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

image not available

Grifo di Tancredi
Italian, active 1271 - 1303 (or possibly 1328)

# *Saint James Major*

c. 1310

tempera on panel
painted surface (top of gilding): 62.2 × 34.8 cm (24 1/2 × 13 11/16 in.)
painted surface (including painted border): 64.8 × 34.8 cm (25 1/2 × 13 11/16 in.)
overall: 66.7 × 36.7 × 1.2 cm (26 1/4 × 14 7/16 × 1/2 in.)
Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1937.1.2.c

**ENTRY**

Up until the mid-nineteenth century, this panel and its two companions (Saint Peter and Christ Blessing) were preserved together with two others from the same polyptych [fig. 1] (see also Reconstruction): one representing the Baptist [fig. 2] now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Chambéry, [1] and the other probably with an image of Saint Ursula, its whereabouts currently unknown. [2] They were parts of an altarpiece that, in view of its dimensions and execution, must have been a commission of some importance, although characterized by iconographic conventions and technical features (execution on a single panel) of an archaizing type. From an iconographic point of view, the bust of the adult Christ (rather than the Madonna and Child) in the central panel, rather uncommon in Tuscany at the time of the execution of the work, [3] and the appearance among the lateral saints of one whose veneration was not particularly widespread (if she really does represent, as would seem to be the case, Saint Ursula), might suggest that the altarpiece was intended for the nuns of the Florentine convent named after this saint and founded in 1309. [4] The elaborate ornamental decoration incised on the gold ground is probably a measure of the importance attached to the work. This


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type of decoration, preferred by Cimabue, was not common in Florence and was generally used in the thirteenth century only on images of the Maestà. [5] As for the peculiar profiles of the triptych components, and the fact that they seem to have been painted on a single panel, these were aspects of archaizing character but still fairly widespread in Florentine painting in the early fourteenth century. [6]

Artaud de Montor probably acquired the National Gallery of Art's panels in Italy in the later years of the eighteenth or early years of the nineteenth century. They came to him accompanied by the attribution (wholly unjustified) to "Margaritone d'Arezzo," with which they were later illustrated in the successive catalogs of his collection (1808, 1811, 1843). [7] A century later, Bernard Berenson (1920) suggested an attribution to Cimabue. [8] Publishing the three panels immediately after their acquisition by Duveen Brothers, Inc., in 1919, Berenson considered them executed "as early as 1271...or a little later" and compared them with various late thirteenth-century works, including two apse mosaics—one in San Miniato al Monte in Florence [9] and the other in Pisa Cathedral, the latter a documented work of a "magister Franciscus," who executed it between 1301 and 1302 [10]—and the fresco with the scene of the Capture of Christ in the upper church of San Francesco at Assisi. [11] The panels were exhibited under the name of Cimabue in 1920, 1924, and 1935, and various subsequent publications accepted the attribution. [12] Among these we may mention the opinions of Osvald Sirén (1922), who compared the three paintings with the artist's late works (in particular with the *Maestà* now in the Uffizi, Florence); [13] Lionello Venturi (1931, 1933); Enzo Carli (1949); Pietro Toesca (1927); and Luigi Coletti (1941), all of whom thought that the paintings in the Gallery probably were autograph by the master. [14] Berenson himself restated on various occasions his conviction of the Cimabuesque authorship of the panels. But Raimond Van Marle (1923 and later) placed this in doubt, as did Richard Offner (1924), though he admitted the possibility of a direct intervention of the master, at least in the central panel. [15] Mario Salmi (1935) also excluded the three panels from Cimabue's catalog; additionally, he recognized one of the missing figures of the former Artaud de Montor altarpiece in the panel of the Baptist in the museum in Chambéry. [16] In 1948, Roberto Longhi identified the master of the polyptych with the anonymous artist who executed the *Maestà* no. 6115 in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence. [17] That panel came from the monastery of San Gaggio near Florence, [18] hence the conventional name Longhi bestowed on this artist: Master of San Gaggio. From that moment, the attribution to Cimabue disappeared from the art historical literature, apart from the posthumous edition of Berenson's *Italian Pictures* (1963) and the catalogs of the Gallery. [19] The three


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paintings thereafter were classified as works by a follower of the master, or ascribed—ever more frequently—to the Master of San Gaggio himself. [20] In 1987, the present writer tentatively proposed the identification of this anonymous master with Grifo di Tancredi, [21] and this proposal has since met with growing consensus. [22] On the other hand, different opinions have been expressed about the dating of the former Artaud de Montor polyptych: Luiz C. Marques (1987) proposed the date 1275–1280; Edward Garrison (1949), Angelo Tartuferi (1990, 2002), and Rolf Bagemihl (1999), the years between 1280 and 1290; Sonia Chiodo (2009), the last decade of the thirteenth century; and others have preferred a dating around or even after 1300. [23]

An aid for solving the problem of dating may come from the panel that gave its name to the painter, namely the *Maestà* now in the Accademia. This is not dated, but some clues suggest that it was executed in the early years of the fourteenth century. [24] The very circumstance that the earlier literature related the altarpiece in the Accademia to the Master of Santa Cecilia, and the three panels in Washington to the earlier production of Pacino di Bonaguida, implies that their closest stylistic affinities should be sought in works dating to the early decades of the fourteenth century. [25] The influence of the young Giotto (Florentine, c. 1265 - 1337) has even been aired. [26] That seems improbable, for some characteristic aspects of the art of Grifo da Tancredi, such as the incongruities and chaotic perspective of his architectural structures or of his marble thrones, suggest that his models in this phase were derived not from Giotto but from the works of Cimabue and artists of his own generation, as yet unable to accept the rationality of Giotto's way of creating pictorial space. The model for the panel in the Accademia, for example, could have been an image of the type of the *Maestà* of Santa Margherita at Montici, or *Saint Peter Enthroned* (dated 1307) in the church of San Simone in Florence. [27]

If the San Gaggio altarpiece in the Accademia belongs, as I believe, to the first decade of the fourteenth century, a similar dating may also apply to the former Artaud de Montor panels. The two share close affinities. Among the saints in the Florentine *Maestà*, the Baptist in particular is almost a replica of the image of the same saint in the painting now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Chambéry, but the Saint Peter [fig. 3] standing alongside the protagonist in the San Gaggio altarpiece also is very close to the representation of that saint in our panels. Their faces are energetically modeled, with marked contrasts of light and shade and characterized by very pronounced cheekbones, short nose, fleshy lips, small eyes, and


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penetrating gaze. Their facial features and their intense brooding expressions are further enlivened by the undulating curls that frame their faces, while their stiff, simplified drapery, furrowed by few folds and given an almost metallic consistency and sheen, assumes a subordinate role. The artist's unfamiliarity with the rules of perspectival foreshortening is also betrayed in the panels now in the Gallery, notably by the rendering of the book held in Christ's left hand [fig. 4]: its pages, instead of opening, improbably seem to bend backwards. [28] Offner (1924) rightly observed that, although the frowning expression of the energetically squared faces [fig. 5] may recall those of the Florentine *caposcuola*, "Cimabue's figures possess a higher intensity." [29] At least during his late phase, Grifo emphasized solemnity and elegance in his figures, delineated with a graphic style that Fern Rusk Shapley correctly deemed "more suave and flowing than in Cimabue's commonly accepted paintings." [30] It is just in this respect that Grifo went beyond the example of Cimabue. His human ideal is gentler, more graceful in movement, neater in dress. He conforms more faithfully to the conventions of the Gothic style in Florentine painting, as did the Master of Santa Cecilia (that is, probably Gaddo Gaddi) and Lippo di Benivieni during these same years. The style of the Washington panels suggests that their dating be placed between the first and the second decade of the fourteenth century. But if we are right in assuming that they were intended for the church of Sant'Orsola in Florence, they cannot have been any earlier than 1309.

Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011)

March 21, 2016

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**COMPARATIVE FIGURES**


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**fig. 1** Reconstruction of a dispersed polyptych by Grifo di Tancredi (color images are NGA objects): a. *Saint Peter*; b. *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 2); c. *Christ Blessing*; d. *Saint James Major*; e. After Grifo di Tancredi, line drawing of a lost image of Saint Ursula

**fig. 2** Grifo di Tancredi, *Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1310, tempera on panel, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chambéry


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**fig. 3** Detail of Saint Peter, Grifo di Tancredi, San Gaggio altarpiece, c. 1300, tempera on panel, Galleria dell'Academia, Florence

**fig. 4** Detail, Grifo di Tancredi, *Christ Blessing*, c. 1310, tempera on poplar, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection


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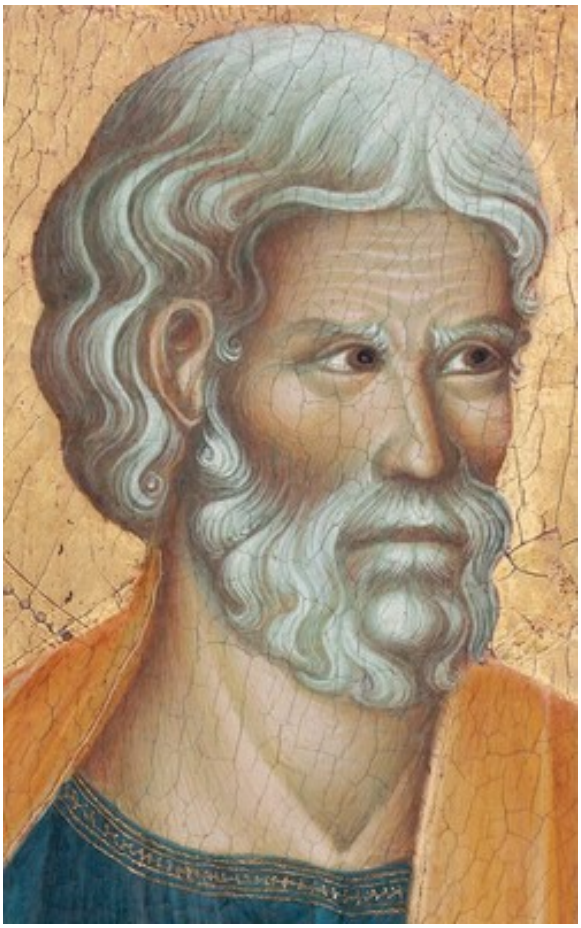

**fig. 5** Detail, Grifo di Tancredi, *Saint Peter*, c. 1310, tempera on poplar, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection


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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.

a. b. c. d. e.

Reconstruction of a dispersed polyptych by Grifo di Tancredi

a. *Saint Peter*
b. *Saint John the Baptist* (Entry fig. 2)
c. *Christ Blessing*
d. *Saint James Major*
e. After Grifo di Tancredi, line drawing of a lost image of Saint Ursula

## NOTES

[1] Véronique Damian and Jean-Claude Giroud, *Peintures florentines*, Collections du Musée de Chambéry (Chambéry, 1990), 66–67. The panel entered the museum in 1914 as a gift of Leonce Mesnard. I have been unable to establish the painting's fate in the time period between the 1851 sale and 1914.

[2] The fate of this painting is also unknown. It never resurfaced after its sale at the abovementioned auction. However, the drawing of it published in the


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Artaud de Montor catalog (1843) suffices to show that the collector's identification of the crowned female saint with Saint Clare of Assisi was mistaken. The martyr saint in question is clearly of royal birth, if not a queen; George Kaftal plausibly recognized her as Saint Ursula. George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art*, vol. 1, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), 996.

[3] While the adult Christ appears with some frequency at the center of altarpieces, at least in the area of Lazio, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this iconography is rarer in Tuscany, where the center panel or compartment is usually filled with the Madonna and Child. Cf. Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), nos. 278, 279, 280, 298, 305. Significant exceptions are Meliore's altarpiece in the Uffizi, Florence (no. 9153); that in the Museo Nazionale in Pisa (no. 1582) and dating to the early years of the Trecento; and Giotto's polyptych now in the North Carolina Museum of Art at Raleigh, no. GL. 60.17.7. Other *sui generis* cases are presented by the Stefaneschi altarpiece in the Pinacoteca Vaticana, executed for Saint Peter's basilica in Rome and hence reflecting local iconographic conventions, and the polyptych of Taddeo Gaddi formerly in the Bromley Davenport collection, in which the central image represents not the blessing Christ but the *Vir dolorum*. For the latter painting, see Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia, MO, 1982), 20–21. Yet after the early decades of the fourteenth century, altarpieces with Christ at the center disappear completely, only to reappear sporadically in the second half of the century; cf. Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, 1951), 9–10.

[4] P. N. Cianfogni and Domenico Moreni, *Memorie istoriche dell'Ambrosiana R. Basilica di S. Lorenzo di Firenze*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1804), 1:136–139.

[5] In Florence, panels with similarly decorated gold grounds are found especially in representations of the Maestà. We may cite, for example, the three versions of the Maestà that have come down to us from the hand of Cimabue, Duccio's *Madonna Rucellai*, or the altarpiece of the Magdalen Master in the church of San Michele at Rovezzano near Florence. See Luciano Bellosi, *Cimabue*, ed. Giovanna Ragionieri (Milan, 1998a), 105–112, 132, 136, 248; and Angelo Tartuferi, *La pittura a Firenze nel Duecento* (Florence, 1990), pl. 163. It is worth pointing out, however, that the Lucchese master Deodato Orlandi also used this type of decoration on horizontal altarpieces with half-length figures of saints. Examples include the one dated 1300 now in the Museo Nazionale in Pisa (no. 1586); the dismembered and dispersed polyptych of which the center panel is known, formerly in the Hurd collection in New York, inscribed with the date 1308; and even in a portable tabernacle, like that now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. See Mariagiulia Burresi and Antonino Caleca, eds., *Cimabue a Pisa:*


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*La pittura pisana del Duecento da Giunta a Giotto* (Pisa, 2005), 260–261; Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 160 no. 418; Miklós Boskovits, ed., *Frühe italienische Malerei: Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Katalog der Gemälde*, trans. Erich Schleier (Berlin, 1988), 256–259.

[6] Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 173, observed that the peculiar profile of the former Artaud de Montor panels seems unique among paintings dating to this period. But this does not necessarily imply, as Garrison believed, that it is the result of modern falsification. Nor does Garrison's doubt regarding the genuineness of the appearance of the paintings in the way they were illustrated in the drawing published in the Artaud de Montor catalog seem justified. It should be borne in mind that the outer frame of the altarpiece has been lost, probably when the figures were separated and their profiles adjusted to the painted internal frame. The external frame originally might have had a different profile, for instance like that of the Sienese triptych no. 11 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, which still preserves its original mixtilinear external frame while the ornamental border that delimits the upper part of the scenes is trefoil shaped. Another similar case is the Florentine Madonna in the Acton collection in Florence, which originally formed the center of an altarpiece; it too is executed on wood with horizontal graining (cf. Garrison 1949, no. 635). Here, the painted inner frame is arch shaped, whereas the outer frame placed over it is triangular in profile. It is therefore difficult to reconstruct with any precision the original external profile of the polyptych by Grifo di Tancredi.
Altarpieces with half-length figures, executed on a single horizontal-grained wooden support, represent an archaic form that Sienese painters abandoned around 1300 but that continued to be used sporadically in Florence in the early decades of the fourteenth century. The best known example is the polyptych of Santa Reparata, produced in Giotto's shop no earlier than c. 1310; cf. Giorgio Bonsanti and Alfio Del Serra, in *Capolavori e restauri* (Florence, 1986), 354–357. Cf. also the examples cited in Provenance note 3.

[7] Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, *Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie, dans les quatre siècles qui ont précédé celui de Raphaël: Par un membre de l'académie de Cortone; Ouvrage servant de catalogue raisonné à une collection de tableaux des XIIe, XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris, 1808), nos. 30, 31, 34; Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, *Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie, dans les quatre siècles qui ont précédé celui de Raphaël, par un membre de l'Académie de Cortone (Artaud de Montor): Ouvrage servant de catalogue raisonné à une collection de tableaux des XIIe, XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris, 1811), nos. 35, 36, 39; Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, *Peintres primitifs: Collection*


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*de tableaux rapportée d'Italie* (Paris, 1843), nos. 35, 36, 39.

[8] Bernard Berenson, "A Newly Discovered Cimabue," *Art in America* 8 (1920): 250–271.

[9] Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, sec. 1, vol. 1, *The Origins of Florentine Painting, 1100–1270* (Florence 1993), 142–144, 726–733. The mosaics of the Florentine church, executed in the 1270s probably by the Master of Sant'Agata, were restored for the first time in 1297 and then later as well. They are now rather difficult to read, but the figure of Christ, which Berenson compared with the Christ in the Washington painting, belongs to the earliest phase of the program. See Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, Sec. i, vol. ii, *The Mosaics of the Baptistery of Florena* (Florence 2007), 207 n. 158, 603–607.

[10] Roberto Paolo Novello, "I mosaici," in *Il Duomo di Pisa*, ed. Adriano Peroni, 3 vols. (Modena, 1995), 1:286–287, 556–558.

[11] Alessio Monciatti, in *La basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*, ed. Giorgio Bonsanti (Modena, 2002), 503–504.

[12] *Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition: Loans and Special Features* (New York, 1920), unnumbered catalog; *Loan Exhibition of Important Early Italian Paintings in the Possession of Notable American Collectors* (New York, 1924), no. 2; and Raymond Escholier et al., *Exposition de l'art italien de Cimabue à Tiepolo* (Paris, 1935), 51.

[13] This is the panel from the church of Santa Trinita (no. 8343), variously dated. More recent scholarship has tended to date it to the last decade of the thirteenth century; cf. Luciano Bellosi, *Cimabue*, ed. Giovanna Ragionieri (Milan, 1998), 249–256.

[14] Lionello Venturi, *Pitture italiane in America* (Milan, 1931), no. 8; Lionello Venturi, *Italian Paintings in America*, trans. Countess Vanden Heuvel and Charles Marriott, 3 vols. (New York and Milan, 1933), 1: no. 10; Enzo Carli, "Cimabue," in *Enciclopedia cattolica*, 12 vols. (Florence, 1949), 3:1614; Pietro Toesca, *Il medioevo*, 2 vols., Storia dell'arte italiana 1 (Turin, 1927), 2:1040 n. 48; Luigi Coletti, *I Primitivi*, vol. 1, *120 tavole* (Novara, 1941), 37.

[15] Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 1, *From the 6th Until the End of the 13th Century* (The Hague, 1923), 476, 574; Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 5, *The Local Schools of Central and Southern Italy of the 14th Century* (The Hague, 1925), 442, fig. 262; Raimond van Marle, *Le scuole della pittura italiana*, vol. 1, *Dal VI alla fine del XIII secolo* (The Hague, 1932), 495–496, fig. 321; Richard Offner, "A Remarkable Exhibition of Italian Paintings," *The Arts* 5 (1924): 244.

[16] Mario Salmi, "Per il completamento di un politico cimabuesco," *Rivista d'arte*



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17 (1935): 114.

[17] Roberto Longhi, “Giudizio sul Duecento,” *Proporzioni* 2 (1948): 19, 47.

[18] See Angelo Tartuferi, 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), 94–98.

[19] Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Florentine School*, 2 vols. (London, 1963), 1:50.

[20] The following authorities spoke of “school” or “following” of Cimabue: Giulia Sinibaldi and Giulia Brunetti, eds., *Pittura italiana del Duecento e Trecento: Catalogo della mostra giottesca di Firenze del 1937* (Florence, 1943), 277; Roberto Salvini, *Cimabue* (Rome, 1946), 23; Roberto Salvini, “Cimabue,” in *Enciclopedia Universale dell’Arte*, ed. Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 15 vols. (Florence, 1960), 3:473; Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 5, *Bernardo Daddi and His Circle*, ed. Miklós Boskovits, Ada Labriola, and Martina Ingendaay Rodio, new ed. (Florence, 2001), 472 n. 1; Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 172–173; Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, 1951), 9 n. 2; Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, *Pittura del Dugento a Firenze* (Florence, 1955), 127; Sergio Samek Ludovici, *Cimabue* (Milan, 1956), 42–44; Hellmut Hager, *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgechichte des toskanischen Hochaltarretabels* (Munich, 1962), 111–112; Mario Salmi, “La donazione Contini Bonacossi,” *Bollettino d’arte* 52 (1967): 223; Burton B. Fredericksen and Federico Zeri, *Census of Pre-Nineteenth-Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 54, 403, 440, 645; Enio Sindona, *L’opera completa di Cimabue e il momento figurativo pregiottesco* (Milan, 1975), 119–120; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:134–135; Meryle Secrest, *Duveen: A Life in Art* (New York, 2004), 422. Longhi’s 1963 attribution to the Master of San Gaggio, in Roberto Longhi, “In traccia di alcuni anonimi trecentisti,” *Paragone* 14 (1963): 10, was accepted in turn by Ugo Galetti and Ettore Camesasca, *Enciclopedia della pittura italiana*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1951), 2:1486 (though the three paintings were also listed among the works of Cimabue on p. 672 of the same publication); Michel Laclotte, *De Giotto à Bellini: Les primitifs italiens dans les musées de France* (Paris, 1956), 15; Luisa Marcucci, *Gallerie nazionali di Firenze*, vol. 1, *I dipinti toscani del secolo XIII* (Rome, 1958), 56; Luisa Marcucci, in *Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chambéry* (Chambéry, 1960), n.p., fig. 15; Giovanni Previtali, *La fortuna dei primitivi: Dal Vasari ai neoclassici* (Turin, 1964), 232; Giovanni Previtali, *Giotto e la sua bottega* (Milan, 1967), 26; Carlo Volpe, “La formazione di Giotto nella cultura di Assisi,” in *Giotto e i giotteschi in Assisi* (Rome, 1969), 38; Miklós Boskovits, “Cenni di Pepe (Pepo), detto Cimabue,” in *Dizionario*



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*biografico degli italiani*, 82 vols. (Rome, 1979), 23:452; Fra Ludovico da Pietralunga and Pietro Scarpellini, *Descrizione della Basilica di S. Francesco e di altri Santuari di Assisi* (Treviso, 1982), 416; Alessandra Guerrini, "Maestro di San Gaggio," in *La Pittura in Italia: Il Duecento e il Trecento*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo, 2 vols. (Milan, 1986), 2:625; Luiz Marques, *La peinture du Duecento en Italie centrale* (Paris, 1987), 202, 286; Angelo Tartuferi, *La pittura a Firenze nel Duecento* (Florence, 1990), 63, 109; Véronique Damian and Jean-Claude Giroud, *Peintures florentines, Collections du Musée de Chambéry* (Chambéry, 1990), 23, 66–67; "Artaud de Montor, Jean Alex Francis," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, 34 vols. (New York, 1996), 2:514.

[21] Miklós Boskovits, ed., *Frühe italienische Malerei: Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Katalog der Gemälde*, trans. Erich Schleier (Berlin, 1988), 122, proposed an integration of the fragmentary inscription of the triptych in the collection of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

[22] Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, sec. 1, vol. 1, *The Origins of Florentine Painting, 1100–1270* (Florence 1993), 732 n. 1, 809; Luciano Bellosi, *Cimabue*, ed. Giovanna Ragionieri (Milan, 1998), 129; Luciano Bellosi, "La lezione di Giotto," in *Storia delle arti in Toscana: Il Trecento*, ed. Max Seidel (Florence, 2004), 96; Rolf Bagemihl, "Some Thoughts about Grifo di Tancredi of Florence and a Little-Known Panel at Volterra," *Arte cristiana* 87 (1999): 413–414; Angelo Tartuferi, "Grifo di Tancredi," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 82 vols. (Rome, 2002), 59:398; Sonia Chiodo, in *L'arte a Firenze nell'età di Dante (1250–1300)*, ed. Angelo Tartuferi and Mario Scalini (Florence, 2004), 110–114; Andrea Staderini, "Un contesto per la collezione di 'primitivi' di Alexis-François Artaud de Montor (1772–1849)," *Proporzioni* 5 (2004): 38; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, "Montano d'Arezzo a San Lorenzo," in *Le chiese di San Lorenzo e San Domenico: Gli ordini mendicanti a Napoli*, ed. Serena Romano and Nicolas Bock (Naples, 2005), 109.

[23] Luiz Marques, *La peinture du Duecento en Italie centrale* (Paris, 1987), 202, 286; Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 172–173; Angelo Tartuferi, *La pittura a Firenze nel Duecento* (Florence, 1990), 63, 109; Angelo Tartuferi, "Grifo di Tancredi," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 87 vols. (Rome, 2002), 59:398; Rolf Bagemihl, "Some Thoughts about Grifo di Tancredi of Florence and a Little-Known Panel at Volterra," *Arte cristiana* 87 (1999): 413–414; Sonia Chiodo, "Grifo di Tancredi," in *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, ed. Günter Meißner, 87 vols. (Munich, 2009), 62:129. See also Luisa Marcucci, *Gallerie nazionali di Firenze*, vol. 1, *I dipinti toscani del secolo XIII* (Rome, 1958), 56; Hellmut Hager, *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgechichte des toskanischen Hochaltarretabels* (Munich, 1962), 111–112; Roberto Longhi, "In


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traccia di alcuni anonimi trecentisti," *Paragone* 14 (1963): 10.

[24] The monastery of the Augustinian nuns dedicated to San Gaggio (= Caius), sometimes described as having been founded in the fourteenth century, in fact already existed in the 1270s, as demonstrated by a testament of 1274; cf. Guido Carocci, *I dintorni di Firenze*, vol. 2, *Sulla sinistra dell'Arno* (Florence, 1907), 289; Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur älteren Geschichte von Florenz*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1896), 4:416. At that time, the community of cloistered nuns, called "donne rinkiuse di San Gaggio," probably was very small; perhaps they did not even have their own church. That such a church presumably existed around the turn of the century can, however, be inferred from documents of 1299 and 1304, cited by Domenico Moreni, *Notizie istoriche dei contorni di Firenze*, vol. 6, *Dalla Porta a Pinti fino a Settignano* (Florence, 1795), 207, which speak of a *monastero* and its *badessa*. Grifo's painting, a *Maestà,* judging from its fame and size, cannot have been destined for the high altar: instead, it adorned the meeting place of a religious confraternity in the church; cf. Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990), 433–446. It therefore presupposes the existence of a church open to the public and for this reason additionally seems more likely to date after than before c. 1300.

[25] No. 6115 of the Galleria dell'Accademia was attributed to the Master of Santa Cecilia by Mario Salmi, "Spigolature d'arte toscana," *L'Arte* 16 (1913): 209–210; Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 2, *The Sienese School of the 14th Century* (The Hague, 1924), 293–294; Ugo Procacci, *La R. Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze* (Rome, 1936), 22. On the other hand, Roberto Longhi noted in a youthful polyptych by Pacino di Bonaguida, now in the collection of the Cassa di Risparmio of Florence, "un aspetto torvo simile a quello datoci" (a surly expression similar to the one given to us) by the "Maestro di San Gaggio" in the former Artaud de Montor altarpiece. Roberto Longhi, "In traccia di alcuni anonimi trecentisti," *Paragone* 14 (1963): 10.

[26] Even in his first intervention, Roberto Longhi noted in the San Gaggio altarpiece and in the panels now in Washington reflections of the "prime sterzature plastiche del Giotto giovane" (the first turns of the wheel towards the plasticity of the young Giotto). Roberto Longhi, "Giudizio sul Duecento," *Proporzioni* 2 (1948): 19. For his part, Luisa Marcucci expressed the view that "l'autore della tavola di San Gaggio, quando la dipinse…aveva già veduto la Madonna [by Giotto] di Ognissanti" (the author of the San Gaggio altarpiece had, when he painted it, already seen Giotto's Madonna from the Ognissanti), and that this implied that it would date no earlier (or not much earlier) than the second decade of the Trecento. Luisa Marcucci, *Gallerie nazionali di Firenze*, vol. 1, *I dipinti toscani del secolo XIII* (Rome, 1958), 57.


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[27] For these panels, generally (though not unanimously) assigned to the Master of Santa Cecilia, cf. Richard Offner and Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 1, *The St. Cecilia Master and His Circle*, new ed. (Florence, 1986), 114–121, 132–137.

[28] Painters of the thirteenth century often represented the blessing Christ with a closed book in his hand. In contrast, examples of Christ holding an open book reveal the problems involved in foreshortening. It is enough to mention in this regard the already cited altarpiece in the Museo Nazionale in Pisa and the mosaic of Magister Francesco in the apse of Pisa Cathedral. See Mariagiulia Burresi and Antonino Caleca, eds., *Cimabue a Pisa: La pittura pisana del Duecento da Giunta a Giotto* (Pisa, 2005), 202–203; Adriano Peroni, ed., *Il Duomo di Pisa*, 3 vols. (Modena, 1995), 2, pt. 2: pl. 1571.

[29] Richard Offner, "A Remarkable Exhibition of Italian Paintings," *The Arts* 5 (1924): 244.

[30] Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:134.

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**TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The wooden supports of this work and Saint Peter are single-member poplar panels with horizontal grain. [1] The upper 6.5 cm of the top, the curved sides of the gables, and the 1.3 cm-wide wooden strips on all sides are later additions. Both panels have been thinned and have had a mahogany cradle applied to the reverse. Christ Blessing was painted on a two-member wooden support, also with horizontal grain. The join is located approximately 10.3 cm from the top of the panel. This is above the tops of the panels depicting the saints, which explains why they do not have similar joins. The upper 4 cm of *Christ Blessing* and 0.8 cm–1.3 cm-wide strips on all sides are also modern additions. This panel, too, has been thinned and cradled. Examination of the x-radiographs and the backs of the panels reveals evidence of three nail holes vertically aligned down the center of each painting, indicating that the panels once had vertical battens. A piece of the top nail remains in *Saint James Major*. Line drawings published in the catalog of the Artaud de Montor collection [2] prove that the three figures, probably painted originally on one single panel, [3] had already been divided at the time they were acquired by the French collector in the early years of the nineteenth century. At that time, *Christ Blessing* still retained its original triangular gable, whereas the


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others had curvilinear gables terminating in triangular tops. After the 1851 sale (see Provenance), the gables were truncated, possibly in order to frame the panels together. The panel now in Chambéry (see below) still preserves the appearance given to it following the cutting of its gable, whereas the tops of the ones now in Washington have been altered, probably after their acquisition by Duveen Brothers, Inc., with the clumsy reconstruction of the gables of this panel and *Saint Peter*. [4] A very fine layer of fabric had been applied to all panels under the traditional gesso ground. A green layer is present under the flesh tones. [5] The ground against which the figures are set is gilt and decorated with punched and hand-incised motifs. The present gold decorations on the drapery of Christ and the inscription on the book are modern, but an older layer of gold is visible under the inscription on the book.

The panels are generally in fine condition, but with many small, inpainted losses. The ornamental borders of the gables are in large part modern. [6] The surface coating is slightly discolored.

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**TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] The NGA scientific research department analyzed the wood using cross-sections (see report dated August 17, 1988, in NGA conservation files).

[2] Alexis-François Artaud de Montor, *Peintres primitifs: Collection de tableaux rapportée d'Italie* (Paris, 1843), 30–31.

[3] That the panels have horizontal grain despite their longitudinal shape suggests that they were painted on a single panel, like some of the earliest polyptychs we know. This is the case with Vigoroso da Siena's polyptych dated 1291 now in the Galleria Nazionale in Perugia (no. 32), or the altarpiece, now divided in sections, whose central panel belongs to the Museum of Santa Croce in Florence and one lateral component to an unknown private collection—the work of an early fourteenth-century artist close to the Maestro Daddesco. See Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 9, *The Miniaturist Tendency* (Florence, 1984), 251–252. Analogous is the case of the triptych by Bernardo Daddi, formerly also in Santa Croce and now in the storerooms of the Soprintendenza in Florence, which still remains on its undivided wooden support. See Christoph Merzenich, *Vom Schreinerwerk zum Gemälde: Florentiner Altarwerke der ersten Hälfte des Quattrocento* (Berlin, 2001), 50.


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[4] Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 85, box 230, folder 25, document the commission of the frame but not the paintings' treatment.

[5] The NGA scientific research department analyzed the paint using x-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF), and the pigments found were consistent with those used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see report dated August 17, 1988, in NGA conservation files).

[6] Edward B. Garrison was certainly in error when he stated that "the tooling in the gold background...is not original." Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 173. There is no reason to affirm, as he did, that the shapes of the panels, when still in Paris, "are impossible in the period" and that the painted borders are all modern. The original appearance of the altarpiece was probably somewhere between Vigoroso's above-cited Perugia panel and the one in the Acton collection in Florence (see Garrison 1949, 160 no. 419), though the latter has simple triangular gables over the lateral figures.

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**PROVENANCE**

By 1808 in the collection of Alexis-François Artaud de Montor [1772-1849], Paris, who probably purchased the panels during one of his several periods of residence in Italy;[1] (his estate sale, Seigneur and Schroth at Hotel des Ventes Mobilières, Paris, 16-17 January 1851, nos. 35, 36, and 39 [with 1937.1.2.a and .b, as by Margaritone d'Arezzo]); Julien Gréau [1810-1895], Troyes; by inheritance to his daughter, Marie, comtesse Bertrand de Broussillion, Paris;[2] purchased September 1919 by (Duveen Brothers, Inc., Paris, New York, and London);[3] Carl W. Hamilton [1886-1967], New York, by 1920;[4] returned to (Duveen Brothers, Inc.); sold 15 December 1936 to The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh;[5] gift 1937 to NGA.

[1] On Artaud de Montor, apart from the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Roland Beyer for the University of Strasbourg in 1978, see Jacques Perot, "Canova et les diplomates français à Rome. François Cacault et Alexis Artaud de Montor," *Bullettin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1980): 219- 233, and Andrea Staderini, "Un contesto per la collezione di primitivi di Alexis - François Artaud de Montor (1772-1849)," *Proporzioni. Annali della Fondazione Roberto Longhi* 5 (2004): 23-62.


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[2] This information on the post-Artaud de Montor provenance of the work was gleaned at the time Duveen Brothers, Inc., purchased the three panels. See the Duveen prospectus, in NGA curatorial files; Edward Fowles, *Memories of Duveen Brothers*, London, 1976: 116.

[3] Fowles 1976, 116; Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 85, box 230, folder 25, and reel 422. The Duveen record indicates that they purchased the painting in Paris from Hilaire Gréau, a son of Julien Gréau.

[4] The three panels were exhibited as “lent by Carl W. Hamilton” in the New York exhibition in 1920. Fern Rusk Shapley (*Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1979: 1:134) also states that they were formerly in the Hamilton collection, and it is reported that “the Cimabue altarpiece was seen in Hamilton’s New York apartment” by 1920 (see Colin Simpson, *Artfull Partners. Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen*, New York, 1986: 199). However, this and other pictures had actually been given to Hamilton on credit by Duveen Brothers (see Meryle Secrest, *Duveen. A Life in Art*, New York, 2004: 422) and were probably returned to the dealers by 1924, when they were shown as "lent anonymously" at the exhibition of early Italian paintings in American collections held by the Duveen Galleries in New York.

[5] The original bill of sale is in Records of The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Subject Files, box 2, Gallery Archives, NGA; copy in NGA curatorial files.

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**EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1920 Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1920, unnumbered catalogue.

1924 Loan Exhibition of Important Early Italian Paintings in the Possession of Notable American Collectors, Duveen Brothers, New York, 1924, no. 2, as by Giovanni Cimabue (no. 1 in illustrated 1926 version of catalogue).


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1935 Exposition de L'Art Italien de Cimabue à Tiepolo, Petit Palais, Paris, 1935, no. 110.

1979 Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1979, no. 81.

2014 La fortuna dei primitivi: Tesori d'arte dalle collezioni italiane fra Sette e Ottocento [The Fortunes of the Primitives: Artistic Treasures from Italian Collections between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries], Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, 2014, no. 79a, repro.

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