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

Simone Martini
Sienese, active from 1315; died 1344

The Angel of the Annunciation

c. 1330

tempera on poplar panel
painted surface (on recto): 29.5 x 20.5 cm (11 5/8 x 8 1/16 in.)
overall: 31 x 21.5 cm (12 3/16 x 8 7/16 in.)
painted surface (gesso ground on verso): 21 x 30.2 cm (8 1/4 x 11 7/8 in.)
framed: 54.6 x 32.9 x 4.1 cm (21 1/2 x 12 15/16 x 1 5/8 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection 1939.1.216

ENTRY

The painting represents the archangel Gabriel, who announces the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. [1] It clearly presupposes a complementary image of the Virgin Annunciate in a separate panel, which in fact has always been recognized in the Virgin Annunciate now in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg [fig. 1]. The latter, identical to the Washington panel in format and in its ornamental punched decoration, comes from the Roman collection of Count Gregory Stroganoff (1829–1910) and entered the Hermitage after the collector's death. [2] The two halves of the diptych probably were separated in the nineteenth century, given that the very similar state of conservation of the two panels suggests a similar fate: the paint surface of both was ruined by drastic overcleaning, probably at the time of their separation in the mid-nineteenth century, when they appeared on the Italian art market.

In 1901, when it was still in the Stroganoff collection in Rome, [3] Giovanni Bernardini recognized the Virgin Annunciate now in Russia, albeit with some uncertainty, as an autograph work by Simone Martini. It was almost unanimously [4] recognized as a work by the Sienese master after its display at *Mostra dell'antica arte senese* in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena in 1904. Lionello Venturi then identified the image of the Angel of the Annunciation as the companion panel of the former Stroganoff Virgin Annunciate in 1935. [5] Venturi's opinion was confirmed in manuscript opinions by Adolfo Venturi, F. Mason Perkins (both without date), Giuseppe Fiocco, and Wilhelm Suida (both dated 1938). [6] The first catalog

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of the National Gallery of Art (1941) also accepted the attribution to Simone Martini, citing a written expertise by Roberto Longhi, who confirmed Simone's authorship, and the opinion of Bernard Berenson, who rejected the attribution. [7] In the subsequent literature opinions were divided: numerous publications accepted the attribution to Simone, [8] even if many scholars preferred to speak of a product of the artist's shop or at any rate showed some uncertainty about its autograph status. [9] Some even proposed alternative names for its artist. [10]

Rarely, however, has the problem of the diptych now divided between St. Petersburg and Washington been addressed in any systematic or analytic fashion. Art historians have mainly limited themselves to brief and categorical statements, without carefully weighing the evidence. In my view, it is precisely this superficial examination of the two panels, combined with the difficulties of evaluating them because of the marked abrasion of their paint surfaces, which accounts for the uncertainties in their attribution and date.

Almost all those who have cited the small panel in the Gallery and its companion, irrespective of their opinion regarding the attribution of the work, have agreed in assigning the two paintings to the years of Simone's residence in Avignon. But its Avignonese origin has been asserted rather than proved, as if the profusion of gold, elaborate punched ornamental decoration, and refined elegance of poses were in themselves sufficient evidence that the two paintings belonged to the final phase in the art of Simone Martini—that is, to the period of his maximum exposure to the tendencies of the transalpine Gothic in such a flourishing cultural center as Avignon was at the time. Sometimes, however, pertinent observations apparently contradicting such an interpretation have been made. Fern Rusk Shapley (1966), for example, concluded her comment on the Gallery's painting by declaring, "The style is, in any case, very close to that of Simone's *Annunciation* of 1333, in the Uffizi"; and Andrew Martindale (1988), one of the few scholars to dedicate a thorough analysis to the style and form of the panels that concern us here, observed that the immensely elegant and elongated figure of Mary had more in common with the Virgin of the San Ansano altar (that is, the Annunciation in the Uffizi, Florence) than with that of the Holy Family (*Christ Discovered in the Temple*, dated 1342) in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and that "the images [of the St. Petersburg-Washington diptych]...lack the robustness which spans the differences even between the Avignon frescoes, the Ambrosiana Virgil and the Liverpool Holy Family." [11] Some objective data should also be taken into account: for example, as Brigitte Klesse (1967) pointed out, the pattern of the brocaded robe of the angel in

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the panel in the Gallery recurs in that of the corresponding figure in the Uffizi Annunciation. [12] Also, the punches used in the diptych divided between St. Petersburg and Washington frequently recur in the Annunciation now in Florence and in even earlier works, paintings that date to Simone's period in Orvieto, for example, but are seldom found in works that date to his Avignon period. [13]

To these observations, which prompt a reconsideration of the usual dating of the diptych, we can add others that similarly suggest that the two panels are indeed earlier than usually claimed. Let us first consider the St. Petersburg panel of the Virgin Annunciate. Of course, the elimination of the Virgin's throne especially would have been prompted by the need to press the figure of Mary, like the angel she confronts, into the foreground and bring her as close as possible to the spectator. But the swiveled pose of her body clearly echoes that of the Madonna of the Annunciation in the Uffizi (apparently the model that other Sienese paintings, such as the Virgin Annunciate formerly in the Stoclet collection, imitate) [14] and not that of the small panel in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp. [15] The same may be said of the motif of the book held half-open by Mary, her finger inserted between its pages as an improvised bookmark, and of the proportions of the Virgin herself. Her figure is characterized by the pronounced elongation of the bust and a smooth and placid contour formed of a succession of long, slightly crescent lines, carefully avoiding any disturbing agitation of the hem of her dress. A restless jagged cadence, by contrast, is a typical aspect of the panels now divided among the museums in Antwerp, Berlin, and Paris; of the illuminated frontispiece of the Virgil codex in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana; [16] and of *Christ Discovered in the Temple*, a panel signed and dated 1342, in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. [17]

Rather similar observations can be made about the Washington panel of the archangel Gabriel. In particular, the emphasis placed on the magnificent gold embroidered robe, as on the proud pose of the heavenly messenger, kneeling but only slightly bending forward as he proffers the olive branch with the tips of his fingers to the Virgin, underlines the resemblance of the image to its counterpart in the Uffizi. The face, with its mysterious expression accentuated by delicate slit eyes that create the impression that the archangel is looking furtively and yet probingly at Mary, and with his firmly clenched lips, may recall the face of the child Jesus in the Liverpool panel; however, the fluid cadence of the draperies, their large and sweeping folds animated only by the fluttering hem, seem to me to betray rather different intentions than those that inspired the artist during his period in Avignon.

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In the Angel of the Annunciation in Antwerp, for example, the artist no longer seeks to dazzle the spectator with the glitter of the exotic oriental silk brocade worn by Gabriel but prefers instead to play with the matching of delicate tones of pink and pale purple, highlighting the mantle with the archaic medium of chrysography, which articulates the folds and underlines the forms more distinctly than the transparent lacquers painted on gold. These aspects, together with the extraordinary elegance of the drawing, seem to me to confirm that the Gallery panel and its companion panel in St. Petersburg (which, as far as it is possible to judge from their existing state, were painted by the same hand) [18] belong to the catalog of Simone's autograph works, though to a phase preceding his journey to Avignon. That phase can be placed between the works executed in the early 1320s for Orvieto and the dated Uffizi Annunciation of 1333.

Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011)

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

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fig. 1 Simone Martini, *Virgin of the Annunciation*, c. 1330, tempera on panel, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg/Vladimir Terebinen, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets

NOTES

[1] Luke 1:26–38. For the iconography of the scene, cf. David M. Robb, "The Iconography of the Annunciation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *The Art Bulletin* 18 (1936): 480–526; Giacomo Prampolini, *L'annunciazione nei pittori primitivi italiani* (Milan, 1939); and the more recent studies by Julia Liebrich, *Die Verkündigung an Maria: Die Ikonographie der italienischen Darstellungen von den Anfängen bis 1500* (Cologne, 1997); and Daniel Arasse, *L'Annonciation italienne: Une histoire de perspective* (Paris, 1999). Marco Pierini's comment (2000) describing the archangel's mode of

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presenting himself to the Virgin, with his left hand placed on his breast, as a "posa quasi indolente" (almost indolent pose), is a misinterpretation of the image. This gesture is in fact far from rare (cf. Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Angel of the Annunciation* in the church of Montesiepi) and should be interpreted as an expression of sincerity and inwardness. Cf. Marco Pierini, *Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 2000), 207; Daniel Arasse, *L'Annonciation italienne: Une histoire de perspective* (Paris, 1999), 80–81; and François Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Age*, vol. 1, *Signification et symbolique* (Paris, 1982), 184–185.

[2] No. GE 284; 30.5 × 21.5 cm.

[3] Giovanni Bernardini (1901) wrote that the small panel was "forse da attribuire al grande artista senese" (perhaps to be attributed to the great Sienese artist), presumably echoing Stroganoff's own attribution. Giovanni Bernardini, "Alcuni dipinti della collezione del conte Stroganoff in Roma," *Rassegna d'arte* 1 (1901): 119. The painting was then exhibited in Siena in 1904 as no. 38 in Room XXVII, under the name of Simone. *Mostra dell'antica arte senese: Catalogo generale* (Siena, 1904), no. 38. The attribution was accepted by F. Mason Perkins (1904), Adolfo Venturi (1907), Robert Langton Douglas (1908), Bernard Berenson (1909), and others. See F. Mason Perkins, "La pittura alla mostra d'arte antica a Siena," *Rassegna d'arte* 4 (1904): 146; Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 5, *La pittura del Trecento e le sue origini* (Milan, 1907), 629; Robert Langton Douglas, in *A History of Painting in Italy from the Second to the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 3, *The Sienese, Umbrian, and North Italian Schools, by Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle* (London, 1908), 69 n. 2; Bernard Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1909), 252.

[4] George Martin Richter (1929) at first proposed the name of Paolo di Giovanni Fei for the panel now in St. Petersburg but later changed his mind (1941), attributing the painting instead to a "close follower" of Simone, perhaps to be identified with Donato Martini. Thereafter the two leaves of the diptych were mainly discussed together. Cf. George Martin Richter, "Simone Martini Problems," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 54 (1929): 171–173; George Martin Richter, "The New National Gallery in Washington," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 78 (1941): 177.

[5] Manuscript expertise dated July 2, 1935 (copy in NGA curatorial files).

[6] Copies of the opinions of Fiocco, Perkins, Suida, and Adolfo Venturi are in NGA curatorial files.

[7] National Gallery of Art, *Preliminary Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture* (Washington, DC, 1941), 184–185. Copies of the opinions of Bernard Berenson and Roberto Longhi are in NGA curatorial files.

[8] Michel Laclotte, *De Giotto à Bellini: Les primitifs italiens dans les musées de*

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France (Paris, 1956), 28; Michel Laclotte, *L'École d'Avignon: La peinture en Provence aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris, 1960), 32; Michel Laclotte and Dominique Thiébaut, *L'École d'Avignon* (Paris, 1983), 118 n. 10; François Enaud, "Les fresques de Simone Martini à Avignon," *Les monuments historiques de la France* 9 (1963): 163, 177 n. 161; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XIII–XV Century* (London, 1966), 48; Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central Italian and North Italian Schools*, 3 vols. (London, 1968), 2:405 (but since this is a posthumous edition of *Italian Pictures*, the opinion might be that of the editors and not of Berenson); Burton B. Fredericksen and Federico Zeri, *Census of Pre-Nineteenth-Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 122; Hendrik W. van Os and Marjan Rinkleff-Reinders, "De reconstructie van Simone Martini's zgn. Polyptiek van de Passie," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 23 (1972): 9; "Simone Martini o di Martino," in *Dizionario enciclopedico Bolaffi dei pittori e degli incisori italiani: Dall' XI al XX secolo*, ed. Alberto Bolaffi and Umberto Allemandi, 11 vols. (Turin, 1975), 10:325; Antonio Caleca, "Tre polittici di Lippo Memmi, un'ipotesi sul Barna e la bottega di Simone e Lippo, 2," *Critica d'arte* 42 (1977): 73; Dillian Gordon, "A Sienese verre eglomisé and Its Setting," *The Burlington Magazine* 123 (1981): 150; Svetlana Nikolaevna Vsevoložskaja, *Ermitage: Italienische Malerei, 13. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, trans. N. Gerassimowa (Leningrad, 1982), 264; Boris Piotrovsky and Irene Linnik, *Western European Painting in the Hermitage* (Leningrad, 1984), no. 1; Colin T. Eisler, *I dipinti dell'Ermitage* (Udine, 1991), 163; "Martini, Simone," in *Dizionario della pittura e dei pittori*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo and Bruno Toscano, 6 vols. (Turin, 1992), 3:526; Tatiana K. Kustodieva, *Italian Painting: Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, Catalogue of Western European Painting/The Hermitage* (Florence, 1994), 265; Andrew Martindale, "Martini, Simone," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, 34 vols. (New York, 1996), 20:509; Marco Pierini, "Martini, Simone," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome, 1997), 8:250; Marco Pierini, *Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 2000) 206–208, 242 nn. 30, 32; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 332, 333; Michela Becchis, "Martini, Simone," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome, 2008), 71:259; and of course the various Gallery catalogs.

[9] Giovanni Paccagnini, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 1955), 168–169; Enrico Castelnuovo, *Un pittore italiano alla corte di Avignone: Matteo Giovannetti e la pittura in Provenza nel secolo XIV* (Turin, 1962), 85–96; Wolfgang Kermer, *Studien zum Diptychon in der sakralen Malerei: Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (PhD diss., Eberhardt-Karls-Universität, Tübingen, 1967), 2:30; Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Bern, 1967), 244; Hendrik W. van Os, *Marias Demut und Verherrlichung in der sienesischen Malerei: 1300–1450* (The Hague, 1969), 47 n. 39; Maria Cristina Gozzoli, in *L'opera*

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completa di Simone Martini, by Gianfranco Contini and Maria Cristina Gozzoli (Milan, 1970), 106; Miklós Boskovits, "A Dismembered Polyptych, Lippo Vanni and Simone Martini," *The Burlington Magazine* 116 (1974): 367 n. 9; Mojmir Svatopluk Frinta, "Unsettling Evidence in Some Panel Paintings of Simone Martini," in *La pittura nel XIV e XV secolo, il contributo dell'analisi tecnica alla storia dell'arte*, ed. Hendrik W. van Os and J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer (Bologna, 1983), 216, 236; Mojmir Svatopluk Frinta, *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting* (Prague, 1998), 118, 247, 261, 298, 324, 333, 355, 377, 388, 446, 464; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, "Problemi martiniani avignonesi: Il 'Maestro degli angeli ribelli,' i due Ceccarelli ed altro," in *Simone Martini: Atti del convegno; Siena, March 27–29, 1985*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 225–226; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini: Catalogo completo dei dipinti* (Florence, 1989), 130–131; Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini* (Oxford, 1988), 60–61, 214–215; Piero Torriti, *Simone Martini* (Florence, 1991), 47; Ada Labriola, *Simone Martini e la pittura gotica a Siena: Duccio di Buoninsegna, Memmo di Filippuccio, Pietro Lorenzetti, Ugolino di Nerio, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Lippo Memmi, Matteo Giovanetti, Naddo Ceccarelli, Bartolomeo Bulgarini, Niccolò di ser Sozzo* (Florence, 2008), 82.

[10] George Martin Richter (1941) proposed an attribution to Donato Martini, brother of Simone (a virtually unknown artist, from whom no works have survived). Carlo Volpe (1955) wondered whether the painting, which he called a "documento mirabile," might not have been an early work by the young Matteo Giovannetti, the painter who seems to have become the leading master at the papal court in Avignon following Simone Martini's death. Subsequently, Cristina De Benedictis (1976, 1979) revived Richter's thesis and once again attributed the Washington Archangel to Donato, the author, in her view, of works hitherto grouped under the conventional name of Master of the Straus Madonna; cf. Monica Leoncini, "Maestro della Madonna Straus–Donato Martini," in *La Pittura in Italia: Il Duecento e il Trecento, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1986), 2:609–610. Enzo Carli (1981) and Grazia Neri (1997) accepted this proposal, and it was not excluded by Pierluigi Leone de Castris (1988, 1989), who in more recent years (2003) seems indeed to have wholly embraced it. See George Martin Richter, "The New National Gallery in Washington," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 78 (1941): 177; Carlo Volpe, "Un libro su Simone Martini, Review of Simone Martini by Giovanni Paccagnini," *Paragone* 6, no. 63 (1955): 52; Cristina De Benedictis, "Il Polittico della Passione di Simone Martini e una proposta per Donato," *Antichità viva* 15, no. 6 (1976): 5, 11 n. 20; Cristina De Benedictis, *La pittura senese 1330–1370* (Florence, 1979), 29; Enzo Carli, *La pittura senese del Trecento* (Milan, 1981), 125; Grazia Neri, "Maestro della Madonna Straus," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome, 1997), 8:101; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, "Problemi martiniani avignonesi: Il 'Maestro degli angeli ribelli,' i due Ceccarelli ed

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altro," in *Simone Martini: Atti del convegno; Siena, March 27–29, 1985*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 225–226; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini: Catalogo completo dei dipinti* (Florence, 1989), 130–131; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 332–333.

[11] Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XIII–XV Century* (London, 1966), 48; Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini* (Oxford, 1988), 214.

[12] Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Bern, 1967), 244.

[13] According to the important (though unfortunately not always sufficiently precise) repertoire of Mojmir Svatopluk Frinta, *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting* (Prague, 1998), the punches that decorate the panels of the Annunciation now divided between the Hermitage and the National Gallery of Art (namely, the motifs Frinta classified as "Da 10 a," "J 26 b," and "Jb 59") seldom recur in the Orsini quadriptych, a work often assigned to the artist's final phase. On the other hand, the same punches used in the Annunciation appear with some frequency in works executed by Simone for Orvieto ("Da 10 a," "Fea 19," "Gh 8," "I 86 c," "I 129a," "J26 b," and "Jb 59") presumably during the third decade; and often also in such paintings as the altarpiece of the Blessed Agostino Novello, now in the Pinacoteca in Siena, usually dated to the second half of the 1320s or after, or the Annunciation in the Uffizi, Florence, of 1333 ("Da 10 a," " Fea 19," "Gh 8," " I 86 c," "I 129 a," "J 26 b," and "Ka 30 b"). Erling Skaug, who at my request very kindly examined the punch marks of the Saint Petersburg-Washington diptych, wrote in a letter of September 16, 2006, "Most likely the many punches in the diptych that were not used in the Orvieto polyptych means that the diptych is later—perhaps only a little later," adding, "your suggestion of dating the diptych around 1330 seems just fine from the sphragiogical point of view."

[14] George Martin Richter, "Simone Martini Problems," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 54 (1929): 166–173, published the small former Stoclet painting (25 × 17 cm), now in a private collection in the United States, as a work by Simone, but art historians generally rejected the proposal, restated in more recent years in the album *Collection Adolphe Stoclet*, vol. 1, *Choix d'oeuvres appartenant à Madame Feron-Stoclet: Préface de Georges A. Salles,...Avant-propos de Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt* (Brussels, 1956), 86–88. In my view, the small panel, rarely cited in monographs on Simone (although cf. Contini and Gozzoli 1970, where it is considered as belonging "alla cerchia di Simone in senso lato" [in the circle of Simone in the broadest sense]), and sometimes referred to Naddo Ceccarelli (De Benedictis 1974), could be a product of the shop of Andrea di Vanni (Sienese, c. 1330 - 1413); in any case, it suggests that Sienese artists were familiar with the Hermitage-Gallery diptych. See Gianfranco Contini and Maria Cristina

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Gozzoli, *L'opera completa di Simone Martini* (Milan, 1970), 106; Cristina De Benedictis, "Naddo Ceccarelli," *Commentari* 25 (1974): 139–140.

[15] The panel in question is one of six small panels now divided among the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp (*Angel of the Annunciation* and *The Descent from the Cross*, originally on the back of the same panel; *Virgin Annunciate* and *Crucifixion*, originally on the back of the same panel); the Louvre, Paris (*The Carrying of the Cross to Calvary*); and the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (*The Entombment*). They were components of a folding altarpiece that bore the signature of Simone and the coats of arms of the Orsini family; cf. Hendrik W. van Os and Marjan Rinkleff-Reinders, "De reconstructie van Simone Martini's zgn. Polyptiek van de Passie," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 23 (1972): 13–26. Most scholars have considered this quadriptych a late work, executed c. 1335–1340, even though some have proposed a dating to the third decade or even earlier, such as Marco Pierini, *Simone Martini* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 2000), 206–208, 242 nn. 30, 32, and others; see Joseph Polzer, "Simone Martini's Orsini Folding Polyptych: Place of Origin and Date and Its Relation to the 1333 Uffizi Annunciation, 1," *Arte cristiana* 98, no. 860 (2010): 321–330; and Joseph Polzer, "Simone Martini's Orsini Folding Polyptych: Place of Origin and Date and Its Relation to the 1333 Uffizi Annunciation, 2," *Arte cristiana* 98, no. 861 (2010): 401–408. As far as I am able to see, however, stylistic evidence decisively contradicts this hypothesis.

[16] The title page of ms. A 79 inf. in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan was commissioned by Petrarch, as attested by an autograph note on the back, following the recovery in 1338 of the manuscript that had been stolen from him. Cf. Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen 1300–1450*, 8 vols. (Berlin, 1980–1990), 2, pt. 2:319–331; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 364.

[17] No. 2787. Cf. Julian Gardner, "The Back of the Panel of Christ Discovered in the Temple by Simone Martini," *Arte cristiana* 78 (1990): 389–398; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 364–365.

[18] On the occasion of the opening of the National Gallery of Art, Richard Offner expressed a withering judgment of the painting in a review he wrote for *Art News*, but the magazine preferred not to publish it (copy of the proofs in NGA curatorial files). Offner described "a superannuated pigment streaked over the outlines…[which] disfigures the fourteenth century original. The remaining surface seems to have been subjected to successive abrasions.… Hence, partly through modern additions, partly because they never were there, the shapes and the rhythms of Simone are nowhere in evidence." Of course, these lines reflect the panel's state in 1941, and we don't know what Offner thought after its cleaning in 1955 or whether his reservations about the *Angel of the Annunciation* also applied to the *Virgin Annunciate* in the Hermitage. Some art historians in more recent years have tried to identify

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stylistic differences between these two panels, such as Maria Cristina Gozzoli in *L'opera completa di Simone Martini*, by Gianfranco Contini and Maria Cristina Gozzoli (Milan, 1970), 106, who placed the Russian panel in Simone's catalog but believed the Washington panel a workshop product, detecting in it "un notevole scarto di qualità rispetto alle opere certe di Simone…tale da far pensare a un'esecuzione integralmente di bottega" (a notable drop in quality with respect to the certain works of Simone, sufficient to suggest its complete execution by the workshop). Subsequently, however, it seems that no other author has been able to identify—and the present writer decidedly rejects—any such disparity in quality between the two leaves of the diptych. Moreover, recent attempts to discriminate between autograph and workshop parts of the execution are disqualified from the start by the heavily abraded state of the surface of both panels. Cf. Grazia Neri, "Maestro della Madonna Straus," in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome, 1997), 8:101; Pierluigi Leone De Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan, 2003), 332–333, 365. Such a discrimination or division of hands is in any case implausible in the case of these small paintings for private devotion, which, to judge from their sumptuous execution—lavish in gold leaf—must have been destined for high-ranking patrons.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support is a single, vertically grained poplar panel [1] on which fine fabric has been applied on both sides. Both the obverse and the reverse were prepared with a gesso ground on which a thin layer of red bole was laid; this in turn was overlaid on the obverse by gold leaf. The main lines of the figure were incised in the gesso preparation. The designs of the brocade were realized with sgraffito technique; the halo and the decorative borders were punched. The paint, with the exception of the flesh, was laid over the gold leaf. [2] The feathers of the angel's wings were articulated with incised lines. The flesh tones were applied over a green underlayer. The reverse, also decorated by punch marks [fig. 1], was originally gilded with silver. [3] The panel exhibits a very slight convex warp and is damaged by a crack running downward from the center of the top edge for approximately 10 cm. The engaged frame of the panel is lost, and the part of the wooden support it covered is exposed on all sides. There are small losses in the gold ground and in the painted surface along the edges. The paint and glazes are generally very abraded. Inpainting can be noted in the angel's right hand, in his face, and in the red floor. The painting is said to have been "cleaned, restored slightly and

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varnished" by Stephen Pichetto in 1936. [4] Photographs made between 1937 and 1955 show it, however, in heavily repainted state [fig. 2]. Mario Modestini removed the overpaint and restored the panel again in 1955. [5]

TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 Reverse, Simone Martini, *The Angel of the Annunciation*, c. 1330, tempera on poplar, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

fig. 2 Archival photograph, 1945, old state, Simone Martini, *The Angel of the Annunciation*, c. 1330, tempera on poplar, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

TECHNICAL NOTES

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[1] The NGA scientific research department identified the wood as poplar (see report dated September 16, 1988, in NGA conservation files).

[2] The restorer of the Uffizi Annunciation, executed in 1333 for Siena Cathedral in collaboration with Lippo Memmi (Sienese, active 1317/1347), observed a similar technical procedure; see Alfio Del Serra, "Il restauro," in *Simone Martini e l'Annunciazione degli Uffizi*, ed. Alessandro Cecchi (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 2001), 77–114, in particular 81 and fig. 5. On the use of sgraffito technique in Sienese Trecento painting, see Norman E. Muller, "The Development of Sgraffito in Sienese Painting in Simone Martini," in *Simone Martini: Atti del convegno; Siena, 27–29 marzo 1985*, ed. Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 147–150, according to whom this technique became common only in the second half of the century.

[3] The NGA scientific research department analyzed the reverse of the painting using x-ray fluorescence spectometry (XRF). Strong peaks for silver were found (see report dated February 29, 2012, in NGA conservation files).

[4] Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:431 n. 6.

[5] The information on Pichetto's treatment seems to have been confirmed by Lionello Venturi's letter to the restorer, dated February 1936 (copy in NGA curatorial files), reporting the discovery of the panel discussed here. Evidently, soon afterward it was handed over to Pichetto for "putting in order." The "Condition and Restoration Records" of the Samuel H. Kress Collection (copy in NGA curatorial files) also mention "some restoration" carried out by Pichetto, adding, "1955 . . . M. Modestini removed the varnish and all of the overpaints. . . . The cleaning disclosed that considerable original paint had been overcleaned several centuries ago." For the testimony of such an acute observer as Richard Offner on the painting's state at the time of its arrival in the National Gallery of Art, see Entry note 18.

PROVENANCE

Charles John Canning, 2nd Viscount Canning and later 1st Earl Canning [1812-1862]; by bequest to his sister, Harriet Canning de Burgh [1804-1876], Marchioness of Clanricarde; by inheritance to her daughter, Margaret Anne de Burgh Beaumont [1831-1888]; probably by inheritance to her son, Wentworth Canning Blackett Beaumont, 1st Viscount Allendale [1860-1923];[1] said to have been in the collection of Henry George Charles Lascelles, 6th earl of Harewood [1882-1947], Harewood House, Leeds, Yorkshire;[2] Lionello Venturi [1895-1961], New York;[3] sold 1936 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York;[4] gift 1939 to NGA.

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[1] The back of the painting bears a paper label printed with a coat of arms with three Moors' heads in profile and the coronet of a viscount above. Underneath is painted the name CANNING. As Ellis Waterhouse's note of 1980 (in NGA curatorial files) informed the Gallery, this can only refer to Charles John Canning; on Canning see also Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire*, 24th ed., London, 1862: 171.

The paper label also is inscribed with the handwritten name of Lady Margaret Beaumont and the number 32. According to Waterhouse's note, this can only be Margaret Anne de Burgh, daughter of Ulick John de Burgh, 1st Marquess of Clanricarde, and of Harriet Canning, sister and heir of Charles John Canning. Margaret Anne married Wentworth Blackett Beaumont (1829-1907) in 1856. The painting probably was inherited by their son, Wentworth Canning Blackett Beaumont.

[2] Lascelles is named in Lionello Venturi's February 1936 letter to the restorer Stephen Pichetto (copy in NGA curatorial files) as the person from whom "about two years ago," i.e., in c. 1934, the painting was acquired by the unnamed person (Venturi) who owned it in February 1936. Lascelles was a grandson of Lady Elizabeth Joanna de Burgh (a sister of Margaret Anne de Burgh Beaumont), who had married Henry Thynne Lascelles, 4th earl Harewood, who became the heir of Elizabeth's and Margaret's unmarried brother, Herbert George de Burgh-Canning, 2nd (and last) marquess of Clanricarde. However, according to Ellis Waterhouse (see note 1) the Washington panel "didn't belong ever to the Earl of Harewood (it was one of the few Clanricarde pictures which didn't)." Indeed, the panel is not included in Tancred Borenius' catalogue of the Harewood collection; the introduction indicates that the 2nd marquess of Clanricarde bequeathed to Lascelles mainly pictures by English eighteenth-century masters; see Tancred Borenius, *Catalogue of the pictures and drawings at Harewood House and elswhere in the collection of the Earl of Harewood*, Oxford, 1936: vii.

[3] Fern Rusk Shapley (*Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1979: 1:431) states that Venturi sold the panel to Samuel H. Kress in 1936.

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[4] See also The Kress Collection Digital Archive, https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/2058.

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