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

Lippo Memmi
Sienese, active 1317/1347

Saint John the Baptist

probably c. 1325

tempera on panel
painted surface (incised line to incised line): 88.7 × 42.2 cm (34 15/16 × 16 5/8 in.)
painted surface (original panel): 92.5 × 44 cm (36 7/16 × 17 5/16 in.)
overall: 94.3 × 45.3 cm (37 1/8 × 17 13/16 in.)
framed: 99.1 x 48.3 x 6 cm (39 x 19 x 2 3/8 in.)
Inscription: on the saint's scroll: ECCE AGNUS DEI.ECCE Q[UI TOLLIT PECCATUM MUNDI] (Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who [taketh away the sins of the world]; from John 1:29)
Samuel H. Kress Collection 1939.1.291

ENTRY

The panel presents the Baptist according to the traditional iconography:[1] with shaggy hair and beard, camel-skin tunic, prophetic scroll in his left hand, and right hand extended in blessing in the oriental fashion.[2] It is evidently the fragment of a polyptych whose style, format, and proportions suggest that it was executed in the circle of the Sienese master Simone Martini (Sienese, active from 1315; died 1344) around 1320–1330.[3] In the 1930s, Evelyn Sandberg-Vavalà concluded that the painting formed part of the same polyptych to which the panel of Saint Peter [fig. 1] in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and that of Saint Paul [fig. 2] in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York belonged. She added to these the Madonna and Child [fig. 3] in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.[4] Some years later, Helen Comstock linked the panel being discussed here with another of Saint John the Evangelist [fig. 4], now in the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, and with those of Saints Louis of Toulouse [fig. 5] and Francis [fig. 6] in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena.[5] At this point, the reconstruction of the dismantled altarpiece, consisting of seven panels, might have seemed complete. But not all art historians accepted it: some detected sufficient stylistic disparities between its separate components to cast doubt on their common origin. For example, Klara Steinweg (1956) considered the Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist and Saints Peter and Paul to be parts of two different polyptychs, the second of which might be identified, she

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proposed, with that recorded by Giorgio Vasari (Florentine, 1511 - 1574) as a work by Lippo Memmi in the church of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno in Pisa.[6] Gertrude Coor (1961) also found this hypothesis attractive.[7] Though her main interest was the stylistic problems relating to the seven panels now dispersed among various museums, she cogently pointed out that the provenance of the two panels now in Siena, from Colle Val d'Elsa, rendered improbable the identification of the complex with the one in Pisa described by Vasari. Coor later developed her reconstruction of the polyptych by observing that the original frame that has survived on the panels in New Haven and Siena presupposed the existence of a second tier of smaller panels above the central Madonna and Child and the six lateral saints. In her view, a bust of Christ in the Musée de la Chartreuse in Douai and the two saints of the Vallombrosan Order in the Lindenau-Museum in Altenburg (Germany) could have formed part of this upper register.[8] Cristina De Benedictis (1974) proposed an alternative reconstruction:[9] the panel in Washington, together with those in Berlin, New Haven, New York, and Paris, formed part of a five-part complex formerly in the church of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno in Pisa. This altarpiece, in her view, likely would have been furnished with a predella consisting of a series of busts of apostles, now divided among the National Gallery of Art and other collections.[10] But she argued that the panels of Saint Francis and Saint Louis now in the Pinacoteca in Siena could not have formed part of it.

The hypothesis that has met with most support and that probably comes closer to the truth was formulated by Michael Mallory (1974, 1975) and by Marianne Lonjon (cited in Laclotte 1978).[11] Both accepted the reconstruction of the main register of the complex as a heptaptych with a provenance from Colle Val d'Elsa. While not excluding the possibility that the above-cited busts of apostles might have belonged to the predella of the same complex, they maintained that the upper register was formed not by the panels in Altenburg and Douai but by the half-length figures of Mary Magdalene [fig. 7] in the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence; Saint Clare [fig. 8] in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Saint Agnes [fig. 9] and Saint Anthony [fig. 10] in the Frick Art Museum in Pittsburgh; and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary [fig. 11] in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli in Milan.[12] An additional panel of the gable zone, representing a half-length Saint Augustine [fig. 12] and now belonging to the Salini collection, Asciano, has been identified in more recent years.[13] What is still lacking from the complex reconstructed in this way [fig. 13] (see also *Reconstruction*) is the central panel of the upper register. The central panel of the main register also remains in dispute, since the Madonna now in Berlin shows some physical discrepancies from the six lateral saints.[14] Finally,

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in 1995, Alessandro Bagnoli advanced convincing arguments to trace the origin of this altarpiece back to the church of San Francesco in San Gimignano.[15]

As for the authorship of the painting in the Gallery, Raimond van Marle immediately discarded the attribution to Taddeo di Bartolo proposed in the sale catalog (1932) in favor of Simone Martini.[16] The panel was published under Simone's name by van Marle (1934), although in an expertise written as the 1934 volume was in press, presumably produced for the art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, van Marle had already suggested this attribution.[17] Various other art historians expressed similar opinions in handwritten expertises: Bernard Berenson, Giuseppe Fiocco, Roberto Longhi, Wilhelm Suida, and Adolfo Venturi.[18] The attribution to Simone was repeated by Helen Comstock (1939), Suida (1940), Robert Langton Douglas (in *Duveen Pictures* 1941), George Martin Richter (1941), and Alfred M. Frankfurter (1944).[19] The panel continued to bear an attribution to Simone in the catalogs of the Gallery until 1959. However, already in the 1930s, some authors expressed doubts, and some proposed an alternative attribution to Lippo Memmi (Simone's brother-in-law). Hermann Beenken (1935) rejected Simone Martini's authorship.[20] Guglielmo Matthiae (1935) associated the painting with Lippo Memmi, while in a private communication Robert Langton Douglas firmly supported an attribution to Lippo.[21] For his part, F. Mason Perkins referred the painting to a "pupil or follower of Simone Martini."[22] Richard Offner, in a draft review of the exhibition of Italian primitives at the Gallery, never published, concluded his comment on the painting by pointing out, "Lippo's style commits the Baptist to his authorship."[23] Klara Steinweg (1956), in turn, classified the painting as "Simonesque"; Maria Cristina Gozzoli (1970) and Sebastiana Delogu Ventroni (1972) classified it as a work by Simone's shop.[24] Giovanni Previtali (1985) felt that he could not wholly reject Simone's personal involvement: referring to the *Saint John the Baptist* being discussed here and its companion panels, he asked, "Is it really possible wholly to exclude Simone's intervention from these extraordinary quintessences of aristocratic deportment and dignified elegance?"[25] Another hypothesis that has been proposed is that the polyptych in question is the collaborative work of various painters active in Lippo's shop, including the mythical "Barna."[26] The date of the painting is also contested: proposals fluctuate between 1315 and 1335, even though more recent studies in general accept its execution in the 1320s.[27]

The uncertainties about the attribution and date of *Saint John the Baptist* depend in large measure on art historians' different judgments about the extent of Lippo

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Memmi's oeuvre and of its stylistic autonomy. Various scholars have wondered whether the changes that can be observed in the paintings attributed to him are indicative of the master's stylistic development, or of the intervention of particularly talented assistants, such as Lippo's brother Tederico, or others. It seems very unlikely, however, that the proportions of the figures painted in Lippo's shop could have been elongated, the drawing given added complexity of rhythm, and the modeling softened depending on the relative talents and skills of the artist's various collaborators. The starting point for a dispassionate consideration of the question must be the presupposition, apparently banal (though often placed in doubt), that the signed works, unless proof to the contrary is forthcoming, imply that the work in question is substantially an autograph of the artist who signed it.[28] The few secure dates at our disposal regarding the output of the two brothers-in-law, Lippo Memmi and Simone Martini, who worked in close contact at least since the 1320s, would suggest that although there is admittedly a substantial corollary between their styles, their individual characteristics never became interchangeable. I think it is right to maintain, therefore, that the polyptych of which the Washington Baptist formed part, with its slender and aristocratic figures of meditative poise and restrained movements, should be inserted in Lippo's catalog in a phase undoubtedly subsequent to his fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico in San Gimignano (1317), but preceding the phase in which the artist signed and dated (1333) the ascetic and nervous figure of the Baptist formerly in the Golovin collection in New York, which originally formed a diptych together with the signed Madonna (no. 1081) in Berlin. In these panels, the amplitude of gold ground not occupied by figures, the pointed arch upper termination, and the pursuit of preciosity in the elaboration of the decorative elements, especially in the prominent bands of punched ornament, testify to an advanced stage in the artist's development.[29] The external profiling of the three panels that still retain their original frame, the trapezoidal termination above the inscribed Gothic arch, and the slender pinnacles of the upper register all are features that appear more modern than those of the polyptych from the church of San Niccolò at Casciana Alta, near Pisa. In the latter, undoubtedly painted after 1323,[30] the individual panels of the altarpiece have squatter proportions and an upper termination in the form of a trilobate round arch. Moreover, the panels with rectangular external profile are surmounted by triangular gables, reviving in simplified form the type of Simone's Pisan polyptych dating to 1319/1320. From a strictly stylistic point of view, various elements suggest a dating of the Casciana Alta complex after the altarpiece with the *Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas* in the church of Santa Caterina in Pisa, a

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work probably realized shortly after the saint's canonization in 1323.[31] However prestigious a commission it may have been, that work is characterized by a more summary modeling, a more emphatic use of an incisive contour line, and a less subtle hand in exploiting soft chiaroscuro effects in modeling the forms, compared to the panels discussed here.[32]

One of Lippo's paintings for which a plausible date is available is the polyptych of 1325 formerly over the high altar of the church of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno in Pisa, described by Vasari in his *vita* of Simone and now divided among the museums of Altenburg, Douai, Palermo (Galleria Nazionale), and Pisa. This is in fact the work by Lippo that approaches most closely in style the polyptych of which our Baptist originally formed part.[33]

Despite the uncertainties that various scholars express both about the name of the artist and about its date, transmitted by the sources but often placed in doubt, it can be said with some confidence, in the light of our present-day knowledge of Trecento painting in Siena, that both Lippo's signature and the year of execution of the Pisan polyptych are entirely plausible. Unfortunately, because of the loss of the original frames and the arbitrary alterations to the external profiling of the main panels of this altarpiece, typological comparison with the San Gimignano polyptych is no longer feasible. All we can say is that the airy composition of the individual panels and the use, at least in the gabled ones, of the pointed arch motif with inscribed trefoil, suggest their dating to the same period. A further, albeit vague, piece of evidence of their chronological proximity might be the presence of the same punched motif in both the Washington panel [fig. 14] and the panel of Saint Peter now in Palermo.[34] But it is above all the accomplished drawing, especially evident in the harmonious curvilinear rhythms of the contours; the self-assured elegance of the poses; and the softness of the modeling that testify that the two complexes were executed in the same phase of Lippo's art. Sufficient evidence does not exist to establish with certainty whether the one polyptych takes precedence over the other in date, even though I am inclined to think that the altarpiece painted for the Franciscans in San Gimignano is somewhat later than the other, to which the sources attach the date 1325. One thing is certain: the Washington *Saint John the Baptist* was painted in the artist's full maturity, the phase in which his output reached its highest levels. That explains, even if it cannot justify, the now obsolete attribution to Simone Martini.

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Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011)

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Peter*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY. Photographer: Gérard Blot

fig. 2 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Paul*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, gold ground, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Coudert Brothers, 1888

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fig. 3 Lippo Memmi, *Madonna and Child*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Image: bpk, Berlin/Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin/Joerg P. Anders/Art Resource, NY

fig. 4 Lippo Memmi, *Saint John the Evangelist*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Yale University Art Gallery, Bequest of Maitland F. Griggs, B. A. 1896. Image: Yale University Art Gallery

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fig. 5 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Francis*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena. Image courtesy of the Ministerio per i Beni e le Attività Culturali

fig. 6 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

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fig. 7 Lippo Memmi, *Mary Magdalene*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Museum Appropriation Fund 21.250. Image: Erik Gould, courtesy of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence

fig. 8 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Clare*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Irma N. Straus, 1964

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fig. 9 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Agnes*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Frick Art and Historical Center, Pittsburgh

fig. 10 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Anthony*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Frick Art and Historical Center, Pittsburgh

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fig. 11 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Museo Poldo Pezzoli, Milan. Image: Fondazione Artistica Poldo Pezzoli ""Onlus""

fig. 12 Lippo Memmi, *Saint Augustine*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, Salini collection, Castello di Gallico, Asciano, Siena

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fig. 13 Reconstruction of a dispersed polyptych by Lippo Memmi. Bottom tier: a. *Saint Louis of Toulouse* (fig. 6); b. *Saint Paul* (fig. 2); c. *Saint John the Baptist*; d. *Madonna and Child* (fig. 3); e. *Saint John the Evangelist* (fig. 4); f. *Saint Peter* (fig. 1); g. *Saint Francis* (fig. 5). Upper tier: h. *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary* (fig. 11); i. *Saint Augustine* (fig. 12); j. *Mary Magdalene* (fig. 7); k. *Saint Anthony* (fig. 10); l. *Saint Clare* (fig. 8); m. *Saint Agnes* (fig. 9)

fig. 14 Detail of halo, Lippo Memmi, *Saint John the Baptist*, probably c. 1325, tempera on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

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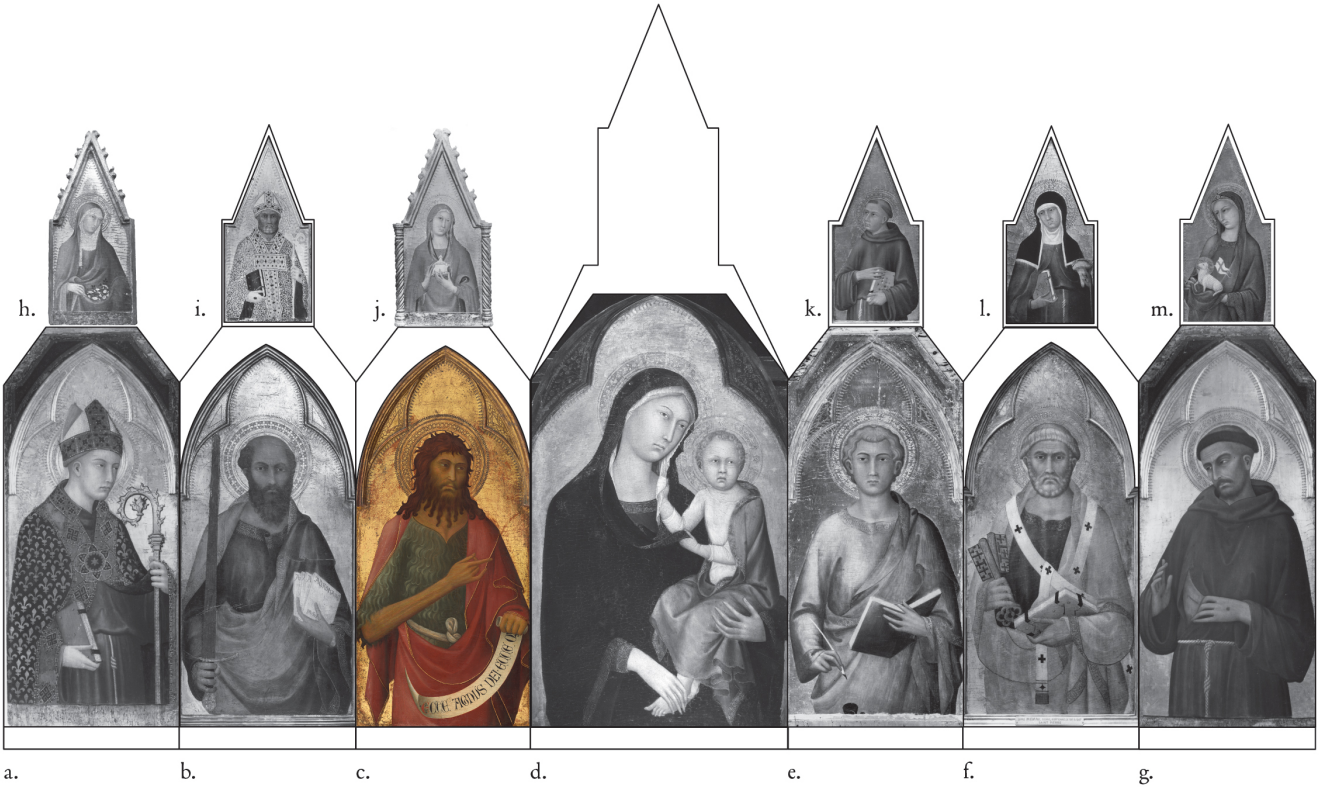
RECONSTRUCTION

Click on any panel in the altarpiece reconstruction below to see an enlarged version of the image. Color reproductions in the reconstruction indicate panels in the National Gallery of Art collection.



Reconstruction of a dispersed polyptych by Lippo Memmi.

Bottom tier:
a. *Saint Louis of Toulouse* (Entry fig. 6)
b. *Saint Paul* (Entry fig. 2)
c. *Saint John the Baptist*
d. *Madonna and Child* (Entry fig. 3)
e. *Saint John the Evangelist* (Entry fig. 4)
f. *Saint Peter* (Entry fig. 1)
g. *Saint Francis* (Entry fig. 5)

Upper tier:
h. *Saint Elizabeth of Hungary* (Entry fig. 11)
i. *Saint Augustine* (Entry fig. 12)
j. *Mary Magdalene* (Entry fig. 7)
k. *Saint Anthony* (Entry fig. 10)
l. *Saint Clare* (Entry fig. 8)
m. *Saint Agnes* (Entry fig. 9)

NOTES

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[1] See George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art*, vol. 1, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), 549–550; Alexandre Masseron, *Saint Jean Baptiste dans l'art* (Paris, 1957).

[2] The blessing gesture used in the Greek Church is performed with the forefinger, ring finger, and little finger extended or, as in Lippo's panel, with thumb, forefinger, and little finger extended. See E. Fehrenbach, "Bénir (manière de)," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, 15 vols. (Paris, 1925), 2, pt. 1:746–758.

[3] On the formats of Sienese polyptychs, and in particular of Simone in the period indicated, cf. Joanna Cannon, "Simone Martini, the Dominicans and the Early Sienese Polyptych," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 45 (1982): 69–93.

[4] Musée du Louvre, Paris, no. M.I. 690, 94 × 44.2 cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 88.3.99, 93.3 × 43.7 cm; Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, no. 1067, 77.5 × 55.5 cm (calculating only the dimensions of the original part of this panel, which was cropped at an early date and later elongated in its upper part by a 9 cm-high modern addition). Federico Zeri reported Evelyn Sandberg-Vavalà's manuscript opinion; Federico Zeri and Elizabeth E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings: Sienese and Central Italian Schools; A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980), 51. However, Raimond van Marle had perhaps already recognized the New York and Paris panels as probable components of the same multipart altarpiece, noting stylistic affinities between these two works and the Madonna in Berlin. Raimond van Marle, *Simone Martini et les peintres de son école* (Strasbourg, 1920), 108–109.

[5] The paintings in question are: Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, no. 1943.239, 104.9 × 44.6 cm; Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, nos. 49 (105 × 46 cm), 48 (105 × 46 cm); cf. Helen Comstock, "The World's Fair and Other Exhibitions," *Connoisseur* 103 (1939): 275–277.

[6] "[Lippo] fece…in San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno…la tavola a tempera che oggi è sopra l'altar maggiore, dentrovi una Nostra Donna, San Piero, San Paolo e San Giovan Batista ed altri Santi; e in questa pose Lippo il suo nome" (Lippo made in San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno the tempera painting that today stands on the high altar, in which is Our Lady, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and Saint John the Baptist, and other saints; and Lippo put his name to this painting): Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols. (Florence, 1878), 1:554–555. Klara Steinweg cautiously suggested that the two panels of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (now respectively in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) belonged to this polyptych. Klara Steinweg, "Beiträge zu Simone Martini und seiner Werkstatt," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen*

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Institutes in Florenz 7 (1956): 168 n. 23.

[7] Gertrude Coor, "Two Unknown Paintings by the Master of the Glorification of St. Thomas and Some Closely Related Works," *Pantheon* 19 (1961): 131–132, 135 n. 25.

[8] Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai, no. 1135, 52 × 28.5 cm: see Francoise Baligand, *Le Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai* (Paris, 1999), 18; Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg, nos. 44–45, 57, 5 × 26 cm each: see Robert Oertel, *Frühe italienische Renaissance in Altenburg: Beschreibender Katalog der Gemälde des 13. bis 16. Jahrhunderts im Staatlichen Lindenau-Museum* (Berlin, 1961), 75–76; Daniela Parenti, in *Maestri senesi e toscani nel Lindenau-Museum di Altenburg*, eds. Miklós Boskovits and Johannes Tripps (Siena, 2008),
28–37.

[9] Cristina De Benedictis, "A proposito di un libro su Buffalmacco," *Antichità viva* 13, no. 2 (1974): 7–8.

[10] The busts in question are here considered works produced by *Simone Martini's* shop (see *Saint Matthew*, *Saint Simon*, *Saint James Major*, and *Saint Judas Thaddeus*).

[11] Michael Mallory, "An Altarpiece by Lippo Memmi Reconsidered," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 9 (1974): 187–202; Michael Mallory, "Thoughts Concerning the 'Master of the Glorification of St. Thomas,'" *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 18–20; Marianne Lonjon, in *Retables italiens du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, ed. Claude Ressort, Sylvia Beguin, and Michel Laclotte (Paris, 1978), 19.

[12] Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, no. 21.250, 51.5 × 24.5 cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 64.189.2, 39.4 × 19.1 cm (painted surface; with modern frame, 48.3 × 20.3 cm); Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh, no. 1970.38, 40 × 18.9 cm (painted surface of each; with modern frame, 63.3 × 24 cm and 63.3 × 24.5 cm, respectively); and Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, no. 3343, 50.5 × 22 cm.

[13] Federico Zeri first recognized the panel as belonging to the polyptych being discussed here in 1976 (Zeri to Marianne Lonjon); cf. Marianne Lonjon, "Précisions sur la provenance du retable dit 'de Colle di Val d'Elsa' de Lippo Memmi," *La revue des musées de France* 56 (2006): 38, n. 2. Cristina De Benedictis subsequently published it as an image of Saint Augustine, whereas Lonjon identified the saint in question as the patron of San Gimignano. However, the fact that the saint wears the black cloak of the Augustinian canons makes the former proposal more convincing. Cf. Cristina De Benedictis, "Mario Salmi collezionista," in *Studi di storia dell'arte sul Medioevo e il Rinascimento: Nel centenario della nascita di Mario Salmi* (Florence, 1992), 125–136.

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[14] Hayden Maginnis's observation (1977) of the differences between the punched decoration of the Madonna in Berlin and that of the panels thought to have formed the main register of the polyptych seemed convincing to the present writer (1988), who noted that the back of the panel of the Madonna lacks the layer of gesso present in other panels of the polyptych. From this and a few other small differences, the conclusion has been drawn (and largely shared in the art historical literature) that the Berlin Madonna cannot have formed part of the polyptych from the Franciscans of San Gimignano. Further reflection (and also closer inspection of the back of the Berlin panel, which reveals that it has been slightly thinned and probably stripped of the layer of gesso with which it was originally covered) has now strengthened my suspicion that the painting in question, whose stylistic and chronological closeness to the other components of the San Gimignano polyptych is generally recognized, could possibly have formed part of it. Cf. Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "The Literature of Sienese Trecento Painting 1945–1975," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1977): 289; Miklós Boskovits, ed., *Frühe italienische Malerei: Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Katalog der Gemälde*, trans. Erich Schleier (Berlin, 1988), 75.

[15] Alessandro Bagnoli, "La chiesa di San Francesco a Colle di Val d'Elsa: Intenti per un restauro globale," in *Restauri e recuperi in terra di Siena: XI Settimana dei Beni Culturali*, ed. Cecilia Alessi and Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli (Badesse–Monteriggioni [Siena], 1995).

[16] *Collection Comte Oriola, formée en Italie de 1860-1896 env.: Tableaux, sculptures, tapisseries . . . acquis en grande partie des collections Bardini, Borghese etc., vente publique à Amsterdam, direction Mensing & Fils, le 13 avril 1932* (Amsterdam, 1932), lot. 3.

[17] Undated copy of expertise in NGA curatorial files. Raimond van Marle, *Le scuole della pittura italiana*, vol. 2, *La scuola senese del XIV secolo* (The Hague, 1934), 210; Raimond van Marle, *Italiaansche Kunst in Nederlandsch Bezeit* (Amsterdam, 1934), 85.

[18] Copies of the expertises by Bernard Berenson, Giuseppe Fiocco, Roberto Longhi, Wilhelm Suida, and Adolfo Venturi are in NGA curatorial files.

[19] See Helen Comstock, "The World's Fair and Other Exhibitions," *Connoisseur* 103 (1939): 277; Wilhelm Suida, "Die Sammlung Kress: New York," *Pantheon* 26 (1940): 274; Robert Langton Douglas, in *Duveen Brothers, Duveen Pictures in Public Collections of America* (New York, 1941), no. 13. Cf. also Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 121, box 266, folder 18 (copy in NGA curatorial files); George Martin Richter, "The New National Gallery in Washington," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 78 (1941): 177; and Alfred M. Frankfurter, *The Kress Collection in the National Gallery* (New York, 1944), 21 (repro.), 63.

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[20] Hermann Beenken, "Review of *Le scuole della pittura italiana II* by Raimond van Marle," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 4 (1935): 356.

[21] Guglielmo Matthiae, "In margine all'esposizione d'arte italiana ad Amsterdam," *Rivista del R. Istituto d'archeologia e storia dell'arte* 5 (1935): 217. For Robert Langton Douglas's opinion, cf. Duveen Brothers, *Duveen Pictures in Public Collections of America* (New York, 1941), no. 13, and Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 121, box 266, folder 18.

[22] Manuscript opinion, dated March 23, 1940 (copy in NGA curatorial files).

[23] Unpublished draft review intended for *Art News* (copy in NGA curatorial files).

[24] Klara Steinweg, "Beiträge zu Simone Martini und seiner Werkstatt," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 7 (1956): 167; Cristina Maria Gozzoli, in Gianfranco Contini and Maria Cristina Gozzoli, *L'opera completa di Simone Martini* (Milan, 1970), 105 no. 54; Sebastiana Delogu Ventroni, *Barna da Siena* (Pisa, 1972), 59.

[25] Giovanni Previtali, "Introduzione," in *Simone Martini e "chompagni"*, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1985), 28.

[26] Ever since 1952, when Federico Zeri firmly asserted the authorship of Lippo Memmi, most art historians have accepted this attribution (with the exceptions mentioned above); Federico Zeri, "An Exhibition of Mediterranean Primitives," *The Burlington Magazine* 94 (1952): 321. But sometimes the polyptych has been given to "Barna" and hence reassigned to the Memmi shop, as part of the recent tendency to consider the paintings previously cataloged under the name Barna as part of the production of the *bottega* "of the Memmi family." Charles Seymour (1970) thus considered it executed at least in part by "Barna." Giovanni Previtali (1988) also described it as a production of the family shop. Alessandro Conti (1986) spoke with regard to the Gallery Baptist of a so-called Master of Asciano (the anonymous master to whom he attributed the Madonna in the local museum, usually given to Barna), and Giulietta Chelazzi Dini (1985) considered at least the Saint Francis and Saint Louis of Toulouse in the Pinacoteca of Siena to be the work of the Master of the Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Santa Caterina, Pisa), sometimes attributed to Barna, but perhaps identifiable, according to Chelazzi Dini, with the young Francesco Traini. There are also those who have supported the common authorship of Lippo and his brother Tederico for the San Gimignano polytych (Bagnoli 1999, Leone De Castris 2003). See Charles Seymour, *Early Italian Paintings in the Yale University Art Gallery* (New Haven and London, 1970), 92; Giovanni Previtali, "Introduzione ai problemi della bottega di Simone Martini," in *Simone Martini: Atti del convegno; Siena, March 27–29, 1985*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 160, 161, 166 n. 22, 26; Alessandro

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Conti, "Simone Martini e 'chompagni': Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale, March 27–October 31, 1985," *Bollettino d'arte* 71, no. 35–36 (1986): 102; Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, in *Simone Martini e "chompagni,"* ed. Alessandro Bagnoli and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1985), 88; Alessandro Bagnoli, *La Maestà di Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 1999), 142, 151 n. 184; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 181, 218 n. 49.

[27] Conjecturing the authorship of Simone Martini, Raimond van Marle (1934, 1935) proposed the date c. 1320, followed by Alfred Frankfurter (1944). *Duveen Pictures* 1941 reproposed the same attribution but suggested a dating to the years 1315–1320. A dating to 1325–1330 was supported by Gertrude Coor (1961), Fern Rusk Shapley (1966, 1979), Millard Meiss (1977), NGA 1985, Cristina De Benedictis in her more recent contributions (1992, 1996), and Marianne Lonjon (2006). Antonino Caleca (1976), for his part, vaguely dated the panel to the decade 1320–1330, while Alessandro Bagnoli (1999) proposed its execution in the years 1323–1325, and Pierluigi Leone De Castris (2003) in those between 1326 and 1328. De Benedictis (1974) initially suggested a dating to c. 1330, followed by Michael Mallory (1974, 1975); Michel Laclotte (1978); Federico Zeri (in Zeri and Gardner, 1980); Keith Christiansen (1982); and Mauro Natale, Alessandra Mottola Molfino, and Joyce Brusa (1982). See Raimond van Marle, *Le scuole della pittura italiana*, vol. 2, *La scuola senese del XIV secolo* (The Hague, 1934), 210, fig. 142; Raimond van Marle, "La pittura all'esposizione d'arte antica italiana di Amsterdam," *Bollettino d'arte* 27 (1935): 297, fig. 4; Alfred M. Frankfurter, *The Kress Collection in the National Gallery* (New York, 1944), 21, 63; Duveen Brothers, *Duveen Pictures in Public Collections of America* (New York, 1941), no. 13; Gertrude Coor, "Two Unknown Paintings by the Master of the Glorification of St. Thomas and Some Closely Related Works," *Pantheon* 19 (1961): 129–130, 133–134 n. 15, 135 n. 25; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XIII–XV Century* (London, 1966), 49, fig. 126; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:331–333; Millard Meiss, "Notes on a Dated Diptych by Lippo Memmi," in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci*, ed. Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto and Paolo Dal Poggetto, 2 vols. (Milan, 1977), 1:139; National Gallery of Art, *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Washington, DC, 1985), 231; Cristina De Benedictis, "Mario Salmi collezionista," in *Studi di storia dell'arte sul Medioevo e il Rinascimento: Nel centenario della nascita di Mario Salmi* (Florence, 1992), 129; Cristina De Benedictis, "Lippo Memmi," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome, 1996), 7:733; Marianne Lonjon, "Précisions sur la provenance du retable dit 'de Colle di Val d'Elsa' de Lippo Memmi," *La revue des musées de France* 56 (2006): 34, 38 n. 1, 39 n. 13; Antonino Caleca, "Tre polittici di Lippo Memmi, un'ipotesi sul Barna e la bottega di Simone e Lippo, 1," *Critica d'arte* 41 (1976): 53, fig. 59; Alessandro Bagnoli, *La Maestà di Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan,

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1999), 142, 151 n. 184; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 181, 218 n. 49; Cristina De Benedictis, "A proposito di un libro su Buffalmacco," *Antichità viva* 13, no. 2 (1974): 8; Michael Mallory, "An Altarpiece by Lippo Memmi Reconsidered," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 9 (1974): 187–188; Michael Mallory, "Thoughts Concerning the 'Master of the Glorification of St. Thomas,'" *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 18–20; Michel Laclotte, in *Retables italiens du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, ed. Claude Ressort, Sylvia Beguin, and Michel Laclotte (Paris, 1978), 19; Federico Zeri, in Federico Zeri and Elizabeth E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings: Sienese and Central Italian Schools; A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980), 50–52; Keith Christiansen, "Fourteenth-Century Italian Altarpieces," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 40 (1982): 26, fig. 25; Mauro Natale, Alessandra Mottola Molfino, and Joyce Brusa, *Museo Poldi Pezzoli*, vol. 1, *Dipinti* (Milan, 1982), 145.

[28] In particular, Giovanni Previtali cast doubt on the credibility of Lippo's signature: he suggested that in the polyptych of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno in Pisa, a work signed by Lippo according to the sources and now dispersed among the museums in Altenburg, Palermo, Pisa and elsewhere, the drawing and at least part of the execution should be attributed to Simone Martini, and that this master was also partially responsible for the execution of the Madonna in the church of the Servi in Siena, signed by Lippo. Previtali also believed that an intervention by Lippo was probable in the execution of the polyptych in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo of Orvieto, although it bears the signature of Simone Martini. See Giovanni Previtali, "Introduzione," in *Simone Martini e "chompagni,"* ed. Alessandro Bagnoli and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1985), 27–28. This latter hypothesis more recently was revived by Bagnoli, who maintained with some assurance the common authorship of Simone and Lippo for the polyptych in Orvieto. See Alessandro Bagnoli, *La Maestà di Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 1999), 142.

[29] The former Golovin Baptist is particularly suited to comparison with the painting in Washington; cf. *An Exhibition of Italian Panels and Manuscripts from the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in Honor of Richard Offner* (Hartford, 1965), 24, no. 24; Millard Meiss, "Notes on a Dated Diptych by Lippo Memmi," in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci*, ed. Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto and Paolo Dal Poggetto, 2 vols. (Milan, 1977), 1:137–139. Admittedly, after the drastic cleaning to which the New York painting has been subjected it is difficult to assess its modeling, but its composition, its restless contours, or the impulsive gesture of the saint himself can leave no doubt about the panel's belonging to a later stylistic phase than the Baptist in the Gallery.

[30] For the polyptych of Casciana Alta, originally intended for Pisa Cathedral, the presence of Saint Thomas Aquinas, canonized on July 18, 1323,

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constitutes a secure *terminus post quem*. But even irrespective of this date, the more elongated proportions of the figures and the delicacy of the chiaroscuro imply that the polyptych was painted several years after Simone's polyptych in Santa Caterina in Pisa. On the polyptych of Casciana Alta, see in particular Luciano Bellosi, in *Simone Martini e "chompagni,"* ed. Alessandro Bagnoli and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1985), 94–102.

[31] With regard to the Santa Caterina altarpiece, for which the contribution of Michael Mallory (1975) remains fundamental, the so-called Master of the Triumph of Saint Thomas to whom Mallory and some other scholars attributed it is now generally identified with Lippo (or Lippo and shop). See Michael Mallory, "Thoughts Concerning the 'Master of the Glorification of St. Thomas,'" *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 9–20. The caution of suspecting that a second artist worked alongside Lippo Memmi, one devoid of any real art historical substance or even biographical foundation—such as Tederico Memmi, a documented personality but perhaps not an artist, or "Barna," likely a wholly fictitious character—seems unjustified.

[32] In the Pisan altarpiece, particularly eloquent analogies with the San Gimignano polyptych are offered by the figure of Saint Paul to the upper left (to be compared with the image of the same saint now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and some faces among the friars and religious people gathered at Saint Thomas's feet, similar in facial type to the Saint Louis in Siena. The Triumph of Saint Thomas nevertheless lacks the pursuit of the nobility of features, with its subtly modulated profile, and the measured, curvilinear rhythms of the contours of the tunics and mantles that distinguish the panel of the *Baptist* in the Gallery and its companion paintings.

[33] The figures of the Pisan polyptych seem taller and more slender, and they move with greater ease, than the figures of the Baptist or of Saints Peter and Paul in the complex destined for San Gimignano. This might also depend on the unusual iconography (the representation of the saints seated on faldstools), but their solemn and composed attitude, the faces modeled with subtly filtered light, and the delicate shading that minutely explores each detail of the form anticipate phenomena that characterize Lippo's paintings in the early 1330s. Another aspect that invites comparison between the Pisa and San Gimignano polyptychs is the dynamic calligraphy, intermittent in tension, of the contour lines. In the Gallery's panel and its companions, the artist's preoccupation with decorative elements, and especially his concern with embellishing even the outer edges of the painted surface with punched motifs, suggest that the San Gimignano polyptych is slightly later in date than the Pisa polyptych of 1325.

[34] Mojmir S. Frinta (1998) pointed out the presence of the punch mark he called "complex tetra-lobe (tetrafoil)" both in the panel in the Gallery and in the former Chiaramonte Bordonaro Saint Peter (now in the Galleria

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Nazionale in Palermo). This punch also recurs in other Lippo works, including the Casciana Alta polyptych and the triptych of the Annunciation dated 1333 in the Uffizi, Florence, executed in collaboration with Simone Martini. See Mojmir Svatopluk Frinta, *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting* (Prague, 1998), 400.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The wooden support consists of a single-member panel with vertical grain. The pointed arch retains the first molding of its original engaged frame. Stephen Pichetto thinned and cradled the panel in 1938–1939 (at present the wood is 1.3–1.5 cm thick).[1] Probably on the same occasion the edges of the panel were cut along the pointed arch.

The painting was executed on a gesso ground. An underdrawing of thin contour lines is visible with infrared reflectography,[2] and a green underpainting is present beneath the flesh tones. The gilded areas were prepared with an orange-red layer of bole. Punchwork decorates the halo as well as the outer edges of the gold ground and the curved spandrels between the pointed external arch and the trefoil-shaped inner frame.

The painted surface is in relatively good condition, but a vertical check extends approximately 6.5 cm from the bottom edge of the panel, and another is visible only on the reverse. There are small paint losses, which are especially heavy in the red drapery, and some abrasion in the gold ground. A 2 cm-wide strip of paint and gilding along the side and bottom edges is later restoration and has discolored. A nineteenth-century frame was present and covered this strip until the 1938–1939 treatment.[3] The painting was treated again in 1955 by Mario Modestini. Areas of the red drapery were extensively glazed during one or both of these treatments. A thick and discolored layer of varnish now covers the surface.

TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] Cf. Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XIII–XV Century* (London, 1966), 49; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:333.

[2] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Hamamatsu c/1000-03

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Vidicon camera fitted with an N2606-10 or N214 lead sulphide tube.

[3] The painting is reproduced within a nineteenth-century frame of rectangular shape both in the 1932 sale catalog and by Raimond van Marle (in 1934 and 1935). Apparently, it maintained the appearance given to it during an undocumented nineteenth-century restoration and was not subjected to any further treatment before its acquisition by Duveen Brothers, Inc., by 1938. See Raimond van Marle, *Le scuole della pittura italiana*, vol. 2, *La scuola senese del XIV secolo* (The Hague, 1934), 210, fig. 142; Raimond van Marle, “La pittura all’esposizione d’arte antica italiana di Amsterdam,” *Bollettino d’arte* 27 (1935): 297, fig. 4.

PROVENANCE

Probably church of San Francesco, San Gimignano, until 1553;[1] church of San Giovanni Battista, San Gimignano, until 1782/1787;[2] church of San Francesco, Colle Val d’Elsa, between 1787 and mid-nineteenth century.[3] Graf von Oriola, Schloss Budesheim, Oberhessen; (his sale, Mensing & Fils at Frederik Muller & Co., Amsterdam, 13 April 1932, no. 3, as by Taddeo di Bartolo).[4] (Jacques Goudstikker, Amsterdam), by 1934;[5] purchased February 1937 through (Paul Cassierer & Co., Amsterdam) by (Duveen Brothers, Inc., London, New York, and Paris);[6] sold June 1938 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York;[7] gift 1939 to NGA.

[1] In 1865 Francesco Brogi saw two of the original companion panels to the NGA’s painting in the church of the Franciscans of Colle Val d’Elsa (not published until 1897: Francesco Brogi, *Inventario generale degli oggetti d’arte della provincia di Siena*, Siena, 1897: 158). However, it has been convincingly suggested (Alessandro Bagnoli, "La Chiesa di San Francesco a Colle di Val d'Elsa, intenti per un restauro globale," in *Restauri e Recuperi in terra di Siena. XI Settimana dei Beni Culturali*, Sienna, December 1995: n.p.; Alessandro Bagnoli, *La Maestà di Simone Martini*, Milan, 1999: 151 n. 184; Marianne Lonjon, “Précisions sur la provenance du retable dit 'de Colle val d’Elsa' de Lippo Memmi,” *Revue des Musée de France* 56, no. 2 [2006]: 31-40) that they were transferred there only in the late eighteenth century from the church of the same order in San Gimignano; it may be presumed that they had originally adorned its high altar. Situated outside the city walls, the church of San Francesco in San Gimignano was demolished in 1553, when, by order of Cosimo I de’ Medici, a new system of fortifications was erected around the city.

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[2] After the 1553 demolition of their church of San Francesco, the Franciscans moved inside the city of San Gimignano, settling in the convent annexed to the church of San Giovanni Battista. In 1782 Duke Leopold suppressed this convent, forcing the friars to make another move.

[3] The community of friars moved to the convent of San Francesco in Colle Val d'Elsa in 1787, likely bringing with them all the church furnishings from San Gimignano. As mentioned above (note 1), two companion panels, Memmi's *Saint Francis* and *Saint Louis of Toulouse* (both now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena), were recorded by Francesco Brogi in 1865 as hanging in the sacristy of the Franciscan church of Colle. The other panels of the dismembered altarpiece were no longer there at this time.

[4] The auction catalog offered for sale a "Collection Comte Oriola, formée en Italie de 1860-1896 env.," without further explanation. Lot 1 of the sale was a detached fresco by Perugino representing the Pietà, which apparently remained unsold (now in the collection of the Cassa di Risparmio in Florence). Walter and Elisabeth Paatz (*Die Kirchen von Florenz. Ein kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1940-1953: 4 [1952]: 649-650, n. 35) cite the fresco as belonging to the heirs of Graf Oriola in Büdesheim, Oberhessen, the location of the collection. The year 1883 is stated as the date of Graf Oriola's acquisition. An Italian stone relief representing the *Profile Portrait of a Man*, lot 46 of the 1932 sale in Amsterdam, which similarly found its way into the Kress Foundation's collection in 1938 and subsequently into the Philbrook Art Center in Tulsa, is also stated to have belonged to the Oriola Collection in Büdensheim; see Ulrich Middeldorf, *Sculptures from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. European Sculptures*, London, 1976: 67. It is possible that the "Comte Oriola" named in the sale catalogue referred to Eduard Ernst Lobo da Silveira (1809-1862) and his sons, Waldemar (1854-1910) and Joachim (1858-1907) Lobo da Silveira, all of whom were known as Graf von Oriola. They were the son and grandsons, respectively, of a Portuguese minister, Joaquim José Lobo da Silveira (1772-1846), who was given a title in the Prussian nobility by Friedrich Wilhelm III, king of Prussia (1770-1840) and who resettled his family in Prussia. Waldemar had Schloss Büdesheim constructed in 1885 near an older castle of the same name, and Joachim was a naval attaché in the German embassy in Italy.

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[5] Goudstikker lent the painting to an exhibition in Amsterdam in 1934. On the life and career of the Dutch dealer see Charlotte Wiefhoff, “De Kunsthandelaar Jacques Goudstikker 1897 - 1940,” *Nederlands Kunsthistotisch Jaarboek* 32 (1982): 249-278.

[6] Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 119, box 264, folder 8; reel 121, box 266, folder 18 (copies in NGA curatorial files).

[7] The bill of sale for eight paintings, including this one, is dated 21 June 1938; payments were to extend through November 1939. The attributions on the bill, in this case to Simone Martini, were those of Bernard Berenson. Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 329, box 474, folder 5 (copies in NGA curatorial files).

EXHIBITION HISTORY

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