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

Daddi, Bernardo

Also known as
Daddo, Bernardo di
active by 1320, died probably 1348

BIOGRAPHY

Son of Daddo di Simone, Bernardo is recorded for the first time in the registers of the Arte dei Medici e Speziali when he enrolled in the guild (which also included artists) between 1312 and 1320.[1] By this date he must have been a firmly established painter, as the reconstruction of his oeuvre also suggests; presumably, he had been born by the last decade of the thirteenth century, if not earlier. His first securely dated work is the signed triptych in the Uffizi, Florence; its inscription contains not only the artist's name but also the year 1328. Recent studies, however, have assigned various works, also of large dimensions, to previous years, such as the cycle of frescoes in the chapel of the Pulci and Berardi families in Santa Croce in Florence; the polyptych of San Martino at Lucarelli (Siena), now in the New Orleans Museum of Art; and the polyptych divided among the Galleria Nazionale in Parma, the Museo Lia in La Spezia, and a private collection.[2] Although perhaps trained in the circle of painters such as Lippo di Benivieni or the Master of San Martino alla Palma,[3] in the second or the early third decade of the fourteenth century Bernardo worked in close contact with Giotto's shop (executing for the church of Santa Croce, then the preserve of the pupils and followers of the great master, not only the abovementioned frescoes but also possibly the Parma–La Spezia polyptych).[4] During the fourth and fifth decades of the century, Daddi's shop seems to have produced by preference numerous small but precious panels destined for private devotion. Among these are the well-preserved and dated triptychs in the Museo del Bigallo in Florence (1333); the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1334); the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena (1336); the National Gallery of Edinburgh (1338); the Courtauld Institute Art Gallery in London (1338); and the Minneapolis Museum of Art (1339).[5] The artist's output of altarpieces for churches also continued to flourish during this period; these include the polyptych for the Cappella della Cintola (Chapel of the Holy Girdle) in Prato Cathedral (of which a fragment of the central panel is now in the Robert Lehman collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the predella in the Museo Civico in Prato);[6] the huge multipart altarpiece for the high altar of Florence

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Cathedral (dismantled and in part dispersed: most of its panels are now in the Uffizi, while the predella is scattered between various collections);[7] the polyptych from Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1344); the Madonna and Child in the tabernacle of Orsanmichele (1346/1347), again in Florence; and the polyptych for San Giorgio at Ruballa (1348), the main panels of which are now in the Courtauld Institute Art Gallery and the fragments of its predella in private collections.[8]

Although at the start of his career his work was influenced by the Giottesque ideals of severity and solemnity, Bernardo Daddi soon began to express his preference for a more gentle and lyrical approach. The sacred figures that fill his paintings are more graceful in behavior and inconstant in character than those populating the world of Giotto's close followers. His gifts as an accomplished narrative painter are best exemplified in the small narrative scenes of his predella panels, where the most complex actions are recounted with perspicuity and great vivacity. After his earliest Giottesque phase, Daddi's works reveal the influence of the former pupil of Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, with whom he would establish a relation of collaboration, and of the Sienese artists Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, who were frequently active in Florence between the third and fourth decades of the fourteenth century, and sculptors such as Tino di Camaino and Andrea Pisano. Richard Offner, the scholar who has most contributed to our knowledge of the painter, explained that Bernardo found "small scale suited to his purpose because it includes, within a limited space, the elements of a happening and can therefore be apprehended in its interrelations at a single glance."[9] But even the figures of his panels on a more monumental scale reveal—albeit below a veil of modesty and discretion—strong emotions that, together with the luminous chromatic harmonies of his compositions, would strongly influence and serve as a model for Florentine painters of the middle decades of the fourteenth century.

[1] Irene Hueck, "Le matricole dei pittori fiorentini prima e dopo il 1320," *Bollettino d'arte* 57 (1972): 115, 119, 120.

[2] Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century,* sec. 3, vol. 8, *Workshop of Bernardo Daddi* (New York, 1958), 65–66; Richard Offner and Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century,* sec. 3, vol. 4, *Bernardo Daddi, His Shop and Following*, new ed. (Florence, 1991), 180–185, 425–437. For their dating, see Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century,* sec. 3, vol. 9, *The Miniaturist Tendency* (Florence, 1984), 70.

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[3] On Lippo, see Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century,* sec. 3, vol. 9, *The Miniaturist Tendency* (Florence, 1984), 25–34 , 169–182; on the Master of San Martino alla Palma, see 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), 13 –14, 71–166.

[4] Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century,* sec. 3, vol. 9, *The Miniaturist Tendency* (Florence, 1984), 337–338; Silvia Giorgi, in *Galleria Nazionale di Parma*, vol. 1, *Catalogo delle opere dall'antico al Cinquecento*, ed. Lucia Fornari Schianchi (Milan, 1997), 41–43.

[5] See, respectively, Richard Offner and Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 4, *Bernardo Daddi, His Shop and Following*, new ed. (Florence, 1991), 216–220, 315–321, 262–269, 302–304; Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 8, *Workshop of Bernardo Daddi* (New York, 1958), 20–21.

[6] Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 9, *The Miniaturist Tendency* (Florence, 1984), 354–355; Richard Offner, Miklós Boskovits, and Enrica Neri Lusanna, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 3, *The Works of Bernardo Daddi*, new ed. (Florence, 1989), 212–221.

[7] This altarpiece was supposed to have been painted for the church of San Pancrazio, Florence, where it was seen by Vasari and later sources; Paula Spilner and Anna Padoa Rizzo discovered its original destination for the Duomo. See Richard Offner, Miklós Boskovits, and Enrica Neri Lusanna, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 3, *The Works of Bernardo Daddi*, new ed. (Florence, 1989), 231–307.

[8] 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), 209–220; Richard Offner, Miklós Boskovits, and Enrica Neri Lusanna, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 3, *The Works of Bernardo Daddi*, new ed. (Florence, 1989), 312–349.

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[9] Richard Offner, Miklós Boskovits, and Enrica Neri Lusanna, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century*, sec. 3, vol. 3, *The Works of Bernardo Daddi*, new ed. (Florence, 1989), 22.

Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011)

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