

2016

Repaint, reframe, renew: updating sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**REPAINT, REFRAME, RENEW: UPDATING SACRED IMAGES DURING THE
EARLY ITALIAN RENAISSANCE**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was completed with the help of many people. I want to thank my advisor, Professor Jodi Cranston, who continued to support me throughout the process and was generous with her time, encouragement and guidance. I am grateful for her insights and probing questions that helped to focus and deepen my thinking. Professor Cranston continues to inspire me through her teaching and scholarship, and I am fortunate to have her as my advisor and mentor. I am also grateful to Professor Deborah Kahn for her enthusiasm for my topic and for her thoughtful and wise suggestions and comments. I want to thank my committee members, Professors Michael Zell, Phillip Haberkern and Deena Klepper for their contributions and support. In addition to my committee members, I want to thank Professors Gregory Williams and Bruce Redford for their helpful suggestions.

A number of individuals and institutions helped support my efforts during my research and writing. Professor Cathleen Hoeniger of Queen's University (Ontario, Canada) generously shared with me her insights and scholarship on this topic. Her dedication to my research is most appreciated. I want to thank Professors Joanna Cannon of the Courtauld Institute of Art, David Perkins and Ron Ritchhart of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Julian Gardner of the University of Warwick, and Kathleen Camara of Tufts University for generously sharing their ideas and research, and Professor Jonathan Ribner of Boston University for his continued support. I am grateful to Stefano Scarpelli

of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, Italy for sharing his knowledge of restoration techniques and practices regarding his recent work on Giotto's *Badia Altarpiece*.

I want to thank my former student Elyse Robbins, painter Hannah Barrett at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA, and David Dearing, the Susan Morse Hilles Curator of Paintings & Sculpture and Director of Exhibitions at the Boston Athenæum, all of whom graciously shared with me their knowledge of painting techniques and materials. I am also grateful to Professor Stephan Wlohojiiian and Tara Cerretani at the Harvard Art Museums in Cambridge MA, Patrice Mattia and Andrew Caputo at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Anna Mieli, director of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, and Marco Riccardi at the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro in Rome, for allowing me access to archives and images for my research. I also thank Professor Diane Cole Ahl of Lafayette College for granting me permission to reproduce her digital reconstruction of the San Domenico di Fiesole Altarpiece.

Finally, I am most grateful to my husband William von Achen and my mother Irene Barahal for their continued, unqualified and unfaltering support. This dissertation is in memory of my father, Dr. Hyman S. Barahal, who modeled for me the joy of learning.

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ABSTRACT

Several early Italian Renaissance sacred images underwent significant restorations shortly after their completion, despite the fact that the paintings had suffered no apparent damage. Paintings that were completed in the mid-to-late 1200s were restored only 30-40 years later. This dissertation explores the motivation behind the premature restorations of these intact and newly-created sacred images.

As religious artworks, these objects were expected to move their viewers spiritually and to work as devotional intermediaries between the viewer and the sacred figures represented in the image. Some scholars contend that these paintings were prematurely restored in an effort to align the images with contemporary conceptions of style.

Based on a scholarly analysis of historical and analytical literature, and close examination of the objects, this dissertation asserts a more compelling and nuanced motive for the restoration of these sacred images: these restorations were prompted by a desire to increase their spiritual efficacy by forging an

empathic connection with viewers. The selective restorations primarily focused on repainting the faces and hands of important figures, with little or no repainting devoted to drapery, background or supporting figures. Repainting figures' faces and hands enabled viewers to connect emotionally with these painted intermediaries and to create a greater empathic bond.

I examine the motivation for artists to restore images prematurely and selectively within several contextual frameworks: the impact of viewers' empathic connection with images is rooted in art historical and rhetorical theory and supported by current brain research; the appeal of early Italian Renaissance vernacular culture created a receptive environment for empathic connections to literature, poetry, devotional music and imagery; and early art historical writings on empathy.

Chapter One examines the history of early Italian Renaissance restoration practices. Chapter Two explores how the art of Duccio di Buoninsegna and Giotto di Bondone motivated the selective repainting of devotional images. Chapters Three and Four present case studies of early Italian Renaissance sacred images that were prematurely repainted and reframed. Specific works examined include Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del Bordone*, 1261, Guido da Siena's *Maestà*, ca. 1270, and Taddeo Gaddi's *Madonna and Child with Four Saints*, ca. 1340-45.

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Introduction: Premature Renovations of Early Italian Renaissance Sacred Images

Nature provides--and there is nothing to be found more rapacious of her like than she--that we mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh, and grieve with the grief-stricken.

Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, Book Two, 41

Sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance were expected to participate in the daily lives of the devout and to serve as intermediaries between the viewer and the figures that were depicted. The direct involvement of these artworks in liturgical ceremonies and individuals' prayers required that they adhere to visual traditions and, therefore, demonstrate a certain degree of conservatism in the face of stylistic changes. Consequently, it is curious that several of these thirteenth century sacred images underwent restorations only a few years after their completion, despite the fact that the paintings had suffered no apparent damage. What was the motivation behind these interventions and re-painting?

Some scholars have suggested that several of these paintings were repainted and reworked as a result of shifts in taste, and that the renovations represent an effort to make the images more acceptable to contemporary viewers. According to these scholars, the motivation to modernize these images was prompted by a desire to increase their efficacy by better aligning the appearance of the image with contemporary conceptions of style and fashion.¹ However, x-radiography of several of the prematurely repainted images has

revealed that the repainting primarily involved the figures' faces and hands rather than the garments and backgrounds.

In this dissertation, I argue that the repainting of these sacred images was part of an effort to foster a stronger devotional experience for the viewer. More than mere updating to align with contemporary fashions, the selective repainting of the faces and hands of the figures depicted in these paintings better enabled viewers to identify and emotionally connect with these painted intermediaries. These efforts to create a greater empathic connection with sacred images coincided with the growing appeal of contemporary religious practices in the emerging vernacular culture.

Although little has been written on the specific topic of the premature restorations of early Italian Renaissance sacred images, I situate my argument in the scholarly literature of Michael Baxandall, Charles Dempsey, Alexander Nagel and Cathleen Hoeniger. Baxandall and Dempsey help position my argument in a broad historical context. Baxandall provides important insights on how the visual arts were impacted by the descriptive language of both the early Italian Renaissance humanists and the classical rhetoricians. Dempsey's work highlights the importance of the rise of the vernacular on popular culture in the early Italian Renaissance.

More directly relevant to my topic is the work of Nagel and Hoeniger. Nagel addresses the aesthetic consideration of the early Italian Renaissance renovations and views them within the context of fashionable updates and taste.

However, he does not explicitly address the importance of the empathic connection with viewers. Hoeniger addresses the topic in a comprehensive manner in her 1995 book, *The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500*. However, Hoeniger places these renovations primarily within a historical and social context and, like Nagel fails to fully address the empathic connection.²

The importance of the empathic connection during this period was brought to the forefront by the innovative work of the Sienese artist Duccio di Buoninsegna in the late 1200s. When we compare Duccio's *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1295-1300; Fig. 1) with the *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* (ca. 1225) by the Sienese Master of Tressa (Fig. 2), we begin to appreciate the emotional responses that Duccio's paintings were able to elicit from viewers. In contrast to the Master of Tressa's painting, Duccio's Madonna does not sit in a rigid and frontal pose, but instead turns to her child with a look of compassion. Her face is painted with soft skin tones and a gradual modeling of greys, pinks and greens that suggest the sense of real flesh. The Child turns to his mother and playfully grabs her veil and presses his right foot against her wrist. The human bond between mother and child is both palpable and convincing. The figures engage with each other and in turn evoke empathy in the viewers.

The approach embodied in Duccio's work had a profound impact on his contemporaries, prompting the renovation of a number of existing sacred images and the repainting of the faces and hands of figures depicted in them. One example of this impact can be seen in the *Madonna del Bordone*, painted by the

Florentine artist Coppo di Marcovaldo in 1261 (Fig.3). The *Madonna del Bordone* was repainted around 1315, shortly after the installation of Duccio's *Maestà* in 1311 (Figs. 4 & 5), which had received an immediate positive reaction.³ During a 1948 cleaning of the Coppo, x-radiography revealed that the early trecento renovation focused on repainting the faces and hands of the sacred figures depicted in the painting.

The interest in repainting and reframing devotional images in the early Italian Renaissance reflected a Byzantine tradition of refreshing older icons and images that had become dated.⁴ The Byzantine practice of renewing devotional images was not exclusively reserved for damaged works of art. Indeed, the repainting of many images was motivated by a desire to revitalize the spiritual impact of the icons by applying a new face and a fresh coat of paint. Often, these newly refreshed icons were copies of older images, and were believed to embody all of the former paintings' attributes and impact while also possessing a heightened spiritual efficacy and empathic quality as a result of their repainting.⁵

The concept of empathy has a long history, emerging in ancient rhetorical texts and writings of the orators Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC-43 BC), and Marcus Fabius Quintilian (ca. 35-100 AD), each of whom stressed the importance of facial expressions and hand gestures in capturing an audience's attention. These ancient Roman orators understood that facial expressions and hand gestures are essential to the art of persuasion and could be more impactful than spoken words alone in forging a connection with an audience.

Quintilian clearly details the importance of gestures and facial expressions in connecting with an audience:

All of your emotion laden words and examples are but empty trappings unless you feel the emotion yourself. And if you do, your emotion will communicate itself to the audience through everything you say and do-not only through your words, but also through your tone of voice, rate of speech, gestures, and facial expressions.⁶

The recommendations for orators impacted the early Renaissance conception of figural expression in painting. Indeed, these ancient rhetorical texts influenced many areas of early art theory and together contributed to a cultural construction of empathy. Leon Battista Alberti, in his 1435 treatise *On Painting*, mirrors the advice given by Cicero and Quintilian in his instructions to artists regarding inventions and techniques. For Alberti, just as speakers must work to establish an emotional connection with their audiences, so too, must artists strive to evoke similar emotions in viewers. He urges artists to move their viewers to “mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh, and grieve with the grief-stricken.”⁷

Indeed, the selective and premature repainting of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance visually embodies the lessons of the ancient orators and anticipates Alberti’s advice more than a century prior to the publication of his

treatise. By repainting the sacred figures' faces and hands, those involved in these premature renovations seemed to have instinctively appreciated the importance of empathy and the ways in which empathy is most powerfully elicited.

A final and definitive force at work in the premature repainting and reframing of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance was the emergence of the vernacular culture and the corresponding investment in reaching a broad audience. By the mid-1300s, we see a variety of literature written in the native vernacular. For example, Dante Aligheri wrote his *Il Convivio* in Italian in 1304-07, in which he discusses the virtues of prose and poetry. Completed in 1321, *The Divine Comedy*, perhaps Dante's most famous work, was also written in Italian. Later, around 1353, Boccaccio wrote *The Decameron* in Italian in which he recounted tales about health and wellbeing to a population recently devastated by the Plague during the mid-1300s. By writing in the vernacular language of their time, Dante, Boccaccio and other writers were able to ensure that their works would speak directly to their readers.

Also in evidence in religious life was the broad appeal and the popular reception of the preaching and poetry of Saint Francis of Assisi. Enamored of the music of troubadours, Saint Francis invented the lauda, a form of religious verse written in the vernacular, to facilitate his religious teaching. Rosalind B. Brooks notes that Saint Francis "used to burst into songs of praise in the vernacular and that the Franciscans encourage lay groups of penitents to sing laude, vernacular religious songs."⁸

These vernacular laude were easily understood by the people and, from contemporary accounts, encouraged the active participation of listeners by evoking emotional responses. Mendicant preachers contributed to and encouraged lay participation and engagement. The *artes praedicatorum* developed in the Middle Ages were manuals prepared by preachers and addressed the needs of audiences by providing guides for the art of preaching.⁹ In addition, the laude must have stimulated mental visual imagery on the part of the laity, which further heightened the spiritual experience for both singers and listeners, and spawned a new type of religious experience and spirituality in which imagery played a vital role.¹⁰

It is this broad appeal of the vernacular in all of its expressive forms--poetry, literature, music, painting and preaching--that directly influenced a new culture. Indeed, Henry Thode believed that the visual arts depicted people's real life experiences in tandem with vernacular preaching, poetry and music, thus creating what he calls a "visual vernacular."¹¹ But, to be effective, this visual vernacular would need to capture more than the superficial appearances of natural phenomena. Instead, the visual artist would have to reach beyond merely depicting the natural world and find ways to convey feelings.

This is clearly exemplified in the paintings of Duccio and of Giotto di Bondone during the late Dugento and early Trecento. Duccio's 1311 *Maestà* replaced Dietisalvi di Speme's *Madonna del Voto*, which was installed barely 40 years earlier (Fig. 6). Although Dietisalvi's painting was originally viewed as an

honorable replacement for the *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* (the painting it replaced, ca. 1270), the now “old” image of the *Madonna del Voto* simply failed to make the same emotional connection with viewers as the Duccio.

Several of the images in this study depict the Virgin Mary and many were created for the city of Siena, which chose Mary was chosen as their patron saint. Often, images of the Virgin Mary were installed as altarpieces, thereby enjoying a large viewership. Indeed, the painting style of the Sienese artist Duccio had an enormously positive impact on viewers due to the artist’s ability to convey Mary’s humanity and foster an empathic connection with viewers.¹²

The popular reception of the works of Duccio and Giotto was overwhelmingly positive, and contemporary artists began to emulate their style and techniques in particular because of their empathic quality.¹³ For example, Coppo’s *Madonna del Bordone* (1261) was repainted in the style of Duccio (ca. 1315). And Guido da Siena’s *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1270s), was repainted less than forty years after its completion by an artist reportedly close to Duccio (Fig. 7). In both examples, the repainted areas focused on the figures’ faces and hands, and the selectively repainted areas are executed in the style of Duccio to render flesh using soft tones and gradual modeling to convey a sense of naturalism, palpability and humanity to the figures.

Duccio’s paintings not only portray the world as it is seen but also convey a world that is experienced emotionally. This approach dramatically changed the general expectations surrounding sacred images,¹⁴ prompting visual artists to

repaint and reframe earlier works to maximize their emotional impact. The vernacular culture provided an ideal environment for this transformation, helping viewers to identify with the emotions of the sacred figures, creating a stronger empathic connection and, in turn, enhancing the spiritual experience.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century art historians of early Italian Renaissance art have reinforced the influence of the vernacular culture on art and its connection with empathy.¹⁵ In 1860, the Swiss art and cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt credited the Italian Renaissance with establishing a secular view of art that encompassed a broad and rich understanding of the culture from which it springs.¹⁶ According to Burckhardt, art communicates meaning through its relationship with its culture, and each culture needs to be evaluated not as a stage in a historical process, as proposed by the Hegelian historical dialectic, but independently.¹⁷ Burckhardt defined a work of art as “the fruit of reflection and careful adaptation.”¹⁸ Indeed, this broad definition, which Burckhardt also applied to politics and the city-state, covers a wide scope of cultural categories.¹⁹ But implicit in this definition is that works of art reflect the cultural influences of their creators.²⁰

Burckhardt’s approach to the study of art history was somewhat eclipsed by his student Heinrich Wölfflin, who relied on a formalist analysis of art objects in which visual elements, for example, line, color, composition and texture, take precedence over cultural and historical contextual considerations. Although formalism dominated the discipline of art history for a significant portion of the

twentieth century, the work of Aby Warburg, who shared Burckhardt's cultural and historical approach to understanding art objects, has gained popularity and renewed attention. Warburg's art historical approach focuses on the art object within its multifaceted cultural context. It emphasizes inclusivity and recognizes the importance of considering a wide range of visual objects. Function and purpose are paramount, trumping the importance of the medium and creator.

The works of Burckhardt, Wölfflin and Warburg are critical to this study, not only because their art historical focus concentrated on Italian Renaissance art, but also because they contributed insightful observations regarding the empathic connections viewers make with art objects. Burckhardt recognized the importance of the psychological factors that influence viewers' reactions to and understanding of art objects. Wölfflin observed that viewers may experience empathic bodily responses when observing particular architectural forms.²¹

Warburg expands Burckhardt's conception of empathy, suggesting that we need to study all objects a culture produces in order to more fully appreciate viewers' empathic reactions. Warburg also believed that the movements that are depicted in a work, for example drapery and garments, are manifestations of the figure's inner emotions. In his dissertation on Botticelli's paintings *The Birth of Venus* and *Spring*, Warburg focused on how the artist is able to move viewers emotionally by means of animated gestures and flowing draperies, a technique borrowed from antiquity to evoke empathic reactions in viewers.²²

Although each art historian approached the concept of empathy differently, I rely on their methodologies in order to frame a historicized account of the role that empathy played in the early Italian Renaissance restorations discussed in this study. Art objects need to be viewed within the context of the human experience. We need to examine a myriad of critical factors that influence the viewer--cultural, historical and psychological--all of which contributed to the decisions to prematurely renovate the sacred images discussed in this study. I believe that this approach-- the exploration of the human and psychological connection between viewer and art object-- is essential in appreciating the motivations behind the early Italian Renaissance premature renovations.

More recent studies on the affective power of artworks complement those of the early modern art historians and help to further illuminate our understanding of the premature renovations of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance. These studies, which focus on a broad variety of cross-cultural images, bring an anthropological and psychological perspective to the impact that images have on viewers.

Hans Belting explores the broader context within which images function and their impact on the viewer. In his article, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology," Belting notes that images live in our bodies and specifically our brains. Viewers connect images with their experiences, mental associations and feelings.²³ This perspective is illustrated in Belting's astute observation regarding the power of Duccio's paintings and how the dugento artist

“brings together so many feelings that his work opens up for many interpretations.”²⁴

Similarly, in his *Power of Images*, David Freedberg examines ways in which all people respond to images, responses that to him seem to be recurrent. In analyzing centuries of responses to artworks, Freedberg concludes that these recurring and cross-cultural responses to images are psychological and behavioral in nature. He looks beyond the discipline of art history to include the fields of psychology, anthropology, philosophy and sociology, and focuses on examples of images that would evoke extreme emotional responses. Freedberg notes that we come closer to Christ and the saints when we suffer with them, and that the best way to accomplish this is by means of images. He reminds us of Gregory of Nyssa’s account of how he could not look at an image depicting Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac without crying.²⁵

James Elkins in *Pictures & Tears* cites contemporary examples of people who were moved to tears when looking at a work of art, and notes that he received over four hundred letters describing their personal experiences.²⁶ In Elkins’ telling, most people cannot explain why a particular work of art has made them cry; however, under questioning, many reveal hidden, repressed or subconscious associations that help to explain their tears. These letters support the belief that we respond to images based on what is in our head and, as Elkins notes, “Crying is on the continuum of normal human responses to the world.”²⁷

(These responses are now supported by neurological findings regarding empathy theory, which are discussed more fully in the following chapters.²⁸)

As Burckhardt and Warburg noted, crying and other emotional reactions to art objects are subjective and dependent upon the personal associations that each individual brings to the art object. But, although viewers of artworks differ greatly in their prior associations and backgrounds, some shared and universal commonalities exist such as emotional and empathic connections and which are both historical and trans-historical. Stephen Bann, in *The True Vine* acknowledges the diversity of Western visual representation and explores the connections among art objects rather than take what he calls, “the convenient concentricity of a ‘period’ focus.”²⁹ He maintains that there are certain motifs and themes in Western art that emerge and endure as an “uninterrupted continuity,” and notes that the vine serves as an effective metaphor for the vitality of Christian art in its continuity from ancient times.

It is possible and indeed productive to acknowledge an “uninterrupted continuity” motif in tandem and in combination with a cultural historical perspective, similar to and compatible with a Warburgian approach. For example, a defining theme for Warburg was the “intensification of outward movement” which he observed recurring in the art of antiquity and which provided the means to evoke *Einführung* or empathy.³⁰ Indeed, Warburg’s interpretation of empathy is indicative of a history of experience and is historicized.³¹

Bann views art as linked to the society that produces and consumes it. In this way, his thinking is aligned with Warburg's effort to understanding art objects within their cultural context. In addition, Bann's notion of "uninterrupted continuity" also reflects Warburg's idea of the continuity of life forces. In the work of Botticelli, for example, Warburg notes the antique theme of movement, *bewegtes Beiwerk* (animated accessory)³², combined with contemporary references to quattrocento Florentine festivals.

Whether it is Bann's idea of "uninterrupted continuity" or Warburg's discontinuous approach to history, this framework disrupts the conventional evolutionary model that has structured the study of Western art and reflects a non-evolutionary and unconventional historical approach of looking at art objects.³³ In an effort to counter conventional art history, Bann refers to a "true vine" that emerges and continues throughout Western art and refers to this motif as an "uninterrupted continuity."

The chapters that follow focus on the premature renovations of select sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance and reflect the influences of the vernacular culture of the time that, as Warburg reminds us, are rooted in the human psyche. In addition to acknowledging the impact of the cultural historical milieu, we also need to appreciate the personal associations and experiences that impact the creation and reception of art objects. In the spirit of Bann, I suggest that empathy can serve as a "true vine" that endures as an "uninterrupted continuity" in the history of art and, when combined with a cultural

historical approach that is interdisciplinary and includes the fields of psychology, anthropology, philosophy and sociology, can facilitate our appreciation of art objects.

The outline below gives an overview of each chapter:

Chapter One: To Restore or Renew

This chapter examines the various terms and vocabulary associated with contemporary restoration practices in an attempt to more fully understand the motivations behind restoration interventions. In addition, an overview of contemporary restoration practices will be explored in order to provide a context for early Renaissance restoration practices and the innovative renovations exacted on works of art.

This chapter also addresses changes in church architecture and liturgy that affected the placement and size of altarpieces, the changes in Church art, and the methods and materials artists used to accommodate these changes. Neri di Bicci's *Ricordanze* and Cennini's *Handbook* are contemporary sources that are examined in order to illuminate our understanding of early restoration practices and attitudes.

Chapter Two: The New Modern

This chapter examines the impact of Duccio and Giotto on the new painting approach during the latter part of the Dugento, the impact of contemporary vernacular culture on visual images, and the Church's attitude regarding the power of images to evoke empathic connections with viewers. The

innovations that are introduced by Duccio and Giotto change the way space and figures are rendered and interpreted. Their new styles influence and are reflected in the work of their contemporaries and followers. This chapter examines the distinguishing elements that characterize the new modern style of Duccio and Giotto, and consider how these ideas may have influenced restoration and renovation interventions.

According to Bruce Cole, the dugento view of history seems to “hinge on the conception and development of a new and powerful pictorial style that sent shock waves into the early Trecento.”³⁴ He refers to the new painting styles of Duccio in Siena and Giotto in Florence. Artists and patrons soon realized that the art of their time was different from that of the past, even that of the recent past.

Chapter Three: Renew, Repaint

Chapter three presents analyses of several early Italian Renaissance sacred images that were prematurely and selectively repainted in the early Trecento and shortly after their completion.³⁵ I examine these renovated paintings and address the reasons why only certain areas were selected to repaint. The following paintings are discussed:

- **Coppo di Marcovaldo, *Madonna del Bordone* (1261), Church of the Servi, Siena**

In about 1315, an artist close to Duccio repainted the faces of the Virgin and the Child over the original painting. X-radiography also reveals that an under-

veil was added to the Virgin's headdress surrounding the outline of her face.

The draperies appear to be untouched and remain in the Dugento original.

- **Coppo di Marcovaldo, *Madonna* (ca. 1260s), Church of the Servi, Orvieto**

Recent restoration reveals that the principal heads were completely repainted at the end of the thirteenth century by an artist who appears to have been influenced by the work of Cimabue. Evidence of Cimabue can be seen "in the neck of the Madonna...."³⁶

- **Guido da Siena, *Maesta* (ca. 1270s), Palazzo Pubblico, Siena**

This altarpiece was selectively repainted approximately forty years after its original completion. The Ducciesque artist repainted the Virgin's face and added a new light-colored veil, repainted the flesh areas of the Christ Child, the faces of the two angels in the gable and the lower part of the throne.

However, none of the draperies was retouched.

- **Circle of Guido da Siena, *St. Dominic* (ca. 1240-80), Fogg Museum, Harvard University**

This panel is a fragment from a Sienese work that was painted only a few years after Saint Dominic's canonization in 1233. It experienced several repaintings of the head, hands and tunic. The gilded halo appears to be pounced decorations of the fourteenth century.

- **Margarito, *Saint Francis* (ca. 1260), Arezzo**

X-radiography indicates that most of the image was retouched at an early date except his left hand holding a book and his two feet. The facial features were significantly changed perhaps to conform with contemporary written accounts of the Saint's authentic appearance.

- **Simone Martini, *Maesta* (1315-16), Palazzo Pubblico, Siena**

In 1321, shortly after its completion, Martini's *Maesta* was partially renovated. It is unclear why renovations occurred but it is unlikely that the work had suffered damage. Repainting the faces and hands of the principal figures seems to have been motivated by the need to convey a more effective image.

The above images represent works that underwent extensive renovations soon after they were created. These alterations resulted in obvious departures from the traditional intention to depict and represent sacred objects that accurately reproduce known prototypes.

Chapter Four: Reframing

This chapter explores the decision to reframe certain individual sacred images rather than to repaint them. The analyses focus on a shift of thinking that occurs in the early part of the Quattrocento regarding restoration practices. Clerics became increasingly upset with stylistic updating. For example, the early fifteenth century friar Giovanni Dominici believed that the addition of modern elements distracted viewers and compromised the "truth represented by those figures."³⁷

By the middle of the Quattrocento, a change occurred in restoration and intervention policies. Old panel paintings were preserved rather than repainted, but might be reframed in accordance with modern framing conventions in order to bridge the gap between the revered image and the worshipping public.³⁸ Another way in which Quattrocento artists and patrons attempted to bridge the gap between old and new was to incorporate old images and fragments into newly painted works.

This chapter concludes with an analysis of Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* (ca. 1438-43) to illustrate the shift in thinking that occurs in the mid-Quattrocento regarding the sacred object.

Reframed works considered are:

- **Giotto, *Badia Polyptych* (ca. 1301-2), Florence, Uffizi**

Reframed in 1451-3 in Florence, this work had triangular pieces of wood added to the original Gothic frame to update it. The updated framing was removed in the mid nineteen-fifties in order to restore the piece to its original look. The removal of the updated framing elements was possible without damage to the original work.

- **Giotto, *Baroncelli Coronation* (ca. 1330), Florence, Santa Croce**

This work was reframed around 1480 in a lavishly ornate frame with classical details.

- **Taddeo Gaddi, *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* (ca. 1340-45), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art**

This was reframed in late fifteenth century when the panels were removed from their pointed-arched frame and reset into a classically architectural frame to reflect the current style.

- **Fra Angelico, *St. Dominic Altarpiece* (ca. 1428), near Fiesole, San Domenico**

Fra Angelico's altarpiece was reframed and radically renovated in 1501 by Lorenzo di Credi. The renovation transformed the late Gothic polyptych into a *sacra conversazione* between the work and the viewer and reflected the knowledge of linear perspective

Conclusion:

This section focuses on an early Italian Renaissance painting of Saint Luke that was prematurely renovated and that exemplifies many of the influences discussed in this study. I also suggest how this study might more fully illuminate our understanding of art history and the potential benefits of an interdisciplinary perspective when looking at artworks. Finally, I propose that the premature renovations of early Italian Renaissance sacred images be considered within the broader and more inclusive framework reflected in the postmodern approach to art history.

Endnotes

¹ See among others: Conti and Glanville; Hoeniger, *Renovation*; and Nagel, "Fashion."

² See Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators, Painting and Experience*; Dempsey, "Importance," *The Early Renaissance*; Nagel, "Fashion," and Hoeniger, *Renovation*. Also See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, for a discussion of how art took on a different meaning after the Middle Ages when images began to be identified with a particular artist and what Belting refers to as the "era of art." Prior to this shift and emphasis on the artist, Belting believes that images best reveal their meaning by their use. I argue that it is in the use of the sacred image that we can understand the motivation to prematurely and selectively update some sacred images.

³ Christiansen, *Duccio*, 16-17.

⁴ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 29. Byzantine artistic influences found their way into Italy after the fourth Crusade and the fall of Constantinople in 1204. Byzantine icons were imported to Italy during the Crusades and it is also likely that Byzantine icon painters immigrated to Italy as well. As a result, we see the Byzantine practice of repainting icons transported to Italy as Eastern influences percolated throughout the country.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁶ Katula, 7.

⁷ Alberti, *On Painting*. Trans. Cecil Grayson. Book Two, 76.

⁸ Brooke, *Image*, 479.

⁹ See *Preacher, Sermon and Audience*, Ed. Carolyn Muessig, esp. the essays by Thompson, "From Texts to Preaching," 13-37 and Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and their Performance," 89-124. It is interesting to note that despite cautions against preachers using entertaining gestures and speech, preachers acknowledge the effectiveness of such techniques. As a result Kienzle notes that many preachers went against the recommendations of the *artes praedicandi*. Preachers practiced not just what was advised but whatever seemed to work to persuade their audiences.

¹⁰ Dempsey, "Importance," 190, 202, fn. 7.

¹¹ Dempsey, *Early Renaissance*, 28.

¹² See Heal, "Civitas Virginis?" and Rubin, *Mother of God*, esp. chapter 12, 197-216. Rubin notes that there was a heightened focus on the humanity of Mary after the 1000 and the commercial revolution and founding of cities and towns. The Church offered the framework for family and community life. A new interest in Mary developed as a woman whose life could be likened to that of the urban wives and daughters of European cities. Mary was understood to be both ordinary in her humanity and unique in her unparalleled purity and represents both the human and the divine.

¹³ Vasari, 15. Indeed, Vasari praises Giotto for bringing art “back to life” in Italy, an art that conveyed a sense of naturalism and expressive qualities to evoke emotion.

¹⁴ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 376.

¹⁵ See Burckhardt; Dempsey, “Importance;” Wöfflin, *Classic Art*; and Warburg.

¹⁶ Farago, “Reframing,” 227.

¹⁷ Lionel Grossman, “Jacob Burckhardt as Art Historian.” *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1988), 25-32.

¹⁸ Farago, “Status,” 17-32.

¹⁹ Farago, “Vision,” 69, 310 fn. 8. Farago notes that Thomas Hobbes, in his 1651 publication *Leviathan*, refers to the state as a ‘work of art,’ similar to Burckhardt’s application of the metaphor.

²⁰ It must be noted that Italy and Germany did not become unified nations until 1870 and 1871 respectively. Burckhardt writes about Italy during a time when it was comprised of individual and competitive city states. If Burckhardt writes of a universal unity (Eins) during the Renaissance, he refers to communities at the local level and not as nations as they are understood in the nineteenth century when he wrote. Burckhardt was influenced by the German writer Johann Gottfreid Herder (1744-1803) who writes about how specific cultures maintain a unique identity. See endnote 11, above.

²¹ Freedberg and Gallese 197-203.

²² Ibid., Warburg's use of the word empathy, *Einfühlung*, was influenced by Robert Vischer's 1873 essay "On the Optical Sense of Form" in which he wrote that images can evoke emotions.

²³ Belting, "Image, Medium, Body," 302-319.

²⁴ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 375.

²⁵ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 164, 470 fn. 8.

²⁶ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears*, 219. Elkins includes 32 of these letters in an appendix on pages 219-258.

²⁷ Ibid., 213.

²⁸ Modern empathy theory is now scientifically supported by evidence that our brain reproduces the somatic states that are seen or implied in images. See Freedberg, "Empathy, Motion and Emotion," 17-51. Viewers feel bodily engagement with the gestures, movements and intentions of others. We identify with the emotions of those we observe as is evidenced by the renovated sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance.

²⁹ Bann xiii.

³⁰ Warburg 13.

³¹ Matthew Rampley, "From Symbol to Allegory," 41-55.

³² Russell 22. According to Russell, Warburg saw these gestures as "animated accessories" and "expressions of antiquity's psychological legacy."

³³ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 34.

³⁴ Cole, "Old in New," 57.

³⁵ Some of the selective early Italian Renaissance repainted facial features might refer to ancient formulaic types, for example, the lips on Coppo's Madonna, now in the Orvieto Museo del Duomo. However, the early Italian Renaissance restorations transform formulae and present these features in a new light. It is when one sees the combination of facial features as a whole and not as individual and separate parts that one appreciates a claim to novelty. The early Italian Renaissance restorers adjusted to contemporary needs and understood that the faces and hands needed to be redone in order for the sacred figures to connect empathically with viewers.

³⁶ Conti and Glanville 3.

³⁷ Nagel, "Fashion," 43.

³⁸ Giorgio Vasari only rarely makes references to restoration but does attack Sodoma's restoration of Signorelli's Circumcision in the life of Signorelli in *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*.

Chapter One: To Restore or Renew

*I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.*¹

The above quote is excerpted from the modern version of the Hippocratic Oath, a pledge taken by doctors to practice medicine ethically. This particular sentence epitomizes the principle of “less is more,” and acknowledges the medical profession’s responsibility and priority to maintain their patients’ health and prevent illness. The goal is to mitigate the need for medical interventions which, although well intentioned, may cause additional damage and suffering.

But this study is about early Italian Renaissance art and specifically focuses on renovations that were executed shortly after the works of art were completed. Although it may seem curious to begin this chapter with a quote from the Hippocratic Oath, there are similarities and parallels between art and the medical profession. The emphasis that physicians place on maintaining a patient’s health and preventing disease is analogous in many ways to the concerns and approaches debated by art conservators and restorers. Both evaluate various courses of action and engage in dynamic discussions that often fail to achieve unanimous decisions about how best to proceed. Whether the subject is a sick patient or a damaged work of art, intervention often represents an invasive and consequential course of action. Conserving and maintaining good health is preferable.

Why were certain sacred images altered so soon after they were first painted? It seems that these restorative interventions occurred not to repair physical damage suffered but rather to stylistically update certain parts of the image. In this chapter, the studio practices of the early Italian Renaissance artists will be examined in order to understand the context in which these renovations and updates occurred, and whether these interventions were considered to be standard contemporary workshop procedures.

Much like medical professionals, art conservators recognize and accept that restorative interventions are sometimes indicated and necessary in order to preserve the integrity of the art object. Current thinking views the processes of art conservation and restoration along a continuum of possible approaches. The priority is to conserve and maintain art objects in their present state; however, there are occasions when conservation attempts are insufficient and objects may require restoration.²

But the distinction between what constitutes conservation and restoration is not always clear, and the edges between the two approaches are often blurred. Although a continuum suggests gradual, sequenced and progressive actions, this is not always the case with regard to conservation and restoration. Reversals and interruptions often occur along the continuum since interpretations of conservators and restorers frequently differ regarding what next steps should be taken.

Indeed, history has witnessed changing attitudes about what should and should not be done to maintain the health of art objects. In ancient times artists were well aware of the need to preserve art works, and the writings of Pliny the Elder reflect sensitivity regarding conservation issues. In his *Historia Naturalis* (ca. CE 77-79), Pliny includes several examples of how to prevent the deterioration of works of art and provides strategies to mitigate damage and decay.

Pliny underlines the need for conservation practices and cites methods and recipes to help counter deterioration due to natural phenomena or injury.³ For example, Pliny refers to the conservation techniques employed by ancient Greek artists, and cites the Greek painter Protogenes who painted with conservation and longevity in mind when creating his painting, *lalyos*. Pliny writes “He gave this picture four coats of colour to preserve it from the approach of injury and age, so that if the first coat peeled off the one below might take its place.”⁴

In another passage, Pliny extols the innovations of the Greek painter Apelles, and describes a painting strategy the artist employed in order to mitigate the accumulating effects of dirt and dust. Pliny writes:

All have profited by his innovations, though one of these could never be imitated: he used to give his pictures when finished a black glazing so that by sending back the light it could call forth a

whitish colour, while at the same time it afforded protection from dust and dirt, only becoming visible itself on the closest inspection.⁵

Pliny emphasizes the need to preserve art works and for artists to take measures to prevent decay. But he also recognizes that some works may require restorative intervention,⁶ and that skilled artists and craftsmen who are highly specialized in working with the appropriate materials and methods should be called upon when necessary to execute the needed repairs.⁷

In the passage below, Pliny refers to Apelles' damaged painting of Aphrodite rising from the sea and acknowledges the difficulty in finding an artist capable of restoring the work:

When the lower portion was damaged no one could be found to restore it, and thus the very injury redounded to the glory of the artist. In course of time the panel of the picture fell into decay, and Nero when Emperor substituted for it another picture by the hand of Dorotheos. Apelles had begun another Aphrodite at Kos, intending to surpass even the fame of his earlier achievement, but when only a part was finished envious death interposed, and no one was found to finish the outlines already traced.⁸

Sanctity of the Original

In the Middle Ages, art works were routinely retouched, and as a result, frequently reflected the hand of numerous artists and craftsmen. As noted by the Italian archaeologist Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, “All during the Middle Ages it appears to have been customary to repaint completely panels, icons and polychrome sculpture when they became worn, darkened or damaged.”⁹

However, we begin to see a shift in thinking regarding the role of restoration during the Italian Renaissance. In his *The Lives of the Artists* (ca. 1550), Giorgio Vasari chronicles the biographies of individual artists, placing the most talented of his subjects in the pantheon of the divine. Indeed, Vasari does not use the contemporary Italian word for artist, *artista*, but instead frequently refers to the artist as an *artifice*, a word derived from the Latin *artifex* and often used in theological texts to refer to God as the Creator.¹⁰

This heightened respect for the artist, and by extension his work, resulted in increased scrutiny of conservation and restoration practices, and called into question any intervention method that might alter the artist’s original work. At the same time, it also raises the question of whether it is possible to ever restore works to their original state without sacrificing the integrity or Vasarian sanctity of the original.

Inherent in the concept of restoration is the implication that a work has succumbed to changes and must be returned or restored to its original state. For example, works of art may need to be restored after suffering damage caused by fire, flood, extreme weather or the devastations of war. Restoration can involve

removing years of accumulated dust and dirt or the residual remains of previous restorative attempts.

However, whether and when restoration is warranted and how it should be initiated continues to spark debate among artists, scholars and restorers. Indeed, the British art critic John Ruskin, in writing about architectural restoration in the middle of the nineteenth century, expressed the belief that restoration was akin to destruction and unacceptable. Ruskin reflected an extreme view of restoration when he wrote:

Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end...But, it is said, there may come a necessity for restoration! Granted. Look the necessity full in the face, and understand it on its own terms. It is a necessity for destruction...Take proper care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them....¹¹

Although the topic of this dissertation does not focus on works that were restored due to damage or deterioration, many of the interventions used to refresh images discussed in this study are representative of techniques similar to those used by conservationists and restorers. It is also important to note that many of the vocabulary terms associated with the concept of restoration are similar in derivation to words that relate to the notion of renewal and conservation.

Therefore, it is useful to explore the etymology of various terms and vocabulary words associated with the concept of restoration in an attempt to more fully understand their meaning in the context of art in the early Renaissance.

The Restoration Lexicon

The etymology of the Italian restoration lexicon is varied and nuanced and the meanings of certain words change over time. During ancient times, the restoration lexicon seems to reflect an emphasis on renewal. For example, Pliny uses various forms of the Latin root word *reficio* when referring to restoration work, a word with a number of different meanings, including to make again, make anew, reconstruct, repair, rekindle or reinvigorate.¹² This wide and subtly nuanced variety of definitions are characteristic of the term even as Latin evolves into the vulgarized Italian language.

The earliest examples of Italian vocabulary words used to describe restoration can be found at the beginning of the fourteenth century and were used in the context of literature and not art. According to the *Grande Dizionario Della Lingua Italiana*, the earliest recorded Italian language references to the words restoration and conservation occur in the writings of Dante.¹³ In *Il Convivio*, written about 1304-07, Dante writes in the vernacular in order to broaden his readership and achieve maximum accessibility. *Il Convivio*, which translates as “The Banquet,” is a metaphor that Dante employs in which poetry and prose are offered as delectable courses, and guests, eager for knowledge, are invited to indulge.

Throughout *Il Convivio*, Dante uses various forms of the Italian word *conservare*, which, depending upon the context, can mean “prolong,” “maintain,” or “preserve.” Further, Dante uses the words conservation and restoration in the context of nature and health and not art. For example, in Book I, Dante alludes to the writing of Aristotle’s second book of *Physics*, stating that everything by nature pursues its own preservation, “ciascuna cosa studia naturalmente a la sua conservazione.”¹⁴ In Book IV, chapter XVII, Dante recalls Aristotle’s second book of *Ethics*, and writes that the second virtue, Temperance, controls our gluttony and preserves our lives, “La seconda E Temperanza, che E regola e freno de la nostra gulositade e de la nostra soperchievole astinenza ne le cose che conservano la nostra vita.”¹⁵ In Book IV, chapter XXVII, in an allusion to Ovid’s seventh book of the *Metamorphoses*, Dante writes that God restored Aeacus’ dead people in greater numbers than before, “il suo popolo sono stati restaurati a lui in numero maggiore rispetto a prima.”¹⁶

As in Dante’s *Il Convivio*, Giovanni Boccaccio’s references to the concepts of conservation and restoration in *The Decameron* (ca. 1350), are in the context of health and include several forms of the words *conservare* and *ristorare*.¹⁷ *The Decameron* tells the story of seven women and three men who leave Florence together in order to escape the devastations of the Black Plague. To pass their time together, the travelers take turns telling stories. Given that their comradeship is based on fleeing the plague, their stories are understandably infused with references to health and well-being. For example, there are

passages in *The Decameron* such as “*conservazion della sanita,*” preservation of health, and “*alla conservazione della nostra vita,*” for the preservation of our life. Boccaccio uses forms of the verb *ristorare* in a number of instances and in the context of physical healing to mean “to refresh oneself,” “to reinvigorate,” and “to be rested.”¹⁸

The concept of restoration is only alluded to in Petrarch’s epic poem *Africa* (ca. 1340). Petrarch writes about restoring Rome in the general sense of returning the city to its glorious ancient past. Petrarch does not use the word restoration (*ristorare*) and only once refers to the word conservation (*conservare*), and then it is in the context of preserving one’s work. The poem exalts ancient Rome and generates feelings of nostalgia and loss.¹⁹ Perhaps Petrarch’s dream to restore Rome simply ignites the reader’s desire to redo the past, and in doing so, reinvigorate the present.

Turning our attention from literature to art, we can begin to appreciate how artists may have benefited from the myriad of nuanced meanings offered by the broad constellation of the Italian lexicon and the rich etymology of words associated with restoration and conservation concepts. Unlike our present day use of the word restoration, which conjures up ideas of returning a work of art to its original state as much as possible, the expansive Italian restoration lexicon reflected and facilitated an open and varied approach to restoration practices, and provided contemporary artists with a variety of ways to describe and interpret their practice. The wide choice of Italian vocabulary used to describe restorative

work helped to mitigate the constraints imposed by the more limited expectations associated with one or two narrowly defined words, and gave artists license to retouch or refresh the work of other artists when such changes were deemed appropriate.

Restoration Practices in the Early Italian Renaissance

Let us now examine some thirteenth and early fourteenth century writings in order to illuminate and more fully understand the early Italian Renaissance approach to restorative interventions. These writings will help explain the prevailing attitudes and practices surrounding art interventions during the early Renaissance in Italy, and how and under what conditions such interventions occurred.

Feelings of loss and nostalgia for the past and a desire to care for precious objects and protect them against future loss are recurring themes that we see expressed throughout early Renaissance writings. For example, in the early thirteenth hundreds, Petrarch writes about his nostalgia for the ancient city of Rome. Erwin Panofsky notes that Petrarch hoped that the future would be able to “walk back into the pure radiance of the past.”²⁰ This desire to return to the glory days of ancient Rome is part of Petrarch’s effort to recapture the essence of classical antiquity, a central theme of his epic poem *Africa*.

In his book *Giotto and the Orators*, Michael Baxandall writes that Petrarch likely was quite interested in painting, noting that “Simone Martini illuminated a

book for him, he owned a painting by Giotto, and there are even small drawings in the margins of his books ascribed to Petrarch himself.”²¹

Petrarch’s knowledge of ancient art, as well as his sense of loss in connection with ancient art works, was most likely gleaned from the writings of Vitruvius and of Pliny, who wrote in the eighth century about his own feelings regarding the loss of art works. Although Petrarch would not have personally viewed any of these lost ancient paintings, he actively read Pliny’s *Natural History*. Indeed, Petrarch’s own copy of Pliny’s book includes extensive margin annotations, especially in the chapters on art where Pliny’s account of Apelles is heavily annotated. And, in his expression of praise for Giotto, Petrarch compares him with Apelles, the celebrated painter of antiquity,²² a comparison echoed by Boccaccio in Book xiv of his *Genealogy of the Gods*.²³

The glorification and exaltation of both Apelles and ancient painting continue in the sixteenth century with the writings of Vasari. In *Lives*, Vasari outlines a linear course of art history that advances ever forward toward perfection. For Vasari, this standard of artistic perfection could best be achieved by following the principals and models found in ancient art.

Since ancient paintings were particularly perishable and vulnerable to decay and destruction, contemporary writers and artists were often forced to rely on descriptive texts in order to recreate and visualize ancient paintings lost to time. While one might legitimately question whether or not these “lost” paintings ever really existed, a number of texts promoted and helped to perpetuate their

purported excellence. This praise and longing for these ancient paintings were significant influences in the widespread belief that precious art objects needed to be protected and preserved, which greatly influenced contemporary approaches to restorative practices and interventions.²⁴

There are a number of obstacles in investigating early Renaissance restoration practices, since few if any explicit references regarding restoration methods are available.²⁵ However, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, *Le Ricordanze*, or *Memoirs*, of Neri di Bicci provide detailed information and records from this period that describe a painter's workshop and the practices. In one of his diary entries of October 14, 1468, he documents repainting a small altarpiece that was damaged by fire.²⁶

Le Ricordanze also reveals that, in addition to creating altarpieces and domestic tabernacles for his patrons, Neri's workshop also repaired works of art. "Sometimes old pictures were repaired or brought up to date."²⁷ While we would most likely describe repair work as "restoration" and updating as "remodeling," Neri couples his repair and updating work together and refers to these interventions as *achonciatura*, or "fixing up."

The combination of these two processes in a single term suggests that Neri considered the repair and updating of art works as complementary practices that improved the work. The word *achonciatura* seems to capture and describe this multidimensional view of and approach to restorative practices which, during the early Italian Renaissance, often involved alterations and changes to the

original work. For the most part, these interventions were executed by practicing artists such as Neri di Bicci. (The meaning of the word *achonciatura* is inextricably connected to style and fashion, and today the term is mainly used by hairdressers to suggest a current hairstyle or trend.²⁸)

Within the context of this multifaceted approach to restoration, individual artists who were charged with the maintenance of certain works of art would have considered it quite natural, and even expected, to freshen up selected works so that they might conform with prevailing tastes. For example, artists might have chosen to brighten pigments that had faded or that had not responded well to cleaning.²⁹ These interventions seemed acceptable within the broad definition of restoration during that period, and therefore aligned with contemporary expectations regarding the care and maintenance of works of art.

Neri di Bicci's *Le Ricordanze* repeatedly references the artist's responsibility to "fix up" works to "the use of today."³⁰ Neri describes a panel that he updated because the vegetative motifs were painted in the old style, "sechondo s'usavano a quello anticho tenpo." Neri writes, "and I fixed it up and adapted it to the use of today" ("io la fe' rachonic[i]are e ridurre a l'uso d'ogidi").³¹

This approach to the updating of images reflects the restoration practices that were employed during the late Dugento and early Trecento in Italy.³² This approach diminishes the importance that we currently place on authorship and originality, and instead focuses on the effective functionality of the artwork. As

noted earlier, the emphasis on originality and the concept of the artist as genius is not promulgated until the mid-sixteenth century by Vasari in *Lives*. In contrast, the early Italian Renaissance updated images often reflect the intervention of multiple artists. The Renaissance scholar Martin Wackernagel urges that, “we must first of all free ourselves from our customary assumption, deriving from recent and present conditions, that the first and decisive stimulus to the production of an art work is the personality of the artist and his own spontaneous creative impulse.”³³

However, within the context of contemporary restoration practices, early Italian Renaissance artists were expected to work within archetypal boundaries, and were not free to invent or implement original interpretations. According to Hans Belting, the emphasis to create archetypal sacred images continued through the thirteenth century and ended when “an image’s exceptional size or exceptional ‘beauty’ became the criteria for judging an image, replacing that of the fame of its archetype.”³⁴ Notably, it is the “exceptional beauty” of the paintings of Duccio which served to significantly influence the updating practices of early Italian Renaissance artists, a subject that will be explored further in Chapter Two.

Function and Functionality

Function was one of the driving contextual factors motivating the creation of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance. More important than originality, the functionality and efficacy of a given sacred image were paramount,

and seem to have been primary considerations in the images selected for restorative interventions.

Part of the motivation to update sacred images may be understood by considering changes in contemporary religious services that affected how priests addressed the congregation, and the resulting modifications in church architecture and physical layout to accommodate these changes. Specifically, the altarpiece was moved so that the priest stood facing the altar with his back to the congregation. This change meant that the sacred images depicted in an altarpiece became a primary focus of the religious service, and that larger and more expansive altarpieces could be accommodated.

Also, in the second half of the thirteenth century, we begin to see wood panel paintings introduced in many Italian churches.³⁵ Early Italian panel paintings were often painted on thick poplar or chestnut supports that, when exposed to variations in temperature and humidity, would warp and shrink. Movement of a panel's wooden support mechanism often caused the paint to develop a fine network of lines known as craquelure, blisters on the painted surface, or both.

It was common for practicing artists to engage in restorative interventions in order to prevent further damage and destruction to these art works. Panel paintings were repainted and repaired by a number of artists who seemed less concerned with the notion of authorship and originality than with the efficacy of the image. For example, the half-length figure of St. Dominic in the Fogg Art

Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts was repainted multiple times. The Fogg *Saint Dominic* painting will be explored in further detail in Chapter Three, which focuses on several repainted sacred images.

In the mid to late Dugento, we also see restorative cleaning and conservation interventions augmented by repainting with the intention to renew and modernize images. Alessandro Conti notes that artists charged with maintaining a painted panel “would find it difficult to refrain from some little touch of repaint, perhaps to brighten the colours that the cleaning had not sufficiently revived, or else to bring the painting up to date iconographically or in line with the prevailing taste of the day.”³⁶ According to Conti, the reworking (*rifacimenti*) of altarpieces at the end of the Middle Ages was not uncommon and was simply considered to be part of the conservation and maintenance process.

Multiple examples of updated and renovated panel paintings are evident in the early Trecento. However, we begin to see a shift in restoration practices in the mid-late Quattrocento, with a reluctance to repaint or alter original sacred images. For example, Giotto’s *Baroncelli Polyptych* (ca. 1330), was simply reframed in the late fifteenth century to reflect contemporary Renaissance taste.

Materials and Methods: The Source

This study focuses on the renovations that occurred on sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance, and primarily on those images that were created with tempera paint on wooden panels. Contemporary restorers had to work within the constraints and confines of the medium, and it is critical that we

understand these artistic parameters in order to appreciate how and within what boundaries the contemporary restorers needed to work. In order to more fully understand and appreciate the contemporary restorative practices, let us examine the materials and techniques which the early Italian Renaissance artists employed when working with tempera on wood.

Tempera panel paintings were particularly susceptible to premature deterioration attributable to poor preparation of the tempera paints and support grounds, and may have therefore required some restoration soon after their initial completion. The methods employed to create tempera panel paintings were by no means formulaic and could be additionally compromised if an artist was not experienced with the medium. As a result, these paintings more often than not evidenced an array of potential problems that required early intervention. It seems reasonable to conclude that, when some tempera panel paintings of sacred images were brought to workshops for repairs, the images also received stylistic updating as part of the restorative work.

There are two approaches we can use to better understand how early Italian Renaissance tempera panel paintings were created and how contemporary restorers may have updated and retouched the selected works. One approach is to look at the actual painting itself, and review any findings resulting from examinations of the painting using modern scientific equipment. A second avenue is to consult the practices of contemporary artists. We will

examine specific works later in this study but, first, let us explore written accounts that reveal artists' practices and concerns.

There are a few documents that describe medieval and early Renaissance artists' techniques and materials. The *Schedula diversarum artium* written by Theophilus Presbyter is one of the earliest accounts of technical processes in the arts of the Middle Ages.³⁷ The *Schedula* contains data describing a number of medieval art practices in central and northern Europe, including painting on wood panels.³⁸ The date of Theophilus' writing is disputed and ranges in time from the ninth century to the first quarter of the twelfth century.³⁹

The *Schedula* may be compared with Cennino Cennini's fourteenth century *Il Libro dell'Arte* in that both authors were practicing artists and each document contains useful recipes for mixing paints and offers practical advice to artists.⁴⁰ However, Theophilus' recipe for tempera paint consists of mixing pigments in an emulsion of water and milk protein known as casein tempera, whereas Cennini's emulsion recipe is a mixture of water and egg yolk. It is Cennini's work on which we will focus since it was written in the early fourteenth century and therefore more accurately reflects the workshop practices of early Renaissance artists.

Written about 1390, *Il Libro dell'Arte* helps to familiarize us with the early Italian Renaissance artists' materials and methods and illuminates the restoration practices and approaches employed during this period specifically regarding the updated artworks considered in this study. Cennini provides us with detailed

instructions about how to mix and prepare colors for tempera painting and how to create the wood panels on which to paint.

Cennini also discusses the concept of restoration in the context of art preservation and does not refer to the actual words for conservation or restoration. Instead, he advises artists to choose materials and techniques that will help prolong the works' longevity.

“And so it is a good plan to wait as long as you can before varnishing; for if you varnish after the colors and their temperas have run their course, they then become very fresh and beautiful, and remain in pristine state forever.”⁴¹ In this passage, Cennini provides artists with instructions for preserving paint colors and overall, his *Handbook* contains a multitude of practical, detailed and innovative art techniques and tips.

To assert the authority behind his instruction, Cennini professes in the opening paragraphs of his treatise his reverence for Giotto. He traces his own lineage to this great master, noting that he was a student of Agnolo Gaddi, who trained under his father Taddeo Gaddi, who in turn trained with Giotto. For Cennini, this unbroken and prestigious lineage provides legitimacy to his writing and instructions.⁴²

Cennini's treatise was a valuable resource for contemporary artists and is still the primary handbook for art restorers working today. Although there are a few original written sources on medieval painting techniques, Cennini's remains

the best known and provides a complete overview of painting methods that he practiced.⁴³

The Tempera Paint

All art media possess characteristics that present advantages as well as limitations, and the tempera medium is no exception. It is important for us to understand the properties of traditional tempera paint, as well as the advantages and limitations of painting in tempera, to better appreciate the parameters within which contemporary restorers worked and the obstacles they may have encountered when repainting and updating images.

Tempera painting can be traced back to antiquity, and is actually referenced by Pliny in his chapters on the history of art in the *Historia Naturalis*. Pliny distinguishes between encaustic painting in which pigment is mixed with a wax binding agent, which he refers to as *penicillo* in the ordinary method of tempera.⁴⁴ Tempera was the standard method of panel painting during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries until it was eclipsed by oil painting. Oil paint began to be used in combination with tempera and soon replaced tempera as the medium of choice. Let us examine the characteristics of tempera paint in order to understand how the early Italian Renaissance artists worked in this medium, and to gain insight into why oil paint eventually replaced tempera.

Tempera paint derives its name from the Latin word *temperare* which means to mix in proportion.⁴⁵ Dry pigment is ground and then mixed in proportion in an emulsion of water and a binding agent. Cennini recommends

using fresh egg yolks for the binding agent and to add just enough of the yolk so that the colors are a bit shiny when applied. According to Cennini, this slight gloss, which dries to a matte finish, indicates that the correct proportion of egg yolk was added, thereby precluding colors from changing or fading when dry.⁴⁶ Too much egg yolk will make the paint greasy and difficult to work with, but too little egg yolk causes colors to appear faded and chalklike. Since different pigments respond differently to egg yolk, Cennini urges artists to try out different proportions to determine the most suitable formula.

Cennini notes that it is important to use only the freshest eggs available and not those that have begun to decompose, since the artist should prepare an emulsion mixture that will be long lasting and, therefore, provide a more effective binder. Cennini also distinguishes between town eggs and country eggs. He recommends using town eggs for the emulsion when mixing light colored pigments since the yolks of town eggs are whiter in color than those of country yolks and are more suitable for painting faces of young people. The country eggs tend to appear red in color and are better for tempering darker flesh tones and the skin of older people.⁴⁷

Tempera's egg yolk binding agent also dictates how the paint is applied. In the preparation of the emulsion, the egg yolk is non-drying. However, when diluted with water, which evaporates quickly, the paint medium dries almost immediately and is permanent. Once applied, the egg tempera paint is inflexible.

Therefore, it needs to be applied to a stiff and unyielding surface in order to preclude crackle and ill adhering paint.

Further, although tempera paint is diluted in a water emulsion, it becomes insoluble when dry, which permits an artist to paint over the thoroughly dried paint layers that have been previously applied. The tempera paint seems to enter into a permanent stage after about eight months.⁴⁸ This characteristic is noteworthy for our study since the early Italian Renaissance restorers who repainted entire sections of the selected sacred images could do so without betraying to the naked eye any trace of the original under-painting⁴⁹ (fig. 8).

Tempera paint also dries quickly to a smooth matte or semi-gloss finish, and its colors are permanent and do not change over time. When dry, the tempera colors most closely resemble the colors of the pure natural state of the original pigment color and are characterized and recognizable by their brilliant and luminous crispness that does not yellow or darken with age. Pigments are most brilliant when ground and prepared in their pure state rather than mixing them with other pigment colors. Mixing tends to dull their appearance and compromise their natural jewel-like brilliance.⁵⁰

At the same time, mixing colors can be a way of achieving modeling by painting gradations of color to convey value ranges and to indicate lit and shaded areas of a painting. A characteristic of tempera is its limited value range and, when mixed with other colors, tempera paint tends to appear muddy and difficult to distinguish among dark colors. Cennini recommends using colors in their pure

form to indicate the darkest areas and to add various amounts of white to this pure color to achieve the intermediate and lightest tones. He describes how to paint drapery by using three shades of one color to represent the shaded and highlighted areas within one color.⁵¹ Although Cennini describes this method in the context of painting in fresco, this strategy would also apply to painting on panels.

When left in their pure state, the most brilliant and jewel-like pigments were vermilion red and ultramarine blue due to their intensity and good coverage. Ultramarine blue is derived from the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli and was the most costly material after gold. Contemporary art patrons often cared as much or more about the choice, quality and preparation of materials, for example, pigments and ground, than the artistic content. For many patrons, the priority was to have an image comprised of precious materials that would also retain its visual quality for a long time.⁵²

It was important for artists to know the properties of each pigment and what was required to achieve the best results. Some pigments had to be ground coarse while others were best ground very fine. Some pigments were best when ground and washed. For example, malachite is a deep green when ground coarsely but lightens when ground fine. An experienced artists would take advantage of this property and grind the malachite to a fine consistency in order to obtain lighter values (fig. 9 & 10).

Early Italian Renaissance workshops relied on their reputations and expertise to distinguish themselves in a highly competitive environment. The trained contemporary eye would have been able to attribute certain paintings to specific workshops based on the appearance of their pigments, the quality of support ground and the customized punch work designs.⁵³ If a workshop prepared the tempera paint and ground properly, the paint was unlikely to crack with age. However, when cracking occurred from improper preparation, the failures would most likely be evident soon after the painting dried.⁵⁴

The Technique

It is entirely possible that some early Italian Renaissance tempera panels were brought to restorers for premature repairs and maintenance due to improper or inadequate initial preparation and painting. The restorers would then take the opportunity to update these images as well, in the spirit of *achonciatura* or “fixing them up.” Let us examine some possible reasons for maintenance and premature restoration interventions.

Because tempera paint is mixed in an emulsion of egg yolk and water, it dries almost immediately upon application. The paint is not fluid and has a high viscosity and, therefore, does not move easily. As a result, it is best applied slowly with a small thin brush using short thread-like strokes to avoid the paint from stopping and becoming immobilized. There should be no feeling of brush being dragged or pushed.⁵⁵

The gesso ground upon which the tempera is applied also affects paint fluidity. Gesso, a chalk mixture similar to Plaster of Paris, is relatively porous and absorbs some of the paint upon contact, further inhibiting fluid movement and precluding broad sweeping brush strokes. However, the benefit of the gesso's porosity is that a portion of the tempera paint is quickly absorbed and becomes well bonded to the ground.

The short brush strokes are often applied in a cross-hatching manner or in a parallel system of lines.⁵⁶ This type of brushwork is time consuming and requires a meticulous and fastidious approach. Further, the paint is built up slowly in a series of successive, precise thin layers. In fact, Cennini suggests that painting in tempera requires a similar technique as drawing, and recommends using the brush strokes like pencil marks.⁵⁷

Overall, the tempera medium is not forgiving and does not promote spontaneity on the part of the artist. Therefore, tempera's properties are best suited for well-defined ideas and ones with a clearly formulated conception. For these reasons, panel paintings were often limited to a moderate size.

Cennini discusses the best sequence for painting in tempera and recommends drawing the complete design lightly in charcoal directly on the prepared panel, including the shaded areas. Once the drawing is complete, the artist should reinforce the drawing lightly using a pointed brush dipped in diluted ink. The next step is to use a needle to incise those areas that will be positioned against a gilded background, as well as any smaller areas that will be gilded, to

help physically separate the gilded and non-gilded areas. Cennini describes in detail the steps involved in applying gold to the prepared panel and how to execute the tool stamping designs for crowns and diadems. All of the gold applications need to be in place prior to painting.

Cennini notes that, when you are ready to begin painting the panel, it is a gentleman's job and you can wear velvets on your back.⁵⁸ Cennini outlines an ordered sequence for painting on panel which further reinforces the need for a well-planned and methodical process. He advises painting the flesh areas after completing the draperies, trees, buildings and mountains since it is easier to key the smaller and lighter areas for last.⁵⁹

Finally, Cennini advises covering the panel with a sheet to avoid unwanted dust that could injure the gilding or unpainted gesso areas. He also reminds artists to keep their hands clean when working in case they come in direct contact with the work. These and other instructions and advice from Cennini are important to keep in mind since they are factors that can impact the quality of the painting and potential result in premature repairs and restoration.

The Ground

Let us now turn to the wood panel supports in order to understand their construction and function in providing an ideal ground for the tempera medium. Wood provides a strong, rigid and flat surface for painting in tempera. Since tempera paint becomes brittle when dry, wood's inflexibility provides a stable support that precludes movement.

During the early Italian Renaissance, poplar was the most widely selected wood for panel painting. The wood needs to be carefully prepared prior to painting and there are a number of steps that need to be followed. If any one of these preparatory procedures is executed poorly, the work may later be in need of restorative interventions.

For example, potential problems can result from joining pieces of wood together when forming the desired size and shape for the painting surface. The pieces of wood are glued and nailed together and then braced horizontally along the back with a series of wooden strips. Simple glues made of animal skin were easily accessible and extremely strong.⁶⁰ Cennini recommends making glue by mixing cheese with quicklime.

The next step is to ensure that the wood is thoroughly dry, grease free and smooth.⁶¹ Cennini suggests covering any knots or other imperfections with a mixture of sawdust and glue, and then scraping the mixture to a uniform level plane when dry with a knife. Indeed, Cennini advises that, if any nail head does show, one should take a small, flat piece of tin foil and glue it over the exposed nail to completely cover it. This practice would preclude any rust from eventually bleeding through to the completed surface, and help prevent a premature visit to the restorer.

It is also important to ensure that the wood surface is perfectly smooth for painting. Cennini recommends the application of strips of fine linen to the wood surface, followed by individually applied layers of gesso applications (one does

not paint directly on the wood but rather, on top of a carefully prepared ground of gesso). Wood's natural porosity bonds well with the gesso which, when smooth, becomes a silky smooth white surface to receive the tempera paint.

Each of these preparatory steps needs to be properly executed or bonding problems can arise, ranging from improperly molded gesso reliefs to poorly applied or burnished gilding. Indeed, tempera panel painting is potentially subject to a myriad of problems that only an experienced artist can mitigate or preclude. The very nature of the tempera medium is such that the artist's and restorer's workshop was a necessary resource to have on hand for basic maintenance of most painted images.

Form and Function: Tempera and the Sacred Image

In spite of the limitations and confines of working in tempera, it was an ideal medium for the early Italian Renaissance sacred images. The medium was best when the image was of moderate size and, therefore, was an appropriate choice for an image destined for an altarpiece or a personal chapel. In addition, the subject matter of sacred images typically adhered to an archetypal formulae (fig. 12 & 13), complementing the deliberate and well-formulated design that was best suited for the tempera medium.

Given the enormous amount of technical expertise required to execute a successful tempera panel painting, it is likely that many paintings found themselves at restorers' workshops for a variety of interventions. There were numerous problems that could occur during the painting process and many

opportunities for pigments to crack, lift, or not sufficiently bond with the gesso coated panel. And, finally, when the painted panel was complete, varnish needed to be applied at a certain time and in a specific manner.

For the best results, Cennini advised delaying the application of varnish for as long as possible, even as long as a year after the painting has been completed. Cennini notes that varnish is powerful and the tempera colors will cower and yield to the varnish, losing some of their ability to refresh themselves with their own tempera emulsion. He advises waiting until the tempera pigments have “run their course” prior to applying the varnish. For those who follow his advice, the pigments should remain pristine forever.⁶²

Prior to Cennini’s treatise, there were no readily available handbook on how best to prepare panels and temper pigments or, for that matter, how to grind each pigment, what brushes work best, and how to actually load the brush and apply each stroke. Proper sequencing was critical and certain steps irreversible. Trial and error were often the best teachers.

Sacred images needed to present well to function effectively in their role as intermediaries. Therefore, it was essential that these paintings be well attended to and scrupulously maintained. But, while it was not unusual for tempera paintings to suffer the ill effects of poorly prepared pigments and panels soon after completion, why were some sacred images “fixed up” so shortly after they were created, and what motivated these renovations and stylistic alterations?

Let us now look at what was occurring in the early thirteenth century art world that may have influenced these changes. In Chapter Two, I will examine the sea changes that occur with the innovations of Duccio di Buoninsegna's paintings in Siena and Giotto di Bondone's in Florence, and explore how these avant-garde artists might have influenced selected stylistic updates.

Endnotes

¹ Excerpt from the modern version of the Hippocratic Oath by Louis Lasagna, 1964. WGBH Educational Foundation for PBS and NOVA Online. Retrieved 7 November 2001.

² The Italian archaeologist Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro suggests that we look at conservation and restoration as a single process that “removes the causes of deterioration.” See Vaccaro 327. The bibliography on the subject of conservation is vast. Consult Selected Bibliography.

³ Pliny the Elder, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake (Chicago, 1976) 129, 133, 135, 139, 151.

⁴ Ibid. 139.

⁵ Ibid. 133.

⁶ Pliny writes about Apelles' painting *Aphrodite Rising from the Sea* and how the lower half was badly damaged and in need of restoration, 128-29.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 129. Sellers, who annotated the Jex-Blake translation of Pliny, states the term “substituted” may be an exaggeration and suggests that the work was restored rather than replaced. Sellers notes that “the picture of Apelles seems still to have been in existence under Vespasian, when Suetonius speaks of its being again restored: *coae Veneris...refectorem insigni congiario*

magnaue mercede donavit (Pliny 128, fn 3). Keck, "Further Materials for a History of Conservation" in Price, Talley and Vaccaro, eds., 283 and 287, fn 8.

⁹ Vaccaro 284.

¹⁰ Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, xii.

¹¹ Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory," Chapter 6 in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, 1849) no. 19.

¹² Sellers (see endnote 8) translates Pliny's use of *reficeret* as "rekindled," 128 and translates *reficerentur* as "repair," 150.

¹³ On the Italian etymology of the words *conservare* and *ristorare*, see Battaglia, vols. III, XV.

¹⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio*, Book I, Chap. XIII.

¹⁵ Ibid. Book IV, Chap. XVII.

¹⁶ Ibid. Chap. XXVII. This story is based on the seventh book of the *Metamorphoses* VII.

¹⁷ See *The Decameron Web*, a project of the Italian Studies Department's Virtual Humanities Lab at Brown University.

[Http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Sudies/dweb/texts/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Sudies/dweb/texts/)

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that nuanced meanings of the Italian word restoration were used in the context of art in the early Renaissance. The word *rinfrresco* was used to describe the work of the painter Bartolo di Fredi in regard to his work on the lamp of the Cappella della Piazza on the Campo at Siena.

See Anabel Thomas 1-14 for further discussion regarding meanings and usage of the restoration lexicon.

¹⁹ See Thomas G. Bergin's *Petrarch's Africa*, an English translation of Petrarch's epic poem Africa in which Petrarch expresses his dream to restore Rome (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977) Introduction, ix-xvii.

²⁰ Panofsky, *Renaissance*, 18.

²¹ Baxandall, *Giotto*, 52.

²² Rubin 288.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For an analysis of the relationship between ancient lost paintings and their textual descriptions, see Jodi Cranston's article "Longing for the lost: ekphrasis, rivalry, and the figuration of notional artworks in Italian Renaissance painting," *Word and Image*, 27:2 (June 2011) 212-19.

²⁵ See Anabel Thomas 1-2.

²⁶ Bomford and Leonard 2.

²⁷ Eve Borsook, A book review of *Le Ricordanze* by Neri di Bicci: Bruno Santi, in *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979) 314.

²⁸ The term was first recorded in the context of literature and not art by the poet and novelist Franco Sacchetti in the middle of the thirteen hundreds. See Battaglia, vol. I. Although the first recorded mention of the word *achonciatura* is in the field of literature, it may be assumed that the word was used much earlier and in other contexts as well. We see the word recorded in the art context in the

Ricordanze by Neri di Bicci in 1453 but it was likely used in practice prior to the written record. For further discussion of restoration related vocabulary, also see Eve Borsook, A book review of *Le Ricordanze* by Neri di Bicci: Bruno Santi, in *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979) 314.

²⁹ Conti and Glanville 3.

³⁰ Although the artist was bound by contract stipulations, we can speculate that the artist was free to create within the contract's limitations. See Glasser for analyses of artists' contracts during this time.

³¹ See Troup 23 for a discussion on the language and practice of contemporary art restoration through Neri di Bicci's *Le Ricordanze*.

³² Ibid. Troup notes that the language of each relevant entry in *Le Ricordanze* reflects an "acute awareness of the religious function of the objects" to be restored. The function or use of each object "determined the type of work commissioned."

³³ Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist* (Princeton UP, 1981) 5.

³⁴ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 353.

³⁵ Kuhn 3.

³⁶ Conti and Glanville 3.

³⁷ Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., "The Schedula," 204.

³⁸ For a fairly comprehensive list of sources on the history of western medieval painting techniques and materials, see Vinas.

³⁹ For a discussion of the dating of Theophilus' *Schedula*, see Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., "The *Schedula*," 209 and fn 1.

⁴⁰ James S. Ackerman suggests that recording basic practical information became increasingly frequent in the later Middle Ages as a result of the relaxation of guild control over trade secrets. See Ackerman 14.

⁴¹ Cennini, 99.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴³ For a discussion on Cennini's treatise on painting techniques and materials, see Vinas 118-19.

⁴⁴ See endnote 38 above.

⁴⁵ Tempera paint has an ancient precedent. Pliny the Elder refers to tempera paint. See Pliny 171, fn 16 for Pliny's distinction between encaustic painting and *penicillo*, which according to Sellers refers to "in the ordinary method of tempera." The etymology of the word tempera derives from the Latin word *temperare* and means to dissolve or mix in the correct dosage. See Battaglia, vol. XX, 832. The earliest use of the word in Italian and in the context of art is in Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*.

⁴⁶ I rely on the useful information in the 1936 volume, *The Practice of Tempera Painting* by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., in which Thompson paraphrases and expands upon Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*. Thompson's interpretations and insights regarding tempera painting are grounded in his direct

experience with the medium and will prove invaluable to practicing artists and art historians.

⁴⁷ Cennini 94. See also Mayer 230. Mayer notes that the yellow color from the egg yolk has very little effect on the paint especially when well diluted with water and mixed with pigments. Mayer says that daylight is said to bleach it permanently soon after it dries.

⁴⁸ Mayer 224. This is Mayer's personal observation based on his experience working with the medium.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to the generosity of my former student and tempera artist Elyse Robbins, for confirming that restorers could successfully cover sections of previously dry tempera layers providing that no modeling or blending had to be done with the existing and older dry tempera paint.

⁵⁰ Hall 16.

⁵¹ Cennini 49.

⁵² Ibid. 14.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Mayer 223-24.

⁵⁵ Thompson, Jr., *The Practice of Tempera Painting*, 99.

⁵⁶ Serra 7.

⁵⁷ Thompson, Jr., *The Practice of Tempera Painting*, 100.

⁵⁸ Cennini 91. See fn 2 in which Thompson notes that velvet is the height of elegance.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 93-94.

⁶⁰ Bruce Cole, *The Renaissance*, 59.

⁶¹ However, even thoroughly dry wood responds to moisture in the environment and will tend to expand and contract when sudden or uneven changes in humidity occur.

⁶² Cennini 99.

Chapter Two: The New Modern

My face made all my feelings visible.
Petrarch, *Rime sparse* CXXIII ¹

This chapter focuses on the key cultural, religious, political and psychological influences that inform the period in which Duccio di Buoninsegna of Siena (ca.1255-1318) and Giotto di Bondone of Florence (ca.1266-1337) painted, and to what extent their innovative paintings influenced and transformed contemporary artists' renderings and interpretations of sacred images. In particular, this chapter will examine how Duccio's empathic paintings played a key role in the premature restorations of several early Italian Renaissance sacred images.

Duccio and Giotto infused their paintings of sacred figures with a combination of both spiritual and human qualities, thereby creating images that convey a sense of humanity. Viewers could identify with and relate to Duccio's and Giotto's renderings while, at the same time, recognize the figures' inherent other-worldliness. By conveying human elements in their paintings, Duccio and Giotto enabled viewers to connect emotionally with their images and experience an empathic response.

The power of these artists' artwork is inextricably connected to the inherent human quality of empathy to which viewers relate. These works' empathic qualities played a key role in the decision to prematurely repaint

several early Italian Renaissance sacred image panel paintings. Indeed, at a time when the Church needed to gain support of its parishioners, empathic imagery could activate and exploit the beholders' emotional responses.²

Initially this chapter will examine the endemic rivalries between Florence and Siena that serve as a background for understanding the art historical perspectives regarding Giotto and Duccio. Next, some contemporary writings are explored that document the artists' innovative work and highlight their empathic qualities. Contemporary sources illuminate viewers' reactions to Giotto and Duccio's innovative and empathic approach. A subsequent section examines contemporary writings that document the awareness of artistic change during the period.

Finally, the chapter will focus on the emotional power of the ekphrastic nature of images, the appeal that images have to the Church, including how the liturgical changes of the Fourth Lateran Council affected church art, and the impact that Duccio's work had on the premature renovations of sacred images. I will argue that, although the early Italian Renaissance restorations are inspired by Duccio's innovative style, the compelling attraction of his work was less about style and fashionable updating and more inextricably connected to empathy theory.

Florence and Siena: Rooted in Rivalry

Giotto's work inspired positive mention in several contemporary Italian writings, including those of Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch and Cennini, and these

references offer us insight into the artist's reception during his time. This praise for Giotto continues later in the writings of Alberti and Vasari in the fourteen and fifteen hundreds respectively. The significant number of references to Giotto's work is striking when compared to the lack of literary praise given to Duccio and his work. At first glance, one wonders if records were perhaps lost, or whether Duccio's work was not as well known or as highly regarded. However, there is evidence of several early Italian Renaissance sacred images that were updated to reflect Duccio's innovative painting style, indicating that his work was known to viewers. Indeed, the positive reactions to Duccio's work motivated restorers to repaint existing works in his style.

Geography and politics contributed to Giotto's eclipse of Duccio. Giotto was Florentine. Duccio was Sieneese. And, although Siena and Florence are physically separated by less than fifty miles, their political rivalry created an immeasurable and insurmountable distance between the two cities in the early thirteenth century.

Geographically, Siena straddled the major travel route connecting Rome to the south and the heart of the Holy Roman Empire to the north. Siena took advantage of its location and collected taxes from the merchants who had to travel this road and through their city. This provoked the jealousy of the nearby Florentines, who were also at odds with the Sieneese over politics and the ongoing feuds between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The Guelphs, who supported Papal supremacy, represented the majority faction in Florence while

the Ghibellines, who supported the Emperor, ruled Siena. Warfare between the two cities began soon after Siena became a self-governing commune in the twelfth century and battles between the two cities continued for generations as each tried to increase its territory.

In 1258, the Guelphs succeeded in ousting the most powerful remaining Ghibellines from Florence. Two years later, on September 4, 1260, the Sienese and Florentines met at the hill of Montaperti, outside of Siena, to fight a battle that raged all day. Despite the superior numbers of Florentine troops, the Sienese won the battle. The Sienese triumph is credited to the offensive counterattack by a member of the Florentine forces, Bocca degli Abati. According to Giovanni Villani's chronicle of the incident, written in the early thirteen hundreds, Bocca, a Guelph who was fighting with the Florentines, was a Ghibelline at heart. During the battle, Bocca attacked the Florentine standard bearer and cut off the hand holding the standard, thus causing confusion among the Florentine fighters, and resulting in victory by the outnumbered Sienese.³

Villani's description is significant because his account is from the Florentine perspective.⁴ Villani (ca. 1270-1348) was a Florentine merchant who wrote the *Nuova Cronica*, a history of Florence. His allegiance to Florence is revealed as he relates the story of the Battle of Montaperti and identifies Bocca as a traitor. Indeed, Dante further immortalizes Bocca's treachery by assigning Bocca to the Pit of Hell, the ninth circle, in his *Divine Comedy*. Dante reserves

the ninth Circle of Hell for the Sins of Betrayal, and it is here that Dante includes

Bocca:

I will not tell you nor show you who I am,
Not if you fall a thousand times on my pate.
Already I had twisted round my palm

A length of hair, and pulled some clumps right out,
And he was barking, with his eyes held down,
When a new voice called: "Bocca, what is it—

What ails you? Are you so weary of the tune
Your jaws create that now you are barking, too?
What devil is at you?" "Now," said I, "I am done:

I have no further need to speak with you,
Accursed traitor, for now, to your disgrace,
I will report about you what is true." ⁵

Villani and Dante, both Florentines, quite clearly and explicitly label Bocca as a traitor. Because each author writes in the vernacular, the anti-Sienese

sentiments have greater accessibility to those literate Florentines. As a result, the Florentine and Siennese rivalry is immortalized in the written word.⁶

Given the long history of conflict between Florence and Siena, it is not surprising that Duccio, a Siennese, is absent from the early Italian literature, whose authors are, for the most part, Florentine. In addition to those Florentines who shape the poetry and prose of Duccio's generation, Vasari, the Florentine artist and art historian, further reinforces and cements a Giotto bias in the mid-sixteenth century in his *Lives*. Vasari's praise for Giotto and his marginalization of Duccio continue to shape and define the art historical perspective to this day.

However, although Duccio did not enjoy the numerous mentions in contemporary documents that Giotto received, several chronicles dating from the mid-fourteenth century describe the procession and reception surrounding the installation of Duccio's *Maesta* situated on the high altar of the cathedral in Siena.⁷ The installation of Duccio's *Maesta* will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

Literature Reveals Change: Poetry and Prose

Although not explicitly referenced, Duccio's innovative paintings appear to visually reflect contemporary thirteenth century Italian love poetry and reinforce how the written word is connected with the images. The poet Guido Guinizelli (ca.1230-1276) is credited with founding the school of poetry characterized as the *dolce stil nuovo*, or "the sweet new style." Guinizelli's poems celebrate an idealized and spiritualized vision of love and women. His conception of love and

women emphasizes the divine rather than material or physical nature. In his poem, *In the Gentle Heart*, Guinizelli writes: “She had the likeness of an angel from your kingdom. It’s not my fault if I fell in love with her.”⁸ The poet justifies and elevates his love for a woman to a God-like level. This new sweet poetry style countered the courtly love poetry of the period that focused on the worldly and physical aspects of love.

Dante references Guinizelli’s “sweet new style” in his *Purgatorio*, and refers to the poet as his mentor and praises Guinizelli’s poems as “sweet, gracious rhymes of love.”⁹ In a verse from Canto XXVI of *Purgatorio*, Dante writes that Guinizelli is like a father to him:

...when I heard him declare his name; the father
Of me and of the others-those my betters-
Who ever used sweet, gracious rhymes of love...¹⁰

The thirteenth century Tuscan climate was ripe for this new style of writing. Franciscan poetry was popular in the Dugento with words celebrating gentility, spirituality and an idealized view of love and women. Duccio’s sacred figures seem to embody both spiritual as well as human qualities and convey a sense of approachability that resonates with viewers. His paintings capture quite elegantly Guinizelli’s sweet new style and give visual expression to his ekphrastic poetry.

In Duccio's *Madonna of Crevole* (ca. 1280; figs. 13-15), for example, Mary and the Christ child convey a loving bond of intimacy that is expressed by Christ's gentle grasp of his mother's veil. Mary cradles the Child in the crook of her left arm as her fingers touch Christ's right leg. This gesture draws our attention to their humanity and loving bond.¹¹

Duccio's figures communicate the platonic love and tenderness inherent in Guinizelli's words and thus transform and heighten the experiential relationship between the viewer and the image. We do not know if Duccio read Guinizelli's poetry; however, this "sweet new style" of poetry permeated Tuscany during the last half of the Dugento. This new style pertained to writing and described the theme of love in a refined and idealized manner. Although this concept was not used to apply to painting styles, Duccio clearly captures in his painting the poetic expressions of the time.

Only a few years younger than Duccio, Giotto also broke ground by conveying a sense of humanity in his paintings of sacred figures by combining both human and worldly qualities with which viewers were able to identify. Contemporary poets and artists celebrated Giotto's artistry. Dante praises Giotto in his *Purgatorio* noting that the artist obscures and surpasses Cimabue's artistic fame.¹²

Contemporary literary references to Giotto can also be found in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Boccaccio follows Dante's lead by commemorating painters in a work of fiction, and praises Giotto with restoring art that had been

buried for years,¹³ and for returning art to life by replicating nature in his paintings.¹⁴ In story number five in the *Decameron*, Boccaccio writes that Giotto was:

A man of such genius that there was nothing in Nature--the mother and moving force behind all created things with the constant revolution of the heavens--that he could not paint with his stylus, pen, or brush, making it so much like its original in nature that it seemed more like an original than a reproduction.¹⁵

The art historian Paul Watson notes that Boccaccio portrays Giotto so vividly that he seems to write from firsthand knowledge, and suggests that the two may have met in Naples between the years 1328 and 1333.¹⁶ Regardless of whether a firsthand encounter occurred, the significance of Boccaccio's tale is that it reinforces the grandeur of Giotto's reputation in mid-fourteenth century contemporary Italian literature.

Written praise of Giotto continues in the late Trecento. The artist Cennino Cennini exalts Giotto in his *Il Libro dell'Arte* (ca.1390). Cennini wrote that Giotto "changed the profession of painting from Greek back into Latin, and brought it up to date."¹⁷ Cennini's expresses high praise for ancient art and applauds Giotto for resurrecting naturalism. Cennini implies that Giotto's art goes "back to the future" and helps bring trecento art into modern times.

Cennini refers to how Giotto conveys a convincing sense of naturalism in his paintings. For example, Giotto creates an illusion of solid figures and real volumetric space through the use of shading and contouring. In addition, Giotto's use of figural gesture, emotion and psychological nuance further enhances and contributes to a sense of naturalism and verisimilitude¹⁸ (Fig. 16).

In his painting *Raising of Lazarus*, part of the fresco cycle in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Giotto chooses to depict the dramatic moment when Lazarus is raised from the tomb. The artist places an onlooker in the center of the composition whose face and hand gesture betray astonishment. His jaw drops, his eyes are wide open and he brings his finger to his chin in what Bruce Cole identifies as a traditional gesture of wonderment.¹⁹ The Scrovegni Chapel frescos best exemplify Cennini's high praise for Giotto's ability to convey lifelike and emotionally charged narratives.²⁰

Another comment by Cennini in his introduction to *Il Libro* is significant. After elevating his own credibility through association with Giotto, Cennini elevates the art of painting to the same level as poetry. Cennini places painting in the realm of the liberal arts and elevates it from a manual craft to one of intellectual significance. Cennini's comment echoes a sentiment expressed earlier by Petrarch who, in his will of 1370, writes that the people who are not educated about art are unable to appreciate the complex and intellectual nuances of a painting.²¹

The hierarchical debate regarding the relative merits of the arts continued throughout the Renaissance and even into modern times.²² However, it may be Cennini who planted some of the initial intellectual seeds for this debate. A few years later, Leon Batista Alberti reinforces Cennini's high opinion of painting in his 1435 treatise *De Pictura*, in which he writes that painting is the ideal medium for representing the natural world. Alberti elevates painting above other art media, noting that "Painting was honoured by our ancestors with this special distinction that, whereas all other artists were called craftsmen, the painter alone was not counted among their number."²³

Alberti's passage is significant in that it reinforces the importance of artists in depicting the natural world and establishes painting as the ideal medium for rendering naturalism. But, according to Alberti, in addition to depicting what we see in nature, the artist must also add to nature and be attentive to what we cannot see. For example, Alberti recognizes the need to depict human emotion and make the invisible visible. He reminds us that the artist can move viewers when figures demonstrate their own feelings as clearly as possible, enabling them to "mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh, and grieve with the grief-stricken."²⁴

Art and Human Emotion

It is interesting to note that centuries before Alberti, Pliny the Elder, in his *Historia Naturalis* (ca. AD 77-79), comments on painters being able to paint the invisible. Discussing the painter Aristides, Pliny writes:

Aristides was the first among all painters to paint the soul, and gave expression to the affections of man--I mean to what the Greeks call ethe-- and also the emotions.²⁵

Like Pliny, Alberti recognized the importance of depicting people's inner feelings. Artists must be attentive to nature when conveying human emotions and must study the human body and its movements. Alberti believed that feelings or emotions are dispositions that can be revealed through movement and gesture. The movement can be slight and nuanced, but impactful nonetheless. He appreciates that emotions can be conveyed by subtle indications. For example, he writes that a mourner's brow is down turned and their body droops.²⁶ For Alberti, the observant, sensitive and skilled artist is capable of projecting human emotion through art.

Alberti praises Giotto's ability to convey a variety of emotions and refers to a lost mosaic by Giotto that depicts Christ and St. Peter walking on water. Alberti notes that Giotto includes the eleven apostles who each betray feelings of wonder and fear, "each showing such clear signs of his agitation in his face and entire body that their individual emotions are discernible in every one of them."²⁷ This comment illustrates Giotto's ability to convey human psychological aspects through movement, gesture and facial expression.

Giotto's revival of naturalism continued to be praised by Renaissance artists. Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), the early Italian Renaissance sculptor and architect, wrote his memoirs in the first half of the Quattrocento in which he writes about art and artists. Ghiberti praises ancient art and quotes from the writings of Vitruvius and Pliny. Like Pliny, Ghiberti comments on the naturalism exhibited by ancient sculptures. In Book Two of his *I Commentari*, Ghiberti credits Giotto's naturalism as resurrecting the state of art to the glory it enjoyed in ancient times, and moves away from the Maniera Greca of the Dugento. Of Giotto, Ghiberti writes:

He abandoned the crudeness of the Greeks and rose to be the most excellent (painter) in Etruria...Giotto saw in art what others had not attained. He brought the natural art and refinement with it, not departing from the proportions.²⁸

These references reflect emotional connections to the past and are significant because they capture a feeling of nostalgia for antiquity and a desire to return to art with which people could identify. Giotto's innovative and more human renderings of sacred figures helped contemporary viewers more easily identify with and relate to these images. His ekphrastic paintings dramatically and vividly convey sacred narratives that generate empathic responses from viewers. Biblical events became accessible and authentic narratives.

Duccio's *Maesta*: Emotional Response Documented

An example of overwhelming viewer response to a work of art is evidenced in the documented initial reaction to Duccio's *Maesta* altarpiece. In 1311, a contemporary Sienese account attests to the overwhelming public reaction to Duccio's painting. People responded positively to and identified with the artist's innovative and human rendering of the sacred figures (figs. 4 & 5).

At this time the altarpiece for the high altar was finished, and the picture which was called the "Madonna with the large eyes", or Our Lady of Grace, that now hangs over the altar of St. Boniface, was taken down. Now this Our Lady was she who had hearkened to the people of Siena when the Florentines were routed at Monte Aperto, and her place was changed because the new one was made, which was far more beautiful and devout and larger and is painted on the back with stories of the Old and New Testaments....²⁹

Although any mention of a new or modern style is absent in this account, it is notable that Duccio's work was installed to replace an important work and one with sacred and miracle-working associations. Clearly, the *Maesta* must have been perceived to have greater appeal than its highly venerated predecessor, but why? The above passage suggests that it was the appeal of the new and dissatisfaction of the old that prompted the replacement.³⁰ The allure of the new

might have been appealing but I believe that the attraction of the new style needs to be probed more deeply. Indeed, the early Renaissance renovations reflect a profound awareness and understanding of the potential psychological impact of sacred images.³¹

Replacing existing and fairly new images with even newer works, or with works with repainted images, begs for an explanation that is deeper and more fundamental than that of mere fashionable updating. Indeed, when these selected sacred images were renovated, they became more empathic in the minds of viewers and, therefore, more powerful as devotional images. Viewers could more easily identify with the updated sacred figures and feel more personally and emotionally connected to them.³²

It is important to more fully explore the reasons for replacing images, especially those that were previously venerated. The highly revered, early thirteenth century painting, *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* (fig. 2, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena), and considered to be instrumental in the Sienese victory over the Florentines at the Battle of Montaperti in 1260, was replaced shortly after the victory.³³ The role that the painting played in Siena's success is recorded in fifteenth century Sienese chronicles and helps us to understand the city's decision to replace the image. The story is both colorful and highly dramatic.

In early September 1260, a large Florentine army formed outside of Siena near the hills of Montaperti. The powerful Florentines ordered the Sienese to

surrender their city to them but the Sienese would not capitulate. On the eve before battle, as the story goes, the mayor of Siena, Buonaguida Lucari, disrobed to his shirt, removed his shoes, created a noose from his belt, placed it around his neck and walked to the city's cathedral.

Buonaguida stood in front of the painting and pleaded with Mary to intercede and save Siena from the overwhelming force of the Florentine army. Buonaguida and all present, including the priests and bishop, then formed a procession and walked through the city. The next day, the Sienese met the Florentines in battle, which resulted in victory for the Sienese troops and represented the beginning of a special relationship between the city and the Virgin Mary.³⁴ Although Siena's devotion to the Virgin Mary had been well established by the early thirteenth century, the events surrounding the battle of Montaperti and the Sienese victory transformed this devotion to a civic religion.³⁵

It is in this context that replacing the image must be seen. Siena's devotion was to Mary herself and not to the image. Buonaguida pleaded with Mary to intercede and the painting served as the intermediary for his communication. The painting was a tangible representative of Mary. However, the thaumaturgic image of the *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi*, to which Buonaguida pleaded, was old fashioned and destined for replacement.

The *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* depicts Mary and the Child in a rigid frontal pose. Mary is seated on a throne holding the Christ Child in the Byzantine style of the *Hodegetria* pose, "she who shows the way." The Child's right hand is

raised in blessing and he holds a scroll in his left hand. There is no emotional connection or warmth between the two figures.³⁶

The Sienese cathedral was undergoing a remodeling program and, shortly after the victorious battle of Montaperti, the painting was replaced with the *Madonna del Voto* (fig. 6), originally attributed to the painter Guido da Siena. The replacement painting illustrates the then current Sienese reinterpretation of the Byzantine style, depicting a new pose for Mary and the Christ Child. No longer frontal, Mary holds the Child with her left arm and tilts her head toward Him, helping to create a sense of human connection between Mother and Child. This connection helps the viewer to empathize and more easily relate to the figures, making the viewer's communication with the painting's figures more meaningful and personal.

The *Madonna del Voto* would replace the older Madonna painting in order to commemorate the Sienese victory over Florence in the battle of Montaperti. Initially thought to have been painted by Guido da Siena, it has recently been suggested that *The Madonna del Voto* was instead painted by Dietisalvi di Speme, another thirteenth century painter.³⁷ The new painting would honor Mary for answering their prayers in the battle of Montaperti. Indeed, on the eve of the battle, the Sienese dedicated their city to the Virgin and they would keep their promise to continue the strong and cult-like relationship with Her. The *Madonna del Voto* represented this promise and the word *voto* means "promise" or "vow."³⁸ However, the newly welcomed *Madonna del Voto* hardly had time to adjust to her

new home in the Siena cathedral before being replaced by Duccio's *Maesta* in June 1311.

As Diana Norman notes in her book *Siena and the Virgin*, Duccio's *Maesta* for the high altar of the cathedral in Siena continued the long-established tradition of celebrating the Virgin by means of painted imagery. Duccio's painting visually captured and communicated this civic ideology of Mary as protector and defender of Siena.³⁹

If we turn to the city of Florence, we see another example of substitution in Bernardo Daddi's *Madonna and Child*, of 1347 in Orsanmichele (fig. 17). Daddi's painting replaced two earlier Madonna paintings. Although the Daddi replacement occurred in Florence several years after the Siennese replacements discussed above, the two examples share motivational similarities. The Daddi substitution more closely resembles the much earlier dugento *Madonna*, probably painted sometime between 1285 and 1292, rather than its immediate predecessor.⁴⁰ According to the chronicler Giovanni Villani, the original dugento painting began to be associated with miracles in 1292, drawing pilgrims.⁴¹ However, in 1304 a civil disturbance destroyed most of the building in which the painting was housed. In response to this disaster, a replica of the image was created, the *Madonna and Child* painting now at Pian di Mugnone⁴² (Fig. 18).

This replica, the *Madonna and Child*, Pian di Mugnone, was replaced soon after, in 1347, by the new painting by Daddi. Daddi's painting comes closer to the original *Madonna and Child* image than its replica, and includes many of

the dugento elements from the original painting that the master of the Pian di Mugnone eliminated in his copy.⁴³ For example, Daddi recalls the original dugento style in the shape of the throne, the inclusion of the goldfinch, the flat front step and the incense boats.⁴⁴ However, the most significant departure from the Pian di Mugnone replica is the emotional interaction between Mother and Child, which recalls the empathic qualities reminiscent of Duccio's work. In contrast, the master of the Pian di Mugnone replica seems to model his *Madonna and Child* on Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna* (fig. 19), reflecting each artist's Florentine tradition.

However, it is significant that Daddi, a Florentine and possibly a student of Giotto (evidenced by the physicality of his figures), is influenced by Sieneese painting. As mentioned above, Daddi includes Byzantine elements in his *Madonna and Child* painting. But most importantly, Mary and the Child, like its dugento predecessor, betray a human and emotional relationship. Daddi's Mary and Child are emotive, empathic figures who relate to each other, in contrast to the master of Pian di Mugnone *Madonna and Child* figures, which are frontal and unapproachable.

Daddi conveys a human interpretation of Mary, and Florentines could feel comforted and protected by Her, especially during the tumultuous decade of the 1340s when Florence experienced a period of economic bankruptcy, famine and plague. By recalling the empathic power of Duccio's style, viewers could identify with Daddi's figures on a human level. This ability to empathically involve

viewers is the key element that enabled these replacement paintings to help viewers make strong emotional connections.

The Orsanmichele substitution is significant. Daddi incorporates Duccio's emotive qualities in his *Madonna and Child* painting, thus reinforcing Duccio's appeal and empathic powers. Clearly, although Giotto is praised and immortalized by the Florentine literary giants of his day, Daddi, a painter and student of Giotto, turns to the art of Duccio, a Siennese artist, as a model for eliciting viewers' emotional connections.

Ekphrasis, Empathy and Efficacy

The empathic reactions to Duccio and Giotto's innovative renderings of sacred images can also be understood in the context of the ancient ekphrastic tradition.⁴⁵ Ekphrasis often refers to written passages that describe or elucidate a painting or other art form in order to more fully and directly involve the audience in the artistic experience. However, a painting can be ekphrastic when the image vividly illustrates a story, an event or an emotion powerful enough to directly involve the viewer in the subject. For example, in a dramatic narrative painting, an artist may depict evocative facial expressions and gestures with which viewers can emotionally identify in order to fully engage them.

Cennini praises Giotto for resurrecting the ancient art of naturalism and how powerfully his convincing images replicate nature. For Cennini, this is a key factor in Giotto's appeal. Viewers may respond to the illusionistic effects of naturalism in art and even become deceived by the work of art. In the third

century AD, for example, Philostratus wrote that he mistook a painted bee for a real one. Later, according to legend by Filarete, Cimabue thought that a fly, painted by Giotto, was a real insect.⁴⁶ Philostratus and Cimabue each acknowledge and directly confront the deceptions that paintings can provoke. While looking at a painting with one of his students, Philostratus proclaims:

How I have been deceived! I was deluded by the painting into thinking that the figures were not painted but real beings, moving and loving--at any rate I shout at them as though they could hear, and I imagine that I hear some response--and you (my boy) did not utter a single word to turn me back from my mistake, being as much overcome as I was and unable to free yourself from the deception and the stupefaction induced by it. So, let us look at the details of the painting; for it really is a painting before which we stand.⁴⁷

Philostratus imagines that the figures are real and shouts at them as if they could hear. He chastises his student for not correcting his mistake, but then acknowledges that his student, like he, was captive to the overwhelming power of the artifice.

Philostratus identifies specific elements that artists employ in order to achieve illusionistic effects and by which they exploit the fictive nature of the

painting. For example, artists convey an illusion of deep space although in reality the painting is rendered on a flat surface. Artists can also depict figures that express feelings and emotions through authentic gestures and expressions. Painted figures can be convincingly made to appear to move, breathe, grieve or rejoice.⁴⁸

However, in spite of its artifice, an image nonetheless causes Philostratus “to confront objects which do not exist as though they existed and to be influenced by them, to believe that they do exist.”⁴⁹ Philostratus’ comment dramatically expresses his personal reaction to art works and reflects his conscious awareness of art’s power. His description is perceptive, insightful, and betrays an acute sense of self-awareness. Indeed, many viewers of art may have shared Philostratus’ reactions, even if they have never articulated their experience.

As the example of Philostratus illustrates, images have the potential to powerfully activate the beholder’s imagination and, as a result, suspend reason. The images’ figures and stories appear to come alive and invite the viewer’s full engagement and interaction. In addition to reacting to illusionistic effects, viewers may also respond to naturalistic or lifelike works of art with deep emotions. Indeed, feelings of empathy can have powerful and enduring ramifications. Viewers may well be aware that they are looking at and responding to a fictive image and yet, concurrently, be deeply affected by the mood and emotions that the image elicits. For example, overt gestures and

expressions of grief or violence can often communicate feelings that are universally understood.⁵⁰

Even the most subtle and nuanced feelings can provoke empathic responses from viewers. An artist that depicts a mother gently caressing her child or looking longingly off into the distance can create a mood that invites viewers into the narrative and creates a stronger empathic relationship with the art. The more knowledgeable a viewer is about the art's subject matter, the deeper the empathic connection is likely to be. Viewers who are familiar with the content can more easily identify with the story and make a personal association, and are more likely to surrender to the fictive nature of the image. Like Philostratus, the viewer will become deceived and stupefied.

In his *Imagines*, Philostratus describes painting as the expression of human character and emotion. He writes that the artist "must have a good knowledge of human nature" so that "his hand will successfully interpret the individual story of each person."⁵¹ The narrative is best conveyed when artists not only understand the story but also understand human psychology and can communicate those feelings through art.

The art historian Sixten Ringbom identifies the empathic connection that many viewers have when looking at sacred images and calls it the "empathic approach." He believes that viewers can relate to sacred images on various levels. For example, images can be objects of adoration yet also function didactically for those unable to read. However, according to Ringbom, the

empathic approach is focused on the attitude of the beholder who has neither an interest for information nor a desire for adoration but, rather, is entirely focused on establishing a deep emotional experience with the image. Indeed, Ringbom believes that this psychological state of mind is the beholder's primary goal.⁵²

The Role of the Church: Images More Effective than Words

Understanding the deep emotional connections that can occur between a viewer and an image did not escape the attention of the Church. The Catholic Church acknowledged the emotional impact that images can have upon viewers well before psychology became a formal discipline in the nineteenth century. Church clergy realized that, in addition to serving a didactic function for the illiterate, pictures and sculptures can be far more effective than words in communicating stories and abstract ideas. Almost from its beginnings, the Church recognized the inherent power of images to impact beholders and move them emotionally.

Peter Lombard (ca. 1096-1164) was a theologian and the author of the *Sentences*, written in the mid-twelfth century. The *Sentences* is a compilation of biblical texts, and throughout the Middle Ages, theologians often wrote commentaries on his work. The *Sentences* provides both clergy and students with a framework within which to reflect upon Christianity and to foster philosophical discussions.⁵³ Book Three of the *Sentences* focuses on Christ as both God and man, and it is these commentaries that are of particular interest to this study. It is in the mid-thirteenth century, when several of the premature

restorations on sacred images occur, that the commentary of Saint Thomas Aquinas reflects the importance of images to engage viewers emotionally. For Aquinas there was:

A threefold reason for the institution of images in the Church: first, for the instruction of the unlettered, who might learn from them as if from books; second, so that the mystery of the Incarnation and the examples of the saints might remain more firmly in our memory by being daily represented to our eyes; and third, to excite the emotions which are more effectively aroused by things seen than by things heard.⁵⁴

Although beholders may benefit from the educational aspects of images, it is the emotional bond that is primary.

The historical context of the Catholic Church may have influenced the need to create strong emotional bonds with parishioners, particularly at this time. The Church began fighting the Crusades at the opening of the twelfth century, and these wars would preoccupy it for hundreds of years. In 1095, Pope Urban II called upon Christians to help their Christian brothers, the Byzantines in the East, to fight against the Muslim Turks and to keep Islam at bay. As an incentive to join the fight, Urban granted indulgences to those who fought in the Crusades, indulgences would diminish one's temporal punishment for sins.

Over time, the practice of granting indulgences was met with criticism from certain devout Christians who believed that some indulgences that were granted were not necessarily connected to acts of piety. Indeed, in the mid-thirteenth century, mendicant orders were created, in part, to suppress and counter the rise of heretical groups who criticized the Church as moving away from the true teachings of Jesus. The mendicant orders attempted to offer an ultra-orthodox alternative path to Christianity and combat the rising critics of the Church.⁵⁵

Aquinas was a member of the Dominican mendicant order. In his words quoted above, he seems to enlist the power of images “to excite the emotions” and help gain support for the Church.⁵⁶ Aquinas clearly understood the potentially strong emotional impact that images can have upon viewers.

During the time when the Church was preoccupied with the Crusades and vulnerable to criticism, the humanistic art of Giotto and Duccio helped to capture viewers’ attention and form emotional connections (figs. 20-29). Their new artistic style was able to engage viewers without spoken words or text, and potentially accomplish what Church liturgy could not. The emergence of the innovative painting styles of Giotto and Duccio precisely fulfilled the needs of the Church on a deeply human level during this challenging period.

At the same time, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 fundamentally changed the physical placement and setting for devotional art when it sanctioned the concept of transubstantiation. This acknowledgement of Christ’s physical presence in the Eucharist changed how the mass was celebrated. The priest

would now face away from the congregants as he performed the miracle of transforming the host into the body of Christ and the wine into His blood, while congregants would be shielded from the mysterious nature of the miracle. Only after the host and wine were consecrated would the priest then elevate them for all to see, enabling the community to partake in the salvation.

This change influenced the look, size and placement of sacred images in the church. Prior to the Council, the priest typically stood behind the altar table facing the congregation. The altar table would accommodate liturgical objects as well as small sacred images and sculptures, and often also featured a decorative altar frontal covering known as an antependium.

Once the priest stood in front of the altar table and faced away from the people, the antependium would be hidden from the congregants and would also be subjected to damage from inadvertent kicks and scuffs by the priest.⁵⁷ As a result, the changes in the liturgy required new types of sacred images. In the thirteenth century we see the focus of attention shift to the high altar that could accommodate large-scale sacred images for all to see and contemplate during the celebration of mass.

Empathy Made Visible: Inspiration for Interventions

Much has been written about the innovative painting styles of Giotto and Duccio.⁵⁸ Each artist imbued his figures and space with a convincing sense of naturalism that differentiated them from the contemporary Byzantine painting style, the *Maniera Greca*, which influenced Italian painting during the Dugento.

Byzantium was located in the eastern European section of the Roman Empire at the Bosphorus Strait and connected the Aegean Sea and Black Sea, and Europe with Asia.⁵⁹ The Western Roman Empire maintained strong commercial connections with the East through trade and during the Crusades, and especially after the sack of Constantinople in 1204 when crusaders took precious objects, including panel paintings, back to Italy.⁶⁰ The tradition of panel painting in the East was well-developed and this medium, in the eleventh century, had developed the concept of the “speaking image.”⁶¹ These “speaking” figures conveyed emotions that would engage viewers in a dialogue, thereby diminishing the psychological barrier projected by the older and more hieratic images. By engaging the viewer, the “speaking” image was more approachable and, as a result, perhaps less authoritative than its aloof predecessor. However, the new speaking images still enjoyed power through their association with the older archetypes.

Historically, artists were not able to add original interpretations to the already accepted prototypes. Rather, they were expected to copy traditionally accepted and timeless icon paintings (fig. 30).⁶² However, from the eleventh century on, icons changed their traditional style and began to depict emotions. The Byzantine statesman and scholar, Michael Psellus (ca. 1018-1078), used the expression “empsychos graphe,” or “living painting,” to characterize this new style of icon which conveyed the illusion of life. Most important, the new painting style more closely aligned painting with the art of poetry which was capable of

arousing one's feelings and emotions.⁶³ This new style of icon painting was able to express life's emotions as poetry had done, more effectively representing life events and feelings than the mere copies of lifeless prototypes.⁶⁴

These new Byzantine "speaking" paintings are stylized imagery which is clearly evident in their depiction of emotions. Although one can easily identify the emotion and the way expression reinforces the subject and strengthens the narrative, the viewer does not react empathetically (fig. 31). Instead, the portrayed emotions act as symbols, offering additional information to enhance the story. We see Mary lament the dead Christ and we identify the emotion of grief on her face. We intellectually accept the emotional component of the narrative, but we feel little, if any, emotional empathy. Although we can identify the emotions, we do not empathize with Mary's anguish and pain. Her emotions are stylized and abstract and, although they convey a feeling, they do not affect us in the same visceral way as their ancient Greek predecessors (figs. 32 & 33). In the Byzantine image, we recognize the expressions that communicate the feeling of grief and that support the narrative, but we are relatively unaffected on an emotional level.

However, in the early Trecento, Giotto and Duccio challenged the established *Maniera Greca* painting style. Their depiction of space and narration, although rendered differently, infused biblical scenes with a sense of naturalism that helped viewers to relate personally to the stories and protagonists (figs. 34 & 35).

One notable change we see in their work is the sense of humanity that is imbued in their sacred figures, and which helps to bridge the existing gap between this world and the spiritual. An important function of sacred images is to serve as devotional intermediaries, and the humanizing elements in Giotto's and Duccio's paintings help viewers more easily identify with the lives and experiences of sacred figures through this added human dimension. If viewers could relate to the figures and to the stories, they could potentially form stronger empathic and emotional connections with the images. The deeper these empathic feelings were, the more intense and meaningful the emotional connections were likely to be.

Bridging the Duccio Gap: Viewers Empathic Response

Duccio and Giotto each elicit empathy through their depiction of natural space and figural expression. Giotto's figures are solid beings that occupy a convincing place in a three-dimensional space. For example, when we look at Giotto's fresco *The Wedding at Cana* (fig. 34) we see sculptural figures in space that recedes and suggests a foreground, middle ground and background. In Duccio's painting of the same subject, figures appear less solid and perhaps more delicate than Giotto's figures. Nonetheless, Duccio engages his viewers by depicting gestures and facial expressions that are relatable and identifiable. Viewers focus on the general sense of space and people rather than on a rational depiction of perspective and space as is evidenced in the Giotto.

Duccio conveys an overall impression of the scene and viewers can emotionally feel present in the space. The experience is not unlike a twentieth century Cubist interior where space is not necessarily a rational view through a window, but rather an exploration of the feeling of being there and moving around. For example, in Duccio's *Wedding at Cana*, a figure in the foreground and to the right turns backward as he walks away, giving viewers the sense of movement.⁶⁵ The space is not static and fixed but dynamic and enables all of the senses to fully participate in the entire festivity.⁶⁶ We feel the experience as if it were our own.

In the *Ruccellai Madonna* (fig. 36), Duccio depicts the Christ child pushing his foot against Mary's thigh, convincing us not only of movement and animation, but reminding us of the familiar playful nature of infants.⁶⁷ Mary, although not looking at us frontally as in Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna*, engages us with her outward glance and subtly discernable smile (figs. 19 & 36). Mary is not in our world, but her smile indicates that she is aware of our presence and she seems approachable. We, the beholders, are acknowledged and implicitly invited into her sacred space, albeit an arm's length. Indeed, despite the fact that Giotto's *Madonna* is frontal and looks directly at us, she seems imposing and perhaps less approachable than the Duccio *Madonna*.⁶⁸

It is well established that Giotto's fresco painting of the *Lamentation* vividly affects us and emotionally draws us into the narrative. Giotto convincingly depicts the tortured anguish and visceral grief felt by the figures and most

certainly by the angels above. Figures occupy space and are modeled to convey volume and three-dimensionality while exhibiting emotion through facial expressions and physical gestures. Each angel's face captures and communicates an aspect of deep emotional torment that empathically connects with viewers (figs. 20-25).

Although Giotto's images convey a rich sense of naturalism and humanity that connect with viewers, I believe that the empathic qualities are more fully situated in Duccio's art. Indeed, viewers empathically react to Giotto's depiction of humanity and naturalism seen in his *Lamentation*. However, the palpable manner in which Duccio renders figures' faces and hands and the subtlety with which the artist suggests gestures and touch, evoke powerfully strong empathic reactions that have no artistic rival. There is an ephemeral quality to Duccio's Madonna faces that infuses them with both a sense of humanity and warmth while at the same time embodying their faces with spirituality. It is Duccio's ability to merge these two seemingly contradictory qualities, that of humanity and spirituality, that contribute to the artist's empathic power.

Materiality

Duccio's color choices and the manner in which he applies paint serve to heighten viewers' involvement. For example, paint is applied thinly and does not draw attention to its physical properties. Faces and hands are softly modeled and contoured to convey a lifelike sense of roundness and the suppleness of flesh (fig. 36). In the *Crevoles Madonna*, Mary's flawless ivory face appears to

possess an almost transparent quality.⁶⁹ Duccio's painting skill is further evidenced in his ability to simulate transparent drapery such as that worn by the Christ Child in the *Maestà*⁷⁰

Duccio's color choices appeal to viewers and add to the empathic power of the images. He juxtaposes a variety of warm tones that complement the subject's intense emotionality. For example, in the *Maestà* painting, Mary's deep blue mantle is lined with a vibrant purple that shares a border with her bright red tunic. The artist chooses a rose pink tone for the cloth that lines Mary's head cloth and that drapes under her neck. Duccio creates yet a third shade of reddish purple for the Child's garment and, within this garment, the artist suggests folds in the fabric by painting shadows and highlights which provide viewers with several subtle and additional shades of red.

The multitude of hues of red, scarlet, purple, pink and rose tones are further punctuated in the cheeks of Mary, the Child and the flanking angels. In addition, the brocade fabric, which forms the backdrop cloth of honor for Mary and the Christ Child, is a modulated purple tone, as are several of the angels' garments. This smorgasbord offering of reds and purples heightens the viewer's emotional experience, as do the intricate gold decorations on the background fabric, the Child's garment and Mary's mantle and tunic.⁷¹

The combination of warm colors and gold decorations in Duccio's paintings add a sensuousness that appeals to viewers on an emotional level and require little intellectual engagement. In addition to appealing to one's eye, his

paintings also engage our sense of touch. We feel and empathize with Mary's touch when we see her hand tenderly touch her Child, which may evoke the miracles of Christ's healing hands.⁷²

Duccio: Impact and Influence

This section will examine the innovative and empathic qualities in Duccio's art to which viewers relate. Duccio's new style influenced the premature renovations of several early Italian Renaissance sacred images. Duccio transformed the Eastern speaking image archetype by humanizing the sacred figures and by convincingly depicting emotions with which viewers empathized. In the late Dugento and early Trecento, several selected sacred images were repainted to reflect Duccio's new style, with which people were becoming familiar. The repainting helped make the images look current and keep abreast with the rapid and appealing stylistic changes.

However, most importantly, the renovated images reflect Duccio's innovative way of depicting human emotions and eliciting empathy. Duccio's sacred figures, although divine and other worldly, are at the same time, portrayed as human and relatable. The empathic qualities in Duccio's paintings influenced the premature interventions that were performed on several early Italian Renaissance sacred images.

Duccio's sacred figures portray a sense of humanity. As Keith Christiansen notes, Duccio's sacred figures "seem approachable and human and beyond common experience. Perhaps to a greater degree than any other painter,

Duccio explored a realm that is transcendent yet human, resplendent yet approachable.⁷³ This paradoxical quality is evident in his *Ruccellai Madonna* (ca. 1285-1287; fig. 36). As noted previously, we see a warm interaction between Mother and Child as She holds the Child's right leg while He seems to push that leg against her thigh. Duccio suggests movement and at the same time captures the playfulness of an infant on his mother's lap and an interaction to which viewers can personally relate and empathize. And yet, despite an emphasis on the humanity of Mary and her Child, Duccio paints gold striations on Mary's dress, introducing an otherworldly dimension that recalls the Byzantine tradition of Mary as Queen of Heaven.⁷⁴ A similar empathic reaction is evoked in Duccio's *Maesta* (ca. 1290; Kunstmuseum, Bern; fig. 37) as Christ moves freely across Mary's lap, suggesting movement and a genuine interaction between Mother and Child.⁷⁵

Duccio painted other empathic Madonna and Child images that depict the motif of the Christ Child playing with His mother's veil.⁷⁶ The veil motif is depicted in Duccio's *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1304), now in Perugia (figs. 38 & 39), *The Virgin and Child with Saints Dominic and Aurea* (ca. 1305-1310), in London (figs. 40 & 41), and the *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1295-1300), in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (figs. 26-29). These depictions of the veil motif may be related to French Gothic ivories that Duccio saw on a trip to France (figs. 42 & 43).⁷⁷

For example, as mentioned above, in his *Madonna of Crevole* (ca. 1280; figs. 13-15), Duccio depicts an intimate moment between the Madonna and Child

as the playful baby reaches up and touches his mother's veil. The artist captures a candid interaction with which mothers can identify. Duccio conveys the love and tender bond between mother and child that seem to reflect and complement the sentiments expressed in the contemporary *dolce stil nuovo* love poetry discussed earlier.⁷⁸

However, in his Metropolitan *Madonna and Child*, Duccio reveals his truly innovative style (figs. 26-29). This devotional panel, still in its original frame, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2004 and had been in private collections prior to its acquisition. Christiansen notes that its most novel feature is the illusionistic parapet that he believes is based on the fictive architectural elements of the frescoes of the life of Saint Francis in Assisi.⁷⁹

The parapet helps to relate the sacred space of the Madonna and Child to the viewer's world. The viewer, although separated from the sacred figures, may feel part of the scene, perhaps even within arm's reach across the fictive ledge. The parapet separates the space but lends a sense of shared space at the same time. This paradoxical double function brings the secular and spiritual realms together.⁸⁰ The novel feature of an illusionistic parapet displays an interest in pictorial space and a way to relate the two worlds.⁸¹

James Stubblebine notes that Duccio introduces an intimacy between the Madonna and Child in the Metropolitan painting that would be "an abiding note in Italian art for several centuries."⁸² This intimacy to which Stubblebine refers is

fundamental to Duccio's appeal and a key factor for understanding the premature restorative interventions.

Stylistic and Fashionable Updating or Something More?

The premature renovations suggest a desire to update or "fix up" sacred images and to reflect Duccio's new style of painting. However, are the early renovations simply a response to the desire for stylistic or fashionable updating, or do they reflect a more profound phenomenon? The interventions do reflect Duccio's new painting style but the reason that his style was attractive was precisely because it filled a need for viewers. Yes, Duccio's style was now in fashion but it was in style for the very reason that its empathic qualities resonated with viewers, making his painting style the preferred choice. The interventions that imitated Duccio's style strengthened the devotional function of the sacred image by creating bonds between the beholder and the sacred figures that were stronger than previous works.

Indeed, one usually associates fashion with changing trends in hairstyles and clothing, and coiffures and clothing often offer clues to an historical period. However, when we look at the interventions and changes that were executed on sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance, something more than fashionable updating seems to be at work. For the most part, the alterations and repainting are confined to the sacred figure's faces and hands, indicating that the need to update these features is based on something more fundamental.

The concept of fashion began to develop with the rise of towns and the middle class. In the mid-twelfth century, fines were imposed on the middle class for dressing like nobility. An early reference to fashion and sumptuary laws is found in Villani's *Cronica*, a history of Florence written in the late thirteenth century. He applauds the strict sumptuary laws of 1330, which were initiated to counter conspicuous consumption, but bemoans the fact that these laws only motivate people to want more fashionable and luxurious clothing.⁸³ Duccio's city of Siena passed its first sumptuary law in 1249 which restricted the length of women's dress trains. The legislation was an attempt to address the problem of excess, which in Italy was primarily an urban phenomenon.⁸⁴

In his book *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, Philip Sohm notes that there were few definitions of style during the early Italian Renaissance. Because definitions of style change over time, it is difficult to explain just what style is. The etymological origin of the word style first appears in France around 1300 as *stile*, in connection to writing, and from the Latin word *stilus*, a writing instrument. Although originally associated with handwriting, the concept of style was later applied to other areas of expression such as fashion, behavior and art. As Meyer Shapiro notes, style is associated with "the constant form--and sometimes the constant expression--in the art of an individual or a group."⁸⁵ Indeed, David Rosand reminds us that Vasari, in his *Lives*, draws an analogy between artistic style and handwriting, and notes that each medium betrays an individual character.⁸⁶

In the preface to part two in his *Lives*, Vasari identifies two types of style, individual and general style. Individual style refers to the characteristics that reveal the personal expression of each artist. General style, according to Vasari, refers to periods or historical epochs that reflect general characteristics or similarity of style.⁸⁷

However, for the purpose of this study, there is one aspect of Vasari's categorization of individual style, *arie*, on which I will focus. The word *aria* means air but also has metaphorical associations that relate to individuals' expressions. In English, the word "air" is also used metaphorically to describe the demeanor, look or general impression of a person. For example, a person may be said to have an "air of dignity" about him. For Vasari, one way in which an artist betrays his individual artistic style is by conveying *arie*, or psychological expressions that reflect a figure's inner feelings.⁸⁸

The early Italian Renaissance renovations reflect Duccio's innovative painting style and the ability to depict deep emotional feelings. I believe that the motivation behind the premature interventions is more complex than simply a need for fashionable updating. The compelling nature of Duccio's paintings reveal a profound realization that his art has the power to emotionally connect with viewers. Duccio renders his sacred figure's faces and hand gestures with sensitivity and empathy that engage the beholder. His paintings convey that sense of *aria* to which Vasari refers. The renovations affirm that style and

function are inextricably connected and that the early interventions reflect the need to convey a sense of humanity as well as style.

Duccio's new painting style enabled viewers to enter the physical and emotional space of the represented sacred figures. Sacred figures are no longer remote and static, but now become palpable and real figures to viewers, resulting in a powerful and emotionally intense devotional experience. Once viewers became aware of this new painting style, earlier sacred images seemed less effective. Duccio's paintings invited viewers into the devotional images by representing humanly accessible figures and thus heightening the spiritual experience. The style of painting was changing and this style change served to increase the efficacy of devotional paintings.

Duccio's and Giotto's innovative renderings of sacred images were groundbreaking in the late Dugento and represented a sea change in the depiction of early Italian Renaissance devotional paintings. One wonders to what extent this new style was recognized and received by contemporaries or, furthermore, whether the artists themselves were consciously aware of the impact of their innovative work. We see cataclysmic differences between their art and the work of earlier artists, and earlier in this chapter we explored contemporary written references to the artists' innovative style. But were these changes widely acknowledged at the time?

Although Duccio's and Giotto's painting styles clearly broke with past traditions, Cole notes that artists were not encouraged to be original in the

thirteenth century and it was unlikely that they were consciously aware of any avant-guard tendencies.⁸⁹ Indeed, there is no explicit mention of style in the early Renaissance, even though style is implied when Cennini declares Giotto to be a modern painter.⁹⁰ Cennini does not refer to style but does refer to how Giotto strikingly departs from the manner of earlier artists and breaks with the Greek and old-fashioned renderings. And, in a desire to align himself with Giotto's modernity and innovative manner, Cennini introduces himself to the readers of his *Libro dell' Arte* by noting that he is a direct artistic descendant of Giotto.⁹¹

However, in addition to written references, evidence does exist that supports a contemporary and conscious awareness of a new manner of painting. Indeed, there is a rise in the number and type of restoration interventions at this time, and repair efforts were no longer strictly limited to physical maintenance work. A great number of re-paintings and over-paintings are executed in order to update paintings and reflect the current artistic changes.

Alexander Nagel notes that it was a common practice in early thirteenth century Tuscany for sacred images to be repainted or for new paintings to replace older paintings. This practice dramatically increased later in the century during the time of Duccio, and we see numerous sacred images repainted or refashioned in his style. The number of sacred image renovations surged when painting underwent a volatile change during the era of Duccio and Giotto.⁹²

Empathy Theory Connection

This chapter has focused on contextual factors surrounding the premature restorations of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance. As discussed in Chapter One, the premature restoration interventions were, in part, a response to the technical vulnerability of the tempera paint medium used on panel paintings. Tempera paint frequently needed repair and, while in the repair shop, these panel paintings were often updated and “fixed up” as explained by Neri di Bicci in his *Le Ricordanze*.⁹³ The confluence of disparate circumstances and events such as challenges within the Church, as well as the practical problems inherent to the medium of tempera paint used to create the panel paintings of sacred images, created a receptive climate for restorative interventions.

Many of these renovations were conducted during the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century and, as mentioned above, during a time when the Church was facing criticisms and responding defensively. It was a time especially ripe for powerfully emotional and empathic sacred images. Indeed, if images can be altered to achieve strong empathic connections, all the more reason to make these changes while already in the repair shop.

In this final section, I will make connections between the repainted sacred images and modern empathy theory. Images have the power to generate strong emotions within us; however, until recently, the acknowledgment of these reactions has been anecdotal. Viewers might admit to being moved emotionally to varying degrees but little research has been devoted to the subject. Modern art history emphasizes the importance of the cognitive component when

analyzing viewers' reactions to images.⁹⁴ But there has been little research regarding viewers' emotional reactions to images.

Centuries ago, Horace, in *Ars Poetica*, published about 18 BC, attests to the power of images:

Actions that have been admitted to our consciousness through our having heard them have less of an impact on our minds than those that have been brought to our attention by our trusty vision and for which the spectator himself is an eyewitness.⁹⁵

We see this ancient philosophy reinvigorated in the early twelfth century with the introduction of the speaking image, discussed earlier in this chapter, and again in the thirteenth century with the prematurely repainted renovations. Most recently, current scientific research is being conducted on empathy theory and its connection to visual imagery. Previous anecdotal references can now be substantiated and supported by scientific findings that indicate that an emotional component of our brain exists and is activated when viewing art.

Modern Empathy Theory

Recent neuroscientific research and evidence help us to better understand how we empathize with others' behaviors and experiences. Modern empathy theory proposes that mirror neurons in our brain have the capacity to simulate the actions and emotions that we observe in others and to activate our own

physiological responses as if we were actually engaged in similar experiences. Indeed, our mirror neurons are activated even if we simply look at images that depict actions and emotions. In other words, observing an action results in activating the same neurons that are activating during the execution of that action.

This phenomenon, known as embodied simulation, has profound implications for art history since the research suggests that images alone can activate the mirror neurons in our brain as effectively as witnessing the actual action.⁹⁶ Indeed, these findings help account for viewers' empathic connection with works of art.⁹⁷ The research suggests that an art image with which we empathize has effectively activated our mirror neurons to simulate those feelings and behaviors and, enabling us to directly understand others.⁹⁸

When we look at figurative images, we most readily identify and empathize with facial expressions and hand gestures. The face and hands have the ability to communicate a great range of emotions. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian (ca. 35 BC - 100 BC) understood that the hands have the ability to express powerful emotions:

As to the hands, without the aid of which all delivery would be deficient and weak, it can scarcely be told of what a variety of motions they are susceptible, since they almost equal in expression the powers of language itself; for other parts of the body assist the speaker, but these, I may almost say, speak themselves. With our

hands we ask, promise, call persons to us and send them away, threaten, supplicate, intimate dislike or fear; with our hands we signify joy, grief, doubt, acknowledgement, penitence, and indicate measure, quantity, number and time. Have not our hands the power of exciting, of restraining, of beseeching, of testifying approbation, admiration, and shame? Do they not, in pointing out places and persons, discharge the duty of adverbs and pronouns? So that amidst the great diversity of tongues pervading all nations and people, the language of the hands appears to be a language common to all men.⁹⁹

Quintilian speaks as an orator and appreciates using hands in order to augment speech. However, artists also recognize the power of hands to express feelings and emotions. For example, Giotto, in his paintings, supplies us with a rich lexicon of hand gestures from which to derive an expansive spectrum of emotions.¹⁰⁰

Quintilian's insight is particularly relevant to this study since the premature early Italian Renaissance interventions focused primarily on repainting faces and hands. Indeed, several repainted Madonna and Child paintings made changes only to the faces and hands which were renovated to more closely resemble Duccio's style. Faces and hands are the features with which we connect most directly and with which we empathize most powerfully.

In his 1872 book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin stated that facial expressions are innate, evolved behavior and are universal. Some social scientists have disputed Darwin's claim, arguing that expressions are socially learned and culturally variable. However, most recently, research supports Darwin's view of universality. Cross-cultural research includes Western, non-Western, literate, and preliterate cultures, and has determined that different cultures apply the same label to the facial expressions depicting photographs of anger, disgust, happiness, fear and sadness.¹⁰¹

However, regardless of whether one supports a culturally and socially learned view of facial expressions over that of universality, the early Italian Renaissance restorers repainted facial types that would be universally understood by thirteenth century Tuscans. The neurologist Antonio Damasio notes that Darwin's catalog of emotional expressions was consistent across cultures and that, even though we find variations, it is the similarities and not the differences that are striking.¹⁰² Even images that depict only subtle expressions and gestures can provoke an empathic response from viewers. A slight tilt of the head, a sideway glance, a soft touch or implied movement can elicit emotion. Indeed, current neurological research and MRI tests confirm that when we visually observe the sensation of touch, our brain is neurologically activated in the same way as if we were actually touched.¹⁰³

Scientific research confirms the potential power that observing facial and gestural imagery can have on us. The next chapter will look closely at several

early Italian Renaissance sacred images that were prematurely renovated and which primarily focused on repainting the faces and hands.

Endnotes

¹ Petrarch, *Canzoniere* 111.

² The Church was involved in fighting the Crusades and was experiencing grave military defeats as well as criticism for its practice of indulgences.

³ Giovanni Villani was a Florentine merchant who wrote the *Nuova Cronica*, a twelve- book history of Florence. Villani's description of the Battle of Montaperti occurs in book VI. Villani's chronicles can be accessed online at the Fordham University Internet Medieval Sourcebooks at www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/villani.asp translated by David Burr.

⁴ Sieneese chronicles were written in the early fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that document the battle of Montaperti. For an analysis of these Sieneese chronicles, see Parsons 2-4. Parsons notes that the chronicles are written at least one hundred years after the battle and their accuracy must be assessed with this historical distance in mind. The Giovanni Villani account, although written closer to the year of the battle, is also written many years after the battle. However, regardless of their historical accuracy, the significance of all the chronicles is that they illuminate both the Florentine and Sieneese perspectives while documenting and affirming the deeply rooted conflict and rivalry between the two cities.

⁵ Dante, *The Inferno*, Canto XXXII, 281.

⁶ Diana Norman notes that the Sieneese, even today, refer to the Battle of Montaperti with civic pride. She alludes to a notice that was spotted at a bus

stop a few years ago on the outskirts of Siena and that supporters of Arezzo's visiting football team would likely see. The notice warned the away-fans to 'remember Montaperti.' See Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)* 1.

⁷ See Satkowski, chapter II, The Chronicles. This chapter offers a comprehensive account of extant chronicles. Satkowski cautions readers that many of these manuscripts must be read with a degree of skepticism since they are not supported by reliable factual evidence and may contain fabrications. Also see Keith Christiansen, *Duccio and the Origins of Western Painting* for an account and analysis of the installation of Duccio's *Maesta* by the chronicler Agnolo di Tura in the mid-fourteenth century. Both Satkowski and Christiansen agree that the chronicle of Agnolo di Tura can be considered most reliable since it contains information that is confirmed by Sienese documents. In addition, Agnolo di Tura was attached to the financial branch of Siena's government and would have had access to primary documents that are now lost.

⁸ Guido Guinizzelli, *The Poetry of Guido Guinizzelli* (New York, 1987).
Translated by Robert Edwards.

⁹ Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto XXVI, 97-98.

¹⁰ Ibid. "...quand' io odo nomar sé stesso il padre, mio e de li altri miei miglior che mai, rime d'amor usar dolci e leggiadre..."

¹¹ James Stubblebine questions the attribution of the *Crevole Madonna* to Duccio. Stubblebine confirms that although the *Crevole Madonna* is generally

accepted by scholars to be an early work of Duccio, he has his doubts. He cites the stiff pose of the Madonna's hands as uncharacteristic of Duccio's work as well as the old fashioned way to paint a white quarter-moon to animate her glance. See James H. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School*, vol.1 (Princeton, 1979) 124-125, and fn 5, 6.

¹² Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto XI. Dante writes, "In painting Cimabue thought he held the field, and now it's Giotto they acclaim-the former only keeps a shadowed fame." However, Dante implies that fame is fleeting and forever changing in the last lines of this paragraph, "Worldly renown is nothing other than a breath of wind that blows now here, now there, and changes name when it has changed its course."

¹³ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, VI, 5. Boccaccio refers to Giotto on the sixth out of the ten days of storytelling.

¹⁴ For a discussion of Giotto's reference in Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, see Watson 43-64.

¹⁵ Boccaccio 458.

¹⁶ Watson 45.

¹⁷ Cennini 2.

¹⁸ See Pardo 45.

¹⁹ Bruce Cole, *Giotto and Florentine Painting 1280-1375* (New York, 1976)

82.

²⁰ It is interesting to note that Cennini explicitly references Giotto only three times in his *Il Libro* and each time it is within the context of elevating his own artistic reputation and connection to the artist. In the introduction to *Il Libro*, Cennini informs us that his teacher was Agnolo di Taddeo who was taught by his father Taddeo, who in fact taught Giotto. At the very beginning of his book, Cennini wants readers to know his direct connection to Giotto. Giotto's legacy appears to be critical to Cennini in establishing his legitimacy up front.

²¹ V. Kirkham and M. Maggi, eds., *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works* (Chicago, 2009) 342. In his will, the testamentum, Petrarch leaves his panel painting of the Virgin Mary which he describes as "A work of the eminent painter Giotto" and which Petrarch received from Michele de Vanni. It is in this section of his testamentum that Petrarch attacks the *vulgus*, the *ignorantes*, who are unable to appreciate the beauty of Giotto's work.

²² One might argue that vestiges of the paragon seem to impact current thinking and attitudes about art media. Glass artists or jewelers are often referred to as craftspeople rather than artists.

²³ Alberti, *On Painting*, Cecil Grayson, trans., 61.

²⁴ Ibid. 76. Cecil Grayson translated notes, in footnote 45, p. 99, that Alberti's expression is derived from Cicero, *De amicitia*, 14.50.

²⁵ Pliny the Elder 133. "Is omnium primus animum pinxit et sensus hominis expressit, quae vocant Graeci ethe, item perturbations." It is interesting to note that Aristotle, in the third century BC wrote about emotions in his *Poetics* and

Rhetoric. Aristotle refers to Pathos as feelings and emotions and orators need to study emotions in order to know how to arouse them when giving persuasive speech. See Roland Greene 1010. The late Renaissance writer Francesco Bocchi, ca. 1548-1613, in his treatise on Donatello's *St. George*, published in 1584 in Florence, refers to Aristotle's discussion of emotions in connection with the visual arts. Moshe Barasch notes that Bocchi is one of the earliest authors to refer to Aristotle in a discussion of the visual arts. See Moshe Barasch, "Character and Physiognomy" 416.

²⁶ Alberti, *On Painting*, Cecil Grayson, trans., 76-7.

²⁷ Ibid. 78. See the footnote n. 50, page 99-100 that explains the specific work which was destroyed in the seventeenth century.

²⁸ Holt 153-54. It is interesting to note that Ghiberti writes in his *Commentarii*, that although Duccio is a "most noble painter" his work is too much in the "la maniera Greca." Ghiberti refers to Duccio's *Maesta*.

²⁹ Ibid. 135.

³⁰ See Bruce Cole, "Old in New," 232.

³¹ Vasari includes the chronicled account of the *Maesta*'s installation but attributes the story to the *Ruccellai Madonna*, a work that he attributes to the Florentine artist Cimabue, Giotto's teacher. Vasari notes that the painting, now accepted to have been painted by Duccio between the years 1285 and about 1287, begins to move away from the Byzantine manner and shows signs of the modern style. Vasari writes in his *Lives*: "This work was larger than any human

figure which had been painted up to that time, and some of the angels around it show that although Cimabue still had the Greek manner, he was gradually approaching, in some ways, the lines and style of modern times. As a result, this work so astonished the people of the day, since they had seen nothing better until then, that they carried it with great rejoicing and with the sounding of trumpets from Cimabue's home to the church in a solemn procession, and Cimabue himself was greatly rewarded and honoured." Cited in Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, 11. Also see Keith Christensen's discussion regarding Vasari's misidentification in *Duccio and the Origins of Western Painting* 21-22.

³² See endnote 28.

³³ The painting was likely painted as an antependium that covered the front of the altar table rather than as an altarpiece. The *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* painting was replaced with the *Madonna del Voto* shortly after the battle at Montaperti. This change was part of a major rebuilding program during this time. See van Os, Chapter One.

³⁴ For a thorough description of this event, see Parsons, Chapter One; van Os 11-12. Parsons provides a thorough discussion of the historical relationship between the city of Siena and the Virgin Mary.

³⁵ Parsons 2.

³⁶ Rona Goffen notes that the determining factor for a *Hodegetria* is the action of the Virgin. "If she presents, indicates, or puts the Child forward, rather

than embracing him in a motherly way, she may be described as *Hodegetria*.

See Goffen, "Icon and Vision," fn 29, 492.

³⁷ Diana Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, 42 and fn7. For authorship and dating of the *Madonna del Voto*, also see Stubblebine, *Guido Da Siena*, 72-75; and Schmidt, fn 45, 289.

³⁸ See Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 72-75 for a description of the *Madonna del Voto* painting and its connection to the Battle of Montaperti.

³⁹ Norman, *Siena and the Virgin* 209.

⁴⁰ Fabbri and Rutenburg, 386.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 388.

⁴³ Ibid. 389.

⁴⁴ See Bruce Cole, Chapter IX 'On an Early Florentine Fresco,' in *Studies in the History of Italian Art 1250-1550*, 83-92 for a discussion of the replica painting by the master of Pian di Mugnone. Cole suggests that the date of the replica painting cannot be earlier than 1308 and betrays Giotto's mature influence.

⁴⁵ Ekphrasis, the Greek noun for description, is derived from the verb *ekphrazein*, to describe or point out.

⁴⁶ Land, *The Viewer as Poet*, 179.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 35.

⁴⁸ Leonard Barkan notes that so far as he can tell, no names of artists are ever mentioned in the collection of *Imagines*. See Barkan, "Making Pictures Speak," 334 fn 17. In the same article, Barkan notes that Alberti, in *De Pictura*, refers to art objects he never saw and only knows from other people's accounts. Barkan 334, fn 18.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 336.

⁵⁰ Recent scientific evidence based on brain research will be discussed in chapter five. This research supports the universal and scientific basis for the empathic approach. I believe that this recent research and evidence has profound implications for the history of art.

⁵¹ Land, *The Viewer as Poet*, 43.

⁵² Ringbom 12.

⁵³ Commentaries on Lombard's *The Sentences* include those by Saints Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. We see the tradition of written commentaries on religious texts in the Talmud, which was finalized ca. 450 AD. The *Talmud* contains the discussions and opinions of many rabbis on a variety of biblical subjects and case law. We also see this practice in Islam with the *Tafsir* ca. 610.

⁵⁴ Freedberg 162 and fn 2, 470.

⁵⁵ The period of the mid-thirteenth century saw the rise of heretical groups such as the Cathars and the Waldensians.

⁵⁶ The Church was criticized for its practice of granting indulgences which was initiated during the Crusades. Indulgences were given as rewards to those who conduct good deeds. The Church absolved sins in return for crusaders to fight.

⁵⁷ Kees van der Ploeg, "How Liturgical is a Medieval Altarpiece," in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. Victor M. Schmidt (New Haven, 2002) 104.

⁵⁸ See White and Stubblebine

⁵⁹ In the year 330 AD the Roman emperor Constantine the Great transferred the capitol of the Empire from Rome to the city of Byzantium and renamed the city Constantinople in his own honor.

⁶⁰ See Asbridge, *The Crusades*.

⁶¹ See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*. In chapter 17 Belting discusses the reception and interpretation of Eastern icons by Tuscan cities in the early thirteenth century.

⁶² Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies* 11 and fn13. Maguire notes that as much as artists may have tried to closely copy models, he reminds us of a passage from a letter of Saint Basil the Great who wrote "painters, when they paint icons from icons, looking closely at the model, are eager to transfer the character (i.e. features) of the icon to their own masterpieces."

⁶³ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 261.

⁶⁴ For an insightful discussion of how Byzantine rhetoric influenced Byzantine art, see Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* 110. Although Maguire believes that Byzantine artists borrowed several techniques from ancient rhetoric, he does not think that Byzantine artists were aware of the origins. Rather, Maguire believes that the ancient use of rhetoric had become part of the contemporary culture.

⁶⁵ See Arb 193. Arb notes that Duccio depicts the figure of St. John in the Boston Museum Crucifixion, with a flexed ankle suggesting movement and the ability to rise.

⁶⁶ Christiansen compares Duccio's supreme sense of color and design as the Matisse of the fourteenth century in *Duccio* 40.

⁶⁷ Vasari incorrectly ascribed the *Ruccellai Madonna* to Cimabue. See James H. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School*, 6-7. Although Duccio was inspired by Cimabue, Stubblebine points out the Sieneese qualities of the work. For example, The Virgin is dematerialized and the angels seem to kneel on air.

⁶⁸ Bruce Cole believes that Giotto's *Madonna* is more engaging than the Duccio because she looks at us. I tend to agree more with Keith Christiansen who feels that the Giotto *Madonna* may be a bit intimidating because of her frontal gaze whereas the Duccio *Madonna* seems approachable and inviting.

⁶⁹ White, *Duccio*, 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid. White notes that it is possible that Duccio introduces transparent draperies for the first time since antiquity.

⁷¹ See Arb 191-198. Arb notes that Duccio uses a color palette that is sensuous and of high intensity.

⁷² Jodi Cranston, "The Touch of the Blind Man" in *Sensible Flesh*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 232.

⁷³ Christiansen, *Duccio*, 31.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 39. The gold painted striations, known as chrisography, are derived from Byzantine practice.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 40. Christiansen notes that the way the Child's cheek presses against his mother's relates to a Tuscan motif that relates to Christ as the bridegroom of the Virgin.

⁷⁶ The veil motif can be traced to French Gothic ivories of ca. 1300 and which Duccio may have seen during his trips to France. See Christiansen, *ibid.* 42.

⁷⁷ Norman, *Siena, Florence and Padua*, vol.1, 54. Norman suggests that Duccio visited France during the 1270s and also worked there in the 1290's. This is based on French tax records of 1296-97 and also on Duccio's apparent references to French Gothic art.

⁷⁸ It is impossible to know if Duccio was directly influenced by the contemporary love poetry which permeated Tuscan culture and which reflected and modeled French refinement. Indeed, Duccio does employ the motif of the

Child playing with the Virgin's veil which is found in contemporary French ivories.
See Christiansen *Duccio*, 42.

⁷⁹ See New York Times, July 8, 2006 interview conducted by Robin Pogrebin with the Duccio scholar Luciano Bellosi. Bellosi states that the parapet in Duccio's Metropolitan *Madonna* is similar to a long cornice in Giotto's fresco series in the Church of St. Francis in Assisi which depicts the life of St. Francis. Bellosi said that Duccio's parapet testifies to the relationship "between the young Duccio and the young Giotto, who both worked in the workshop of Cimabue."

⁸⁰ Rona Goffen, "Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 57, No.4 (Dec. 1975) 499-500.

⁸¹ In devotional images such as the Metropolitan *Madonna and Child* painting, the parapet refers to and derives its source from ancient funerary reliefs. See Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture*, 43.

⁸² Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School*, 8.

⁸³ Frick 180.

⁸⁴ Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200-1500* (Oxford, 2002) 4.

⁸⁵ Meyer Shapiro, "Style," in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society: Selected Papers IV* (New York, 1994) 51.

⁸⁶ David Rosand, "Penmanship," in *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge, 2001) 139-40.

⁸⁷ Sohm 86-87. Sohm notes in fn 1, p 238 that he assumes, as others have, that the prefaces in Vasari's *Vite* were "indeed written by Vasari."

⁸⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of the concept of aria as an artistic ideal in the Renaissance, see Summers, "ARIA II." Also see Summers, *Michelangelo*, 192-94.

⁸⁹ Bruce Cole, "Old in New in the Early Trecento," 230.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Craftmen's Handbook, 2.

⁹² Nagel, "Fashion and the Now-Time of Renaissance Art," 41.

⁹³ See Chapter One of this study and the bibliography.

⁹⁴ Indeed, twentieth century art history eliminates the emotional component from viewers' responses to art and instead tends to focus primarily on cognitive assessments and reactions. Indeed, in 1976, the philosopher Nelson Goodman wrote, "in esthetic experience the emotions function cognitively." See Goodman 247-8.

⁹⁵ O.B. Hardison and Leon Golden, *Horace for Students of Literature: The "Ars Poetica" and its Tradition*, 12.

⁹⁶ Freedberg and Gallese 198.

⁹⁷ It must be noted that in order for the viewer's mirror neurons to be activated, the observed behavior must be one that is familiar to the viewer and already part of the viewer's neuron repertoire. See Zahavi 220.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 247.

⁹⁹ Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* vi-viii.

¹⁰¹ Erika Rosenberg and Paul Ekman, "Facial Expression and Emotion,"
Neuroscience Year, Supplement 3 to the Encyclopedia of Neuroscience, (1993).
51-52.

¹⁰² Damasio 52.

¹⁰³ Keyzers, "A Touching Sight," 335-346.

Chapter Three: Renew, Repaint

Omnia mutantur, nihil interit (Everything changes, nothing perishes).
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 165

This chapter will present individual case studies of thirteenth century paintings that underwent extensive and premature renewals in the early Trecento, shortly after their completion in the late Dugento or early Trecento. The premature restorations were selective and only involved repainting certain portions of the painting. This chapter will examine six paintings that underwent early restorations and will address why only certain elements were designated for renewal.

The practice of updating and repainting images in the early Italian Renaissance can be traced to Byzantine traditions which made their way into Italy in the early thirteenth century. Byzantine culture began taking root in Italy after the conquest of Constantinople by the forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Icons were reproduced to represent the essential attributes of the old icon but the reproductions may often appear more modern. However, even with updating, the image is still understood and recognized as its spiritual model regardless of some changes. Inscriptions on restored icons often refer to these restorations as “renewals” which help viewers relate to and identify with represented figures in the painting. It is within this Byzantine tradition and context that the early Italian Renaissance renovations were understood and appreciated.¹

I will focus on works that were selectively altered in order, I will argue, to increase the image's efficacy by evoking a powerful empathic connection with the viewer. This chapter will examine six renovated paintings that served as significant devotional intermediaries for viewers. These paintings facilitated communication between the viewers and the actual figures portrayed in the images.

Each painting was prematurely and intentionally repainted; however, the restoration examples in this study were not executed to correct damage or deterioration. So, what motivated these interventions? It is interesting to consider and contemplate why only certain portions of the paintings were selectively and extensively repainted, especially since the alterations resulted in obvious departures from the traditional intention for sacred images to accurately depict, represent and reproduce known prototypes.²

The premature renovations in this study primarily concentrated on repainting faces and hands; the question as to why this was so begs to be asked. This chapter will explore this curiosity and propose an explanation as to why the faces and hands were critically important and therefore received the restorer's attention and focus. A case study approach, which follows, will be used to examine each of the prematurely repainted early Renaissance sacred images. I will first present an historical context to support the importance of selectively repainting faces and hands.

Evoking Empathy: Artistic Theory Rooted in Rhetoric

This chapter focuses on early Italian Renaissance sacred images that were selectively repainted in order, I argue, to deepen empathic connections between the image and the viewer. The renovated areas focused on repainting a figure's face and hands. This section will examine how artists evoke empathic reactions in viewers primarily in the manner in which they depict faces and hands. I contend that faces and hands are critical features and have the power to evoke empathic connections with viewers. Indeed, ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians understood the importance of using facial expressions and hand gestures to persuade their audience. Richard Brilliant writes that the incorporation of gesture in ancient Roman art is significant. Brilliant notes that the emphasis on the hands is found in early Etrusco-Italian art which he considers to be a distinctive Italo-Roman trait. He emphasizes that Roman art consistently strove to elicit the viewer's response by means of gesture.³ We see the importance of hand gestures in the rhetorical deliveries of Cicero and Quintilian, each of whom exploited the power of gestures and facial expressions to their advantage. Artistic theory and practice are interrelated with and reliant on rhetorical influences.

Early Italian Renaissance artistic theory is rooted in ancient Roman rhetorical texts such as, for example, the writings of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC-43 BC) and Marcus Fabius Quintilian (ca. AD 35-100). Both orators, Cicero and Quintilian wrote about the importance of effective speech delivery and the profound impact an orator can have on an audience. Much of their advice

emphasizes the orator's use of facial expressions and hand gestures, which also form the basis of early Renaissance artistic theory. As Caroline Eck notes, painters use gestures to convey emotions and interactions among figures, and to address the viewer.⁴

Quintilian specifically cites the importance of the use of eyes, the positioning of the head and hand gestures in persuading an audience. Facial expressions and hand gestures can evoke the emotions and empathy of viewers. Quintilian says that "We must identify ourselves with the persons for whom we complain...and must...for a brief space feel their suffering as though it were our own, while our words must be such as we should use if we stood in their shoes."⁵ In this statement, Quintilian captures the essence of empathy for others and how orators can elicit this feeling. Cicero, like Quintilian, also emphasized the eyes and the position of the head more than any other part of the body.⁶ Although orators were reliant on the power of speech, both Cicero and Quintilian understood the emotional power in unspoken facial expressions and hand gestures--the visual. The relationship between ancient rhetoric and the visual arts is inextricably connected in the respective power of each to evoke viewers' emotions and empathy.

Painters adopted these rhetorical practices in order to invite the viewer in and participate in the scene.⁷ In his 1435 treatise to artists, *De Pictura (On Painting)*, Leon Battista Alberti recommends that painters incorporate rhetorical practices in their artwork. *De Pictura* is the earliest book we have on the theory

of painting. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, information about artists' materials and techniques can be found in Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (ca. AD 77-79) and in Cennino d'Andrea Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte* (ca. 1390). Alberti is influenced by Pliny and Cennini and in *De Pictura* cites ancient stories from Pliny and recipe recommendations from Cennini. However, in *De Pictura*, Alberti positions his treatise in a theoretical framework and among the liberal arts. Alberti grounds his artistic theories not only in the context of art but also in the writings and practices of ancient Roman rhetoricians.

Alberti relies on both Cicero and Quintilian for his theories on painting and for his advice to artists. Indeed, in many sections of *De Pictura*, Alberti quotes Cicero and Quintilian almost verbatim when recommending how artists should render and convey certain emotions in their paintings. The ancient orators provided Alberti with an intellectual framework.⁸ For example, Alberti writes that figures' bodily movements should be related to the emotions you wish to express.⁹ Quintilian said "the key issue in stirring the emotions is this one thing: that we should ourselves be stirred."¹⁰ Similarly, Alberti recommends that painters need to convincingly convey emotions to their viewers. Alberti advises artists to consider the viewer and recommends that a figure "invites you with his own gestures to laugh together or cry in company."¹¹ In other words, the orator and the artist must make the audience feel what he feels.

Brian Vickers notes that John Spencer, in his 1966 translation of *De Pictura*, expresses surprise that Alberti turns to Roman rhetorical practice when

advising artists rather than emphasizing the importance of observing nature. However, I agree with Vickers that, by applying the ancient orators' advice to artists, Alberti was closely aligned with nature. Facial expressions, gestures and bodily movements were closely observed and noted.¹²

As noted, Cicero and Quintilian emphasize the need for orators to recognize the importance of facial expressions and hand gestures in making their arguments and winning the audience's support. The ancient orators acknowledge the power of the visual. Alberti praises the orator's epideictic skills and translates this oratorical delivery advice to the visual realm and to the painter. When Cicero and Quintilian write about the importance of facial expressions and hand gestures, they are writing about visual, not auditory, communications. It is the orator's visual signals and not his speech that have the most powerful impact on the audience. It is the dialogue that is silently communicated and conveyed by means of facial expressions and hand gestures that has most impact.

Relying on Cicero and Quintilian, Alberti adapts ancient rhetorical texts to painting and addresses how artists can emotionally win over their audience. Caroline Eck notes that Alberti even divides *De Pictura* into three books in the manner in which rhetorical handbooks were structured.¹³ However, unlike the rhetoricians who wanted to win the support of a judge or jury in a court of law, Alberti sought to win over a different kind of audience--the beholders of art. The painting should depict emotions that move the viewer to feel them too.

More than a century before Alberti published *De Pictura* in 1435, early Italian Renaissance restorers prematurely renovated sacred images and selectively repainted them. In all of these interventions, the repainted areas focused on the faces and hands. I argue that these late dugento and early trecento artists intuitively understood the lessons of the ancient orators and the persuasive power and importance of facial expressions and gestures. The faces and hands were repainted to heighten their empathic qualities and to increase the devotional efficacy of the image. A case study of some of these premature interventions follows.

Coppo di Marcovaldo's Madonna and Child Panels: Two Early Restorations

Two Madonna and Child panel paintings, painted by the artist Coppo di Marcovaldo (ca.1225-1276), were repainted shortly after their completion; Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone*, located in Siena and painted in 1261 (figs. 3 & 45), and his *Madonna and Child*, located in Orvieto and painted around 1265 (fig. 44). Each of these panel paintings was renovated only a few years after its completion and each premature renovation primarily focused on repainting the faces and hands of Mary and the Christ Child. Before closely looking at each of these two paintings and their early renovations, it is necessary to first examine the historical realities of Tuscany in the mid-Dugento and their connections with Coppo's painting of *Madonna del Bordone*. For it is essential to understand

Coppo's political involvements and entanglements in order to more fully appreciate the artist's motivation to paint the *Madonna del Bordone*.

As was detailed in Chapter Two of this study, Siena and Florence were engaged in a prolonged struggle that culminated in the Battle of Montaperti in 1260.¹⁴ The Sienese victory over Florence was unexpected and Siena attributed its good fortune to their city's dedication to the Virgin Mary and Her benevolent intercession on their behalf. As a result, it is understandable that, shortly after their victory over the Florentines, the Sienese expressed their gratitude to the Virgin and paid tribute to Her in a public and grand manner. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, it was after the Sienese victory at Montaperti that the old fashioned *Madonna degli Occhi Grossi* (fig. 2) was replaced by the newer *Madonna del Voto* (fig. 6), and placed in a new altar in the Siena Cathedral.

The Battle of Montaperti was likely also the motivation that initiated the painting of the *Madonna del Bordone* which was intended for Siena's Church of the Servi and which, like the *Madonna del Voto*, would honor and commemorate the Virgin Mary after the Sienese victory.¹⁵ But the artist who painted the *Madonna del Voto* was Sienese and Coppo di Marcovaldo, the painter of the *Madonna del Bordone*, was Florentine and a Sienese rival. Why would the Sienese choose a Florentine to paint a Madonna and Child panel that would commemorate their victory and honor the Virgin Mary to whom Siena is dedicated? How did this occur?

The earliest known mention of Coppo di Marcovaldo is listed in the Book of Montaperti under the date of February 11, 1260.¹⁶ Coppo's name is recorded with other Florentines who were conscripted for the battle with Siena. The artist is listed among the *pavesarii*, the shield bearers, which was a military role demanding no special skill.¹⁷ According to interpretations of extant contemporary documents, Coppo was captured, became a prisoner of war and apparently eventually gained his freedom by painting the large triumphant panel of the Virgin and Christ Child, known as the *Madonna del Bordone*, for the Sienese.¹⁸

The *Madonna del Bordone*

The *Madonna del Bordone* is a large panel painting that measures seven feet three inches tall and four feet wide.¹⁹ The panel's imposing size serves to amplify the painting's purpose to honor Mary and glorify Siena's success.²⁰ The painting, located in the church of the Servi in Siena, was likely commissioned by the Servite order and is signed by the Florentine painter Coppo di Marcovaldo and dated 1261²¹ (fig. 45). The Servite order, or Servants of Mary, was founded in Florence in the 1230s, but the order was not firmly established in Siena until the decade after 1250.²² Prior to having its own church, the Order resided in the church of S. Clemente but focused on building its own convent.²³ Yet even before their convent was built, the Servites commissioned the large image of the Virgin Mary known as the *Madonna del Bordone*. The commission testifies to the importance of Mary to the Servite Order which was known for its special devotion

to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, the Order's high altars were all dedicated to the Virgin and displayed Her image.²⁴

The *Madonna del Bordone* not only commands our attention because of its scale but also because it appeals to our emotions. Coppo's Madonna is warm and human in contrast to Byzantine prototypes and the frontal Hodegetria Madonna and Child formulaic type. James Stubblebine wrote that Coppo's "genius transformed the artistic formulas to which he fell heir--both Italian and Byzantine--to such an extent that it is often difficult to determine where he borrowed and where he invented."²⁵ Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone* embodies empathic qualities that evoke emotional feelings in the viewer. It is important to first explore these qualities in order to understand the power of Coppo's image and to appreciate the premature renovations that were implemented only a few years after the painting's completion.

Although Coppo's Madonna resembles the Byzantine Hodegetria type, here She is not seated in a frontal pose as is the traditional Hodegetria image. Instead, She is turned toward the Christ Child and looks out at the viewer. Another difference with the Hodegetria type is that Coppo's Mary does not point to the Christ Child but rather, She touches His foot.²⁶ Indeed, Mary sits on a throne that reminds us of Her majesty and role of *Maria Regina*. But despite Her royal presence, She is approachable and exudes a warmth and humanity to which viewers can relate. For example, She looks at us with a sideways glance that engages us while tenderly holding the Christ Child's right foot (fig. 46).

Viewers know that they are in the presence of the Virgin Mary, but can also identify with Her motherly and human qualities.

Coppo includes elements that allude to Mary's anticipated suffering and Christ's Passion which also provoke the viewer's empathic involvement. For example, Mary looks out at us with a knowing and prophetic look of the mourning to come (fig. 47). To further reinforce Mary's lament, Coppo depicts the Christ Child seated barelegged on a thickly folded cloth, both of which reference the Crucifixion. Coppo's painting is part of the *Eleousa* icon group, those images that show tenderness and mercy. The *Eleousa* functions in *prolepsis* and illustrates what is to come.²⁷

The barelegged Christ Child is associated in both the East and West with the Presentation in the Temple and recalls the story of Symeon (fig. 48) who prophesized Mary's grief and suffering.²⁸ Symeon was the first to warn the Virgin of her future trials and his prophecy to Mary is recorded in St. Luke (Luke 2:35): "And a sword will pierce through your own soul also."²⁹ The folded striped cloth upon which the Christ Child sits would have been identified and recognized as a shroud based on contemporary burial practice.³⁰ These visual references to the Passion heighten the viewer's empathic connection to the image.

Viewers could easily identify emotionally with the *Madonna del Bordone*. Because of this empathic connection, the image likely received viewers' first person appeals to the Virgin to intercede with Christ on their behalf when troubled by illness, anxiety or sin.³¹ Viewers could empathize with the suffering

in Mary's future and perhaps find comfort regarding their own misfortunes. This empathic connection was powerful and served to intensify people's relationship to the Church and the Liturgy. It is understandable that, if the *Madonna del Bordone* could be changed to make it even more empathic, the interventions would be well received. Indeed, shortly after Duccio's *Maesta* painting was installed in 1311, the *Madonna del Bordone* was selectively repainted.

The Early Renovation

In about 1315, an artist close to Duccio painted over the faces of the Virgin and the Child in the original painting.³² In 1948, the Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome examined and cleaned the painting and X-radiography confirmed that the painting was selectively repainted about forty or fifty years after it was originally painted (fig. 49). The X-radiograph also reveals that an under-veil was added to the Virgin's headdress surrounding the outline of her face. The draperies appear to be untouched and remain the same as in the *dugento* original.³³

The restorers in 1948-50 determined that none of the draperies, including the cloth-of-honor, the green and gold robe of the Christ Child, and the pink underdress of the Virgin, was retouched in the early fourteenth century. The heavy repainting on the blue mantle was estimated to date from the sixteenth century. The fact that the major thirteenth century repainting concentrated on the faces and hands is interesting and significant and will be the focus of this chapter as we explore other prematurely renovated sacred images.

The repainting was selective and therefore, the argument that the repainting was implemented in order to accommodate new changes in taste and bring the paintings up to date is insufficient.³⁴ This argument fails to explain why in each case the repainting focused on the faces of the Virgin and Child and other flesh areas, for example, hands.³⁵ Why were draperies, for example, that could have appeared outdated, not repainted? Cathleen Hoeniger suggests that the reason may have been religiously motivated. Since the repainting was executed shortly after the installation of Duccio's *Maesta*, which in her words, "immediately became the 'most important religious image in Siena,'" Hoeniger suggests that Duccio's work had a great impact and became associated with religious efficacy. She writes that the repainted images, by proxy, acquired some of the same power.³⁶ Hoeniger refers to the *Madonna del Bordone* and Guido da Siena's *Maesta*, which was also prematurely repainted in the style of Duccio and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Hoeniger's argument makes sense, but does not go far or deeply enough. Although, as she states, the early renovations may have been religiously motivated, it is curious that the focus was only on the faces and hands. What is the religious significance of repainting the faces and hands? What is special about the faces and hands? The answer is supported in modern empathy theory as was discussed in Chapter Two of this study; the brain responds powerfully and empathically to images of faces and hands. Duccio's paintings have the ability to activate viewers' empathic reactions to facial expressions and visually

arouse the viewer's sense of touch, both of which intensely heighten one's religious involvement.

Fortunately, the artist who repainted Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone* did so without removing the original painting. The repainted sections were thinly applied and easily transparent to X-radiography.³⁷ As a result, many details of the original faces of Coppo's Mary and Child are visible through X-radiographs (fig. 50). When one compares the physiognomy of Mary's repainted face, it is quite different from Coppo's original painting. The X-radiograph reveals facial features that are in keeping with Byzantine stylization.³⁸ For example, Mary's eyes are large, wide and accented with exaggerated arched brows. The upper and lower eyelids are each clearly demarcated by distinct outlines (fig. 51).

Using defined lines to create anatomical features is a technique that tends to render the individual elements as abstract and often geometric patterns. The features appear as surface patterns, not unlike a textile or mosaic, rather than three-dimensional shapes possessing volume and depth. For example, the outlined bridge of Mary's nose forms a triangular shape and the line that forms the right side of Her nose ends as a circle to become the nostril. Lips are also clearly outlined and seemingly applied to her face.

Hoенiger suggests that the trecento restorers added the under veil "to soften the outline" of Mary's face.³⁹ However, although the veil may soften the outline of Mary's face, I argue that the veil was added to cover the original and stylized rendering of Mary's right earlobe that is revealed in the X-radiograph.

The veil not only reflects similar veils in Duccio's Madonna paintings, but also helps to hide most of the original earlobe. After the trecento renovations, Mary's right ear is only partially visible. Although the veil's addition may have been motivated by Duccio's contemporary Madonna paintings, the veil offered a way to conceal the unnatural look of Mary's earlobe.⁴⁰

The X-radiographs of Coppo's original painting reveal his technique of outlining the facial features of Mary and the Christ Child. Coppo also likely employed outlines when rendering the figures' hands and feet. Mary's hands and the Child's hands and bare feet would have been abstractly conveyed and lack a sense of volume and the anatomical naturalism of simulated flesh. Viewers have a more difficult time identifying with the figures' humanity.

The *Madonna del Bordone* heads were repainted to reflect those of Duccio's *Maestà*⁴¹ (figs. 52 & 53). In contrast to the stylized and outlined features of Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone*, the facial features on the repainted faces are rendered with soft and modulated contours (figs. 47 & 54). Graduated shading is implemented to create the natural look of the nose, cheeks, chin, eyelids and mouth. The modeling, soft contouring and warm paint tones convey the suppleness of flesh and the features' rounded appearance. The figures appear more lifelike and human as a result of the renovations. For example, the facial features are shaded and modeled to suggest volume and three-dimensionality. The right side of Mary's nose is deeply shaded near the recessed area adjacent to the corner of Her right eye. The restorer highlights the

protruding areas, for example, the bridge and tip of the nose. However, the sides of the nose are gradually shaded and modulated to form subtle values as opposed to distinct tones. A similar technique is used to indicate how the recessed area below the eye gradually protrudes to become the highlighted cheek.

The figures' hands and the Child's feet are treated in a similar manner. For example, the fingers and toes are separated with shading rather than distinct lines (fig. 46). Even the fingernails are softly shaded rather than clearly outlined. Areas that protrude, such as the Child's thumb and chubby areas of His forearm are highlighted (fig. 55). The artist's use of modeling and highlighting helps to convey the sense of flesh and naturalism that heighten and deepen the viewer's empathic connection to the figures. The sense of touch is an important factor that activates the viewer's empathic connection to the figures. Consequently, the more natural the fingers appear, the more powerful the identity and connection will be.

It is significant that the renovated areas of this painting are selected and retained to the principal faces and hands. As cited earlier in this study, modern empathy theory supports the finding that people respond empathically to images they see and particularly to images of faces and those suggesting the sense of touch. The empathic region of our brain is activated when viewing faces as well as when viewing a gesture that implies touch. For example, we respond with

empathy and identify with Mary when we see Her touch Her Child's foot and when we see the infant touch the Virgin's veil.

It appears that only the principle figures' faces and hands, Mary's and the Christ Child's, were repainted. The angels that flank the enthroned Madonna and Child appear untouched and retain their dugento features of Coppo's original painting (fig. 56). I believe that other flesh areas of the Child were also repainted such as the infant's legs, feet and particularly the toes on the infant's right foot. These areas are modeled in a way that simulates the softness of natural flesh and, as a result, activates the viewer's empathic sense of touch.⁴²

A few years after painting the *Madonna del Bordone*, Coppo painted a Madonna and Child that was also repainted shortly after its completion. The repainting was executed before the end of the thirteenth century and only thirty years after its completion.⁴³ It is Coppo's *Madonna and Child* painting (ca. 1265), located in the Museum of the Duomo in Orvieto.

Coppo's Orvieto *Madonna and Child*

Like Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone*, Coppo's Orvieto panel was painted for the Servite Order and is also large in scale, measuring almost eight feet vertically and four and a half feet wide.⁴⁴ And, like Coppo's Siena panel, X-radiographs of the Orvieto *Madonna and Child* confirm that the principal heads, those of the Madonna and Child, were repainted. However, unlike the Siena panel, it seems that little remains of the original painted heads as a result of damage caused by fire.⁴⁵

In the Orvieto painting, Coppo covers the Child's legs to the ankles with draped fabric rather than depicting Him bare-legged as in the *Madonna del Bordone*. However, Mary is clothed in similar garments as she is seen in the Siena panel and She also sits on a lyre-backed throne. In both panels, the Child is seated on a striped and thickly folded cloth.⁴⁶ As in the Siena panel, the Orvieto painting alludes to Mary's future lament and suffering and the Passion. Both panels include prophetic references that viewers will recognize. For example, the folded cloth on which the Child sits refers to the shroud and Mary touches her son's foot referring to the location of the nail of the Crucifixion.

Both the Siena and Orvieto panels are extensions of the *Eleousa* type Madonna and Child painting in which Mary anticipates what is to come. Each painting contains symbolic elements that are capable of evoking viewers' emotional involvement and inviting devotional dialogue. Therefore, when the Orvieto panel needed restoration due to possible fire damage, it is understandable that the renovators were motivated to repaint the Madonna and Child in ways to enhance the painting's empathic qualities.

The Repainting

Recent analysis of the Orvieto panel in the 1970s by the Istituto Centrale Del Restauro in Rome reveals that most of the two principal heads were repainted over Coppo's original work. Using a scalpel and performed under a microscope, a small section of the repainted area was removed and examined.⁴⁷ The paint samples underwent chemical analyses and the results concluded that

the repainted areas contain layers of oil, egg yolk and animal glue. The results had an interesting impact on art historians. For example, many scholars, including Hoeniger, believe that, because of the presence of oil binders in the repainted areas of Coppo's Orvieto *Madonna and Child*, the repainted areas must have been executed as late as the eighteenth century at the time when many restorations occurred.⁴⁸ The belief is that, since oil binders were not typically used by thirteenth century artists, the restoration must have been late.

Joseph Polzer rejected the thirteenth century date of the Orvieto repainting not only because of the presence of oil binders, but also because of the repainting style. Polzer believed that the use of an oil medium would be unprecedented in the early thirteenth century and that the repainted areas follow the original style and are not innovative.⁴⁹

I do take issue with Polzer's ideas and first want to address the issue of the presence of oil binders in the repainted areas of the Orvieto panel. It is interesting that Polzer and others dismiss the idea that the Orvieto panel was repainted in the late Dugento because chemical analysis revealed the presence of oil media. Except for Alessandro Conti, whom I will discuss below, most art historians believe that the presence of an oil medium in the repainted areas indicates that it was executed at a later date. Indeed, the scientific evidence reveals the presence of oil paint and is based on examinations conducted by the Istituto di Istologia ed Embriologia in Rome, on behalf of the Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome.⁵⁰ Based on these scientific findings, the Istituto Centrale

concluded that it is reasonable to suppose that the interventions may be relatively recent. It is upon this information that many scholars believe that the repainting on the Orvieto panel must have been executed much later than the thirteenth century and probably as late as the eighteenth century.

The above conclusion is curious because Cesare Brandi, director of the Centro during the cleaning of *Madonna del Bordone* in 1949, wrote that Coppo used varnishes in the way that was described by the ancient writer Theophilus in his *Schedula*. Brandi says that Theophilus' text was well known and widely disseminated throughout Europe in the Middle Ages.⁵¹ If artists were familiar with Theophilus' text regarding the use of varnishes, it seems that they might be equally informed about his recipes for oil media. Ironically, Brandi's report supports Conti's argument that Coppo would have known about the use and application of oil binders that were described by Theophilus.

Indeed, I concur with Alessandro Conti who believes that the recent restoration reveals that the principal heads of Coppo's Orvieto *Madonna and Child* were completely repainted at the end of the thirteenth century by an artist who appears to have been influenced by the work of Cimabue. Evidence of Cimabue can be seen "in the neck of the Madonna, with its closed, harmonious outline resembling that of a Greek vase..."⁵² (figs. 57, 58 & 59). Again, I agree with Conti's stylistic analysis and find issue with Polzer. Conti observes Cimabuesque characteristics and changes in the repainted areas from the original painting, whereas Polzer sees nothing new in the repainted areas of the

Orvieto panel. Polzer states that the examples of the paintings that were repainted in the thirteenth century, and he cites Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del Bordone* as a prime example, reflect areas that were "made more modern in appearance."⁵³ But unlike these repainted and innovative paintings, Polzer writes, "The repainted faces on the Orvietan panel differ, however, in that they carefully follow the original style."⁵⁴

However, when one looks closely at the Orvieto panel, the faces of the Virgin and Child as well as their hands and the child's feet, especially His left foot and the very foot Mary is touching, one observes differences from Coppo's work (figs. 60, 61, 62 & 63). The repainted faces are modeled using the technique of graduated shading as opposed to outlining the individual features. Mary's neck is softly shaded to indicate recession and shadow as compared to the angel on the left, which appears original and lacking gradations of shading (figs. 64 & 65). The left hand angel also lacks the soft modeling of the side of the nose, the depression above the chin and the area above the top lip. These deepened areas are softly modeled in Mary's repainted face. Also, as Edward B. Garrison wrote about Cimabue's distinct style, "Observe only the nose!"⁵⁵ Compare Mary's repainted nose in the Orvieto panel to Her nose in Cimabue's *Virgin and Child* (figs. 66 & 67). The bridge of the nose is distinctive and almost duplicative as is the modeling of the sides of the nose, the nostrils, and the philtrum which is the vertical groove in the middle of and above the upper lip. Other resounding similarities are the manner in which highlighting is employed. For example, the

outer most area of the nose is heightened, in both the Cimabue and the repainted Orvietan nose, softly and without line. The highlighting on the outer edge of Mary's upper lip is also similar in both paintings (figs. 68 & 69).

Mary's fingers and the Christ Child's toes are also modeled and separated by using shading rather than lines (figs. 70 & 71). The fingers and toes are rendered with graduated hues that suggest supple flesh and rounded form. In the Orvieto panel, Mary's left hand is rendered softly and naturally and quite unlike the Coppoesque dugento style hand. Stubblebine visually captures the dugento style of painting hands with his description of Mary's right hand in Guido da Siena's *Maesta* in San Domenico, "with its long fingers tapering almost to points."⁵⁶ Mary's fingers in the Orvieto panel convey the shading and soft modeling that we see in Duccio and the late work of Cimabue (figs. 7, 72 & 73).

When we compare the Orvieto *Madonna* to Cimabue's *Madonna and Child* in Castelfiorentino, which Cimabue painted around 1280-89, one sees, as Conti wrote, the Cimabuesque influence in the repainted areas of the panel painting. The Orvieto panel (ca. 1270) was repainted only thirty to forty years later by an artist who could have easily seen the work of Cimabue. Indeed, Keith Christiansen suggests that the authorship of the Castelfiorentino *Virgin and Child* may be attributed jointly to both Duccio and Cimabue and, if so, the painting captures some of the humanity seen in Duccio's *Ruccellai Madonna*.⁵⁷

In addition, the Christ Child's hair in the Orvieto painting was also repainted to reflect Cimabue's style. If we examine the radiographs of the Child's

head, we notice that the original painting included tight curls in the area above His right ear.⁵⁸ However, the curls have been repainted and covered with smooth sections of hair similar to the locks we see in Cimabue's *Madonna Enthroned* (ca. 1260-80). Like the hair of the Child in the repainted Orvieto panel, Cimabue's Child has curls near the nape of His neck but soft sections of hair over the ear and not tight curls (figs. 74, 75 & 76).

When one looks closely at the Orvieto painting, one cannot help but recognize that the artist who repainted select areas of the painting did so in order to make innovative changes. Like the selectively repainted areas of the *Madonna del Bordone*, the repainted portions of the Orvieto painting reflect the humanity that was recognized in the art of Duccio and, in the case of the Orvieto panel, of Duccio and Cimabue.

Polzer argues that the repainting was executed for and motivated by "conscious historical accuracy."⁵⁹ Indeed, the conscious effort of restorers to achieve historical restoration to which Polzer refers is in keeping with the restoration practices of the eighteenth century. By arguing that the repainting of the Orvieto panel had to have been executed in the eighteenth century, as Polzer asserts, it makes sense that he also does not look closely at the repainted areas. Indeed, Polzer focuses most of his argument on the garments worn by Mary and the Child and not the faces. However, the hands, feet, necks, the Child's hair and possible portions of the angel in the upper right, were renovated to reflect the humanity reflected in Duccio's and Cimabue's work. Like the *Madonna del*

Bordone, the repainted areas focus on faces and hands which are the very areas that activate the empathic region of our brain and powerfully affect our emotional involvement with the image.

Guido da Siena's *Madonna and Child*

A Madonna and Child panel painting by Guido da Siena was also selectively repainted soon after it was completed. Guido's *Madonna and Child* panel was prematurely renovated within thirty to forty years after its completion. It is now located in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Guido, a leading Sienese painter during the 1260s and 1270s, originally painted the *Madonna and Child* in the mid-1270s for the high altar of the new church, San Domenico in Siena⁶⁰ (figs. 7, 72 & 73).

Although many scholars believe that the painting was executed for the high altar, Diana Norman questions this location. Norman suggests that the painting was originally placed on perhaps the choir screen or a wall that was more accessible to viewers since she believes that it was commissioned for devotional use.⁶¹ Norman's hypothesis is based on the importance that the Dominican Order placed on the custom of singing laude or hymns which often involved using a painted image of the Virgin and the Christ Child as a focal point for their collective singing.⁶² Indeed, Joanna Cannon presents detailed and compelling evidence that supports a subordinate location for Guido's panel as opposed to the high altar.⁶³ If Guido's panel was intended for a side altar, to honor the Virgin Mary and have the image be more accessible as an

intermediary for devotional prayer, this location further reinforces and supports the motivation to prematurely and selectively repaint the panel in order to enhance its efficacy and empathic power.

The early renovations reveal selective repainting and it is believed that a Sieneese artist close to Duccio executed the repainting.⁶⁴ However, prior to discussing the premature and selective repainting of the Palazzo Pubblico *Madonna and Child*, it is important to briefly explore the controversies surrounding the painting's date and its original composition.

The Date

The inscription and date 1221 on the painting have been long debated; however, on the basis of style, Guido's *Madonna and Child* painting was likely to have been painted sometime between 1270 and 1280. Although the painting is signed and dated 1221, X-radiographs confirm that the inscription is contemporary with the painting.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the 1221 date is at odds with the art historical scholarship on dugento painting which dates the Guido panel toward the latter part of the dugento period.⁶⁶ Therefore, the date of 1221 is a curiosity.

Scholars believe that, rather than indicating the date of authorship, the 1221 date likely refers to the year of the death of St. Dominic, the patron saint of the Church of San Domenico for which the painting was made.⁶⁷ Alexander Nagel argues that the 1221 date should indeed be seen in a larger context and perspective and suggests that it was in that year that a donation was made for the first foundation of the church of San Domenico, that of the San Gregorio.⁶⁸

Indeed, the importance of connection and legacy supports the Tuscan practice of replacing sacred images for newer versions. Also, the replacement image appeared different from the image it replaced. The 1221 date in effect acknowledges an update or renovation while at the same time referencing its tradition and legacy.⁶⁹

The Composition

Guido's enthroned *Madonna and Child* painting is similar in composition to the two Coppo panels discussed above in that each painting draws on the Byzantine Hodegetria prototype. Each of the panels also differs from the Byzantine type in that both Coppo and Guido humanize the figures and depict the Christ Child as a playful baby rather than as a stiff manikin. Also like Coppo's panels, Guido's painting is large in scale. Including the pediment, Guido's Palazzo Pubblico *Madonna and Child* measures approximately twelve feet vertically and over six feet wide.

An additional curiosity is the pediment that is situated above the rectangular panel. Guido's *Madonna and Child* panel and its pediment have been in the Sala del Mappamondo of the Palazzo Pubblico since 1888.⁷⁰ The pediment depicts a half-length figure of Christ in the center, flanked by a half-length angel on either side. Many scholars believe that the *Madonna and Child* panel was originally the center portion of an altarpiece that was flanked by a number of scenes from the life of Christ.⁷¹ However, there are no hinge marks present to indicate the attachment of shutters on the rectangular panel, and none

of the reconstructed schematic diagrams convinces scholars to agree on Guido's original design intentions.⁷²

The size of Guido's *Madonna and Child* continues the tradition of large-scale altarpieces, similar to Coppo's two Madonna and Child paintings discussed above. However, according to Stubblebine, Guido introduces, for the first time in Italian painting, the cusped arch above the enthroned Madonna, which is used in all subsequent examples, with the exception of the *Madonna* in the Krakow Tabernacle.⁷³ Guido also introduces angels in the spandrels above the cusped arch, who appear aware of the Madonna and Child below. The pediment is an additional element not present in Coppo's panels but seems to be original to the panel since vertical cracks on the left side of the rectangular panel seem to line up with a similar crack on the pediment above (fig. 7).

Although Guido's monumental *Madonna and Child* was perhaps influenced by Coppo's large scale Madonna and Child paintings, as well as his incorporation of the highbacked throne and the Madonna's white veil, Stubblebine insightfully notes that, with Guido, "much of what we mean when we say 'Sienese' took root in his paintings." Stubblebine refers to Guido's refinement and the delicacy that permeates his work. For example, Guido covers the surface of his gold ground halos with intricate patterns of tooling.⁷⁴

The Repainting

A Sienese who apparently was a Ducciesque master was commissioned to repaint Guido da Siena's *Madonna and Child* panel when the painting was

approximately only thirty years old.⁷⁵ There was little attempt by the trecento artist to save any of the original painting, for according to modern x-radiographs performed on the painting, the tempera paint on the faces of the Virgin and the Christ Child was scraped off the wood panel and new gesso was applied to create a new ground.⁷⁶ The repainting was done on this new gesso preparation and in some areas, such as the neckline of the Virgin, the boundary between the original painting and the repainted areas, can be relatively easily detected because the new ground is not consistently and smoothly joined to the original gesso.⁷⁷ Gesso is a mixture of gypsum or chalk mixed with an animal glue solvent and similar to plaster of Paris. Cennini gives detailed instructions in his // *Libro dell'Arte* about how to prepare and apply the gesso ground to wood panels.⁷⁸ The gesso is applied in several coats allowing each layer to dry before applying the next. It is recommended that the gesso ground layers be applied without interruption in order to achieve a smooth and seamless surface. Therefore, it is understandable that the trecento artist, regardless of his mastery, would be challenged to seamlessly join his new ground with Guido's adjacent dugento application.

Like Coppo's *Madonna and Child* restorations, Guido's *Madonna and Child* painting was renovated by selectively choosing areas to repaint. Also like the Coppo restorations, the repainted areas of Guido's panel include the faces of the Virgin and Child, their hands and some flesh areas of the Christ Child. The faces of the two angels in the pediment were also repainted.⁷⁹ Major attention

was focused on repainting the faces, hands and flesh areas of the principal figures; however, a new light colored veil was added around the Virgin's face and a small portion of the left side of the throne was repainted to reflect the trecento style. The right side of the throne still remains the original dugento style with leaves and protruding horizontal bands.⁸⁰

It is significant that the draperies were not touched. The repainting focused on those areas with which viewers empathically connect. Like the Coppo premature renovations, the Guido panel was repainted to achieve the maximum impact of emotional and empathetic involvement on the part of the viewer. Not only are these areas the ones that connect with viewers through expression and gesture, but they are the very areas of the body that activate the empathic region of our brain. Therefore, it is the faces and hands that are most important. Hoeniger notes that the early restorations "can only be fully comprehended within the more ancient Byzantine tradition of the renewal of devotional icons."⁸¹ This Byzantine tradition of repainting appears to have been absorbed in Italy as evidenced by the premature repainting. I agree with Hoeniger but believe that what we now know about modern empathy theory more fully illuminates the motivation behind these early interventions.

It is interesting that icons were traditionally covered with decorative metal plates that were intended to protect the painted surface of the holy images. However, it is significant to note that the covers all had openings cut in the metal to expose the figure's faces, hands, and feet. It appears that the need for

viewers to see and emotionally connect with the holy figure's essential body parts was paramount.

Indeed, the practice to renovate images is integral to the image's functionality. The motivation to restore images so that they better connect with their viewers supports the tenants of modern empathy theory. Guido's *Madonna and Child* altarpiece was renovated shortly after Duccio completed his *Maesta* of 1311 and we clearly can see the Ducciesque style in the face of Guido's repainted Madonna. The Istituto Centrale in Rome, which conducted the 1949 restoration, was unable to entirely restore Guido's original work since much of the original paint was scraped off and removed from, for example, the face of Mary and the Christ Child. Therefore, we can compare the repainted faces with Duccio's *Maesta* and appreciate the close resemblance. For example, when we compare the faces of Mary, we see the soft modeling for which Duccio is known. We see this gradual modeling along the side of the nose, the groove above the upper lip, below the lower lip and under the chin that depicts the recessed area where the neck begins (figs. 77 & 78).

The similarity is most striking in how the nose and eyes are rendered. The nose in the Guido repainting is almost identical to the Duccio, including the length, the shape of the nostrils and especially the bridge. The Ducciesque artist accurately replicates the highlighting on each area of the nose and imitates the way Duccio merges the upper bridge of the nose with soft modeling that becomes the arch of Her upper eye socket.

The eyes are also imitated in detail. For example, the Ducciesque master positions the iris and pupil of Mary's right eye exactly like the Duccio. The artist also replicates the proportions of the white of the eye to mimic that of Duccio's. The amount of white in the inner corner of the eye is exactly the same as is the amount of white in the outer corner of the eye and even the slight slice of visible white under the iris is replicated. The upper and lower eyelids that form the shape of the eyeball also conform to the Duccio (figs. 79 & 80).

But the artist does not stop with the nose and eyes. The mouth is also replicated. The fullness and shape of both the upper and lower lip is a perfect duplication. And like the nose, attention is also given to imitate the highlight on the outer edge of the upper lip as well as the shadows that form the recessed areas and that simulate the supple look of natural flesh. Highlights and shadows on the protruding part of the chin and the tip of the nose also contribute to the natural appearance of flesh.

In addition, there is incredible attention given to the brushwork of Duccio. When one looks closely at the brush strokes on the Virgin's face in Duccio's *Maestà*, one is struck by the artist's awareness of the importance and impact of the direction of brush strokes. Duccio applies the tempera paint with strokes that conform to and follow the shape, volume and form of what he paints. For example, when one looks at the Virgin's right cheek, one sees paint applied with brush strokes that gently curve to conform to the contour of Her face and then turn as the strokes need to form the smaller curve under Her chin. Different

brushstrokes are needed for the nose. Here, the trecento artist, like Duccio, applies the paint with straight strokes to form the more linear side and flat bridge of the nose. However, it appears that the paint on the tip of the nose is applied in a circular motion to render and simulate its rounded shape.

The attention to Mary's face and the desire to humanize Her as in Duccio's *Maestà*, is also evident in the Christ Child's face. His nose is modeled softly and the nostrils are rendered with brush strokes that conform to and mimic the direction and shape of each form. The Child is given chubby cheeks like the Child in Duccio's *Maestà* and like the Duccio, this Child's upper lip and chin are created by using soft shadows and highlights. Like the Madonna, the Child's jaw line blends gradually as it recedes into the neck (fig. 81).

According to the 1949 restoration report conducted by the Istituto Centrale in Rome on the Guido da Siena Palazzo Pubblico *Madonna and Child* painting, in addition to the faces of the Mary and the Christ Child, other areas critical to empathic activation were also repainted by the trecento artist. For example, Mary's and the Child's hands were repainted and other flesh areas of the Child, such as His shoulders, legs and feet were also repainted.

Modern restorers removed the trecento repainted areas to reveal Guido's original dugento work. However, since the dugento faces of Mary and the Christ Child were thoroughly scraped and all paint removed at the time of repainting by the Ducciesque artist, the trecento repainted faces needed to remain. The restorers were able to remove the trecento repainting of the hands and the flesh

areas of the Christ Child. For the most part, Guido's painting is seen today in its dugento form but with repainted trecento faces. Mary's restored hands appear incongruous with Her Ducciesque face. Mary's right hand is characteristic of Guido's style and depicts long slender fingers that end in tapers and that lack volume.⁸²

A new light colored veil was added to the Virgin by the trecento repainting. Although one could argue that this added element does not affect or activate the empathic area of our brain, I argue that it contributes to the powerful empathic effect of the work. The veil frames and in effect isolates Mary's face, enabling the viewer to focus solely on Her face. The Ducciesque painter assiduously replicates Duccio's veil in his *Maestà*. If one compares the two veils, they appear almost identical, for example, where the draped curve of the veil touches Mary's neck and the pattern and direction of its folds (figs. 79 & 80).

The added trecento veil remains today and was not removed by the modern restorers. Although their goal was to restore Guido's original dugento work, the added veil is adjacent to the repainted face and since nothing remains of the original dugento face, I suspect the restorers decided to keep the trecento veil. As mentioned in the endnote above, restoration practices change. It was a natural part of the restoration practice during the early Trecento to repaint and renew images. However, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, rather than repainting images, restorers began reframing images in order to more effectively

connect with viewers. The next chapter in this study examines some reframing that occurred in order to increase viewers' empathic connection to sacred images.

The Ducciesque artist also repainted the angels' faces that flank the Redeemer.⁸³ It is curious that none of the six angels in either spandrel was repainted. I suspect that the spandrel angels, although engaged with the Virgin and Child below, are not engaged with the viewer and therefore, have little empathic impact. The angels on the pediment, however, are larger, have an important position next to the Redeemer and look out at the viewer. Their empathic impact would be important. Modern restorers were able to remove the repainted face of the angel on the right to reveal the dugento face; however, the angel on the left appears in the Ducciesque repainted style since the original paint had been scraped and removed⁸⁴ (figs. 82, 83 & 84).

The repainting of Guido's *Madonna and Child* painting can be seen in the context of the need to increase the efficacy and empathic power of the image and, as a result, to venerate the Dominican Order itself since the panel is thought to be originally executed for the church of San Domenico.⁸⁵ Interestingly, a portrait of St. Dominic, by an artist in the circle of Guido da Siena, reinforces the need and importance to honor the Dominican Order and increase empathic connections to sacred images. This portrait of St. Dominic (ca. 1240-1280) was repainted multiple times shortly after its completion. What is noteworthy, and which reinforces modern empathy theory, is that the face and hands of St. Dominic were repainted.

Similarly, repainting was executed on a St. Francis panel portrait that, like the St. Dominic panel, was painted in the mid to late Dugento and repainted only a few years after its completion. Both panels are portraits of patron saints and the repainting seems to have been motivated by the need to present a more human and empathic representation of the saint. Each portrait's repainting reflects the changes that we see at this time in the art of Cimabue and Coppo di Marcovaldo. The repainted images of these patron saints appear more individualized and communicate a sense of humanity that evoke and activate viewers' empathic connection.

Circle of Guido da Siena, *St. Dominic*

According to the Provincia Romana in Rome in 1247, a Dominican administrative division, priors were encouraged to have an image of St. Dominic displayed in their house. This recommendation may attest to the belief in the power of art to promote Dominic's cult. However, as Cannon notes, one needs to question how successful this request was since there are only three extant thirteenth century panel paintings of St. Dominic.⁸⁶ One of these paintings is the Fogg *St. Dominic* (fig. 85).⁸⁷

The *St. Dominic* panel, located in the Fogg Museum at the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is thought to be a fragment from a Siene work that was painted only a few years after St. Dominic's canonization in 1233. Professor Millard Meiss along with some of his graduate students at Harvard University in the mid-1950s studied the *St. Dominic*

panel under the supervision of Elizabeth Jones, the chief conservator of the Fogg Museum at the time. Their findings were published and, based on their analysis, they believe that the original painting was executed between 1235 and 1240 or between 1235 and 1250.⁸⁸ It appears that the gabled panel was cut at the bottom and that originally the saint was depicted full length but now is seen in three-quarter length.⁸⁹ Their study suggests that originally the *St. Dominic* image may have been the center of a larger altarpiece and flanked by side panels that were glued to the large panel of the saint, although no evidence exists to support this hypothesis.⁹⁰

The Repainting

The Fogg *St. Dominic* holds a book in his proper left hand and raises his right hand to show his open palm to the viewer as a gesture of witness.⁹¹ Interestingly, the panel was repainted several times shortly after its completion; the original face appears to have been repainted two times over the original paint layer and the saint's hands were repainted once. As a result, X-radiographs of the panel reveal three faces and two sets of hands. Dominic's tunic also received some repainting as well at that time. The original gilded halo appears to have had ornate pounced decorations added during the fourteenth century (fig. 86 & 87).

The saint's repainted face and hands, like the works discussed above, can be seen in the context of increasing an empathic connection with the viewer. Cannon notes that the repainting of the *St. Dominic* portrait, unlike Guido's

repainted *Madonna and Child* painting in San Domenico, does not indicate a modernization of the face and hands.⁹² However, I argue that the changes are critical and increase the empathic connection. The Fogg *St. Dominic* face was repainted twice and the raised right hand repainted once in order to convey, in each renovation, the saint's human qualities. He looks out at us and projects his humanity and sympathy.

Meiss and his students created a diagram that clearly illustrates and differentiates the original painted face from the two subsequent repainted versions (fig. 88). In the original face, the saint is centered on the panel with his facial features symmetrically positioned. His nose is in the middle of the panel and equally divided on a vertical axis. His pose is frontal and he looks straight out at the viewer. Indeed, his eyes stare ahead with a fixed gaze. His left and right eyes are identical in shape and size and each eye is divided equally in the amount of white, iris and pupil that we see. The pupil of each eye is a horizontal elliptical shape and not round which is characteristic of the early Dugento. Also characteristic of this time, the pupil is entirely surrounded by the white of the eye.⁹³ The original *St. Dominic* image is psychologically removed and remote from the viewer.

With the first repainted face, executed around 1260, the artist slightly lowers the facial features, but the most significant change is accomplished by the artist moving the facial features off center and to the left.⁹⁴ *St. Dominic's* face is no longer facing frontal but is depicted more in a three-quarter view. This is a

critical change and reflects the new painting style of Coppo di Marcovaldo. It is Coppo, according to Stubblebine, who abandons the traditional frontal pose of the Virgin and we see a similar side glance in the Fogg *St. Dominic* painting.⁹⁵ We also see Coppo's influence in the deeply set eyes and how they look to the right rather than straight ahead. These minor alterations have a major impact on the empathic connection of the image to the viewer. A second repainting, and the one we see today (executed ca. 1280-85), is attributed to a follower of Guido da Siena (figs. 89, 90 & 91).

The Empathic Effect

The first repainted St. Dominic appears more human, more natural and less robotic than the original. His eyes appear more natural. The pupils are now round and the amount of white that shows around the iris is proportional. The repainted portrait seems sympathetic and approachable to viewers who want to engage with the image in their devotional prayers.

The final repainting raises the eyes slightly to align more naturally with the ears. Also, in the version we see today, the artist models the side of the nose, shading it and highlighting the bridge to give this feature volume and dimension. The lips are also given additional fullness and rendered with gradations of shading and highlights. These changes humanize the portrait and make the saint more accessible and approachable to viewers.⁹⁶

The repainted St. Dominic face achieves a verisimilitude that is lacking in the original image. However, although the repainted St. Dominic does convey a

more realistic and natural look that helps promote empathic connections with viewers, it is not verisimilitude alone that strengthens this empathic bond. Verisimilitude alone will not necessarily forge an empathic connection. An empathic connection between the image and the viewer involves more than merely making the figure look real. Verisimilitude needs to be combined with a sense of humanity and these human qualities are communicated in St. Dominic's repainted face and hand, with eyes that connect with the viewers, a face that gently tilts with a natural pose and with a hand that almost begs to be touched.

Dominic's raised hand was repainted to give it a more natural look and in turn, increase its empathic power. The original hand lacks volume and dimension. It appears flat and stencil-like. The fingers are separated and unrelated to each other and lack contour. Each finger is unnaturally tapered to a sharp point. The repainted hand is shaded to give the open palm dimension and the look of natural flesh. The fleshy portion of the thumb convincingly protrudes more in the foreground as compared to the rest of the hand. And, the fingers are softened to resolve in rounded tips as opposed to the sharp knife blade appearance of the original. The saint's hand gestures to us and our sense of touch is empathically activated (figs. 92, 93 & 94).

The repainted versions emphasize Dominic's human qualities. Indeed, even the original portrait nods to what was known about the saint's actual appearance. There is an eyewitness description of St. Dominic's physical appearance recorded by Cecilia Caesarini, a nun and contemporary of the saint.

Indeed, she was a young woman when she personally received her Dominican habit from St. Dominic. In her account of St. Dominic's miracles, Sister Cecilia describes the saint's physical appearance:

I would describe the appearance of Blessed Dominic in the following way. He was slender and of middle height. His face was handsome and somewhat ruddy. His hair and beard were reddish hair and his eyes beautiful. From his brow and eyes emanated a kind of radiance which drew everyone to revere and love him. He was always cheerful and gay, except when he was moved to compassion at the sight of someone's affliction. His hands were long and well-formed and his voice was of a pleasing resonance. He was never bald, though he wore the full corona, which was sprinkled with a few grey hairs.⁹⁷

Interestingly, x-radiographs conducted on the Fogg *St. Dominic* reveal that the original hair was painted red. His hair in the final version that we see today is also red.⁹⁸ The need to replicate Dominic's actual physical appearance in the painting may connect to the Byzantine belief that the image or icon derives its authority from the authentic appearance of the holy person.⁹⁹ We see this adherence to authenticity in the original painting as well as in the two repainted versions. The saint is depicted with red tonsured hair and bearded.

However, Cannon notes that conflicting descriptions of Dominic exist. In the Fogg panel, Sister Cecilia's reference to the saint's red hair is depicted in both the original and repainted versions.¹⁰⁰ It does not appear that there is a consistent portrait type for St. Dominic, but what does seem important was for the repainted versions to humanize the saint and heighten his empathic qualities. In the version that we see today, the saint is more accessible and approachable to worshippers.

The Gold Leaf Background

The background of the *St. Dominic* panel received additional restoration work in the fourteenth century.¹⁰¹ The original gold leaf background was likely plain and unadorned with tooling. In his 1929 article, George L. Stout notes that, although stamps were used for leather and metal, tooling of gold leaf was not done until the early Trecento.¹⁰² Stout's hypothesis is reinforced by Mojmir Frinta's 1971 article that identifies the artist of the Fogg *St. Dominic* tooling to be Ugolino di Nerio (ca. 1320-25).¹⁰³

It appears that the tooling was executed after and later added around the original painting since there is a gap and no decorative tooling above St. Dominic's left shoulder. This gap is a result of the repainting since the saint's hood originally filled in that space (figs. 85, 86 & 95). When the portrait was repainted, the hood was altered to remove its pointed extension and when removed, revealed the original plain gold leaf background. It is reasonable to assume that the incised star on the left portion of the gold leaf background is

original.¹⁰⁴ Although he does not specifically reference the star, Stout does mention that in the early dugento gold leaf was often laid over relief or incised work¹⁰⁵ (figs. 85 & 96).

The later additional and highly decorative retooling further increased St. Dominic's empathic power. If repainting the saint's face and hand helped viewers more easily identify with St. Dominic's humanity, retooling the gold leaf background highlighted his divinity. As evidenced by the repainted Madonna and Child paintings, the artists who renovated the *St. Dominic* panel successfully combined in one figure both the human and spiritual qualities.

St. Dominic was a contemporary of St. Francis but while there was apparently no adhered portrait type for St. Dominic, there seems to be some consistency apparent in the images of St. Francis. He is usually depicted with dark hair and the signs of the stigmata.¹⁰⁶ The two saints' personalities differed as well. St. Dominic was quiet and retiring compared to the charismatic personality of St. Francis.¹⁰⁷ However, a commonality exists between the repainted image of the Fogg *St. Dominic* and the repainted image of Margarito d'Arezzo's *St. Francis*. Each portrait was selectively and prematurely repainted in order to increase its empathic effect on worshippers.

Margarito d'Arezzo, *St. Francis*

What we know and how much we know about St. Francis varies considerably from our knowledge of St. Dominic. The early biographies of St. Dominic describe a self-effacing and quiet person who shied away from

attention.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps his retiring nature helps explain why there are so few single portraits of the saint since his image might invite devotion and worship of him personally.

However, in striking contrast to St. Dominic's personality, the early biographies of St. Francis portray the saint's extraordinary and vivid personality and differ substantially from the retiring life of St. Dominic, who was Francis' contemporary. St. Francis was born to privilege but gave up this life for one of poverty and service to God and, according to Rosalind Brooke, "Francis was no self-effacing saint. He had a message he thought it vital to put across."¹⁰⁹

Indeed, St. Francis and the Order that he founded appear to have fostered a cult of his personality.¹¹⁰ And rather than a dearth of St. Dominic portraits, there is an abundant number of St. Francis portraits to promote him and his message. After his death, several altarpieces were painted to venerate the saint and his life as well as full-length portraits depicting the saint alone.¹¹¹ One full-length portrait by Margarito d'Arezzo depicts St. Francis alone and today is located in the Museo Medievale e Moderno in Arezzo. Margarito's Arezzo *St. Francis* portrait was prematurely and selectively repainted soon after it was painted.¹¹² This painting will be explored in this chapter section (fig. 97).

As mentioned above, St. Francis' personality was charismatic and his image inspired viewers' veneration. The saint's image was in demand by churches and monasteries in Italy as well as in people's homes.¹¹³ To amplify the impact that these single saint portraits held for the lay public, Marion Habig

includes a story from St. Bonaventure's *Legend of St. Francis* recounting a miracle that occurred after St. Francis' death. According to St. Bonaventure, a woman living in Rome had a painting of St. Francis in her home but the artist had omitted the saint's stigmata. However, according to the story, one day, the stigmata miraculously appeared on the painting.

Soon after St. Francis died, his life was recorded by Thomas of Celano, the saint's first biographer. In his *First Life*, Thomas describes St. Francis' physical appearance:

Francis was a most eloquent man, a man with a cheerful and kindly face; he knew nothing of cowardice, and was devoid of arrogance. He was of medium height, inclining to shortness; his head was of normal size and round, his face rather long and prominent, his forehead unlined and narrow; his eyes were of average size, black, with a frank look; his hair was dark, his eyebrows straight, his nose even, thin and straight; his ears were pointed, but small; his temples smooth. The words he spoke were kindly, but could be fiery and penetrating. His voice was powerful, but melodious, clear and resonant. His teeth were close-set, even and white; his lips were delicate and thin, his beard was black, and on the sparse side, his neck slender, his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands slender, with long, tapering fingers and nails; his legs were thin, his

feet tiny; his skin delicate, his flesh very spare. He wore rough clothing, he slept very little, he gave with great generosity.¹¹⁴

Although Thomas knew Francis well, his description is unlike most portraits that we have of the saint.¹¹⁵ Andre Vauchez, in his book *Francis of Assisi*, notes that Thomas stood next to Francis several times between the years 1215 and 1221, and therefore could realistically and reliably judge his height.¹¹⁶ However, it is reasonable to imagine that a contemporary physical description would influence an artist's depiction of the portrait. Rona Goffen reminds us that the thirteenth century eyewitness account of St. Dominic by Sister Cecile may indeed be reliable.¹¹⁷ Perhaps we can, albeit with a grain of salt, view the Margarito *St. Francis* with Thomas' description in mind.

Thomas of Celano's description was written in Latin and not in the vernacular. As Vincent Moleta notes in his book, *From St. Francis to Giotto*, these writings were intended for the Order and not the lay community. The laity was able to visualize St. Francis and his miracles from the abundant number of depicted images of the saint in churches and shrines.¹¹⁸

It has been suggested that the Arezzo portrait was used as a prototype and may have been originally created for the Franciscan shrine, La Verna, a monastery near Arezzo where St. Francis received his stigmatization.¹¹⁹ Indeed, several subsequent portraits of St. Francis by Margarito d'Arezzo appear to be based on the Arezzo *St. Francis*.¹²⁰ St. Francis acknowledged the value of

image worship and in fact, when worshipping in front of an image of Christ, the image came alive and spoke to Francis.¹²¹ A small painting by Duccio which includes three Franciscan patrons kneeling in devotion to the enthroned Mary and Child reinforces St. Francis' relationship to images¹²² (figs. 98 & 99).

The Repainting

Since paintings appear to be an integral part of Franciscan devotion, it is critical that the images possess the essential qualities that will powerfully impact and affect viewers. In the case of St. Francis, his colorful and emotionally contagious personality developed a cult that motivated worshippers and friars alike to have access to his image for veneration. Images of St. Francis began to proliferate in the mid Dugento and, at this time, these portraits depicted the saint as a living person. The portraits of St. Francis by Margarito d'Arezzo depict an animated St. Francis and one that reflects the memories of those who knew him.¹²³ St. Francis' expressive animation is conveyed in the Arezzo portrait, for example, in the way the saint stands in a relaxed *contrapposto* pose and the naturalistic rendering of anatomy, revealing the saint's right knee beneath his robe.

I suspect that Margarito's Arezzo *St. Francis* panel portrait was repainted in order to increase its empathic and expressive qualities and therefore, its religious efficacy. Although X-radiography indicates that most of the image was retouched at an early date except for the saint's proper left hand that holds a book and his two feet, it is the saint's face and his proper right hand that received

extensive repainting and attention. X-radiographs reveal that the saint's facial features were significantly changed from the original (figs. 100 & 101). St. Francis' facial changes may have been made to conform to the contemporary written accounts of the saint's appearance. In addition to the face, the saint's robe and hood were significantly repainted but I contend that these garments were repainted in a manner that focuses the viewer's attention on the face.

X-radiographs as well as microscopic examinations of the paint reveal that Margarito's signature is original and left intact after the renovation. I agree with Hoeniger's assessment that the repainted sections were executed either by one of Margarito's students or by someone in the artist's shop, and disagree with A.M. Maetke who attributes the repainting to a Florentine artist. Hoeniger notes that the repainted areas closely conform to Margarito's style. Also, the fact that Margarito's signature was left intact after the repainting reinforces the argument that the repainting was done by either Margarito himself or an artist in his shop who supports Margarito's name and reputation.¹²⁴

When we compare the saint's repainted face with the X-radiographs showing the original painting underneath, the first impression is that the differences are slight and lack significance. One can perhaps dismiss the alterations as minor. However, I argue that, upon close examination and comparison, the changes are significant and have a major impact on viewers. Furthermore, it does not seem likely that these premature renovations would

have been executed if they were thought to go unnoticed or not be needed.

What were the changes and what impact did these changes have on viewers?

X-radiographs reveal that St. Francis' original face was painted in a frontal position to the viewer. The saint's facial features were symmetrically positioned, with the saint's nose centered on the vertical axis of the face, therefore equally dividing his face to the right and left of his nose. Horizontally, the saint's features are positioned high on his face.

The Empathic Effect

Much of the saint's face was repainted and the changes that were made affect the face's frontality, feature placement and proportions. These alterations greatly impact the viewer's empathic relationship with the image. In the original painting, the saint's eyes are large and turn upward and the original nose was shorter.¹²⁵ The repainted eyes are smaller, lower on the face and no longer look upward. Instead, the saint's eyes glance downward and slightly to the right of the viewer. The saint appears more approachable and of this world. Prior to the repainting, the saint's upward glance communicated a detached and spiritual figure and one associated more with the ethereal and spiritual realms and not one with whom viewers could easily relate and identify. His glance and demeanor were directed not to the viewer, but to God and the spiritual realm. The original eyes emphasized a spiritual connection and called attention to the large proportion of white under the iris as the saint's eyes rolled upward into his head. His eyes were not only exaggerated in size, but also in their depth. The x-

radiographs of the original reveal eye sockets that appear unnaturally deep and cavernous and those of a suffering, emaciated ascetic. These were not the eyes of a real human being with whom viewers could confer and seek comfort.

By repainting the eyes smaller, lower and with a downward glance, the saint becomes someone to whom viewers can relate. His eyes look like the eyes of someone with whom we can converse. The proportion of visible white areas of the eyes is natural and reflects what we know. St. Francis, although spiritual and divine, is now portrayed as a relatable human being. He is someone to whom we can talk and seek comfort. He is there for us.

The repainted face also reflects slight changes that affect the proportions. For example, the saint's nose is lengthened and the face is ever so slightly turned to the right and less frontal than in the original. The saint's nose was shorter in the original which resulted in an unnatural and disproportional amount of space between the tip of the nose and the bottom of the chin. By lowering the eyes and lengthening the nose, the facial features present a more natural and realistic portrait.

The saint's proper right hand was extensively repainted as well. On close examination, it appears that the repainted hand is not fundamentally different in position, gesture and general structure of the original as seen in the X-radiograph. However, there is a plasticity and modeling of the repainted hand that does not appear on the saint's proper left hand nor on his two feet, none of which was repainted. The repainted hand is modeled and shaded to convey fullness and

flesh. This is particularly evident on the fleshy part of the palm at the base of the thumb known as the thenar. The repainted palm and thenar are deeply modeled to appear soft and three dimensional as it projects into the painting's foreground and faces the viewer.

The deep modeling used to create the contours of the palm of the saint's right hand contributes to its lifelike appearance and elicits a sense of tactility that heightens the power and significance of this blessing gesture. The viewer can virtually feel the softness of St. Francis' flesh as he raises his palm in blessing. The stigma takes center stage on the saint's newly repainted and naturalistic hand. One wonders if the stigmata were added during the repainting. The restoration report does not reference any repainting on the saint's proper left hand and feet.¹²⁶

However, I suggest that the stigmata on the left hand and foot were added later during the repainting or at the minimum, enhanced. When one compares the stigmata of this work with other St. Francis paintings by Margarito, the Arezzo *St. Francis* stigmata appear more pronounced and obvious. It must be noted that at some point subsequent to its premature repainting, the panel suffered damage to the saint's proper left foot which now has no visible stigma. It is uncertain whether the original painting included stigmata or, if it did, whether the stigmata were smaller and less pronounced. X-radiographic examination is limited in what it can tell us and would probably not pick up the stigmata's brownish paint color

but tends only to reveal metallic pigment layers, for example, lead white paint.¹²⁷

However, the stigmata do appear to have been added or enhanced.

Other areas that were repainted and revealed in X-radiographs were the saint's garments. His hood and robe were remodeled extensively. I argue that the clothing alterations were made not to give a different look to his attire but only to enhance and focus viewers' attention on the saint's face. Prior to the repainting, the saint's hood emerged from a high V neckline that covered his neck and completely covered his head before falling behind and out of sight.¹²⁸ However, his hood was repainted to reveal the saint's head and his tonsure. This reveal contributes to and reinforces the saint's piety and sainthood. By having the hood fall to the right rather than behind the saint, attention is called to the saint's name which is included in the background and now in close proximity to the hood's point (fig. 100). In effect, the repainted hood design acts as a pointer to the saint's identification. Furthermore, the hood's entire border was then outlined in white paint to form a continuous highlighted line that encircles the saint's face. This outline quite literally highlights and frames the saint's face for viewers.

The original V neckline created a wide space between the garment and the beginning of the saint's face causing one to be distracted by the fashion and shape of the neckline. The spread of the wide V neckline also caused one's eyes to continue their gaze outward and to follow the lines of the wide V. The repainted neckline now directed viewers' attention directly to the saint's face

rather than attire.¹²⁹ The new neckline sits directly under the saint's chin and culminates in the white outline that accentuates his face. Rather than a V neckline, we now see a cowl neckline consisting of a series of curved drapes and fabric folds that begin at the level of the saint's hands and softly and gradually continue until they resolve and meet at the saint's chin. These drapery folds help lead our eyes from the saint's palm to his face. It must also be stated that the neckline garment folds are modeled with exquisite attention creating the subtle and convincing play of light to establish the softness and three dimensionality of draped fabric (fig. 100).

Up until now we have directed our attention to prematurely renovated panel paintings that were sacred in nature. However, it is important to explore the early and extensive repainting that was conducted on a large fresco in Siena that, although a depiction of the Madonna and Child enthroned, conveyed a political message. This fresco is Simone Martini's *Maestà* (ca. 1315-16), to which we now turn our attention.

Simone Martini, *Maestà*

In 1321, and only about five years after its completion, Simone Martini's *Maestà*, located in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, was selectively repainted (fig. 102). The heads of eight figures and several hands were completely repainted. However, unlike the repainted sacred images discussed above, Simone's *Maestà* fresco is categorically different from the other images in regard to its medium, scale, setting and intention. It is a large fresco, measuring twenty-six feet high by

twenty-nine and a half feet wide, and is located in the main council room of Siena's town hall. Simone's painting faces and greets visitors as they enter the room from the main staircase and consequently is the focal point of this public and secular space. Unlike the repainted images previously explored in this study, it is difficult to imagine that Simone's fresco, with its grand scale and public setting, would inspire viewers' private devotional prayers and interactive exchanges. On the contrary, Simone's fresco conveys a clear and direct unilateral message to its intended viewers.

However, despite these differences, Simone's *Maestà* is inextricably connected to the other early Renaissance repainted images by one overriding and powerful commonality that transcends any dissimilarity. Simone's image, like the others, was renovated to evoke viewers' empathic involvement and emotional connection. However, given its site specific, static and secular location, who are the intended viewers for Simone's fresco? And what does his painting communicate? In order to appreciate the potential impact of Simone's fresco on viewers, it is necessary to examine some contextual factors that will help to illuminate why this fresco was prematurely repainted.

The Context

There are no records that specifically document the date that Simone was commissioned to paint the *Maestà*, but there is a record dated October 20, 1315 that shows that Simone is debited against a credit account with the Siena commune.¹³⁰ Hoeniger notes that this document has been traditionally

associated with Simone's *Maestà* and therefore, it has been generally accepted that Simone painted the fresco between the years of 1315-16.¹³¹ Furthermore, there is a fragmentary inscription on the fresco stating that the painting was completed in the spring of 1316.¹³²

Andrew Martindale believes that Simone began his *Maestà* fresco earlier than 1315 and bases his argument on comparisons with Lippo Memmi's *Maestà* in San Gimignano, which is derivative of Simone's fresco but completed in 1317. Martindale notes that the repainted heads in Simone's *Maestà* are similar in style to the Lippo, and therefore must have been repainted prior to 1317, the date Lippo completed his fresco, and not in 1321, which is the generally the accepted date of Simone's renovations.¹³³ However, if we accept Martindale's argument that Simone's repainted heads influenced Lippo's *Maestà*, why did Lippo depict Mary frontally? Simone depicts his repainted Mary with Her head tilted and glancing to the side, similar to Duccio's Mary in his *Maestà*.

It is plausible that Simone's original figure of Mary was depicted frontally, similar to his panel painting of *St. Louis of Toulouse* (ca.1317; fig. 103). However, when Simone repainted the *Maestà* heads, he may have decided to change Mary's frontal pose. Simone's repainted Mary recalls the approachability and humanity we see in Duccio's *Maestà*. If Lippo was influenced by Simone's repainted figures, why did he portray Mary in a conventional and hieratic pose? I disagree with Martindale's dating and suspect that Lippo's *Maestà* was based on Simone's pre-renovated version.

One suspects that prior to his renovations, Simone originally painted Mary frontally, and it is this first version that perhaps influenced Lippo. There is no way to know. But what we do know is that Simone repainted eight heads of the *Maestà*, including that of Mary. We can speculate that Simone's fresco was most likely painted in response to Siena's overwhelming and positive reaction to Duccio's *Maestà*. However, unlike Duccio's Cathedral placed altarpiece, Simone's fresco is located in a secular setting and confronts viewers with a pointed, political proclamation. As Cannon notes, the secular and sacred were overlapping spheres, specifically in art, where images were often used to express political aims and aspirations.¹³⁴

The Message

Mary is seated on an elaborate Gothic styled throne with the Christ Child standing erect on Her left thigh. Stubblebine notes that this is the first time in Italian painting that this motif is represented this way.¹³⁵ Simone depicts Mary as the queen of Heaven and the protectress of Siena. Saints and apostles surround her and Siena's four patron saints--Ansanus, Savinus, Crescentius and Victor--kneel in the foreground to Her left and right while kneeling angels offer Her flowers (fig. 104). The four patron saints originally held painted scrolls with writing, now only faintly detectable, that perhaps were textual evidence of a dialogue among the saints and Mary and an appeal to Her.¹³⁶

However, Mary, too, has much to say to all the magistrates who congregate in this council hall. On the stairs leading up to Mary's throne are two

inscribed verses that send a clear message to those who govern Siena. John White notes that the inclusion of the Virgin's exhorting message to those who govern was perhaps motivated by the frequent family feuds witnessed by Siena.¹³⁷ Mary's words are:

The angelic flowers, the rose and lily
With which the heavenly fields are decked
Do not delight me more than righteous counsel.
But some I see who for their own estate
Despise me and deceive my land
And are most praised when they speak worst.
Whoever stands condemned by this my speech take heed.

My beloved bear it in mind
When your just devotees make supplication
I will make them content as you desire,
But if the powerful do harm to the weak
Weighing them down with shame or hurt
Your prayers are not for these
Nor for whoever deceives my land.¹³⁸

The text in Duccio's *Maestà* served as a model for Simone. In his *Maestà*, Duccio limned a message in Latin that calls viewers' attention to Mary's role as protectress of Siena. However, Simone's inscription is in Italian. Although Simone depicts Mary as the Queen of Heaven, She speaks to viewers not in Latin, the language of the Church, but in Italian, the language of the people. Charles Dempsey aptly quotes Enzo Carli who said that he found in Simone's *Maestà* Madonna, "the choicest lady in a celestial court modeled on the courts of this earth."¹³⁹

According to Dempsey, Simone's use of the vernacular visually expresses the early Renaissance interest in this earth and in naturalism and notes how this is evidenced in the art of Giotto and Duccio and written about in the vernacular at that time.¹⁴⁰ Giotto, for example, is praised by contemporary writers writing in the vernacular, such as Boccaccio and Petrarch, as a painter whose style is based in nature.¹⁴¹

C. Jean Campbell writes that perhaps one of Simone's motivations for presenting the dialogue between Mary and the saints in the vernacular was to make Her words more accessible to viewers and to those who could not read Latin.¹⁴² Mary's words are limned in Italian, whereas Simone has the Christ Child holding a scroll upon which is Latin text from the *Book of Wisdom*, which says: *Diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram* ("Observe justice, you who rule the world") (fig. 105). The Christ Child reminds us of the authority of the official Church and Mary communicates the need for justice in a more approachable and

conversational manner. Mary's message begins with the words *Diletti miei* ("my beloved").

In addition to Mary's and the Christ Child's messages, Simone incorporates a number of textual references in the *Maestà*. A border of frescoed medallions depicting God the Father, Old Testament prophets, the four Evangelists and the four Doctors of the Church surrounds the main rectangular portion of the fresco. Each figure either holds a scroll or an open book and others are shown writing. The central medallion in the lower border portrays a two-headed female figure. Her left profile is that of an old woman and behind her is printed "the old law." Her right profile is of a young woman and titled "the new law"¹⁴³ (fig. 106). St. Jerome is shown transcribing from one volume to another. Martindale notes that Jerome appears to be translating an exotic script to a new book; however, the translation is no longer legible.¹⁴⁴

Simone's *Maestà* challenges the councilmen to seek a new day for Siena. The time has come to rethink the old ways of governance and to modernize. Mary's message is accessible and engages the viewer. She states that justice must be government for the common good which is paramount, implying that Siena, up until now, had succumbed to its long time family feuds that need to end.¹⁴⁵ It is time for Siena to embrace a new view of leadership and governance. Simone's *Maestà* is painted to evoke empathic connections with viewers. Mary's message is critical and logistically placed on the main wall where the councilmen meet. Every element of this fresco is chosen to attract viewers' attention and to

connect with the message. For example, Simone incorporated unorthodox materials in his painting such as collage, glass lozenges, metal foils and relief work.¹⁴⁶ Simone actually applied a piece of colored glass on Mary's mantle to simulate a brooch fastener. It is a faux oval aquamarine colored cabochon four-pronged "gem stone" that complements Her ornate blue and gold mantle. Simone also inserted painted glass lozenges on the Christ Child's halo (figs. 107 & 108).

Simone also used expensive pigments such as lapis lazuli and malachite. Although many of these materials had been incorporated in earlier Italian paintings, it is Simone's almost obsessive use of enormous amounts and combinations of many varied materials that are striking. His *Maestà* was spectacular and worthy of being the focal point of the Sala del Consiglio.

Although many of the applied stones are now lost and much of the brilliant metallic foil shine has tarnished, one can easily imagine the overwhelming visual appeal this luxurious and glistening fresco once had upon its viewers. It was not a conventional fresco by any means. Simone created a three-dimensional relief mixed media extravaganza that literally sparkled in front of its audience. Simone's *Maestà* combined an illusion of depth and a variety of materials and textures to which viewers could empathically connect.

I argue that the entire *Maestà* fresco was conceived and executed in order to empathically connect with its viewers. This *tableau vivant* is directed to Siena's nine councilmen and four patron saints, all of whom it is meant to

influence and persuade. Within this context, it is therefore understandable that Simone, only five years after completing this fresco, would return to refresh and revitalize his *Maestà* and make it even more powerfully accessible and empathic to viewers.

The Repainting

It is unclear why the faces and/or hands of only nine of the principal figures were repainted but the decision seems to have been motivated by the need to convey a more effective and empathic image. It is possible that Simone's use of experimental *secco* techniques may have contributed to premature deterioration, but I argue that the prime motivation behind the renewal was the desire to increase and enhance the painting's empathic qualities and, as a result, its efficacy.

The more curious question is why Simone chose only to repaint eight heads and some hands.¹⁴⁷ I suspect that the cost would have been prohibitive to repaint all of the fresco's many figures not to mention the enormous and overwhelming amount of work involved in such an undertaking. But how did Simone decide to limit his repainting to only certain heads and hands?

The selective repainting focused on the central figures of the composition including the Virgin's face, headdress and hands as well as the face and hands of the Christ Child. A small portion of the Child's tunic was repainted and is the section below Mary's proper left hand. I suspect that this small area of His clothing was repainted only because it needed to be touched up due to Mary's

repainted left hand and was not otherwise of critical importance. The additional figures that were repainted were the faces and hands of the two kneeling angels in the foreground, Saints Ursula, Catherine, Crescentius and Ansanus, and the proper right hand of St. Paul that holds his sword¹⁴⁸ (fig. 109).

The heads and hands were repainted by scraping off the original plaster and first applying new and fresh plaster. Simone originally painted the *Maestà* entirely *a secco* or on dry plaster. Painting *a secco* enabled artists to work slowly rather than on wet plaster, *buon fresco*, which required that the prepared area of wet plaster be completed before the plaster dried. In addition to a more leisurely pace, the *a secco* technique had other advantages. Fine details that required time to execute could be added later. More importantly, some pigments do not chemically work well in the alkaline environment of wet plaster. For example, neither azurite nor lapis lazuli, the two minerals from which the color blue was derived, works well on fresh plaster. Simone used lapis lazuli extensively in the *Maestà* and the color remains vibrant today.

The original heads of all the figures in the *Maestà* are dark in color. However, the repainted heads and hands, all of which Simone repainted in *buon fresco*, are much lighter and brighter (fig. 110). The old plaster was scraped off and new plaster applied. Eve Borsook notes that the new “plaster appears to have been of a different quality from that used earlier--it is much whiter.”¹⁴⁹

I suspect that the whiteness of the repainted heads and hands is not a factor of the quality of the plaster but rather its chemical composition. A final

layer of plaster, the *intonaco*, is applied to the fresco wall regardless of whether the fresco will be painted dry or wet. This final layer is comprised of one part fine sand and one part lime putty.¹⁵⁰ The characteristically natural color of Sienese earth and sand, or what is called raw Siena, is a yellowish brown pigment and is composed primarily of iron oxide and a small amount of manganese oxide.¹⁵¹ When one looks at the original flesh tones of Simone's figures, they appear dark and perhaps are revealing the natural brown color of Siena sand and its indigenous region. However, in contrast to the original figures, Simone's repainted heads and hands are white and bright. When Simone scraped off the old *intonaco*, I believe he mixed his new plaster using white sand.

But the question of why certain figures were selected for repainting still remains. Scholars believe that Simone, who perhaps realistically could only repaint a few figures, decided to repaint the central figures. I concur. However, Borsook raises a good question. She wonders why Simone did not repaint St. Savino, who is in the front row, yet the heads and hands of those to the left and right of St. Savino were repainted.¹⁵² On first glance, this is a curiosity. When one examines the composition, one sees six figures kneeling in the front row foreground and at the foot of the Virgin's throne. On the right side, the two figures that kneel closest to the Virgin are the angel holding a bowl of lilies, who is physically closest to Mary, and next to that angel is a kneeling St. Crecentius. Both of these had their heads and hands repainted. As a result, the first two

kneeling figures on the right side of the painting and the ones that are next to each other and closest to the throne are repainted (fig. 102).

But Simone does not repeat this pattern on the left side. For symmetry and consistency, the repainted figures on the left should be the kneeling angel holding a bowl of roses and St. Savino. Simone does repaint the kneeling angel's head and hands but he skips over St. Savino, who is compositionally the counterpoint of St. Crescentius on the right, and instead repaints the head and hands of St. Ansanus. Borsook questions why this is. However, upon close examination of the St. Savino figure, I will offer my explanation as to why Simone left this saint untouched (fig. 111).

It is quite noticeable that the figure of St. Savino is flanked by repainted figures. His face and hands are considerably darker than his refreshed neighbors.¹⁵³ However, when one closely examines his face, albeit dark, one is struck by the empathic expression and painstakingly applied details. His head is raised upward toward the Virgin with an expression of both awe and devotion. He appears thoughtful and is depicted with a furrowed brow and intense gaze. Simone paints lines at the corner of his proper right eye to indicate both his advanced age and eyes squinted in thought. Carefully painted lines indicating folded flesh are rendered on the nape of his neck as he tilts his head back to look up at Mary (fig. 112).

Most extraordinary is Simone's treatment of St. Savino's facial hair. The artist painted individual hairs with a fine brush and mixes shades of dark

pigments with zinc white to create the salt and pepper appearance of a certain age. Simone achieves a striking degree of verisimilitude with his St. Savino. I suspect that this undoubtedly slow process could not be replicated on wet plaster. In addition, as Cennini will advise artists many years after Simone had the advantage to benefit from the craftsman's wealth of technical experience, one should always paint older people's flesh tones a darker tone than the young.¹⁵⁴ Simone seemed to instinctively understand this and was prophetic indeed.

The apparent asymmetry of that front kneeling row now seems to make sense. The original St. Savino figure was not only already empathic in Simone's original execution, but if redone, would become less empathic and effective. And, to visually connect the repainted figure of St. Ansanus to the composition, Simone repaints the hand of St. Paul's sword holding hand (figs. 111 & 113). Now our eyes travel up from St. Ansanus to St. Paul's hand--an important hand--since it holds the attribute of the saint's martyrdom with which he was beheaded. In addition, Paul's sword calls our attention to the Church's authority and the militant aspect of Christianity.¹⁵⁵

The Empathic Effect

Simone repaints selective figures' faces and hands to further strengthen the empathic connection of his *Maestà* with viewers. As discussed earlier, Duccio's empathic portrayal of Mary in his *Maestà* was enthusiastically received when it was installed on the high altar of Siena's Cathedral in 1311. However, as Enzo Carli notes, if Duccio took the essential first steps, Simone's Madonna and

Maestà were “infused with more living accents, a capacity for engaging the viewer, an immediate veracity, and an almost sensual charm...”¹⁵⁶

Although Simone’s repainted Madonna clearly depicts Mary as the Queen of Heaven and seated on Her throne, the artist portrays Her as an approachable intercessor who is thoughtful, caring and speaks on our behalf. Moreover, she speaks in Italian, not in Latin as does Duccio’s Madonna. Simone convinces viewers that Italian is Mary’s native language and is natural to Her and most relatable to us. The most startling feature of Simone’s repainted Madonna is Her uncovered hair. Dempsey astutely observed this phenomenon in Simone’s *Maestà* and believes that this is the first time in Italian art that Mary reveals her hair. In Duccio’s *Maestà*, the artist depicts Mary veiled and her hair completely concealed.¹⁵⁷ In addition, Dempsey notes that Simone’s Mary is blond.

However, I do not think that the artist’s choice of hair color is unusual given that fair complexions are not uncommon in Tuscany. Simone depicts a number of the figures in his *Maestà* with blond or light colored hair. In fact, each of the eight repainted heads have light hair; Mary, the Christ Child, St. Ansano, St. Crescentius, St. Ursula, St. Catherine and the two kneeling angels in the front row are all fair haired and all but St. Ansanus, who is still fair, are blond.

One might speculate that northern Italians will identify with the light complexions. However, one might also argue that by repainting all of the central figures with light hair on new white *intonaco*, Simone effectively made these figures visually advance and stand out. In fact, when one closely examines the

original heads, in contrast to the repainted heads, most of the figures are rendered with darker colored hair except for those, like St. Peter, who are silver haired. All of the repainted figures are blond or fair-haired which supports my belief that Simone wanted these newly painted figures to grab viewers' attention as compared to the original figures that, because their faces and hands are darker, recede in space. Of course, there is no way to know if these repainted figures were originally painted blond. However, I suspect, given that there are few fair-haired figures from the original work, that Simone converted all of the new figures to blonds.

Another striking feature of these repainted faces and hands is the brushwork and coloration. The repainted faces are executed with large, bold brushstrokes characteristic of true fresco and the need to work quickly. The faces are modeled with broad brushstrokes that capture the roundness and three-dimensionality that form and simulate the flesh and fullness of features such as the cheeks, lips and rounded nostrils (fig. 114). When one compares the frontal view of the archangel Gabriel that is from Simone's original cycle, to the frontal view of the repainted Mary, one can clearly see the difference in brushwork (fig. 115). The angel Gabriel, like the St. Savino profile and also from the original painting, is executed in small and labored brushstrokes characteristic of the fastidious technique used in panel painting. The paint is applied in successive layers and the coloration lacks the animation of Simone's repainted faces.

However, when we look at the repainted figures, we see the broadly applied brushstrokes that are characteristic of *buon fresco* painting. This technique is evidenced and seen most clearly in the two repainted frontal figures of Mary and the Christ Child. All of the other repainted figures are depicted in profile or, in the case of St. Catherine, in three quarter view. However, even in profile view, it is evident that the faces and hands are executed with broad brushstrokes and the spontaneous and free application of paint associated with true fresco technique. All of the repainted figures, in contrast to the original figures, emphasize a crimson coloration that enlivens the figures' flesh, enhances their humanity and as a result, increases their empathic qualities.

When we look closely at Mary and the Christ Child, we see Mary's concerned and compassionate look and her animated coloration with her rosy cheeks and beautifully modeled pink lips. The Christ Child, although standing on Mary's knee and more adult looking than perhaps Duccio's Christ Child in his *Maestà*, nevertheless is depicted with the full round face of a baby. His cheeks are fleshy and obviously rosy. His lips are also full and modeled with shading created from various hues of crimson. Simone continues the red coloration in the corners of the Child's mouth and also on the outer edges of His nostrils and in the outlines of His neck and His outer proper right ear. Simone further counters the Child's apparent adult and authoritative stance in the manner in which he depicts the Child's chin and neck. This is a baby's face. The artist depicts a soft looking double chin that meets the neck in a series of repeated folds. If viewers

are impressed with the Child's authoritative pose and the scroll His hand grasps with its Latin message from the *Book of Wisdom*, they must be simultaneously taken with his convincingly baby-like appeal. Both mother and child are approachable and knowable. The empathic connection is powerful. One needs to mention that Simone imbues the Child's blond hair with a lyrical quality that echoes the artist's extraordinary attention to details that we also find in his fabrics and halo decorations. The repetitive and rhythmic interaction of each curl is complemented by the intricate and repeated pattern on Mary's mantle to the Child's left and reminiscent of French cloisonné enamel work, as well as the detailed intarsia marquetry on the throne, to the right.¹⁵⁸ The Child's blond spiraled curls are exquisitely choreographed around the Child's face and direct our eyes both inward to His face and at the same time, outward to His jeweled halo.

The empathic qualities of Simone's *Maestà* clearly influenced his fellow artist and future brother-in-law, Lippo Memmi. Just as Simone was influenced by Duccio's *Maestà*, Lippo painted a close copy of Simone's fresco on the wall of the Sala del Consiglio in the Palazzo Comunale in San Gimignano. Lippo's *Maestà*, was completed in 1317 and therefore before Simone's repainting, attesting to the powerful empathic connection that even Simone's original work had on viewers (figs. 116 & 117).

Lippo Memmi, *Maestà*

Lippo's *Maestà*, like Simone's, was executed in the *a secco* technique. However, Lippo painted the saints and angels in *buon fresco* except for Mary, the Christ Child and the podestà since Lippo preferred to work slowly and use the pigments that only worked well on surfaces of dry plaster. Due to its fragility the fresco needed restoration in the late Trecento when a protective coating was applied to the fresco's entire surface.¹⁵⁹ Also in the late Trecento, Lippo's *Maestà* was expanded upon in order to add two extra saints at either end. A later restoration, in 1467, involved further repairs to damaged areas of the fresco although this later restoration caused further problems and damage that involved a subsequent intervention.

During this later restoration, repairs were made to address doors that were cut into the painting to create access to a newly added and contiguous room. Repairs and touch ups were executed including repainting two faces to align with Quattrocento Italian Renaissance tastes. Hoeniger suggests that this later renovation reflected the need for this painting to remain relevant and effective.¹⁶⁰ This may be. However, I want to emphasize that, unlike the Lippo restorations, Simone's primary motivation to repaint eight heads and select hands only five years after its completion, was not based on the fresco's deterioration but on the need to further enhance its empathic power. In contrast, given the restorations that were conducted on Lippo's *Maestà*, it appears that the underlying motivation to restore the Lippo was due to its deteriorated condition. However, it is noteworthy to add that in 1467, one hundred and fifty years after Lippo's fresco

was completed, restorers repainted the faces of two saints that were part of the earlier expansion in the late Trecento. I suspect that again, the motivation was to mitigate deterioration; however, according to Hoeniger, one of the new faces does appear in keeping with contemporary portraits.¹⁶¹ A significant commonality between the two *Maestà* frescos discussed above is that each is an example of sacred art placed in a secular setting with the intention to evoke powerful empathic connections with a particular viewing audience. The restorations serve to strengthen the paintings' political efficacy and deepen the empathic connections with viewers.

This chapter examined a selection of sacred images that underwent the repainting of figures' faces and hands in order to further enhance the images' empathic powers. However, as noted earlier in this study, restoration practices change over time and by the middle of the fifteenth century, we begin to see a shift in thinking regarding intervention procedures and strategies.¹⁶² During the Trecento in Italy, it was not unusual to involve many hands in reworking or "renewing" works of art to effect a greater empathic connection with viewers. But as we approach the middle to end of the fifteenth century, different methods were employed to make images more relatable and empathic to viewers. Rather than change the image, they changed the frame. The chapter that follows examines the practice of reframing images in the desire to achieve an empathic connection with viewers.

Endnotes

¹ Hoeniger, *The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany*, 31-32.

² Ibid. 33. Hoeniger notes that it was an accepted Byzantine tradition to renew an icon in order to enhance its original fundamental attributes.

³ Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank*, 11-49 and 213.

⁴ van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric*, 17.

⁵ Katula, 10.

⁶ Fantham, 258.

⁷ van Eck, 17.

⁸ Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 118.

⁹ Alberti, *On Painting*. Edited and Translated by Rocco Sinisgalli, 66.

¹⁰ Leigh, 137.

¹¹ Alberti, *On Painting*. Edited and Translated by Rocco Sinisgalli, 63.

¹² Vickers, 349.

¹³ van Eck 28.

¹⁴ See Chapter Two of this study for a discussion of the Battle of Montaperti, and its connection to the Virgin's significance and importance to the city of Siena.

¹⁵ The word *bordone* means "staff" in Italian. The painting was commonly called the *Madonna del Bordone* and possibly received its name from a pilgrim's

staff which at some unknown time was placed near the painting as a sign of gratitude. See Coor-Achenbach, "Coppo di Marcovaldo and His Son Salerno," fn 12. However, a more convincing explanation of the title is presented by Mina in "Madonna del Bordone," 243-247. Mina argues that the word *bordone* refers to a type of melody or canto and suggests that the Servites sang in front of the image of the Virgin. Mina references the beginning chapters of the Servite Order's Constitutions which call for the Salve Regina to be sung at vespers.

¹⁶ Coor-Achenbach, "Coppo di Marcovaldo and His Son Salerno," 1. Few documents exist about thirteenth century Tuscan painters; however, there are references to Coppo di Marcovaldo in the Book of Montaperti of February 11, 1260 and quoted in C. Paoli, *Il Libro di Montaperti*, Florence, 1889, 25. However, it was Peleo Bacci who, according to Gertrude Coor-Achenbach, discovered several records referring to Coppo and published them in 1900 in "Coppo di Marcovaldo e Salerno di Coppo," *L'arte*, III (1900): 32-40. In 1912, Bacci published additional documents referring to Coppo in *Documenti toscani per la storia dell' arte*, Florence, 1910-12.

¹⁷ Coor-Achenbach, "Coppo di Marcovaldo and His Son Salerno," 234 fn 11.

¹⁸ Bacci assumes that Coppo came to Siena as one of the thousands of Florentines who were captured in the Battle of Montaperti and became a prisoner of war. Bacci refers to a pious Sienese tradition, referred to in a document of

1895, which states that Coppo, after taken prisoner, painted the Virgin in exchange for his freedom.

¹⁹ The size of the painting and copies of it that were made indicate that it was considered important in its time. See Corrie, "Political Meaning."

²⁰ Corrie, "Political Meaning," 65-66. Corrie notes that the fabric of Mary's headscarf is decorated with eagles in roundels. Manfred, King of Sicily, who had come to the aid of Siena in 1260, used the eagle as an imperial symbol. Indeed, Corrie argues in this article that the Battle of Montaperti was among the important factors that shaped the iconography and the meaning of the *Madonna del Bordone* painting.

²¹ Ibid. 61.

²² Ibid. 64.

²³ Mina, "Madonna del Bordone," 242.

²⁴ Ibid. 246.

²⁵ Stubblebine, "Byzantine Influence," 93.

²⁶ See Corrie, "Political Meaning," 71, fn 9. Corrie suggests that although the foot-holding gesture is not clear, it may allude to the location of the nail of the Crucifixion.

²⁷ These elements refer to the *Eleousa* icon type that depicts the young mother Mary anticipating the future and what is to come. See Belting, "An Image and Its Function," 9.

²⁸ Corrie, "Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del bordone*," 43.

²⁹ Maguire, "Iconography of Symeon," 267.

³⁰ Corrie, "Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del bordone*," 49.

³¹ Sevchenko, 52.

³² Hoeniger, 21.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cole, "Old in New," 234. Cole notes that several early fourteenth-century repaintings were in response to Duccio's *Maesta* painting and reflect the impact of the new style.

³⁵ See Cesare Brandi *Mostra di Restauri* (Roma, 1948). Brandi only mentions that the heads of Mary and the Child were repainted and does not mention the hands. Gianna A. Mina in her chapter "Madonna del Bordone," cited above in endnote 15, writes that the hands were repainted as well. I am grateful to Joanna Cannon and Rebecca W. Corrie who each contributed their thoughts about the repainted faces and hands. Since no document exists that confirms the specific areas of repainting, one needs to rely on ones' connoisseurship and stylistic comparisons and analyses.

³⁶ Hoeniger 23.

³⁷ Ibid. 21.

³⁸ Corrie, "Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del Bordone*," 43 and 59, fn 8. Corrie notes that Paul Hills has suggested that Coppo introduced this Byzantine technique to Tuscan panel painting. See Hills 25. In fn 7, Corrie also refers to

Papageorgiou 14 which shows an image of a Cypriot Archangel that is similar to Coppo's original painting in terms of the highlighting and features.

³⁹ Hoeniger 21.

⁴⁰ Mina, fn 19, cites E. B. Garrison who notes that Coppo's original painting reveals clearly visible concentric lines on the cheeks.

⁴¹ Brandi, "Cleaning of Pictures," suggests that the painter who did the renovation was Niccolo di Segna, a follower of Duccio.

⁴² It is interesting that the recent restorers decided not to remove the trecento over painting given that the modern X-radiographs reveal Coppo's original dugento painting beneath. However, Cesare Brandi, in his report, notes that there does not seem to be a sufficient primer layer between the two paintings and that removing the repainted version may damage the under painting as well. This is discussed in Cordaro 263-276, 269, fn 21.

⁴³ Nagel, "Fashion and the Now-Time of Renaissance Art," 41.

⁴⁴ The Orvieto panel is dated a few years later than Coppo's *Madonna del Bordone* based on the fact that the church of the Servites in Orvieto was constructed during the latter 1260's. See Polzer 5.

⁴⁵ Conti and Glanville 3. They suggest that the repainting was executed as a result of damage caused by fire.

⁴⁶ Corrie, "Coppo di Marcovaldo's *Madonna del Bordone*," 52.

⁴⁷ Documents from the Istituto Centrale Del Restauro, Roma.

⁴⁸ Hoeniger, *The Renovation of Paintings in Tuscany, 1250-1500*, 160, fn 1. Hoeniger's study focuses on early repainted images and she excludes Coppo's Orvieto *Madonna and Child* due entirely to the presence of oil media.

⁴⁹ Polzer 5. Nagel, in "Fashion and the Now," 41, fn 34, notes that Cordaro, 263-276, concurs with Polzer that the presence of oil paint in the overpainting dates the repainting to the eighteenth century. However, Boskovits, "Intomo," 94-105, notes that the repainting was done early, by the late thirteenth century Master of the Madonna of San Brizio.

⁵⁰ Annarosa Ciofi-Luzzatto and Laura Conti, *Improved Histochemical Techniques for the Study of Finding Media in Old Paintings--A Preliminary Approach* (Rome: Istituto di Istologia ed Embriologia, 1974). The Institute's report was reprinted and published in *Science Tools*, 21.2-3, 1974.

⁵¹ Brandi, "Cleaning of Pictures," 187.

⁵² Conti and Glanville 3.

⁵³ Polzer 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting*, 15.

⁵⁶ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 31.

⁵⁷ Christiansen, *Duccio*, 35.

⁵⁸ Istituto Centrale del Restauro document ASO863 on the restoration of the Orvieto panel. The reference to the Child's hair states that under X-radiography "it was clear that, under the hair in clumps, there was a layer of paint

with hair and curls.” *Sul viso del Bambino, dall’indagine effettuata mediante la radiografia, appariva evidente che, sotto I capelli a ciocche, esisteva uno strato di pittura con capelli a riccioli.*

⁵⁹ Polzer 6.

⁶⁰ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 30-42; van Os 29; and Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 39 also assume it was executed for the high altar of San Domenico.

⁶¹ Norman, *Painting*, 52-53.

⁶² *Ibid.* 47.

⁶³ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 81-82.

⁶⁴ It is difficult to know the name of the Ducciesque artist who is responsible for the early repainting. See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 160 fn 3 for a list of possible attributions.

⁶⁵ Cesare Brandi and Enzo Carli, “Relazione sul restauro della Madonna di Guido da Siena del 1221,” *Bollettino d’arte*, XXXVI (1951) 248-60. Also, Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 31, notes that recent restoration confirms that the inscription is contemporary with the rest of the painting.

⁶⁶ Richard Offner, “Guido da Siena and A.D. 1221,” *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 6, XXXVII (1950) 61-90. Offner notes that Guido’s *Palazzo Madonna* must be dated in the later part of the Dugento and cites its size as a major reason.

⁶⁷ Nagel, “Fashion,” 40 fn 28. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting*, 116, notes that a date of 1221 is impossible from the standpoint of both style and iconography. Stubblebine believes that based even on size alone,

Guido's *Madonna and Child* panel cannot be a work of the early thirteenth century. Stubblebine refers to the influence of Cimabue seen in the diagonal view of the throne and the human relationship among the figures as evidence of the later dugento style. Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 35.

⁶⁸ Nagel 41.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 31.

⁷¹ See Curt Weigelt, "Guido da Siena's Great Ancona: A Reconstruction," *Burlington Magazine*, LIX (1931) 15-22. See Stubblebine, "An Altarpiece," 260-268, for a thorough discussion of the altarpiece and ideas regarding possible reconstruction theories.

⁷² White, *Art and Architecture*, 405, fn 4.

⁷³ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 34.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 8.

⁷⁵ Cathleen Hoeniger notes that it is difficult to attribute the repainting to a particular Ducciesque master. Hoeniger lists possible artists proposed by scholars. See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 160, fn 3.

⁷⁶ Bruce Cole, "Old and New," 232.

⁷⁷ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 23.

⁷⁸ Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, 71.

⁷⁹ Nagel, "Fashion and the Now," 38.

⁸⁰ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 31. Stubblebine notes that it was not possible to remove the repainting on the left side of the throne since nothing of the original paint remains beneath.

⁸¹ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 40.

⁸² Mary's right hand was restored to Guido's original for the most part. However, a trace of the Ducciesque repainting remains on a portion of the right index finger. The decision to remove the repainted areas reflects changing restoration practices in history. Indeed, at the time the faces of Mary and the Christ Child were repainted in the Trecento, the empathic areas were of primary concern and viewed as increasing the image's efficacy.

⁸³ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 22.

⁸⁴ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 42.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 41

⁸⁶ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 93.

⁸⁷ I am grateful to the Harvard Art Museums, Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies for the St. Dominic images.

⁸⁸ Gomez-Moreno, Carmen, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., Elizabeth H. Jones and Millard Meiss, "A Sienese St. Dominic," 363-366.

⁸⁹ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 97.

⁹⁰ Gomez-Moreno et al. 365. Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 99, notes that there is no conclusive evidence for the side panels.

⁹¹ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 99.

⁹² Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 99.

⁹³ Gomez-Moreno et al. 363, fn 7.

⁹⁴ Courtesy of the Harvard Art Museums Restoration Report. I am grateful to Professor Stephan Wolohojian, the London and Lavinia Clay Curator and Head Division of European and American Art at the Harvard Art Museums/Fogg, and his assistant Tara Cerretani for their interest in my project. I am grateful to them for permitting me access to the University's St. Dominic archives.

⁹⁵ Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena*, 6.

⁹⁶ Traces of the saint's original proper right ear are visible today as pentimento.

⁹⁷ Lehner 183-4.

⁹⁸ Gomez-Moreno et al. 364.

⁹⁹ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 196.

¹⁰¹ See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 94. For thorough studies of the Fogg *St. Dominic* tooling see Stout 141-152, and Frinta 306-309.

¹⁰² Stout 148.

¹⁰³ Frinta 306.

¹⁰⁴ According to legend, at his Baptism, the infant Dominic appeared to have a star on his forehead. See Lehner 11.

¹⁰⁵ Stout 142.

¹⁰⁶ Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 196.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 92-3.

¹⁰⁸ Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Early Dominicans*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 51.

¹⁰⁹ Brooke, *The Image of St. Francis*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Brooke, "Lives," 177.

¹¹¹ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 76.

¹¹² Ibid. 77. Cathleen Hoeniger dates the repainting to only ten years after the original painting was completed.

¹¹³ Marion A. Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 749-50.

¹¹⁴ Thomas of Celano, *First Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 80-8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 81.

¹¹⁶ Vauchez 72.

¹¹⁷ Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 14.

¹¹⁸ Vincent Moleta, *From St. Francis to Giotto* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 13.

¹¹⁹ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 83.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 165, fn 15.

¹²¹ Ibid. 84.

¹²² Ibid. This image by Duccio, *Madonna of the Franciscans* (ca. 1284-85) depicts three Franciscan friars. However, Keith Christiansen notes that the friars are placed to suggest one figure in continuous action and recalls Marcel

Duchamp's 1912 *Nude Descending a Staircase*. See Christiansen, *Duccio*, 34-35. In light of Duccio's innovative style, it would not be surprising for the artist to paint three friars yet suggest the kneeling movement and act of proskynesis.

¹²³ Vauchez 211.

¹²⁴ See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 82 and 165, fn 15. See Maetzke, "Nuove Ricerche su Margarito d'Arezzo," 108.

¹²⁵ *Il Museo Statale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna in Arezzo* (Firenze: Cassa Di Risparmio Di Firenze, 1987), 37-38.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 38.

¹²⁷ I am grateful to Cathleen Hoeniger for generously sharing her opinions and expertise with me regarding this subject. Her insights have enriched my study and research.

¹²⁸ The earliest known single full length St. Francis panel painting is in the Louvre and is by the Roman artist St. Gregory Master. The painting is dated ca. 1230-5 and shows the saint wearing a garment with the wide V neckline. This painting may have influenced Margarito's choice. However, after the V neckline was repainted to a draped cowl neckline, Margarito's subsequent St. Francis paintings all had the cowl neck and the V neckline was abandoned.

¹²⁹ Maetzke 108.

¹³⁰ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 128.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* Furthermore, Hoeniger notes that the fresco includes a fragmentary inscription that indicates that the painting was completed in 1316.

However, Simone may have begun the painting as early as 1311, the position taken by Andrew Martindale. See Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini* (New York: New York UP, 1988), 14-17.

¹³² Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 128.

¹³³ See Gordon, "Martini Shaken and Stirred," 370-374. Gordon discusses Andrew Martindale's controversial dating of Simone Martini's *Maesta* fresco.

¹³⁴ Joanna Cannon, "Introduction: Secular Power and the Sacred in the Art of the Central Italian City-State," Cannon and Williamson, eds., 3-4.

¹³⁵ Stubblebine, "French Gothic Elements," 139-152.

¹³⁶ Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 54. Also see Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 207. Martindale notes that there is a vestige of the scrolls slightly visible in the hands of St. Crecentius and St. Victor.

¹³⁷ White, *Duccio*, 96.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Dempsey, "Vernacular Style in Renaissance Art," 194.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 201. Dempsey also notes on page 193 that Mary speaks in *terza rima*, a verse form generally believed to be invented by Dante but who had not completed his *Divina Commedia* at the time Simone painted the *Maestà*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 192. On page 189, Dempsey references Aby Warburg and Henry Thode, two art historians who, in the late eighteenth hundreds, viewed early Renaissance art as an expression of popular culture. Dempsey notes Aby

Warburg's interest in examining Botticelli's art in relation to similar ideas that appear in contemporary art theory and poetic literature. Dempsey mentions Henry Thode's book on St. Francis of Assisi, and how Thode emphasized the role that Francis played in vernacular culture such as his love of contemporary poetry and his inspirational manner of preaching.

¹⁴² Campbell 371-386.

¹⁴³ Diana Norman, *Sienna and the Virgin*, 55.

¹⁴⁴ Martindale 205.

¹⁴⁵ White, *Art and Architecture*, 34. White discusses the long time feuds between the Salimbini and Tolomei families, which erupted in open fighting the year that Simone was working on his *Maestà*.

¹⁴⁶ For a thorough discussion of the metallic foils used in Sieneese murals of the early Trecento including Simone's *Maestà*, see Tintori, 94-95.

¹⁴⁷ As mentioned throughout this study, the premature renovations focused on repainting the figures' faces and hands. As Diana Norman perceptively notes, "In respect of the human representation, it is these parts of the body which in psychological terms are the most affective for the potential devotee." See Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 48.

¹⁴⁸ Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 220, fn 21. Most scholars agree on which figures and hands were repainted. However, Stubblebine identifies the figure that is agreed to be St. Ursula, as St. Barbara. See Stubblebine, "French Gothic Elements," 139. Martindale notes that it is now hardly possible to identify

the attribute of this saint which, in the case of St. Ursula would be an arrow or a pilgrim's staff.

¹⁴⁹ Borsook 21.

¹⁵⁰ Mayer 344.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 64.

¹⁵² Borsook 22, fn 24.

¹⁵³ It is noteworthy that although Cennini's *Il Libro dell Arte* was written in the late Trecento and too late for Simone, Cennini's recommendation for how to paint the flesh of older people is prophetic. Cennini advises artists to use darker tones for the flesh color of older people's faces, hands, feet and body. See Cennini 47-48.

¹⁵⁴ See note 153 above.

¹⁵⁵ Sill 13-14.

¹⁵⁶ Dempsey, "Vernacular Style," 194.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 193. Also see Dempsey, *The Early Renaissance and Vernacular Culture*, 44-53, for a detailed discussion of Mary's blond hair. On page 49, Dempsey notes a precedent for depicting Mary with blond hair in the pulpits by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano. Stubblebine notes that we lack evidence of whether the original head of Simone's Mary, prior to the 1321 repainting, did or did not have her hair covered. See Stubblebine, "French Gothic Elements," 151, fn 23.

¹⁵⁸ Stubblebine notes that the treatment of the Christ Child's hair, the throne and other elements reflect Simone's interest and knowledge of French

Gothic art. Stubblebine relates the Christ Child's hair in Simone's *Maestà* to a similar treatment by the Parisian miniaturist, Master Honore of the 1290s, and attributes the style of the throne upon which Mary and the Child are seated to Simone's "advanced understanding of French Gothic architectural design." See Stubblebine, "French Gothic Elements," 139-152 and in particular, 140. We know that Simone moved to Avignon in France in the 1340s. However, it has been proposed that Simone may have traveled to Avignon prior to his moving there. Stubblebine, "French Gothic Elements," 147-148, and 152 fn. 41.

¹⁵⁹ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 139.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 142.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 140.

¹⁶² Conti and Glanville, *A History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art*, 8.

Chapter Four: Reframing

*Again, various things give equal pleasure to our eyes,
so that we can with difficulty decide which are more pleasing to them.*

Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book 1, 37

This chapter will focus on the shift of thinking that occurs in the mid-fifteenth century regarding restoration practices. The earlier trecento practice of selectively repainting sacred images in order to increase the work's empathic connection with viewers' shifts instead to reframing the image. Although scholars have noted this change in restoration practices, from repainting sacred images to reframing them, the reasons for this shift in thinking have not been fully explored.¹

One factor influencing this shift in restoration practices is the negative reaction from clerics who became increasingly upset with stylistic updating and believed these renovations to be distracting. For example, the early fifteenth century friar Giovanni Dominici (ca. 1356-1419) believed that the addition of modern elements distracted viewers and compromised the "truth represented by those figures."² The updated paintings interrupted the Byzantine tradition of replication and, therefore, their credibility.

Dominici's comment is directed toward renovations executed to reflect contemporary custom or fashion. However, the selectively repainted sacred images discussed in this study focus primarily on faces and hands and not on fashion. Although many scholars explain the motivation to repaint sacred images as a need to update or modernize the image and discuss these renovations in

the context of religious efficacy, they do not explicitly tie the renewals to empathy theory.³ As I argue in this study, I believe that the selectively repainted images were motivated by the desire to forge deeper empathic connections with the viewers, and that this bond between image and viewer is powerfully communicated through facial expression, gesture and the sense of touch. However, the restoration practice to selectively repaint early Italian Renaissance sacred images gradually changes toward the middle of the fifteenth century. Rather than selectively repainting images, restorers reframed images in order to narrow the gap that might occur between the art and the viewer.

This shift in restoration and intervention practice focused on preserving older panel paintings rather than repainting them. However, although the tendency was to move away from repainting images, the image might be reframed to reflect contemporary framing conventions. Replacing the older Gothic frame with a modern and more familiar looking Renaissance style frame would help bridge any possible gap between the sacred image and the viewers.⁴ Another way in which quattrocento artists and patrons attempted to bridge the gap between old and new was to incorporate old images and fragments into newly painted works.⁵

In fact, the mere age of a painting tended only to increase its stature and value. The art historian Klaus Kruger notes that the age of a work can enhance its devotional appeal and increase its credibility and status. Kruger cites the author Giovanni Baglione who, in his book of artists' lives written in 1642,

describes how the painter Terenzio da Urbino deliberately painted over old panel paintings to make them look ancient. These panels, because of their apparent age, were thought to encourage greater devotion, and Urbino was able to ask higher prices for his “antique” panels.⁶

Artist as Author

The above story amplifies the reverence felt for older works and around the mid-Quattrocento in Italy we see a shift in restoration practices from the selective repainting of sacred images to a resistance to retouch the work. However, I believe that this shift in restoration practice reflects another force that begins to emerge at this time. This shift in restoration practice occurs not only because of the inherent reverence accorded to a work’s age but also due to the belief that the artist and the work’s historicity are paramount. Alexander Nagel, in his book *Anachronic Renaissance*, reflecting on images as historical artifacts, writes that “Here for the first time, we recognize the contours of the core principle of modern historical scholarship of art: pictorial form as index of history, that is, as *style*.”⁷ We see the impact of an individual artist’s style in the early fourteenth century with repainted images executed to emulate and recognize Duccio’s style.

The practice to selectively repaint sacred images continued to accelerate during the early Italian Renaissance due to the powerful and positive influence of the art of Duccio and Giotto. It is these two artists who draw our attention to the impact of style and the potential power of an individual artist. Paintings were selectively repainted to emulate their style. Yet it is ironic that the

acknowledgment and recognition of the importance of the artist as author soon contributed to changes in restoration practices. Early Renaissance paintings were retouched in order to replicate Duccio's unique style and his ability to forge empathic connections with his viewers. However, by the mid to late fourteen hundreds, restoration practices shifted to venerate the individual artist's original work and to keep that work unaltered. The conscious notion of style became inextricably connected to restoration practices.

Acknowledging the primacy of the artist was accentuated and epitomized in the mid-sixteenth century with the publication of Vasari's *Lives* in which he emphasizes the importance of the artist as author. The artist's work is venerated and not to be altered. Restoration practices reflected this shift in thinking and moved away from repainting images in order to retain the integrity of the original. In order to achieve deeper empathic connections with viewers and not alter the image, older images were often reframed rather than repainted. This shift in restoration practice continued until the eighteenth century.

The practice to reframe images in lieu of repainting them was indirectly influenced by other factors. For example, since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which ruled that the priest would face the main altar wall during the celebration of the Eucharist, the viewers' focus was on the back altar wall. This change increased the importance and demand for larger altar wall images. The demand for larger altar paintings required artists and framers to reconsider the materials and construction techniques that would be suitable for large panel

paintings. Larger paintings required a different approach to panel construction and frame making techniques. Indeed, the shift in restoration practices, to reframe rather than repaint, was influenced and supported by the contemporary technological innovations in frame making. The following section offers a contextual framework, if you will, for the early Renaissance panel paintings and their frames.

Framing the Frame: Fabrication Techniques and Innovations

This section will contextualize the frame as an essential and integral part of the image and explore frame fabrication techniques that were employed in Italy during the early Renaissance. Frames surround and emphasize images. The frame's edges define boundaries and serve to limit and therefore facilitate the viewer's focus. Indeed, the etymology of "frame" has its roots in the old English word *fram*, meaning "forward," "to stand out from its environment."⁸

There is a wealth of literature about frames and framing, and the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida are useful to this study and particularly relevant to this chapter. Let us consider the comments of Jacques Derrida in regard to the frame as *parergon*.⁹ Is the frame intrinsic or extrinsic to the work of art? Is the frame simply a *parergon* and only an adjunct to the *ergon* or the work of art? Derrida refers to Kant who, in his *Critique*, distinguishes the *parergon* from the *ergon* and sees the frame as the *parergon* and secondary to the work.¹⁰ However, Derrida suggests that the frame "is not incidental; it is connected to and cooperates in its operation from the outside."¹¹

I agree with Derrida; one needs to question where frames begin and end. What is their place? What are their inner and outer limits? Indeed, I argue that the frames discussed in this chapter--both the Gothic frames and the Renaissance renovations that replaced them--are not adjuncts to the work. The frames are intrinsically connected to the work. As Derrida wrote about a *parergon*, "It is like an accessory which we are obliged to accommodate alongside and inside."¹² The Gothic frames echoed the architectural space beyond their borders and enhanced the spirituality of the work within. The renovated Renaissance frames helped align with the contemporary architecture, eliminate distractions caused by the "old-fashioned" Gothic frames and as a result, increased the devotional connection with viewers.

During the early Renaissance, frames were integral to the wood panel upon which the images were painted. The frame would often contribute additional visual interest as well as structural support. In Italy during the late Dugento and Trecento, frames were integral to the painted panels and carved from the same piece of wood as the panel painting itself. The carpenter prepared the panel by first carving out and removing the central section of the wood panel, resulting in a recessed area to receive paint and a higher and flat "frame" along the perimeter edge reflecting the original thickness of the wood panel.¹³ This edge or frame helped to protect the painting from touch, visually set the image apart from its surroundings and provided the artist with a place to lean while painting.

With the increasing demand for larger altarpieces, it became impractical for frame makers to create a raised edge by carving out the wood panel's center section. Removing the inner portion of the panel was difficult and time consuming given the current tools. However, technological advancements in carpentry tools soon enabled wood workers to fabricate separate miter-edged wooden molding strips that when applied to the top edges of the panel's perimeter, created a raised edge that functioned as a frame. This technique also provided larger altarpieces, those constructed with multiple vertical and contiguous panels, with the structural support and rigidity they needed.¹⁴ However, the increased rigidity, although it mitigated warping, also restricted the individual panel's ability to expand and contract in response to humidity changes. The inability to respond to moisture variations can result in vertical gaps. For example, Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna* suffered from excessive rigidity and has visible separations between its panels¹⁵ (figs. 118 & 119).

The warpage problem led wood workers to fabricate thinner and more flexible support strips or battens that allowed for movement while still supporting the individual adjacent panels. In the case of large polyptychs, dowels were used to connect and align the multiple panels, and the narrow spaces between the panels that occurred with this system were camouflaged with an architectural element such as a small column or pilaster. The large polyptych altarpieces that were popular in the Trecento resembled and emulated the contemporary Gothic architecture that was in its later phase between 1290 and 1385. The altarpiece

frames introduced familiar Gothic architectural elements such as pinnacles that accentuated the frame's verticality and simulated cathedral spires that evoked a sense of upward soaring.¹⁶

However, in the middle to late fourteen hundreds, these Gothic frames began to appear outdated to viewers and distracted from the revered sacred images they surrounded. The images and their artists were highly venerated but the trecento frames needed to be addressed in order not to interfere with the viewer's engagement and ability to connect emotionally. The new frames would remain as architectural complements to the images within but would be made to reflect contemporary fifteenth century architectural elements. Indeed, the work of Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) had a significant impact on frame makers and we see his classical architectural elements translated into frame designs. Brunelleschi's Spedale degli Innocenti (1419-26; fig. 120) and his Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo (1420-29) may have inspired the frame design for Fra Angelico's *The Annunciation* (1433-34; fig. 121).¹⁷ Reframing sacred images would become the fifteenth century renovation alternative to the former practice of repainting images, yet would serve a similar function, that is, to increase the viewer's engagement and connection to the art.

Gothic Becomes Renaissance: Change the Frame

This chapter examines sacred images that were reframed in accordance with this shift in restoration policy. Reframing older works of art achieved a similar effect to the practice of selectively repainting images in that each of these

renovation strategies was motivated by the persistent need for these sacred images to empathically connect with viewers.¹⁸ I will focus on images that were reframed but essentially left intact except for some additional painting that was necessary in order to accommodate the new contemporary framing design. Although there were instances of Gothic reframing in the early fourteen hundreds, the majority of these renovations were executed in the middle to late Quattrocento. Cathleen Hoeniger notes that the art historian Richard Offner was one of the first to document a number of these reframed Gothic images and to comment on the possible motivations for the reframing. Offner likened the reframed images to a type of appropriation and states, "Almost all of these instances of remodeling date from the last part of the fifteenth century and betray the last effort the Renaissance was to make at reclaiming Gothic by adapting it to its own forms."¹⁹

The fifteenth century renovations focus on updating the frame and replacing the existing Gothic style frames with new frames *all'antica*, "in the antique style."²⁰ The new frame style reflects the Renaissance interest in and influence of ancient Greco-Roman architecture and surrounds the image with a simulated miniature shrine, called a tabernacle or aedicular frame, derived from the Latin word *aedicula*, meaning a small shrine. These frames could be simple structures or quite ornate depending upon the patron's desire and the intended setting. The tabernacle frames typically include a base, columns or pilasters and

an entablature that is a horizontal band that runs above and rests on the column's capital.²¹

The painter and restorer Neri di Bicci left us with invaluable details about the variety and construction of tabernacle frames. In his diary, *Le Ricordanze*, on September 1, 1455, Neri cites a contract with Giuliano da Majano to construct an altarpiece to be “square, in the classical style...with a predella at the base, fluted columns on the sides, and an architrave, frieze, and cornice with leaves above.”²² This classical style became popular and many trecento works were brought in for modernizations. Neri refers to a client who had a frame with *re cholmi apuntati* (“three pointed arches”) and arranges for Giuliano, with whom he often collaborated, to cut the work down, adjust it to become a rectangle and accommodate a tabernacle frame.²³

The works that are discussed below are images that underwent frame modernizations and works that are attributed to one artist and not hybrids. As mentioned earlier, minor painted additions were sometimes necessary in order to complete the look of the new frame. The works that will be discussed are two works by Giotto, the *Badia Polyptych* (ca. 1301-2) and the *Baroncelli Coronation* (ca. 1334), reframed in 1451 and 1480 respectively; Taddeo Gaddi's *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* (ca. 1340-45), reframed in the late fourteen hundreds; and Fra Angelico's *St. Dominic Altarpiece* (ca. 1428), reframed in 1501.

This chapter will conclude with an analysis of Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* (ca. 1438-43) to illustrate the shift in thinking that occurs in the mid-

Quattrocento regarding the conception of the sacred object. The two works by Giotto will be examined first. As Alessandro Conti notes in his history of restoration, Giotto's work was reframed but with the "specific intent of preserving the figurative elements of a master who enjoyed great prestige...What was no longer of any great interest was the Gothic frame...."²⁴

Giotto di Bondone, *Badia Polyptych*

Although now located in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Giotto's *Badia Polyptych* (ca. 1301-02; fig. 122) was originally created for the high altar of the Badia Fiorentina in Florence. Both Lorenzo Ghiberti in his *Commentaries* (ca. 1450) and Giorgio Vasari in the second edition of his *Lives* (1568) mention that Giotto painted the polyptych on the high altar of the Badia church. Neither source provides any description of the work, but a label on its reverse supports that it was indeed from the Badia abbey which was founded as a Benedictine monastery in 978 by Willa Marchioness of Tuscany and dedicated to the Virgin Mary.²⁵ Although some scholars suspected that the Badia Polyptych was painted by Giotto's workshop, most now accept the work as autographic of Giotto. The master's signature brushwork and style were revealed after the painting's 1958 cleaning.²⁶ The Badia's most recent cleaning, completed by Stefano Scarpelli in 2009, provided additional visual evidence of Giotto's singular involvement if not influence. For example, the cleaning reveals the Christ Child's right hand actively grabbing His mother's mantle, conveying a playful liveliness that, prior to restoration, appeared static and inanimate²⁷ (figs. 123 & 124). The *Badia*

Polyptych is believed to be one of Giotto's early works, and yet the artist already imparts his figures with a sense of three dimensionality and humanity.²⁸

The *Badia Polyptych* is comprised of five framed paintings with a triangular cusp, and portrays a half length bust of the Virgin holding the Christ Child in the center flanked by two saints on the left and two saints on the right, each of which is depicted in half length. As we look at the painting, beginning from the left, we see Saint Nicholas of Bari, Saint John the Evangelist, Mary and the Christ Child in the center, Saint Peter and Saint Benedict. Each of the four saints is identified by his name beneath and each holds his traditional attribute in his right hand and a book in his left hand. St. Nicholas on the far left and St. Benedict on the far right each face inward uniting the group. The five ogival arches that comprise the entire frame also contribute to the group's unity while at the same time each individual trefoil arch creates a separate architectural shrine for each figure. In the gable above each of the five panels is a tondo, containing an angel above each saint, and God the Father above Mary and the Christ Child.

Bildfeld and Rahmung: The Relationship

As noted earlier, the framing elements of trecento panel paintings were integral to the panel and the image. The *Badia Polyptych* was no exception. The Badia's raised moulding elements surrounding the painted figures resulted from carving away and removing the inner area of each panel. The image was painted on the recessed inner panel with the raised edge serving as a framing element. Only the pilasters that divide the panels and the mouldings along the

edges of the gables are separately attached pieces of wood.²⁹ Framing elements and images interact; the relationship between the image and frame becomes reciprocal. *Bildfeld*, the picture field, and *Rahmung*, the framing, become integrated and unified.

Restorers suspect that some original framing elements were removed when the polyptych was reframed in the mid-fifteenth century. It is believed that the gables were punctuated with pinnacles or spires since traces of their possible joins were discovered during the Badia's 2009 restoration.³⁰ These framing elements, no longer extant, would have accentuated and complemented the contemporary Gothic architecture of the Badia Fiorentina for which the polyptych was intended. Although built in 978 in the Romanesque style, the church was renovated during the late Dugento and early Trecento to reflect the popular contemporary Gothic architecture. The Badia altarpiece with its ogival arches, gables and pinnacles would reinforce the verticality and upward soaring typified by the Gothic style. However, in the mid-fifteenth century, modifications were made to the Badia Polyptych's frame to reflect the contemporary Renaissance architectural elements that were in vogue. The pinnacles were removed and the Polyptych was adapted to fit into a new frame that was horizontal and that de-emphasized its verticality and Gothic roots. Indeed, the holes that housed the anchor pins for the pinnacles are visible to the eye and also documented by recent X-radiographs.³¹

This quattrocento framing transformation was a relatively simple procedure; the original Gothic frame essentially remained and the new rectangular shaped frame was created with additional triangular elements to fill in the gaps between the gables. As a result, the Gothic frame “lived” within the Renaissance rectangle and could be easily returned to its original state. Indeed, during the *Badia Polyptych’s* cleaning in 1957-8, the Renaissance framing additions were removed. Today the *Badia Polyptych* resides in the Galleria degli Uffizi shed of its Renaissance accouterments.³² The restorer Umberto Baldini explained why the quattrocento additions were removed: “the Renaissance intervention in the structure of the Polyptych had taken Giotto’s figures into a new dimensional relationship; the figures were inserted into a space which was much too large and they consequently lost much of their expressive force.”³³

The next section will examine the *Badia Polyptych’s* quattrocento reframing.

Bildfeld and Rahmung: Harmonious Dissonance

Prior to its reframing in 1451-3, the *Badia Polyptych’s* original frame complemented its Gothic surroundings. Giotto’s polyptych, with its integrated frame, echoed the abbey’s late dugento Gothic architectural elements, the results of the abbey’s renovations begun in 1285 by the architect Arnolfo di Cambio. However, between the years 1420 and 1440, Abbot Gomezio di Giovanni began a rebuilding and redecorating program of reform to revitalize the Benedictine community. Anne Leader, in her study on the Badia in Florence, notes that the

abbey was “an important site of competitive self-fashioning.”³⁴ During the mid-Quattrocento there is an increase in the number of lay piety and we witness not only clergy but also private patrons engaging in a mid-century frenzy of one-upmanship to update and redecorate churches, cloisters and private family chapels.

The late Trecento and Quattrocento saw the rise of urban centers, wealthy city-states and centers of banking in Italy. Wealth became concentrated with bankers and merchants who, by the end of the Quattrocento, comprised a new social class. This commercial class sought to glorify their name and position by patronizing the arts. Banking families viewed the funding of altarpieces and chapels as a form of penance for practicing usury that was condemned by the Church and a way to promote their personal fame and prestige.

In this competitive environment, patrons demonstrated their appreciation of venerated images. The image was kept intact but its stature was enhanced and elevated by replacing its old fashioned frame with an updated one.³⁵ The Badia refurbishing campaign embraced the new Renaissance style to reflect classical Greco-Roman architecture and it was in this context that Giotto’s polyptych was reframed. Refurbishing the Badia reinforces the close interconnections among architectural space, art and religion. Reframing Giotto’s polyptych would help worshippers mediate between this venerated image and the abbey’s newly designed physical space.

The *Badia Polyptych* was reframed in the years 1451-3 to change its overall shape to become rectangular (fig. 125). The carpenter Giovanni Nardo dell-Omo was hired to construct triangular wooden pieces to be added to the original Gothic frame and serve to fill in the spaces between the Gothic style gables.³⁶ Scarpelli, who conducted the 2009 restoration of the Badia, notes that Francesco di Stefano (known as Pesellino) painted cherubs on the four large new wooden additions³⁷ (figs. 126 & 127). These triangular inserts squared the polyptych along the top to become rectangular and *all'antica*.

Although the new frame was no longer stylistically integrated with the image, it now complemented the new Renaissance style and the new space it occupied. Perhaps most importantly, viewers were able to relate more empathically with the new familiar style frame and not become distracted from the original and old-fashioned Gothic frame. However, since the polyptych's 1957-58 restoration when the image returned to its original frame, we have been unable to see how the mid-quattrocento renovation appeared to viewers. The Giotto *Badia Polyptych* hangs in the Uffizi today with no reference or photo of the Renaissance framing. Hoeniger suggests that, although Giotto's figures may appear more proportional and expressive in their original frame, she regrets that no value is afforded to the Renaissance decision to reframe the piece in accordance with contemporary viewers' tastes. Hoeniger believes that, to the Renaissance viewer, "the new dimensional relationship between the Gothic figures and their classically inspired framing was attractive."³⁸ I believe that

Hoeninger offers a critical insight into how we might approach the study and historical context of restoration shifts and practices.

When the new classically Renaissance style frame replaced the original Gothic style frame it was received as fashionable and current. A mid-fifteenth century style frame would now surround Giotto's early trecento polyptych. However, combining the two seemingly disparate styles did not create discord but rather presented a harmonious dissonance that was accepted and that resonated with its viewers. Old and highly revered images such as Giotto's polyptych have the capacity to evoke deep emotional feelings of piety; rather than the updated frame being a hindrance, it is instead an enhancement. The new frame shows respect for the venerated artwork and the desire to surround it in the newest fashion.³⁹ I concur with Irene Hueck who speculates that clerics had a predilection for antiquated images. And to amplify Hueck, I argue that by reframing the venerated and old image in a contemporary frame, one benefits from the powerful piety of the old and the familiar connection one has to the new.⁴⁰

Beyond the Frame

Indeed, the new frame went beyond the image both literally and metaphorically. It not only extended the physical dimensions of the image but the frame also transcended its boundaries in terms of its symbolic reach. The updated frame increased the power of the image to reach beyond its physical borders and become more than simply an image. By modernizing the frame,

images became an integral part of the architectural space. Patrons recognized and exploited the potential propagandistic value of updating sacred images and devotional spaces in order to increase their own political and spiritual efficacy. In the mid-Quattrocento several chapel interiors were renovated and venerated artworks were reframed to reflect the status and piety of the private patron or, in the case of the Badia Abbey, the Benedictine monastic order.⁴¹

Giotto di Bondone, *Baroncelli Coronation*

Giotto's *Baroncelli Altarpiece* (ca. 1334; fig. 128) was reframed in the late Quattrocento around 1480 in an ornate frame with classical details and was part of the renovation campaign for the Church of Santa Croce. Although nothing of the original altarpiece frame exists, it is likely that the main bay of the Baroncelli chapel looks today as it was originally intended. The *Baroncelli Altarpiece* is the only surviving example of a Giottoesque altarpiece in the setting for which it was originally intended and designed.⁴²

Vasari references the *Baroncelli Polyptych* in his *Lives*. However, in contrast to providing no descriptive information for Giotto's *Badia Polyptych*, Vasari describes the *Baroncelli Altarpiece* with descriptive details and definitively attributes the work to Giotto. Vasari writes that, in Santa Croce:

There is a panel in tempera by Giotto's hand, where the Coronation of Our Lady is executed with a great deal of diligence along with a very large number of small figures and a chorus of angels and

saints very carefully wrought. Giotto's name and the date are written in golden letters on this work, and artists who will reflect upon when it was that Giotto, without any knowledge of proper style, laid the foundations for the proper method of drawing and colouring, will be forced to hold him in the highest veneration.⁴³

Vasari's comments clearly indicate that he unquestionably identifies the *Baroncelli Polyptych* depicting the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the central panel, as Giotto's painting style. Although scholars have debated the extent to which Giotto was involved in the actual execution, Giotto's signature attests to the major role he played and the influence the master had on his *bottega*.⁴⁴ There are only three known signatures by Giotto: the *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, the *St. Francis* in the Louvre, and the altarpiece in the Pinacoteca of Bologna (fig. 129). As the art historian Julien Gardner notes, it is often suggested that the Bologna polyptych shares many structural and decorative features with the *Baroncelli Altarpiece*⁴⁵ (fig. 130).

The *Baroncelli Altarpiece* provides us with a rare opportunity to experience Giotto's early trecento work in its intended and original setting. The Baroncelli family commissioned the altarpiece in 1327 for the chapel donated by them and dedicated to the Madonna. We see Giotto's altarpiece of the *Coronation of the Virgin* as part of the chapel's intended overall design. Giotto's painting sits on what we believe is the original stone altar (ca. 1325), and is flanked by three

niche walls that are decorated with frescos by Taddeo Gaddi (painted ca. 1328-1338) depicting the life of Mary.⁴⁶

The Baroncelli chapel integrates a myriad of visual elements to form a cohesive and complementary unit (fig. 131). For example, the chapel's exquisitely designed stained glass lancet creates a jewel-like backdrop to Giotto's altarpiece and its brilliant pinks and blues echo the colors of Giotto's altarpiece and Taddeo's frescos. The chapel's myriad artistic elements all work in harmony to create an extraordinary visual medley of materials and textures that vividly and pedagogically communicate the narratives of the life of Mary in tableaux vivants.

Giotto's *Coronation of the Virgin* is comprised of five panels that form a continuous narrative. The center panel depicts Mary and Christ seated together on a Gothic styled throne as Christ crowns Her Queen of Heaven (figs. 132 & 133). Mary reverently bows her head to receive the crown while angels and saints bear witness to this joyous event. The angels are spectacular and somewhat steal the show. One cannot help but turn one's attention to their animated engagement and the detailed depiction of an array of musical instruments. Giotto not only conveys his knowledge of several contemporary musical instruments' appearance and structure but also his understanding of how these instruments are played. We see puffed out cheeks on those angels playing horns, string players with the appropriate pose and all with musical poses such as a subtle tilt of the head or bend of the neck and pipe players supporting

the instrument at the proper height (fig. 134). Giotto's *Coronation of the Virgin* visually culminates the chapel's program depicting the life of Mary.

The chapel's well-conceived program and highly integrated artistic elements are portrayed and epitomized in a small detail of Giotto's painting, which is now detached due to the reframing renovation in the late Quattrocento. The fragment is now in the San Diego Museum of Art and shows God the Father with angels, which was originally above the central panel (fig. 135). Six angels, three to the left and three to the right of God the Father, hover in the air like hummingbirds. What is striking is that one of the angels in each group of three holds up a round object attached to an extended handle in front of their face in order to shade their eyes from the intense light. This light emanates from the figure of God the Father but also from the spectacular and actual light shining in from the lancet behind and above⁴⁷ (fig. 131). Indeed, Taddeo also alludes to the chapel's brilliance. In one fresco he depicts a shepherd who is awakened by the shining light that perhaps emanates from the combination of the actual lancet and the fictive fresco of the Annunciation above.

Reframed

Given that the Baroncelli chapel is such a well-integrated program and that the altarpiece is still in its original location, one might think it a dissonant outrage that the original frame was discarded and the painting reframed around 1480. However, as with the *Badia Altarpiece*, the frame was updated to reflect contemporary Renaissance tastes and thereby to mitigate viewer distraction.

Unlike Giotto's *Badia Polyptych* that was reframed by adding sections to the original Gothic frame, the Baroncelli renovation was a radical departure from the old frame; the original frame was removed and replaced by a newly fabricated Renaissance *all'antica* frame. The old frame has not survived and we can only imagine what it looked like (fig. 130).

The new frame conforms to the Renaissance classical style with a squared silhouette that eliminates the Gothic pointed arches and pinnacles that we assume were part of the original frame. The central panel of Giotto's *Coronation of the Virgin* is taller than the other four panels which are each of equal height. Consequently, in order to "square off" the painting to conform to the new rectangular frame, restorers removed and discarded the top portion of the central panel so that all five panels were equal in height. The portion that was removed depicted the image of God the Father with angels.⁴⁸

The new frame is quite ornate. The cornice molding is decorated with a classic egg and dart motif below which is a frieze in gold relief depicting alternating cherubim with classic palmettes and foliage designs. The side pilasters are embellished with raised gold classical urn designs that are enhanced with foliage and topped with gold Corinthian capitols with the characteristic acanthus leaves. The gold decorations are striking against the deep blue background.

The Cherubim theme is continued and much needed to fill in the upper gaps in the spandrels between the panels. As in the *Badia* reframing, new

wooden sections were added to mitigate the Gothic arches and make the pointed panels conform to a horizontal frame. Painted cherubs with spreading wings were added to fill the triangular spaces, echoing the cherubs in the cornice above.

Hoeniger notes that these types of interventions are often difficult to attribute because the evidence is often sparse and these frames often look alike. However, she notes that the *Baroncelli Altarpiece* frame is an exception and because of its high quality and distinct detailing can be associated with the workshop of Giuliano da Maiano.⁴⁹ The painted cherubim in the spandrels may have been painted by the Ghirlandaio workshop since Ghirlandaio was working on the *Assumption of the Virgin with St. Thomas* fresco in the early 1480s in Santa Croce and at the time of the Baroncelli reframing.⁵⁰

In updating and glorifying Giotto's venerated painting with a new frame, the Baroncelli family reasserts its importance as a powerful Tuscan family. The renovation affirms the family's wealth, power and piety, and also their appreciation and respect for Giotto, the Florentine master. The new frame honors Giotto and promotes the Baroncelli family name. Rather than be seen as a dissonant element, the new frame must be understood in the early Italian Renaissance historical context: wealthy banking families publically demonstrating their appreciation and knowledge of art while at the same time increasing the perception of their piety to ensure their salvation.

Samuel K. Cohen details the rise in testators' bequests for private family chapels during the late Quattrocento in Tuscany, and the Baroncelli chapel can

be viewed in this larger context.⁵¹ The Baroncelli banking family would no doubt want to be associated with the intelligentsia and those knowledgeable about and appreciative of fine art. One only needs to remember the words of Petrarch, who wrote that he owned a Madonna painting by Giotto “whose beauty amazes the masters of art, though the ignorant cannot understand it.”⁵² Clearly the Baroncelli family wanted to be aligned with the “masters of art.” As Niall Ferguson reminds us, up until the late Trecento, early Italian Renaissance bankers were often thought to be more like gangsters rather than bankers because of their usury practices.⁵³ Even in the late Quattrocento, we see that these pejorative associations linger.

Another altarpiece that underwent reframing in the late Quattrocento was Taddeo Gaddi's *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* (fig. 136). Taddeo's altarpiece is another example of a trecento work that was updated more than a century after it was painted. Its classic new frame helped bring this Gothic work into the Renaissance.

Taddeo Gaddi, *Madonna and Child with Four Saints*

Taddeo's altarpiece, *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* (ca. 1340-45), was reframed in the late fifteenth century when its five panels were removed from their pointed-arched Gothic frame and reset into a classic architectural frame to reflect the current style. Like the *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, the central panel was shortened to accommodate the new rectangular frame and new pieces of wood were added to fill in the triangular spandrels between the pointed arches caused

by the reframing. Images of the four Evangelists, Luke, John, Mark and Matthew were painted in the newly created spandrels by the workshop of Ghirlandaio.⁵⁴ Ornamental pilasters were painted and added between the standing saints to fill in the gaps created when the Gothic framing elements were removed.

The altarpiece depicts four full-length figures of saints. On the far left is St. Lawrence who holds the grill of his martyrdom and next to him is John the Baptist shown with his right arm and hand extended and raised in a blessing gesture. The central panel depicts the Madonna and Child with angels. The Child playfully pulls on His Mother's veil depicting the motif often employed by Duccio.⁵⁵ To the right we see the apostle James who is the patron of pilgrims and thus is depicted holding a staff and a book decorated with a pilgrim's shell. On the far right is St. Stephen who is shown with a large stone embedded in his bloodied scalp to indicate the object of his martyrdom⁵⁶ (figs. 137 & 138).

Unlike the *Baroncelli Altarpiece*, the Taddeo is no longer in its originally intended location but rather in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The polyptych was purchased by the Met in 1910 from Marcello Galli-Dunn who lived between Florence and Siena in the Castello di Badia in Poggibonsi. We can only speculate on the painting's provenance but as early as 1910, the Taddeo altarpiece was associated with a reference made by Vasari in his *Lives*.⁵⁷

There is no certain information regarding its original location, but Vasari writes in his Life on Taddeo Gaddi, "In S. Stefano del Ponte Vecchio he painted the panel and the predella of the high-altar with great diligence."⁵⁸ The art

historian Andrew Ladis believes that the connection between the Taddeo polyptych and Santo Stefano is “groundless” because Vasari fails to mention the painting’s fifteenth century frame renovation.⁵⁹

However, I believe that Landis’s argument fails to fully take into account Vasari’s other writings. For example, when one compares Vasari’s account of Taddeo’s altarpiece with his account of Giotto in his *Lives*, Vasari also omits any reference to the fifteenth century renovated frames on Giotto’s Badia and Baroncelli altarpieces. Perhaps Vasari did not feel the need to mention the renovated frames because he saw them as part of the accepted contemporary restoration practice. I suggest that it is essential to consider Vasari’s view of restoration within the historical context of the sixteenth century in which he lived, and that interventions are appropriate when they contribute to the work’s overall *buona maniera*.⁶⁰

Vasari wrote about restoration practices and, although he did not directly address the fifteenth century custom of renovating frames, his writings do imply what his beliefs could be about the reframe interventions discussed in this chapter. Vasari defends and praises himself for restoring and updating the parish church of Arezzo. Vasari writes:

Moved by Christian devotion, and by the affection in which I hold this venerable collegiate and ancient church, and because it was in the church that, when decked in my first youth, I took my first

instruction, and that it contains the relics of my ancestors, I was moved--as I have said--by these reasons, and by seeing it in so derelict a condition, to restore it in such a manner that one could say that from being dead, it returned to life. In addition to having brought light to it (it had been very dark) by enlarging the existing windows as well as making new ones, I also moved the choir, from the front where it occupied a large portion of the church, to behind the altar, to the great satisfaction of the canons.⁶¹

The above passage indicates that Vasari felt that it was necessary to update and change works that no longer fulfilled their devotional function. Although Vasari does not explicitly refer to reframed images, I suspect that he would think that the Gothic frames would be distracting and interfere with the art's devotional function. The new Renaissance frame would support Vasari's restoration approach to promote *buona maniera*, good style.

There is circumstantial evidence that supports Vasari's claim that Taddeo's *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* was located on the high altar of Santo Stefano del Ponte Vecchio: the inclusion of St. Stephen and in addition, Vasari attributes the predella to a later artist, Antonio Veneziano. In *Lives*, Vasari writes "Afterwards, in S. Stefano del Ponte Vecchio, on the predella of the high altar, Antonio Veneziano made some stories of Saint Stephen, with such great lovingness that it is not possible to see either more gracious or more beautiful

figures, even if they were done in miniature.”⁶² Assigning the predella to an artist other than Taddeo aligns with more recent speculation that associates the Taddeo altarpiece predella with eight panels by Bernardo Daddi which depicts the life of St. Stephen and in the Pinacoteca Vaticana.

The reframed altarpieces discussed above must be understood within the context of mid-quattrocento restoration practices. Venerated and revered images were reframed in order to increase their devotional function and impact. The Gothic frames were seen as distracting and not, as Vasari notes, in *buona maniera*. This approach and attitude regarding restoration practices continues into the early Cinquecento with Fra Angelico’s *San Domenico Altarpiece*.

Fra Angelico, *St. Dominic Altarpiece*

Fra Angelico’s *St. Dominic Altarpiece* (ca. 1428) was reframed and radically renovated in 1501 by the Florentine painter and sculptor Lorenzo di Credi (fig. 139). The renovation transformed the late Gothic polyptych into a contemporary and classic Renaissance rectangular frame.

We can only imagine how the *San Domenico Altarpiece* originally looked but suspect that it was conceived as a triptych and united as a single panel when renovated by Credi in 1501 during the church’s modernization.⁶³ The painting shows Mary and the Christ Child in the center panel, seated on a curved throne and surrounded by angels-- three angels standing and one kneeling to Her left and three angels standing and one kneeling to Her right.

In addition to the angels, a pair of saints flanks the central panel. On the far left is St. Thomas of Aquinas, the principle scholar of the Dominican Order and next to him is St. Barnabas, the patron saint of Barnaba degli Agli, who died in 1418 and left 6,000 florins in his will to complete the church and convent of San Dominic that was founded in 1406.⁶⁴ On the far right of the central panel is Peter the Martyr, a Dominican friar, and next to him stands St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order. Fra Angelico quite deliberately suffuses his painting with Dominican ideals; Mary and the Christ Child are venerated and surrounded by angels and are flanked by saints, all of whom are dedicated to the Dominican Order.

Dating the Work

Although most scholars agree that Fra Angelico's Altarpiece for San Domenico in Fiesole was painted prior to 1430, some disagreement exists regarding just how early in the Quattrocento it was painted and what factors may have influenced the artist. Hoeniger dates the *San Domenico Altarpiece* to around 1428, citing that its continuous floor pattern represents a development on Angelico's *St. Peter Martyr Altarpiece* (ca. 1425-9: fig. 140). William Hood, on the other hand, suggests that it was the *San Domenico Altarpiece* that won Fra Angelico the commission for the *San Pier Martire Altarpiece* which Hood dates to 1428. John T. Spike notes that the saints' "downward pointing toes" are a vestige of the Gothic style and therefore he assigns an early date of 1420 to the *San Domenico Altarpiece*.⁶⁵

However, I argue that the most compelling and salient factor for one to consider when placing the *San Domenico Altarpiece* in the early decades of the Quattrocento is Fra Angelico's innovative depiction of continuous flooring and specifically, patterned tile flooring. I agree with Hoeniger, who notes that the *San Domenico Altarpiece* represents a further development of the marble flooring Fra Angelico incorporates in his *San Pier Martire Altarpiece*. Although the flooring in the *San Domenico Altarpiece* does not accurately adhere to the mathematics of linear perspective, the patterned tiles do reflect an awareness and attempt to represent receding space and depth. However, unlike the veined and continuous marble slab flooring in the *San Pier Martire Altarpiece*, the patterned tiles in the *San Domenico Altarpiece* enable Fra Angelico to show individual orthogonals that recede into the distance and suggest a vanishing point.

Perhaps we can imagine both Fra Angelico and Masaccio witness to Filippo Brunelleschi's public Florentine Baptistery experiment of 1425 in which the architect visually revealed the mystery and documented the method of representing linear perspective, which at the time may have appeared magical.⁶⁶ I believe that Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* acknowledges Brunelleschi's experiment and therefore, date the work to no earlier than 1425.⁶⁷ As Samuel Y. Edgerton perceptively notes:

The accent in the works of Masaccio, Masolino, Fra Angelico, Fra Lippo Lippi, Domenico Veneziano, and other masters of the 1420s,

1430s, and 1440s, was now not on sensuous charm of pictorial surface, but rather on compelling the viewer to a more intellectual contemplation of the picture's holy subject; here Brunelleschi's new perspective rules played their part."⁶⁸

And what a part these new rules played! If the early Renaissance sacred images strove to foster empathic connections between the sacred figures and their viewers, how much more effective this bond would be if viewers could feel a part of their space and participants in the narrative? Although originally conceived as a triptych, the *San Domenico Altarpiece* reflects Fra Angelico's innovative way to convey a unified space that invites us in. A shared and continuous floor unites the figures and, although we do not know the original appearance of the *San Domenico Altarpiece*, since it was radically renovated and reframed in 1501, it is likely that Fra Angelico used it as the model for his *Cortona Altarpiece* which also incorporates continuous flooring and which is still intact (fig. 141).

The New Polyptych: A Break with Tradition

The *Cortona Altarpiece* informs our understanding of the original conception for the *San Domenico Altarpiece* (fig. 142). In each of these works, the framing elements and the continuous flooring open up the sense of space that we experience in the traditional trecento polyptych. Based on the appearance of the *Cortona Altarpiece*, we suspect that the *San Domenico*

Altarpiece was originally conceived so that each pair of saints that flanks the Virgin and Christ Child was not entirely separated by framing. Each saint has an individual ogival arch above his head but the pair is not fully separated from the other with a pilaster which is the common framing approach of traditional polyptychs. However, in both the *Cortona* and *San Domenico Altarpieces*, only a slight separation between the saints is suggested; the overhead ogival arches terminate at the saints' shoulder height, allowing each pair to share contiguous space.⁶⁹ Only the central panel figures--Mary, the Christ Child and angels--are physically separated by pilasters. Yet nonetheless, continuous flooring unites all the figures.

Fra Angelico begins to change the traditional trecento polyptych model of depicting spatial relationships among the figures. Rather than dividing the figures in confined and distinct rigid spaces, Fra Angelico begins to unify figures in a shared physical space. In 1501 Lorenzo di Credi will reframe Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* and push these spatial boundaries even further. Credi will remove all of the framing elements that separated the figures such as the ogival arches and the pilasters that physically divide the Virgin and Christ Child from the paired saints. However, Credi's renovations included changes beyond framing elements; he radically transformed Angelico's conception of space. Lorenzo di Credi transforms Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* into a more fully unified *sacra conversazione* space and opens up the background space to become an Albertian "window" to reveal the fictive painted landscape beyond.

The Context

When Lorenzo di Credi reframed Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* in 1501, he needed to work within the context of an overall expansion plan and modernization effort of the San Domenico church and convent that began in 1486. The original structure of San Domenico, which dates between 1418 and 1420, was small and it was on the high altar of this original building where Fra Angelico's altarpiece stood.⁷⁰ However, during the extensive modernization, the high altar was removed and placed against a wall. This interior modernization was begun in 1488 and it was this new floor plan and architectural setting that influenced Credi's reframing decisions regarding Angelico's altarpiece.⁷¹ Credi needed to consider his new designs in the context of the new interior and the contemporary Renaissance architectural elements that were being installed; the classical rounded arches and the dark grey-green pietra serena accents that were fabricated from the stone indigenous to Fiesole and often seen incorporated into Brunelleschi's work.

Now that the high altar was repositioned against a wall, Credi decided to create illusionistic "windows" through that wall to reveal a fictive, painted, pastoral Arcadian landscape which became a fitting backdrop for Mary, the Queen of Heaven, who is also part of our physical world. Credi not only brought Angelico's image up to date to align it with Renaissance taste, he also related the work to the new architectural setting and physical space. Credi's new design seems to fully apprehend and illustrate the complexities surrounding the questions

proposed by Derrida and the idea of the frame as parergon, for example, where does the frame begin and end, and what are its limits? I argue that Credi's renovations beg these questions and further cloud any answers.

The Reframing

Credi reframed and repainted sections of Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece* to align it with contemporary Renaissance tastes and the building's modernization plan. Credi removed and dismantled the original frame but saved many of the old framing elements. He salvaged and adapted the original lateral pilasters and the predella box but also fabricated new elements to increase the painting's height. For example, the pilaster figures were given niches of *pietra serena* and their gold leaf background was painted over.⁷² He added new Corinthian capitals and a large entablature that added height to the original work.⁷³ This newly expanded background was repainted to cover the original gold leaf and was replaced instead with painted *trompe l'oeil* classical architectural arches to border the illusionistic open "windows" that were added to the left and right of the central panel that features Mary and the Christ Child.⁷⁴ Through these "windows" we see a gradated blue sky and the painted Arcadian landscape that recedes into deep space and the distance beyond.

The *trompe l'oeil* architectural center arch painted behind Mary and the Christ Child frames the figures and distinguishes them while at the same time, simulates and refers to the actual *pietra serena* architectural elements in the church. In addition, this painted fictive center arch creates a contrasting

background to the illusionistic windows that flank it and at the same time, visually pushes the central figures closer to viewers. Conversely, the open “windows” draw us back into the far distance while Mary and the Christ Child appear to advance forward and therefore, appear to become more accessible to viewers. Credi tempers Mary’s approachability by placing directly behind Her a deep blue regal cloth of honor, which is framed by a majestic arch. Perhaps the artist wants to remind us of Her role as Queen of Heaven, while also attainable.

I suspect that Credi’s renovations were influenced by one of Fra Angelico’s later works, the *San Marco Altarpiece* (ca. 1438-43). It is most probable that Credi saw the extraordinary innovations Angelico incorporated in his *San Marco Altarpiece* and used these as models for his 1501 San Domenico restoration. As Hood notes, “What Lorenzo di Credi did was to modernize one altarpiece by Fra Angelico according to the standards of another.”⁷⁵ I will return to the *San Marco Altarpiece* at the end of this section and address these innovations. Although the *San Marco Altarpiece* is not an example of an early Italian Renaissance sacred work that was repainted or reframed, I include it in this study, not as an example of premature restoration, but as a work that quintessentially embodies the values of the vernacular culture that, I will later argue, influenced and motivated these early interventions.

A consequence of Credi’s renovations is that the dimensions of the three center sections of the original predella box no longer aligned with the new framing above.⁷⁶ The center figures in the center section of the predella are

attributed to Fra Angelico but, given the inconsistency in style and execution, the artist most likely collaborated with studio assistants and perhaps with his brother, Benedetto.⁷⁷ There is no evidence that Credi touched the predella.⁷⁸

Due to Credi's radical transformation of the *San Domenico Altarpiece*, much of Fra Angelico's original work is now hidden. However, what we do see, and still remains evident, is Angelico's interest to open up the confined and rigid spaces of the traditional polyptych and to unify the figures in one shared space. As Anneke De Vries notes in regard to Fra Angelico's *San Domenico Altarpiece*, we see the "first step in an artistic development that would soon become a 'velvet' revolution."⁷⁹

The 'Revolution' Continues: Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece*

Fra Angelico continues this "velvet" revolution and further develops the manner in which he depicts space. We see a radical departure from tradition in the artist's *San Marco Altarpiece* (ca. 1438-1443; fig. 143). Fra Angelico turns a conventional subject--the Virgin and Child enthroned with saints--into a monumental and new look. For example, the traditional polyptych framing elements such as soaring pinnacles and gables are gone. Also, there is no gold ground.⁸⁰

What is most striking is that the figures share one space together in a room to which we can relate and mix with each other as if attending a social gathering. Viewers can easily see themselves as part of this meeting and perhaps welcome to contribute to the conversation. Indeed, as Hood notes,

heretofore the convention was for this traditional subject to convey a sense of awe and distance to viewers.⁸¹ Fra Angelico, however, eliminates all hierarchical divisions and unites the figures in this large, seven foot square painting.

Viewers are visually led into the altarpiece by the patterned carpet that recedes in perspectival space and toward Mary's throne, which conveys a sense of depth.⁸² It is now more than a decade since Brunelleschi's 1425 perspective experiment, and only a few years after Alberti published his 1435 treatise *On Painting* in which he outlines the mathematical rules regarding perspective and converging orthogonal lines. All lines seem to point to Mary's chest and lead one's eyes to Her. Hellmut Wohl traced the orthogonals of the carpet in the foreground which converge at that single vanishing point in the middle of the panel.⁸³ Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* appears to visually translate Alberti's theory on perspective and canon of proportions. All of the figures are proportional and the same scale as each other, which further helps to unify the group.

Furthermore, in the *San Marco Altarpiece*, we see Alberti's reliance on Cicero and Quintilian in regard to the orators' advice to rhetoricians, whose recommendations Alberti finds useful for artists. Fra Angelico engages viewers by means of his figures' gestures, gazes and expressions. Two groups of figures on either side of Mary and the Christ Child lead our eyes to the center in the way, as Spike notes, "that columns in the nave of a church lead inevitably to the apse."⁸⁴ And what animated "columns" these are! On our visual journey to Mary

and the Christ Child, we are compelled to make intermittent stops along the way in order to partake of the figures' interactions, just as Alberti would recommend. For example, St. Cosmas turns and looks out to viewers in order to get our attention and with his right hand, points to the Virgin and Child.⁸⁵ Cosmas directs us with his gesture while his facial expression evokes the solemn nature of this event (figs. 144, 145 & 146).

As discussed in Chapter Three of this study, the right hand is the one typically assigned to convey a gesture. In the *San Marco Altarpiece*, we see that the right hand plays an important role in regard to St. Cosmas and also with St. Mark, who holds his gospel open with his left hand but gestures to the text with his right hand. Mark points to chapter 6, verses 2-8 which describe how Jesus sent the Apostles out to heal the sick.⁸⁶ In the *San Marco Altarpiece*, Fra Angelico visually embodies two central ideas of Alberti's treatise *On Painting*: mathematical perspective and the use of gesture.

Fra Angelico's *San Marco Altarpiece* fully captures Alberti's description to artists of how to implement Brunelleschi's mathematical system of perspective, in addition to illustrating Alberti's advice on engaging viewers with a variety of gestures and facial expressions. Alberti fully recognized that painters could capitalize on and benefit from the genius of Brunelleschi's mathematical breakthrough and also exploit the psychological astuteness of both Cicero and Quintilian in regard to their recommendations to orators. Alberti was aware of the powerful implications these ideas could have for artists and we see his advice

visually expressed by Fra Angelico in his *San Marco Altarpiece*. A perspectival setting and decorous gestures help tell a story.

As a result of the unified spatial arrangement and the convincing interaction of the figures in the *San Marco Altarpiece*, we too feel engaged in this *sacre conversazione*. Perhaps Fra Angelico, although a Dominican, recalls the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi, who also, in the early 1200s, emotionally connected with the people. St. Francis's spiritual appeal and popularity were founded in vernacular culture. We see the influence of St. Francis's vernacular preaching develop and flourish throughout the early Italian Renaissance and exemplified by the authors of *sacre rappresentazioni*, a new dramatic genre that appeared in Florence in the mid-1440s.⁸⁷ These theatrical enactments were live expressions of their painted counterparts, the *sacre conversazione*.

In the conclusion that follows, I will examine an art work that exemplifies the profound affect the new vernacular culture had in motivating artists to prematurely renovate devotional images, and that amplifies the early Italian Renaissance awareness that sacred images need to connect empathically with viewers in order to increase their efficacy. Indeed, I suggest that the early Italian Renaissance premature renovations might illuminate our current thinking about art history and art restoration.

Endnotes

¹ See Offner, Section III: The Fourteenth Century, vol. 5, 88-89 fn. 10; Hoeniger, *Renovation*, chapter 5; Conti and Glanville, 8-14; and Nagel, "Fashion," 42.

² Nagel, "Fashion," 43.

³ Many scholars explain the motivation to repaint sacred images as the need to update or modernize them. See publications by Nagel; Cole; and Hoeniger. They discuss the renovations in the context of religious efficacy but do not explicitly tie the repaintings to empathy theory.

⁴ Giorgio Vasari only rarely makes references to restoration but does attack Sodoma's restoration of Signorelli's *Circumcision*, in the life of Signorelli in *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*.

⁵ The *Selve Madonna*, c. 1482, in the church of SS. Filippo e Giacomo at Lecceto, is an example of such a hybrid altarpiece and possibly includes Byzantine fragments as well as dugento and trecento elements. Neri di Bicci renovated the altarpiece in 1482 but many elements of the Byzantine *maniera greca* were unchanged. Retaining the original painted elements elevates these older fragments to the status of relics and increases their power. In keeping with the mid-fifteenth century shift in restoration practice, the *Selve* altarpiece was reframed in the classical Renaissance style. For a detailed description of the *Selve Madonna Altarpiece*, see Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 44-56.

⁶ Klaus Krüger, "Medium and Imagination: Aesthetic Aspects of Trecento Panel Painting," 57 in Schmidt.

⁷ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 83.

⁸ Ellwood and Braun 205.

⁹ The word *parergon* is an ancient concept that can be traced to both Quintilian and Pliny. Quintilian refers to embellishments that are added to discourse (Inst. Orat., II,3.) and Pliny refers to embellishments added to painting or *addenda* (Nat. Hist., XXXV, 101-2.). *Para/ergon* is what is added to a work. See Stoichita, chapter 2, for a useful analysis of and application of *parergon*.

¹⁰ Derrida and Owens 3-41.

¹¹ Ibid. 20.

¹² Stoichita 23.

¹³ Newberry and Bisacca 12.

¹⁴ Ibid. 13.

¹⁵ Ibid. 14.

¹⁶ White, "Measurement," 549.

¹⁷ Newberry, Bisacca, and Kanter 19-20.

¹⁸ Hoeniger notes that the painter and art restorer Neri di Bicci confirms the outdated look of Gothic frames in his *Le Ricordanze*, a diary he kept in the years 1453-1475. See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 106.

¹⁹ See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 168. fn 11, and Offner, *Florentine Painting*, 88-89 fn 10. I am grateful to Cathleen Hoeniger for locating the original source for me.

²⁰ Conti and Glanville 8.

²¹ The National Gallery of Art Newsletter, July 7- September, 2007, Washington, D.C.

²² Newberry, Bisacca, and Kanter 22. References Neri di Bicci, *Le Ricordanze* (10 marzo 1453-24 aprile 1475), ed. Bruno Santi, Pisa, 1976, entry 64, p. 33. “quadra, al’antica...chon predella da pie, cholonne a canale da lato e architrave, freg[i]o, chornic[i]one e foglia di sopra.” Giuliani da Majano, a wood carver, was employed by Neri di Bicci and the two often worked together carving frames.

²³ Newberry, Bisacca, and Kanter 22.

²⁴ Conti and Glanville 8.

²⁵ Angelo Tartuferi, “L’opera,” 54 in Tartuferi, ed. The work was transferred to storerooms in the Museo di San Marco due to the Napoleonic suppression of religious houses in 1810. Documents from the Archivio delle Gallerie in Florence and the Accademia di Bell Arti attest that the work was first transferred to San Marco and then to the convent of Santa Croce where it remained until the mid-nineteenth century. After it was restored in 1958, it was brought to the Uffizi where it still resides.

²⁶ Flores d’Arais, *Giotto* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995) 118-19.

²⁷ Angelo Tartuferi, "L'opera," 18 in Tartuferi, ed.

²⁸ Gordon, *Italian Paintings*, 228.

²⁹ Andrea De Marchi, "Geometria E Naturalezza, Modulo E Ritmo," 37 in Tartuferi, ed.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Stevano Scarpelli, "L'intervento di Restauro alla Luce dello Stato di Conservazione e delle Techiche Esecutive," 103 in Tartuferi, ed.

³² See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 6.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Leader, *Badia*, 55.

³⁵ See Ferguson 43-44. Ferguson notes that the Medici family created ways to circumvent charging interest by receiving lower prices from merchants in return for money lent.

³⁶ Andrea De Marchi, "Geometria E Naturalezza, Modulo E Ritmo," 39 in Tartuferi, ed. The updated framing was removed during the 1957-58 cleaning and the work was restored to its original look. The removal of the updated framing elements was possible without damage to the original work.

³⁷ Stevano Scarpelli, "L'intervento di Restauro alla Luce dello Stato di Conservazione e delle Techiche Esecutive," 103 in Tartuferi, ed.

³⁸ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 6.

³⁹ See note 6, above, 57-81. Krüger discusses the alterations on trecento painting within the context of an historically reflected awareness of style.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 64-65, fn 25.

⁴¹ The San Marco cloister was undergoing a similar renovation and redecoration at this time.

⁴² Gardner, "Decoration," 89-114.

⁴³ Vasari, *Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 17-18. Francesca Flores D'Arcais, in her 1995 book *Giotto*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal, writes on page 337 that Vasari mentions "that the upper part of the frame and the cherubs carved between the arches are from the fifteenth century." I cannot find any mention of this in either the 1991 Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella translation of *The Lives* or in the 1912 Gaston Du C. De Vere translation.

⁴⁴ Skaug 141, fn 1.

⁴⁵ Gardner, "Decoration," 108.

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Professor Julian Gardner for graciously exchanging numerous communications with me about the altar's dating and provenance. He concludes that the altar is original to the design and attributes it to a Florentine sculptor c. 1325. Gardner notes that the socket holes in the altar slab match the dimensions of the altarpiece, the stone block itself and that the style of the relief sculptures are probably from the fourteenth century.

⁴⁷ See Gardner, "Decoration," 104.

⁴⁸ This section was discovered by Federico Zeri in 1957 and is now in the San Diego Museum of Art. See Gardner, "Decoration," 104, 112, fn 23.

⁴⁹ See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 107. The Baroncelli frame closely resembles frames by Giuliano's brother Benedetto da Maiano.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 109 and fn 21. Ghirlandaio and Giuliano da Maiano often collaborated together on projects for example, the chapel of Santa Fina in the collegiate at San Gimignano.

⁵¹ Samuel K. Cohen details the rise in testators' bequests for private family chapels during the late Quattrocento, in Cohen 58-71.

⁵² Petrarch praises Giotto's art in his "*Letters on Familiar Matters*" and in his will bequeaths a Madonna painting by Giotto to Francesco da Carrara. See Francesco Petrarch, *Rerum Familiarum Libri*, Book V, no. 17, and Petrarch, *Petrarch: A Critical Guide*.

⁵³ See Ferguson 42.

⁵⁴ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 101. Hoeniger notes that the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio was often engaged in renovation projects.

⁵⁵ Andrew Ladis notes that the motif of the Christ Child playfully pulling on Mary's veil is rare in Florentine painting of the period. See Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi*, 151.

⁵⁶ I am grateful to Patrice Mattia at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for granting me permission to view the altarpiece in storage while the galleries were renovated. I want to also thank her for giving me full access to the painting's archives.

⁵⁷ Mather 252-54.

⁵⁸ Giorgio Vasari, "Life of Taddeo Gaddi," in The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Trans. Gaston du C. de Vere.

⁵⁹ Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi*, 151 and fn. 2. See also Mather 252-54. Mather proposed that possibility of connection between the Taddeo altarpiece and Santo Stefano a Ponte.

⁶⁰ Conti and Glanville 40.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Metropolitan Museum of art notes on Taddeo Gaddi's *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*.

⁶³ Ahl 44.

⁶⁴ Dillian Gordon, Martin Wyld and Ashok Roy, *Fra Angelico's Predella for the High Altarpiece of San Domenico, Fiesole* (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2002) 4.

⁶⁵ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 121. Some scholars date the *San Domenico Altarpiece* earlier, between 1419 and 1425. See Anneke De Vries, "A Velvet Revolution: Fra Angelico's High Altarpiece for San Domenico in Fiesole," in Kanter and Palladino, who dates the work shortly after the convent was occupied in 1419. Kanter and Palladino cite similarities to Lorenzo di Bicci's *Virgin and Child Enthroned, with Kneeling Donor* which documents work on the painting as early as July 1423-April 1424. Diane Cole Ahl suggests that the *San Domenico*

Altarpiece may have been installed in 1424-25 when the altar cloth for the high altar chapel was completed; see Ahl 45. See also Hood 65 and Spike 84.

⁶⁶ Edgerton 124-142.

⁶⁷ It was c. 1425 that Masaccio painted his painting *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella in Florence which also betrays the knowledge of linear perspective and Brunelleschi's experiment.

⁶⁸ Edgerton 35.

⁶⁹ John Pope-Hennessy notes that in its original form the San Domenico Altarpiece consisted of three panels of approximately equal width; the central panel of the Virgin and Child and the two flanking panels of paired saints. He adds that the form of the pointed arch above Mary and Child as well as the arches above the saints can still be seen on the surface of the painting. See Pope-Hennessy 189.

⁷⁰ Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 124.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Gordon, *Fra Angelico's Predella*, 6.

⁷³ Ibid.121.

⁷⁴ See note 69 above.

⁷⁵ Hood, *Fra Angelico*, 66.

⁷⁶ Hoeniger notes that the original predella was sold before 1827 and replaced by a nineteenth-century copy. The original predella is in the National Gallery in London.

⁷⁷ Ahl 45.

⁷⁸ Gordon, *Fra Angelico's Predella*, 6.

⁷⁹ See endnote 65 above, De Vries, "A Velvet Revolution," 64.

⁸⁰ Hood, *Fra Angelico*, 97.

⁸¹ Ibid. 98.

⁸² The throne replicates the classical architectural elements of the newly renovated church by the architect Michelozzo.

⁸³ See Spike 52-53 and 268, fn 134 and 135.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 124. One is reminded of the columns on the porch of the Caryatids on the Greek temple, the Erechtheion, c. 405, which was dedicated to Athena. Here, the female figures function as columns. Perhaps in his *San Marco Altarpiece*, Fra Angelico alludes to the comparison between the human figure and the column with the receding rows of saints that are positioned on each side of Mary.

⁸⁵ Both Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian were physicians and Fra Angelico depicts Cosmas holding a salve spreader in his right hand which is a symbol of his profession.

⁸⁶ Spike 124. Spike suggests that Fra Angelico intended to bestow apostolic status upon the physician saints, Cosmas and Damian, who were patron saints of Pierfrancesco and Piero de' Medici.

⁸⁷ Dempsey, *The Early Renaissance*, 119.

Conclusion: Final Reflections

The renovation of sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance documents the importance of meaningful reception and helps us more fully to understand and appreciate each work's intended function, its cultural and historical context, and the need for the work to forge empathic connections with viewers. The premature restorations discussed in this study provide us with insights that have the potential to enrich and illuminate our understanding of art objects across all cultures and time frames; the capacity for empathy transcends time and place.

In addition, these premature interventions help to enrich our understanding of restoration practices that reflect the prevailing attitudes and shifts in taste. Ultimately, restoration decisions are made by patrons and restorers and shaped by cultural and contextual influences. Each restored work of art reflects and is dependent upon the restorer's aesthetic choices.¹

Indeed, the positive viewer response to Duccio's art, and the overwhelming appeal of St. Francis which resulted from the popularity of a vernacular culture, created a climate in Italy at the beginning of the Trecento that was receptive to images that evoke the emotions. At this time we see sacred images prematurely and selectively renovated not to repair damages but to deepen empathic devotional connections with viewers. The renovated images enabled viewers to more easily identify with and relate to the emotions conveyed by the depicted holy figures.

Hans Belting, in his book *Likeness and Presence*, notes that art took on a different meaning after the Middle Ages when images began to be identified with a particular artist and what Belting refers to as the “era of art.” Prior to this shift and emphasis on the artist, Belting believes that images best revealed their meaning by their use; therefore, he considers that the role images play needs to be viewed within their particular cultural and historical context. The idea that spiritual power was located in sacred objects and images reinforces the motivation to renovate sacred images in order to ensure their optimum efficacy.²

An example of one such renovation that epitomizes the cultural climate and the influences that motivated these interventions is the Tuscan panel painting of St. Luke (ca. 1275-80; fig. 147) that is attributed to the Master of Maddalena, a thirteenth century Florentine artist.³ The painting is located in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, and looks today as it did when first painted (see figure of St. Luke). However, this panel painting has an intriguing history and underwent restorations soon after it was painted. When this painting of St. Luke arrived at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence in 1934 for examination, it appeared to date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. However, X-radiographs conducted during the panel’s cleaning and restoration between the years 1934 and 1935 determined that the image that appeared visible to the naked eye was in fact repainted over two earlier paint layers which were hidden beneath the surface. The X-radiographs revealed that the late eighteenth century repainted face completely covered two earlier faces; both the original

dugento face and the early Renaissance trecento renovated face. Fortunately, the two previously painted layers were left intact (figs. 148 & 149).⁴

Scientific tests determined that the first repainted face dates to the early Trecento and was repainted shortly after the original painting was completed in the late Dugento. However, the trecento face of St. Luke was repainted and changed to become the face of St. Francis.⁵ During a subsequent restoration in the late eighteenth century, the face was returned to resemble that of St. Luke. When the painting arrived at the Opificio, it was assumed that it had received a Tuscan eighteenth century painting. Yet not until its cleaning and restoration was it discovered that two superimposed faces existed underneath. This mediocre eighteenth century restoration acquisition hid quite a surprise--an early trecento face of St. Francis and the original late dugento face of St. Luke.⁶

It is curious that at the time of the early trecento renovation that the inscription of St. Luke's name included in the background remained unchanged. During this early renovation, the saint's face was transformed from that of St. Luke to St. Francis; however, the original St. Luke inscription remained untouched. I suspect that the restorers' primary motivation was to change the saint's identity and facial recognition to become St. Francis due to his heightened popularity and appeal at that time. In addition, there were most likely practical and technical issues to be considered since the inscription was integrated into the gold leaf background and therefore difficult to redo. Ultimately, viewers will be emotionally moved and empathically connect to the saint's face, and

consequently the inscription and its inherent incongruity go unnoticed. Indeed, the face is what is paramount and trumps any inconsistency that might exist as a result of the original inscription. And in the early Trecento, the face of St. Francis was undeniably acknowledged to possess a heightened degree of devotional efficacy.

One cannot ignore the apparent irony of repainting the image of St. Luke. According to legend, the Virgin Mary and Christ Child posed for Luke to paint their portrait. Because of Luke's outstanding artistic pedigree and reputation, he was later chosen to be the patron saint of painters and is often portrayed painting a portrait of Mary. And yet, I suspect that as a painter, Luke would have appreciated artists' renovations since the changes that were executed accentuate the sensitivity and need to continually make devotional images relevant and to empathically connect with viewers. Since the Vasarian model of the artist as genius and author was not yet a concern, the need for artists to renovate art objects in the Trecento was considered acceptable and appreciated.

Implications for Art History

The premature renovations of sacred images during the early Italian Renaissance have implications that transcend time and place and have the potential to illuminate our understanding of art objects. However, museums typically reveal little or no information about an art object's restoration history. As a result, viewers only see the art object's current state and any previous interventions remain, for the most part, unknown. Viewers are not informed

about the art object's restoration history and these lacunae, if known, could enrich viewers' reception and appreciation. Without understanding a work's restoration history, one cannot fully understand or appreciate its contextual purpose and genesis.

I agree with Cathleen Hoeniger who feels that the public would benefit from information regarding these premature interventions in order to more fully appreciate their historical context and the restorers' motivations. Often this information is missing from exhibits. Hoeniger feels that curators could inform the public by including comprehensive annotations that address the art object's historical context. I suspect, like Hoeniger, that the public would be interested to learn about "the curious and fascinating sequence of transformations that the image underwent."⁷

Chapter One of this study, provides an overview of the dynamic shifts that occur in restoration practices over time. However, regardless of changes in convention and practice, restorers are often primarily concerned with techniques, materials and processes. Perhaps the art restoration field needs to widen its approach and research scope to include more art historians. Rather than remain, for the most part, a distinct and separate field from the history of art, I agree with the art restorer Massimo Ferretti, director of the Laboratory of Art History and Classical Archaeology in Pisa, who like his colleague Alessandro Conti believes that art restorers need to work in tandem with art historians. For Ferretti and Conti, art restoration is a more direct way of being an art historian.⁸

Perhaps one way to unite the restorers, conservators, technicians and scientists with the art historians is to more fully integrate the fields and acknowledge the complementary and synergistic characteristics among them. Science and history are not oppositional disciplines but rather are interrelated. It is when we consider art objects' materiality in combination with their cultural and historical contexts that we can begin to make informed restoration and conservation decisions. This inclusive approach will enrich our understanding of the object's meaning, significance and prognosis. The early Italian Renaissance premature renovations remind us of the universal human characteristics that unite us as people and as beholders of art objects; we all share and are affected by our inherent and neurologically based capacity for empathy.

Possible Next Steps

Art historians need to emphasize the study of cultural history and explore viewers' responses to art objects and how they change over time. This dynamic paradigm has the potential to cross cultural boundaries and invite limitless and open-ended interpretations of art objects. The words of the philosopher Walter Benjamin resonate today when in 1928 he wrote that Aby Warburg "increasingly takes down the dividing walls between the disciplines, characteristic of the concept of the sciences of the last century to promote an analysis of the work of art which recognizes in it an integral expression of the religious, metaphysical, political, and economic tendencies of an epoch which can in no way be limited in

terms of subject areas.”⁹ Perhaps this broader view of art history, and one that prophetically challenged Modernism, is recommended.

Modernism has its roots in the art historical canon that is inextricably connected to Giorgio Vasari’s 1568 publication of *Lives*, which continues to influence the discipline of art history. Vasari stresses the importance of the artist and his genius and views history as a linear progression that continually improves. However, Didi-Huberman notes that a non-linear approach to art objects runs counter to and disturbs the discipline of art history. He refers to how Warburg “opened the field of art history to anthropology, not simply in order to recognize new objects of study, but also in order to open time.”¹⁰ Vasari’s reliance on a linear progression of history, the emphasis on authorship and the artist’s biography in addition to his exclusivity regarding the art objects worthy of study, would be inappropriate, indeed antithetical, to an inclusive method of understanding the meaning and function of images.

This non-linear approach captures the essence of postmodernism and reminds us of Robert Venturi’s “valuable formula” for art: “Elements which are hybrid rather than ‘pure,’ compromising rather than ‘clean,’ ambiguous rather than ‘articulated,’ perverse as well as ‘interesting.’”¹¹ This quote could well describe and be applied to the premature renovations of sacred images in the early Italian Renaissance. Indeed, Venturi’s description is in direct opposition to the Vasarian canon and rather reflects the eclectic and inclusive approach of

postmodern artists who tend to diminish the role of the author and indeed, embrace the practice of appropriation.¹²

The appropriation of art objects creates a nonlinear perspective of history or, as Richard Brilliant notes, an “uncertain connection between the past and the present, shaped by the predominance of one polarity over the other and the mitigating factors of historical knowledge and source recognition, when and if they are present.”¹³ This historical discontinuity is evidenced in the early Italian Renaissance sacred images. If we consider the overriding motivation to selectively renovate these sacred images to have been a need for empathic connections in order for art to be effective, I agree with Brilliant that the recontextualization can offer its own version of truth. Appropriation reflects what was most effective for that moment, which at that time was the present.¹⁴ Perhaps the ultimate goal for art historians is to be mindful of the cultural and historical realities that surround each art object.

Endnotes

¹ Ferretti, Massimo, "A Serene Vision of the Relationship between Material and Image," 388-9, 391 fn. 16, in Conti and Glanville.

² Trexler 9.

³ Paolucci 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 33. The cleaning and restoration was conducted by the Restoration Laboratory in Florence at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure. The official opening of the Opificio was in 1934 and the St. Luke panel was one of the laboratory's first projects.

⁵ The face appears to be in the style of the early Trecento Florentine artist Pacino di Bonaguida. See Paolucci 49. See also Ugo Procacci, "Restauro dei dipinti della Toscana," *Bollettino d'Arte* 29 (1936): 364-9.

⁶ Cathleen Hoeniger notes that the panel was most likely originally associated with a Florentine Franciscan establishment since the St. Luke panel includes donor figures of a Franciscan friar and nun at the feet of St. Luke. See Hoeniger, *Renovation*, 159, fn. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.* 8.

⁸ Ferretti 389.

⁹ Diers, Girst, and von Moltke 59-73.

¹⁰ Didi-Huberman 59-70.

¹¹ Danto 12.

¹² For a discussion on the relative importance of signifying an author, see Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in Preziosi 299-314.

¹³ Brilliant and Kinney 176.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Professional Experience

Tufts University in affiliation with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts

- Director of Art Education
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Harvard Project Zero Faculty

- Project Zero Summer Institute, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

Teacher of Art and Art History

- Town of Saugus MA

Consultant

- Massachusetts Department of Education, Assisted in writing the Arts Curriculum Frameworks

Researcher

- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA, research assistant in American Decorative Arts and Sculpture Department

Editor/Writer

- Teacher Advisor, *Creative Classroom Magazine*
- Decorative Arts Editor, *Art New England*
- Fine Arts Editor, *Decade Magazine*

Education

Ph.D. candidate, Department of History of Art & Architecture, Boston University.

- Dissertation: "Repaint, Reframe, Renew: Updating Sacred Images During the Early Italian Renaissance."
- Advisor: Professor Jodi Cranston.

M.Ed., Boston University School of Education.

- Thesis: How to Incorporate Art History into a Social Studies Curriculum.

B. S., University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Presentations and Guest Lectures

- Faculty Forum at Ivan G. Smith Elementary School, Danvers MA. Invited to Present Research on Visible Thinking Routines and Protocols. March 2013.
- National Art Education Association Convention. New York. Research on Artful Thinking for Art Teachers. March 2012.
- The 15th International Conference on Thinking, Belfast, Ireland. Research on Artful Thinking. Invited by Project Zero, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. June 2011.
- Massachusetts Art Education Association Spring Conference. Boston, MA. Workshop on Artful Thinking research with Pre-Service Student Teachers. May 2008.
- Visible Thinking Conference. Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Gallery Display of Student Teachers' research on Artful Thinking. Invited by Project Zero, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. April 2008, May, 2006.
- The 13th International Conference on Thinking, Norrkoping, Sweden. International group research on Visible Thinking. Invited by Project Zero, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. June 2007.
- Tufts University in affiliation with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Department of Art Education. Workshops on Artful Thinking for Graduate Seminars for Pre-service teachers in PK-12 Art Classes. Oct. 2006, Feb. 2007, Sept. 2007, Oct. 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.
- Artful Thinking Workshop. Presented Artful Thinking research practices and routines for educators. June 2006.
- Project Zero Forum "Hotspots of Quality Arts Education." Harvard University Graduate School of Education. January and June, 2006
- Boston College Lynch School of Education. Chestnut Hill, MA. Guest lecturer in Social Studies Methods Courses, 2006 and 2007.

Publications

Barahal, S. L. (2008). Thinking about Thinking: Pre-service Teachers Strengthen Their Thinking Artfully. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(4), pp.298-302.

Amorosi, B., & Barahal, S. (1999). Image and Word: Pushing for Deeper Literacy. In Wolf, D. & Balick, D. (Ed.), *Art Works! Interdisciplinary Learning Powered By The Arts* (pp.101-128). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Press.

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Publications previous to 1990 available on request.

Published Reviews

- Served as reviewer for *Metalsmith Magazine*. Served as reviewer for *Art New England Magazine*.

Certifications/Professional Associations

- Massachusetts Teacher License, Visual Arts, K-12
- Member AAUW: American Association of University Women
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- Member CAA: College Art Association
- Member NAEA: National Art Education Association
- Member MAEA: Massachusetts Art Education Association
- Member NESAA: New England Sculptors Association (juried membership) and elected to the Board of Directors. Appointed to Education Coordinator.
- Qualified MELA-O Administrator

Juried Group Sculpture Exhibits

- New England Sculptors Association, State Transportation Building, Boston MA. 2009
- New England Sculptors Association, North Shore Arts Association, Gloucester, MA, 2007