



1 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Niccolò Cieco?), Disputation of Saint Stephen. Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO'S SANTA MARIA NOVELLA ALTARPIECE A RECONSTRUCTION

Takuma Ito

Introduction

The double-sided altarpiece for the *cappella maggiore* of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, also known as the Tornabuoni Chapel (Fig. 2), was one of the last works by Domenico Ghirlandaio and was completed by his workshop after his death in 1494.¹ In addition to the *Virgin and Child in glory with four saints* (Fig. 5) on the front and the *Resurrection of Christ* (Fig. 6) on the back, it comprised six slender panels, each of which featured a full-length saint (Figs. 7–12) and a series of narrative paintings in the predella. All of these were

integrated in the monumental, free standing structure realized by the woodworker Baccio d'Agnolo. As a consequence of the dismantlement of the altarpiece in the early nineteenth century, the painted panels were dispersed into various European collections and some were later destroyed during the Second World War.

The appearance of the structure in its entirety is known through the early eighteenth-century engravings discussed by Christian von Holst in 1969 (Figs. 3, 4).² The altarpiece had a box-like shape,³

¹ In the recent monographs on Ghirlandaio, the altarpiece has been discussed by Jean Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, New Haven 2000, pp. 264–268; Ronald Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio und die Malerei der Florentiner Renaissance*, Munich 2000, pp. 321–329. More recently, see Joseph Schmid, “*Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria*”: *Bürgerliche repräsentatio in der Cappella Tornabuoni in S. Maria Novella*, Munich/Berlin 2002; Michael Rohlmann, “Ghirlandaios Florenz”, in: *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, ed. by *idem*, Weimar 2004, pp. 9–61: 18–23; Anna Maria van Loosen-Loerakker, *De koorkapel in de Santa Maria Novella te Florence*, Zierikzee 2008; Tobias Leuker, “Heiligenlob in Text und Bild: Der hl. Dominikus und Ghirlandaios Pala für Santa

Maria Novella”, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LIV (2010/12), pp. 425–444.

² Christian von Holst, “Domenico Ghirlandaio: l’altare maggiore di Santa Maria Novella a Firenze ricostruito”, in: *Antichità viva*, VIII (1969), 3, pp. 36–41.

³ The box-like structure is one of the traditional solutions for a double-sided altarpiece, although the reason for the adoption of this type in the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece is still to be clarified. For the various types of the double-sided altarpiece, see the contributions in the recent monograph on Sassetta’s Borgo San Sepolcro altarpiece: *Sassetta: The Borgo San*



2 Florence, Santa Maria Novella, present view of the cappella maggiore or Tornabuoni Chapel

3 View of the cappella maggiore of Santa Maria Novella from the entrance side (reversed). Engraving in Jean Corbinelli, *Histoire généalogique de la Maison de Gondi*, Paris 1705

4 View of the cappella maggiore of Santa Maria Novella from the right side (reversed). Engraving in Jean Corbinelli, *Histoire généalogique de la Maison de Gondi*, Paris 1705

with each of the shorter sides adorned with one panel of a saint, while the main panels, on the front and back, were flanked by two other saints. Von Holst also proposed an arrangement which has been accepted by almost all subsequent scholars. However, a late eighteenth-century manuscript, published here in the Appendix, suggests a different arrangement of the single panels. Furthermore, the manuscript's detailed description of the predella scenes, about which little has been heretofore known, makes it possible to identify as part of the predella a number of paintings whose relationship to the altarpiece has been hitherto unrecognized.

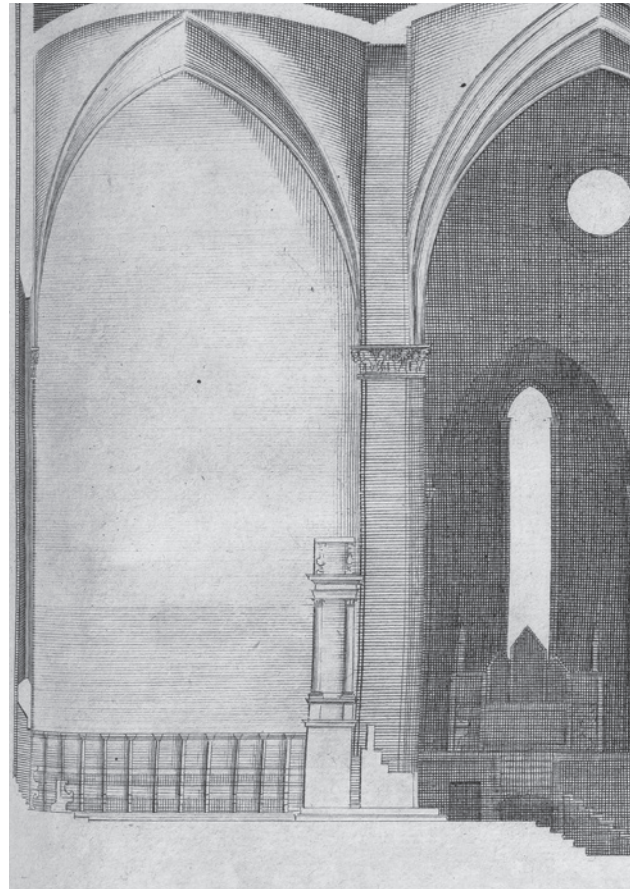
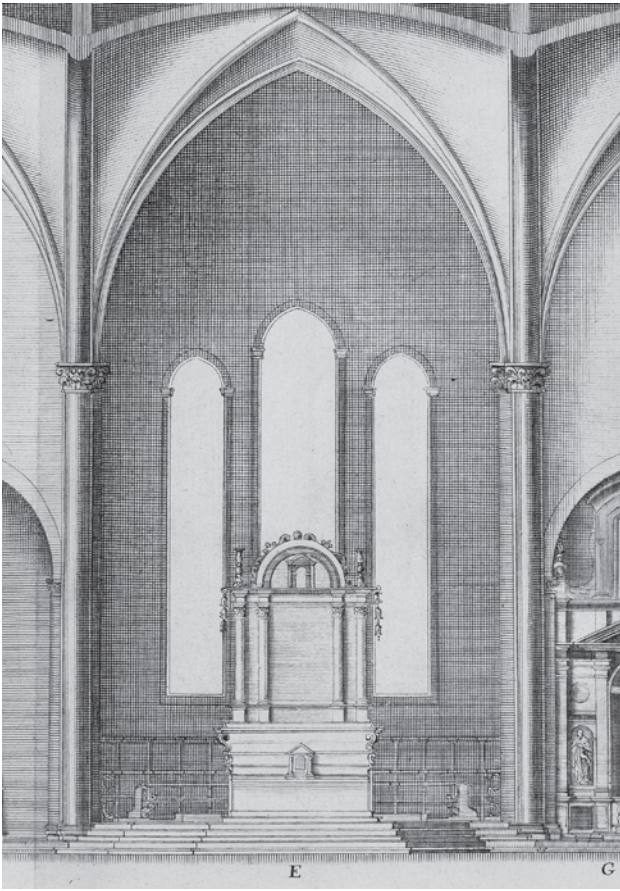
The Manuscript

The manuscript is entitled *Monumenti della chiesa di Santa Maria Novella illustrati con annotazioni e dati in luce dal P. Vincenzo Fineschi* and consists of two volumes now preserved separately, the first in the archive of the convent of the church and the second in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence.⁴ The Dominican Vincenzo Fineschi (1727–1803) devoted himself to historical studies of his order and especially of the convent and the church of Santa Maria Novella, where he spent a large part of his life. He is best known to art historians as the author of the booklet *Il forestiero istruito in S. Maria Novella di Firenze*, which was published in 1790.⁵ This booklet is a very concise version of his survey of the works of art in the church and

Sepolcro Altarpiece, ed. by Machtelt Israëls, Florence 2009. Especially those by Christa Gardner von Teuffel ("Sassetta's Franciscan Altarpiece at Borgo San Sepolcro: Precedents and Context", pp. 211–229, and "Sassetta's Franciscan Altarpiece at Borgo San Sepolcro: A Swan Song?", pp. 255–267).

⁴ The first volume is in the Archivio storico del convento Santa Maria Novella di Firenze, I.A.40, while the second is in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Fondo Conventi Soppressi, Santa Maria Novella, E 5.777. I would like to thank Father Emilio Panella O.P. for the consultation of the manuscript in the convent. I am also grateful to Serena Rovere and Tommaso Ranfagni, who helped me with the transcription of the document.

⁵ Vincenzo Fineschi, *Il forestiero istruito in S. Maria Novella di Firenze*, Florence 1790. The reference to the altarpiece is on p. 22. On Fineschi see Orsola Gori Pasta, s.v. Fineschi, Vincenzo (al secolo Francesco Niccolò), in: *Di-*



refers the readers several times to the *Monumenti della chiesa*, which the friar apparently intended to publish.⁶ The first volume of the *Monumenti* manuscript devotes much attention not only to the frescoes of the *cappella maggiore* but also to the altarpiece, to which only a very brief remark was made in the printed work.

After a description of the history and decoration of the *cappella maggiore*, including the murals and the painted windows,⁷ the manuscript proceeds to describe the high altarpiece and its paintings (see Appendix). The author appraises the wooden structure of the ensemble, especially noting its double-sidedness,

zionario biografico degli italiani, XLVIII, Rome 1997, pp. 37–48, who correctly points out the importance of the *Monumenti* manuscript.

⁶ Vincenzo Fineschi, *Memorie storiche che possono servire alle vite degli uomini illustri del convento di S. Maria Novella di Firenze*, Florence 1790, p. xxxi, also refers to his intention to publish the *Monumenti*.

although he erroneously conflated the name of the woodworker Baccio d’Agnolo with that of Baccio da Montelupo.⁸ He also informs his readers that it was gilded and partially colored in green, and associates this combination with the arms of the Tornaquinci. These two colors, in fact, also refer to the Tornabuoni family, which, stemming from the Tornaquinci at the end of thirteenth century, were the actual patrons of the entire chapel decoration.⁹ Their arms, a lion on a field parted per saltire in yellow and green, remain visible today in the stained glass windows of the chapel.

⁷ ASMN, I.A.40, fol. 32r–37v.

⁸ Fineschi first refers to the woodworker as “Baccio di Agnolo da Montelupo” (ASMN, I.A.40, fol. 37r) and from there on calls him “Baccio da Montelupo”.

⁹ For the patronage of the *cappella maggiore*, see note 57 below.



5 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, *Virgin and Child in glory with Saints Dominic, Michael, John the Baptist and Thomas Apostle*. Munich, Alte Pinakothek

Fineschi's account of the single scenes in the altarpiece begins with the central panel in the front, the *Virgin and Child in glory with four saints*, which is now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (Fig. 5). From the author's words, we learn that the predella below the central front panel showed five scenes, which portrayed, from left to right, *The birth of Saint Dominic*, *The apparition of Saint Michael on the Mount Gargano*, *The Nativity of Christ*, *Saint John receiving benediction from his parents*, and *The incredulity of Saint Thomas the Apostle*. The Dominican friar interpreted the painting on the panel now in Munich as a representation of the Assumption of the Virgin and identifies the saint on the far right, who has been commonly supposed to be Saint John the Evangelist, as Saint Thomas the Apostle. Since the corresponding predella scene is dedicated to Saint

¹⁰ Appendix, fol. 38v.



6 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, *Resurrection of Christ*. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

Thomas the Apostle, it is clear that Fineschi's identification is the correct one. Moreover, the interpretation of the main scene as the Assumption of the Virgin is – if not justifiable – understandable because of the presence of Saint Thomas, who appears frequently in such scenes. As a matter of fact, the saint, in the act of receiving the girdle from the Virgin in heaven, is also represented in the uppermost lunette of the central glass window in the same chapel.

Fineschi's description then moves left proceeding clockwise, naming: *Saint Laurence* (Fig. 7) on the left side of the front ("dalla parte del Vangelo"¹⁰), then, "seguitando il circolo della tavola",¹¹ *Saint Vincent Ferrer* (Fig. 8), *Saint Catherine of Siena* (Fig. 9), the *Resurrection of Christ* (Fig. 6) in the center on the back, *Saint Peter Martyr* (Fig. II), *Antonino Pierozzi* (Fig. IO), and, finally,

¹¹ *Ibidem*.



7 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Saint Lawrence. Munich, Alte Pinakothek



8 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Saint Vincent Ferrer. Formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum (lost during World War II)



9 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Saint Catherine of Siena. Munich, Alte Pinakothek



10 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Antonino Pierozzi. Formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum (lost during World War II)



11 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Saint Peter Martyr. Mamiano di Traversetolo (Parma), Magnani Rocca Collection



12 Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, Saint Stephen. Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum

coming back to the front, *Saint Stephen* (Fig. 12) “dalla parte dell’Epistola”¹² (on the right side). Each of the saints was accompanied by a narrative scene in the predella, and an inscription composed, according to Fineschi, by Angelo Poliziano; it is unknown on what this apocryphal attribution is based. The author provides the subjects of the predella panels, some with detailed description, and transcribes the inscriptions.¹³ Beneath the *Resurrection of Christ* in the center of the back there were two predella panels, *Christ in the guise of a gardener with Saint Mary Magdalene* and *The apparition to the Apostles on the way to Emmaus*, separated by a gilded *sportello* which had been formerly used to hold the ciborium.

The Predella

According to the *Lives* of Giorgio Vasari the predella panels of the altarpiece were painted primarily by workshop assistants.¹⁴ He specifies the subject of only one panel, *The disputation of Saint Stephen*, attributing it to a pupil named Nicolaio or Niccolò Cieco. This panel has been identified with a painting, measuring 34.4 cm by 42.2 cm, now in the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow (Fig. 1).¹⁵ Furthermore, two panels attributed to the Ghirlandaio circle have also been suggested as candidates for fragments of the predella. One is the *Miracle of Saint Vincent Ferrer* (Fig. 13), widely accepted as a work of the young Francesco Granacci, who was indeed a member of the Ghirlandaio workshop. It was in the possession of the art dealer Frederick Mont in New York around 1974, when von Holst reported



13 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Francesco Granacci), *Miracle of Saint Vincent Ferrer*. Formerly New York, art dealer Frederick Mont

measurements of 36.8 by 50 cm.¹⁶ This piece was later sold in a Christie’s auction in London in 1984, when the catalogue entry described the measurements as 35.9 by 40.5 cm.¹⁷ The other is *Saint Peter Martyr contemplating the Cross with Saints Agnes, Catherine and Cecilia*, once in the Evelyn Joll collection and exhibited in London in 1965 with an attribution to Bartolomeo di Giovanni and measurements of 31.1 by 41.2 cm (Fig. 14).¹⁸ Because of the different sizes of the three panels doubts have been raised about their identification as parts of the predella,¹⁹ but Fineschi’s description is in perfect

¹² Appendix, fol. 39v.

¹³ The lost inscriptions for Saints Stephen and Peter Martyr are now commonly known through Vincenzo Chiaroni, “Il coro e l’altare maggiore in Santa Maria Novella”, in: *Rivista fiorentina*, I (1909), 5, pp. 12–19: 17. Chiaroni here relies on Fineschi’s manuscript.

¹⁴ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1987, III, pp. 490f., IV, p. 607, V, p. 437.

¹⁵ Maria Skubiszewska, in: *Paintings from the Lanckoroński Collection from the 14th through 16th Centuries in the Collections of the Wawel Royal Castle*, ed. by eadem/Kazimierz Kuczman, Cracow 2010, pp. 122–125; Christian von Holst, *Francesco Granacci*, Munich 1974, pp. 207f. (no. 214); *idem* (note 2), p. 41, note 13.

¹⁶ Von Holst (note 15), p. 129, no. 2.

¹⁷ *Important Old Master Pictures*, auction cat. Christie’s, London, 11 December 1984, pp. 92f., no. 45. The Christie’s catalogue erroneously identifies the saint as Zenobius.

¹⁸ *A Loan Exhibition: The Art of Painting in Florence and Siena from 1250 to 1500*, exh. cat., Wildenstein, London 1965, p. 41, fig. 66, no. 72. According to von Holst (note 15), p. 129, no. 2, Everett Fahy recognized it as a predella panel of the Ghirlandaio altarpiece, attributing it to Granacci. Von Holst rejects the attribution, though accepting the identification as a part of the altarpiece.

¹⁹ Opinions about the three panels are summarized in Lisa Venturini, “Dall’idea del maestro all’opera compiuta”, in: *Maestri e botteghe: pittura a Fi-*



14 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Benedetto Ghirlandaio?), Saint Peter Martyr contemplating the Cross with Saints Agnes, Catherine and Cecilia. Formerly London, Evelyn Joll collection



15 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Pseudo Granacci), Saint Lawrence distributing alms. Formerly Lucerne, art dealer Böhler-Steinmeyer

agreement with their iconography and confirms their provenance from the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece. For the Saint Vincent panel, the measurements given in the Christie's catalogue are probably correct, while the Saint Peter Martyr panel, if its dimensions are correctly recorded, might have been shortened in height by a few centimeters.

The counterpart of the *Disputation of Saint Stephen* on the front must have been *Saint Lawrence distributing alms* (Fig. 15), ascribable to an artist in the Ghirlandaio circle. Fineschi's description, especially the reference to the man intent on reading the notice posted beside the church door in the background,²⁰ is detailed enough to distinguish this painting from others of the same subject. Its present location is unknown, but

handwritten notes on the back of the photographs in Bernard Berenson's collection at the Villa I Tatti give its measurements as 34 by 42 cm and say it was in the possession of Steinmeyer in Lucerne in 1950.²¹ Berenson believed the panel to be by Alunno di Domenico, who is now identified as Bartolomeo di Giovanni. Meanwhile, Everett Fahy, in his dissertation published in 1976, more convincingly attributed it to the anonymous Master of the Spiridon Story of Joseph, *alias* Pseudo Granacci, stating that it was in the possession of Böhler in Lucerne until 1949.²² From these apparently contradicting indications we can deduce that the panel presumably belonged to the art gallery Böhler & Steinmeyer, founded by Julius Wilhelm Böhler, who had moved to Lucerne in 1920,

renze alla fine del Quattrocento, exh. cat. Florence 1992, ed. by Mina Gregori *et al.*, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, pp. 125–136: 131–133 and 136, note 49; Cadogan (note 1), p. 267. Cadogan is reluctant to accept the identification of the scenes of Saint Stephen and Saint Peter Martyr as part of the predella of Santa Maria Novella's main altar.

²⁰ Appendix, fol. 38v.

²¹ Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Photograph Archive, nos. I00643–I00645. For access to and the consultation of the materials in the Photograph Archive, I would like to thank Jonathan Nelson and Giovanni Pagliarulo.

²² Everett Fahy, *Some Followers of Domenico Ghirlandajo*, New York 1976 (originally Ph.D. diss. submitted to Harvard University in 1968), pp. 198f.



with his friend Fritz Steinmeyer.²³ The Böhler family was originally active in Munich and their clientele included the Royal Court of Bavaria. It is therefore possible that the predella panel relating to Saint Lawrence might have shared a part of its past with the larger panels now in the Alte Pinakothek, after removal from the church in Florence.

The Pseudo Granacci is an artist to whom a significant number of paintings for private use have been ascribed. According to Everett Fahy, the existence of this painter was first recognized by Roberto Longhi, who, however, did not publish anything about him.

The painter's œuvre was later studied among others by Federico Zeri and Fahy himself under the name of the Master of the Spiridon Story of Joseph. The appellation of the Pseudo Granacci was then adopted inasmuch as his works were often confounded with those of Francesco Granacci.²⁴ The list of works given in Fahy's dissertation is the most extensive and includes some work by the Ghirlandaio workshop, such as the predella scenes of the Malatesta altarpiece in Rimini, as well as the landscape backgrounds of both central panels, front and back, of the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece.²⁵ Fahy later came to believe that the entire

²³ See the history of the art-dealer Julius Böhler on the web site of the gallery: <http://www.boehler-art.com> (accessed on 28 October 2013).

²⁴ For Longhi's insight, see Fahy (note 22), p. 198. For the early bibliography, see Lisa Venturini, s.v. Maestro delle storie di Giuseppe Spiridon, in: *La pittura in Italia: il Quattrocento*, ed. by Federico Zeri, Milan 1987 (1986), II, p. 681. The name "Pseudo Granacci" was first used by Carlo Volpe, in: *Mostra di dipinti dal*

XIV al XVIII secolo, exh. cat. Finarte, Milan 1972, pp. 16f., no. 6, and adopted in Burton B. Fredericksen/Federico Zeri, *Census of Pre-Nineteenth-Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, p. 130.

²⁵ Fahy (note 22), pp. 198f. Professor Fahy, to whom I am mostly grateful, kindly sent me an enlarged list of the works he now attributes to the Pseudo Granacci (e-mail, October 2013).

surface of the *Resurrection* in Berlin was by the Pseudo Granacci's hand – an opinion not shared by Lisa Venturini.²⁶ In either case, the artist's participation on the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece was certainly extensive, since, as we now examine, some other predella panels can be attributed to him.

The Saint Lawrence panel was once accompanied by two other works by the same master in the Böhler-Steinmeyer collection, as is testified both by the inscriptions on the relative photographs in the Villa I Tatti and Fahy's dissertation: *Saint John the Baptist taking leave from his parents* (Fig. 16) and the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas the Apostle* (Fig. 17).²⁷ While the present location of the latter, which measured 34 by 37 cm, is unknown, the former is now housed in the Conservation Center of New York University's Institute of Fine Arts and measures 34.4 by 37 cm. According to the Institute's conservators, the panel has been cut on both the left and right sides, while the height is still the original one.²⁸ These two panels, approximately of the same size, were evidently part of the predella beneath the *Virgin and Child in glory*. Of the two panels beneath the *Resurrection* on the back, one can be identified with another work by the same master, *Noli me tangere*, measuring 34.5 by 48.2 cm, which was sold in a Farsetti Arte auction in 2007 (Fig. 18).²⁹

The remaining six predella panels have yet to be identified. Three of them were located beneath the *Virgin and Child* on the front: the *Nativity* “benissimo



16 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Pseudo Granacci), *Saint John the Baptist taking leave from his parents*. New York University Institute of Fine Arts, Conservation Center

17 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (Pseudo Granacci), *Incredulity of Saint Thomas the Apostle*. Formerly Lucerne, art dealer Böhler-Steinmeyer

²⁶ Everett Fahy, in: *Il giardino di San Marco*, exh. cat. Florence 1992, ed. by Paola Barocchi, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, pp. 49–52, no. 11; Venturini (note 19), p. 136, note 49. Cf. also *ibidem*, pp. 130–133, 142f., no. 4.6. In addition, according to the updated list (see note 25), Fahy ascribes the figure of God the Father in the lunette of the Malatesta altarpiece to the Pseudo Granacci, while Venturini attributes it to Sebastiano Mainardi (cf. Venturini [note 19], p. 136, note 35; Lisa Venturini, “Riflessioni sulla pala ghirlandaiasca di Rimini”, in: *Domenico Ghirlandaio: 1449–1494*, proceedings of the conference Florence 1994, ed. by Wolfram Prinz/Max Seidel, Florence 1996, pp. 154–164: 156f.).

²⁷ See the catalogue information of the photographs in Villa I Tatti, nos. I00642 (Saint John), I00630 (Saint Thomas); Fahy (note 22), pp. 198f.

²⁸ The information was provided by Catherine A. Lukaszewski of the

Conservation Center by e-mail between October 2013 and February 2014, and I would like to thank her for her help. There are bare edges present on both the top and bottom of the original painted wood, but not on the left or right sides. Furthermore, it appears that the backing is of an older wood, but part of it appears to have been replaced with a newer wood. The work was donated to the Conservation Center on 27 May 1971 by the art dealer Justin Thannhauser from Berne, whose name is now especially renowned for the Thannhauser Collection in the Guggenheim Museum in New York. He directly purchased the work from Julius Böhler.

²⁹ *Asta di importanti dipinti antichi: dipinti di artisti toscani e dell'Ottocento*, auction cat. Farsetti Arte, Prato, 10 November 2007 (no. I41), no. 47. See also *Arte nei secoli: Toscana fra antico e moderno*, exh. cat. Farsetti Arte, ed. by Francesca Baldassari/Luigi Cavallo/Oretta Nicolini, Cortina d'Ampezzo/Prato/Milan 1993, no. 12.



18 Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio
(Pseudo Granacci), *Noli me tangere*.
Formerly Prato, Farsetti Arte

rappresentata con S. Giuseppe, e altre divote figurine”, the *Apparition of Saint Michael on Mount Gargano*, and the *Birth of Saint Dominic* “con l’apparizione seguita in sogno del cane con la torcia in bocca, e ben disegnato il letto, la madre con una donna, che l’assiste; e il nato Bambino in braccio ad un’altra”. One panel, *Christ appearing to the Apostles on the way to Emmaus*, where “in lontananza si vede sedere con loro a tavola che prende il pane, e lo spezza”, was placed beneath the *Resurrection* on the back. Finally, two accompanied the related saints’ panels: *Young Antonino Pierozzi meets beato Giovanni Dominici prior of the Fiesole convent* and “domanda di vestir l’abito religioso” and *Saint Catherine of Siena receives Holy Communion*, where “il sacerdote dall’altare gli porge con grazia, e maestà la Sacrosanta Ostia, mentre [Saint Catherine] va in estasi”.³⁰ It is tempting to identify the *Shooting of the bull on Mount Gargano* (Fig. 19),

³⁰ See Appendix, fol. 38r–39r.

³¹ *Die Weltkunst*, XXIV (1954), 24, p. 54. I owe the retrieval of this publication to information provided by Everett Fahy (see note 25). I have not been able to find out if Heinz Steinmeyer was related to the art gallery Böhler & Steinmeyer. In 1954 the heir of the Böhler family was also active in Munich as Julius Böhler (their advertisement is in the same journal, p. 55), in the same Brienner Straße as Heinz Steinmeyer.

³² Similar pillars, but in different shapes, were painted to divide the scenes

also attributed to the Pseudo Granacci, with the panel simply noted by Fineschi as “il fatto dell’apparizione sul monte Gargano”. This work appeared in an advertisement of the art dealer Heinz Steinmeyer in Munich in 1954 with an unacceptable attribution to Amico Aspertini and measurements given as 40 by 44 cm.³¹ Because of the poor quality of the photograph in the advertisement it is not possible to judge if the pillars on both sides, elements which are not present in the other panels, were original.³² However, we should not exclude the possibility that this panel belonged to another altarpiece, such as, for example, the *Madonna and Child enthroned with Saint John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (inv. 97). This work, commonly attributed to Francesco Granacci, shares some stylistic features, especially in the background, with the ex-Heinz Steinmeyer predella panel.³³

The Pseudo Granacci was certainly one of the most important, if not most talented, members of the workshop around the time of Domenico’s death. Considering other works from the Ghirlandaio workshop, his style is clearly discernible in the landscape background of *Saint Lucy with a donor* in Santa Maria Novella, realized in 1494 (Fig. 20). The representation of the winding paths that run on both sides of the saint, and the delicately painted, almost Peruginolike woods, trees and hills, are easily comparable to some of the Santa Maria Novella predella panels identified above.³⁴ Fahy suggests that the artist might be identified as Poggio Poggini, who was working as a *garzone* of the Ghirlandaio workshop in Pisa in 1493,³⁵ but the question has remained open. Vasari, after nam-

in the predella of a now untraceable altarpiece by the Ghirlandaio workshop for Filippo Strozzi. See Federico Zeri, “Aggiunta a una predella ghirlandaiasca”, in: *idem*, *Diari di lavoro*, Bergamo 1971, pp. 56–58, figs. 68f; *Maestri e botteghe* (note 19), pp. 143f. (nos. 4.7, 4.8).

³³ For the painting in the Gemäldegalerie, see von Holst (note 15), p. 131, no. 4 and p. 58, fig. 11. The list provided by Everett Fahy (see note 25) attributes the work to the Pseudo Granacci.

³⁴ The attribution of this work, despite the documented payment to



19 Pseudo Granacci, Shooting of the bull on Mount Gargano. Formerly Munich, art dealer Heinz Steinmeyer



20 Benedetto Ghirlandaio and Pseudo Granacci (?), Saint Lucy with a donor. Florence, Santa Maria Novella

ing Nicolaio as the author of the *Disputation of Saint Stephen* (Fig. I), cites two other “allevati” of Domenico Ghirlandaio as assistants responsible for the predella: Francesco Granacci and Jacopo del Tedesco.³⁶ This assertion carries some significance, since one of the predella panels, the *Miracle of Saint Vincent Ferrer* (Fig. I3), can indeed be attributed to Francesco Granacci. Furthermore, if we admit the veracity of Vasari’s attribution of the *Disputation of Saint Stephen* to Nicolaio, “che per il molto studio dell’arte accedò, il quale sarebbe venuto maestro veramente eccellente”, and, as a result, was called Niccolò Cieco,³⁷ this biographical circumstance

might explain why the style of this panel cannot be associated with any other work from the Ghirlandaio circle. The attribution of *Saint Peter Martyr contemplating the Cross with Saints Agnes, Catherine and Cecilia* (Fig. I4) is still uncertain, but its solid modelling and the rather stiff posture of the figures suggest an older painter, who might have been Benedetto Ghirlandaio. He had returned from France shortly before and, according to Vasari, also participated in the completion of the altarpiece.³⁸ Finally, if the entire passage on the “allevati” is deemed to be trustworthy, the last artist named, Jacopo del Tedesco, whom the biographer describes as

Davide Ghirlandaio, has oscillated between him and his brother Benedetto. See the recent catalogue entry by Annamaria Bernacchioni, in: *Ghirlandaio: una famiglia di pittori del Rinascimento tra Firenze e Scandicci*, exh. cat. Scandicci 2010–2011, ed. by *eadem*, Florence 2010, pp. 102f., no. 3.

³⁵ Everett Fahy, in: *Il giardino di San Marco* (note 26), pp. 49–52, no. 11.

³⁶ Vasari (note 14), V, p. 437 (edition of 1550). In the edition of 1568, their participation is extended to include, together with Benedetto Ghirlandaio, the large-scale figures of *Antonino Pierozzi* and *Saint Catherine of Siena*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*. For the appellative *ibidem*, III, p. 496.

³⁸ For Benedetto’s stay in France see Lisa Venturini, “I Ghirlandaio”, in: *Maestri e botteghe* (note 19), pp. 109–113: 110f. See also Annamaria Bernacchioni, in: *Ghirlandaio: una famiglia* (note 34), p. 86. The sole work securely attributed to him is the *Nativity* in Notre-Dame church in Aigueperse. Cf. the catalogue entry by Dominique Thiébaud, in: *Mantegna 1431–1506*, exh. cat., ed. by Giovanni Agosti/Dominique Thiébaud, Paris 2008, pp. 218–220, no. 77.

Granacci's peer, is a more plausible candidate for the identification of the Pseudo Granacci than Poggio Poggini. As a matter of fact, the Jacopo del Tedesco recalled by Vasari is probably Jacopo di Alessandro di Giovanni, who was already enrolled in the Compagnia di San Luca in 1503 and was called "del Tedesco". His father, Alexander Formoser, was indeed a German painter who had settled in Florence before 1475.³⁹ Moreover, Jacopo del Tedesco could be identical to "Jacopo di Sandro", who was among the painters recruited by Granacci in 1508 to assist Michelangelo with the Sistine ceiling.⁴⁰ If these names refer to the same person, Jacopo del Tedesco's biography well conforms to the oeuvre of the Pseudo Granacci, which demonstrates a strong affinity to that of Granacci.

The Structure

Considered along with the size of the predella panels identified above, Fineschi's account enables us to envisage more clearly the altarpiece structure before its dismantlement. The panels of full-length saints measure between 53 and 57.5 cm in width, which is equivalent to one *braccio fiorentino* (about 58 cm), while those of the corresponding predella panels range between 40.5 cm and 42.2 cm. The early eighteenth-century prints (Figs. 3, 4) demonstrate that the columns dividing the larger panels rested on projecting bases that seem to have been wider than the columns themselves.⁴¹ Each of the single predella

panels beneath the independent saints must have been inserted separately into the narrower spaces between the two bases.

The presence of predella panels beneath the central scenes, both on the front and back, has received scant attention in the past. The two panels representing the stories of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Thomas the Apostle were approximately the same size (34/34.4 by 37 cm) and occupied the right hand side of the front predella. The two panels on the left probably had the same width, whether or not one was the ex-Heinz Steinmeyer picture. The central *Nativity* might have been, but was not necessarily, greater in width. Although in some cases the width of the predella exceeds that of the main panel above, the representation of the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece in the eighteenth-century engravings is not supportive of such a hypothesis. The width of the *Virgin and Child* in Munich, 198.2 cm (about 40 cm if simply divided in five), thus leaves only a maximum of a few extra centimeters for each of the single predella scenes. The scenes beneath the *Virgin and Child* might have been separately inserted into simple frames. However, as the Saint John panel now in New York was cut only on the left and right sides, they as well might have originally consisted of a single, long plank.

The *sportello* in the center of the back-side predella, which was once used to contain the ciborium, may have derived from a later arrangement. As Vasari tells

³⁹ For Jacopo di Alexander Formoser see Louis A. Waldman, "Commissioning Art in Florence for Matthias Corvinus: The Painter and Agent Alexander Formoser and His Sons, Jacopo and Raffaello del Tedesco", in: *Italy and Hungary*, conference proceedings Florence 2007, ed. by Péter Farbaky/Louis A. Waldman, Milan 2011, pp. 427–501, in part. 461–467. Waldman tentatively identifies Jacopo del Tedesco (Formoser) with the Master of the Borghese Tondo, another anonymous painter in the Ghirlandaio circle. This opinion, however, is not acceptable. It is based on an old speculation by Géza de Francovich, "Appunti su alcuni minori pittori fiorentini della seconda metà del secolo XV", in: *Bollettino d'arte*, VI [= XX] (1926/27), pp. 529–547. However, as has been observed, De Francovich's hypothesis is groundless (cf. Lisa Venturini, "Un altro pittore fiorentino nell'Appartamento Borgia: il Maestro del Tondo Borghese", in: *Maestri e botteghe* [note 19], pp. 283–289: 283) and Wald-

man does not provide further arguments. The stylistic features of the Master of the Borghese Tondo suggest that he belonged to an older generation than Granacci and the Pseudo Granacci, and it is less likely that he participated in the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece as an "allevato" of Domenico Ghirlandaio.

⁴⁰ William E. Wallace, "Michelangelo's Assistants in the Sistine Chapel", in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CX (1987), pp. 203–216, in part. pp. 207, 215. Waldman (note 39) maintains that the assistant of Michelangelo was another painter, Jacopo di Domenico Foschi, sometimes called Jacopo di Sandro after his master Botticelli. However, since the other painters recruited for this project by Granacci were mostly ex-companions from the Ghirlandaio workshop, it is less likely that he would choose a Botticelli pupil.

⁴¹ For the wooden structure, especially the columns and the bases, the Bini altarpiece which Baccio d'Agnolo built later can provide an example, although

us, the original tabernacle for the Host was beneath the arched structure surmounting the altarpiece⁴² – an element which is also visible in the eighteenth-century prints. Fineschi assumes that the *sportello* of the back side was introduced as a result of the dismissal of the habit to hold the Host in a high place.⁴³ In either case, the original composition of the predella on the back must have been different from that of the front side, since one of the two panels, the *Noli me tangere*, is significantly wider (48.2 cm).⁴⁴

The Arrangement of Saints

The arrangement of the panels of full-length saints suggested by Fineschi's manuscript is a more controversial issue, as it does not correspond to any of the reconstructions posited so far. The clockwise order of the panels which the text adopts can be reinterpreted as follows: the sides of the *Virgin and Child in glory* on the front were occupied by *Saint Lawrence* on the left and *Saint Stephen* on the right; similarly, the *Resurrection* on the back was flanked by *Saint Peter Martyr* on the left and *Saint Catherine* on the right; finally, looking into the chapel from the entrance, the left and right shorter sides were adorned by *Saint Vincent* and *Antonino Pierozzi* respectively (Fig. 21).

Vasari's *Lives* does not clearly specify the positions of the independent saints. Gaetano Milanesi, in his edition of the *Lives*, noted where the altarpiece's fragments had ended up, along with a date of 1804 for

its dismantlement.⁴⁵ He presumed that their division reflected the original arrangement of the panels in the altarpiece, supposing that *Saint Catherine* and *Saint Lawrence* in Munich had come from the front side and *Saint Vincent Ferrer* and *Antonino Pierozzi* in Berlin from the back. He also noted that *Saint Stephen* and *Saint Peter Martyr* had been sold in 1809 to Lucien Bonaparte, without specifying their positions in the altarpiece structure. Meanwhile, the destination of the predella panels was not known to him.

In the essay published in 1969, Christian von Holst challenged Milanesi's presumption.⁴⁶ Through an analysis of the early eighteenth-century engravings he demonstrated definitively that the altarpiece had been a box-like structure with all four sides decorated rather than a typical double-sided work. For the front, von Holst chose the set of deacons, placing *Saint Lawrence* on the left and *Saint Stephen* on the right. He favored this arrangement since the background of the panels shared a common, centralized perspective plan, inasmuch as the architectural motifs behind the figures receded to the right side in *Saint Lawrence* and to the left in *Saint Stephen*. As von Holst argued, Milanesi's selection of *Saint Catherine* and *Saint Lawrence* for the frontal positions would have denied not only the pairing of the two deacons, but also a unified lighting and perspectival setting for the altarpiece's front. Similarly, for the reverse side, von Holst placed *Antonino* on the left and *Saint Vincent Ferrer* on the right. For the left shorter side he

the arrangement of painted panels are different. For this altarpiece see Riccardo Spinelli, in: *L'officina della maniera: varietà e fierezza nell'arte fiorentina del Cinquecento fra le due repubbliche 1494–1530*, exh. cat. Florence 1996, ed. by Antonio Natali/Alessandro Cecchi, Venice 1996, p. 244, no. 80.

⁴² Vasari (note 14), III, pp. 481–483.

⁴³ Appendix, fol. 39r.

⁴⁴ The small tabernacle which can be seen at the foot of the altarpiece in the eighteenth-century engraving representing the front view of the *cappella maggiore* (Fig. 3) did not belong to the altarpiece ensemble either. Fineschi's text indeed alludes to the presence of various liturgical objects on the altar, noting that the view of the predella on the front side was, at that time, impeded by candle holders (Appendix, fol. 38r). The engraving with the side view of the chapel (Fig. 4) clearly suggests that this tabernacle was placed on

the altar itself, probably incorporated into a type of gradine for candles and other liturgical objects rather than attached to the altarpiece.

⁴⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. by Gaetano Milanesi, Florence 1878–1885, III, pp. 268f., note 2.

⁴⁶ Von Holst (note 2). Milanesi's assumption was widely accepted until the mid-twentieth century. See for example: James Brown, *The Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence: A Historical, Architectural, and Artistic Study*, Edinburgh 1902, p. 131; Chiaroni (note 13), pp. 15–18. The lack of substantial studies was pointed out by A. Scharf, "Notes on the High Altar from Sta Maria Novella at Florence", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, XCI (1949), pp. 214–217: 214f. Miklós Boskovits, *Tuscan Paintings of the Early Renaissance: Budapest Museum of Fine Arts – Esztergom Christian Museum*, Budapest 1968, pp. 38f., proposed an arrangement to place all six saints on

preferred *Saint Peter Martyr*, while the right side would have displayed *Saint Catherine*, the sole panel lit from the right, implying light sources from the windows on the end wall and viewpoints from the entrance side of the chapel. This reconstruction (Fig. 22) has enjoyed wide acceptance since 1969, as illustrated by its adoption in recent monographic studies of Ghirlandaio by critics such as Jean Cadogan and Ronald Kecks.⁴⁷

The arrangement of the panels deduced from Fineschi's manuscript raises the same type of problem that led von Holst to argue against Milanesi's reconstruction. On the back, although harmonized in a perspective setting, the light source from the right for *Saint Catherine* would be in disagreement with those from the left of the other two panels. *Antonino*, if set on the right shorter side, would necessitate a light source from the direction of the chapel's entrance, while *Saint Vincent* on the left would be lit from the end wall. This lighting arrangement is less than persuasive, since the fresco paintings of the chapel realized by the same Ghirlandaio workshop, on both side walls, are composed as equally lit from the light source in the windows on the end wall. Furthermore, the perspective in the backgrounds of the two panels on the shorter sides would require viewpoints set inside the chapel, near the far end of the side walls.

Whereas Fineschi's description is so precise that there is no reason to doubt its accuracy, it is nonetheless difficult to accept the arrangement he witnessed as original. The scarce number of double-sided altarpieces that have maintained their original shape suggests that

they were quite often disassembled and remodeled, according to changes in taste and liturgical customs. One of the most illustrative cases of this tendency is the high altarpiece of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, for which Baccio d'Agnolo, who had already built the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece, provided a wooden structure at the beginning of the sixteenth-century.⁴⁸ It had a similar box-like shape, with two main panels and six slender panels of saints painted by Filippino Lippi and, after the death of the former, Pietro Perugino. In less than a century, however, the altarpiece underwent radical modifications, although the wooden structure remained next to the high altar until it was completely dismantled in the seventeenth century. The first major remodeling occurred as early as 1546, when the altarpiece was converted into a stand for a gigantic ciborium. In order to create a space for the ciborium, the two main panels were removed from the structure and transferred into other chapels. Then, in 1566, the entire structure, though remaining next to the high altar, was rotated by 180 degrees. At some point in these operations, two panels of the saints were horizontally split into two parts and their upper halves were probably relocated above two of the remaining four full-length saints. Evidently the painted panels and the wooden base were structurally independent and thus were quite easily dismantled.⁴⁹

The six panels representing full-length saints in the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece could have been easily interchanged in similar operations. They are approximately the same size (206–211.5 by

the front, although without presenting any substantial proof backing this hypothesis.

⁴⁷ Cadogan (note I); Kecks (note I).

⁴⁸ For this altarpiece, see Wiebke Fastenrath Vinattieri/Johannes Schaefer, *Pietro Perugino: Die hl. Margarethe von Antiochia und der sel. Franziskus von Siena*, Altenburg 2011; *Filippino Lippi e Pietro Perugino: la Deposizione della Santissima Annunziata e il suo restauro*, ed. by Franca Falletti, Livorno 2004; Eugenio Casalini, "La 'tavola' dell'altare maggiore dell'Annunziata di Firenze", in: *Studi storici dell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria*, LI (2001), pp. 7–32.

⁴⁹ Two other altarpieces of similar shapes that were created in the middle of the sixteenth century testify to the vulnerability of work to later

remodeling. Both were by Giorgio Vasari, one for the Pieve di Santa Maria in his native Arezzo, and the other for Santa Croce in Bosco Marengo. The latter had already been disassembled around 1710, with most of its single panels rearranged as independent works, while the former maintains its original shape, albeit transferred into the Badia delle Sante Flora e Lucilla in the same city in 1864. Cf. Giulio Ieni, "Una macchina grandissima quasi a guisa d'arco trionfale: l'altare vasariano", in: *Pio V e Santa Croce di Bosco: aspetti di una committenza papale*, ed. by Carlenrica Spantigati/Giulio Ieni, n.p. 1985, pp. 49–62; Christian-Adolf Isermeyer, "Die Cappella Vasari und der Hochaltar in der Pieve von Arezzo", in: *Eine Gabe der Freunde für Carl Georg Heise zum 28. 6. 1950*, ed. by Erich Meyer, Berlin 1950, pp. 137–153.



21 Reconstruction of the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece according to Vincenzo Fineschi (late eighteenth century)

22 Reconstruction of the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece by Christian von Holst (1969)



23 The author's reconstruction of the Santa Maria Novella altarpiece



53–57.5 cm), except for *Saint Stephen* and *Saint Peter Martyr* (191 by 56 cm), whose upper sections with the inscriptions have been cut off. It is possible that a rearrangement occurred during the renovation of the church interior of Santa Maria Novella which began in 1565 under the direction of Giorgio Vasari.⁵⁰ The renovation indeed brought about major changes to the space around the high altar. Originally, the front side of the altarpiece was directed towards the friars' choir, which occupied a vast space in the nave, while the area facing the back was apparently subsidiary. Vasari demolished the roodscreen or *ponte*, and transferred the friars' choir stalls from the nave to the area behind the high altar: the present wooden stalls arranged in two rows along the walls surrounding the chapel are work designed by Vasari.⁵¹ The high altar was moved approximately six *braccia* (about 3.5 meters) closer to the chapel's entrance.⁵² The front side of the altarpiece thus became directly visible to the laity without obstruction by a choir or roodscreen, while the back of the altarpiece, on the other hand, was viewed by the friars seated only a short distance away.

In the process of the church renovation, the altarpiece might have been disassembled and reconstructed after the reinstallation of the altar, and the new setting around it could have spurred the desire to rearrange the panels of the saints. In regard to the perspectival construction, the arrangement Fineschi witnessed agrees with von Holst's reconstruction except

for the panels placed on the shorter sides. Von Holst supposes that the panels should have viewpoints set on the entrance side, whereas what Fineschi describes implies that they should be seen from inside the chapel. Indeed, after Vasari's church renovation, the view from inside the *cappella maggiore* increased in importance because of the relocation of the choir, and this may have favored a perspective construction adjusted to the viewpoint of the friars. On the right of the back side, Fineschi reports *Saint Catherine*. This would certainly have been considered a more prominent location than on one of the shorter sides. It is possible that a century after her canonization, her popularity might have grown, especially in the years after the annexation of Siena to Florence in 1555. On the other hand, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, who is allocated the right hand side on the back in von Holst's reconstruction, was highly venerated when the altarpiece was realized.⁵³

Vasari knew well that the panels of a double-sided altarpiece of the Santa Maria Novella type could be easily interchanged, as he had witnessed the remodelings of the Santissima Annunziata altarpiece. The latter certainly impressed him since he mentioned it, as late as 1567, as one of the models for his own double-sided altarpiece which he was preparing for Santa Croce in Bosco Marengo.⁵⁴ He might have even invented a fascinating story about the Servite friars, who, dissatisfied with the *Assumption of the Virgin* by Perugino, set Filippino Lippi's *Deposition* on the nave

⁵⁰ For the church renovation, see Marcia B. Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565–1577*, Oxford 1979.

⁵¹ See *ibidem*, pp. 167–169, doc. 2; Alessandro Cecchi, "Percorso di Baccio d'Agnolo legnaiuolo e architetto fiorentino: dagli esordi al palazzo Borgherini, I", in: *Antichità viva*, XXIX (1990), I, pp. 31–46: 32–35; Lucia Aquino, "I Ghirlandaio, Baccio d'Agnolo e le loro botteghe 'in sulla piazza di San Michele Berteldi'", in: *Invisibile agli occhi: atti della giornata di studio in ricordo di Lisa Venturini*, ed. by Nicoletta Baldini, Florence 2007, pp. 64–76: 67f. There were probably no choir stalls behind the altar until Vasari's time. See Sheila Ross, *The Redecoration of Santa Maria Novella's Cappella Maggiore*, Ph.D. diss., University of California (Berkeley), Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 21f.; Schmid (note I), pp. 141f. However, the possibility that some simple seats or benches had been installed there cannot be excluded. For a more detailed discussion on

the relocation of the altarpiece, see Takuma Ito, "Domenico Ghirlandaio's Double-Sided Altarpiece of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, during the 16th Century Giorgio Vasari Church Renovation", in: *Bulletin of Keisen University [Keisen Jogakuen Daigaku Kiyou]*, XXVI (2014), pp. 177–208 (in Japanese, with English summary).

⁵² On the transfer of the altar, Agostino Lapini, *Diario Fiorentino dal 252 al 1596*, ed. by Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini, Florence 1900, p. 152 (entry of 24 March 1566). This location probably corresponds to the one represented in the eighteenth-century engravings.

⁵³ The initial fervor of veneration of this Valencian saint, throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, was documented in a large number of art works; see the concise list given by Venturini (note 26), pp. 157f.

⁵⁴ Karl Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, Munich 1923–1930, II, pp. 324f., no. DLXXIX. For the Bosco Marengo altarpiece, see note 49.

side, although initially it was planned on the back.⁵⁵ In describing Ghirlandaio's altarpiece in the second edition of the *Lives*, published after the church renovation of Santa Maria Novella, Vasari only touched upon the relocation of the new choir and provided no further information on the arrangement of the saints other than what he had said in the first edition. It is not clear if the saints were maintained in the same locations or if the biography simply copied a passage from the former edition. In either case, a change of panels as discussed above might have occurred at any time, and thus the arrangement Fineschi witnessed should not be regarded as what Domenico Ghirlandaio originally envisioned.

Toward a New Reconstruction

We can agree with the general rules of perspective and light sources which von Holst took as a basis for his reconstruction. However, a minor adjustment of his arrangement still seems necessary. If we accept the selection of the two deacons for the front side, the rules require that *Saint Vincent* should occupy the right side on the back since he is the only one among the four Dominican saints who is lit and viewed from the left. On the other hand, the counterpart may be either *Saint Peter Martyr* or *Antonino Pierozzi*, since they both share a similar perspectival construction and lighting scheme (being viewed from the right and lit from the left). Von Holst prefers the latter since, noting *Saint Peter Martyr's* similarity to *Saint Vincent* in clothing, pose and attributes (both hold books in their left hands), he believes the two saints, viewed together, would be

compositionally "troppo noiosi".⁵⁶ On this point his reconstruction is less than persuasive, since the argument is based primarily on modern aesthetic preferences, not on historical evidence.

In examining the placement of the two figures, we must also reconsider the relationship between the program of the chapel's mural paintings and the altarpiece. Although the entire chapel decoration was eventually financed by Giovanni Tornabuoni, when work on it begun in 1485 the project did not include the altarpiece and the stained glass windows. Tornabuoni was not the legitimate patron of the chapel and could only assert his rights on the mural decoration, since the existing wall paintings realized by Andrea Orcagna in the fourteenth century had been financed by members from Tornabuoni's original *consorteria*, the Tornaquinci.⁵⁷ According to the well-known iconographic program outlined in the initial contract between Tornabuoni and the Ghirlandaio brothers, the four Dominican saints later allocated to the altarpiece were to be represented on the far-end wall in fresco along with two other saints of the order, Saints Dominic and Thomas Aquinas. The arrangement of the six saints was defined by a clearly organized plan, in which the higher ranking saints are obviously positioned higher on the wall. The lowest level would have been occupied by the former bishop of Florence, Antonino Pierozzi, and Saint Catherine of Siena. Their humble positions must have reflected the fact that the latter was a tertiary whose saintly status had only very recently been acknowledged, while the former, although revered by local people,

⁵⁵ Jonathan Nelson, "La disgrazia di Pietro: l'importanza della pala della Santissima Annunziata nella Vita del Perugino del Vasari", in: *Pietro Vannucci, il Perugino*, proceedings of the conference Perugia 2000, ed. by Laura Teza/Mirko Santanicchia, Perugia 2004, pp. 65–73. Vasari's story cannot be true, since the *Deposition* was expected to occupy the nave side as specified by the initial contract.

⁵⁶ Von Holst (note 2), pp. 40f., note II.

⁵⁷ On the patronage of the *cappella maggiore* see, in addition to the literature cited in note I: Ross (note 51); Patricia Simons, *Portraiture and Patronage in Quattrocento Florence with Special Reference to the Tornaquinci and Their Chapel in S. Ma-*

ria Novella, Ph.D. Diss., University of Melbourne 1985; *eadem*, "Patronage in the Tornaquinci Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence", in: *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Francis Kent/Patricia Simons, Oxford 1987, pp. 221–250; Rab Hatfield, "Giovanni Tornabuoni, i fratelli Ghirlandaio e la cappella maggiore di Santa Maria Novella", in: *Domenico Ghirlandaio* (note 26), pp. 112–117. Documentary sources have been extensively published by Cadogan (note 1), pp. 350–372. Additional materials can be found in an unpublished typescript by Rab Hatfield, preserved in the library of Syracuse University's Florentine campus. I would like to deeply thank Professor Hatfield for graciously facilitating consultation of the manuscript.

had not yet been canonized.⁵⁸ Saints Thomas Aquinas and Vincent Ferrer, arranged on the second tier, were both acclaimed theologians and had an irreproachable importance to the Order of Preachers. Finally, the rows of the Dominican saints would have been crowned by the founder of the order, Saint Dominic, and its first martyr, Saint Peter. Furthermore, the figures on the left hand side, Dominic, Thomas and Antonino, would have been considered more important than their counterparts on the right, if not hierarchically superior. The uncanonized Antonino would have been placed to the left of Saint Catherine because of his popularity among contemporary Florentines, especially among the Dominican members of Santa Maria Novella.

When Giovanni Tornabuoni successfully procured patronage over the entire chapel in 1486, a detailed program for additional works such as the altarpiece and the stained glass windows must have been drawn up. Some of the content originally selected for the murals was then relocated to other works, freeing up the far-end wall for new subjects as seen today.⁵⁹ The initially fixed disposition of subject matter thus became more complex. Remnants of the original mural program include the scenes from the lives of Saints Dominic and Peter Martyr on the upper level of the far-end wall, while the stained glass windows accommodate the figures of Saints Dominic and Thomas Aquinas. The remaining four saints were moved to the lateral panels of the altarpiece, in addition to the second depiction of Saint Dominic in the *Virgin and Child in glory*.⁶⁰

The arrangement of the six saints in the initial program for the mural indicates which pairing was feasible among the four Dominican saints relocated to the altarpiece. Saint Peter Martyr, who had been

assigned to the highest level in the mural, must have been paired with Vincent Ferrer. On the other hand, the two Dominicans initially designated for the lowest level, Antonino Pierozzi and Catherine, must have maintained their 'partnership'. Von Holst's reconstruction, which instead selects Antonino as an incongruent companion to Saint Vincent, should therefore be corrected by exchanging Antonino with Saint Peter Martyr (Fig. 23). This arrangement implies a greater importance of the two figures flanking the *Resurrection of Christ* on the back compared to those occupying the shorter sides. Also, when individual pairings are compared, it appears that the left side was privileged. According to this scheme, the four saints ascend, in importance, in the order of Catherine, Antonino, Vincent Ferrer, and Peter Martyr, which corresponds perfectly to the order set in the initial mural program as stipulated in the contract of 1485. Such a placement satisfactorily accounts not only for the lighting scheme and the perspectival construction, but also for the subject matter of the lateral panels. Just as the two deacons on the front were depicted wearing similar garments, on the back Saints Peter Martyr and Vincent Ferrer were both holding closed books in their left hands. Analogously, in the predella scenes the two saints were represented praying in front of altars with crucifixes that are positioned each on the side of the painting directed toward the center of the altarpiece (Figs. 13, 14). The symmetrical composition both in the large-scale figures and the predella scenes is definitely intentional.

This reconstruction also has the advantage of more closely matching Vasari's description of the altarpiece, which had already appeared in the first edition of 1550, prior to the renovation of Santa Maria Novella. In the life of Domenico Ghirlanda-

⁵⁸ The recognition of Antonino Pierozzi's lesser status would later be expressed in the altarpiece through a depiction of rays around the head (Fig. 10) instead of the halo to be seen in the portraits of the other five saints.

⁵⁹ For a detailed comparison between the initial program and the eventual decoration, see for example Cadogan (note 1), pp. 240f.

⁶⁰ For the representation of Saint Dominic in the main panel, see Leuker (note 1).

io, the biographer noted that the altarpiece contained six panels of saints, naming however only four of them: “oltre alla Nostra Donna che siede in aria col Figliuolo in collo e gli altri Santi che gli sono intorno, oltre il San Lorenzo et il Santo Stefano [...], vi è il San Vincenzio et il San Pietro martire.”⁶¹ The other two saints, which we have placed on the shorter sides, are only mentioned in the life of Domenico’s brothers Davide and Benedetto. It says that the former “finì poi in compagnia di Benedetto suo fratello molte cose cominciate da Domenico, fra le quali è la tavola di Santa Maria Novella a Giovanni Tornabuoni, da la parte di dietro, dove è la Resurrezione [*sic*] di Cristo; e agli allevati di Domenico fece finir la predella [...]. Così a Benedetto suo fratello fece fare in detta opera la figura di Santo Antonino arcivescovo di Fiorenza e la Santa Caterina da Siena.”⁶² Regardless of the credibility of the attributions, this description reveals the author’s presumption that the panels on the back had been finished by the *capobottega* Davide, who in turn assigned the less important figures on the shorter sides to his younger brother Benedetto, and the even less important predella panels to other assistants in the workshop.⁶³

Conclusion

Since Aby Warburg’s pioneering study on Francesco Sassetti, rival of Giovanni Tornabuoni, the patronage of the *cappella maggiore* in Santa Maria Novella has attracted the attention of a great number of art historians.⁶⁴ The sociological dimensions of pa-

tronage have dominated the scholarly discourse, while relatively few studies have focused on the altarpiece itself, even among those who have considered the chapel in its entirety. There is no doubt that the complexity of the altarpiece’s structure and the dispersal of its components have hindered comprehensive study. Although we have limited the scope of this discussion to the reconstruction of the altarpiece itself, the work presents many issues that deserve further investigation. The altarpiece was indeed the focal point of the entire chapel and the church of Santa Maria Novella, both on the iconographic and the liturgical levels. It also represents one of the most important projects for the Ghirlandaio workshop, where some of the most talented artists of the next generation received their training and gained a wide range of experience. The reconstruction proposed here, albeit still incomplete, along with the information relayed by Vincenzio Fineschi provides some firm ground from which to address the issues prompted by such a unique work as Domenico Ghirlandaio’s double-sided altarpiece.

An earlier version of this text was first submitted in February 2012. However, after Fineschi’s manuscript had come to my attention it required extensive rewriting. I would like to thank the editors for their tolerance. I also wish to express my deep gratitude to Koichi Toyama, Christa Gardner von Teuffel, Everett Faby, Frank Martin (†), and other scholars and friends for their detailed comments, suggestions, and constant support. Pamela Lee Novick and Mari Yoko Hara kindly helped me to prepare the English text. This research was partially supported by a Grant-in-Aid of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS Kakenhi Grant Number 25770047).

⁶¹ Vasari (note 14), III, p. 491.

⁶² *Ibidem*, V, p. 437.

⁶³ Dr. Christa Gardner von Teuffel has informed me that she also proposed, independently, the same arrangement of the saints in an unpublished paper presented in a conference at the Lindenau-Museum, Altenburg, in January 2012.

⁶⁴ Aby Warburg, “Francesco Sassetti’s letztwillige Verfügung”, in: *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge August Schmarsow gewidmet zum 50. Semester seiner akademischen Lebttätigkeit*, Leipzig 1907, pp. 130–152. Some misunderstandings in Warburg’s study regarding the Tornabuoni Chapel have been corrected; see for example Eve Borsook/Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel*, Doornspijk 1981.

Florence, Archivio storico del convento Santa Maria Novella, I.A.40. Monumenti della chiesa di Santa Maria Novella illustrati con annotazioni e dati in luce dal P. Vincenzio Fineschi, tom. 1, fol. 38r–39v.

The original text contains some corrections and modifications, most probably added by the author of the manuscript in the process of preparing it for publication. These alterations are included in the transcription below. The phrases underlined are also indicated as such in the original text.

[fol. 38r] Descritta la cappella diremo qualche cosa dell'altare, e degli ornamenti di quello. La tavola fu dipinta a tempera parimente da esso Domenico [Ghirlandaio] ed è rappresentata l'Assunzione di Maria con vari santi, cioè S. Michele Arcangelo, S. Giovanni Batista, S. Domenico e S. Tommaso Apostolo, ai lati S. Lorenzo da una parte, e dall'altra S. Stefano tramezzati da lavori a intaglio messi a oro, e coloriti di verde, che è appunto il campo dell'arma Tornaquinci, travagliati dal sopradetto Baccio da Montelupo [sic; see note 8 in the text], uomo in tal genere molto intendente; e perché quest'altare rimane isolato, è nella medesima maniera lavorato, e dipinto anche per la parte del coro: e perché detto Domenico l'aveva lasciato imperfetto, perciò la Resurrezione di Cristo fu opera di Benedetto, e di Davidde fratelli del detto Domenico. Ai lati S. Vincenzo, S. Antonino, S. Pietro martire e S. Caterina da Siena.

Nella predella, o vogliamo dire nel gradino, sul quale riposa la tavola, che ora non si può osservare se non da chi si avvicina al medesimo altare, rimanendo coperta da candellieri, vi sono dipinti certi fatti relativi a detti Santi, i quali sembrano a chi gusta il disegno piuttosto miniature, che pitture, e perché di essi non è stata fatta parola, non sarà spiacevole questa mia descrizione a chi gusta la storia.

Sotto la beatissima Vergine vi è la Natività del Signore benissimo rappresentata con S. Giuseppe, e altre devote figurine. Sotto S. Michele vi è espresso il fatto dell'apparizione sul monte [fol. 38v] Gargano, sotto S. Giovanni vi è effigiato il Santo, allorché giovanetto prende la benedizione da' suoi genitori per andare al deserto. Sotto S. Domenico vi è la nascita del medesimo con l'apparizione seguita in sogno del cane con la torcia in bocca, e ben disegnato il letto, la madre con una donna, che l'assiste; e il nato Bambino in braccio ad un'altra: sotto S. Tommaso quando questo Apostolo pone il dito nel costato del Redentore.

Dalla parte del Vangelo sotto S. Lorenzo vi è bene espresso il fatto di quando distribuisce a' Poveri i tesori della Chiesa, e vi si osservano quelle piccole figure ben disegnate, e finite degli storpi, de' ciechi, e simili altri; e in lontananza vi si vede una chiesa, sulla porta della quale evvi affisso un cartello, ed uno che legge con attenzione con ottima grazia, vestito secondo l'uso di quei tempi; sopra il Santo vi si legge questo motto con gli altri, che seguono appropriati a' Santi ivi dipinti composti dal celebre Agnolo Poliziano.

“Pressuram flamme non timui,
et in medio ignis non sum estuasus [sic]”

Seguendo il circolo della tavola vi si vede S. Vincenzo sotto del quale rappresentasi vestito degli abiti sacerdotali alla foggia d'allora, allorché essendo all'altare nell'atto della consacrazione apparisce visibilmente [fol. 39r] il S. Bambino Gesù: degna è qui d'osservazione la forma degli altari, e l'adornamento di quelli; mentre allora non si usavano, né gradi, né candellieri, ma solamente sopra la mensa nel mezzo presso al crocifisso, eravi un certo ordegno ovale per lo più di bronzo, o di ferro, in cui si ponevano le candele: sopra di esso Santo il motto dice

“Vincentio pro vitę meritis absconditum
manna datum a Domino est”

Ne segue S. Caterina da Siena, e sotto si osserva essa nell'atto di comunicarsi, e il sacerdote dall'altare gli porge con grazia, e maestà la Sacrosanta ostia, mentre va in estasi. Il motto di quella dice

“Invicta animi virtus, et virginitatis decus
me in aethera substulerunt”

Dalla banda del coro la tavola rappresenta la Resurrezione di Cristo, come si è detto, e sotto vi è espresso il Redentore in forma di ortolano, che apparisce alla Maddalena, e in lontananza vi si veggono le tre donne, che ancor nelle tenebre avanti la levata del sole se ne vanno al sepolcro. Vi si osserva l'apparizione di Cristo a' discepoli, che andavano in Emmaus, e poi in lontananza si vede sedere con loro a tavola che prende il pane, e lo spezza. Nel mezzo vi si osserva uno sportello dorato dentro al quale vi era un ciborio, in cui tenevasi il SS. Sacramento; allorché fu dismesso l'uso antico di tenersi in alto stante la calamità de' tempi, e il pericolo delle invasioni a norma delle costituzioni apostoliche ⁽¹⁾.

[in the left margin of fol. 39r] ⁽¹⁾ Si può vedere il Martene, Muratori, ed altri autori che trattano de' rebus liturgicis.

[fol. 39v] Ne segue S. Pietro Martire, sotto del quale vi è il Santo che in atto di orare vede nella sua cella tre Sante Vergini, che gli apparvero, ed egli si stupisce. Il motto veramente qui pare più appropriato al di lui martirio

“Propagandę fidei desiderio
vulnera ista gero”

Sotto S. Antonino vi è quando fanciulletto si presenta al Beato Giovanni Domenico priore del convento di Fiesole, e gli domanda di vestir l'abito religioso: sopra di esso il motto dice

“Splendor vitę et doctrinę prestantia
Antonio inter sanctos contulere sortem”

Finalmente sotto S. Stefano, che rimane nella facciata dell'Altare dalla parte dell'Epistola, vi si vede il Santo in mezzo a vecchi seniori, spiegando la divina scrittura, e sono bellissimi gli atteggiamenti di coloro, a' quali dispiacendo il di lui parlare dimostra la rabbia, e il livore

“Torrentis lapides Stephano Martiri
invictissimo dulcissimi extiterunt”

Per quanto si sia descritta la cappella, e l'Altare pur non di meno non può essersi detto a bastanza poiché tutto quello, che vi si vede, sebbene da molti [altri] bene informati sia reputato un'antichità non valutabile è tutto la cura di eccellenti Professori, e più che mai comparisce a chi minutamente si pone a considerarne i [passi].

Abbreviations

ASMN Archivio storico del convento Santa Maria Novella di Firenze

Abstract

This essay discusses the reconstruction of Domenico Ghirlandaio's double-sided altarpiece for the *cappella maggiore* of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, based on an unpublished manuscript by the Dominican friar Vincenzo Fineschi. Written in the late eighteenth century, the manuscript describes the altarpiece when it still stood in the church, also providing rich information about the predella panels. In addition to the three panels mentioned in earlier studies, the author identifies four, possibly five, panels whose relationship to the altarpiece has been hitherto unrecognized. These works can be attributed to the anonymous artist known as Pseudo Granacci, who also participated in other projects by Ghirlandaio workshop around the time of Domenico's death. Furthermore, the manuscript reveals that the saint on the far right side in the *Virgin in Glory* in Munich (central front panel), now commonly supposed to be Saint John the Apostle, is in fact Saint Thomas.

The article also reconsiders the arrangement of the saints' panels in the main tier, since the arrangement deduced from Fineschi's manuscript does not correspond to the now widely accepted 1969 reconstruction by Christian von Holst. It is argued, however, that the panels of the altarpiece must have been rearranged before Fineschi's time, most probably during the mid-sixteenth-century church renovation by Giorgio Vasari. A re-examination of the iconographic relationship between the altarpiece and the mural in the chapel leads to a new arrangement, in which *Saint Peter Martyr* takes the place of *Antonino Pierozzi* on the left wing of the reverse side.

Photo credits

© Wawel Royal Castle, Cracow: Fig. 1. — Antonio Quattrone, Florence: Fig. 2. — Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut: Figs. 3, 4. — Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen — Alte Pinakothek, Munich: Figs. 5, 7, 9. — Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Jörg P. Anders): Fig. 6. — Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Photoatelier Schwarz): Figs. 8, 10. — Fondazione Magnani Rocca, Mamiano di Traversetolo (Parma): Fig. 11. — Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest: Fig. 12. — © Photo Scala, Florence, 2014 — Biblioteca Berenson, Fototeca, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence: Figs. 13–15, 17. — The Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York: Fig. 16. — Farsetti Arte, Prato: Fig. 18. — Die Weltkunst, XXIV (1954), 24: Fig. 19. — Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze — Gabinetto Fotografico: Fig. 20. — Author: Figs. 21–23.

Umschlagbild | Copertina:
Pellegrino Tibaldi, progetto definitivo di altare dedicato a santa Caterina d'Alessandria
(Detail aus Abb. 2, S. 238 | Dettaglio da fig. 2, p. 238)

ISSN 0342-1201

Stampa: Alpi Lito, Firenze
novembre 2014