanticus, British Museum, London 1860.0616.98v, 1860.0616.100v, fig. 44.2). Leonardo would develop this pose—figure at an angle with right leg extended across the foreground—more radically in his lost *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* cartoon, exhibited in Florence sometime between 1501 and 1507/8. (It is possible that Credi's interest in reprising the *Astronomy* figure in *Madonna and Child* was sparked by the Virgin in this cartoon.) The impact of the cartoon was immediate, with many artists experimenting with Leonardo's new compositional ideas. Nothing of Leonardo's advanced *sfumato* drawing technique is detected in *Astronomy*. In fact, Credi's conservative, painstaking technique, so distant from Leonardo's mature work, seems to support an earlier date as well. Furthermore, allegorical subjects were more favored before the early 1490s and the rise of Savonarola, especially by Credi, who focused on religious painting after that time (Rossi 2010).

—Rachel McGarry



Lorenzo di Credi

Florence 1456–1537 Florence

Six Figure Studies, c. 1515

Metalpoint, pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash, heightened with lead white, on white paper tinted ocher in selected passages; 9 5/8 × 6 7/8 in. (24.5 × 17.4 cm)

INSCRIBED (in blue pencil at lower right): 218; (on verso in red pencil at top of sheet): *lorenzo di credi*; (and in pencil at center): *Filippino Lippi / C 5.619°38*; at lower left: 61

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. no. 218 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Baldinucci 1687, as Fra Filippo Lippi; Pelli 1775–93, as Filippo Lippi); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Dalli Regoli 1966, 166, no. 145; Cecchi in Florence 1992a, 140–41, no. 6.10; Bartoli in Rome 2000, 1:208, no. 5.28; Rossi in London and Florence 2010–11, 190–91, no. 43; Rossi in Florence 2015b, 388, no. 84 (with bibliography); Nesi 2022, 11n4.



Fig. 45.1. Andrea del Verrocchio, *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, 1467–83, bronze, with gilding, height 94 1/2 in. (240 cm), Orsanmichele, Florence.

This pen drawing shows Lorenzo di Credi generating ever-more refined ideas for a standing female figure, along with a few other rapid thoughts. He may have begun with the small nude at lower right, partially obscured by the larger figure above. Spindly as she is, she vaguely resembles Credi's heroic *Venus*, painted two decades earlier (no. 10), although her pose is flipped, a common *disegno* practice in the period to stimulate new ideas. Credi drew the figure anew to the left, first nude, then clothed in a clingy dress and large mantle, introducing a new position for the arms and possibly a halo. The abbreviated pen sketches of a kneeling bearded man, perhaps a shepherd or a pilgrim, and a standing figure with his right arm raised, must have preceded the two more finished studies above, which dominate the sheet. The figure at upper left elaborates the draped darker study at lower center, albeit with greatly amplified drapery. The figure at upper right, in turn, advances the idea of the nude directly beneath her. Infrared reflectography reveals that Credi initially experimented with depicting the larger right-hand figure with her left arm raised (Rossi 2010), but he ended up following the arm position of the small study. He did, however, alter her legs and feet so that she puts her right foot before her left, thus shifting her weight. He clothed her in an elegant dress with a jeweled brooch, which resembles one found in paintings by Andrea del Verrocchio, Credi's master and collaborator, and other

artists in Verrocchio's studio (Hirschauer and Walmsley in Washington 2019, 81). Credi gave this figure a lighter mantle than the one depicted at left, and drew a martyr's palm in her hand, suggesting that the female figures are all studies of saints. This would explain the languid, resigned expressions of the larger figures.

Infrared reflectography indicates that Credi first drew the larger figures nude, for anatomical accuracy, before covering their bodies with abundant drapery. The upper left figure holds the pleats of her massive mantle almost as if it were an overgrown infant. Credi patiently modeled each intricate fold, using fine pen strokes and crosshatching for shadows and white heightening for highlights (and to cover changes; see especially figure at upper right). Spot lit to enhance the dynamic patterns, the drapery appears weighty and voluminous, as if cast in bronze or carved in stone. The profusion of fabric recalls, again, the work of Verrocchio, particularly his bronze *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* at Orsanmichele, Florence (Bartoli 2000). Cast in the early 1480s, the apostle's lively, copious drapery was unprecedented and deeply influential, offering a distinctive alternative to antique models (fig. 45.1). Credi's upper-left figure might even vaguely recall Thomas's pose, albeit reversed.

The lightly sketched figure at lower left is usually identified as Saint John the Baptist in the act of pouring water at a baptism.

The raised arm held across the body is less usual for such representations, however; the tension implied in such a torqued pose might seem more reminiscent of an executioner wielding a weapon, with the shoulder serving as a fulcrum of force. It has been noted that the figure kneeling in prayer recalls Leonardo, specifically the fervent old male spectators in his *Adoration of the Magi* (1481, Gallerie degli Uffizi), with one nineteenth-century art historian (Bayerdorsfer) even suggesting that this figure was sketched by Leonardo. Indeed, in addition to Credi, the drawing has been attributed to a range of artists active in Florence between 1430 and 1530—Filippo Lippi, Filippino Lippi, Piero di Cosimo, and the Verrocchio school, among others—until Dalli Regoli in her 1966 monograph on Credi firmly established his hand (see Rossi 2015 for attribution history).

There are no surviving paintings by Credi directly related to these studies, but scholars have universally favored a late date, circa 1510–20, based on the maturity and fluidity of the handling. The artist's earlier drawings are more fastidious and overworked (no. 44). Also persuasive is the dynamic mix of studies on the sheet, which is more typical of Credi's late drawings and exhibits an interest in developments in contemporary Florentine art, even if Credi's later paintings became more conventional.

—Rachel McGarry



Jacopo del Sellaio

Florence c. 1442–1493 Florence

The Banquet of Queen Vashti, c. 1485Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 17¼ × 32¼ in. (45 × 82 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 492

PROVENANCE: Giuseppe Morellini, Florence (until 1781; sold, June 6, to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since 1781; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Sframeli in Florence 2006, 230, no. 88; Sframeli in Budapest 2008, 99; Pons in Florence 2010, 170–75; Sallay 2019, 67–80; Debby 2021, 362–63.



Fig. 46.1. Jacopo del Sellaio, *Banquet of Ahasuerus*, probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 17½ × 27½ in. (44.5 × 62 cm), Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 491.



Fig. 46.2. Reconstruction of the *forziere* by Dóra Sallay, showing *The Banquet of Ahasuerus* (left) and *The Banquet of Queen Vashti* (right) (from Sallay 2019, 74, fig. 7).

This panel shows the banquet held by Vashti, the first wife of Ahasuerus, whom he later repudiated before marrying Esther, as narrated in the Book of Esther in the Bible. This work, together with other panels by Jacopo del Sellaio showing scenes of Vashti and Esther discussed below, had formerly been thought to be part of a *spalliera*, or wainscoting decoration on the walls of a room, or else part of a *lettuccio*, a kind of daybed that is frequently documented among Renaissance household furnishings.

The recent removal of an old frame, however, allowed the scholar Dóra Sallay to recognize that the present painting was originally the right half of a larger panel, the other fragment being the Uffizi's *The Banquet of Ahasuerus* (fig. 46.1, Sallay 2019). Originally, the two scenes formed the front panel of a painted *forziere* (fig. 46.2), a type of large chest used to store clothing and the trousseau in a couple's bedroom. This reconstruction is confirmed by a groove that originally held the lock of the chest, which is still visible on the back of the upper side of this panel (fig. 46.3). These furnishings were usually commissioned in pairs by the father of the bride or by the husband, on the occasion of a wedding. The pendant chest of this work was decorated with three fragmentary scenes now in different museums but once again originally part of a single panel: the *Coronation of Esther* in Paris (see fig. 47.1), *Esther before Ahasuerus*

in Budapest (see fig. 47.2), and the *Triumph of Mordecai* in the Uffizi (see fig. 47.3), shown in the present exhibition (no. 47). Together they depicted scenes from the life of Esther, exalting the virtues of the second consort of the Persian king, a woman who succeeded in saving the Jewish people from the conspiracy of Haman.

Although *forziere* chests were painted with scenes of classical mythology or biblical episodes, and sometimes even with scenes of conflict, the most popular subjects were tales of love that celebrate qualities prized in a bride, such as fidelity, chastity, and purity. According to the story, Ahasuerus hosted a banquet in the palace courtyard for all the citizens of the city of Susa, and asked the palace eunuchs to invite Queen Vashti to join him (*Banquet of Ahasuerus*, fig. 46.1). The panel shows the queen attending another banquet, thus disrespecting her husband and performing an outrageous act. For this Vashti was stripped of her royal robes and crown, then expelled—depicted in the hectic scene at the center of the panel. The biblical text recounts only her sentencing, and it is plausible that the present painting was inspired by *sacre rappresentazioni*, the religious theater plays so popular in Florence at the time. In the street in the background, a figure on horseback might be a messenger circulating the news of the fate of the disgraced queen. In this view we glimpse Florentine city life,

palaces with the *panca di via*, the stone bench built into the structure of the most noble palaces, and city gates. Such street views also feature in monumental public paintings such as the fresco cycles of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Sasseti Chapel in Santa Trinita, 1482–85; Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, 1485–90).

Together in the original furnishing, the panels contrast two models of behavior: here, the shameful Vashti, as a warning to the bride, and virtuous Esther, a model for the righteous wife.

Jacopo del Sellaio, a Florentine painter who took his inspiration from Sandro Botticelli, specialized in paintings for domestic furnishings. His talent in this genre is evident here in his attention to details such as the rendering of the banquet, the richness of the appointments and fine textiles, and the sideboard with splendid wares and furnishings. The scene reflects Florentine wedding banquets as we know them from contemporary descriptions, designed to exhibit the wealth of a family with the display of valuable objects. In an overdoor is the bust of a child, presumably a young Christ or Saint John the Baptist, which was a common feature in Florentine houses, offering a moral exemplar for the children of the household (no. 48). Traces of a coat of arms, no longer legible, might have belonged to the patron's family.

—Nicoletta Pons



Fig. 46.3. Hypothetical reconstruction of the *forziere* by Dóra Sallay (from Sallay 2019, 74, fig. 8).

Jacopo del Sellaio

Florence c. 1442–1493 Florence

Triumph of Mordecai, c. 1485Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*) on panel, 17¼ × 23¾ in. (45 × 60 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 493

PROVENANCE: Giuseppe Morellini, Florence (until 1781; sold, June 6, to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since 1781; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Haraszti-Takács 1989, 14–25; Sframeli in Florence 2006, 230; Pons in Florence 2010, 170–75; Sallay 2019, 67–80; Debby 2021, 362–63.



Fig. 47.1. Jacopo del Sellaio, *Coronation of Esther*, tempera on panel, 18 × 17¼ in. (45.5 × 43.6 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. RF 1274.



Fig. 47.2. Jacopo del Sellaio, *Esther before Ahasuerus*, tempera on panel, 17¼ × 17 in. (45 × 43 cm), Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. 2537.



Fig. 47.3. Reconstruction of the *forziere* by Dóra Sallay, showing *Coronation of Esther* (left), *Esther before Ahasuerus* (center), and *Triumph of Mordecai* (right) (from Sallay 2019, 73, fig. 7).

This panel illustrates the conclusion of the story of Esther, the *Triumph of Mordecai*, as narrated in the Book of Esther in the Bible. This fragment was once part of a larger panel belonging to a painted *forziere* chest, which was cut into three sections some time before 1781, when the panel was acquired by the Uffizi. Panels belonging to the same piece of furniture have been identified: the left panel is the *Coronation of Esther* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (fig. 47.1), and the central panel, *Esther before Ahasuerus* now in Budapest (fig. 47.2), the latter of which has traces of the original fitting for the lock (Sallay 2019). The panel on the right was the present work, *Triumph of Mordecai* (fig. 47.3). *Forzieri* (or *cassoni*) were decorated chests intended for furnishing the bridal chamber and were usually commissioned in pairs for the spouses. Panels from the pendant of this chest have been identified, in this case divided into two parts, and represent the story of Vashti: *The Banquet of Ahasuerus* and *The Banquet of Queen Vashti* (no. 46). The three Esther scenes originally composed a single panel measuring approximately 43.5 by 143.5 centimeters, with the walls of the painted architecture neatly separating different scenes in the story.

The Paris panel shows the *Coronation of Esther* following Ahasuerus's repudiation of Vashti and his choice of Esther as a new bride. In the background of the fragment in Budapest is the next moment, when Mordecai,

Esther's uncle, overhears two eunuchs of the king plotting against the Jewish people. He asks the young queen to intercede with the royal consort to save her people. By law no one could meet the king without an invitation, so Esther approaches Ahasuerus with hesitation and fear, feelings rendered sensitively in the painting. Inspired by God, Ahasuerus gives his bride a kindly welcome, placing the scepter lightly on her head.

The final episode—depicted in the present panel—celebrates the *Triumph of Mordecai*. In the center, Esther and Ahasuerus approach a seated man who has fallen asleep; his head-dress identifies him as the wicked counselor Haman. Next we see disgraced Haman at left, as he is forced to accompany Mordecai who, riding on horseback and richly dressed in royal robes, processes in triumph through city streets. In the final scene on the right Mordecai receives a gold ring from the king and queen that had once belonged to Haman, who is dead and shown hanging in the background. The various characters are easily identified by the device of giving each individualized dress and fabric color, hairstyle, and headgear across the episodes.

The various episodes of this story are arranged across the surface, each in a distinctive setting, like the theatrical scenes and sets of a play. The settings have stairways, loggias, and arcades that would have been found in the grandest Renaissance palaces for which

such a *cassone* would have been made. While the story of Vashti on the pendant *cassone* ends with the expulsion of the bad wife, the story of Esther has a happy ending, sounding a note of harmony that bodes well for the new bride who was the recipient of the *cassone*. The patrons who commissioned the two chests are unknown, but the richness of the painting and decoration suggest an important destination. It is possible that coats of arms or heraldic devices originally appeared on the painted sides of the chest, unfortunately now lost. There may be a reference to the bride in the profile bust of a young woman seen in a lunette above the door. It was customary in Florence to decorate lunettes and tympanums of overdoors with half-length portraits: they were often virtuous young women, or young men depicted in the guise of the young Saint John the Baptist or Jesus, exemplars of virtue and deportment (see the bust by Benedetto da Rovezzano, no. 48).

All the panels share an oblique perspective, privileging a point of view from the right, which probably related to the original location of the two chests. This work, like its companion, was painted by Jacopo del Sellaio, a painter who specialized in devotional images and paintings made for domestic furnishings (*forziere* chests and *spalliere* wainscoting).

—Nicoletta Pons

Benedetto da Rovezzano

Canapale, near Pistoia, c. 1474–c. 1552
Vallombrosa

Saint John the Baptist, c. 1505

Terracotta, 19¾ × 16¼ × 8¾ in.
(50 × 41.3 × 22.2 cm)

Minneapolis Institute of Art,
The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2013.1

PROVENANCE: Marchesa Serafini, Florence (by 1900). Michiel Onnes van Nijenrode (1878–1972), Groningen, Netherlands (before 1923). Sale, Frederik Muller & Cie., Amsterdam, July 10, 1923, no. 47; Dr. Otto Lanz, Amsterdam (1923–35); his widow, Anna Theresia Willi Lanz, Amsterdam and Lugano, Switzerland (1935–1941; forced sale to Hitler through Hans Posse, transferred to Kremsmünster and then Altaussee, Austria); Adolf Hitler (1941–d. 1945; recovered by Allied forces and taken to the Munich Central Collecting Point); repatriated to the Netherlands Art Property Foundation (Stichting Nederlands Kunstbezit), Amsterdam, 1946. Sale, Frederik Muller & Cie., Amsterdam, March 13–19, 1951; Georg B. Lanz, son of Otto Lanz, and his wife, Gertrude Lanz, Château du Grand Clos, Rennaz, Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland (1951–after 1969); Marie Laforêt, Geneva (c. 1978); Dr. Nikolaos Pindaros Diallinas, Geneva (by 1979); [Art trade, Paris; 1979–82]; Guy Ladrière, Paris (1982–2013); [Sam Fogg, London, 2013; sold to the Minneapolis Institute of Art]

SELECTED REFERENCES: Bode 1901–2, 1–2, fig. 1; Paris 2012, 22–27; Caglioti 2021, 85, 89, fig. 2.

Busts of Saint John the Baptist as a boy were widespread in the Florentine Renaissance—but almost unheard of elsewhere—from approximately the middle of the fifteenth century until around 1520. The oldest known representation in sculpture of Saint John as an adolescent was Donatello's marble standing figure, actually the size of an adult, for the Martelli family in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence; commonly dated 1455–60 but actually almost certainly dating to c. 1442 (Caglioti 2022, no. 81, 244–45). Desiderio da Settignano introduced the bust format (Pisani 2007, 212–14). Sometimes combined with a bust of the Christ child, these sculptures of the patron saint of Florence (and of the merchants' guild, the Arte della Calimala) seem to follow the suggestion of Giovanni Dominici, in his *Regola del Governo Familiare* (Rule of family government) of 1419, in which he asks the city's mothers to keep in the home (painted) images of saints, in their childhood, including those of the little Saint John the Baptist, as well as the Christ child, in order to teach their children proper behavior and inspire pious thoughts in them. In fact, we see such a child's bust in Jacopo del Sellaio's *Banquet of Queen Vashti* (over the door next to the ceremonial display of tableware) in this exhibition (nos. 46–47).

The Minneapolis bust was the starting point in 1901 for Wilhelm von Bode to group a number of works in terracotta, assigning them on stylistic grounds to an anonymous early sixteenth-century artist, whom he called the Master of the Saint John Statuettes. After almost a century of various attempts to identify this oeuvre as part of the production of sculptors known from their work in other materials, in 1996 Francesco Caglioti first proposed to identify him with Benedetto da Rovezzano, which now is universally accepted. In fact, together with a figure of the seated *Saint John the Baptist in the Desert*, shown through horizontally layered rock formations as part of the sculpture (c. 1510, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence), the Minneapolis bust of *Saint John* is seen as one of the cornerstones and most characteristic works of Benedetto's production in terracotta. Benedetto da Rovezzano is well documented as a highly accomplished sculptor in marble and bronze. In Florence, Benedetto received the most prestigious commissions during the first Florentine republic under Piero Soderini—including Soderini's own tomb (Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence); the tomb of San Giovanni Gualberto, founder of the Vallombrosan order; and the over-life-size statue of Saint John the Evangelist in Florence Cathedral. The high regard in which Benedetto was held during his lifetime also emerges from the fact that Giorgio Vasari included his biography in his *Lives of the Artists* (1550 and 1568), rather than just mentioning his name in another artist's life.

When Michelangelo left Florence for Rome to paint the Sistine ceiling in 1508, he entrusted Benedetto to finish his (now lost)

bronze *David* for Cardinal Rohan. In Genoa, among other prestigious commissions, he was appointed by the French secretary of state to create the tomb for Louis XII's ancestors, Louis d'Orléans and Valentina Visconti, which was shipped to Paris (today in the church of Saint-Denis). Moreover, he followed an invitation to England to create the tomb for Cardinal Wolsey for Windsor Castle; after the cardinal's fall from grace, Henry VIII destined this tomb for himself, and after further complications, the sarcophagus was later moved to Saint Paul's Cathedral, where it now contains Lord Nelson's remains. Through these commissions from the royal households of France and England, Benedetto da Rovezzano played an important role in spreading the visual language of the Italian Renaissance to European centers beyond the Alps.

The much idealized face with a slim, linear nose and lively, layered hair of the adolescent *Saint John the Baptist* in the Minneapolis bust very much embodies the ideal of youthful male figures, which we find in Botticelli's oeuvre since the 1470s. It is especially similar to the angel in profile in Michelangelo's *Manchester Madonna* (c. 1497, National Gallery, London), which points to a more lengthy and profound relation between these two artists, and may help to explain the fact that Michelangelo entrusted him to finish his bronze *David* in 1508.

—Eike D. Schmidt





From Life: Florentine Faces and People

Who were the protagonists in Renaissance Florence and how did they want to be seen by their contemporaries and remembered by their descendants? At the center of this section is the *Adoration of the Magi* by Sandro Botticelli (no. 49). It includes some of the most important people in the city, who are shown personifying the characters of the sacred scene, and it encompasses a variety of aspects of portraiture. In fact, we see posthumous portraits (celebrative, and therefore idealized); likenesses of living people, including the patron, proud to be represented in such illustrious company; and, on the right, the only known self-portrait of Botticelli, just over thirty years old, who appears to introduce us to the scene. Members of the Medici family, who were the de facto rulers of Florence, are disguised as the three kings, along with their kin and closest friends in the cortege. The Medici were also patrons of the Confraternity of the Magi, who paraded as the kings through the city with their entourage during religious feasts. One of those processions seems to be the subject of Cosimo Rosselli's *Adoration of the Magi* (no. 50), which might come from Palazzo Vecchio, the heart of the city's political life. In the crowd the artist may have portrayed representatives of government and contemporary high society. Among them, in the center of the scene, King Balthasar stands out, sumptuously dressed. This is the first known portrait of a northern African (possibly an Egyptian) as a king in Florentine painting.

The Renaissance is also the period when portraiture becomes a specific artistic genre, coinciding with a rediscovery and celebration of the individual. In early fifteenth-century Italy (as well as later), the sitter is frequently represented in profile, as Roman emperors were on ancient coins. Only in the second half of the century, under the influence of northern European realism, did Italian artists start to paint portraits in three-quarter views, which show deeper psychological insights and often create a direct relationship between the sitter and spectator. Of course, only the wealthiest people could afford having their likeness made, hence the boy painted by Botticelli in a rich red mantle and dark *mazzocchio*—the outfit for official occasions—probably belonged to the Florentine high society or to the body of attendants of the Florentine *magistrature* (no. 52).

The very elegant lady represented by Piero del Pollaiuolo, in collaboration with his brother Antonio, lavishly dressed in gold brocade and silk velvet, with jewels and pearls also in her coiffure, may have been portrayed for the purpose of presentation to a prospective groom or husband, given the official tone of the portrait (no. 55). The Minneapolis Institute of Art's panel presumably served the same function; the prim lady, pale and blonde, is depicted by an Italian artist following the northern and French style (no. 56). It was probably painted by the Florentine Benedetto Ghirlandaio, active in France for almost twenty years. His brother Domenico Ghirlandaio owed part of his success to his ability to represent the Florentine society of his time at its best. However, the character of his two masterpieces included here is the most spontaneous and least official of all. The first is a monk in his white robe, shown during meditation or listening to a holy message (no. 53). What a wisdom in his benevolent eyes, what a long and deep experience we can detect in his wrinkles! And the second is a drawing of a long-necked woman, dressed simply but very well, considering the almost transparent organdy (surely silk) of her veil with its hem, delicately embroidered with a pearl motif (no. 54).

The boy portrayed by Perugino is soberly and elegantly dressed—notice the fine white shirt under his doublet (no. 57). Considering that he seems to be a teenager, this painting was probably commissioned by his father. Perugino's genius is evident in the ability to imagine the viewer's feeling, to whom the touching, intense gaze of the sitter is directed. This quality is also evident in the lively head study of a boy that is traditionally attributed to Perugino (no. 58). Signorelli also possessed extraordinary talents for capturing human characteristics in his work, as is demonstrated in the marvelous portrait drawing, possibly a self-portrait and as immediate as a snapshot, which is on display here (no. 59).

—Roberta Bartoli

Sandro Botticelli

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Adoration of the Magi, 1470–75

Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*)
on panel, 43¼ × 54 in. (111 × 137 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria
delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 882

PROVENANCE: Church of Santa Maria Novella,
Florence; Don Fabio Arazola da Mondragone,
Florence (1570–75). Don Antonio de'
Medici, Casino di San Marco, Florence (by
1587–d.1621; 1621 inv. c. 252r); Medici Villa
of Poggio Imperiale, Florence. Galleria degli
Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (since
1796; May 13, 1796 inv. no. 1286; 1940–45
removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Mesnil 1903, 87–98;
Hatfield 1976; Lightbown 1978; Trexler
1978b, 127–218; Cecchi 2005; Van der Sman in
Mariani and Van der Sman 2015, 183–202.



This painting was commissioned from Sandro Botticelli by Guasparre di Zanobi del Lama (Florence, 1411–1481), *faccendiere*, or intermediary, of the bankers' guild, a rich man from a modest background, who gravitated in the orbit of the Medici. The "del Lama" of his name refers to the small town of Lamole on the road to Pisa, from where his family came. Only much later was "del Lama" transformed into the last name Lami—at the time only noble families really possessed last names.

Guasparre (or Gaspare in more modern spelling) del Lama had patronage rights for a family altar in the Florentine church of Santa Maria Novella, one of the city's most important churches, connected to the convent of the Dominicans, a mendicant order that, like the Franciscans at Santa Croce, served the city's poor. From the time of the foundation of these two orders in the early thirteenth century, their churches attracted many donations from wealthy families and also important artistic commissions.

Guasparre del Lama, Santa Maria Novella, and Botticelli are interrelated on several levels. The patron lived in the neighborhood of the church, and not far from Botticelli's house. Del Lama's residence might go far, in fact, to explain the choice of artist and destination of the painting (Van der Sman 2015). The subject matter was a natural choice for a patron named after Caspar, one of the three Magi. It was also linked to the traditional, important devotion to the Magi in Santa Maria Novella, where their cult had been introduced in the fourteenth century by Baldassare degli Ubriachi (d. 1406), a Florentine merchant and political fixer, who was engaged in the production of highly prized ivory objects and whose eponymous saint was another of the Magi (R. Trexler, 1988).

The Lami family altar was located against the inner wall of the facade of Santa Maria Novella. There is some evidence from early sources that Botticelli's panel stood within a marble frame and underneath a lunette with a fresco of the Nativity, which survives in the church (Hatfield 1976; Cecchi 2005). Since Guasparre Lami was punished for business malpractice and expelled from the bankers' guild in 1476, the commission must date to a time before then and after his foundation of the altar in 1469.

Vasari (1550, 1568), who reported that this work led to Botticelli's selection for the Sistine Chapel fresco commission (1481–82), described the portraits in the *Adoration* with precision. Among them were many notable Florentines alive at the time or recently deceased, chiefly members of the Medici family, representing a clear homage by Lami to the real, albeit unofficial, rulers of Florence. And in this connection there is another layer to the subject matter. Since 1390 a new cult of the Magi had taken root at San Marco, at the time passed to the convent of a reformed or Observant branch of the Dominicans. There a confraternity ruled the Magi cult, a lay religious association of which the Medici were

the chief patrons. Indeed, in processions at Epiphany and other times, members of the Medici took on the role of the Magi, wearing costumes, a custom that was very much alive when the present *Adoration of the Magi* was painted. The conflation of patron and iconography had found its fullest expression about fifteen years earlier, in the frescoes in the private chapel inside the Medici Palace (1459), where Benozzo Gozzoli depicted the ceremonial procession of the Magi. This chapel was accessible only to selected visitors, however, so it is possible to consider the Lami altarpiece by Botticelli as the first example of a painting with a religious function that reflects a worldly, ephemeral activity. Indeed, perhaps the patron and painter elected to avoid too explicit a reference to the city parades, eschewing the cortège scene and showing instead the act of homage, the Magi's presentation of gifts to the Holy Family.

Although Vasari noted portraits of the Medici in the painting, he was also the first to raise doubts about their exact identification. For Vasari, Cosimo the Elder (1389–1464) was shown kneeling before the Virgin Mary; below, shown as a pair looking at each other, he saw Cosimo's grandson Giuliano and (identified only in the second edition of his *Lives of the Artists* in 1568) Giovanni, son of Cosimo and Giuliano's uncle. However, comparison with other portraits suggests that the paired Magi in fact show Cosimo's two sons Piero (1416–1469) and Giovanni (1421–1463). Since the three persons just named had died before Botticelli painted this panel, their presence is a kind of tribute, while avoiding any explicit identification between the Magi and members of the family currently in power.

Many conjectures have been made about other supposed portraits in the painting, first of all, of Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother Giuliano, protagonist of the joust held in Piazza Santa Croce in 1475, for which Botticelli painted a decorative standard that no longer survives. Giuliano is often thought to be shown in the most dashing figure in the picture, the foremost of a group of pages, for which a preparatory drawing exists in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lille (fig. 49.1). His brother Lorenzo may be the young man with a bare head and black cape, standing behind the two kneeling Magi, in a position clearly marking him as the dynastic successor to his father and grandfather. This hypothesis finds support in the laurel bush sprouting from the wall above this figure, alluding to his name (Hatfield 1990). An equally attractive suggestion is that Lorenzo is the youth in the azure cape standing at the head of the group of spectators on the left (Lightbown 1978), a position that joins him closely to his brother. In the entourage of the Magi, scholars have also sought to identify associates of the Medici, whether intellectuals such as Marsilio Ficino, Agnolo Poliziano, or Pico della Mirandola, or political allies, such as Filippo Strozzi and Lorenzo Tornabuoni.

As was customary, the patron is shown as well, clearly identifiable as the oldest spectator (Mesnil 1903), a white-haired man standing on the right who looks directly at the viewer. And in the right foreground, the figure in yellow drapery looking still more insistently at the viewer has universally been identified as a self-portrait of the artist. It is worth noting that, at the same time, this figure serves the function, defined in Leon Battista Alberti's seminal treatise *On Painting* (1439), of a "commentator," who attracts the viewer's attention and directs it to the most significant part of the painting.

While many elements of the painting draw upon the conventional iconography of many fifteenth-century Nativity scenes, they are not symbols devoid of conviction. The ruins of classical antiquity suggest that Christianity has supplanted ancient Rome but also show a certain continuity; the plants emerging from crannies and hard terrain are signs of new life among relics of the past; the landscape with a river winding into the distance, opening up space, is at once an allusion to the river Jordan of Christ's baptism and a reference to the Arno valley that enfolds and nourishes Florence. Lastly, the peacock perched on the ruined wall at the right would have been read as a symbol of the incorruptibility of the flesh, a clear allusion to the miracle of Christ's resurrection from the tomb; appearing in the *Adoration of the Magi*, the peacock prefigures the newborn's future sacrifice and triumph over death, but it also evokes the clamor and iridescent pageantry of the Florentine processions dedicated to the Epiphany.

—Cecilia Frosinini

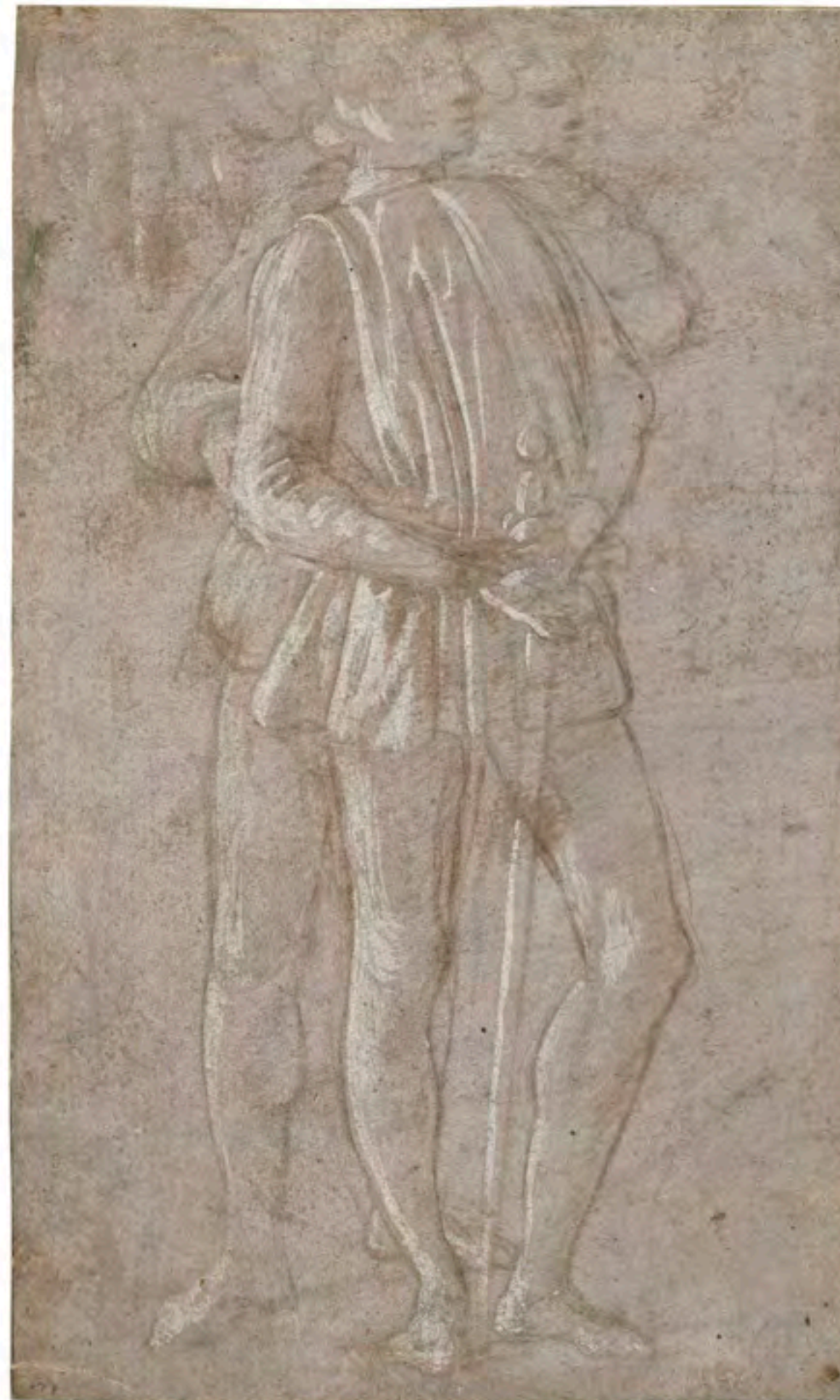


Fig. 49.1. Sandro Botticelli, *Study of Two Standing Figures*, c. 1475, metalpoint on tinted paper, with white highlights, 16.5 × 10 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, inv. 77.



50

Cosimo Rosselli
Florence 1440–1507 Florence

Adoration of the Magi, c. 1475
Tempera on panel, 39¾ × 85½ in.
(101 × 217 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria
delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 494

PROVENANCE: Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo
degli Uffizi, Florence (by 1784; 1784 inv.
no. 74, as School of Ghirlandaio; 1940–48
removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Trexler 1978; Carew-
Reid 1987; Cardini 1991; Morandi in *Florence*
1992d; Newbigin in *Garfagnini* 1994, 17–41;
Cardini 2000; Padoa Rizzo in *Winter Park*
2001, 61–73; Gabrielli 2007.



Fig. 50.1. Probable portraits of Cosimo and Piero de' Medici, detail of no. 50.

Epiphany, the feast day of the Magi, celebrates one of the most important events connected with the Nativity of Christ. In quattrocento Florence it accompanied quite a spectacle, which was something between a religious ceremony and a chivalric parade. Religious observances honoring the Magi were introduced to Florence by the rich merchant Baldassare degli Ubriachi (Trexler 1978b), in the basilica of Santa Maria Novella, but then moved to a lay confraternity that met at San Marco, which held a procession through the city streets on January 6, accompanied by theater pieces about aspects of the legend of the Magi at various points along the way. The occasion allowed the actors, the members of the confraternity, to wear luxurious garments ordinarily discouraged by sumptuary laws, and to display luxury goods manufactured or imported by them, carried by animals that were also richly draped (Carew-Reid 1987).

This painting by Cosimo Rosselli is almost a pictorial transposition of that pageantry. The scene is devised as a kind of procession containing figures with sharply individualized features. While clearly a Florentine of the time would have tended to imagine the historical event in terms of the city's annual feast-day procession, we are struck here by the specificity of the luxurious clothing, and

of the splendid animals (the falcon, thoroughbred horses, rare breeds of dog), features also associated with civic processions held to honor important visitors to the city. Such elements hardly require explanation, since the gifts of the Magi represent the homage of temporal rulers to Christ, but in this painting they suggest the merging of secular rulers of the time with characters of sacred history.

The large size and horizontal format would be compatible with a *spalliera*, or wainscoting, a type of panel (painted or not) often applied to portions of the walls in important rooms of patrician houses. It has been suggested that this panel was made for the room of a confraternity (Pons 2011), perhaps the one in San Marco, the Confraternity of the Magi sponsored by the Medici (Padoa Rizzo 1989 and Padoa Rizzo in Winter Park 2001), and indeed the caparison of the horse at the left has the symbol of a diamond and two feathers that was a personal emblem of both Cosimo the Elder and his son Piero (the father of Lorenzo il Magnifico). Cosimo may be identifiable in the profile figure near the top of the panel wearing a *tocco* (a traditional flat-topped round head covering) of red fabric (Morandi in Florence 1992d). Piero may be shown at our left, wearing the same kind of hat but dressed more elegantly, in a *giornea* (a kind of padded jerkin of rich cloth) with embroidered cuffs (fig. 50.1).

It should be noted that two early sources record an *Adoration of the Magi* in Palazzo Vecchio: an unknown biographer of artists known as Anonimo Gaddiano (c. 1540) attributes the painting to Botticelli, whereas Vasari (1568) suggests it is by Giuliano Pesello or Francesco Pesellino, two artists known for their production of *spalliere* and other painted furniture. Thus the present painting, crowded with portraits and a manifesto of Medici power in disguise, may have been located in a key center of Florentine politics, installed above the grand staircase leading to the halls of government, as the sources claim, to remind Florentines who the true lords of the city were.

The date of the painting to around 1475, based on stylistic grounds and its affinities to the del Lama *Adoration of the Magi* by Botticelli (no. 49), is confirmed by historical circumstance. Following the murder of his brother Giuliano during the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, Lorenzo il Magnifico suspended all civic festivities, including the procession of the Magi, for a decade (Newbigin in Garfagnini 1994).

In the center of the painting stands the figure of the third king, dressed in a rich yellow garment and cloak, and shown wearing a Phrygian cap adorned with jewels and fur (fig. 50.2). This is the third magus, Balthasar,



Fig. 50.2. Detail of one of the Magi, identifiable as Balthasar.

who is described in medieval sources as black; Saint Elizabeth of Schönau (1129–1164) refers to his dark skin color (Cardini 2000), and the twelfth-century collection *Excerptiones Patrum* by the Pseudo-Bede, says Balthasar is *fuscus*, which can mean both dark-skinned and somber. The depiction of the black wise king does not appear in Italy until well into the fifteenth century and even later in Florence, where the three kings were evidently identified with members of the Medici family. Until now, it has been thought that the first to paint Balthasar as a black man was Filippino Lippi, in his Uffizi *Adoration of the Magi* of 1496 (Nelson 2021). Since Rosselli's painting, instead, can be dated to around

1475, this iconography seems to have emerged in Florence at least two decades earlier. However, Rosselli's Balthasar appears to be North African, perhaps from Egypt, one of the countries on the Mediterranean where the Florentine Republic sent ambassadors annually (Tripodi 2011). The painter portrayed a figure of high lineage, probably inspired by accounts of fellow citizens returning from diplomatic trips.

The painting is laden with symbolic elements, not all of them easily decipherable. The comet is worthy of mention, appearing in the background and seeming to point to the walled city of Florence rather than to the Holy Family. And Florence, recognizable

from the dome of the cathedral and the tower of Palazzo Vecchio, is not nestled in the Arno valley but perched on a hill, as if to present it as new Jerusalem (Cardini 1991): a conflation that two decades later would be a key element in the fiery sermons of Savonarola.

—Cecilia Frosinini



51

Filippino Lippi

Prato, c. 1457–1504 Florence

Adoration of the Magi, 1478–80

Pen and brown ink and brown wash over black chalk, heightened with lead white, on ocher paper, 4 1/4 x 14 in. (10.8 x 35.5 cm)

WATERMARK: flower in the form of a tulip, close to Briquet 6662 (Florence, 1496)

INSCRIBED (in brown ink on verso): *Sandro.BL.*
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 210 E

PROVENANCE: Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930; Lagrange 1862, as Botticelli)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Zambrano in Nelson and Zambrano 2004, 178, 324, no. 17.d.1; Nelson in Nelson and Zambrano 2004, 558n35, 595–96 no. 52.d.7 (engraving).



Fig. 51.1. Filippino Lippi, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1478–80, tempera and oil on panel, 22 3/4 x 33 3/4 in. (57.5 x 85.7 cm), National Gallery, London.



Fig. 51.2. Cristofano Robetta (after Filippino Lippi), *Adoration of the Magi*, early 1500s, engraving, 11¼ × 11¼ in. (30 × 28.4 cm), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of Herschel V. Jones, P.68.249.

Although the Uffizi originally attributed this drawing to Botticelli, due in part to the inscription, all recent scholars ascribe it to his student Filippino Lippi, who seems to have made this composition study, one of the very few surviving examples from the 1470s, in preparation for his painting *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 51.1). It is datable on stylistic grounds to 1478–80 and it probably decorated a merchant's home. The subject is one of the most popular biblical narratives in Florence. The Gospel of Matthew recounts that three magi (or wise men), typically identified as kings, came from afar to adore the newborn Christ child. In the drawing and painting, a broken-down manger provides a backdrop for the Holy Family: the seated Virgin holds the infant Jesus upright in her lap and Joseph rests behind them, supported by his staff. The three kings form a semicircle with the eldest kneeling in the center, ready to kiss the foot of the King of Kings; the second king, at right, is on bent knee, with gift in hand; and the youngest king moves forward from the left while removing his headgear. On both sides of this regal group, some members of their entourage appear thoughtful, others amazed, and all wear the heavy mantles found so often in works by Filippino and Botticelli.

Filippino framed his composition with details that allude to the magi's long journey: a landscape on one side and two horses on the other. At the far right, an exhausted groom

leans on his horse, a carefully observed scene from everyday life. In the painting, Filippino transformed this group into the boy seated next to a greyhound at the far left, and eliminated the distracting ox and donkey in the center of his drawing. These changes allow us to see how the artist developed his ideas. In the drawing and painting, the gaps in the composition at the left and in the center create poetic pauses, where viewers can rest their eyes. This feature and the inclusion of landscapes, both typical of Filippino's early works, distinguish them from Botticelli's, which are busy with far more figures.

In an earlier *Adoration of the Magi* painting by Botticelli (National Gallery, London), where Filippino, still a student, added several central figures, the Madonna and Child appear on the right, as was then typical for depictions of this subject. The three kings line up before them, in order of importance, and a crowd moves in from the left. In the present drawing and Filippino's related painting, however, Jesus appears just off center. This interrupts the royal procession and forced the artist to select the most appropriate location for the three kings, based on their status. The young artist must have studied this compositional innovation, first found in two other *Adoration of the Magi* paintings by his former teacher from the mid-1470s: a round work (National Gallery, London), which probably adorned the Pucci Palace,

and the del Lama altarpiece (no. 49) from the church of Santa Maria Novella. Filippino's drawing documents a key moment in the evolution of the centralized *Adoration of the Magi*, which quickly became the norm in Florence and beyond. An important later example by Filippino, in an altarpiece dated 1496 (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), was commissioned for the convent of San Donato in Scopeto to replace the unfinished *Adoration* by Leonardo da Vinci, now in the Uffizi. The basic arrangement of the three kings even recalls that in the present drawing. Filippino's 1496 solution proved popular enough to be reproduced, with a few changes, in an early sixteenth-century engraving (fig. 51.2). This was made by a mysterious artist who made many prints based on Filippino's drawings, and often signed his works Robetta. Though often identified as a certain Cristofano di Michele Martini, he must be the Florentine sculptor and goldsmith listed in a document of 1515 as "Cristoforus olim Ieronimi del Ruchetta, vocato el Robetta." This reproduction indicates how composition studies were useful not only to artists when developing their ideas and teaching their students, but also as a record of paintings that left the workshop, and even, in rare cases, as the basis for engravings.

—Jonathan K. Nelson



Fig. 51.2. Detail of no. 51.

Sandro Botticelli

Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Portrait of a Young Man, 1470Probably tempera and oil (*tempera grassa*)
on panel, 20 × 13¼ in. (51 × 33.5 cm)Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria
Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, inv. 1912 no. 372

PROVENANCE: Galleria Palatina and Royal
Apartments, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (by 1829;
1829 inv. 3225; 1940–45 removed from city of
Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Lightbown 1978,
1:38, 2:26, B12; Pons 1989, 57n18; Guidi 1992,
648–52; Rubinstein 1995, 12, 21; Cecchi 2005,
118; Cecchi in Rome 2011, 86–87; Mascalchi in
Florence 2011, 220; Baldini in Padovani 2014,
154–56; Cecchi 2015, 47; Zambrano 2019,
11–12, 15; Cecchi in Rovereto 2021, 44.

The face of this elegantly dressed young man is framed by thick clusters of chestnut hair and a head covering in dark violet tones of the type called a *mazzocchio*, consisting of a pleated cap and *becchetto*, a long strip of the same cloth falling from the cap and thrown over the shoulders. This type of hat, fashionable in the 1470s in Florence, indicates a high social rank, which is confirmed in the portrait by the refined clothing and direct, brazen gaze of the sitter.

Unanimously recognized as an early work of Botticelli, a master portraitist of Renaissance Florence, the painting belongs to a critical juncture in the development of the genre, a transition from the profile view, which prevailed in the first half of the fifteenth century, to showing sitters in three-quarter view. Painted around 1470, this is probably one of the earliest, if not the earliest portrait by Botticelli, and it is still imbued with the figure types of his master Filippo Lippi in the treatment of the face. There are also clear references to Piero del Pollaiuolo; see, for example, the *Portrait of a Man* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, attributed to him. A nearly contemporary work is Botticelli's portrait

of Smeralda Brandini (fig. 34). In that work, the noblewoman appears in an architectural setting, her face seen at an angle as in the Galleria Palatina youth. In contrast, the present work has a simple background, without any of the built structures or landscape elements that characterize most of his portraits. In the Florence and London portraits the subject looks directly at the viewer, and this contact, setting up a kind of unspoken dialogue, would become a characteristic of Botticelli's portraits.

The identification of the subject is impossible in the absence of inscriptions, written records, or related likenesses in contemporary frescoes or panel paintings. Cecchi (2005) cautiously proposed that the youth was one of the *"famiglia"* of Palazzo Vecchio, that is, part of the staff made up of servants, guards, musicians, heralds, bell players, barbers, cooks, clergymen, and other employees who are documented wearing red robes or uniforms like the person depicted here (Guidi 1992, 2:648–52; Rubinstein 1995, 12, 21). With practical and ceremonial functions in the town hall, they attended to the needs of the *Signoria*, the body of magistrates governing the city, for a term of two months. But this hypothesis remains

nothing more than a suggestion, since there is no supporting evidence. The Botticelli portrait has sometimes been related to a no longer extant Florentine portrait of uncertain attribution, formerly in the Museo Filangieri in Naples, destroyed and known only from old black-and-white photographs (see Fototeca Zeri, Bologna, no. 12594). The inscription at the base of the Naples portrait, *"ne timeas tibi fidus ero,"* translating to "Fear not, I shall be true to you," may illuminate the context of the present work. Inscriptions with reference to love, also found on other portraits of youths of the period, may plausibly be linked to the moment in which a couple was betrothed, as a sort of pictorial declaration of love or of a promise to marry, and it can be assumed that this meaning can also be extended to some works where no inscription is present. In 2009 the Opificio delle Pietre Dure of Florence, one of Italy's state-run conservation centers, carried out a major restoration of this work, which made the surface more legible and recovered the original range of colors.

—Nicoletta Pons



Domenico Ghirlandaio

Florence 1448–1494 Florence

Portrait of an Old Man, c. 1485–90

Fresco on tile, 18½ × 15 in. (47 × 38 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1485

PROVENANCE: Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, Florence (before d. 1675); Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (1675–1772); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1772; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Berenson 1896, 116; Ragghianti 1935, 198; Nelson and Zambrano 2004, no. R7, 359 (with bibliography); Gianceselli 2012, 143.



Fig. 53.1. Domenico Ghirlandaio (and workshop), *Portrait of Francesco Sassetti*, fresco, 1479–85, Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence.

Portrait of an Old Man has been traditionally and durably attributed to Filippino Lippi since Berenson (1896). It seems more likely, however, that it was painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio, a hypothesis proposed by Ragghianti in 1935 (see Nelson and Zambrano 2004 with bibliography and, more recently, Gianceselli 2012). In fact, Filippino's independent portraits fit more directly within a Botticellian mold (*Portrait of a Youth*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) or show greater creativity (*Portrait of a Musician*, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin).

The *Old Man* at the Uffizi seems to be more in the realist—even verist—style that Ghirlandaio developed in his many portraits of his patrons and their *consorteria* displayed in the Florentine chapels of Santa Trinita (Sassetti Chapel, 1479–85, fig. 53.1) and Santa Maria Novella (Tornabuoni Chapel, 1485–90) and in independent panels, including *Portrait of an Old Man and a Child* at the Musée du Louvre, Paris (1480s). Similar to his *Saint Jerome* in the church of Ognissanti, here we find an unsparing presentation of the irregularities of a face burnished by time, also in the fresco technique. The wrinkles and facial imperfections are transcribed in a darker color, with skillfully executed fine crosshatching and delicate highlights sculpting and enlivening the volumes of the face. These technical characteristics resemble those observed in Ghirlandaio's graphic manner. Comparison with the emphatic *Head of an Elderly Man in Profile* at the British Museum in London (inv. Pp. 1.3), which adroitly combines white highlights with parallel or crosshatched

lines sharply rendered in silverpoint to suggest the imperfections of furrowed skin, is utterly symbolic in this sense.

These naturalist stances also remind us that Ghirlandaio was one of the greatest promoters of Flemish art in Florence. Numerous Flemish prototypes (by Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes, Hans Memling, and others) were circulating at the time in Tuscany. Albeit tempered, Ghirlandaio took up this *flamingant* realism, which he may have seen in Memling's *Saint Benedict*, the left-hand wing of the small Portinari triptych (c. 1475, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), displayed at the time in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, and especially in the modeled faces of the shepherds and saints in Hugo van der Goes's large triptych, which arrived in Florence in 1483.

For all these technical and stylistic reasons, we propose to date this portrait between 1485 and 1490. At a time when his contemporary, Sandro Botticelli, was executing paintings that were revolutionary with regard to the positioning of the model (see fig. 39), Ghirlandaio stood out for his strong, sometimes uncompromising, attention to the portrayal of facial features, both the masses and the modeling.

A number of examples attest to the practice of painting on tile, which was probably more widespread than we might think today. Such paintings may have been pure exercises of technical demonstration for publicity purposes, as Cecilia Frosinini suggested to me personally (2022). A *Bust of the Virgin* executed by Domenico's brother, Davide (Musée Bonnat-Helleu, Bayonne), Andrea del Sarto's

Self-Portrait (Gallerie degli Uffizi), kept by the painter's wife until his death, and the many portraits described in the inventory after death of Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (Gianceselli 2019) also indicate that these works had to respond to domestic purposes such as Christian or family devotion. This portrait of an old man—probably a monk, as confirmed to me by Arianna Sarti on the basis of his clothing (2021)—may have been intended for display in the town hall of his community, of which he may have been a recognized and appreciated member.

The typology of works on tile seems to have been a specialty of Fra' Bartolomeo, who left a large number of frescoes painted on this support; he favored portrayals of Christ as well as John the Baptist and other saints (c. 1506–7, Museo di San Marco, Florence). In the tradition of Fra' Angelico and the Ghirlandaio brothers, with whom he collaborated in his youth, Fra' Bartolomeo created intimate, sensitive images of these holy faces, in stirring encounters, whose characterization often suggests the spontaneity of a *dal vivo* execution.

—Matteo Gianceselli



Domenico Ghirlandaio

Florence 1448–1494 Florence

Portrait of a Young Woman, c. 1490

Silverpoint heightened with lead white on prepared gray paper, 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 10 in. (32.6 × 25.4 cm)
 INSCRIBED (on verso, lower left, in pen and ink): *Ghirlandaio*

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 298 E

PROVENANCE: Bassetti collection, Florence (until 1699; Bassetti 1699, as David Ghirlandaio); Medici collection, Florence (from 1699; Pelli 1775–93, as David Ghirlandaio); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ferri 1881, 19; Berenson 1903, 2:47, no. 875; Petrioli Tofani 1986–87, 132; Cadogan 2000, 296, no. 87; Sassi in London and Florence 2010–11, 228–29, no. 61; Gianceselli 2012, 143, no. 590.

Domenico Ghirlandaio executed many studies from life. In his most accomplished sheets, he combined silverpoint and white highlights masterfully to suggest the volume and modeling of a face. In the present drawing, a vigorous contour is modulated by white highlights, applied in a broad, gliding manner or in networks of small concentric hashings, as can be found in Ghirlandaio's most successful studies, such as sheet 288 E at the Gallerie degli Uffizi, a preparatory sketch for the tondo of *Madonna and Child with Three Angels* (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

The model is presented in a manner reminiscent of a young woman in one of the studies at the British Museum (inv. Pp.1.27), also executed on prepared gray paper. In both cases, the image is limited to a bust, cropped at chest level, not showing the hands. These sheets stand out for the frontal position of the head and the woman's direct gaze at the viewer. No other independent painted portrait by Domenico Ghirlandaio seems to have assumed such immediacy and frankness. More frequently, the portraits present the models in profile or three-quarter view, but in these cases, the viewer never meets the young woman's eyes, as she gazes elsewhere out of the frame. Only the *Portrait of Selvaggia Sassetti* by Domenico's brother Davide (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), dares to visually transgress the canons of modesty related to the moral codes of a society in which women were held to embody decorum and virtue.

Domenico Ghirlandaio resumed this format, however, in his research drawings for the great decorative frescoes that he executed

in the 1480s and 1490s for the chapels of Francesco Sassetti (Santa Trinita, Florence) and Giovanni Tornabuoni (Santa Maria Novella, Florence). In those, the physical distance established between the viewer and the painted composition may have justified the several portraits of women presented with the bust leaning slightly forward, the head straight on, and the gaze direct. He had previously used this pose for Selvaggia in *The Resurrection of the Notary's Son* (Sassetti Chapel) and, notably, in the groups of portraits gathered around the female companions in *Birth of Saint John the Baptist* and *Birth of Mary* (Tornabuoni Chapel). The prestige of the commission obviously encouraged Ghirlandaio to do extremely meticulous preparatory work, as we can still see today in some studies of faces that may be associated with these fresco portraits. For instance, study Pp.1.26 at the British Museum may be related to the likeness of the young woman in the pink dress in *Birth of Saint John the Baptist*, in a position that is not dissimilar to that adopted in the *Mona Lisa* sometime later. The model in the present drawing bears some resemblance, inverted sideways, to the female figure at the center of *Birth of Mary*. The sheet is evidence of Ghirlandaio's ambition in portraiture, in the direct lineage of the revolution embodied in *Lady with a Bouquet* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence), executed by his master, Andrea del Verrocchio, ten years earlier.

—Matteo Gianceselli



Antonio del Pollaiuolo

Florence 1431/32–1498 Rome

Piero del Pollaiuolo

Florence 1441–before 1496 Rome

Portrait of a Young Woman, c. 1480

Tempera on poplar panel; 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 13 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
(55 × 34.5 cm)

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1491

PROVENANCE: Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (by 1834–61); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1861; 1940–44 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Inghirami 1834, 54, no. 376; Chiavacci 1859, 161, no. 371; Levi Pisetzky 1964, 2:fig. 137; Liscia Bemporad in Florence 1977, 298–99, fig. 193; Marchini in Berti 1979, 423 no. P1224; Steinberg 1987, 27; Rainey 1991, 218–20; Simons 1992, 49–50, fig. 8; Pons 1994, 14, 106, no. 21; Bonito Fancelli 1995, 196–99; Kress 1995, 240, fig. 65; Bridgeman in Panizza 2000, 214–18; Poletti 2001, 205, 209; Woods-Marsden in Washington 2001, 66–67, fig. 3; Wright 2005, 125–27, 524–25, no. 56; Acanfora in Beijing and Rouen 2006, 88, no. 18; Tartuferi in Florence 2007, 118–20, no. 5; Sframeli in Budapest 2008, 70, no. 19; Franzon 2011, 52–53, fig. 14, and 54–55, fig. 18; Bigazzi in Florence 2013a, 38; Franzon 2014; Milan 2014, 250–53, no. 27; Tosi Brandi in Milan 2014, 109–10, 114–15; Frosinini 2015; Parenti in Florence 2016, 198, no. 19; Kranz in Munich 2018, 296, no. 75.

Portraits of Florentine women were inspired by female profiles on engraved gems, like that of Athena's helmeted bust in Lorenzo de' Medici's collection (Florence 1972, 54, no. 22, fig. 16). Athena was the pagan archetype of the virtuous woman, albeit one who has not fulfilled the primary role assigned to women by society, namely, to assure the continuity of a distinguished family, her own and her husband's, by bringing forth healthy progeny.

This portrait was recorded in 1859 as hung in the Room of Prometheus in the Palatina Gallery of the Palazzo Pitti and probably seen there already in 1834; it entered the Gallerie degli Uffizi in 1861. This work was probably the result of a collaboration between the Pollaiuolo brothers Antonio (goldsmith, painter, and textile designer) and Piero (painter). Antonio presumably created the architectonic structure of the bust, expressed in the balance between her profile and elaborate coiffure, and by the contrast between the wavy folds of her garments and the geometric outlines of three large jewels. Piero supposedly brought this outline to life in the tactile details of her skin, hair, and jewelry, in the brocaded sleeve of her dress (*cotta*) and velvet overgown (*giornea*), and finally in the portrait's exquisite colors: the ultramarine blue background, the vermilion of her lips and rubies, the ochers of her skin and sleeve, and the dark crimson of her *giornea*. Antonio's pomegranate pattern is shown on the sleeve of her dress. The pattern is symbolic of fertility, and the loose fit of the *giornea* alludes

to her pregnancy. The portrait might have been commissioned to celebrate this woman's place in society as wife and mother. Its artistic excellence is incontrovertible.

Florentine female portraits present the daughters, brides, wives, and occasionally mothers of wealthy merchants and bankers. They mostly represent brides, since sumptuary laws restricted married women from displaying luxury objects. Unless a husband declared his wife's expensive clothing and jewelry and agreed to pay sumptuary fines, married women could not be portrayed if their clothing and adornments might be viewed as a display of wealth and privilege, instead of in modest adherence to the contemporary social mores.

The lady's face reveals contemporary conventions of feminine beauty: the plucked hairline and high forehead, the delineated eyebrows, pale skin with touches of rouge, and, unusual for around 1480, an angelic smile. Her string of pearls encircles her long neck so delicately as to show her breathing. A finely woven snood (*vespaio*) gathers her light hair to form a thick cord. This cord is banded into three sections with a plume of wavy curls on the top, slightly below the crown of her head. A pearled brooch (*fermaglietto*), with a ruby in its center, holds a three-stringed, pearl-beaded headband (*frenello*) in place. This intricate hairstyle, prompted by the fear of aural impregnation, is held by a gauzy veil that presses on her earlobe to emphasize its closure. The back of her neck is tightly

veiled to ensure that all hair strands, including the rounded plaits near her ear, are fully contained; loose hair on married women was unacceptable at that time.

The *cotta* with the V-line collar is modest and slopes behind. An encrusted black chalcidony, with a dangling pearl, hangs from the pearled necklace. A multicolored riband, with three pearls between its strips, rims the *giornea*, and its bunched volant folds counterbalance the thick plaits of hair. The impression of a living figure is enhanced by the fleshy part jutting out below her armpit. The sides of the *giornea*, edged with tiny beads, are fastened on her bosom with a massive jewel in a golden frame (*fermaglio*) featuring an angel formed of precious stones emerging from a pearl setting. Black chalcedony, ruby, sapphire, and pearls were not merely adornments but were invested with talismanic powers; they feature in Florentine depictions of the Madonna. Her face exudes the joy in her fashionable hairstyle, dress, and jewelry. This lovely woman seems pleased to demonstrate that she could keep herself both modestly virtuous and luxuriously elegant.

—Luba Freedman



Attributed to an unknown artist

Florence, c. 1490s

Benedetto Ghirlandaio (?)

Florence 1458–1497 Florence

Portrait of a Woman, c. 1495Oil on panel (not tested), 17³/₈ × 12³/₈ in.

(44.1 × 31.4 cm)

Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of Miss Tessie Jones in memory of Herschel V. Jones, 68.41.9

PROVENANCE: Unknown collection, London (before 1902); Wilhelm Gumprecht, Berlin (by 1902–1918; his sale, Paul Cassirer and Hugo Helbing, Berlin, March 21, 1918, no. 6, ill., as attributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio, for 71,000DM, to Böhler); [Julius Böhler, Munich and Lucerne, 1918–19; sold, July 21, 1919, ?to Nemes); Marzell de Nemes, Budapest and Munich (from 1919). Herschel V. Jones, Minneapolis (until d. 1928); his daughter, Tessie Jones, in lifetime trust, Newburgh and Balmville, New York (until d. 1967; bequeathed to the Minneapolis Institute of Art)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Plietzsch 1915, 213–14; Minneapolis Institute of Arts 1970, 388–89, no. 206; the Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2007, 190.

The attribution of this portrait is a complex matter, as certain elements seem to point to the northern style, whereas others bear a definite resemblance to the Florentine school. To resolve this complicated dichotomy, Berenson (handwritten note, October 7, 1924) proposed that it be recognized as the work not of Domenico Ghirlandaio, as had been forcefully suggested previously (Plietzsch 1915), but of his brother, Benedetto, who would have painted it during his stay in France between 1486 and 1493. The idea that the young woman portrayed was French must certainly be discarded, however, as the dress is definitely Tuscan. The thinned panel was likely made of poplar; this was suggested by the museum conservators, who detected a craquelure pattern that is consistent with this species. This would provide final proof that the painting was executed by an Italian artist.

Berenson's intuition is not well substantiated, given that his only proof was a comparison with a single work, the Aigueperse

Nativity (fig. 56.1); nevertheless, we shall retain it as a hypothesis until there is more solid evidence to add. In this sense, the extremely careful rendering of the skin tone and of the materiality of the garments might remind us how beneficial Benedetto's stay in Auvergne would have been, notably because he was able to spend time with Jean Hey, the official painter of the court of the Bourbons in Moulins. Whereas his older brother Domenico was constantly emulating the northern painters, Benedetto was also fascinated by the refinement of the Flemish manner. This portrait, likely painted after he returned from France, would testify to this interest, as it displays his great mastery of the effects of oil paint. In his documentation, Everett Fahy saw this medium as one of the idiosyncratic features of Benedetto's catalogue, therefore attributing to him the tondi (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples; and Museum of Art, Birmingham, previously Providence, Rhode Island) executed, in oil,

after his brother Domenico's well-known prototype at the Musée du Louvre, Paris. Vasari also notes that it was Domenico who, in the altarpiece at San Giusto (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), pushed the technical limitations of imitating gold the furthest, as he was the first to replace the use of gold with pigments. This is obviously one of Vasari's typical statements that cannot be taken as an absolute truth (see, for example, the systematic use of yellow instead of gold found in Botticelli, Bellucci 1990). Nevertheless, close observation of the work shows that unlike the embroideries, the medallion was not enhanced with gold but actually painted in yellow. Benedetto would therefore have been expressing his debt to his older brother, who helped to train him.

The question of attribution is made even more complex by the existence of a study conserved in Vienna (fig. 56.2), which was associated with the portrait in 1917–18 (Gronau) and today is attributed to an unknown German artist. The previous attribution was based on the





Fig. 56.1. Benedetto Ghirlandaio, *The Nativity*, 1490, mixed technique, 57 × 17½ in. (145.7 × 145 cm), Church of Notre-Dame, Aigueperse.

presence of the monogram “HH,” which was very likely added well after the sheet was executed in an attempt to have it pass for a drawing by Hans Holbein, who placed his initials on many of his works. Stylistically, the study does not correspond to German, or even Flemish, practices and is more readily related to the handling of black chalk as it was traditionally used in Florence. Artists working in the wake of Domenico Ghirlandaio were interested in reproducing his graphic manner, and in particular his careful, hierarchical hatching work, which is seen here. If we retain the hypothesis that Benedetto Ghirlandaio made the Minneapolis portrait, we would be tempted to attribute the Vienna sheet to him as well. This would be the only known graphic document of work by Benedetto, whose catalogue is still quite difficult to distinguish. It would consist of a fairly completed sketch—though at first glance unfinished—designed to fix the model’s features and the general lines of her clothing (only the left half of the necklace is portrayed).

The different elements of the clothing and the typology of the portrait seem to confirm that the panel was executed in Florence. The model wears a red dress with green sleeves, adorned with a strip of lace (*buratto*) at the neck, and a veil, similar to that in certain portraits made in Domenico Ghirlandaio’s studio in the 1480s and 1490s (Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon). The accessories arranged on the young woman’s head do not reflect contemporary clothing so clearly. For instance, the veil usually sat on the back half of the head (as in the work attributed to the studio of Domenico Ghirlandaio, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence); when it fell far forward onto the forehead, as is the case in the Minneapolis panel, the wearer was usually a middle-aged woman, a wife, or a widow, and always dressed totally in black and white. This austerity was only rarely tempered by the presence of a necklace, as in the *Portrait of a Woman* in the Martelli collection, possibly attributable to Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. The

fashion of the hennin, the tall conical hat that developed in the early fifteenth century in the northern Alps, was not unknown in Tuscany, if we go by the presumed portrait of Clarice Orsini (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin). The style may have been revived by the introduction to Florence of Flemish prototypes, notably the Portinari triptych (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), which arrived in Italy in 1483. As Arianna Sarti has noted to me (2021), however, the model in this panel wears only the lower part of the hennin, deprived of its characteristic cone. Portraits of the period more commonly showed, rather, a piece of fabric used to gather the hair in a bun. The rest of the hair has been divided into two equal masses, and the strands have been straightened and bleached. As the different portraits mentioned above seem to show, young Florentine women liked to highlight strands of blond hair, on which the light could play, at the front of their faces. The forehead is high, as can be seen in certain likenesses

executed by painters of previous generations, although it is not clear that this fashion had arrived in Florence in the 1480s and 1490s (studio of Domenico Ghirlandaio, Lindenau Museum, Altenburg).

The necklace was clearly a characteristic element in Italian fashion. Whereas women in Flemish high society preferred to show off heavy gold chains, their Italian counterparts favored pearls. The model is wearing two strands. From a gold chain attached to the lower strand hangs a heavy pendant decorated with a cut diamond, a ruby cabochon, and a large pearl. A similarly complex adornment, combining pearl necklace, gold chain, and luxurious pendant, is found analogously in portraits by Piero del Pollaiuolo (no. 55, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), and the very typology of the pendant somewhat evokes that worn by Maddalena Doni in the portrait painted by Raphael (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence) a few years later. The preciousness of the grouping places the portrait in

the happy context of a wedding, the jewelry having been presented as a gift by the groom or part of the young woman’s dowry. In this context, the pendant is obviously symbolic. Placed above the cleavage, near the heart, it deploys an allegorical language: the diamond evokes the strength of love; the ruby, the fire of passion; and the pearl, purity of feelings. These love topoi associated with exactly the same ornaments can be found in the jewelry in Domenico Ghirlandaio’s painting *Giovanna Tornabuoni* (Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid) and in the portraits painted by his brother Davide, which are directly related. The contemporary gemological discourse easily transfigures these prosaic notations of power and passion, intended to convey abundance and fertility, to luminous evocations of virtue and piety. Thus, just as the program for *Giovanna Tornabuoni* stipulates, the portrait would have had the vocation, in this valuable talisman, of “depicting the spirit and morals” of the model, in line

with the allegorical discourse offered by the reverse side of Piero della Francesca’s *Battista Sforza* (Uffizi, Florence) and the medallion of Letizia Sanudo by Bertoldo di Giovanni (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris).

Largely neglected by critics, this *Portrait of a Woman* nevertheless constitutes a fundamental milestone in Renaissance Florentine portraiture, fitting between the early *Portrait of a Woman* by Filippo Lippi and Raphael’s *Maddalena Doni*.

—Matteo Gianeselli



Fig. 56.2. Attributed to an unknown artist, Florence, Benedetto Ghirlandaio?, *Study for a Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1490, silverpoint, 7½ × 4½ in. (18.1 × 11.4 cm), Albertina, Vienna, inv. 4833.

Pietro Vannucci, called Il Perugino

Città della Pieve c. 1450–1523 Fontignano di Perugia

***Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1495**

Oil on panel, 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (37 × 26 cm)

INSCRIBED (on the reverse, in a seventeenth-century hand): *ritratto di alessandro braccesi*

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture, inv. 1890 no. 1474

PROVENANCE: Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (before 1800; transferred, from the Guardaroba Medicea, July 7, to the Uffizi); Galleria degli Uffizi, Palazzo degli Uffizi, Florence (from 1800; 1940–45 removed from city of Florence for safe refuge)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Scarpellini 1984, 89, no. 64; Perugia 2004, no. I.43, 256–57.

This picture of a teenage boy appears to have been painted in Florence by the Umbrian painter Pietro Perugino. Perugino married a Florentine, Chiara Fancelli, and much of his career was spent in the Tuscan city. For much of the nineteenth century the picture was attributed to the Florentine painter Lorenzo di Credi (1456/59–1537). The famed connoisseur Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891) was the first to suggest that it was painted by Pietro Perugino, and this view has been adopted by most subsequent scholars, although one writer suggested an unsustainable attribution to a Ferrarese artist, Lorenzo Costa (1460–1535).

The portrait entered the Gallerie degli Uffizi from the Medici Grand-ducal collections at Palazzo Pitti in July 1800. It is often difficult to identify the sitters in Renaissance portraits. Portraits usually remained in private family collections, where an identification might be recorded in an inventory, or sometimes on a label attached to the frame, but these are easily lost, and once an individual's identity has been forgotten it is usually not recovered. They are rarely identified within the painting itself, and only a very few record a name on the reverse of the painting support, as is the case with this picture, where Alessandro Braccesi's (1445–after 1498) name has been added by a seventeenth-century owner.

Braccesi was a Florentine notary and public official who was well connected to Medicean circles in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. He is known to have mixed in artistic circles—acting as a notary for Antonio (1453–1534) and Giuliano da Sangallo (c. 1445–1516)—and lived in the

same street as Perugino: Via de' Pinti, now known as Borgo Pinti. This context might be thought to favor the seventeenth-century identification of the sitter, but the fact that Alessandro Braccesi was born in 1445 undermines this conclusion, since it is impossible to date this picture as early as circa 1460 (and so to match the apparent age of the sitter with his known date of birth). Most writers date the picture in a period from the late 1470s to the mid-1490s, and base their arguments on Perugino's stylistic development. Establishing even an approximate date has a bearing on proposals for the sitter's identity, as most writers have concluded that the boy in the portrait cannot be older than fourteen or fifteen years old, which seems an entirely appropriate conclusion. Perugino's style changed across his career much more than is usually recognized, and the use of a black background here points to a slightly later date than is sometimes suggested.

Recently, the Florentine scholar Nicoletta Baldini (Perugia 2004) has carefully investigated Alessandro Braccesi, his family, career, and contacts. Her research eliminates Alessandro Braccesi from consideration as the subject of the portrait, but she has also tentatively suggested an alternative identification: Alessandro Braccesi's son Cornelio, who was born in December 1483. If the sitter is about fourteen years old, then the picture might be dated about 1497, which is perfectly plausible on stylistic and circumstantial grounds; and one can imagine how later family members might have muddled up who was who when inscribing a name on the back of the picture in the seventeenth century.

Whoever he is, the sitter's attire is typical of the period. He wears a white shirt, which is visible at the neck and also below the shoulders. His brown jacket, or jerkin, is fastened with ties that have metal tips. The sleeves are presumably detachable, which was a style in the late fifteenth century; and his simple cap tones with his jacket. His face is framed by long locks of chestnut-brown hair, and the overall tonality is established by the boy's dark-brown eyes. Although we are looking at a portrait, and so at a commissioned work of art for a patron who was surely related to the sitter, the beauty and serenity of the youthful face are captured by the painter and find their comparators in his pictures of young saints and angels as much as in his catalogue of portraits.

—Tom Henry



Unknown artist

Florence, late fifteenth–early sixteenth century
(Formerly attributed to Perugino, c. 1450–1523)

Head Study of a Youth (recto), Partial Head Study (verso), c. 1480–1500

Brush and brown wash and lead white heightening, pen and brown ink, over traces of metalpoint and black chalk, on tinted beige paper (recto); black chalk (verso), 4 1/8 × 4 1/8 in. (10.5 × 10.3 cm)

INSCRIBED (on verso in black chalk): 414 esp. / Perugino; (and at top edge): Corn. 252; and lower edge: 416 E

Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 416 E

PROVENANCE: Medici collection, Florence (Balducci 1687; Pelli 1775–93, as Perugino); Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Fischel 1917, 15, 93, no. 16; Tempesti and Forlani in Florence 1976, 76, no. 51; Ferino Pagden in Florence 1982, 32–33, no. 8; Venturini and Baldini in Perugia 2004, 331, 337, no. 11.1; Baiardi in Cleri 2017, 114–15.

Smaller than a postcard, this charming portrait captures an adolescent as he looked five hundred years ago. The boy's fixed, contemplative gaze and the natural, slightly sleepy tilt of his head infuse the work with remarkable vitality, echoed in the lively brushwork describing the curly locks escaping from his felt *berretto*. Drawn from life, the sitter could have been a workshop *garzoni*, a family member, or the subject of a portrait commission. Portraits of this type became common in Florence between 1470 and 1520, both in painting and drawing (such as Botticelli's early *Portrait of a Young Man*, no. 52). Members of the middle class, including women and children, were deemed worthy subjects and portrayed less formally, even intimately—looking directly at the spectator—with an interest in capturing not only the sitter's physical features, but also their character or spirit. The typology was important in the development of portraiture, superseding the official or political state portraits in favor of a more accessible genre that also appealed to the merchant class of Renaissance society.

The attribution of this portrait drawing to Perugino, recorded in the eighteenth century (Pelli 1775–93) and probably dating to the seventeenth century (Balducci 1687), has been accepted with little question. Perugino was an accomplished portraitist in painting, creating portrayals noteworthy for their powerful physical and psychological presence, and their meticulous handling (no. 57). Yet, the drawing's pictorial manner is difficult to reconcile with Perugino's draftsmanship and elegant, idealized head studies. He worked in a variety of techniques, but favored precise

lines to describe forms and linear, individualized highlights to model facial features and hair (Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. 4370, and British Museum, London, inv. Pp.1.28)—handling far different from the bold strokes of white gouache and brown wash here.

Fischel likened the manner of drawing in this sheet to fresco technique and dated the study to the time of the Sistine Chapel wall murals (1481–82). While supporting the attribution to Perugino, he observed a close resemblance with the youth at the far left of Luca Signorelli's *Last Acts and Death of Moses* in the same cycle. The Sistine Chapel commission was highly collaborative, with many hands participating in the sixteen monumental frescoes. Even if individual scenes can be attributed to specific artists, they shared assistants, intervened in colleagues' frescoes, and reused cartoons and studies. A boy in Ghirlandaio's *Calling of the First Apostles*, also in the Sistine Chapel, might recall our sitter, too (fig. 58.2). Notably, Ghirlandaio's painted blond highlights closely mimic those in the drawing—or vice versa—and no parallels with the Uffizi study can be found in Ghirlandaio's varied corpus of extant drawings, particularly his portrait drawings (no. 54). The painterly handling of 416 E and the distinct combination of media would seem to exclude Signorelli's authorship as well, and locate it instead around artists who had frequented Verrocchio's Florentine workshop (Baiardi 2017).

Verrocchio's innovative combination of drawing techniques, experimentation in chiaroscuro and light effects, and interest in emotional expression, among other things, transformed the art of drawing in Florence (Melli in Washington 2019). Two other studies tied to Verrocchio's shop and executed in a pictorial technique similar to 416 E should be considered: *Study of Faith* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, 208 E), variously attributed to Verrocchio, Botticelli, and Biagio d'Antonio, and *Head of a Man* (Musée du Louvre, fig. 58.3), given to Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and Lorenzo di Credi. Unfortunately, the lightly sketched head study on the verso cannot shed light on the problematic attribution. Nevertheless, it seems possible that this and the portrait on the recto might be executed a generation later, by a yet-to-be-identified talent active in Perugino's shop or other Florentine bottega who was deeply influenced by Verrocchio's inventive methods.

—Rachel McGarry



Fig. 58.1. Verso of no. 58.



Fig. 58.2. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Calling of the First Apostles*, detail, 1481–82, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican.



Fig. 58.3. Unknown artist, Florence (attributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and Lorenzo di Credi), *Head of a Man Wearing a Skullcap*, c. 1480–1500, pen and brown ink, brown wash, black chalk, heightened with white on paper partially prepared in pink, 10 3/4 × 8 1/4 in. (27.3 × 21 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. 2678r.



Luca Signorelli

Cortona c. 1450–1523 Cortona

Head of an Elderly Man (self-portrait?),
c. 1515–20Black chalk and charcoal on coarse cream-colored paper; 9⁷/₈ × 7³/₄ in. (25.1 × 19.5 cm)
irregular sheet

WATERMARK: scales with triangular weights in a circle surmounted by circles (perhaps a trefoil), close to Briquet 2448

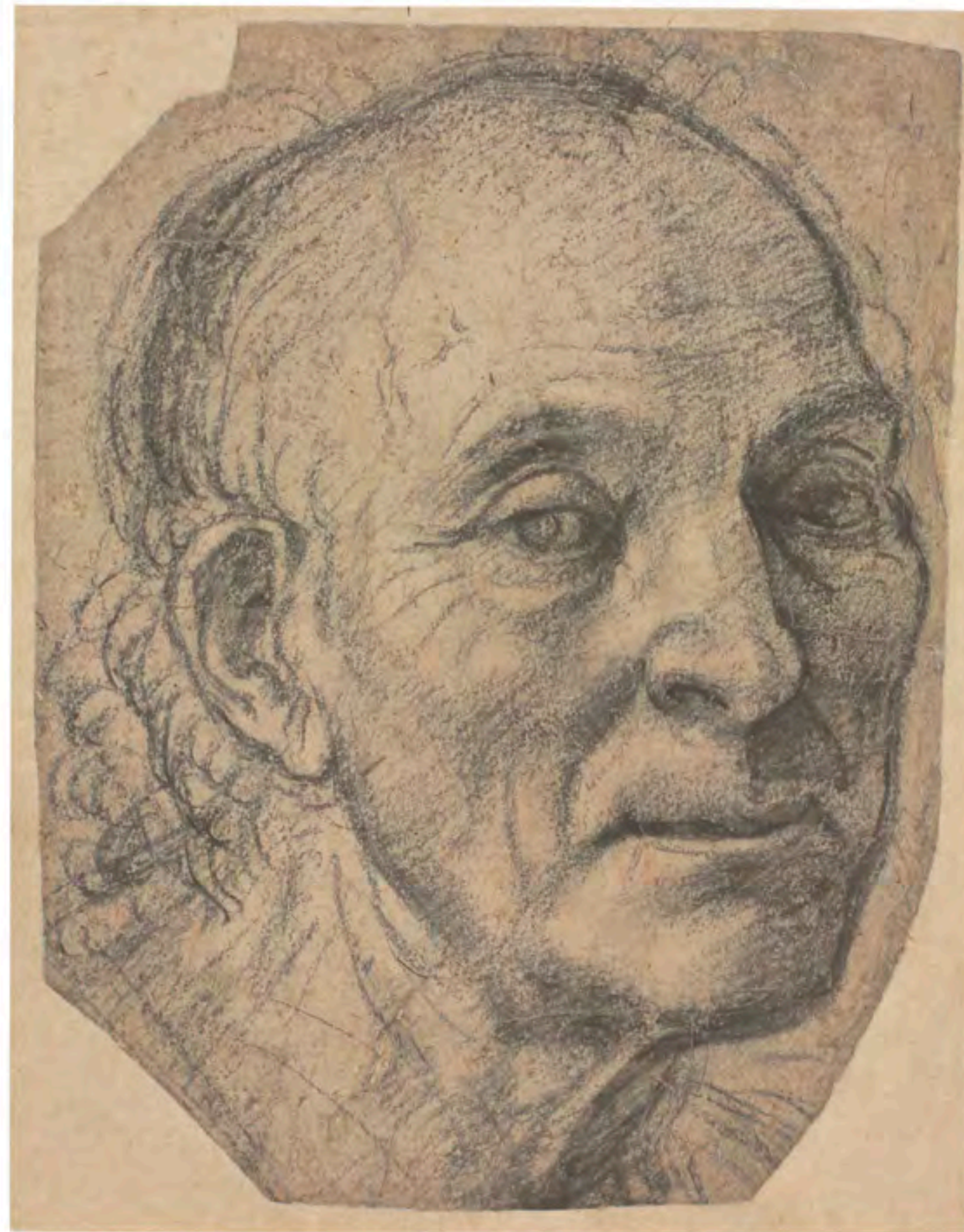
Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 129 F recto

PROVENANCE: Reale Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Lugt 930; Ferri 1881 cat.)

SELECTED REFERENCES: Ferri 1890, 139; Berenson 1903, no. 1850; Mancini 1903, 235; Berenson 1961, no. 1850; Pouncey 1964, 289; Florence 1982, no. 65, 114–15; Torre de' Passeri 1991, 293; Van Cleave 1995, no. 8, 114–15 (with bibliography); Henry 2012, 207.



Fig. 59.1. Luca Signorelli, *Self-Portrait*, detail from the *Deeds of the Antichrist*, c. 1503, fresco, San Brizio Chapel, Orvieto Cathedral.



This penetrating study of the head and neck of an elderly man shows every sign of having been drawn from life. The lighting is strong, there is some indecision, hesitancy, and experimentation in the marks on the page, with the favored lines—especially contours—being reinforced by the artist to give them the desired prominence. The result fixes one on the spot as eye contact is made and held; and the sensation of being in the presence of a recognizable individual is strong.

The purpose of the drawing is unknown. It might have been intended as the basis for a painted portrait, or else as a study for a figure in a painting of another subject. Artists in Renaissance Italy frequently based figures in their paintings on people they knew or had been able to sketch. The drawing was originally catalogued by the Uffizi as the work of Luca Signorelli, but for much of the twentieth century it was given, following the influential scholarship of Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), to a Florentine artist: Piero di Cosimo (1462–1522). This attribution was challenged in 1964 by the foremost British drawings scholar, Philip Pouncey (1910–1990), who authoritatively suggested Luca Signorelli as author of the sheet. This conclusion has now been adopted by all subsequent scholars, and this type of close concentration on the sitter—and crucially, the style of drawing in

black chalk—can be found in other drawings by the artist, such as his magisterial drawing *Head of a Man*, usually identified as Dante, in the Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (2381).

Signorelli was one of the most innovative artists to use black chalk in the fifteenth century. While no black-chalk drawings have survived by Signorelli's master, Piero della Francesca (1412–1492), he was a leading exponent of 1:1 scale preparatory cartoons and almost certainly drew in this versatile medium. Signorelli was unusual in the period by adopting this technique almost exclusively, and he was plainly excited by the variety of line that he could achieve and by variations in the medium itself (black chalk could be soft and waxy, or dry and friable). It was exceptionally well suited to strongly lit studies, as with this face illuminated from the left. Allowing the paper to show through creates the highlights; the lines define the features; and the form and texture of the old man's face is brought out by soft, descriptive stumping—drawing with the side of the chalk to achieve broad, planar effects, as also in the drawing of the cheeks. The verso of the sheet also has two slight sketches in black chalk: a younger face looking to the left and a nude, probably male, drawn with the sheet turned 180 degrees.

A drawing of this type is very hard to date unless one can connect it with a specific work of art. In the absence of a finished painting, the present drawing is difficult to situate. Dates ranging from the 1480s (Ferino) to circa 1510 (Van Cleave) have been suggested for this drawing on the basis of comparison with other drawings by the artist. By about 1510 Signorelli was an old man himself—at least in contemporary terms. His career had taken him away from his hometown of Cortona to work across central Italy and for the highest ranks of patrons such as the Medici in Florence and for Popes Sixtus IV and Julius II in Rome. By 1510 and until his death in 1523 he was increasingly to be found in and around Cortona, working for patrons who could not have commanded the artist's attention earlier in his career. The nature of the pose, and comparison with Signorelli's certain (but earlier) self-portrait at Orvieto (fig. 59.1), has resulted in Van Cleave's suggestion that this might be a drawn self-portrait. This is not certain, but it is thought provoking and would support the later date, or one a few years later. On balance, the comparison with the earlier self-portrait is persuasive, but would arguably push the date later still, to circa 1515–20.

—Tom Henry



Appendix A: Chronology of Sandro Botticelli, 1445–1510

Annamaria Bernacchioni

1445

Alessandro Filipepi Botticelli, later known as Sandro Botticelli, is born. His father, Mariano Filipepi, is a leather tanner who works near the Santa Trinita bridge, and his mother is named Smeralda. His family lives on Via del Porcellana, in the Santa Maria Novella quarter in the neighborhood of Borgo Ognissanti. They live next door to the merchant family of the Vespucci, one of whom was the famous navigator Amerigo Vespucci. Sandro is the youngest of four brothers; he took the nickname of his brother Giovanni, a *faccendiere*, an intermediary who deals with general financial affairs on behalf of others, who earned the sobriquet Botticello, or “little barrel,” either because of a propensity to drink or a big torso. In more recent opinions, the nickname Botticello could also come from the profession of Antonio, Sandro’s brother, who was a *battiargento*, or “silver beater,” also referred to as *battigello*.

1446 (April 16) Death of Filippo Brunelleschi, architect and sculptor, creator of the cupola of Florence Cathedral and inventor of the rules of linear perspective.

1447

Mariano Filipepi’s tax declaration (*portata al catasto*) states that the family is now living in a rented house on Via della Vigna Nuova. The house is owned by the Rucellai, a powerful merchant family that supported Botticelli and whose art patronage included such prestigious commissions to the architect Leon Battista Alberti as the facade of the church of Santa Maria Novella.

1448 (June 2) Birth of Domenico Ghirlandaio, who would become in painting the greatest illustrator of society of his time. He was also the early master of Michelangelo.

1449 (January 1) Birth of Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici, grandson of Cosimo the Elder. He would become the unofficial lord of Florence and be called il Magnifico (the Magnificent), a name used for the highest office of the Florentine Republic. History remembers Lorenzo as an astute politician, poet, and gifted patron of humanist culture, letters, and the arts.

1452 (April 15) Birth of Leonardo, towering genius of the Renaissance, who would take his name from Vinci, a village in the Tuscan countryside near Florence.

1458

In his tax return Mariano declares that his son Sandro, age thirteen, attends school and is infirm (“sta a legere et è malsano”). Besides studying, at this time Sandro may already frequent the workshop of his

brother Antonio, a goldsmith and gilder. Another older brother, Simone, was serving an apprenticeship in Naples with Paolo Rucellai, the member of an upstanding Florentine family and a textile dealer.

1459–64

Sandro Botticelli is probably apprenticed to the painter Filippo Lippi, perhaps upon the recommendation of the Vespucci or the Rucellai. While undocumented, this apprenticeship was noted by Vasari (Vasari 1550), and it is clearly deducible from the style of Botticelli’s early works.

1459 Benozzo Gozzoli commences a fresco showing the Journey of the Magi to pay homage to the newborn Jesus Christ. The festive scene, in the private chapel of the Palazzo Medici, includes portraits of members of the Medici family and contemporaries.

1464 (August 1) Death of Cosimo de’ Medici; his successor is his son Piero “the Gouty.”

1467 Filippo Lippi, previously master of Botticelli, moves to Spoleto to paint frescoes of the Life of the Virgin in the cathedral.

1467

Probably around this time Botticelli begins to frequent the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, sculptor, goldsmith, and painter. The association is perhaps arranged by Sandro’s brother Antonio. Verrocchio, one of the most important Florentine artists of the era of Lorenzo il Magnifico, also trained Leonardo da Vinci and Lorenzo di Credi. Perugino, slightly older than the others, was probably his assistant for a period.

1469 (October 9) Death of Filippo Lippi at Spoleto.

1469

Mariano declares in his tax return that Sandro is a painter and carries out his profession in his father’s house. Mariano’s family, numbering fifteen persons, is well off, and he owns property, including farmland and workshops.

1469 (December 3) Death of Piero de’ Medici, who is succeeded by his sons Lorenzo il Magnifico and Giuliano.

1470

The memoirs of the Florentine chronicler Benedetto Dei state that Sandro Botticelli has his own workshop. Documents record that he painted a figure of *Fortitude* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) for the Mercanzia, the tribunal for commerce in the city. Botticelli likely owes this commission to the good offices of Tommaso Soderini, a prominent public

official close to the Medici. At this time Botticelli may also have painted the *Sacra Conversazione* altarpiece for the church of Sant’Ambrogio (Gallerie degli Uffizi).

1472

Botticelli joins the city’s Compagnia di San Luca, a professional, social, and religious association of the city’s painters.

Around this year Botticelli’s workshop apprentices include the young Filippino Lippi, whose parents were a defrocked monk and a nun, the painter Filippo Lippi and Lucrezia Buti. Filippo Lippi had been Botticelli’s master; by the early 1480s Filippino emerged as one of the chief painters of the period.

1474

Botticelli paints a *Saint Sebastian* (Staatliche Museen, Berlin) for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence.

(**January**) Botticelli is called to Pisa to carry out several frescoes in the Camposanto in Pisa; he is required to paint an *Assumption of the Virgin* as a trial piece, in the cathedral (never completed and destroyed in 1583); the commission falls through.

1475–78 Verrocchio paints the *Baptism of Christ* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) with the assistance of Leonardo da Vinci; it is a complex and fascinating work in which the great artistic powers of master and pupil may be compared.

1475

(**January 28**) For a ceremonial joust held in Piazza Santa Croce, Giuliano de’ Medici, Lorenzo’s brother, participates with a banner painted by Botticelli depicting a victorious Pallas. This is apparently one of several images by Botticelli bearing the likeness of Simonetta Vespucci, a Genoese noblewoman married to Marco Vespucci; she was an ideal object of courtly love for Giuliano de’ Medici and a muse of Botticelli.

According to a later source text, the so-called *Anonimo Gaddiano*, approximately at this date Botticelli painted an *Adoration of the Magi* (now lost), displayed next to the Porta della Catena in Palazzo Vecchio, near the main assembly hall. Botticelli’s *Adoration of the Magi* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) commissioned by Gaspare di Zanobi del Lama for Santa Maria Novella, also dates to this year. The painting includes portraits of several of the Medici.

1475 (March 5) Michelangelo Buonarroti is born at Caprese, near Arezzo, to a Florentine family. Michelangelo was probably the main protagonist of Italian Renaissance culture, active as sculptor, architect, painter, and poet.

1478 (April 26) During Easter Mass in Florence’s cathedral, at the moment of the elevation of the host, the Medici are attacked. Lorenzo il Magnifico escapes death by taking refuge with some associates in the sacristy, but his younger brother is stabbed to death. The conspiracy was hatched by a rival family, the Pazzi, with papal connivance. The plot fails to set off an uprising against the Medici, and the conspirators flee; some are attacked by outraged citizens in an outburst of popular fury, while others, who escape the city, are tracked down and brought to justice.

1478

For the city government Sandro Botticelli paints defamatory images of members of the Pazzi conspiracy on the exterior wall of the Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio), near the *Porta della Dogana*. Conspirators from the Pazzi family, along with Francesco Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, are shown hung by the neck, conspirators not yet captured are shown hung by one foot. The paintings, reflecting an occasional practice of the period, together with inscriptions, would be removed after Lorenzo’s son Piero fled Florence six-teen years later.

1480

Botticelli paints a fresco of *Saint Augustine in His Study* for the Vespucci family in the church of Ognissanti (in competition with Ghirlandaio and his fresco of *Saint Jerome*). Sandro Botticelli’s tax report this year mentions three assistants working in his workshop: Raffaello Tosi, Giovanni Cianfanini, Jacopo di Domenico Foschi.

1481

Mariano Filipepi, Botticelli’s father, declares in his tax return that his son Sandro is a painter and works in the house “when he likes.”

1481 (April/May) Botticelli paints an *Annunciation* in San Martino alla Scala (now in the Gallerie degli Uffizi), above the tomb of the church’s founder, Cione Pollini.

1481 (October 27) The painters Sandro Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Perugino sign a contract to complete frescoed scenes on the walls of the Sistine Chapel in Rome by March 15, 1482. The painters had been called to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV. According to the contract, the painters are required to execute preliminary individual trial frescoes, which are to be officially examined and evaluated in January 1482. The tests were deemed satisfactory before the date of the judgment, or were never done, because by October 1481 the artists were given the commission to execute the remaining ten stories. The fresco cycle comprises sixteen

large-scale narrative scenes, of which twelve survive today. Botticelli paints three of the frescoes: *The Temptations of Christ*, *The Trials of Moses*, and *Moses Punishing the Rebels*.

1482

Leonardo da Vinci, his ambitions unsatisfied in Florence, where he was also charged with sodomy, goes to the court of Ludovico Sforza, “il Moro,” in Milan, probably upon a specific request of Lorenzo il Magnifico to use him as a cultural ambassador (or possibly a spy). There he spends his most productive years, working as a painter, architect, sculptor, engineer, and theater designer.

1482

Friar Girolamo Savonarola, born in Ferrara, arrives in Florence and is named the reader of the convent of San Marco. A fiery orator and a moral zealot, the charismatic preacher would denounce the corruption and decadence of the city of Lorenzo il Magnifico.

1482

Around this time Botticelli may have begun one of his most celebrated paintings, the *Primavera* (Gallerie degli Uffizi). This date is supplied by the marriage of the work’s patron, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, second cousin of Lorenzo il Magnifico, with Semiramide Appiani, daughter of the lord of Piombino and Battistina Fregoso, a relation of Simonetta Vespucci. This scene, the first early modern large-scale painted image of classical mythology, and one of the most important pagan allegories in the history of art, shows Venus, Primavera, and other Greco-Roman divinities. Scholars still do not agree on the exact meaning of the work, richly layered with philosophical and poetic allusions.

1482 (February) Upon the death of his father, Botticelli returns to Florence from Rome, Mariano Filipepi is buried in the church of Ognissanti. Botticelli’s payment for work in the Sistine Chapel is set at two hundred and fifty gold ducats.

1482 (October 5) Botticelli signs the contract for frescoes in the Sala dei Gigli in Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio), a commission he does not carry out.

1483

Botticelli and assistants paint four panels with scenes of the *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* (Museo del Prado, Madrid, and private collection) from a tale in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. The paintings were made for the marriage of Giannozzo Pucci, a Medici ally, and Lucrezia Bini. (Filippino Lippi, by now an independent artist, includes a portrait of Giannozzo in the Brancacci Chapel in the church of the Carmine, in the *Martyrdom of Saint Peter*. Pucci is also shown in Ghirlandaio’s Sassetti Chapel and, of course, in the Nastagio panels themselves.)

Around this time Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Perugino, and Ghirlandaio decorate Lorenzo il Magnifico’s villa at Spedaletto near Volterra (lost in a fire in the seventeenth century).

1483

(**March/April**) Raphael is born at Urbino, son of the painter Giovanni Santi, a reputed artist at the Montefeltro court based at Urbino. Following apprenticeship with his father, collaboration with Perugino, and the encounter with the work of Leonardo and Michelangelo in Florence, Raphael becomes one of the major artists of the period. Once established in Rome as a painter and architect, Raphael would produce many works for the popes Julius II and Leo X, including the Stanza in the Vatican palace.

1485

Agnolo Bardi, a member of the family of Lorenzo il Magnifico’s grandmother, pays Botticelli for an altarpiece for the family chapel in Santo Spirito (Staatliche Museen, Berlin).

Around this time Botticelli paints the *Birtb of Venus* (see fig. 11) for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, perhaps for installation at the Villa di Castello.

1485–90

Domenico Ghirlandaio and his workshop fresco the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella.

1487

Botticelli paints the *Madonna of the Pomegranate* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) for the *Massai di Camera*, officials in Palazzo Vecchio concerned with financial matters. In the same year he probably painted the altarpiece for the church of San Barnaba (Gallerie degli Uffizi).

1487–1502

Filippino Lippi frescoes the Chapel of Filippo Strozzi in Santa Maria Novella.

1488

Death of Andrea del Verrocchio in Venice.

1489

Benedetto Guardi commissions from Botticelli an *Annunciation* (Gallerie degli Uffizi) for his chapel in the church of Santa Maria a Cestello (a chapel later moved to Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi).

1491

Botticelli is called to join a commission to evaluate design proposals for the new facade of the duomo, a project that is not carried out. Together with the painters Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni he is commissioned to create mosaics for two sections of the ceiling vault of the Saint Zenobius Chapel in the duomo. Botticelli does not complete the task, which would be finished by David Ghirlandaio and Monte di Giovanni.

1492 (April 7) Death of Lorenzo il Magnifico at his Florentine villa, Careggi; his personal and political heir is his son Piero.

1492

(**October 12**) The Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus reaches America.

1493

Botticelli’s brother Giovanni, a kind of middleman (*faccendiere*), dies; their brother Simone returns from Naples and becomes a fervent follower of Savonarola.

1494

(**January 11**) Death of Domenico Ghirlandaio. **1494 (November 8)** Piero di Lorenzo de’ Medici is forced to flee from Florence.

1494

(**November 17–28**) King Charles VIII of France, on his way to conquer Naples, enters Florence.

1494–98

The people of Florence establish a republican form of government under the spiritual leadership of Girolamo Savonarola.

1494

Jointly with his brothers Antonio and Simone, Botticelli acquires a farm outside Porta San Frediano and he goes to live in the house of his nephews Benincasa and Lorenzo in the quarter of Santa Maria Novella. Like his brother Simone, Botticelli becomes a supporter of Savonarola, one of the so-called Piagnoni (“wailers”), counterbalanced by Medici supporters, called Palleschi, from the Medici crest.

1495

(**April**) According to a letter, Botticelli is expected to go to the Villa del Trebbio to “paint certain things,” not better specified, for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici.

1496

Botticelli is paid for a fresco (no longer extant) in the monastery of Santa Maria a Monticelli.

(**July**) Botticelli receives a letter from Michelangelo to be taken to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici.

Around this time he produces for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici one hundred drawings and illuminations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, of which ninety-two survive (divided between the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, and the Vatican Library).

1497

(**February 7**) Savonarola and his followers burn thousands of objects—artworks (possibly including some by Botticelli), books, musical instruments, mirrors, cards, dice, songbooks, and other luxury items—across Florence, in the so-called “bonfire of the vanities.”

1497

(**May 12**) Savonarola is excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia or Borja). Some Florentines sign a petition to the pope to cancel the excommunication.

1497

Botticelli finishes fresco decorations (lost) for the Villa at Castello, on the periphery, for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici.

Around this time he paints the *Calumny of Apelles* (Gallerie degli Uffizi), given by the painter to Antonio Segni.

1498

In a book published this year the eminent mathematician Luca Pacioli cites Botticelli, together with Filippino Lippi and Domenico Ghirlandaio, as Florentine painters skilled in the use of linear perspective. Around this year Botticelli painted, with the help of assistants, scenes from the lives of Virginia and Lucretia for Guidantonio Vespucci for his residence in Via dei Servi.

1498

(**May 23**) Fra’ Girolamo Savonarola is judged guilty of heresy and the sentence is carried out by the city: he is burned at the stake in Piazza della Signoria.

1498

(**November 24**) The Arno floods Florence.

1499

Botticelli matriculates in the guild of physicians and apothecaries, the guild in which painters had to enroll. He paints frescoes (no longer extant) for the Vespucci Chapel in the church of Ognissanti. (**November 2**) According to the diary written by the painter’s brother Simone, on this day Botticelli discusses the demise of Savonarola with Doffo Spini, a prominent member of the anti-Savonarola populist party (the “Compagnacci”).

1501

(**January**) Botticelli signs and dates the *Mystic Nativity* (National Gallery, London).

1502

(**August 26**) Piero Soderini is nominated head of the government, holding the office of standard-bearer of the republic of Florence for life (“Gonfaloniere a vita”).

1502

(**September**) Botticelli’s name is recommended to Isabella d’Este, who needs a painter to complete her richly decorated *studio* in the ducal palace in Mantua, a decoration left incomplete by Mantegna at his death.

(**November**) Botticelli is indicted for the crime of sodomy before city officials, evidently without any legal consequences. The accusation, based on an anonymous complaint, was a typical form of political revenge at the time.

1503 (March) Leonardo da Vinci returns to Florence. The Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini commissions Leonardo and Michelangelo to paint, respectively, monumental frescoes of the Battle of Anghiari and the Battle of Cascina (both never painted) in the Salone dei Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio.

1503–5

Botticelli is recorded with debts with the local painter’s association, the Compagnia di San Luca.

1504

Raphael leaves Perugia and arrives in Florence.

1504

(**January**) The city of Florence charges an ad hoc committee, including many artists, with deciding upon the placement of Michelangelo’s *David*. While Botticelli and others suggest the entrance steps of the duomo, the city opts for the location proposed by Filippino Lippi and Michelangelo himself, Piazza della Signoria.

1508

Michelangelo commences work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, which he completes in 1512.

1505

(**May 14**) Botticelli is commissioned to paint a large altarpiece depicting the Pentecost (fragment, Birmingham City Art Gallery) for the Oratory of Spirito Santo at Montelupo.

1510

(**May 17**) Death of Botticelli; his body is interred in the church of Ognissanti.

Appendix B: Artists’ Biographies

Leon Battista Alberti, detail of the fresco of the Palazzo Rucellai, c. 1480.

Leon Battista Alberti
Genoa 1404–1472 Rome

Born into a noble Florentine family in exile in Genoa, Leon Battista Alberti was one of the exceptional minds of the Italian Renaissance and an influential artistic figure with a breadth of interests unrivaled in his day. He was active in many fields—as an architect, writer, mathematician, humanist, linguist, and musician. He was of incalculable importance in the field of art since, primed by his study of classical antiquity, he wrote foundational treatises in Latin in this realm: *De pictura* (*On Painting*, 1435), *De re aedificatoria* (*On the Art of Building*, 1450), and *De statua* (*On Sculpture*, 1462–64). *On Painting* was translated into Italian and dedicated to Brunelleschi—a friend of Alberti’s for many years—precisely to make it more popular. Among other things, this treatise codified the mathematical theory and the artistic practice underlying linear perspective.

Alberti studied in Venice, Padua, and Bologna, where he learned Greek and obtained a degree in canon law. He joined the administration of Pope Eugenius IV, following the many passages of this difficult pontificate, in Florence and then in Rome. Alberti was ordained a cleric and derived revenue from ecclesiastical benefices. Alberti’s renown led him to work with the rulers of major Italian cities, each with its own court culture: the Malatesta at Rimini, the Este in Ferrara, and the Gonzaga in Mantua.

As an architect, Leon Battista Alberti revived the teachings of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius. He did not directly supervise any building project, however, dedicating himself instead solely to the design of such major structures as the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini (c. 1450) and two churches in Mantua: San Sebastiano (c. 1460) and Sant’Andrea (c. 1470). In Florence, Alberti designed, for his patron Giovanni Rucellai, the Palazzo Rucellai and nearby Loggia, the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre in San Pancrazio, and the facade of the church of Santa Maria Novella (c. 1447–51), which was based on rules derived from his direct study of Roman monuments.

—Cecilia Frosinini

Baccio Baldini
Florence c. 1436–1487 Florence

Baccio Baldini is one of the more tantalizing and frustrating figures in the early history of printmaking. In his biography of the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi, Giorgio Vasari gives a brief account of his understanding of the origins of printing from engraved metal plates. With his limited knowledge of German

antecedents, Vasari wrongly cites Maso Finiguerra as the inventor of the medium and goes on to say that Finiguerra was followed by “Baccio Baldini orefice fiorentino” (Baccio Baldini, a goldsmith of Florence). He described Baldini as having little power of design and taking all that he did from the invention and design of Botticelli. In his biography of Botticelli, Vasari says that he illustrated Dante’s *Inferno* and printed it. Vasari went on to say that Botticelli also printed many of his drawings and that the engraving was poorly done.

From these passages arose the mysterious life of Baccio Baldini. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Italian, German, and French scholars began to assign authorship of many engravings to Baldini. Not until 1898 did a naysayer push back: Sydney Colvin, keeper of prints at the British Museum, questioned not only the attributions but also the very existence of Baldini. In 1910 Colvin reported that Herbert Horne had recently discovered an archival reference to the burial of a goldsmith named Baccio, on December 12, 1487, in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Baccio is a nickname for Bartolommeo, and Horne also found that, in 1485, a Bartolommeo di Jacopo di Filippo had made a pierced brass door for a tabernacle for the church of Saint’Ambrogio in Florence. Is either of these metalsmiths Vasari’s Baldini? We do not know. As of 1470, there were four goldsmiths in Florence named Bartolommeo or Baccio. Hence, even the dates given here for the artist’s life are speculative.

—Tom Rassiour

Bartolomeo di Giovanni
Florence, documented 1488–1501 Florence

Bartolomeo di Giovanni’s first documented work is the predella panel for Domenico Ghirlandaio’s altarpiece of the *Adoration of the Magi*, commissioned in 1488 by the prior of Florence’s founding hospital, the Spedale degli Innocenti, for the hospital’s church of Santa Maria (Museo degli Innocenti, Florence). Already in 1481 Bartolomeo was working with Ghirlandaio in the Sistine Chapel in Rome; his hand has been identified in several passages in the fresco by the brothers Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio of *The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew*. In his capacity as a specialist in small-scale paintings, Bartolomeo collaborated often with the Ghirlandaio workshop, but also with Sandro Botticelli. In 1483 he assisted the latter in the painting of a series of large narrative panels for a domestic interior showing the Story of Nastagio degli Onesti, a commission honoring a marriage between the Pucci and Bini families. In fact, Bartolomeo seems to have

executed the panel of the *Banquet in the Pine Forest of Ravenna* (Museo del Prado, Madrid), while the other panels (Museo del Prado, Madrid, and Pucci collection, Florence) reveal the hand of another of Botticelli’s collaborators—although the ideation and design of all four scenes seem clearly to be due to Botticelli himself.

In the early 1490s Bartolomeo was again in Rome, assisting the Umbrian artist Pinturicchio in the painting of the Room of the Mysteries in the Borgia apartments in the Vatican Palace. Bartolomeo is recorded back in Florence in 1495. There the eclectic artist executed some altarpieces in which the strong influence of Umbrian style is perceptible. Two notable works were made for Pandolfo Cattani, who in 1496 was the prior of the rural church of Sant’Andrea a Camoggiano, north of Florence: the *Crucifixion* painted for that church (today in the church of San Silvestro at Barberino di Mugello) and the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto). An altarpiece for the convent of San Giovanni Evangelista at Boldrone (now in the Mount Holyoke College Museum of Art, South Hadley, Massachusetts), dates to 1498. The following year Bartolomeo received a partial payment from the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli on Via degli Alfani, a few blocks from Florence Cathedral, for an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Anthony (an unidentified work). Bartolomeo died in Florence in October 1501.

—Nicoletta Pons

Benedetto da Rovezzano
Canapale, near Pistoia 1474–c. 1554 Vallombrosa

Born Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, this sculptor was known as da Rovezzano because he owned a property near this hamlet on the Arno River, east of Florence. He was a very refined sculptor and architect who trained in the workshop of Giuliano da Sangallo, who probably enabled his earliest works of sculpture and architecture in the 1490s for the monks of the Badia Fiorentina (the Pandolfini Chapel, the sculpted portal on Via del Proconsolo, and the vestibule). Still in Sangallo’s orbit are his early works for the Cantoria, or singing gallery, in the abbey of Santo Stefano at Genoa (1498–99), and some marble figures for the tomb of the duke of Orléans (1502, Saint-Denis, Paris). Here Benedetto’s visual language shows breadth, with a conscious appropriation of both models from ancient art and late quattrocento artists, including Andrea del Verrocchio and Antonio del Pollaiuolo. In 1505 he was working on the elaborate marble sepulcher of Saint John Gualbert for Santa Trinita (now in the

Benedetto da Rovezzano, detail of the relief of the Last Supper, c. 1500.

refectory of the church of San Salvi). In 1508 he executed the chasing of a bronze *David* by Michelangelo. This now lost work was commissioned by the Florentine republic as a gift for the marshal Pierre de Rohan, maréchal de Gié, who first entered Italy when French forces under Charles VIII invaded the peninsula; it was ultimately given to the king’s treasurer Florimond Robertet (like Rohan, an important patron of Italian art from France).

In 1513 Benedetto was occupied with the tomb monument for the Gonfalonier Pier Soderini in the choir of the Carmine church in Florence; but Soderini died in Rome and was never entombed in it. The work, badly damaged by a fire in 1771, is partly reconstructed. In 1512–13 Benedetto da Rovezzano completed the marble statue *Saint John the Evangelist* for one of the pilaster niches supporting the cupola of Florence Cathedral, part of a series to which Jacopo Sansovino and Baccio Bandinelli also contributed sculptures. His exquisite Altoviti tomb (Santi Apostoli, Florence) can be dated to 1515–16. Beginning in 1519, Benedetto worked for around twenty years in England, where he participated in major projects such as the tomb of Cardinal Wolsey, and where he helped to introduce Italian Renaissance art. After his return to Florence in 1542, one of his major commissions was the Sernigi altar, again in Santa Trinita. Today critics agree that he was the author of a large group of terracotta statues and statuettes that the connoisseurs Wilhelm von Bode and John Pope-Hennessy had grouped under the provisional names Master of the David and Saint John Statuettes and Master of the Unruly Children.

—Cecilia Frosinini

Biagio d’Antonio Tucci
Florence c. 1445–1516 Florence

Son of a master embroiderer, in his youth Biagio painted with small and delicate brushstrokes, under the influence of Filippo Lippi. Toward 1475 he adopted the more sculpturesque and decisive style of Verrocchio, with whom he seems to have collaborated closely, but beginning around 1480 until his death his style aligned with that of Domenico Ghirlandaio and his workshop. The author of religious panels and frescoes, Biagio also produced many paintings for wedding chests and *spalliere* (decorative wainscoting), works marked by a great narrative verve. In 1476 Biagio is recorded at Faenza, a town just across the Apennines that during the Renaissance attracted many important Florentine artists, and where he continued to work sporadically. In 1481–82 Biagio formed part of that select group of painters, including Botticelli, sent to Rome by Lorenzo

Biagio d'Antonio Tucci, detail of the relief of the Last Supper, c. 1475.

il Magnifico to complete the decoration of the walls of the Sistine Chapel: here Biagio painted the *Parting of the Red Sea* and sections of the *Last Supper* by Cosimo Rosselli. Biagio is thus to be considered one of that number of artist-ambassadors who successfully exported the artistic trends fashionable in Florence to other centers.

—Roberta Bartoli

Alessandro Filipepi, known as **Sandro Botticelli**
Florence 1445–1510 Florence

Alessandro Filipepi, known as Sandro Botticelli, was born in Florence, the eighth of nine children of Smeralda and Mariano Filipepi, a leather tanner. He inherited the nickname Botticello, or “little barrel,” from an older brother who presumably indulged liberally in drink or had a big torso, or perhaps, instead, the sobriquet relates to a brother being a *battiargento*, or “silver beater.” Botticelli trained with Filippo Lippi, and also likely frequented the workshop of Verrocchio, before setting up an independent workshop in the late 1460s. His early work *Fortitude* (1470, see fig. 5), painted for Florence’s Tribunale della Mercanzia, established Botticelli as one of the leading painters of his generation. In its splendor, exquisite finish, and illusionism, it far surpassed the six Virtues painted by Piero del Pollaiuolo, who had first been awarded the commission. Today Botticelli’s outsized reputation is owed to his iconic mythological paintings, the *Primavera*, *Birth of Venus*, and *Pallas and the Centaur* (see figs. 10, 11, no. 1), all of which were executed in the 1480s. These works are exceptional for their novel interpretations of pagan subjects, beauty, and large scale. Yet they were not as well known in his lifetime, as they were held in private homes (commissioned by and for members of the Medici family). Botticelli’s preeminent standing in his day was largely due to his influential, inimitable treatment of sacred subjects, and his many prominent altarpieces in Florence and countless devotional paintings. His magnificent tondi (circular paintings), depicting the Madonna and Child accompanied by angels, struck a chord with his Florentine clientele, elite and ordinary patrons alike. The great number that survive, both autograph and workshop versions, and the many more produced by followers, testify to their popularity. He spent almost his entire career in Florence, except for a brief stint in Rome, where he contributed frescoes to the Sistine Chapel decorative campaign of Pope Sixtus IV, including three major narrative scenes (1481–82, in situ). Botticelli was a gifted portraitist and a noted draftsman. Vasari

Sandro Botticelli, detail of the relief of the Last Supper, c. 1475.

praised his drawings as “extraordinarily good . . . made with great mastery and judgment” and reported that in addition to collecting them himself, they were greatly sought after by craftsmen, especially embroiderers. His change in style in the late 1490s to a more austere, serious manner reflects the tumultuous times in which he lived and the cultural, religious, and economic changes in Florence that followed the exile of the Medici and rise and fall of Savonarola. New documents and a closer examination of his late works show that there was sustained demand for his paintings, including an altarpiece commission as late as 1505 (*Pentecost* fragment, now Birmingham).

Despite Botticelli’s extraordinary success and influence, his posthumous reputation suffered, as evidenced already in 1550 in Vasari’s critical biography of the artist. Renewed interest in Botticelli emerged only in the nineteenth century, fostered, in part, by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of British painters, poets, and critics inspired by Italian art that preceded Raphael (1483–1520). Since Botticelli’s “rediscovery,” the artist has become one of the most celebrated figures in the history of art, with interest across the globe—both popular and scholarly—that seems to grow with each generation.

—Rachel McGarry

Francesco di Giovanni, known as **Francesco Botticini**
(Florence 1446–1497 Florence)

Francesco di Giovanni, detail of the relief of the Last Supper, c. 1475.

Francesco di Giovanni, to use his true name, was born into a family of painters: his father was a painter of playing cards, and his own son Raffaello was a painter as well. The family’s last name, Botticini, first appears in a payment to Raffaello from 1499, two years after his father’s death. Botticini was first apprenticed to Neri di Bicci, whose busy workshop made products that were in great demand, mainly from lower-bourgeoisie and provincial patrons. There Botticini must have met a slightly older contemporary already active for several years as an assistant to Neri, Cosimo Rosselli. It has been conjectured that Botticini then moved to the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, where over the years artists of the caliber of Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo di Credi, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Pietro Perugino were to be found. This transfer is undocumented but can be deduced from the development of Botticini’s style. Botticini presumably collaborated with Verrocchio and his entourage until around 1475, though he was already an independent master in 1469. Important works by Botticini include: The *Three Archangels*, commissioned for a lay confraternity in Santo Spirito (1470–75, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence); the altarpiece of *Saint*

Monica Bestowing Her Monastic Rule upon the Augustinian Nuns (Santo Spirito, Florence); and the giant panel of the *Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin with Angels, Saints, Propbets, Patriarchs, and Two Donors* (National Gallery, London). Botticini’s only documented work is the *Sacrament Tabernacle* for the confraternity of the Pieve in the town of Empoli (begun 1484: Museo della Collegiata). Execution of the *Tabernacle*, a late work, was so protracted that it was only completed after his death by his son Raffaello, in 1504. It was really in his late period that Botticini most assimilated Botticelli’s style. That said, throughout his career Botticini assimilated and appropriated the style of most of his contemporaries, operating much the way his first master, Neri di Bicci, had a generation earlier. —Cecilia Frosinini

Lorenzo d’Andrea d’Oderigo, known as **Lorenzo di Credi** (Florence, 1456–1537 Florence)

After learning the art of goldsmithing in his father’s workshop, where his brother also worked, Lorenzo, around 1476, entered the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488), which was also frequented by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Pietro Perugino (c. 1450–1523), and Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510). Lorenzo di Credi was Verrocchio’s closest and most faithful follower, to such a degree that Verrocchio named him the executor of his will, after Lorenzo had managed his master’s workshop while Verrocchio was away in Venice, starting in 1486. Leonardo, Verrocchio’s other prominent collaborator, had already left for Milan four years earlier. Lorenzo’s masterpiece is the *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Donatus of Arezzo (Pala di Piazza)* in the Pistoia Cathedral. The design and drawing were devised by Verrocchio around 1478, while the enamel-like and precise execution are by Lorenzo, who completed the work around 1485. These stylistic hallmarks, which Vasari defined as “very finished and clean,” remain a constant of Lorenzo’s work to the end. His oeuvre consists of a large number of private devotional works, primarily Madonnas and altarpieces. The latter include the *Madonna with Saints Julian and Nicholas* (1494, Musée du Louvre, Paris) and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (before 1510, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence) where the influence of Flemish painting is displayed in the realistic landscape and the saturated colors. After 1510 Lorenzo settled into the repetition of a set of models and compositional schemes in panels of modest dimensions. The convenience of this choice did not lower his reputation as a skillful artist and

upright person. Already in 1490 he had been named to the committee to judge proposals for designs for the Florence cathedral’s facade, and in 1504 he was among the artists (including Sandro Botticelli) called upon by the city priors to decide the location of Michelangelo’s *David*. —Roberta Bartoli

Dante Alighieri
Florence 1265–1321 Ravenna

One of the world’s greatest poets, Dante Alighieri—who is also known by only his first name—was very active in the political and cultural life of his native Florence. The main political division in Italy and its cities at the time was between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines: the supporters, respectively, of dominion over Italy by the pope or by the emperor. Dante belonged to a branch of the Guelphs. Conflict between political parties inside Florence led to Dante’s condemnation to perpetual exile, bitter but productive years that he spent mainly in the courts of northern Italy; he eventually died at Ravenna. The greatest poet in Italian literature, Dante is the author of the *Divine Comedy*, a verse poem in three parts about the three realms of the afterlife: Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise. In the poem Dante undertakes a journey through those three worlds, and he is given special access through divine will. Along the way he meets not only people from the distant or recent past, but some contemporaries who are variously damned or blessed by him according to their different political views. Dante’s encyclopedic knowledge about matters of theology and philosophy and profound wisdom and humanity infuses this moving and powerfully imaginative poem. The *Divine Comedy* is also significant as the first major poem written in Italian (in the vernacular or, as Italian has it, *in volgare*), which is still readily understandable to Italians today. Through this poem, he ennobled the language so that it became suitable for the most elevated subject matter. For this reason, Dante is rightly considered the creator of the modern Italian language. —Cecilia Frosinini

Marsilio Ficino
Figline 1433–1499 Careggi

Marsilio Ficino’s father, the personal physician of Cosimo de’ Medici, encouraged his son to pursue a degree in medicine. Ficino studied at the universities of Florence, Pisa, and Bologna until he was about thirty, when Cosimo donated a villa to him near his own villa at Careggi, in the hills just above Florence, so that Ficino could pursue his

studies of philosophy and ancient Greek. Ficino devoted himself, in particular, to the study of Neoplatonic philosophy and became the leading exponent of this school of thought in the Renaissance. Neoplatonism emerged in the Hellenistic period, reinterpreting the philosophy of Plato (active in the fourth century BCE), and later being influenced by Christianity. Ficino’s villa at Careggi became an academy, with clear reference, as the word suggests, to the world of classical Greece. He cultivated a place for intellectuals to meet—philosophers, poets, humanists in general, politicians and jurists—to debate, take lectures, and recite written orations as training for political discourse. The academy also organized formal events, such as the annual celebration on November 7 of the anniversary of Plato’s birth and death, and also banquets inspired by the Greek world. Thanks to Ficino’s deep knowledge of ancient Greek, he translated the *Dialogues* of Plato into Latin (published in Florence in 1484), as well as many other classical texts, including, most importantly, the *Corpus hermeticum*, a manuscript attributed to the legendary author Ermete Trismegisto, who was believed in the fifteenth century to precede the entire Greek philosophical tradition. Magic, astrology, and alchemy were legitimate subjects of study in Renaissance culture and few people did more than Ficino to generate interest in them and systematically study them. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, followers of magic conceived of the world as a unified living organism in which all things are interrelated and matter is impregnated with the divine. Indeed, nature was seen as imbued with magical principles which the proper magus (magician) knows and whose secrets he can penetrate. Ficino developed a vision of the world, incorporating features of beneficial magic, in literary and philosophical works, above all the *Platonic Theology (Theologia platonica de immortalitate animorum)* and his *Three Books on Life (De vita)*. The first work, published in 1482, is a kind of Renaissance Neoplatonic manifesto, synthesizing the positions of various thinkers of his day. The cosmos is arranged into an ascending hierarchy of five stages of perfection: body, various qualities, the soul, the angels, and God. Man is the center of the cosmos, and the soul, which is the essence of a human, mediates between God and bodies. Ficino’s other great work, *De vita*, concerns the health and welfare of the body. Medical counsels, health remedies, and dietary rules are interwoven with considerations about the influences of stars and celestial bodies upon the body, health, and life in general—medicine and astrology being, in Ficino’s view, an indissoluble whole. —Cecilia Frosinini

Benedetto di Tommaso Bigordi, known as **Benedetto di Tommaso Ghirlandaio**
Florence 1458–1497 Florence

Domenico Ghirlandaio’s younger brother—the other brothers were Davide (1452–1525) and Giovanbattista (1456/57–after 1489)—Benedetto was not always active in the family’s painting workshop, one of the most flourishing and active in the city in the last quarter of the quattrocento. In fact, from 1486 to 1493 Benedetto sought his fortunes in France, where he worked for Gilbert de Bourbon, count of Montpensier, and Dauphin of Auvergne, and his Italian wife, Chiara, daughter of marquess Federigo Gonzaga of Mantua. Benedetto’s only documented work is in France, a *Nativity with Donors* (1490, Notre-Dame, Aigueperse). Tommaso, the father of the Ghirlandaio brothers, had written in his tax declaration in 1480 that Benedetto was a painter of illuminated manuscripts and in that year had gone blind in one eye and was infirm in the other. Giorgio Vasari, writing in his *Lives* on the Ghirlandaio brothers and Domenico’s son, Ridolfo (1483–1561), also records that Benedetto was a painter of miniatures, but examples of his work in this vein have not been identified. —Roberta Bartoli

Domenico di Tommaso Bigordi, known as **Domenico Ghirlandaio**
Florence 1448–1494 Florence

Domenico Ghirlandaio was the head of one of the most efficient and sought-after painter’s workshops in Florence in the last quarter of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. His three brothers, Davide (1452–1525), Benedetto (1458–1497) and Giovanbattista (1456/57–after 1489), his brother-in-law Bastiano Mainardi (1466–1513), and his own son, Ridolfo (1483–1561), were all painters. Domenico took his nickname from his father, who probably sold garlands of metals and precious stones that were fashionable among Florentine ladies, even if he does not appear to have been a goldsmith. Domenico’s style, at once elegant, composed, and meticulously realistic, lent itself to two types of painting for which he acquired fame: portraiture (two masterpieces in this genre are his *Portrait of Lucrezia Tornabuoni* in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, and his touching *Portrait of an Old Man with His Grandson*, in the Musée du Louvre, Paris), and altarpieces (the San Giusto altarpiece, 1483, Gallerie degli Uffizi; and the *Adoration of the Magi*, 1483–88, Museo degli Innocenti, Florence). As a painter and entrepreneur Ghirlandaio could be relied upon to complete work on time, even the most demanding

commissions, and manage to fuse the talents of a diverse group of disciples and collaborators—including the very young Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564)—in a homogenous style and impeccable technique. He is praised in these terms and lauded as a fresco painter in a letter written to the duke of Milan around 1490 by his agent, who had been sent to recruit the services of the most talented artists in Florence. And it was as a fresco painter, not yet twenty, that Ghirlandaio painted lost decorations in the Vatican Library (1475–1476), and *Scenes from the Life of Santa Fina* (c. 1477, Collegiata, San Gimignano). As one of the painters sent by Lorenzo il Magnifico to Rome to fresco the walls of the new Sistine Chapel with scenes from the lives of Moses and of Christ, he contributed to one of the most important acts of cultural diplomacy of the period, one that aimed to mend the rupture between Florence and the papacy, and also to showcase Florentine art in the eternal city. Upon his return to Florence in 1482, Ghirlandaio painted the *Scenes from the Life of Saint Francis* in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita, and his most ambitious work of all, the fresco decoration of the gigantic Tornabuoni Chapel enclosing the high altarpiece of Santa Maria Novella (1485–90). In all these mature works, not a small part of the delight and success is due to Domenico Ghirlandaio’s ability to situate scenes from the Bible and sacred history in a familiar, contemporary setting, peopled with portraits of patrons, various notables, and friends, all elegantly attired, and the ladies decked out with elegant jewelry and coiffures. Ghirlandaio’s style is realistic, infused with the technique of Flemish contemporaries, but always decorous, benevolent, and serene in tone, offering a lively and graceful glimpse into the manners of the highest echelon of the society of his time. —Roberta Bartoli

Jacopo del Sellaio
Florence c. 1442–1493 Florence

Jacopo del Sellaio was born around 1441–42 in the Florentine neighborhood of San Frediano, a place he would remain closely tied to, personally and professionally, for his entire life. A pupil of Filippo Lippi, Jacopo set up an artistic partnership with Biagio d’Antonio in the late 1460s. In 1472 they produced a pair of wedding chests, together known as the Morelli-Nerli *cassoni* (Courtauld Institute of Art, London), which reflects the hand of both artists, although Biagio’s prevails. Indeed, the two probably entered into this partnership (or *compagnia*) in order to expedite the painting of such trousseau chests, and their interest in this work may have been

strengthened by the proximity of their workshop to another painter active in this field, Masaccio’s brother, known as Lo Scheggia (the Splinter). By 1473 Sellaio’s new professional partner was Filippo di Giuliano, who is also recorded as a painter of playing cards or *naibi*, but none of his works have been identified. Jacopo painted many works for the lay confraternities of the Oltrarno district he lived in, including for some of which he was a member. In 1469, in fact, Jacopo belonged to the confraternity of San Paolo and donated a *Chrst Crowned with Thorns*, an unidentified work, but a subject he treated many times. In 1488 he painted a ceremonial candle for the sodality of Sant’Agnese, a work made to be presented to Lorenzo il Magnifico. Chiefly a painter of devotional images, such as images of Saint Jerome and the Madonna and Child, Jacopo also painted some important large altarpieces, such as the *Pietà with Saints* for the church of San Frediano (1483, formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, destroyed). His son, Arcangelo, also a painter, much later furnished the predella of the altarpiece with *Scenes from the Life of San Frediano* (1506, Banca del Monte, Lucca). Around 1490, for the same church, Jacopo painted a *Crucifixion with Saints*, still in situ, and also in the same period, for another location in his native neighborhood, he executed the large *Coronation of the Virgin* (Galleria Palatina, Florence). —Nicoletta Pons

Filippo di Filippo Lippi, known as **Filippino Lippi**
Prato c. 1457–1504 Florence

Filippino (ittle Filippo) Lippi was one of the most respected, famous, and influential painters in Florence from the early 1480s until his premature death two decades later. He received his initial training from his father, Fra Filippo Lippi, and even collaborated, at a very early age, on Lippi’s frescoes in the Spoleto Cathedral. After the death of Filippo Lippi, in 1469, his finest student, Sandro Botticelli, became the teacher of the young Filippino. In his earliest known works, from the early 1470s, this precocious painter captured the essence of Botticelli, creating works even more graceful than those by his master. In the mid-1470s Botticelli and Filippino collaborated on several paintings, including the *Story of Esther*, which is now divided among various collections. By 1478 Filippino had become his own master, showing great interest in representations of surfaces, textures, and landscapes. Renaissance sources praised Filippino’s works not only for their skill and angelic air but also their inventiveness. Filippino created new pictorial

solutions for altarpieces, most notably the *Vision of Saint Bernard* in the Badia, Florence, as well as portraits, secular subjects, and fresco cycles. The last include his most famous works, the Carafa Chapel, Rome, and the Strozzi Chapel, Florence. These helped introduce ancient-inspired clothing and decorative elements to Florentine artists, and the overall organizations had a direct impact on Michelangelo and Raphael. More than most contemporaries, Filippino had the sensitivity to understand the needs of differing patrons. For some, like Lorenzo de’ Medici, called il Magnifico, Filippino created florid works overflowing with charming details and rich with learned references and symbolic meaning; for others, including followers of the preacher Girolamo Savonarola, Filippino made serious and austere works, designed to stir the emotions of visitors. Filippino had the pictorial intelligence to create pleasing but innovative solutions for a wide range of settings and audiences.

—Jonathan K. Nelson

Filippo Lippi
Florence c. 1406–1469 Spoleto

From a very poor family and orphaned as a small child, Filippo Lippi was just eight years old when he entered the convent of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, where he took monastic vows in 1421. In the church of this Carmelite convent the young Filippo would have seen the painting of the first Renaissance fresco cycle in Florence, in the Brancacci Chapel (c. 1424–28), where the essentially late Gothic style of Masolino da Panicale stands side by side with the powerful and monumental art of Masaccio. It is possible that Filippo collaborated with Masaccio, as Lippi’s hand has been traced in the Pisa Polyptych (1426, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa, and other locations). Notwithstanding his religious vows, Filippo Lippi lead a turbulent life: he traveled widely, and an unverified story told by Vasari holds that he was kidnapped by Moorish pirates and held captive for a year. In 1437 Filippo Lippi returned to Florence and opened a workshop as a painter. The pope himself granted Lippi a benefice of a country church, which supplemented his earnings, but this was lost when he neglected his pastoral duties there. Tales of Lippi’s excesses, while not always documented, speak of debts and of imprisonment for fraud. In the nearby city of Prato, Lippi frescoed scenes from the lives of Saints Stephen and John in the high altar chapel of Santo Stefano Cathedral (1452–65), and in 1456 Lippi was also named chaplain of the local convent of Santa Margherita, probably to secure his presence in Prato. Here

he fell in love with the young nun Lucrezia Buti and the two eloped. In 1461 a papal dispensation released the two lovers from their monastic vows, but the two never married. In the meantime, the couple had two children: a daughter, Alessandra, and a son, the future painter of the same name, known by his diminutive, Filippino. Filippo’s last major work was the fresco cycle of *Scenes from the Life of the Virgin* in the apse of the duomo at Spoleto, completed by Lippi’s workshop after the master’s sudden death in 1469. Filippo Lippi was a prolific artist, earning him the strong support of the Medici family. Filippo’s workshop, both in Florence and Prato, was the training ground for numerous painters of the next generation, including artists from Umbria and the Marches in central Italy, and artists of the caliber of Sandro Botticelli.

—Cecilia Frosinini

Tommaso di Antonio Finiguerra, known as **Maso Finiguerra**
Florence 1426–1464 Florence

A goldsmith, maker of niello plates, and draftsman, Maso matriculated in the silk guild (where all the goldsmiths were enrolled) in 1456. He probably trained as a goldsmith under his father, Antonio, in the goldsmith’s shop on Via Vacchereccia, near Palazzo Vecchio, which his father ran with the goldsmith Rinieri Manni. Sandro Botticelli’s brother, the goldsmith Antonio di Mariano, trained in the same workshop. Maso’s paternal uncles were a satirical poet, Stefano Finiguerra, known as Il Za, and the woodworker Bartolomeo Finiguerra, known to have collaborated with a maker of inlaid wood designs (intarsia work), whose nickname, Manno de’ Cori, refers to elaborate choir stalls. The sculptor Baccio Bandinelli identified Maso in the workshop of Lorenzo Ghiberti helping to produce his monumental *Gates of Paradise*, but the first documentary record of Maso dates to 1449, when he made the cast of a silver knife for the painter Alesso Baldovinetti. In 1452, he was already a renowned master and completed a silver pax (a Eucharist liturgical object) for the Florence Baptistery, decorated with a depiction of the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence). From his workshop in Via Vacchereccia between 1457 and 1464 Maso partnered with Pietro Sali and the younger artist Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1459–62). This bottega issued a splendid series of works of art, none of which survive: church furnishings in precious metals, such as a set of candlesticks for Pistoia Cathedral, and profane works for distinguished Florentines, including belt buckles, jewels, and tableware. Maso was celebrated for his particular skill in the

goldsmith technique of niello, decorations of black enamel on silver incised with the burin, a technique in which his extraordinary skills and virtuoso small-scale details were unrivalled. From the engraved and not yet nielloed metal plates, Maso produced sulfur casts and impressions on paper (Musée du Louvre, Paris; British Museum, London), thus inventing, as Vasari recounts, the practice of making figurative prints. Modern scholars tend to date the first Florentine copper prints to after Maso’s death, crediting Baccio Baldini, and, above all, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, author of the first signed engraving, the *Battle of the Nudes* (c. 1470). Finiguerra was also active as a *maestro di disegno*, an artist who furnished figurative models for inlaid woodwork (intarsia) (Duomo, Florence; Badia Fiesolana). In making such designs Maso carried on a family practice (he was related to carpenters); he was also enrolled in the guild of woodworkers and served, in 1455, as consul or chief official. Maso’s many drawings were principally made to hone his skills and to create a figural repertory for the nielli. Originating from no less than fourteen drawing albums and long the object of litigation among his heirs, Maso’s drawings are now found in museums around the world.

—Lorenza Melli

Cosimo de’ Medici, known as **Cosimo the Elder**
Florence 1389–1464 Careggi

Cosimo de’ Medici, the son of Giovanni di Averardo (called Bicci) de’ Medici, is called Cosimo the Elder by historians to distinguish him from a different member of the family by the same name, descendant of his brother, Cosimo the first grand duke of Florence. The members of the main line of descent of the Medici in the quattrocento are sometimes called the Medici di Cafaggiolo in reference to one of the family’s ancestral castles in the Mugello uplands north of Florence. Cosimo inherited the vast wealth of a banking empire constructed by his father, and he increased it by opening branches in such major European cities as Bruges, Paris, and London. A combination of wealth and shrewdness allowed the mature Cosimo to adroitly manipulate the political life of the city, after serving in political office and diplomatic missions from a young age. Cosimo challenged the patrician oligarchy of the city under Rinaldo degli Albizzi, harnessing popular discontent by promoting tax reform in the Florentine republic. This culminated in the institution in 1427 of a new tax registry, called the *catasto*, a system based on the declaration of assets by heads of families. The reform penalized wealth based on large landed estates (typical

of oligarchs) and favored those in possession of liquid capital (financial companies like the Medici bank). Additionally, the reform relieved citizens of taxes on their first house, fostering an urban renewal in Florence, which, in turn, led to the construction of the large palaces that still dominate the cityscape. Viewed as the chief opponent of the ruling class, Cosimo was arrested in 1433 and exiled to Padua, then moved to Venice in the following year. In Florence, however, fortunes turned against Rinaldo degli Albizzi and in 1434 Cosimo was called back to the city, where he rapidly came to dominate the city’s politics. Ever respectful of the Florentines’ long tradition of republican government, he never became lord of the city; instead, he governed through existing city offices, exercising power through a network of “relations, friends, and neighbors.” Undeniably, the city benefitted from his competent promotion of development in many fields, such as agriculture and commerce, in part through special arrangements and public works projects (notably the undertaking to make the Arno River navigable). His family bank, which served the papacy and other clients, was one of the largest in Europe, and in Cosimo’s lifetime the city prospered. By his wife, Contessina de’ Bardi, Cosimo had two sons, Piero and Giovanni. Piero, the firstborn male, was his heir and in turn had two sons: Lorenzo il Magnifico and Giuliano.

Cosimo was a remarkable patron of the arts. He sponsored the building of churches and convents (including the Badia Fiesolana constructed according to his design, the new church of San Marco, and the basilica of Santissima Annunziata), chapels, palaces, and country villas (most famous was his residence at Careggi just north of the city). Cosimo supported scholars and oversaw the development of libraries in his private palace, at the Badia Fiesolana, but most importantly at San Marco. After he died, the city of Florence adopted a phrase used by the ancient Romans to extol civic merits, proclaiming him the “father of his country,” *Pater Patriae*.

A second line of the Medici—sometimes referred to as the Medici del Trebbio from another castle in the Mugello—descended through Cosimo’s brother, Lorenzo, his son Pierfrancesco, and the latter’s sons Lorenzo and Giovanni, who in the course of the civic crisis of the 1490s briefly changed their family name to Popolani to underscore their political sympathies.

—Cecilia Frosinini

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici
Florence 1463–1503 Careggi

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, called il Popolano, belonged to a minor branch of the Medici family and was a third cousin of Lorenzo il Magnifico. Lorenzo lost his father at the age of thirteen and, together with his brother Giovanni, was taken under the tutelage of Lorenzo il Magnifico, who raised the two cousins together with his own children, providing them with a cultured upbringing and excellent education. Two of their teachers were none other than the philosopher Marsilio Ficino and the poet Agnolo Poliziano. Between 1476 and 1490 Ficino educated the two cousins in philosophy, while Poliziano provided a more general grounding in the classics and he also dedicated several poems to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco. Despite this early closeness between the two branches of the family, they became distant as a result of Lorenzo il Magnifico taking possession of a large portion of the young cousins’ assets during a financial crisis of the Medici bank and never returning the sum in full. The issue was resolved through legal arbitration. The brothers Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco and Giovanni obtained in recompense the villa of Cafaggiolo and other properties in the Mugello (where they already owned the Villa del Trebbio). In 1477, as directed by Lorenzo il Magnifico, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco purchased the Villa di Castello. In 1482 Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco married Semiramide Appiani, daughter of the lord of Piombino, a coastal town; this marriage was once again arranged by Lorenzo il Magnifico, who sought to gain the iron mines on the island of Elba and other strategic advantages. In the two years after Lorenzo il Magnifico’s death in which Lorenzo’s son Piero, called il Fatuo (the Vain) ruled Florence, the hostility between the two branches of the family broke out anew. Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco went so far as to join ranks with those in the Florentine oligarchy who opposed the Medici, even plotting with the king of France, Charles VIII, for the overthrow of Piero. For this reason, in May 1494 Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco and his brother were exiled from Florence. The following November, however, after a popular insurrection led by Fra Girolamo Savonarola and the expulsion of the Medici in the person of Piero, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco and his brother returned to Florence, taking on the sobriquet of Popolani in homage to their fidelity to the return of full republican rule in Florence.

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco sought to act as the political and cultural heir of Lorenzo il Magnifico. A poet and the author of a sacred theater play, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco was also a skilled entrepreneur, merchant, and

banker. He was also an exceptional art patron. Botticelli’s *Primavera* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence) and *Pallas and the Centaur* (no. 1) were, in fact, painted for him. His patronage extended to the young Michelangelo, who around 1495 carved a statue of the young *Saint John the Baptist*, unfortunately now lost. He and his brother also supported humanists and writers from the Greek world, including Michele Marullo, known as Tarcaniota (named for the Greek city from where his family originated), possibly the subject of a portrait by Botticelli. Botticelli also painted for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco the decorations of rooms at the Villa del Trebbio (1495) and Villa di Castello (1497), now lost, and he illustrated a parchment manuscript with scenes from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (divided between the Biblioteca Vaticana, and the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin). From Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco’s brother, Giovanni, originated the line of the Medici that took power beginning in the sixteenth century, most notably through Cosimo I (born in 1519, grand duke from 1562), who was Giovanni’s grandson.

—Cecilia Frosinini

Lorenzo de’ Medici, known as **il Magnifico**
Florence 1449–1492 Careggi

A crypto-ruler of the city-state of Florence, Lorenzo de’ Medici was the grandson of Cosimo the Elder, founder of the Medici family dynasty. Lorenzo consolidated power and defined his role as leader by assuming the most important office of the republic while not appearing to hold absolute power. For this reason, Lorenzo will go down in history with the nickname il Magnifico (the Magnificent), a title that belonged to the office of Standard Bearer of Justice (Gonfaloniere di Giustizia), roughly similar to the prestige and duties of a modern president of the republic. In the centuries that followed, Lorenzo’s il Magnifico title has assumed other meanings for the general public, coming to define his character as an enlightened ruler and generous patron of the arts.

It should be remembered that historically both Lorenzo’s father, Piero, and grandfather, Cosimo the Elder, were Gonfalonieri di Giustizia and were called Magnifico Messere during their lifetimes. Lorenzo, in reality, could not have been formally elected *gonfaloniere*, since he died at the age of forty-three, and the legal age to enter the office was forty-five. Nonetheless he was called Magnifico Messere from twenty-one years of age; when, following the death of his father, the Florentine magistrates paid him homage and pleaded for him to take care of the city. Thus Lorenzo inherited the title of his predecessors.

Lorenzo il Magnfco was an accomplished man of letters and a prominent politician, at the very center of life in Italian society. For his talents in diplomacy, he was called the “balance needle,” a name given to him by Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), a historian of the next generation and one of the major political writers of the Italian Renaissance. Lorenzo exerted enormous influence in Italy. Florence and its territories were in a key position on the peninsula, and when Lorenzo broke alliances with states and supported parties opposed to the papacy, the Medici were caught in the crosshairs of the Papal States, then ruled by Pope Sixtus IV. The pope even financed and promoted the so-called Pazzi conspiracy (named after the important Florentine family who sided against the Medici). Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino (1422–1482) was also part of the plot, and on the side of the papacy. The conspiracy attempted to kill Lorenzo and his brother, Giuliano, and took place during Easter Mass in the Florence Cathedral on Sunday April 26, 1478. Only Giuliano was killed, while Lorenzo, who survived, won even more support from the Florentines after this dramatic episode.

An exceptional patron of the arts and culture, Lorenzo was less attentive to aspects of the family’s banking and mercantile fortune. Under him the Medici bank went through periods of crisis. In Rome he successfully promoted the ascent of family members in the Church hierarchy: his second son, Giovanni, became a cardinal and later Pope Leo X (1475–1521; elected to the papacy in 1513). His daughter, Maddalena, married Franceschetto Cybo, son of Pope Innocent VIII (1432–1492, elected to the papacy 1484).—Cecilia Frosinini

Pietro Vannucci, known as **Perugino** Città della Pieve c. 1450–1523 Fontignano di Perugia

Perugino was the leading artist of central Italy in the last twenty years of the fifteenth century. Born in Città della Pieve, he died at Fontignano after a fifty-year career that took him from these Umbrian origins to Florence, Rome, and Venice, while he also sent works to Milan, Mantua, Naples, and Siena for popes, princes, governments, and patrons at the highest level. After a provincial training, probably in Perugia (which resulted in him being known as il Perugino), he established himself in Florence, where he married a local woman and set up a busy workshop in Borgo Pinti. Perugino’s initial reputation was as a fresco artist and he was the leading figure in the decoration of the walls of the Sistine Chapel in 1481–82 (together with Signorelli,

Botticelli, and others). He also painted devo-tional works—indeed his devotional style lay behind his extraordinary popularity—as well as portraits. In about 1500 he was the most famous painter in Italy—more famous than the established Leonardo da Vinci or the young Michelangelo—and demand for his work resulted in his workshops in multiple locations, training or influencing a generation of followers who, especially around Perugia, perpetuated his style for decades after his death. Raphael was one of these followers, at least in his early years. The combined factors of popularity, creating almost excessive demand for his work, of workshop practices that encouraged repetition (often employing less gifted assistants or lesser quality control to satisfy the demand for pictures), as well as changing taste and fashion, saw Perugino’s reputation suffer within his lifetime and after his death. But around 1500 he was held to be the best painter in all Italy and there was a stampede of people desperate to have works by his hand.—Tom Henry

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola Mirandola 1463–1494 Florence

A brilliant, dashing, and embattled philosopher, Giovanni belonged to a noble family, the counts of Mirandola, a small town in the Emilian Apennines near Modena (Pico being the last name by which he is usually cited). Biographies and other period sources describe a beautiful young man of wealth who divided his time between an intense and extraordinary path of studies and love affairs. He was a precocious student of letters, philosophy, and law, and after moving to Florence, gravitated toward humanism. He became acquainted with Agnolo Poliziano, Girolamo Benivieni, and Marsilio Ficino. His studies in philosophy took him to Paris in 1485. An accomplished linguist, Pico read Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and French. He was also celebrated across Europe for his remarkable memory, which appar-ently allowed him to recite Dante’s entire *Divine Comedy* line by line, even in reverse (In Italy the nickname Pico della Mirandola is still used today for persons with an excel-lent memory). Pico passionately studied the Jewish Kabbalah, in which he sought the key to the wisdom of the Bible. At twenty-three he published his *Nine Hundred Theses*, a philosophical and theological study that gathers assertions on topics from ethics to magic, and attempts to effect a sort of union between the three monotheistic religions. Pico’s project aimed to stimulate an inter-national scholarly debate among Christian thinkers, but instead resulted in a papal

investigation and accusation of heresy. In 1488 he fled to France, where Pope Innocent VIII had him arrested and imprisoned in the castle at Vincennes. He was released, thanks to Lorenzo il Magnifico, and taken under Lorenzo’s protection, spending the remainder of his life as a guest at a Medici villa in Fiesole, where he wrote his other major works. His sudden death at the age of thirty-one occurred shortly after that of his friend Poliziano (both deaths may have been poisonings). At the time of his death, Pico was engaged on a treatise refuting all super-stitions, but had only completed the section against divinatory astrology; this text was praised by Savonarola, who shared a synopsis of it in Italian with his followers.—Cecilia Frosinini

Agnolo Poliziano Montepulciano 1454–1494 Florence

Angelo Ambrogini, son of a jurist with ties to the Medici family, took the name Poliziano from his native town of Montepulciano, located in southeastern Tuscany, near the border with Umbria.

One of the major poets and scholars of the fifteenth century, Poliziano moved to Florence in 1469, where he became a central figure in the intellectual circle of Lorenzo il Magnifico and hence in Florentine Renaissance culture. He won attention for his translation into Italian of Homer’s *Iliad*. Thanks to Lorenzo’s support, Poliziano was able to pursue his humanistic studies and writing, while also holding prestigious positions as tutor of the Medici and as Lorenzo’s personal secretary. Poliziano’s social position was further enhanced after he was ordained a priest and, later, when he became one of the canons of Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral. Among his many works written in Italian, Latin, and Greek, the *Stanze per la giostra* is considered his most important piece of lyric poetry. Begun in 1474 to celebrate a festive joust held in that year, it was never completed, having been interrupted by the death of the dedicatee, Giuliano de’ Medici, who was murdered in the course of the Pazzi conspiracy, on April 26, 1478.

In 1478 Florence was also struck by a bout of bubonic plague, and Poliziano followed the Medici to the villa of Cafaggiolo in the Mugello, a rural area from which the Medici family originated. Here, however, for reasons that are unclear, Poliziano’s good relations with the Medici broke down. Lorenzo’s wife, Clarice Orsini, forbade her husband from entrusting Poliziano with the education of their son, Giovanni de’ Medici, the future pope Leo X. Further conflicts ensued, and Poliziano was forced to leave the Medici entourage.

After several years, Lorenzo made peace with Poliziano, who was engaged as a professor at the Studio Fiorentino, the city’s university. There Poliziano found intellectual kinship in the humanist and philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Poliziano died, perhaps of poisoning, at the age of forty, two years after his protector, Lorenzo il Magnifico.—Cecilia Frosinini

Antonio del Pollaiuolo Florence 1431/32–1498 Rome

Antonio di Jacopo d'Antonio Benci, known as Antonio del Pollaiuolo because his father sold poultry, trained and worked as a goldsmith. Early sources ascribe many paint-ings to him as well, but modern scholars have reassigned these works to his younger brother Piero. Antonio produced numerous works in gold, silver, and enamel, some with settings of pearls, and he was very active as a draftsman and designer, and designed works for colleagues (as attested in the writings of Benvenuto Cellini, the greatest Italian goldsmith and bronze sculptor of the sixteenth century). Antonio’s works demonstrate the close tie between a goldsmith’s work and drawing, both in terms of the role of the drawn line and in the artistic concept encapsulated in the word *invenzione*, the artist’s power of the creative concept in a given work. A measure of his talent in designing for different media is illustrated by his ambitious group of liturgical vestments for the baptis-tery, with embroideries of thirty stories from the life of Saint John the Baptist (c. 1470–75, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence). For this project a team of interna-tional embroiderers was called to Florence to produce the works in silk and gold thread, based on the cartoons furnished by the artist. Another exceptional synthesis of the artist’s work as a goldsmith and draftsman is the engraving *Battle of the Nudes* (see no. 41), a splendid scene of active figures printed from a copper plate incised with a burin. Antonio del Pollaiuolo was a major Florentine sculp-tor, working in plaster, terracotta, and bronze. After 1495 he dedicated the last twelve years of his life to two major bronze monuments in Rome, the tombs of popes Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII (Saint Peter’s, Rome). He was also an architect, providing designs for var-ious building, and finally, he was active as a painter. A few important works can be traced to this activity, including lost canvases of the *Labors of Hercules* for the Medici Palace, created with his brother Piero, the *Elevation of Saint Mary Magdalen* (Staggia, near Siena), and the fragmentary fresco of *Dancing Nudes* (Villa La Gallina, Arcetri, south of Florence).—Cecilia Frosinini

Piero del Pollaiuolo Florence 1441–before 1496 Rome

Piero di Jacopo d'Antonio Benci, known as Piero del Pollaiuolo from his father’s trade, was the younger brother of Antonio. Early sources mention Piero exclusively as a painter. He maintained his own workshop, although the two brothers collaborated occa-sionally, Antonio being primarily a goldsmith and sculptor. In 1460 Piero and Antonio painted three canvases (now lost) illustrating the Labors of Hercules, for Piero de’ Medici, the father of Lorenzo il Magnifico. Among Piero’s most important works for public and private patrons is the series of allegorical figures of the Virtues for the Tribunale della Mercanzia (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence); *Fortitude* by Botticelli (see fig. 5) also belongs to this commission. Piero painted the sumptuous altarpiece and frescoes adorning the funerary chapel of James of Portugal, a cardinal and prince of Aviv; the altarpiece is now in the Gallerie degli Uffizi and a copy is in the chapel at San Miniato al Monte, Florence. He also painted a series of celebrated portraits of young Florentine noblewomen, charac-terized by their pose in profile, derived from classical medals (see no. 56). Recently critics have assigned to Piero a greater part in the body of paintings that have traditionally been ascribed either to Antonio alone or to both Antonio and Piero. Piero’s early adoption in Florence of oil painting was influenced by the Flemish paintings that began to arrive in the city around the middle of the fifteenth century, commissioned by the wealthy local bourgeoisie who had trading and banking offices in Flanders.—Cecilia Frosinini

Cosimo Rosselli Florence 1440–1507 Florence

In a career spanning almost fifty years, Cosimo Rosselli achieved great commer-cial success as a painter and was awarded several important commissions. His fam-ily was deeply rooted in the professional world of artistic craftsmanship: his father, Lorenzo, was a stonemason (*scalpellino*); his half-brother Francesco (1448–1513) was an early engraver and probably the author of the celebrated view of Florence known as the *Map of the Chain* (c. 1480); another half-brother, Chimenti (1417–1482), was a painter of decorations. Cosimo served an apprenticeship (1453–56) in one of the most flourishing painter’s workshops of the time, that of Neri di Bicci. The same work-shop trained Cosimo’s cousin, Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli (1450–1526), a prolific minor painter mostly active for provincial clients.

Once he became an independent painter, Cosimo was also engaged with prestigious commissions outside Florence, including one in Pisa (1465). The high point of his career came when he was called by the pope to help paint the walls of the Sistine Chapel in Rome in 1481. The other painters were Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and (join-ing them the following year) Biagio d’Antonio (with whom Cosimo Rosselli had already worked), Bartolomeo della Gatta, and Luca Signorelli. If the productiveness of Cosimo Rosselli is beyond question, the importance and esteem with which he was regarded are further attested by the call to join two committees in Florence tasked to advise on momentous artistic matters of civic impor-tance: in 1490/91 the group judged proposals for the facade of the duomo, and in 1504 they decided where to install Michelangelo’s *David*. In his workshop Cosimo Rosselli trained three important artists: Piero di Cosimo, Fra Bartolomeo, and Mariotto Albertinelli.—Cecilia Frosinini

Francesco Rosselli Florence 1448–before 1513 Florence

Francesco Rosselli was born into a family of craftsmen and artists; his half-brother was the painter Cosimo (1439–1507). Francesco began his artistic career either with Cosimo or, more likely, with the miniature painter Francesco di Antonio del Chierico (1433–1484). In any event his early works are all illuminations of choir books and of manu-scripts of Latin texts by classical authors, for patrons who included the Medici lord of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro. In the 1480s Francesco traveled to Hungary, where he became the official miniature painter at the court of King Matthias Corvinus (ruled 1458–90). Abroad, Francesco refined the art of engraving, of which he became one of the leading practitioners upon his return to Florence.

However, in 1508 Francesco is listed in Venice, as an attendee of public lectures on geometry given by the Franciscan friar and mathematician Luca Pacioli (1447–1517). Probably Rosselli’s pursuit of a geometric description of the world and the growing demand of the market for maps and city views contributed to his significant production of engravings, which occupied him until the end of his life. The engraving workshop that he had in Florence was very productive in the typical Florentine style of engraving. In particular, Francesco developed images of city maps or views (Constantinople, Pisa, Rome, and Florence), and true works of car-tography. Sadly, only one city view by him

survives, the view of Florence taken from an elevated position, known from the decorative border as the *Map of the Chain* (c. 1480: Berlin). Francesco’s figurative engravings include many prints derived from works by Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, and Sandro Botticelli. —Cecilia Frosinini

Girolamo Savonarola

Ferrara 1452–1498 Florence

Savonarola, by Sandro Botticelli, 1498

Savonarola, a Dominican friar, gifted preacher, and a reformer of the Catholic Church, was a central figure in the history, culture, and politics of Florence between 1480 and 1500. Savonarola was born into a noble family of Ferrara, a major city of northern Italy with a strong humanistic tradition, where he received a fine education. Savonarola then entered the Dominican order, a mendicant brotherhood distinguished for its preeminence in preaching and learning, the same order to which one of the great medieval theologians, Saint Thomas Aquinas, had belonged. In 1482 Girolamo Savonarola was sent to Florence, to the Dominican convent of San Marco, which was already an important center for ascetic reform, which had passed from the Silvestrini to the Dominican scholars in 1436. San Marco was where the painter and monk Fra Angelico spent most of his life. Savonarola launched a campaign to profoundly restore the faith and morals of Florence. In his thundering sermons Savonarola saw the Apocalypse as imminent, and he castigated the Florentines for their loose ways, rapidly gaining an enormous following. His sermons targeted two major forces: the papacy, then under the notorious Alexander VI of the Borgia family, abetted by the large and corrupt papal bureaucracy (the Roman curia); and the governors of Florence, whom Savonarola urged to expel the Medici and install a new republic grounded in fundamentalist Christianity. Most Florentines were convinced that Savonarola was a true prophet, who, among other things, had predicted the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico in 1492. Only two years later a French invasion of Italy under King Charles VIII precipitated the fall and ouster of the Medici, at which point a republican regime was installed by the political party associated with Savonarola. Savonarola’s followers went by the humble name of Piagnoni, that is, “wailers” or “penitents,” originally a derogatory term with a strident overtone. One of the Piagnoni was Botticelli’s brother Simone, author of a history of Savonarola’s last years. There is little doubt that, following on the heels of Simone, Sandro Botticelli probably fell in with the Piagnoni; certainly his late works are saturated with deep piety and some contain precise echoes of

Savonarola’s sermons. Savonarola’s attack on the papacy proved to be fatal to his cause. The Borgia pope excommunicated the friar. In the meantime, Savonarola’s local power base was undermined by the opposing political party, the so-called League of the Enraged (*Lega degli Arrabbiati*), which enjoyed the financial support of the papal curia and of the Medici in exile. In effect Savonarola fell victim to his own tactics. He was convinced to submit to a medieval form of judgment, a trial or ordeal in which severe if not impossible physical challenges would reveal divine judgment of a person’s innocence or sanctity. The result of this trial did not help Savonarola. In April 1498, he and two zealous Dominican followers were tried for heresy and hung by civic authorities; their three bodies were then burned at the stake in the center of Piazza della Signoria (in front of the Palazzo Vecchio), and their ashes were then strewn into the waters of the Arno. —Cecilia Frosinini

Luca Signorelli

Cortona c. 1450–1523 Cortona

Cortona

Preeminent in his generation, and described as “famous throughout Italy,” Signorelli was given pride of place in Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists* (1568) at the very end of the second section—explicitly as the culmination of fifteenth-century achievement who showed the way for the subsequent generation of High Renaissance artists. He was born and died in the southern Tuscan town of Cortona. He trained with Piero della Francesca and his earliest surviving works also demonstrate knowledge of Florentine artists such as Donatello and Verrocchio, who must have appealed to him for their treatment of the male nude. Prestigious commissions followed for Pope Sixtus IV (painting scenes on the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel), Lorenzo de’ Medici, Pope Julius II, and others over a forty-year career that saw extensive travel in central Italy between Florence and Rome, and from coast to coast. His work ranged from portraits, small devotional pictures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus (especially tondi), and large altarpieces to fresco cycles and designs for stained glass and pavement designs. He is best known for frescoes of the *Last Judgment* and *End of the World*, which he painted in Orvieto Cathedral from 1499 to 1503, and which can be seen as the essential prelude to the more famous frescoes of Michelangelo and Raphael that were painted a little later in the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Stanze. Signorelli is known today for his drawings in black chalk, which also anticipate Michelangelo, and for his paintings and drawings of the male nude (see nos. 19 and 59 for notable examples of these characteristic

interests). His later life was spent in Cortona, where he remained productive until the very end of his life, and was said to have been a devoted husband, kindly teacher, as well as an active local citizen.

—Tom Henry

Francesco della Rovere, Pope Sixtus IV

Celle Ligure, Republic of Genoa 1414–1484

Rome, reigned 1471–84

Cortona

Born Francesco della Rovere, into a Ligurian family of modest means, he joined the Franciscan order; in 1467 he was made a cardinal by Pope Paul II, after whose death he was elected pope, taking on the name of Sixtus IV. Politically, Sixtus IV pursued an expansion of the temporal powers of the Church, in which endeavor he adopted the practice of nepotism, even naming two nephews to the cardinalate, Giuliano della Rovere (later Pope Julius II) and Pietro Riario (who, according to some, was actually his secret son).

Sixtus’s chief foreign policy goal, ultimately a failure, was to organize a crusade against the Ottoman Turks. In Italian politics Sixtus IV opposed the Medici in the hopes of adding the Florentine state (most of Tuscany) to the large Papal States in central Italy. To this end, he supported and financed the Pazzi conspiracy in April 1478, which by the assassination of the brothers Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici, he hoped would trigger an uprising. In the event only Giuliano was killed and the dramatic attack reinforced Lorenzo’s popular support and hold on power. As a churchman, Sixtus IV was energetic. He instituted the feast day of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary on December 8, a devotion dear to a Franciscan like himself, but opposed by other forces within the Church, and he also promoted devotion to Saint Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, and to Mary’s earthly spouse, Saint Joseph. He declared 1485 a Holy Year and since then this periodic event has been known as the Jubilee Year. Pressured by the co-rulers of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella (the supporters of the navigator Columbus), Sixtus IV permitted the establishment of a special tribunal to combat the spread of religious heresy, the Spanish Inquisition. Although Sixtus IV sought to limit the excesses of the Inquisition, he accepted the nomination as chief inquisitor of Tomas de Torquemada, known for his intransigence and for the use of torture upon suspects.

In line with his vision of the papacy as an absolute monarchy, which he helped to further, Sixtus IV greatly advanced the modernization of Rome as a cultural project, definitively moving the city from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, fulfilling the dream of his predecessors Nicholas V and Pius II.

In his *renovatio urbis* (city renewal), Sixtus also greatly supported humanistic learning. Among his artistic commissions was the construction and decoration of a chapel inside the Vatican palace, known as the Sistine Chapel after his name. In his lifetime Sixtus IV oversaw the decoration of the chapel walls. In 1481 he called in a group of artists, mostly Florentine—Domenico Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, as well as the Umbrians Perugino and Pinturicchio—to depict parallel scenes from the Old and New Testaments. The main painters were joined by other collaborators: Biagio di Antonio, Piero di Cosimo, Bartolomeo della Gatta, and Luca Signorelli. The quattrocento decorative campaign of the Sistine Chapel was crowned during the papacy of Sixtus IV’s nephew, Julius II, by Michelangelo’s frescoed ceiling. Another grand artistic enterprise, expressive of the learning and ambitions of Sixtus IV, is his superb bronze tomb for Saint Peter’s (Sacristy Museum, Saint Peter’s, Vatican). This work, perhaps planned by the pope prior to his death, is a masterpiece by Antonio del Pollaiuolo. —Cecilia Frosinini

Giorgio Vasari

Arezzo 1511–1574 Florence

Florence

Painter, architect, and author, Giorgio Vasari was a member of the Medici court. He was especially close to Cosimo I, who consolidated the Medici dynasty in Florence, serving as the first declared lord or signore of the city, first as duke, and then as the grand duke of Tuscany. Although a many-faceted artist endowed with great energy and technical skill, Vasari is best known as a historian, art theorist, and writer. We owe to Vasari the first systematic treatment of the history of art.

In his youth Vasari spent much time in Rome, an artistic capital, traveling also to Naples, Venice, and to many towns in the Po valley. As he traveled, earning a livelihood through well-paid commissions, chiefly frescoes for private residences, Vasari also studied various modes in which artists were educated. In 1550 he published the first edition of his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. His principal work of history and literature, Vasari’s *Lives* is not only a trove of information about artists, it constitutes the first published collection of biographies of artists, and it may be considered the first modern treatise on the history of art. In 1554 on Cosimo’s request, Vasari returned to Florence to put his talents at the duke’s service. For Cosimo, Vasari carried out three major building projects of great cultural and political importance. First, he restructured the Palazzo della Signoria, known since

this period as the Palazzo Vecchio, turning it into a more sumptuous government building. Next to it, Vasari built a U-shaped building for administrative offices, a function reflected in its name: the Uffizi, which in the 1580s already had an art gallery, and which is today one of the world’s most important museums. Finally, he built a covered and elevated walkway, still known as the Vasari Corridor, linking the Uffizi, by way of the Ponte Vecchio, to the new ducal residence in the Palazzo Pitti, the expansion of which was underway. In 1568 Vasari published a second revised and expanded edition of his *Lives*. In its final form the book gathers the biographies of more than one hundred and fifty artists active between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, beginning with Cimabue and ending with himself. A long introduction delves into the materials and techniques of the three major fields of art: architecture, sculpture, and painting. Vasari’s oeuvre remains a core text for the discipline of art history, and it is often the only source of much biographical information about artists. In its massive documentation, the *Lives* reflects the quantities of information Vasari gathered during his travels and from different sources as well as what we would today call oral history, about artists living and dead. Vasari’s narrative is not always reliable. The author sometimes loses his way in anecdotes, supplies information that we now can prove is inaccurate, or proffers legends and even defamatory stories of dubious evidentiary value, as moralizing ballast. Moreover, in the interest of serving Cosimo I, and as a Tuscan himself, Vasari tends to exalt the undoubted achievements of local artists over even the most gifted masters from other centers. —Cecilia Frosinini

Andrea di Michele, known as **Verrocchio**
Florence c. 1435–1488 Venice

Venice

In his 1568 life of Verrocchio, Vasari states that the artist, trained as a goldsmith, not only studied with passion the hard sciences, in particular mathematics, but was an excellent sculptor, painter, and talented musician. In short, he embodied the universal genius or emblematic figure of the Renaissance man, who flourished, in particular, in the rich and wide-ranging cultural climate that characterized Florence in the time of Lorenzo il Magnifico. His workshop was frequented by the greatest young painters and sculptors of the time, among them Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi, Luca Signorelli, Perugino, Biagio d’Antonio, Lorenzo di Credi, and Leonardo da Vinci. Verrocchio’s dynamic sculptures marvelously integrate the space around them, often with an innovative design. In his funeral

monument of Giovanni and Piero de’ Medici (1472, Old Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence), the sarcophagus appears behind a bronze grillwork that visually suggests the passage between life and death; in his fountain figure *Putto with a Dolphin* (1470–1475, courtyard, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence), the boy seems to spin upward as he attempts to hold the leaping sea creature. Verrocchio’s *Lady with a Carnation* (1478, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) is the first portrait bust to include arms and hands, augmenting the expressiveness to the figure. His *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1483, Orsanmichele, Florence) is a masterpiece of artistic virtuosity, in which the two figures, especially in the draperies, show a richness of treatment and vibrant effects of movement that anticipate Baroque art.

There are fewer paintings by Verrocchio than sculptures, and they often involved the work of pupils or colleagues. In the *Baptism of Christ* (c. 1475, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence) Verrocchio executed only the figure of Saint John the Baptist, where the strong external contour and the precise anatomy are redolent of his practice as a goldsmith and sculptor, while the softly modulated rendition of the figures of Christ and the angels at the left are the work of the young Leonardo da Vinci and other artists. Likewise, Verrocchio was responsible for the general design and composition of the *Madonna with Child and Saints John the Baptist and Saint Donatus* altarpiece (the *Pala di Piazza*, Cathedral of San Zeno, Pistoia), leaving the execution of the painted surface to his faithful pupil and collaborator Lorenzo di Credi. Lorenzo di Credi was given management of Verrocchio’s workshop when the master moved to Venice in 1486 to undertake the equestrian monument of Bartolomeo Colleoni. The ambitious project was well advanced when Verrocchio died in that city in 1488, and the work was completed by a Venetian, Alessandro Leopardi. —Roberta Bartoli

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Abbreviations
ASF
Archivio di Stato, Florence
BCS
Biblioteca Comunale, Siena.
BNF
Bibliothèque Nationale de France
CIL
<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , 17 vols, Berlin, 1862–1986.

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Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) is one of the most important and best-loved artists of the Renaissance. For many, his painting embodies the fifteenth-century awakening of learning, art, culture, and the rediscovery of the art of classical Greece and Rome that characterizes the Renaissance. This book documents the stunning exhibition organized by Florence’s Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Minneapolis Institute of Art—one of the most comprehensive exhibitions on Botticelli and his contemporaries ever staged in the United States.

Here, in Botticelli’s paintings, his exquisite drawings and figure studies, and in prints by his contemporaries, we can compare how Botticelli and his circle masterfully borrowed, reinterpreted, and brilliantly transformed motifs, characters, and myths from classical sculptures—as well as from antique marbles included here—in remarkable works made for Medici palaces, for grand Florentine residences, for churches, and as devotional paintings.

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