NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Agnolo Gaddi
Florentine, c. 1350 - 1396

Madonna and Child Enthroned with Twelve Angels, and with the Blessing Christ [middle panel]

shortly before 1387

tempera on poplar panel
overall: 204 × 80 cm (80 5/16 × 31 1/2 in.)
Inscription: across the bottom: AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS [TECUM] (Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; from Luke 1:28); on the book held by the Redeemer in the gable: EGO SUM / A[ET] O PRINCI / PIU[M] [ET] FINIS / EGO SUM VI / A. VERITAS / [ET] VITA (I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, I am the way, the truth, and the life; from John 14:6; Revelations 22:13)
Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1937.1.4.b

ENTRY

This panel is the central part of a triptych flanked by two laterals with paired saints (*Saint Andrew and Saint Benedict with the Archangel Gabriel [left panel]* and *Saint Bernard and Saint Catherine of Alexandria with the Virgin of the Annunciation [right panel]*). All three panels are topped with similar triangular gables with a painted medallion in the center. The reduction of a five-part altarpiece into a simplified format with the external profile of a triptych may have been suggested to Florentine masters as a consequence of trends that appeared towards the end of the fourteenth century: a greater simplification in composition and a revival of elements of painting from the first half of the Trecento.[1] Agnolo Gaddi followed this trend in several of his works. He demonstrates this in the three panels being discussed here by his deliberate revival of motifs that had been abandoned by most Florentine painters since the mid-fourteenth century. To present the Madonna seated on a throne of Giottesque type,[2] instead of concealing the structure of the throne with a gold-embroidered cloth of honor as in most paintings

realized by masters in the circle of Orcagna, was a sort of archaism at this time. Agnolo scrupulously describes this seat and at the same time exploits its form to create three-dimensional effects. Yet these archaizing motifs are combined with more forward-looking features. Gaddi's progressive adjustment to the innovative late-Gothic taste of his time is thus attested by various aspects of the triptych, such as the pastiglia decoration in the gables, the now lost decoration of the frame,[3] the rich orientalizing carpet that covers the floor,[4] and even the crowded composition of the central panel.

Lionello Venturi published this triptych in 1931 under the name of Gherardo Starnina.[5] This attribution was based on the now discarded theory of scholars who had tried in the first three decades of the century to reconstruct the oeuvre of a putative disciple of Agnolo Gaddi, to whom the conventional name "Madonnenmeister" or "Compagno d' Agnolo" was given and who was later identified with Gherardo Starnina.[6] However, Bernard Berenson recognized that a good part of the work given to the "Compagno d'Agnolo" belongs to Agnolo himself. The studies of Ugo Procacci [7] on Starnina finally put the proposed identification to rest, though it continued to enjoy residual credit for some time to come.[8] In the National Gallery of Art, the altarpiece was cataloged as a work by Agnolo Gaddi, and since the 1960s, art historians have unanimously accepted this attribution.

The present writer proposed that Agnolo Gaddi's altarpiece might have been executed for the sacristy of the church of San Miniato al Monte (Florence),[9] of which the Alberti were patrons and for whose decoration Benedetto di Nerozzo Alberti left funds in his will of 1387.[10] The reasons adduced at that time in support of such a hypothesis were, it must be admitted, not quite convincing: referring to the inscription in Saint Benedict's book to the "admonition" (an administrative sanction by the Florentine government) against Alberti in 1387 and his subsequent exile is open to question. Furthermore, I erroneously asserted that Saint Giovanni Gualberto was represented in the painting. The saint to the right of the Virgin is, in fact, Bernard of Clairvaux, but the presence of this saint in the altarpiece is actually a further argument in support of a provenance from the sacristy of San Miniato. Saint Bernard was the patron Saint of Benedetto Alberti's son Bernardo, who in his will dated 1389 left money for masses to be celebrated annually *pro anima dicti testatoris* (for the soul of the said testator) in the family chapel in San Miniato, which had evidently already by that date been consecrated.[11] The representation of Saint Andrew, who was the patron saint of a predeceased son of Benedetto

Alberti, also links the altarpiece to the sacristy of San Miniato. As to the fourth saint, Catherine of Alexandria (standing on a broken wheel), she was evidently much venerated in Benedetto's family. This is proved by the fact that, in his will of 1387, he bequeathed money for the decoration of an oratory near Florence (Santa Caterina dell'Antella) dedicated to the martyr saint of Alexandria (and decorated by a cycle of frescoes illustrating scenes from her life by Spinello Aretino); additionally, his son Bernardo wished to build a monastery and a church in her honor.[12] The Alberti family's veneration of Saint Catherine may have been based on the popular etymology of her name (catherine=*catenula*) diffused by Jacopo da Varazze in *Legenda aurea*,[13] with reference to the chain represented in the Alberti coats of arms.

Although the provenance from San Miniato remains a hypothesis, it still seems to me a quite plausible one that, if correct, would give us the certainty that by 1830 the triptych was still on the altar of the sacristy. An altarpiece can apparently be seen still *in situ* in a sketch of the sacristy's altar wall [fig. 1] made in that year by architect Christoph Robert August Roller (1805–1858), in his *Tagebuch einer italienischen Reise* (Castle Museum Burgdorf, Burgdorf, Switzerland). Unfortunately, the sketch, to which Stefan Weppelmann kindly drew my attention, is very small and certainly not sufficient for the identification of the triptych in the Gallery. What may be said for certain is only that an altarpiece composed of five panels stood on the altar of the sacristy of San Miniato in 1830, but by 1836 this altarpiece was no longer there, as Stefan Weppelmann rightly observed. It was removed and sold presumably by the Pia Opera degli Esercizi Spirituali, which had owned the furniture and decorations of the church since 1820.[14]

As for its date, the Gallery's first catalog (1941) cautiously suggested "the last quarter of the XIVth century," while the volume devoted to the Duveen Pictures (1941) proposed an approximate date of c. 1380.[15] More recent publications in general support a time frame within the 1380s, although without explaining the reasons for this proposal. Arguing for a provenance from the sacristy of the Florentine church of San Miniato al Monte, Miklós Boskovits (1975) attempted a more precise dating shortly after the codicil dated 1387 was appended to the testament of Benedetto di Nerozzo degli Alberti, its putative patron.[16] For his part, Bruce Cole (1979) stylistically linked the Gallery triptych with the cycle of frescoes in the choir of Santa Croce in Florence, for which he proposed a date of execution in the years c. 1388–1393.[17] Given the lack of securely datable panels by Gaddi, with the exception of the composite altarpiece of the Cappella del

Crocifisso, still in the church of San Miniato,[18] various scholars have attempted to construct a chronology for the artist based on an analysis of the punched decoration of his work; however, this effort has failed to yield any precise indication for the Washington altarpiece other than a vague association with a relatively late phase in the painter's activity.[19]

In the course of his career, especially between the 1380s and the early 1390s, Agnolo Gaddi produced a number of polyptychs, now in part dismantled and dispersed, of which at least the surviving central panels propose a composition close to that of the triptych discussed here. I refer in particular to *Madonna and Child with Eight Angels* (now united with laterals that did not originally belong to it) in the Contini-Bonacossi bequest to the Uffizi, Florence;[20] *Madonna and Child Surrounded by Eight Angels* in the church of San Lorenzo at Borgo San Lorenzo;[21] the triptych in the Staatliche Museen of Berlin, in which six angels are placed around the throne and a further pair are in the gable;[22] and *Madonna and Child Flanked by Twelve Angels*, now in a private collection in Milan.[23] None of these is securely dated, but the Berlin triptych can in all probability be identified with that formerly on the altar of the Nobili chapel in Santa Maria degli Angeli, which bore the inscription "An D 1387 Bernardus Cini de Nobilibus fecit fieri hanc cappellam."[24] This gives us a useful point of reference not only for defining a chronological sequence of the paintings in question but also, as we shall see, for the dating of Gaddi's great cycles of Florentine frescoes. Another chronological point of reference, albeit an approximate one, is 1383, the date of the testament of Michele di Vanni Castellani, in which he made bequests for the construction and decoration of a family chapel in Santa Croce, the chapel that would later be frescoed by Agnolo Gaddi.[25] The style of this decoration suggests a period of execution not much later than the will; indeed, most art historians tend to place the execution of the cycle in the years immediately following 1383.

Although successive restorations have now made it difficult to assess, the Borgo San Lorenzo panel [26] seems the earliest of the group. It was perhaps painted even before the frescoes in the Castellani chapel, with which it has affinities in its use of dense shadows in modeling, in the rigid profiles of the angels, and in the deeply channeled and brittle-looking folds of their garments. Between that work and the Nobili triptych now in Berlin can be placed both the Madonna of the Contini-Bonacossi bequest (it too now altered by retouches) and the triptych in the Gallery. In contrast to these latter two, the animated composition of the panel destined for the Nobili chapel seems to represent a further step forward, in the

direction of the more dynamic compositions and the more delicate modeling that characterize the painter's final phase, to which the above-mentioned Madonna surrounded by twelve angels now in a private collection can, I believe, be ascribed.[27]

If such a chronological sequence of the altarpieces executed by Agnolo in the 1380s is plausible, the Gallery triptych ought to date to a period slightly preceding 1387—that is, slightly preceding the execution of the other and more important enterprise promoted by Benedetto di Nerozzo Alberti, the frescoing of the choir in Santa Croce.[28] Various similarities can be identified between passages of that cycle and the Washington triptych, in confirmation of the chronological proximity of the two works: the bust of Saint Andrew [fig. 2] recurs, in similar form, in the scene of the Making of the Cross [fig. 3], in the group of spectators to the extreme right of the fresco, while analogies can also be identified between the other saints of the triptych and the busts of the prophets inserted in the ornamental friezes that articulate the chapel's decoration. Close similarities have also been observed between the lateral saints of the Gallery triptych and the fragments of an altarpiece now in Indianapolis.[29] We have no secure evidence to help us date these fragments, probably the remains of the decoration of the lateral pilasters of a polyptych roughly contemporary with, or perhaps slightly later than, the triptych being discussed here. In conclusion, therefore, the Washington altarpiece exemplifies a stage in the artist's career in which he embarked on the gradual discovery of the innovative features of late-Gothic art. This led him to develop greater elegance in poses, more delicate and harmonious arrangement of draperies, and more spontaneous vitality in the conduct of the angels thronged around the sides of the throne as if drawn magnetically to the child. A clear sign of the innovations of the phase in which Agnolo painted the frescoes in the choir of Santa Croce is also the artist's polychromy: abandoning the somber palette of previous works, he now prefers or utilizes combinations of delicate pastel colors.

Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011)

March 21, 2016

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

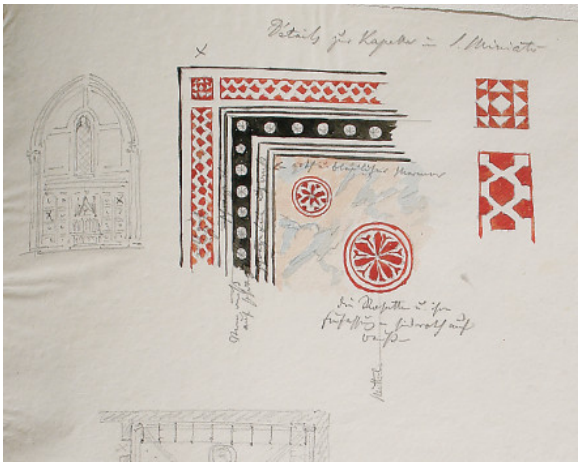

fig. 1 C. A. R. Roller, ""Design of the east wall of the sacristy of San Miniato in Florence,"" from *Tagebuch einer italienischen Reise* (Journal of My Trip to Italy in the Years 1829 and 1830), 1:7, June 1830, Rittersaalverein Castle Museum, Burgdorf, Switzerland

fig. 2 Detail of Saint Andrew (left), Agnolo Gaddi, *Madonna and Child with Saints Andrew, Benedict, Bernard, and Catherine of Alexandria with Angels*, shortly before 1387, tempera on poplar, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

fig. 3 Detail of spectators, Agnolo Gaddi, *The Making of the Cross*, 1385–1390, fresco, Cappella Maggiore, Santa Croce, Florence. Image: Scala/Art Resource, NY

NOTES

[1] A similar solution—a five-part polyptych reduced to triptych format—in fact appears on the main side of Giotto's Stefaneschi altarpiece (Pinacoteca Vaticana, no. 40.120) and later (probably at a date close to 1340) in the fragment of a triptych by Jacopo del Casentino now in a private collection; see Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 7, *The Biadaiolo Illuminator, Master of the Dominican Effigies* (New York, 1957), pl. xlix. About 1365, Matteo di Pacino revived this scheme in an altarpiece of similar structure now in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence (no. 8463); see Michela Palmeri, in *Dipinti*, vol. 1, *Dal Duecento a Giovanni da Milano, Cataloghi della Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze*, ed. Miklós Boskovits and Angelo Tartuferi (Florence, 2003), 174–181. Perhaps a few years later in date is another triptych of similar format, attributed to the Master of San Lucchese near Poggibonsi, destroyed in 1944; reproduced in Bernard Berenson, "Quadri senza casa: Il Trecento fiorentino, 2," *Dedalo* 11 (1930–1931): 1050, as a work by Jacopo di Cione. Another altarpiece of the same format is the triptych painted by the Master of the Misericordia and Niccolò Gerini in collaboration, now in the church of Sant'Andrea at Montespertoli near Florence; reproduced in Richard Offner and Klara Steinweg, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 4, vol. 5, *Giovanni del Biondo*, pt. 2 (New York, 1969), pl. xliv, as workshop of Giovanni del Biondo, probably executed around 1380.

[2] The throne is similar to the one that appears in the polyptych signed by Giotto now in the Museo Civico Nazionale in Bologna (no. 284). Thrones of this type, with a high, triangular-topped backrest but of simple structure and convincingly drawn in perspective, appear in the early 1360s in Giovanni da Milano's polyptych now in the Museo Civico at Prato; in the fragmentary polyptych by Cenni di Francesco, dated 1370, in the church of San Cristofano a Perticaia near Florence; in the polyptych by Pietro Nelli and Niccolò Gerini in the pieve at Impruneta, dated 1375; and thereafter ever more frequently in the last quarter of the century. Cf. Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), pls. 86 and 61.

[3] On the original decoration of the frame, cf. Mary B. Bustin, "Recalling the Past: Evidence for the Original Construction of Madonna Enthroned with Saints and Angels by Agnolo Gaddi," *Studies in the History of Art: Conservation Research*57 (1996–1997): 50–64. The fashion of covering the gable zones of altarpieces with pastiglia ornamental motifs in relief before they were gilded began to spread from Orcagna's shop in the second half of the Trecento.

[4] The sumptuous decoration, with pairs of facing animals, of the brocaded fabrics used to cover the throne of the Madonna or the floor on which the saints stand is a phenomenon characteristic of Florentine painting in the

second half of the fourteenth century, especially in paintings of the circle of Orcagna, but also in panels produced in the bottega of Agnolo Gaddi. Cf. Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Bern, 1967), 283, 316, 341.

[5] Lionello Venturi, *Pitture italiane in America* (Milan, 1931), no. 52.

[6] Oskar Wulff (1907) coined this unfortunate conventional name. Osvald Sirén (1914–1915) later altered it to "Compagno d'Agnolo," and shortly thereafter he formulated a hypothesis identifying this artist with Gherardo Starnina (1916, 51–53). See Oskar Wulff, "Der Madonnenmeister: Ein sienesisch–florentinische Trecentist," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 20 (1907): 195–210, 227–236; Osvald Sirén, "Early Italian Pictures, the University Museum, Göttingen (Conclusion)," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 26 (1914): 107–114; Osvald Sirén, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the Jarves Collection Belonging to Yale University* (New Haven and London, 1916), 51–53.
The proposal was accepted by Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 3, *The Florentine School of the 14th Century*(The Hague, 1924), 565–573, and some other authors in the following decade.

[7] Referring to the group of paintings usually cited under the name "Compagno d'Agnolo," Bernard Berenson wrote: "Una delle più singolari aberrazioni della critica recente è stata quella di attribuire tutte queste Madonne allo Starnina; ma non è necessario perdere il tempo a dissipare errori che il tempo stesso disperderà" (One of the most singular aberrations of modern criticism is that of attributing all these Madonnas to Starnina; but it is not necessary to waste time dissipating errors that time itself will dissipate). See Bernard Berenson, "Quadri senza casa: Il Trecento fiorentino, 3," *Dedalo* 11 (1930–1931): 1303. After the discovery of the remains of the cycle of Starnina's documented frescoes in the church of the Carmine in Florence, the hypothesis of the anonymous master's identification with Starnina was gradually abandoned. See Ugo Procacci, "Gherardo Starnina," *Rivista d'arte* 15 (1933): 151–190; Ugo Procacci, "Gherardo Starnina," *Rivista d'arte* 17 (1935): 331–384.

[8] The triptych now in the National Gallery of Art evidently came to Duveen Brothers accompanied by expertises from Robert Langton Douglas and Osvald Sirén, both supporting the attribution to Starnina; see Duveen Brothers, *Duveen Pictures in Public Collections of America* (New York, 1941), nos. 24–25. Lionello Venturi (1931, 1933), Wilhelm R. Valentiner (1933), and Ugo Galetti and Ettore Camesasca (1951) also accepted that attribution. Roberto Salvini (1935–1936), not accepting the identification Gherardo Starnina=Compagno d'Agnolo, attributed the painting to the latter. Cf. Lionello Venturi, *Pitture italiane in America* (Milan, 1931), no. 52; Lionello Venturi, *Italian Paintings in America*, trans. Countess Vanden Heuvel and

Charles Marriott, 3 vols. (New York and Milan, 1933), 1: no. 63; Wilhelm R. Valentiner, ed., *The Sixteenth Loan Exhibition of Old Masters: Italian Paintings of the XIV to XVI Century* (Detroit, 1933), no. 11; Ugo Galetti and Ettore Camesasca, *Enciclopedia della pittura italiana*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1951), 3:2351; and Roberto Salvini, "Per la cronologia e per il catalogo di un discepolo di Agnolo Gaddi," *Bollettino d'arte* 29 (1935–1936): 287.

[9] Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), 118–121.

[10] On Benedetto Alberti's will, see Luigi Passerini, ed., *Gli Alberti di Firenze: Genealogia, storia e documenti*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1869), 2:187. The codicil in question was attached to the will drawn up in 1377 (now lost and known only from a seventeenth-century abstract). In it the testator already instructed that "si facessi dipignere la Sagrestia di San Miniato al Monte con gli Armadi et Finestra et af[freschi]" (that the sacristy of San Miniato al Monte should be painted [and provided] with cupboards, [stained glass] window, and frescoes); Giovanni Felice Berti, *Cenni storico-artistici per servire di guida ed illustrazione alla insigne Basilica di S. Minato al Monte e di alcuni dintorni presso Firenze* (Florence, 1850), 156. So, when Alberti ten years later made testamentary provision that the "sacrestia ecclesiae sancti Miniatis ad Montem de prope Florentiam compleatur et compleri et perfici debeant picturis, armariis, coro, fenestra vitrea, altari et aliis necessariis" (the sacristy of San Miniato al Monte of Florence should be completed and perfected with paintings, cupboards, a choir stall, stained glass window, an altar, and all other necessary things), this decoration might already have been planned and perhaps even in part realized. Ada Labriola and Federica Baldini accepted the provenance of the Gallery's panels from the sacristy of San Miniato in Ada Labriola, "La decorazione pittorica," in *L'Oratorio di Santa Caterina: Osservazioni storico-critiche in occasione del restauro*, ed. Maurizio De Vita (Florence, 1998), 52; Federica Baldini, in *L'Oratorio di Santa Caterina all'Antella e i suoi pittori*, ed. Angelo Tartuferi (Florence, 2009), 159.

[11] See Stefan Weppelmann, *Spinello Aretino und die toskanische Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Florence, 2003), 381.

[12] See Stefan Weppelmann, *Spinello Aretino und die toskanische Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Florence, 2003), 381.

[13] Jacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2 vols. (Florence, 1998), 2:1205.

[14] See "Regesto dell'Abbazia fiorentina di San Miniato," *La Graticola* 4 (1976): 117–135. See Stefan Weppelmann, *Spinello Aretino und die toskanische Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Florence, 2003), 381.

[15] National Gallery of Art, *Preliminary Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture* (Washington, DC, 1941), 69; Duveen Brothers, *Duveen Pictures in*

Public Collections of America (New York, 1941), nos. 24–25.

[16] Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), 118.

[17] Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 21–26.

[18] Even the dating of this work, for the most part identified with the altarpiece for which Agnolo was paid between 1394 and 1396, has been questioned. What is certain is that payments were made to Agnolo during those years for "la tavola di San Miniato a Monte." In 1396, however, because the artist had died in the meantime, his brother Zanobi received the balance; see Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 65, 67. No doubt correctly, art historians generally have assumed that the documents refer to the altarpiece placed on the altar of the crucifix of Saint Giovanni Gualberto in San Miniato, which has come down to us with its components rearranged. Originally, the panels of the polyptych representing the stories of Christ and full-length figures of Saint Giovanni Gualberto and Saint Minias formed an ensemble that must have contained at the center the much-venerated crucifix, which, according to legend, had spoken to Saint Giovanni Gualberto. When the crucifix was transferred to the Vallombrosans of Santa Trinita in Florence in 1671, the painted panels were rearranged in such a way as to fill the gap created by its removal. Though Cole (1977, 51–56) contested the identification of the existing altarpiece of the crucifix of Saint Giovanni Gualberto with that cited in the documents, his opinion met with little support. Cole argued instead that the documented painting should be identified with the triptych of the Contini-Bonacossi bequest now in the Uffizi, Florence. But this latter painting has existed in its present form only since the 1930s, when the dispersed panels of two different altarpieces were arbitrarily cobbled together during an unscrupulous restoration; cf. Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 51–56; Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), 66, 216 n. 85, 298; Gaudenz Freuler, ed., *Manifestatori delle cose miracolose: Arte italiana del '300 e '400 da collezioni in Svizzera e nel Liechtenstein* (Einsiedeln, 1991), 204; Christoph Merzenich, *Vom Schreinerwerk zum Gemälde: Florentiner Altarwerke der ersten Hälfte des Quattrocento* (Berlin, 2001), 228. Freuler, however, believed that at least the two laterals of the Contini-Bonacossi polyptych formed part of the altarpiece documented in 1394–1396.

[19] Among the punch marks used by Agnolo, Erling Skaug (1994) especially observed two that can be identified in Taddeo Gaddi's triptych dated 1334, now in the Staatlichen Museen of Berlin. Skaug inserted the National Gallery of Art painting in the late phase of Agnolo Gaddi. Both the investigations of Mojmir S. Frinta (1998) and the later analysis of Skaug himself (2004) largely concurred, however, in suggesting that the very same punches were used throughout the artist's career. See Erling S. Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto*

to Fra Angelico: Attribution, Chronology, and Workshop Relationships in Tuscan Panel Painting with Particular Consideration to Florence, c. 1330–1430, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1994), 1:260–264; 2: punch chart 8.2; Mojmir Svatopluk Frinta, *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting* (Prague, 1998), 100, 244, 283, 290, 322, 481; Erling S. Skaug, "Towards a Reconstruction of the Santa Maria degli Angeli Altarpiece of 1388: Agnolo Gaddi and Lorenzo Monaco?" *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 48 (2004): 245, 254–255. Some of the punch marks found in the Washington triptych also appear in the later San Miniato altarpiece, documented in 1394–1396 (on which see note 18 above), while others had already been used in *Coronation of the Virgin* in the London National Gallery, generally considered an early work by the artist.

[20] Osvald Sirén, "Addenda und Errata in meinem Giottino-Buch," *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 1 (1908): 1122–1123, published the central panel with an attribution to Agnolo Gaddi and stated its present whereabouts as the Masi collection in Capannoli (Pisa). It is very probable, therefore, that the painting has a provenance either from Pisa or from Capannoli itself, a spa (at present a resort) in the district of Pisa that used to belong to Piero Gambacorti, the governor of Pisa, who owned a castle there; see Emanuele Repetti, *Dizionario geografico, fisico, storico della Toscana, contenente la descrizione di tutti i luoghi del Granducato, Ducato di Lucca, Garfagnana e Lunigiana*, 11 vols. (Florence, 1833–1849), 1:452. The provenance of the laterals now attached to this painting is unknown; all we know is that in 1952 they were the property of Alessandro Contini-Bonacossi, who, according to Cole, had purchased them in Rome prior to 1931. Cf. George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art*, vol. 1, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), 747–748; Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 76. Contini then commissioned special frames to be made for them, similar to the original frame of the Madonna from Capannoli. Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), 298, dated the latter to c. 1380–1385, while Cole, as we have seen, considered the recomposed triptych to be genuine and associated it with the two documents of 1394–1396. Caterina Caneva, in *Gli Uffizi: Catalogo generale*, 2nd ed. (Florence, 1980), 277, dated the execution of the whole altarpiece to 1375–1380; Ada Labriola, "Gaddi, Agnolo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 82 vols. (Rome, 1998), 51:146, to the 1380s; while Sonia Chiodo, "Gaddi, Agnolo," in*Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, ed. Günter Meißner, 87 vols. (Munich, 2005), 47:113, mentioned it as a "late work."

[21] Boskovits's proposal (1975, 117, 296) to attribute the Borgo San Lorenzo Madonna to Agnolo and to date it to 1380–1385 has in substance been accepted by the more recent literature; cf. Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura*

fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400 (Florence, 1975), 117, 296; Erling S. Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico: Attribution, Chronology, and Workshop Relationships in Tuscan Panel Painting with Particular Consideration to Florence, c. 1330–1430*, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1994), 1:261; Maria Matilde Simari, "Il Mugello," in *Il Mugello, la Valdisieve e la Romagna fiorentina*, ed. Cristina Acidini and Anna Benvenuti Papi (Milan, 2000), 56. A modern (nineteenth- or twentieth-century) copy of this painting, attributed to Agnolo himself, was with Wildenstein & Co. in New York in 1954; see Dorothy C. Shorr, *The Christ Child in Devotional Images in Italy during the XIV Century* (New York, 1954), 114.

[22] The predella of the painting, now in the Louvre, Paris, has been recognized as that formerly in the Nobili chapel at Santa Maria degli Angeli and dated to 1387–1388 on the basis of information derived from the sources by Hans Dietrich Gronau, "The Earliest Works of Lorenzo Monaco, 2," *The Burlington Magazine* 92, no. 569 (1950): 217–222. Federico Zeri cautiously conjectured that the predella belonged to the triptych now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, and Bruce Cole more firmly accepted this proposal. See Federico Zeri, "Investigations into the Early Period of Lorenzo Monaco, 1," *The Burlington Magazine* 106 (1964): 554–558; Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 75, 84–87. For a recent résumé of the problems relating to a reconstruction of the altarpiece, see Erling S. Skaug, "Note sulle decorazione a punzone e i dipinti su tavola di Lorenzo Monaco," in *Lorenzo Monaco: Dalla tradizione giottesca al Rinascimento*, ed. Angelo Tartuferi and Daniela Parenti (Florence, 2006), 106–110; see also note 23 below.

[23] The painting, which measures 150 × 87 cm, was illustrated in *Servizio per le ricerche delle opere rubate, Bollettino* 17 (1994): 60, published by the special police unit of the Carabinieri devoted to the recovery of stolen works of art, formerly with an attribution to Agnolo Gaddi. Later, the reported theft of the painting was shown to be mistaken, and the work was republished by Gaudenz Freuler, "Gli inizi di Lorenzo Monaco miniatore," in *Lorenzo Monaco: Dalla tradizione giottesca al Rinascimento*, ed. Angelo Tartuferi and Daniela Parenti (Florence, 2006), 80, with the same attribution. The variety of the angels' poses, the softness of the modeling, and the motif of angels supporting the crown over Mary's head (which recurs in paintings of Gaddi's late phase) in any case suggest a late dating, probably in the last decade of the century.

[24] Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, no. 1039; see Bruce Cole, Agnolo Gaddi (Oxford, 1977), 76, 84–87. Attributed to the school of Agnolo Gaddi by Osvald Sirén,*Don Lorenzo Monaco* (Strasbourg, 1905), 41, it was reinstated as an autograph work by Gaddi himself by Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and their Works with an Index of Places* (Oxford, 1932), 213. For the lost inscriptions, see Dillian Gordon, *The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings, National Gallery*

Catalogues (London, 2003), 197 n. 3.

[25] See Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 78–79, and, concerning the will of Michele Castellani, 61, doc. 7. Attributed by Vasari and by much of the later art-historical literature to Gherardo Starnina, the mural paintings in the chapel were attributed by Berenson to Agnolo Gaddi, at least "in great part." See Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and Their Works with an Index of Places* (Oxford, 1932), 213. More recent studies have in general accepted this view, though some art historians believe that they detect the hand of various assistants of Agnolo in the cycle. Cole (1977, 14–15) thought that "three masters" worked in the chapel with some degree of autonomy: the anonymous master of the stories of Saints Nicholas and Anthony, the equally anonymous master of the scenes from the life of the Baptist, and Agnolo Gaddi himself, who, Cole argued, executed part of the lunette of Zacharias and the stories of Saint John the Evangelist.

[26] The Borgo San Lorenzo panel was extensively retouched in 1864 and then restored c. 1920; see Francesco Niccolai, *Mugello e Val di Sieve: Guida topografica storico-artistica illustrata* (Borgo S. Lorenzo, 1914), 430. Since then it has been subjected to at least two other restorations. The alterations in the appearance of the painting following these treatments are documented in photographs nos. 886, 68589, and 93950 of the Soprintendenza in Florence.

[27] The close resemblance between the passage with the blessing Christ child seated on his mother's lap and the fresco by Agnolo Gaddi now in the Museo di Pittura Murale in Prato suggests that the two paintings are close in date, presumably contemporary with the painter's documented activity in Prato in the years 1391–1394. For the fresco in Prato, see Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), fig. 260; for the documents in question, see Giuseppe Poggi, "Appunti d'archivio: La Cappella del Sacro Cingolo nel Duomo di Prato e gli affreschi di Agnolo Gaddi,"*Rivista d'arte* 14 (1932): 355–376; Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 63–65.

[28] We have no secure documentary evidence for the dating of the frescoes in question. Roberto Salvini, *L'arte di Agnolo Gaddi*(Florence, 1936), 31–85, considered them to predate the decoration of the Castellani chapel, but the more recent art historical literature in general indicates 1387 as the *terminus ante quem* for the execution of the cycle; Sonia Chiodo, "Gaddi, Agnolo," in*Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, ed. Günter Meißner, 87 vols. (Munich, 2005), 47:113. The fact is that while Benedetto degli Alberti in his testament dictated in 1377 indicated Santa Croce (where his family had the patronage of the *cappella maggiore*) as the place where he wished to be buried, he made no mention of the realization of the frescoes in this chapel in the codicil added to his will ten

years later, when he made testamentary provision for the funding of other artistic enterprises; for the text of the codicil, which also cites the relevant passage from the testament of 1377, see Luigi Passerini, ed., *Gli Alberti di Firenze: Genealogia, storia e documenti*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1869), 2:186–194. It seems logical to infer from this evidence that at the time the codicil was added the mural decoration of the chapel had already been finished and that everything was ready for Benedetto's burial. In my view, however, the stylistic evidence suggests a later, or more protracted, date for the very demanding enterprise of frescoing the chapel, which could have begun c. 1385 but could well have been prolonged for years due to the political setbacks that struck the family. Accordingly, the present writer suggests the date 1385–1390; Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370–1400* (Florence, 1975), 297; and Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 21–27, c. 1388–1393. In dating the frescoes in the choir, various stylistic features should be borne in mind: the more complex and crowded compositions; the more elaborate language of gesture; the numerous genre details; and the tendency towards a softening of the forms, modeled with light tonal passages of chiaroscuro. These features all suggest that the cycle of the *cappella maggiore* in Santa Croce is stylistically more advanced than the decoration of the Castellani chapel (executed, as we have seen, sometime after 1383), but no doubt antecedent to the frescoes in the Cappella della Cintola in Prato Cathedral, for which the painter received payments in 1392–1394. See Giuseppe Poggi, "Appunti d'archivio: La Cappella del Sacro Cingolo nel Duomo di Prato e gli affreschi di Agnolo Gaddi," *Rivista d'arte* 14 (1932): 363–369.

[29] Clowes collection, Indianapolis Museum of Art: Ian Fraser et al., *A Catalogue of the Clowes Collection*, Indianapolis Museum of Art Bulletin (Indianapolis, 1973), 6. Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford, 1977), 27, rightly observed the "very close stylistic and positional relationship with the Washington saints," deducing from this affinity that "both works were in the artist's shop at the same time." Perhaps it would be permissible to speak of the reuse of the same model employed for the Washington triptych in another similar and slightly later triptych, of which the panels now in Indianapolis formed part. I suspect, however, that the Indianapolis panels belonged to the triptych of the Nobili chapel in Santa Maria degli Angeli, the Florentine church of the Camaldolese order (see notes 21 and 23 above). In fact, the lost framing pilasters of the triptych now in Berlin could have contained, to judge from their measurements, two of the Indianapolis panels superimposed on each side. It is also worth pointing out that the paintings in the American museum come—like the Berlin triptych—from the Solly collection, and that the white habit with which Saint Benedict and the other monk immersed in reading are portrayed would have been very suitable to adorn a chapel in a church belonging to the Camaldolese order (a reformed branch of the Benedictines). Laurence Kanter informs me that he is about to publish

further evidence for identifying the Indianapolis saints and their counterparts at the University of Gottingen as the front and lateral faces of the framing pilasters of the Nobili altarpiece, together with the missing pilaster base from the altarpiece predella.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This panel, along with its companions *Saint Andrew and Saint Benedict with the Archangel Gabriel [left panel]* and *Saint Bernard and Saint Catherine of Alexandria with the Virgin of the Annunciation [right panel]*, are formed from vertically oriented poplar planks.[1] *Saint Andrew and Saint Benedict* and *Madonna and Child Enthroned* are formed of three vertical planks each, with narrower strips of wood flanking the central plank, while *Saint Bernard and Saint Catherine* is formed of two boards of equal width, joined vertically between the two saints. The main panels of the altarpiece are 4 to 4.5 cm thick; the frame supplies an additional thickness of 2.7 to 2.9 cm for the flat molding and 2.3 cm for the dentil molding. On the reverse, the panels are reinforced with modern horizontal battens set into grooves. The two absent original battens, spanning all three panels, were placed along the bottom and just below the base of the gabled tops of each panel, as is clear from the remains of large nails used to attach them that are visible in the x-radiographs. The frame, which consists of an additional plank of wood that completely covers the gable portion of the panels, contains *pastiglia* decoration. The columns dividing the central and lateral panels and flanking the outer edge of the laterals are missing, as well as the freestanding cusped arches originally lining the ogival arches of the panels. The wooden support is covered by a gesso ground spread over a fabric interlayer. Incised lines in the gesso outline the figures and the fold lines in the drapery. The gold ground was applied over a red bole preparation. The halos are decorated by stamped and engraved motifs as well as stippling.

Outlines of areas to be painted and drapery fold lines were further delineated with brushed underdrawing, which is visible with infrared reflectography.[2] The paint is mostly egg tempera, but select pigments are bound with glue.[3] Flesh areas are painted with the traditional underlayer of green. The pattern of the orientalizing carpet on which the figures stand was transferred from a stencil to the paint applied over burnished gold.[4] The wings of the seraphim are decorated using *sgraffito* to reveal the gold underlayer. The edges of the figures' robes are decorated with mordant gilding.

All three panels retain their original thickness. This one has two major splits, one running from the lower edge into the mantle of the Virgin, the other diagonally across the wing of the uppermost right-hand angel. *Saint Andrew and Saint Benedict* has cracks caused by the removal of the original intermediate frame. *Saint Bernard and Saint Catherine* has a split at the lower edge and another in the frame to the left of and above the Virgin Annunciate in the gable medallion. Worm tunneling is present in all three panels, but it is most extensive in the side planks of *Saint Andrew and Saint Benedict* and *Madonna and Child Enthroned* as well as in the gables of all three panels. There is minor abrasion of the paint film in the faces and hands, but otherwise the painted surface is in fine condition. The red lakes of the robes of Saint Catherine, the kneeling angels, and the Christ child have faded slightly, and the Virgin's blue robe is worn. The altarpiece underwent conservation treatment between 1988 and 1991,[5] in the course of which the now lost intermediate columns between the three panels were reconstructed.[6] Also during this treatment, some of the fold lines in the Virgin's robe were recreated.

TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] The NGA scientific research department analyzed cross-sections of the panel. The wood of the panel was identified as poplar and the integral frame as linden (*tiglio*). A nonoriginal strip along the bottom was identified as spruce (see report dated November 22, 1990, in NGA conservation files).

[2] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Kodak 310-21X PtSi camera.

[3] The NGA scientific research department analyzed the paint using amino acid analysis in conjunction with high-performance liquid chromatography, cross-sections, and gas chromatography in conjunction with mass spectrometry, and identified both egg and glue binders (see reports dated August 23, 1989, and November 22, 1991, in NGA conservation files).

[4] Report dated January 9, 1989, in NGA conservation files. Brigitte Klesse pointed out that the same pattern, with minor modifications, was also used in Gaddi's triptych now in the Berlin gallery (no. 1039); see Brigitte Klesse,*Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Bern, 1967), 316.

[5] At the time of this treatment, the NGA scientific research department analyzed the painting using x-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF), amino acid analysis in conjunction with high performance liquid chromatography, gas chromatography in conjunction with mass-spectrometry, x-ray

diffraction, and microscopy of cross-sections (see reports dated February 13, 1989; January 23, 1990; November 22, 1991; August 6, 1990; August 22, 1990; October 17, 1990; August 2, 1991; August 23, 1989; and November 22, 1990, in NGA conservation files).

[6] The reconstruction was based on marks on the panel as well as research into comparable structures still intact. See Mary B. Bustin, "Recalling the Past: Evidence for the Original Construction of Madonna Enthroned with Saints and Angels by Agnolo Gaddi," *Studies in the History of Art: Conservation Research*57 (1996–1997): 35–65. The altarpiece must have been treated prior to 1988, probably in the first half of the twentieth century, because the crockets on the top side of the frame, which are visible in Lionello Venturi's reproduction, had already disappeared prior to the 1988 treatment. Cf. Lionello Venturi, *Pitture italiane in America* (Milan, 1931), no. 52; Lionello Venturi, *Italian Paintings in America*, trans. Countess Vanden Heuvel and Charles Marriott, 3 vols. (New York and Milan, 1933), 1: no. 63.

PROVENANCE

Probably in the sacristy of the church of San Miniato al Monte, Florence, from whence the triptych may have been removed shortly after 1830.[1] Bertram Ashburnham [1797-1878], 4th earl of Ashburnham, Ashburnham Place, Battle, Sussex;[2] by inheritance to his son, Bertram Ashburnham [1840-1913], 5th earl of Ashburnham, Ashburnham Place; by inheritance to his daughter, Lady Mary Catherine Charlotte Ashburnham [1890-1953], Ashburnham Place; (Robert Langton Douglas, London);[3] purchased 19 June 1919 by(Duveen Brothers, Inc., London, New York, and Paris);[4] sold 15 December 1936 to The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh;[5] gift 1937 to NGA.

[1] Miklós Boskovits, *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370-1400*, Florence, 1975: 118-121, proposed this provenance. The Alberti family were patrons of the church, and Benedetto di Nerozzo Alberti left funds for its decoration in a codicil dated 1387 that was appended to his will of 1377 (now lost and known only from a seventeenth-century abstract); see Luigi Passerini, *Gli Alberti di Firenze. Genealogia, storia e documenti*, Florence, 1869: 2:187. Three of the four saints depicted in the side panels are associated with the Alberti family, providing further argument in support of the proposed provenance. Although in 1975 Boskovits erroneously asserted that Saint John Gualbert was represented in the altarpiece to

the right of the Virgin, he corrected this in the NGA systematic catalogue by identifying the saint instead as Bernard of Clairvaux, the patron saint of Benedetto Alberti's son Bernardo, who in his will dated 1389 left money for masses to be celebrated annually for his soul in the family chapel in San Miniato, which had evidently already been consecrated (see Stefan Weppelmann, *Spinello Aretino*, Florence, 2003: 381). The representation of Saint Andrew, who was the patron saint of a predeceased son of Benedetto Albert also links the altarpiece to the sacristy of San Miniato, and Catherine of Alexandria, shown standing on a broken wheel, was evidently much venerated in the Alberti family. In Benedetto's will he bequeathed money for the decoration of an oratory near Florence (Santa Caterina dell'Antella) dedicated to Catherine, and his son, Bernardo, wished to build a monastery and a church in her honor (see Weppelmann 2003).

Although this provenance remains a hypothesis, it still seems a quite plausible one that, if correct, would provide the certainty that by 1830 the altarpiece was still on the altar of the sacristy. An altarpiece can apparently be seen still in place in a sketch of the sacristy's altar wall made in that year by Christoph Roller (1805-1858), in his *Tagebuch einer italienschen Reise* (Burgdorfer Heimatsmuseum, Burgdorf, Switzerland). Unfortunately, the sketch, kindly brought to the attention of Miklós Boskovits by Stefan Weppelmann, is very small and not sufficient for identifying the Gallery's painting. What may be said for certain is only that an altarpiece composed of five panels stood on the altar of the sacristy of San Miniato in 1830, but by 1836 this altarpiece was no longer there (Weppelmann 2003, 184). It was removed and sold, presumably by the Pia Opera degli Esercizi Spirituali, which had owned the furniture and decorations of the church since 1820; see "Regesto dell' Abbazia florentina di S. Miniato," *La Graticola* 4 (1976): 117-135.

[2] The collection, formed originally by George, 3rd earl of Ashburnham, was enlarged by his son, Bertram, after whose death no further paintings were added. See *The Ashburnham Collections. Part I. Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings ...*, Sotheby's, London, sale of 24 June 1953: 3-4.

[3] According to Denis Sutton ("Robert Langton Douglas. Part III," *Apollo* 109 (1979): 452, Douglas was in contact with the Ashburnham family around 1919. See also letter from Douglas to Fowles dated 1 May 1941, Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los

Angeles: box 244, reel 299.

[4] Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 422. The painting was first entered in the Duveen "X-Book" (number X 149) as by Starnina, but this was crossed out and replaced with the attribution "Agnelo [*sic*] Gaddi."

[5] The original Duveen Brothers invoice is in the Records of The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Subject Files, Box 2, Gallery Archives, NGA; copy in NGA curatorial files. The painting is listed as by Gherardo Starnina, influenced by Agnolo Gaddi, with the additional note that Bernard Berenson gave the painting to Gaddi.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1933 Italian Paintings of the XIV to XVI Century, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1933, no. 11, repro., as Altarpiece by Gherardo Starnina.

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