

MITTEILUNGEN
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN
INSTITUTES
IN FLORENZ



LXV. BAND — 2023
HEFT 2/3



LXV. BAND — 2023

HEFT 2/3

MITTEILUNGEN DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTES IN FLORENZ

Inhalt | Contenuto

Redaktionskomitee | Comitato di redazione
Alessandro Nova, Gerhard Wolf, Samuel Vitali

Redakteur | Redattore
Samuel Vitali

Redaktionsassistent, Editing und Herstellung |
Assistenza di redazione, editing e impaginazione
Ortensia Martinez Fucini, Giada Policicchio

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
Max-Planck-Institut
Via G. Giusti 44, I-50121 Firenze
Tel. 055.2491147, Fax 055.2491155
s.vitali@khi.fi.it – martinez@khi.fi.it
www.khi.fi.it/publikationen/mitteilungen

Graphik | Progetto grafico
RovaiWeber design, Firenze

Produktion | Produzione
Centro Di edizioni, Firenze

Die *Mitteilungen* erscheinen jährlich in drei Heften und können im Abonnement oder in Einzelheften bezogen werden durch | Le *Mitteilungen* escono con cadenza quadrimestrale e possono essere ordinate in abbonamento o singolarmente presso:
Centro Di edizioni, Via dei Renai 20r
I-50125 Firenze, Tel. 055.2342666,
edizioni@centrodi.it; www.centrodi.it.

Preis | Prezzo

Einzelheft | Fascicolo singolo:
€ 30 (plus Porto | più costi di spedizione)
Jahresabonnement | Abbonamento annuale:
€ 90 (Italia); € 120 (Ausland | estero)

Die Mitglieder des Vereins zur Förderung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz (Max-Planck-Institut) e. V. erhalten die Zeitschrift kostenlos. I membri del Verein zur Förderung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz (Max-Planck-Institut) e. V. ricevono la rivista gratuitamente.

Adresse des Vereins | Indirizzo del Verein:
c/o Schuhmann Rechtsanwälte
Ludwigstraße 8
D-80539 München
foerderverein@khi.fi.it; www.khi.fi.it/foerderverein

Die alten Jahrgänge der *Mitteilungen* sind für Subskribenten online abrufbar über JSTOR (www.jstor.org).
Le precedenti annate delle *Mitteilungen* sono accessibili online su JSTOR (www.jstor.org) per gli abbonati al servizio.

_ Aufsätze _ Saggi

_ 139 _ *Alison Wright*
Compelling radiance: Fra Angelico's Shine

_ 173 _ *Jack Wasserman*
Brunelleschi and Michelozzo: The Chapel of Cosmas and Damian and the Old Sacristy in the Church of San Lorenzo, Florence

_ 203 _ *Maddalena Spagnolo*
L'abside della discordia: Parmigianino, Giulio Romano e Anselmi alla Steccata

_ 235 _ *Lunarita Sterpetti*
Ottaviano de' Medici e la sua collezione: arte e politica tra repubblica e ducato

_ 271 _ *Francesco Saracino*
Cristo fonte di vita. Un'invenzione 'spirituale' di Baccio Bandinelli

_ 295 _ *Rafael Japón, Silvio Balloni*
I Ginori in Spagna e Portogallo tra XVII e XVIII secolo: commercio globale, diplomazia artistica e collezionismo tra Italia e Penisola Iberica

_ Miszellen _ Appunti

_ 321 _ *Marco Scansani*
Una conferma per Pietro Lombardo a Bologna

_ 331 _ *Christa Gardner von Teuffel*
Botticelli, Ugolino di Nerio and a Sassetti Memorial Portrait: A New Proposal

_ Nachrufe _ Necrologi

_ 341 _ *Peter Tigler*
Wolfgang Wolters

Botticelli, Ugolino di Nerio and a Sassetti Memorial Portrait A New Proposal

Christa Gardner von Teuffel

On 28 January 2021 Sandro Botticelli's *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel* (Fig. 1) was sold by Sotheby's in New York.¹ Over the last decades this painting has provoked much discussion. Some major questions have been resolved, helped by the technical study published in the special catalogue dedicated to this sale lot, whilst others, equally, if not more important, would seem to require further investigation.

What prompted Botticelli to insert a fragment of a Sienese fourteenth-century panel painting (Fig. 2) into his portrait of a fashionable Quattrocento Florentine? Furthermore, what could the earlier, incomplete sacred figure have meant, either for the adolescent portrayed, or the portrait's patron? And what might their joint depiction have meant for a contemporary viewer? These questions invite investigation, as apparently no documentation on the painting survives. The new proposals presented here will, if correct, deepen our understanding of Botticelli's

enigmatic masterpiece and suggest a possible identification of the sitter and the portrait's commissioner. Furthermore, they may confront us with the only fragment of Ugolino di Nerio's famous high altarpiece for Santa Maria Novella in Florence so far identified.

The technical study by Matthew Hayes and Karen E. Thomas published in the sale's catalogue proves that Botticelli himself had inserted a roundel into the poplar support of his portrait by carving out an appropriate circular cavity.² The material examination could not definitively establish if the extant fragment has been originally included by Botticelli or, as has been claimed in the past, if it has been substituted in the nineteenth or early twentieth century for another object, such as the picture of a young woman, an icon, a plaster medal, or a mirror.³ However, all these options lack convincing arguments in their favour: it is in fact highly improbable that a modern

¹ *Botticelli: Renaissance Man*, auction cat. Sotheby's, New York, 28 January 2021, with full bibliography. I thank Alex Bell, London, for providing me with the catalogue and images. The lot is also available on <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/master-paintings-sculpture-part-i/portrait-of-a-young-man-holding-a-roundel?locale=en> (accessed on 8 August 2023).

² Matthew Hayes/Karen E. Thomas, "The Materials and Making of Botticelli's Young Man Holding a Roundel", in: *Botticelli* (note 1), pp. 78–95: 94, Fig. 38.

³ Alexander Nagel/Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York 2010, pp. 115–122, 395–397, succinctly summarise the different proposals. Among these, see especially David Alan Brown, in: *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, exh. cat. Washington 2001, ed. by *idem*, Princeton 2001, pp. 177–179, no. 26, who assumed the replacement of a lover's portrait, followed by Anna

Rühl, in: *Botticelli: Bildnis, Mythos, Andacht*, exh. cat. Frankfurt 2009, ed. by Andreas Schumacher *et al.*, Ostfildern 2009, pp. 198–201, no. 19. Nagel and Wood, as well as recently Alexander Nagel, "Conversations Across Time: Botticelli's Young Man Holding a Roundel", in: *Botticelli* (note 1), pp. 68–75, somewhat misleadingly address the roundel as an "icon", a position taken up by Rebecca Moore Howard, "A Mnemonic Reading of Botticelli's Portrait of a Man with a Medal", in: *Source*, XXXVIII (2019), pp. 196–205, and Simona Moretti/Lucrezia Sozzè/Marta Teruzzi, "Collezionare Bisanzio in Italia nel XV secolo", in: *Sulle vie del collezionismo: saggi per la storia della critica d'arte*, ed. by Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, Milan 2021, pp. 59–85. However, for an authoritative definition of the icon consult Thomas F. Mathews, "The Origin of Icons", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Art and Architecture*, ed. by Ellen C. Schwartz, New York 2021, pp. 23–29. See further Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1990, p. 469.



1 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel*. Private collection

restoration should replace an original insertion with an object that at first glance seems so inappropriate in a Renaissance portrait. Hayes and Thomas, moreover, could not detect any traces of a later removal and thus conclude that – according to the principle of Occam’s razor – “the integrity of the existing arrangement reflects the simplest solution”.⁴

Botticelli’s portrait is painted on a poplar panel which has a vertical grain, and its pictorial surface is extremely well preserved. The Trecento insertion also comes from a vertically grained panel, but it has obviously suffered considerably during its extraction from its original context. It was then thinned down, as the wormholes, clearly revealed by the X-rays, show (Fig. 3). It was subsequently cut to a round shape, the damaged edges were repaired, its surface was partly re-gilded, and the original incised vertical lines and the circular blind punches were all strengthened. The modern retouching observed by the conservators’ report at the edges of the roundel⁵ is certainly due to the fact that the two different pieces of wood have moved very slightly over the years. The vertical incised bands decorated with quatrefoil and plain circular punches which flank the figure, still clearly visible on the left side, must, however, be original, as incisions and punches could not have been successfully tooled into older, dried, and hardened *gesso*. In its original context this original punched decoration probably bordered a frame, a slender wooden column or moulding.

These technical observations exclude, with near certainty, the possibility that the inserted roundel was originally a tondo or a spandrel decoration of the type chosen by Ugolino di Nerio for his Santa Croce high altarpiece, as the surviving spandrel fragment now in Los Angeles testifies.⁶ Instead, a frontal figure, probably once full-length, that occupied a rectangular compartment, perhaps located in a predella or, less likely, a lateral pilaster, was cut to shape. Examples for both hypotheses can be found. The front predella of Duccio’s *Maestà* of 1311, destined for Siena cathedral, alternates standing prophets and christological scenes (Fig. 4).⁷ While a predella commonly consists of a horizontal plank forming the front of a box – as did the predella of Duccio’s *Maestà* –, scenes or figures painted on vertically



2 Ugolino di Nerio (attr.),
Prophet, detail of Fig. 1

grained wood, such as the prophet roundel, or on a laminated support also survive; for the latter, Pietro Lorenzetti’s Carmelite polyptych provides a contemporary Siense example.⁸ Lorenzetti’s preceding contract of 1320 for the high altarpiece of the pieve at Arezzo documents now lost lateral pilasters or, more accurately, buttress figures.⁹

⁴ Hayes/Thomas (note 2), p. 94.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ For the Santa Croce altarpiece, see Stefan Weppelmann, “Geschichten auf Gold in neuem Licht: Das Hochaltarretabel aus der Franziskanerkirche Santa Croce”, in: *Geschichten auf Gold: Bilderzählungen in der frühen italienischen Malerei*, exh. cat., ed. by *idem*, Berlin 2005, pp. 26–50, reviewed by Christa Gardner von Teuffel, “Stories in Gold: Berlin”, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLVIII (2006), pp. 217–220; moreover, it is discussed in detail by Dillian Gordon, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Italian Paintings before 1400*, London 2011, pp. 430–477: 465.

⁷ For the *Maestà*, see Giovanna Ragionieri, in: *Duccio: alle origini della pit-*

tura senese, exh. cat. Siena 2003/04, ed. by Alessandro Bagnoli *et al.*, Milan 2003, pp. 208–233, no. 32, and Gordon (note 6), pp. 154–187.

⁸ Christa Gardner von Teuffel, “The Carmelite Altarpiece (circa 1290–1350): Self-Identification of an Order”, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LVII (2015), pp. 3–41: 16, note 76 for the reconstruction.

⁹ *Eadem*, “The Buttressed Altarpiece: A Forgotten Aspect of Tuscan Fourteenth-Century Altarpiece Design”, in: *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XXI (1979), pp. 21–65: 46, reprinted and annotated in: *eadem*, *From Duccio’s Maestà to Raphael’s Transfiguration: Italian Altarpieces and their Settings*, London 2005, pp. 119–182, 622–628: 125–127, 623.



3 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel*, X-ray image. Private collection

¹⁰ *Italian Art and Britain: Winter Exhibition 1960*, exh. cat., London 1960, p. 127f., no. 345 (with reference to Offner's verbal communication); Richard Stapleford, "Botticelli's Portrait of a Young Man With a Trecento Medaillon", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXIX (1987), pp. 428–436; Judith Steinhoff-Morrison, *Bartolomeo Bulgarini and Siene Painting of the Mid-Fourteenth Century*, Ph.D diss., Princeton University 1990, pp. 354–357; "Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi, Called Sandro Botticelli, Portrait of Young Man Holding a Roundel", in: *Botticelli* (note 1), pp. 16–41: 31f.

¹¹ Listed under "Maestro d'Ovile (= Ugolino Lorenzetti)" and well reproduced in Piero Torriti, *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena: i dipinti dal XII al XV secolo*, Genoa 1977, pp. 134f.

¹² The simple circular punch used in the inserted roundel is too commonly used a shape to assist serious identification of a specific artist or shop. See Mojmir S. Frinta, *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting: Part I, Catalogue Raisonné of all Punch Shapes*, Prague 1998, p. 90. For Bulgarini's punch marks, see Erling S. Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico: Attribution, Chronology, and Workshop Relationships in Tuscan Panel Painting, with*

Based on Richard Offner's initial attribution to the Ovile Master, Richard Stapleford, Judith Steinhoff-Morrison, and the anonymous author of the entry in Sotheby's sale catalogue have considered the tondo a work by Bartolomeo Bulgarini (active 1337–1379?), a pupil of Ugolino di Nerio.¹⁰ Bulgarini's triptych from San Bartolomeo in Sestano, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale at Siena, may go some way towards explaining their attribution.¹¹ However, even that work evidences that Bulgarini preferred more voluminous figures and complicated punches.¹² As most of Bartolomeo's documented altar paintings no longer survive in their original format, it is correspondingly difficult to assess his career and style. He is now best known for his dismembered altarpiece of the *Nativity of Christ* flanked by Saints Victor and Corona from Siena cathedral, the carpentry of which was paid for in 1351.¹³ The difficulties of characterising Bulgarini's style are directly reflected in the attributional history of his paintings. Bernard Berenson initially gathered one group together under the invented name of Ugolino Lorenzetti, consciously intended to indicate the mixed origins of the panels' style.¹⁴ Ernst De Wald subsequently assembled another group, which he attributed to the Master of the Ovile Madonna, and both groupings were finally combined by Millard Meiss under the name of Bartolomeo Bulgarini, who received his first monographic treatment in 1989 by Judith Steinhoff-Morrison.¹⁵

For Florence, Bulgarini produced, as far as I am aware, only a minor polyptych for the Covoni family in Santa Croce.¹⁶ Stapleford and Steinhoff-Morrison have suggested that this altarpiece, probably dating from the 1340s, was the tondo's original context.¹⁷ Yet according to Vasari it was still *in situ* during his lifetime,¹⁸ which renders any earlier extraction of the roundel unlikely.

The haloed figure in his tight, grey-blue drapery with his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing is most likely a prophet.

Particular Consideration to Florence, c. 1330–1430, Oslo 1994, I, pp. 249–256.

¹³ For a good synthesis, see Monika Butzek, "Le pale di Sant'Ansano e degli altri protettori della città nel Duomo di Siena: una storia documentaria", in: *Simone Martini e l'Annunciazione degli Uffizi*, ed. by Alessandro Cecchi, Cinisello Balsamo 2001, pp. 35–59: 38.

¹⁴ Bernard Berenson, "Ugolino Lorenzetti", in: *Art in America*, V (1916/17), pp. 259–275, VI (1917/18), pp. 25–52.

¹⁵ Ernst T. De Wald, "The Master of the Ovile Madonna", in: *Art Studies*, I (1923), pp. 45–54; Millard Meiss, "Ugolino Lorenzetti", in: *The Art Bulletin*, XIII (1931), pp. 376–397, and *idem*, "Bartolommeo Bulgarini altrimenti detto Ugolino Lorenzetti?", in: *Rivista d'Arte*, XVIII (1936), pp. 113–136; Steinhoff-Morrison (note 10).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 341–350.

¹⁷ Stapleford (note 10), p. 432; Steinhoff-Morrison (note 10), p. 356.

¹⁸ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1558*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1997, II, p. 147.



4 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Isaiah, Nativity of Christ, Ezekiel*. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

He can convincingly be compared to the bearded figures, including the smaller quatrefoil heads, in the surviving main panels of Ugolino di Nerio's altarpiece for Santa Croce, now in the Gemäldegalerie at Berlin.¹⁹ The characteristic facial features, the light, dense brush strokes building up the long beard, the undulating hair framing the face, the furrowed forehead, and the alert, intense gaze all recur in the prophets David and Isaiah by Ugolino, originating from the same Franciscan polyptych and now in the National Gallery, London (Figs. 5, 6).²⁰ Following typical Sienese practice, greenish underpaint was used for the flesh areas and red bole to prepare the water gilding of the gold ground. The prophet's garment in the Botticelli portrait, rendered with numerous fine brushstrokes, resembles the cloak of the resurrected Christ in the predella scene from Santa Croce, also in London (Fig. 7).²¹ The prophet's emphatic speaking or blessing gesture recurs in another *Isaiah* fragment in Dublin, plausibly attributed to Ugolino.²² This gestural reper-

toire points towards the painter's familiarity with panels produced by Duccio and his flourishing Sienese workshop.²³

Based on such stylistic similarities, I propose that the roundel of outstanding workmanship inserted in Botticelli's portrait should be dated considerably earlier, probably to the 1320s, and that it can therefore be more convincingly attributed to Ugolino di Nerio, who is documented in Siena between 1317 and circa 1329. Therefore, the fragment would most likely originate from an altarpiece by Ugolino, who created two grand, multi-storeyed polyptychs for the main altars of two competing mendicant houses in Florence, Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce.²⁴ Both polyptychs were later removed from their original sites and dismembered. As many of the most important components of the Franciscan heptptych, which is recorded in a drawing attributed to Humbert de Superville of 1785–1789,²⁵ survive, the prophet roundel more likely originated from Ugolino's slightly earlier Dominican polyptych from Santa Maria Novella. From this

¹⁹ For images see Weppelmann (note 6) and Gordon (note 6), p. 471.

²⁰ See *ibidem*, pp. 456–463.

²¹ Gordon (note 6), p. 443.

²² For this painting, see *National Gallery of Ireland: Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Paintings*, ed. by Homan Potterton, Dublin 1981, p. 167, no. 1112.

²³ Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 18f., for general but vague comment.

²⁴ Joanna Cannon, "Simone Martini, the Dominicans and the Early

Sienese Polyptych", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLV (1982), pp. 69–93: 87–91, remains fundamental. Once removed from the high altar, the fate of the altarpiece cannot be traced with complete accuracy; see further *eadem*, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches: Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn./London 2013, pp. 140, 144, 159, 215. For the Santa Croce altarpiece see note 6.

²⁵ Weppelmann (note 6), p. 29 for the drawing and pp. 44f. for the author's suggestive reconstruction.



5 Ugolino di Nerio,
David. London,
The National Gallery

6 Ugolino di Nerio,
Isaiah. London,
The National Gallery

altarpiece, which is poorly documented in the written sources, no surviving fragments have so far been identified. Ugolino exported, it seems, major innovations of Duccio's magnificent *Maestà* from Siena to Florence. After the erection of his polyptych in Santa Maria Novella, a sumptuous textile paliotto, or altar-frontal, was commissioned circa 1336 from Jacopo di Cambio for the same high altar.²⁶ By alternating standing figures and narrative scenes in the upper storey, it may well have followed the composi-

tion of Ugolino's predella, in turn modelled on Duccio's example (Fig. 4). If this hypothesis is correct, the fragment in Botticelli's portrait might originate from a standing figure in the predella of the Santa Maria Novella high altarpiece.

According to the *Necrologio* of Santa Maria Novella, Fra Baro Sassetti, previously twice sub-prior of the convent, commissioned the high altarpiece before 1324, probably financing it with his family's money.²⁷ According to Francesco Sassetti's

²⁶ Ada Labriola, "Jacopo di Cambio", in: *Giotto: bilancio critico di sessant'anni di studi e ricerche*, exh. cat., ed. by Angelo Tartuferi, Florence 2000, pp. 224–227.

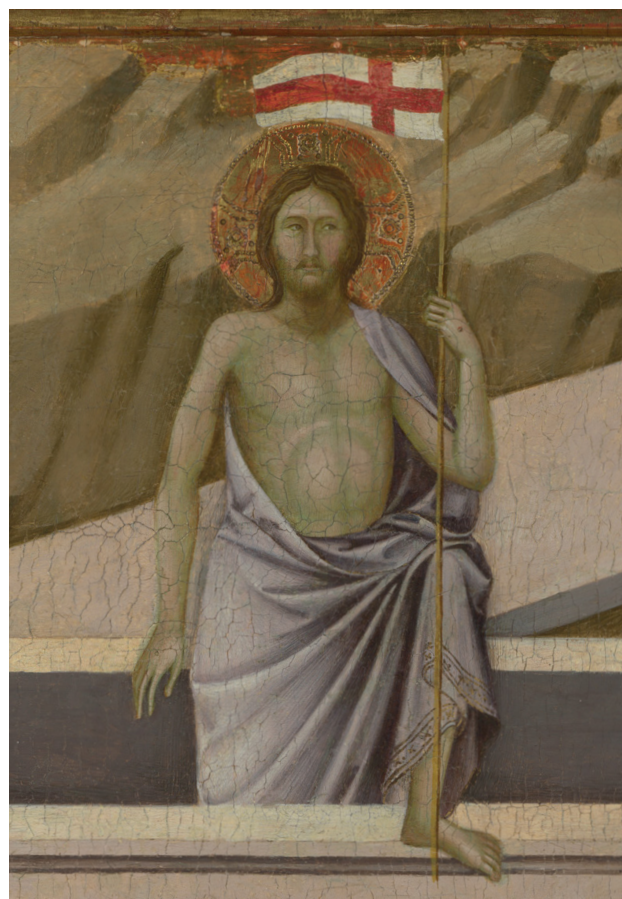
²⁷ *Necrologio di S. Maria Novella* [...], ed. by Stefano Orlandi, Florence 1955, I, p. 40. Delphine Carron/Iñigo Atucha/Anna Pegoretti, "Chronologie

de Santa Maria Novella (1291–1319)", in: *The Dominicans and the Making of Florentine Cultural Identity (13th–14th Centuries)*, ed. by Johannes Bartuschat/Elisa Brilli/Delphine Carron, Florence 2020, pp. 23–52: 35, 42, 47, also document "Baro de parentela Sasetorum".

1488 will, the polyptych bore the family's coat-of-arms, and in the words of the family's early seventeenth-century chronicler Francesco di Giambattista Sassetti it proclaimed the "onore di nostra casa" and "nostra antichità".²⁸ The family also possessed several tombs, among them a prestigious *avello* in the old cemetery of the Dominican church.²⁹

In the following years, the friars repeatedly requested the Sassetti, as benefactors of the high altar, not as patrons of the choir chapel, to care for and contribute to the upkeep of the precious and fragile high altarpiece.³⁰ The family therefore considered providing funds for a protective cover, the "copertorio dicte tabulae" in 1429.³¹ By the later Quattrocento Francesco Sassetti was finally prepared to act, to care for his family's esteemed high altarpiece and also to re-decorate the walls of the main choir chapel. His condition was that he could have a cycle of his name-Saint Francis frescoed in the main chapel.³² Unsurprisingly, the Dominicans promptly refused, and his more assertive and wealthier rival, Giovanni Tornabuoni, who belonged to the Tornaquinci *consorteria*, took over the re-furbishment of the presbytery.³³ Contemporaneously, and certainly before October 1486, when Tornabuoni was granted the comprehensive patronage rights for the entire chapel, including altar, walls, and windows, the Sassetti polyptych must have been removed from the high altar, perhaps shifted into the chapterhouse and subsequently the convent, and has apparently been totally lost since the nineteenth century.³⁴

This drastic removal must have caused the separation of some frame elements, such as predella and lateral buttresses, gables and spandrels, not only to facilitate the move but also to adjust the altarpiece to a less important, less spacious setting. Crucially, it could have provided an obvious opportunity for the donor family to remove the small panel from its original setting. Shortly afterwards Francesco Sassetti acquired a burial chapel, dedicated to Saint Francis and the Nativity, in the nearby Vallombrosan monastery church of Santa Trinita, which was also located close to his family palace.³⁵ After his return from Rome in 1482, Domenico Ghirlandaio, who had already elaborated the chapel programme in several drawings, was



7 Ugolino di Nerio,
Resurrection. London,
The National Gallery

²⁸ Aby Warburg, "Francesco Sassettis letztwillige Verfügung", in: *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge: August Schmarsow gewidmet zum 50. Semester s. akad. Lebztätigkeit*, Leipzig 1907, pp. 129–152: 137. For the author of the family's chronicle see Francesco di Giambattista Sassetti, "Notizie dell'origine e nobiltà della famiglia de' Sassetti [...] MDC", in: *Lettere edite e inedite di Filippo Sassetti*, ed. by Ettore Marcucci, Florence 1855, pp. XV–XLVII: XXIXf.

²⁹ Frithjof Schwartz, *Il bel cimitero: Santa Maria Novella in Florenz 1279–1348. Grabmäler, Architektur und Gesellschaft*, Berlin/Munich 2009, pp. 154, 418.

³⁰ Patricia Simons, "Patronage in the Tornaquinci Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence", in: *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by

eadem/Francis W. Kent/John Christopher Eade, Canberra/Oxford 1987, pp. 221–250: 225–229.

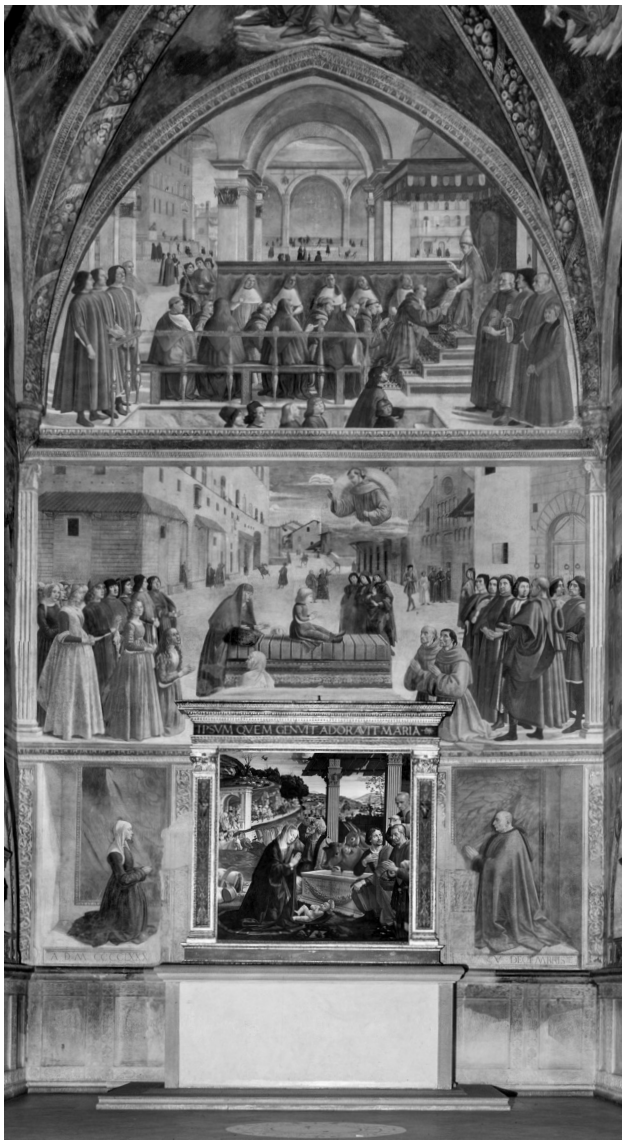
³¹ Eve Borsook/Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel*, Doornspijk 1981, p. 62.

³² For the detailed history of the main chapel of Santa Maria Novella, see Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, New Haven, Conn./London 2000, pp. 236–243.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 238.

³⁴ For the patronage rights see *ibidem*, pp. 238f., 357f.; for the altarpiece removal Cannon 1982 (note 24), pp. 87–91.

³⁵ Borsook/Offerhaus (note 31), pp. 18–20.



8 Florence, Santa Trinita,
Sassetti Chapel, altar wall

³⁶ For the frescoes see Cadogan (note 32), pp. 230–236; further Steffi Roettgen, *Wandmalerei der Frührenaissance in Italien*, Munich 1996/97, II, pp. 136–163.

³⁷ Aby Warburg, *Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum*, I: *Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita, die Bildnisse des Lorenzo de' Medici und seiner Angehörigen*, Leipzig 1902, p. 10; followed by Borsook/Offerhaus (note 31), pp. 37, 56–58, Fig. 28.

³⁸ Cadogan (note 32), pp. 278f.; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “Le nom ‘refait’: la transmission des prénoms à Florence (XIV^e–XVI^e siècles)”, in: *L'Homme*, XX (1980), 4, pp. 77–104.

commissioned by Sassetti to fresco a Saint Francis cycle there (Fig. 8).³⁶ It strikingly includes several prominent portraits of the families of Francesco Sassetti and Lorenzo de' Medici, as well as their contemporaries.

Francesco Sassetti and his wife Nera Corsi had ten children, of whom the oldest, Teodoro, was born in 1460 and died prematurely in late 1478 or early 1479. It seems very plausible, given the many family portraits in his chapel, that Francesco also wanted to commemorate this firstborn son Teodoro, “God’s gift”, after the young man’s death in an autonomous portrait by Botticelli. Final proof for this identification is lacking, since no documented likeness has so far been found. Aby Warburg suggested that Teodoro is also portrayed in the Sassetti Chapel, among the group of the Sassetti brothers to the left of the *Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Honorius III* on the altar wall (Fig. 8).³⁷ Yet this identification is speculative and cannot be confirmed by other evidence. On the same wall, directly above Ghirlandaio’s altarpiece of the *Nativity of Christ*, the central fresco depicts the *Resuscitation of the Roman Notary’s Son*, a rare post-mortem miracle of Saint Francis, which may well refer to the life experience of the patron. In 1479 Sassetti’s youngest son Teodoro was born, named, according to Florentine custom, in memory of the deceased eldest child, the first Teodoro.³⁸ Father and youngest son, identified by inscription, were portrayed a decade or so later by Domenico Ghirlandaio (Fig. 9).³⁹

The Sotheby’s catalogue entry suggests that Botticelli painted the *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel* only after autumn 1482, when he too returned to Florence from working in the Sistine Chapel.⁴⁰ If this dating is correct, his subject, Teodoro would already have been dead, and this circumstance might explain some rather unspecific elements of Botticelli’s painting. He created a somewhat generic portrait of a fashionably dressed, pensive young Florentine posing in near three-quarter profile in front of the rigid stone frame of a window, slightly turned towards the viewer. The composition is comparable to that of Botticelli’s posthumous likeness of Giuliano de’ Medici, now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington.⁴¹ This image with turtle-dove and twig, conceived for family remembrance, should probably be dated after Giuliano’s death in 1478. This confirms

³⁹ Everett Fahy, in: *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, exh. cat. New York 2011/12, ed. by Keith Christiansen/Stefan Weppelmann, New Haven, Conn./London 2011, pp. 158f., no. 42.

⁴⁰ “Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi” (note 10), p. 12.

⁴¹ Stefan Weppelmann, in: *The Renaissance Portrait* (note 39), pp. 174–177, no. 52 (discussing also the other two versions of this portrait); Andreas Schumacher, in: *Botticelli: Bildnis, Mythos, Andacht* (note 3), pp. 164–167, no. 5.

⁴² *Idem*, “Der Maler Sandro Botticelli: Eine Einführung in sein Werk”, *ibidem*, pp. 14–55: 45f.

a slightly later date – in the early 1480s – for our portrait, although Botticelli's oeuvre does not lend itself easily to an exact chronology. The man's facial features can also be compared to those of the angels, especially to the one in a yellow robe, in the mature *Madonna del Magnificat*, painted circa 1482.⁴²

The only distinguishing feature of the portrait is the delicate Trecento roundel which the youth holds with both hands (Fig. 2). If the identifications proposed here are correct, Botticelli must have been asked by his patron to memorialize Sassetti history by combining Teodoro's likeness with an esteemed family 'trophy', a figural gold-ground fragment from the early fourteenth-century high altarpiece that had been commissioned from Ugolino di Nerio by Baro Sassetti for Santa Maria Novella. This exceptional task the painter fulfilled superbly by unifying light, colour, and figural setting to an astonishing degree, thus bringing the youth to life.

The insertion of a Trecento fragment into a Quattrocento painting has been called "un antistorico 'nonsense'" hardly imaginable for an artist such as Botticelli.⁴³ Yet, as Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have argued, such an approach is perfectly plausible in the context of what they defined as "anachronic Renaissance": in fact Botticelli has convincingly exploited the anachronic nature of Ugolino's gold-ground roundel in his brilliantly original concept. He not only confirmed the originality of the inserted prophet image, a fundamental aspect of his extraordinary creation, but also provided a novel aetiology for the portrait.⁴⁴ In their new chapel at Santa Trinita, Francesco and Nera Sassetti were themselves portrayed in small tondi on their tombs, evidently alluding to classical coins or medals.⁴⁵ These elegant roundels in relief, attributed to Giuliano da Sangallo, strongly suggest a Sassetti preference for the round format of the inserted panel.

Such an act of reframing, refashioning, and resetting was by no means unique in contemporary Florence or Italy: Carmelites reframed their icons,⁴⁶ the Baroncelli turned their polyptych by Giotto into a Renaissance *pala*,⁴⁷ Raphael's former pupils Giulio Romano and Gianfrancesco Penni cut and subsequently integrated two different panel paintings into the Monteluce *Coronation of the Virgin* for Perugia,⁴⁸ and the Rondinelli insisted on



9 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Francesco Sassetti and His Son Teodoro II*. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, Jules Bache Collection

re-erecting their Trecento triptych by Jacopo di Cione in their Brunelleschian chapel in San Lorenzo.⁴⁹ Was Francesco Sassetti, the avid humanist, banker and trusted friend of the Medici, perhaps inspired by commemorative commissions of the Medici and their circle? These included Botticelli's above-mentioned *Portrait of Giuliano de' Medici* and his *Portrait of a Man Holding a Medal*

⁴³ Roberto Longhi, "Uno sguardo alle fotografie della Mostra 'Italian Art and Britain' alla Royal Academy di Londra", in: *Paragone*, XI (1960), pp. 59–61: 61; cfr. also Keith Christiansen/Sidney F. Sabin, "Botticelli's Portrait of a Young Man with a Trecento Medaillon", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXIX (1987), p. 744.

⁴⁴ Nagel/Wood (note 3), pp. 115–122, 395–397. See also Nagel (note 3).

⁴⁵ Borsook/Offerhaus (note 31), pp. 20–27.

⁴⁶ Gardner von Teuffel (note 8), pp. 3–41.

⁴⁷ Julian Gardner, "Painters, Inquisitors, and Novices: Giotto, Taddeo

Gaddi, and Filippo Lippi at Santa Croce", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LX (2018), pp. 222–253; Cathleen Sara Hoeniger, *The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany: 1250–1500*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 107–112.

⁴⁸ Fabrizio Mancinelli, "La pala di Monteluce", in: *Raffaello in Vaticano*, exh. cat. Vatican City 1984, ed. by *idem et al.*, Milan 1984, pp. 286–296.

⁴⁹ Christa Gardner von Teuffel, "The Altarpieces of San Lorenzo: Memorializing the Martyr or Accommodating the Parishioners?", in: *San Lorenzo: A Florentine Church*, ed. by Robert W. Gaston/Louis A. Waldman, Florence 2017, pp. 184–243: 198f., 217f.



10 Sandro Botticelli,
*Portrait of a Man Holding a
Medal of Cosimo il Vecchio*.
Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi,
Galleria delle Statue
e delle Pitture

of Cosimo il Vecchio, of circa 1475 (Fig. 10).⁵⁰ Sassetti may have similarly asked Botticelli to memorialize his son in order to showcase the lineage of his own family and its prestige, established since the late Duecento.

Competing lineages had already emerged at San Lorenzo, where long-established families had insisted on retaining their old-fashioned altarpieces in Brunelleschi's modern architectural setting despite pressure from both the canons and the Medici.⁵¹ The sophisticated fresco programme of Francesco Sassetti's burial chapel in Santa Trinita successfully and boldly integrated his family history into the canonical life of Saint Francis and extended it over time, in a conceptual process not dissimilar from that of Botticelli's portrait.⁵² Ghirlandaio's frescoes and in particular Botticelli's haunting *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Roundel*, presumably a fragment of Ugolino di Nerio's high altarpiece commissioned by his ancestor, Baro Sassetti, for Santa Maria Novella, convincingly instantiate the patron's self-conscious preoccupation with family status and distinguished lineage, which the contemporary Florentines would recognize and respect.

This article is based on a paper given at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Dublin, 29 March 2022. The attribution of the roundel to Ugolino di Nerio was made jointly with Julian Gardner. I thank Julian Gardner, Samuel Vitali, George Bent, Gail Solberg, and Judith Steinhoff for their help.

Photo Credits

Courtesy of Sotheby's, London: Figs. 1, 2, 3. – National Gallery of Art, Washington: Fig. 4. – The National Gallery, London: Figs. 5, 6, 7. – Antonio Quattrone, Florence: Fig. 8. – The Metropolitan Museum, Jules Bache Collection, New York: Fig. 9. – Wikimedia Commons: Fig. 10.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Ronald Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work*, London 1978, II, pp. 33–35; Moore Howard (note 3).

⁵¹ Gardner von Teuffel (note 49), pp. 216–219.

⁵² See the literature in notes 36 and 37, as well as Michael Rohmann,

“Bildernetzwerk: Die Verflechtung von Familienschicksal und Heilsge-
schichte in Ghirlandaio's Sassetti-Kapelle”, in: *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Künst-
lerische Konstruktion von Identität im Florenz der Renaissance*, ed. by *idem*, Weimar
2003, pp. 165–243.

Umschlagbild | Copertina:
Bronzino, *Portrait Francesca Salviati (?)* | *Ritratto di Francesca Salviati (?)*
Frankfurt a. M., Städel Museum
(S. 260, Abb. 16 | p. 260, fig. 16)

ISSN 0342-1201

Stampa: Grafiche Martinelli, Firenze
ottobre 2024