

PRILIMINARY CATALOGUE FOR ANGELS FROM THE UFFIZZI

1.
FLORENCE, MEDICI MANUFACTORY,
low-warp weave by NICOLA KARCHER
(Brussels, known from 1517-Mantua 1562)
Descent from the Cross
before 31 July 1546
Drawing and cartoon by FRANCESCO DE' ROSSI known as IL
SALVIATI
(Florence 1510-Rome 1563)
first half 1546?
silk, gold, gilded silver, wool; 202 x 200 cm
Tapestries Inventory no. 773



The dating of the tapestry is based on a document of 15 October 1545, which records Salviati among the painters working for the Medici tapestry workshop at the time. As demonstrated by Candace Adelson and confirmed by the studies of Lucia Meoni, this was a trial cloth dating to the launch of the Medici manufactory, set up under Cosimo I de' Medici in 1545 and closed in 1747.

The brilliance of the colours used and the high quality of the weaving confirms its use as a demonstration piece, almost an exercise in virtuosity. The same composition had already been painted by Salviati, first for the Venetian church of Corpus Domini and later for Cosimo himself in a painting still conserved in the Pitti Palace. The tapestry differs from the paintings, not only in being woven in reverse, but also for the insertion of the symbols of the Passion – which in the paintings are included in the composition – inside the innermost border framing the work and composing the elegant geometric motif that also portrays the Medici-Toledo arms and the Capricorn, Cosimo's zodiacal sign. In the outer border festoons of fruit and ribbands are entwined in a moderate and delicate decoration. The model for both the two paintings and the tapestry could have been the drawing showing the figure of Christ conserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi (inventory no. 1210 E).

The cloth is recorded in the inventory as a *Pietà*, but the scene of the narration is more fitting to a *Descent from the Cross*, as the presence of rocks in the background and the boulder on which the lifeless body is lying would appear to indicate, while the Madonna with Mary Magdalene and Joseph of Arimathea are weeping and supporting the dead Christ (Matt. 27:59-61); it also responds to the destination as an "Altar cloth" possibly woven for the Cappella dei Priori or for that of Eleonora di Toledo in Palazzo Vecchio. After various passages through the Medici properties, the tapestry was displayed in the Regia Galleria degli Arazzi from 1882 and from 1922 at the Uffizi where it remained up to 1987 when, for reasons of conservation, it was moved to the museum repositories along with all the tapestries in the Gallery. Together with the other portraying the *Resurrection*, between 1993 and 1997 a careful and complex restoration of this tapestry was carried out by the Tapestry Restoration Workshop of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure.

Giovanna Giusti Galardi

2.
FLORENCE, MEDICI MANUFACTORY,
low-warp weave by NICOLA KARCHER
(Brussels, known from 1517-Mantua 1562)
Resurrection
1546?-before 1549
Drawing and cartoon by FRANCESCO DE' ROSSI known as IL
SALVIATI
(Florence 1510-Rome 1563)
1546?
silk, gold, gilded silver, wool; 228 x 223 cm
Tapestries Inventory no. 59



Recorded as an "altar cloth" this tapestry was woven for Benedetto Accolti, Cardinal of Ravenna, and inherited on the death of the latter in 1549 by Cosimo I de' Medici. We can assume that it was woven between the arrival of Karcher in Florence, on 26 October 1545, and 21 September 1549 (date of the Accolti legacy), even though the inscription «F. FIERNZA» in the lower selvedge – incorrect and unique – would appear to suggest one of the first

works produced by Karcher shortly after he arrived in Florence together with Giovanni Rost, since later Karcher was to use the inscription «F:FLŌ». From the same cartoon by Salviati two other tapestries with different borders were woven, conserved in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan and the Museo Correr in Venice.

In the centre of the composition, between angels irradiated by the divine light, the risen Christ bears the banner, while the soldiers fall, dazzled by the apparition and hold up their shields to protect themselves; these figures – in particular the soldier on the right – have been carefully studied, and are present in other paintings by Salviati portraying the Resurrection. The border, very elaborate and iconographically rich, also comprises symbols that prefigure the resurrection (the burning bush, the sacrifice of Isaac, the building of Noah's ark, Cain and Abel, the bronze serpent, Jonah and the whale). In the lower corners of the border, beneath the cardinal's hat, are two Accolti coats of arms which had been covered by the Medici arms in 1560 when the tapestry was destined to the Pitti Palace.

The cloth was displayed from 1884 in the Palazzo della Crocetta, which housed the Regia Galleria degli Arazzi, and from 1928 at the Uffizi where it remained up to 1987 when, for reasons of conservation, it was moved to the museum repositories along with all the tapestries in the Gallery. Together with the other portraying the *Descent from the Cross*, between 1993 and 1997 a careful and complex restoration of this tapestry was carried out by the Tapestry Restoration Workshop of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure.

Giovanna Giusti Galardi

3.

FABRIZIO BOSCHI

(Florence 1572-1642)

The Fall of Manna

circa 1594-1597

oil on canvas; 144 x 229 cm

1890 inventory no. 3810

At lower right: «FB»



The Biblical episode of the fall of manna, the gift from God that allowed the people of Israel to survive for forty years as they crossed the desert led by Moses, is the subject of this large canvas by Fabrizio Boschi, still dazzling in its colours despite the inevitable ravages of time. It is hence comprised among the images of Old Testament episodes that prefigure the salvific significance of the Eucharistic sacrifice. This food, which fell from the sky every day (except Saturday), was white, similar in appearance to coriander seeds and had a taste like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16:31), or better “serving to the appetite of the eater, tempered itself to every man's liking” (Wis. 16:21). Moses ordered his brother Aaron to gather a measure and conserve it in the ark, as a witness for future generations of the generosity of God. Thus the manna prefigures the word of God as spiritual food (The Lord “fed thee with manna [...] that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord”, Deut. 8:3), defined as “bread of the mighty” or “bread of angels” (Pss. 78:25) while in the Gospel of Saint John (John 6: 21-59) Christ declares that he himself is this bread of eternal life.

This is an early work by Fabrizio Boschi, a leading exponent of the Florentine school of the first half of the seventeenth century, executed around the turn of the century and already of a very high quality. He presents the story of the fall of the manna in a dramatically scenic manner, faithfully taking his cue from the Bible text that describes the surprise with which the arrival around the encampment of this white substance like visible hoarfrost was greeted: everyone attempts to gather it using more or less precious receptacles or even simply by raising the corners of their garments. Standing out against the indistinct, illuminated crowd is the shadow of the figure of Moses on the left, with a man filling up a vessel, while opposite them is a brightly-coloured group of bystanders among whom we can distinguish a woman in contemporary costume, who is observing and commenting on the event. The painting may have come to the Florentine galleries from a confraternity as a result of the suppressions carried out under Leopold or Napoleon.

Francesca de Luca

4. LIVIO MEHUS
SACRIFICIO DI ISACCO
DA SOSTITUIRE?



5.
JACOPO DA EMPOLI
(Florence 1551-1640)
The Creation of Adam
1632
oil on canvas; 193 x 145 cm.
1890 inventory no. 2128



On the sixth day, after having created heaven and earth, “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:26). In translating the Bible passage faithfully into painting, Jacopo da Empoli chose to place the figure of the Almighty in the unfathomable atmosphere of a still unspoilt, “almost primordial” space in which Adam, the “first son”, had not yet risen from the bed of dust from which he was taken.

God the Father, in the act of giving life – which is also to be read as a stark Christological prefiguration of the rebirth of humanity redeemed from sin – is thus blocked by the artist in a quiet and contemplative pose, his countenance haloed with supernatural radiance: a fiery reflection of the intimate sentiment of communion instilled by the Creator in the flesh and heart of man from his very first gesture. Unlike what was sketched in the preliminary drawings, the final draft of the work, pervaded by a vaporous Furini-like chiaroscuro, in effect portrays the two figures united in a gesture of poignant intimacy, underscoring the laborious tenderness through which the heavy and still numbed body of Adam was germinated from the earth.

The painting was commissioned from Jacopo da Empoli in 1632 by Don Lorenzo de’ Medici for the Villa della Petraia. The eighty-one year old artist executed the commission with exceptional speed, doubtless sustained in this by the prospect of having to measure himself against the younger talents that Florence was able to furnish at the time. The episode of the Genesis thus went to join the creations of Cesare and Vincenzo Dandini, Carlo Dolci, Francesco Furini, and Volterrano, above all enabling Jacopo to return to addressing a subject that had been particularly dear to him from his very earliest important achievements in the artistic sphere.

Andrea Baldinotti

6. after FRANS FLORIS
(Antwerp, 1519 or 1520 - 1570)
The Sin of Adam and Eve
early seventeenth century
oil on canvas; 179 x 179 cm
1890 inventory no. 9961



Recovered in Germany in December 1953 by Rodolfo Siviera, the work was originally part of the Roman collection of the Morandotti family. Compared to the original executed by Frans Floris in 1560, now conserved in the Palatine Gallery, the *Adam and Eve* of the Uffizi is not only larger, but also considerably more refined in the choice of the chromatic registers, calibrated on particularly soft and mellow tones. This aspect has led the critics to opt for a later, already seventeenth-century dating. Consequently, we are dealing neither with an autograph replica nor a contemporary copy. The two figures are set against a dense woody backdrop, beyond which the garden of Eden is lost to sight in a mysterious and impenetrable vista. Adam, of a classically displayed nudity, is portrayed in the act of embracing his companion, a sort of diaphanous arboreal Venus whose full beauty he obscurely appears to discern now, after the sin, for the first time.

Andrea Baldinotti

7.
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENTINE PAINTER
Original Sin
Second half of the sixteenth century
Oil on canvas; 28 x 34.1 cm
1890 inventory no. 5982



This painting, although small in size, is of great value in terms of its iconography which, through the Old and the New Testaments, identifies the prefiguration and confirmation of the salvific function of Christ's sacrifice as Eucharistic food. In a corner of Eden we see, isolated in the centre, the tree of good and evil from which Eve has plucked an apple to offer it to Adam. This sacrilegious gesture has been inspired by the tempter serpent, whose body is coiled around the trunk of the tree and clearly connoted as demoniacal by his bats' wings, horns and faun-like ears. Adam, violating the only prohibition laid down by the Lord to restrict his freedom, accepts the fruit, sullyng himself and all his progeny with a sin that can be redeemed only by the sacrifice of Christ.

The composition, in which Adam and Eve are in an almost heraldic position in relation to the large tree in the centre, has a marked monumentality. It displays a very Florentine respect for meticulous draughtsmanship and anatomical precision, even though the technical diligence appears here to be enhanced by a naturalness of the flesh tones and the epidermic values, as for example in Eve's hair. This aspect can be connected with the presence in Florence in 1564 and 1576 of Federico Zuccari, with all the repercussions of the experience acquired in Venice, in Rome and through Nordic painting. This was an eccentric education for the Florentines, who saw in Bronzino's pupil Alessandro Allori the worthy successor to Giorgio Vasari, who had died in 1574.

Francesca de Luca

8.
GIOVANNI MANNOZZI, known as GIOVANNI DA SAN GIOVANNI

(San Giovanni Valdarno 1592-Florence 1636)

The Expulsion from Paradise

circa 1634

fresco on tile; 58 x 77 cm

1890 inventory no. 5422



The painting was part of a group of six scenes in rectangular format painted in fresco on slabs of terracotta by Giovanni da San Giovanni, and now displayed in the atrium of the Gallery management department, together with a similar series of round format, frescoed on mats, made for prince Lorenzo de' Medici. In 1670 the rectangular series, which may also have belonged to Don Lorenzo, was in the Pitti Palace, and in 1675 was listed among the assets of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici. After spells during which they were displayed in the Medici residences of Castello and the Petraia (as indicated by labels on the rear), the paintings arrived in the Uffizi in 1796.

The technique of painting on tiles or mats, which the artist also employed in his portraits, was admired both in terms of format and for its "bizarre" quality. Documenting the last manner of MannoZZi as a frescoist and his vocation for literary narration, not devoid of licentious implications, the Biblical and mythological stories reveal a lesser commitment than Giovanni da San Giovanni's contemporary decorative undertakings, comprising the demanding work executed in the ground floor salon of the Pitti Palace. Nevertheless, in the tiles we can discern the same simple tone and expedients of narrative and colour that characterise the entire artistic career of MannoZZi, defining his ironic and dissident temperament.

The artist entrusts the task of casting our ancestors out of the garden of Eden to an angel in a pearly pink-orange robe, advancing resolutely with drawn sword: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. 3:24). Ashamed of their nudity and of their fatal guilt, Adam and Eve abandon Paradise. From this moment, that of the rupture with the Father, the heavens are barred to them and the long journey towards the redemption of mankind begins.

Novella Barbolani di Montauto

9.
LIVIO MEHUS

(Oudenaarde 1627-Florence 1691)

Annunciation

seventh decade of the seventeenth century

oil on canvas; 78 x 69 cm

1890 inventory no. 5616



Beneath a canopy topped by gathering grey clouds, the young Mary is surprised by the arrival of a blond angel with multicoloured wings who, timidly kneeling upon a cloud, offers her a lily while indicating the dove of the Holy Spirit. The gospel story is narrated by the artist with gentle simplicity, within a bare setting that leaves room for the two figures and a sliver of landscape. The light that emanates from the Holy Spirit and lingers in the pink and orange reflections of the drapery, contributes to endow the domestic scene with elements of the extraordinary.

The painting can be placed in Mehus' mature period – when he had already been enriched by the Venetian and Lombard experiences and was able to elaborate Cortona's influence in an independent manner. It was part of a series of four canvases portraying scenes from the life of the Virgin executed by him for a tailor friend, but which the Grand Prince Ferdinand wished to purchase for his collection. The four paintings are in fact listed in the inventory drawn up on the death of the Prince, in 1713, along with numerous other works by Mehus, confirming Ferdinando's precocious interest in the new use of light, the chromatic variety and nimble paintwork of this original interpreter of Baroque painting. In the process of salvation that leads to the death and resurrection of Christ – the subject of this exhibition – the Annunciation represents the beginning of Christ's passage through the world, since Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin heralds the incarnation. God becomes man, initiating the journey towards redemption.

Novella Barbolani di Montauto

10.

PIETRO LIBERI

(Padua 1614-Venice 1687)

Annunciation

circa 1670

oil on canvas; 220 x 163 cm

1890 inventory no. 10500

This *Annunciation*, together with six paintings recently displayed in the Vasarian Corridor and a drawing conserved in the Prints and Drawings Department of the Uffizi, is part of a group of works left to the Gallery in 2006 in her will by Laura Giabbani, the widow of Giuseppe Marchini, who held the position of Superintendent of the Florentine Galleries in the years 1970-1973. The painting originates from the church of the Madonna del Pianto or of the Cappuccine in Venice, deconsecrated in 1810, where it was placed above the first altar to the south of the high altar where, to produce a rounded form, it was completed by a lunette portraying a group of angels. Already in 1674 Boschini mentioned it as a “most admirable work”, and a century later Zanetti too recalled it as being a “most charming painting” (1771). Giuseppe Marchini, who identified and published it in 1966, connecting it with the *Annunciation* in the church of the Salute in Venice painted around 1671, places the execution around 1670 while also recognising in the head of the angel what he described as a certain Cortona-style Veronese influence. There are evident influences of the Emilians, whom Liberi became familiar with during his Bolognese sojourn of 1643, in particular of Correggio, who is recalled here in the placing of the kneeling angel upon fluffy clouds.

The composition features a theatricality of gesture which accompanies the vivid and lithe figure of the young Madonna, surprised at her everyday tasks as the basket at her feet suggests. The surrounding air is disturbed in a fluttering of wings in the diagonal that cuts the scene, while in the background the architectural partitions and the dove that seals the event assuage the action.

As a youth Pietro Liberi engaged in adventurous pilgrimages and had relations with the Medici, for whom he had fought against the Turks, later immortalising the glories of the family on the ceiling of the Oratorio dei Vanchetoni. By him the Gallery also conserves the *Self Portrait* and a painting portraying *Diana and Callisto*, recognised as having belonged to the “Gabinetto” of works in small format that the Grand Prince Ferdinando had set up in the Villa of Poggio a Caiano.

Giovanna Giusti Galardi



11. ALESSANDRO BONVICINO,

known as IL MORETTO (?)

(Brescia circa 1490 -1554)

Nativity with shepherds

1545-1550

oil on canvas, 138 x 183 cm

1890 inventory no. 9952.

This painting, which is part of the group of works retrieved by Rodolfo Siviera and destined to the Uffizi in 1989, would – once the damage suffered in the past has been remedied – deserve to be included among those displayed in the section devoted to Lombard sixteenth-century painting. Unfortunately, however, as anyone with even a limited acquaintance with the rooms of the gallery is well aware, sixteenth-century Lombard painting includes a number of the absolute masterpieces of Italian art: the vivid *Transfiguration* by Savoldo, three stupendous portraits by Moroni, another three famous paintings by Lotto (the *Head of a Young Boy*, *Susanna and the Elders*, and the *Holy Family*). We would also be tempted to display a *Nativity* by this latter master, conserved in the repositories, which was up to now considered an identical copy of the painting on the same subject in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena, but has been restored by Giovanni Agosti to at least the rank of a workshop replica, partly thanks to a legend on the rear of the panel considered to be coeval with the painting (see his fine catalogue of the Paduan drawings at the Uffizi, published in 2001).



In the same room, we can also see several portraits originating from the Cremona rooms of the Campi family, or the rare altarpiece by Girolamo Figino. In this compact anthology of Lombard figurative culture, with links to that of Veneto, the *Nativity* – which the inventory of the works retrieved by Siviera records under the plausible name of Moretto (possibly not without the aid of some young workshop assistant) – would certainly have cut its own figure. It would undoubtedly enhance the illustration of that particular figurative culture, while also representing the painting of Moretto in the form of the only work by his hand in the possession of the Florentine Galleries.

Andrea Baldinotti

12.

ALESSANDRO TIARINI

(Bologna 1577-1668)

Nativity

fifth decade of the seventeenth century

oil on copper; 33 x 42.7 cm

1890 inventory no. 1371



The fine paintings on copper by Alessandro Tiarini have been dated in a convincing manner by Daniele Benati after 1641; more specifically this Uffizi painting has been assigned to the fifth decade of the seventeenth century in view of the analogies with the chromatic range of the late works by Guido Reni.

The title of this work is variously indicated as *Nativity* or *Adoration of the Shepherds* but can be more precisely defined as *Saint Joseph welcomes the Shepherds led by an Angel into the hut at Bethlehem*. It is a singular subject that has a partial precedent in the *Nativity* by Federico Barocci (Madrid, Museo del Prado) in which, however, the angels are absent, although we can intuit that they are in flight above the humble abode, as in the more usual iconography. It is precisely the presence of this angel, who is leading the shepherds on foot, that marks the singularity of the scene conceived by Tiarini who, as we know from Malvasia, used to meditate at length upon the drafting of his sacred compositions so that he could confidently introduce variations on the theme, in the same way as a musician, or as his biographer put it, “so that he could then safely play with the additions”. Saint Luke’s Gospel (Luke 2:8-20) speaks of an angel who presents himself to the shepherds to give them precise instructions on how to recognise the Messiah, after which – it would appear – he disappears along with the multitude of the heavenly host which had appeared praising God. After this the shepherds decide to go to Bethlehem, albeit apparently by now on their own. The addition, the variation on the theme, here consists in the emphasis given to the arrival of the shepherds led by the angel, comparable in importance to the main scene in which the Madonna is delicately placing the Child Jesus in the manger, while an adoring angel holds the sheet, in what is possibly an allusion to the future descent from the Cross. The humble shepherds are the first to receive and enthusiastically take up the invitation to come and adore the Messiah, humble in his incarnation, and humiliated in his death on the Cross.

Grazia Badino

13.

ALESSANDRO DI MARIANO FILIPEPI, known as SANDRO BOTTICELLI

(and NINETEENTH-CENTURY RESTORER)

(Florence 1445-1510)

Madonna and Child (“*Madonna of the Loggia*”)

circa 1466-1467

oil on panel; 72 x 50 cm

Respositories Inventory no. 8



The painting probably belonged to one of the Guilds or Magistratures which were transferred by Cosimo I to the interior of the Uffizi building in the second half of the sixteenth century, the assets of which later passed to the Chamber of Commerce. Upon the suppression of the latter, the work must have reached the Lorraine collections before 1784, under the government of Peter Leopold. After having been stored at length in the Archivio Notarile, the panel returned to the Uffizi in 1873.

Attributed between the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth to an unknown fifteenth-century Florentine painter, it was later identified in an almost unanimous manner as belonging to Botticelli’s early period. This, despite the consciousness that the state of conservation of the work has been almost irremediably compromised by a disastrous “cleaning” carried out in the past, followed by a reconstructive restoration based on the complete repainting of the faces of the Madonna and Child as well as many other parts. Investigations carried out in recent years, and a complex operation of reordering entrusted to a restorer of the calibre of Alfio Del Serra, have confirmed this situation. Only a few parts, such as for example the red gown of the Virgin and the distant landscape which can be glimpsed in the background from the loggia, proved to be in a slightly better state of conservation. Despite this, as far as it is possible to decipher notwithstanding the complete reworking, the

composition of the work represents a further, precious testimony of the close stylistic adherence of the young artist to the manner of his maestro, Filippo Lippi.

The embrace of the Child, who appears almost to seek a loving refuge in his contact with the abstracted gaze of the Mother is, here as elsewhere, a poignant presentiment of a painful destiny, albeit later of glory.

Angelo Tartuferi

14.

FRANCESCO GIROLAMO MAZZOLA, known as IL PARMIGIANINO
(Parma 1503-Casalmaggiore 1540)

Madonna and Child

1525

oil on panel; 44 x 31 cm

1890 inventory no. 1410

In this fascinating panel, recently confirmed as being by Parmigianino, the Madonna is reading with an austere expression a book resting on the legs of the Child seated upon a parapet. Jesus gazes at the observer with a knowing look that contrasts with his childish appearance, and is holding in his left hand a white dove, symbol of purity. Behind them, a curtain raised on one side reveals a view of landscape. In its essentiality, and through the expressions on the countenances, this small work encapsulates the human drama of Christ's salvific mission, necessarily linked to his sacrifice. Very similar to the 1525 *Madonna and Child* by Parmigianino in the Doria Pamphilj Gallery, it nevertheless reveals several original features in comparison to the latter. The painting is described in the Gallery in 1782 by Zacchioli, although its provenance is unknown.



The application of the paint is incomplete, allowing the preparatory layer to transpire, especially in the area of the joined hands of the Virgin, and a preparatory sketch in a very free and firm hand. This characteristic has suggested an identification of the panel with Parmigianino's unfinished *Madonna*, which in both editions of the *Lives* Giorgio Vasari claims he purchased from the artist in 1541 and which in the inventories of his assets drawn up on his death in 1574 was in his house in Arezzo. The painting must have been very dear to him: in the inventory of his house in Florence is another *Madonna* by Parmigianino, documented elsewhere as a copy painted by Vasari himself from the Arezzo original. In any case, regardless of any hypothetical relation with the *Madonna* in Vasari's collection, it is interesting to note how greatly admired Parmigianino was by the Tuscan historian, architect and court painter, whose critical appraisal was the sign of an interesting aperture towards the typically flowing and elongated manner of the leader of the Emilian school.

Francesca de Luca

15.

ANDREA PICCINELLI, known as IL BRESCIANINO

(Siena, active from 1507 to 1525)

Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John, Dominican monk and Angels

second decade of the sixteenth century

oil on panel; 119.5 x 76.5 cm

1890 inventory no. 1622

Andrea del Brescianino probably executed this panel in the second decade of the sixteenth century, after his encounter with the “grace” of the Florentine Raphael, as we can easily grasp from the sinuous pose of the child Jesus clinging to his mother’s right side, and the gaze of the Madonna pervaded by the same severe sweetness as those of the angels behind her.

The composed gestures of the bystanders appear to allude to the dual human and divine nature of Christ, and to his sacrifice. Notable among them are the young Saint John (in the act of unrolling his scroll which alludes to the mission of salvation of the Son of God) and the Dominican monk who, set between the angelic host and the group of the Madonna and Child, is raising his index finger to heaven to endorse the celestial nature of this mission, while at the same time turning his gaze to the spectator, almost as if to seek or to elicit his mutual assent.

In effect, it cannot be ruled out that Brescianino may actually have painted this devotional image for a follower of Saint Dominic. The unfathomable expressions of the angelic countenances are a characteristic that appears to be common to many of the sacred figures portrayed by the artist in his religious works. This aspect calls to mind another work, possibly executed by the Siense painter for the Dominican Order: the *Virgin with Saint Dominic, Saint Andrew, Saint Laurence and Two Musician Angels*, it too conserved in Florence in the Great Refectory of the convent of San Marco. The figures are veined with a regal and yet disquieting detachment, nourished with that same pathos that appears to have dissolved into a masterfully restrained emphasis the poetics of the Florentine masters of the early century, such as Fra’ Bartolomeo or Albertinelli, whose path was crossed, like that of Brescianino, by the sudden and blinding light of the star of Raphael.



Andrea Baldinotti

16.

NICCOLÒ DI BARTOLOMEO DELL’ABRUGIA, known as NICCOLÒ PISANO

(Pisa 1470-1538)

Holy Family with the Young Saint John

circa 1510

oil on panel; 61.8 x 49.7 cm

1890 inventory no. 8543

At the beginning of the last century the painting was in store at the premises of the Florence Tax Office. In December 1911 it was transferred to the Palatine Gallery in the Pitti Palace, after which it arrived in the Uffizi in 1925.

It was a subject particularly dear to this fascinating wandering artist, who trained in his native city at the end of the fifteenth century, as documented by the altarpiece executed in 1493 for the church of San Matteo in Pisa, and now in the National Museum. After a last memento left in his native region, commissioned in 1497 for the church of San Martino in Pietrasanta, the painter was largely active in Ferrara – where he is already recorded in 1499 – working for Duke Alfonso d’Este and also in Bologna, where he executed several altarpieces for the most important churches in the city over the course of the second half of the 1520s. Having returned home in 1537, by now in the twilight of his life, he went on working to the end of his days, painting among other things the panel portraying the *Punishment of the Sons of Aaron* for the cathedral of Pisa. From the very beginning, the painter revealed his predilection for the classical-style models that were popular in the Po valley between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries – note, in particular the fine landscape of Giorgione inspiration – with a stylistic evolution in many respects parallel to that of Garofalo (1476-1559) and of Ortolano (circa 1487-1527).

In this and in other analogous compositions, the artist appears to expand the horizons of his classical interests to include the example of Giulio Romano, while nevertheless seeking above all an atmosphere marked by a simple and natural



serenity. The baby Jesus is playing, grasping with his tiny left hand the cross held by the infant John the Baptist, who appears to be indicating to the Saviour the symbol of his future sacrifice.

Angelo Tartuferi

17.
TOMMASO MANZUOLI, known as MASO DA SAN FRIANO
(Florence 1531-1571)
Holy Family with the Young Saint John
circa 1560
oil on panel; 96 x 68 cm
1890 inventory no. 9256

The attribution to Maso da San Friano is to be considered certain in view of the results of the most recent studies of Alessandro Nesi. Through the by now remote recollection of Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*, Maso da San Friano develops a packed composition, of the kind frequent in the works of his second maestro, Carlo Portelli. Numerous details of the painting also have echoes in other of his works: the profile of Saint Joseph resembles the figure of Icarus himself in the *Fall of Icarus* in the Studiolo of Francesco I, while the group of the Madonna and Child is practically identical to that of the woman holding a child in her arms on the left in the middle distance in the *Visitation* previously in San Pier Maggiore in Florence and now in the Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge. Further, the anatomy of the child Jesus is very similar to that of one of the putti in the *Charity* painted on the ceiling of the Sala di Penelope in Palazzo Vecchio, which Nesi has now attributed to Manzuoli. These two latter notable analogies, together with other similarities to the *Madonna and Saints* in the Museum of San Salvi, lead to the dating of this painting too, like the works just mentioned, in the early 1560s.

The crowded and almost daunting quality of the composition adds a dramatic note verging on suspense, underscored by the gesture of the Virgin who appears almost to be protecting the Child from a danger not present but which she can intuit and in a sense see. The explanation is apparently portrayed in the figure of Saint Joseph bearing the book in his hand, and in that of the Young Saint John clasping a little cross to his chest. These objects symbolically evoke, respectively, the centuries-long preparation for the incarnation and the redemption, recorded in the Old Testament, and the future passion and death of Christ. Mary, the first to have welcomed the Messiah through her fundamental assent to the announcement of the angel, is also the first to have full cognisance of the identity of the Son and of his mission of redemption and salvation, without this in any way attenuating her maternal tenderness.

Grazia Badino

18.
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENTINE PAINTER
(MICHELE DI RIDOLFO?)
Holy Family with the Young Saint John
mid sixteenth century
oil on panel; 135 x 98 cm
1890 inventory no. 8722

Very often in the sixteenth-century images of the *Madonna and Child* the latter is portrayed sunk in an innocent and defenceless sleep, watched over by the sorrowful and concerned gaze of the Virgin, conscious of the destiny at once baleful and great that awaits her son. A sleep that is transformed into the sleep of death in Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* at the Uffizi (1534), in its lucid distortion of the forms: the supine body of the Child is portrayed in an unnatural, almost disarticulated abandon, while the colouring is wan, with ashen reflexes.

The author of this superb panel of great quality, although in very poor condition, appears to propose the manner of the Florentine 1520s tradition of Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo: we can note, for example the protruding knee of the Madonna, or the impetuous contrapposto of the young Saint John with his rebellious curls, which underscores the spatial relation with the main group, in addition to a sophisticated volumetric research in the anatomical construction. Genealogically, this Saint John descends from the putto in the *Tribute to Caesar* by Andrea del Sarto in Poggio a Caiano (1520) or from that of the Jacopi tombstone in Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, and also from the lively and somewhat arrogant angels of the Vallombrosa altarpiece dating to 1528 now in the Uffizi. He appears even



more closely related to Pontormo's *Saint Michael Archangel* and to the putti in his fresco of *Vertumnus and Pomona* in Poggio a Caiano. However, in this panel the deathly abandon of the infant, together with the disproportionately slender hands of the Virgin and the soft sunburst of the folds of her gown would not be justifiable without Parmigianino's model, despite conserving the plastic evidence of the Florentine tradition of Bronzino.

The altarpiece has traditionally been attributed to Francesco Brina, exponent of a workshop active in the second half of the century, with whom certain formal points of contact can be identified, albeit devoid of affinities with Parmigianino. In qualitative terms, the painting is of a more elevated manner, closer also in terms of expressive insight to the portraits of Michele di Ridolfo, with whom the painting has similarly been linked: two workshops between which there existed a familiarity.

Francesca de Luca

NOTE: NO. 19 IS THE RESTORED TIZIANO & WORKSHOP PAINTING, WILL BE IN FINAL SECTION

20. BARTOLOMEO SCHEDONI

(Modena, 1578-Parma, 1615)

The Child Jesus points out the Passages of the Old Testament to the Virgin in the presence of Saint Joseph and the Young Saint John

second decade of the seventeenth century

oil on panel; 25.5 x 20.2 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 111

This small panel, almost certainly executed by the artist during the last ten years of his activity, portrays the Holy Family, more specifically the Virgin who, in the presence of Saint Joseph and Saint John, still a child, is reading a text pointed out to her by her son. Mary (who is helping the Child to hold the book) contemplates, comprehends, prays and consents, thus preparing herself to take in all the messages that will be transmitted to her by the Word. As in the *Annunciation*, where the archangel Gabriel fulfils the prophecies which she is reading, and in that very moment the prophecies come true within her, so the same thing is to continue throughout her life. Mary, the first witness of salvation, by virtue of the Holy Spirit becomes the protagonist of the incarnation of God in his Son. Originally and essentially Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Book, and only later, in consequence, the reader. It is he who indicates the revelations to his Mother, while at the same time caressing the hand of Saint John, he who had announced his arrival: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John. 1:1). In 1975 the work was correctly attributed to Bartolomeo Schedoni by Evelina Borea, at the time of the exhibition on the seventeenth-century Bolognese painters present in the Florentine Galleries, and can be indicated as a replica of the painting displayed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The paternity of Schedoni in this work is rendered certain by the warm light that enwraps the figures, and by its original elaboration from the affectionate models of Correggio.

The work, which was part of the Feroni collections, came to the Uffizi in 1865 and is being temporarily conserved in the repositories of the museum while waiting to be displayed in the new exhibition areas of the Gallery.

Serena Nocentini



21.

GIOVAN BATTISTA NALDINI

(Florence 1537-1591)

Holy Family with the Young Saint John

circa 1585-1591

oil on panel; 117 x 90 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 111

When, probably just a few years before his death in 1591, Giovan Battista Naldini was approaching the painting of this panel, the subject of the *Holy Family with the Young Saint John* could be rightly considered one of most popular themes in the local iconographic tradition, above all in Florence. This tradition was as illustrious as it was deeply rooted in the religious imagination of a century which, by now waxing to a close, proved to be entirely pervaded by the religious precepts promulgated by the Council of Trent. We do not know who commissioned it from Naldini, who many years earlier had assisted Vasari in the decoration of the Studiolo of Francesco I in Palazzo Vecchio and in the decoration of the altars of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce. However, in view of the marked simplification of the compositional layout, we cannot be far removed in terms of time from the two versions of the *Presentation in the Temple* of Perugia (circa 1580) and Volterra (1590).

Set against a solemn architectural backdrop, extending with marked perspective towards a vanishing point in the distant landscape of the background, the divine Child is portrayed overcome by slumber. Watching over him are Joseph, Mary – and it is hard to tell whether she has just discovered the heartbreaking beauty of her son's limbs or whether she is about to cover them with the cloth she is grasping between her fingers – and a moved young Saint John. Despite being pervaded by serene joy at this proximity to the Saviour, the Precursor nevertheless holds over his head the little cross made of reeds, which is his habitual iconographic attribute, the symbolism of which has always been an explicit evocation of the final act in the life of Christ, culminating in the scandal of Golgotha. Considering the absence of pretexts in the Gospels, moreover, this was the line of interpretation for the not yet adolescent figure of John the Baptist, especially from the end of the fifteenth century with the circulation of the *Lives of the Holy Fathers* (at the time attributed to Domenico Cavalca). The latter was a text of fundamental importance, not only for the development of the iconography of the patron saint of the city of Florence, but also in view of the complex iconological implications that



ended up moulding his destiny – as ascetic in the desert and future martyr – to that (in effect analogous) of the Child of Nazareth.

Andrea Baldinotti

22.

FRANCESCO ALBANI

(Bologna 1578-1660)

Rest on the Flight into Egypt

1659-1660

oil on canvas; 55.5 x 75.5 cm

1890 inventory no. 1341



In a broad landscape stretching out behind a hill rising on the right, small groups of figures dot the foreground of this composition like notes on the pentagram, in an unusual iconographic interpretation of the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. On the left two angels, separated from the main group by a clump of trees, are laying a table with bread; their upward gaze draws attention towards two cherubs bearing a tray down from the heavens. Saint Joseph, standing, leaning against the trunk of a tree, breaks off from the reading in which he is immersed to gaze at another angel on his left who is offering the Madonna a large plate of flowers, from which she smilingly takes a white rose. Laid upon a cushion set on his mother's knee, the Child slumbers peacefully, while clasping a little cross in his tiny right hand. Other angelic presences hover around the group: from above three cherubim contemplate the child Jesus, while there are another two angels further to the right, one of whom, in flight, draws water from a spring gushing forth from the rocks above, while the other leads the ass to drink in the stream below. Set upon the crest of the hill are two palm trees, recalling the text of the apocryphal gospel of the pseudo Matthew (20:1-2): while they were resting during their journey to Egypt, Jesus ordered a palm tree to lower its branches and offer its dates, after which he commanded it to raise itself and with its roots liberate the vein of water running beneath the earth so that the family and the animals could drink.

The theme of the body of Christ as Eucharistic sacrifice, often also referred to as the bread of heaven, is delineated in a very didactic manner in this charming painting by the elderly classicist Francesco Albani, a prolific author of pastoral and mythological scenes set within airy landscapes, painted between 1659 and 1660 for the extremely devout Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere together with a pendant piece, since lost, showing two guardian angels.

Francesca de Luca

23. PIETRO SORRI

(San Gismè, 1556? - Siena, 1622)

The Miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes

1603

oil cartoon glued to canvas, 24 x 42.5 cm

Uffizi Prints and Drawings Department Inventory 19154 F



In this little cartoon Pietro Sorri has sketched out, with decisive brushstrokes and contrasting chiaroscuro, a complex scene of great breadth and monumentality which, according to the critics, could have been preparatory to a decorative work of private destination, which can probably be identified with a canvas sent together with another to Ciriaco Mattei in Rome in 1603. The episode is that of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes described by the four evangelists: Christ, having withdrawn to the desert to meditate after the death of John the Baptist, was followed by a multitude of people who had brought along their sick that he might cure them. Jesus performed many miraculous cures, but when it was growing late and the disciples suggested that he should send the multitude away so that they could go and buy themselves food, Christ told them instead to bring him what food they could find: "And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." (Matt. 14:13-20). The terminology used by Christ is similar to that of the institution of the Eucharist, with which it comes naturally to compare this miracle. In another multiplication of loaves and fishes, recorded only by Matthew (14:29-39) and by Mark (8:1-10) Jesus behaves in a similar manner. In his Gospel, John (6: 26-59) underlines this relation, following the accounts of the miracle of the loaves and fishes and that of the walking on the water with an explicit treatise by Jesus on the subject of the Eucharist as bread from heaven.

Pietro Sorri dramatically sets the group of Christ and his disciples on a rocky spur, as they hasten to distribute the food to the multitude, which is introduced by figures of women and children on the left and by a seated naked youth. A

Sieneſe painter, Sorri worked and ſtudied in the moſt lively artiſtic centres of Italy, including Venice, Genoa, Milan and Rome, in the years ſpanning the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries, that is the period of conſolidation of a common figurative language inſpired by the preſcriptions of the Counter-Reformation, to the definition of which the Tuſcan ſchool made ſuch a ſignificant contribution.

Francesca de Luca

24.

WORKSHOP OF LUCA SIGNORELLI

(Cortona, circa 1450 -1523)

Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, Flagellation

circa 1510

oil on panel; 32.5 x 204.5 cm

1890 inventory no. 8371



This is the predella generally identified with that which originally belonged to the altarpiece portraying the *Trinity, the Madonna and Child between the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and Saints Augustine and Athanasius of Alexandria* (1890 inventory no. 8369), painted by the great Cortona artist for the Confraternita della Trinità dei Pellegrini of his city, although this does not mean that alternative attributions have not also been proposed. The altarpiece and the predella were removed from their original location during the suppressions of 1810, and transferred to the Accademia in Florence, from where they came into the Uffizi in 1919.

In our opinion, after the cleaning carried out in 2000, the distinct qualitative deviation in comparison to the entirely autograph works of this artist, at once genial and inconstant, can be seen even more clearly in these illustrations of episodes from the Passion of Christ. Consequently, we can plausibly assume that they were largely executed by his well-organised workshop, and it is not for nothing that, in the past, certain critics have proposed attributing them directly to Girolamo Genga (Urbino circa 1476-1551) or to Francesco Signorelli, the artist's nephew known by a signed altarpiece in the Pinacoteca of Gubbio.

In the scene of the *Last Supper*, with the large three-sided table, the figure of Judas stands out in the centre of the room, seen from the rear in a desperate isolation. Also extremely poignant is the figure of Christ praying in the garden, begging his Father moreover not to let him die, albeit adding "if this is possible..." but above all concluding "but may your will be done not mine". In other words, we are dealing with the most profound and real sense of Christian prayer, as summarised in a passage from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 6:7-8): "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

Angelo Tartuferi

25.

BONIFACIO DE' PITATI
(Verona 1487-Venice 1553)

The Last Supper

circa 1550

oil on canvas; 118 x 332 cm

(208 x 332 cm., including the portion
folded back on the rear)

1890 inventory no. 948



This large painting figures in the 1713 inventory of the collection of Prince Fredinando in the Pitti Palace, from where it entered the Uffizi in 1798. The work is traditionally referred to the vast production that emerged from the workshop of the Veronese Bonifacio de' Pitati, an authentic "artistic entrepreneur" who was enormously popular in Venice in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, alongside Titian and Lorenzo Lotto. The dating prevalently proposed by the critics is in the mature phase of the artist, around the middle of the century, and with the probable intervention of his flourishing and highly-organised workshop, when he implemented his peculiar synthesis between the Venetian tradition (Giorgione, Palma the Elder, Titian) and the influxes of the central Italian pictorial tradition of Raphaellesque matrix. The original composition was actually much larger, if we consider the broad strip which was folded back on the rear (circa 90 x 332 cm) possibly because the work proved to be too large for its chosen destination in the Pitti Palace.

The holy event takes place in a solemn atmosphere, against the background of an airy portico with four soaring paired columns, beyond which the view stretches to a distant mountain landscape. Christ is seated at the centre of the long table, with next to him his favourite disciple, John, asleep, while on his right is Saint Peter. Judas, dressed in red, is sitting almost opposite Jesus, leaning forwards to take the bread that Christ is offering. The "Eucharistic species", that is the bread and wine, are given a distinct didactic prominence: the large basket holding the "panis angelorum" and the two metallic flasks are in fact set clearly in the foreground, together with a cat and a dog at the extreme right.

Angelo Tartuferi

26.

GIOVANNI MARTINELLI

(Montevarchi 1600 or 1604-Florence 1659)

Ecce Homo

circa 1645

oil on canvas; 40 x 29 cm

1890 inventory no. 590

On the rear, in a fragment of the original canvas:

«del Martinelli»

The Gospel episode in which Pilate displays the scourged Jesus to the Jews, pronouncing the words "Behold the man!" (John 19:5), is the tragic prelude to his crucifixion. Giovanni Martinelli's sketch portrays the moment of Jesus being shown to the people, after being dressed by the soldiers in a purple robe, with a crown of thorns placed on his head to mock him as King of the Jews. Beneath the balcony the scene is filled with a crowd of people in different attitudes, some arguing, others looking on in dismay and others again applauding.

We do not know the circumstances of the execution of this oil study, which was probably preparatory to an altarpiece destined to a church in the environs of Florence, as suggested by the label stuck on the rear, on which all that is now legible is the phrase "fuor di Firenze". Moreover, the known works by the artist and the scant biographical information that can be gleaned from the archive documents – there are no ancient references to the painter in artistic historiography, and not only does Filippo Baldinucci not include his biography, he does not even mention him once – do not offer any certain chronological cues. The provincial destination of the painting is in fact shared by many of Martinelli's works; indeed he worked primarily for the country churches and had few commissions in the city, so few as to suggest that he did not in fact frequent the Florentine artistic circles. The *Ecce Homo* of the Uffizi would nevertheless appear to belong to the artist's maturity, in view of the naturalness of the composition and the masterful use of the light, which proceeds from the left, glittering on the soldier's armour and spreading through the bare space of the setting to strike the heads and faces of the figures. Despite the small dimensions of the painting, we can recognise Martinelli's pictorial richness in the colouristic transparencies and the delicate range of pinks, greens and reds astutely distributed – note the ribbon in the hair of the sole, intense, female presence – which are characteristic of his palette.



Novella Barbolani di Montauto

27.

JOHANN CARL LOTH
(Munich 1632-Venice 1698)

Ecce Homo

circa 1690

oil on canvas; 120 x 105 cm

1890 inventory no. 5629

The Florentine Galleries conserve numerous paintings by this Bavarian artist, at length active in Venice where he arrived in 1655 and set up a flourishing workshop. It was in fact the Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, an impassioned collector of Venetian painting, who sought out the works of Loth whom he had got to know during his sojourns in the lagoon city and with whom he maintained contacts through Niccolò Cassana, another adoptive Venetian greatly admired by Ferdinando. It was through the mediation of the prince that in 1693 the artist's *Self Portrait* (1890 inventory no. 1866) and the large altarpiece portraying the *Death of Saint Joseph* for the chapel of Francesco Feroni in the church of the Santissima Annunziata arrived in Florence. After the death of the artist in 1698, Ferdinando continued to seek works by him, especially "half-figure" paintings, albeit "showing the hands", since he felt that it was in this format that Loth expressed his gifts to the best. It is possible that this group may have comprised the painting on display here, which is described in the inventory of the assets of the Grand Prince drawn up in 1713: "an Ecce Homo, with a purple cloth about his shoulders, crowned with thorns, who is gazing towards heaven, with his hands bound and holding in the left a rod, and a villain wearing a turban on his head in the act of pointing at Jesus."

The mature style of Loth – who was one of the Venetian protagonists of the manner known as "tenebrosa" or shadowy, in view of the strident realism and the exaggerated and irregular contrasts of light introduced through a neo-Caravaggio current – can be observed in the dramatic use of light and in the mellow stroke of the whites and browns. Standing out in the looming foreground are the illuminated torso of Christ and the rough fabric of his loincloth and of the headgear of the villain, while the light in the moist eyes of Christ and the jewel that clasps the turban of his torturer are picked out by swift touches of white. The subject, which Loth painted several times, was one of the most frequently illustrated episodes of the Passion of Christ: episodes that are displayed in this exhibition to illustrate the essential suffering inherent to the path of salvation forged by the Son of God.



Novella Barbolani di Montauto

28.

LUCA GIORDANO
(Naples 1634-1705)

The Ascent to Calvary

1685-1686

oil on canvas; 126 x 175 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 113

On the stone in the foreground: «Jordanus F»

The painting is part of a series of four canvases portraying *Scenes of the Passion* executed by Luca Giordano for the chapel of the Palazzo Del Rosso in Florence. The family, Lorenzo and Andrea Del Rosso in particular, were at the head of an important banking enterprise in



Naples, which explains their interest in the collecting of seventeenth-century Neapolitan painting. They in fact established relations of friendship with Giordano from the time of the painter's sojourn in Florence in 1682, and then again in 1685-1686, when he was at length the guest of Andrea Del Rosso. The latter became Luca's intermediary in the commissioning of works for the Grand Ducal family and also for other Florentine commissioners, and the artist produced numerous paintings for him partly as a recompense for the hospitality and attentions he had received. In fact, the 1689 inventory of the Del Rosso brothers' collection comprises no less than forty-seven paintings by Giordano. These include the series of canvases that adorned the chapel of the palazzo; nevertheless these four paintings, flawlessly executed with the same palette of browns, yellows and blues, must have been dismantled and separated fairly rapidly.

In addition to the painting on display, also originating from the Feroni bequest and illustrating one of the crucial stages of the *Via Crucis*, when Veronica cleans the blood and sweat from the face of Jesus, were a *Flagellation* of the same dimensions (Florence, Noferi collection), and two paintings to be hung above, a *Christ Before Pilate* and a *Descent from the Cross*, purchased by the Uffizi at the end of the eighteenth century in 1799 and then exchanged with Simone Martini's *Annunciation* and now conserved in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena. On the altar there was probably a *Crucifixion* (not traced), the subject that completed the Passion cycle, the tragic acme of the salvific

progress from the incarnation to death and the Eucharist. Here the latter is prefigured in a clear allusion, in the sheaf of ears of corn clasped in the arms of a young boy in the *Flagellation*.

Novella Barbolani di Montauto

29.

GIOVANNI DOMENICO FERRETTI

(Florence 1692-1768)

Crucifixion

circa 1735-1745

oil on canvas; 135 x 82 cm

1890 inventory no. 5735

The compositional calibre of this *Crucifixion* is constructed through the circular movement that passes through the grieving figure of the Madonna to the loving solicitude expressed in the gesture of the young Saint John, to the sorrowful bent pose of Mary Magdalene kneeling at the foot of the cross. Together these figures create a sort of counterbalance to the hieratic composure of Mary. The shudder that runs between the cherubs, attendant upon this choral passion, agitates everything around, including the loincloth of Christ, which appears to express his abandonment of earthly life.

The painting was published by Francesca Baldassari in the monograph on Ferretti (2002), together with an *Adoration of the Shepherds*, of identical dimensions and it too arched, to which it is a pendant, conserved in the repositories of the Palatine Gallery of the Pitti Palace (1890 inventory no. 5617). In terms of the affinities of style, both works are compared to other of Ferretti's works, and the *Crucifixion* in particular to an oval dedicated to Saint Verdiana in the namesake church in Castelfiorentino, in which Baldassari identifies the face of the saint as absolutely identical to that of the Virgin in the painting on display here.

The antique provenance from the repositories of the Florentine Galleries has suggested that it may have been executed for the Medici, possibly commissioned by one of the "devout" Grand Duchesses, such as Violante of Bavaria or Anna Maria Luisa, and for whom Ferretti had worked. Also conserved in the repositories of the Gallery are the drafts of two important enterprises carried out by Ferretti in Florence, one for the fresco in the concha of the apse in the church of San Salvatore al Vescovo (1738) and the other for the lunette in the arch leading into the choir in the Badia Fiorentina, executed in the years 1733-1734.



Giovanna Giusti Galardi

30. SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NORDIC PAINTER

Crucifixion

circa 1600

oil on copper; 34 x 48 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 52

This fine *Crucifixion*, formerly ascribed to the Dutch painter Hendrick Bloemaert and to the workshop of Hans von Aachen in view of its affinities with another *Crucifixion* attributed to that workshop (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), is now legible only with difficulty in view of the state of oxidation that has rendered the paint dark and opaque. The quality of the small work on copper is nevertheless clearly evident, portraying with the greatest detail the crowded group of bystanders, soldiers and disciples present at the supreme moment of Christ's suffering, flanked by the two robbers contorted by spasms of pain. Beneath the cross, opposite Saint John, the Marys bear up the Virgin who has fainted away, while the executioners busy themselves in completing Christ's agony. At the left, a soldier shown in profile points out the scene, in line with a narrative expedient of Mannerist origin whereby the linking figure, placed in the foreground, directs the attention of the observer.



From the Italian late Mannerist canons of the end of the sixteenth century, and with touches of Roman and Tintoretto inspiration, this *Crucifixion* now at the Uffizi inherits the whirled crowding of figures of eloquent gesture, the sustained colour of which we can at present only intuit; standing out above all is the white purity of the body of Christ hanging on the cross.

Francesca de Luca

31.

LORENZO MONACO

(Florence circa 1370 -1425)

Christ Crucified between the grieving Virgin, Saint John and Mary Magdalene

circa 1395-1400

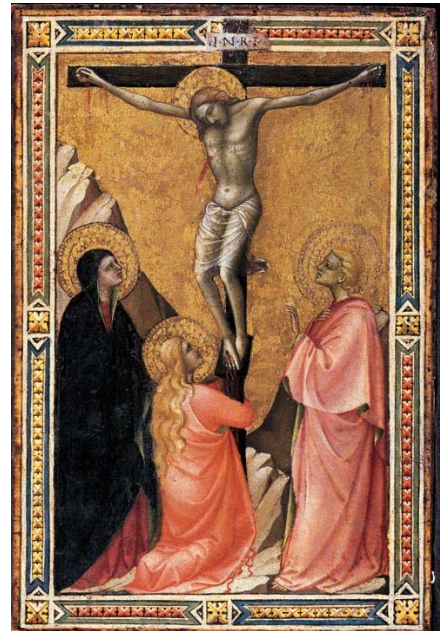
parchment glued to panel; 24 x 16.5 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 126

This is an illumination which has been cut out and glued to a panel in modern times to resemble a small painting. It originally belonged to a missal where, at the beginning of the Canon of the Mass it was the custom to insert an image of the sacrifice of Christ. After an initial, significant reference to Taddeo Gaddi – Giotto's favourite pupil in Florence – the attribution to the great painter and illuminator of the Camaldolese order has been generally accepted by the vast majority of critics since the beginning of the last century. The fine, typically Florentine decorated frame is also found in panel paintings and frescoes between the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the next.

The stylistic features of this small, sophisticated and precious work are very closely related to those that can be detected in other works by the artist that can be referred to the earlier phase of his activity as known to date: the *Vir dolorum* of the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, the small, shaped *Crucifix* of the Museo Horne in Florence, or the large *Prayer in the Garden* of the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence. In these paintings we can discern the same clean-cut and precise drawing, while at the same time being marvellously moulded to intentions of the highest poetry, which here gives life to the at once harrowing and lofty contours of this Crucifix.

Beyond the superb quality of the pictorial execution, here we cannot fail to also be struck by the extreme spiritual concentration of the grievers, which conceded nothing to more pronounced attitudes of expression of grief. In this way, the figures at the foot of the cross appear to be intent simply upon a profound meditation upon the central event of Christian theology. Nevertheless, this spiritual and dramatic concentration does not prevent the painter-monk from dwelling upon a number of splendid descriptive details, such as, for example, the long blonde hair of Mary Magdalene that fall to her shoulders in thick coiling tresses, while below the mantle almost merges with the blood of Christ falling from the holy wood.



Angelo Tartuferi

32. FRA' SEMPLICE DA VERONA

known as IL CAPPUCCINO VERONESE

(Verona 1589 - Verona or Rome 1654)

Pietà with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alessandra

1621

oil on canvas; 186 x 187 cm

1890 inventory no. 918

On the stone at bottom centre:

<F. Simplex vero/nensis cappuccs/F/1621>

Recorded in the Pitti Palace at the end of the seventeenth century, and having passed from there to the Uffizi in 1798, the painting endows the lamentation over the tortured body of Christ with a dramatic orchestration of the twilight illumination, as intimate as it is extraordinary. The last light of the day tongues the figures of the Virgin and the gathered saints with brilliant flickers, mercilessly revealing the tools of the passion laid on the earth in the foreground: the crown of thorns and the hammer, the nails and the pliers. Far in the distance, instead, the disordered movements of the soldiers and the incredulous and confused bystanders stand out against the sky. The Verona artist probably executed the work during his sojourn at the court of Mantua, on commission from Caterina de' Medici, wife of Ferdinando Gonzaga. In effect, the presence on the right of the scene of her namesake saint, Catherine of Alessandra would appear to allude to this, in addition to the figure of the patron saint of Florence, John the Baptist, on the opposite side – as a further tribute to her Tuscan origins.



Andrea Baldinotti

33.

Giovanni Camillo Sagrestani
(Florence 1660-1731)

Pietà (Descent from the Cross with the Virgin and Angels)

circa 1720

oil on canvas; 145 x 111.5 cm

1890 inventory no. 8373

This painting was recorded in Poggio Imperiale between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century and transferred to the Uffizi in the twentieth. Together with another two of the same dimensions portraying the *Marriage of the Virgin* (1890 inventory no. 7783, in the repositories of the Uffizi) and the *Annunciation* (1890 inventory no. 7376, in the repositories of the Palatine Gallery), it was probably part of a series dedicated to the life of the Virgin, while a version of smaller dimensions proves to have been sold by Christie's in 2006 (1st November, lot no. 152).

Sagrestani was an artist accustomed to frequent travels, through which he was able to update himself in the expressive innovation of artists such as Luca Giordano, whom he also studied through the practice of the copy, and of the Bolognese and Veneto painters. His virtuosity is the result of experiences absorbed and elaborated through a delightful and fluent language, faithful to the orientations of late Baroque painting. In the fresco in particular he was admired for an attractive naturalness of touch, in compositions where light and colour are the absolute protagonists. However, no less significant was his collaboration with the Medici tapestry workshop, at least from 1708 to 1730. In this *Pietà* too, the articulation of the figures is sustained by a dynamic expressiveness, energetic in the rendering of the drapery, which intensifies the dramatic quality of the composition. The three angels fluttering in the vicinity bear the symbols of the Passion, materially liberating Christ from the suffering undergone, while highlighted on the ground are the nails of the crucifixion. The colour is strong, and at times livid, and similarly intense is the expressivity of the group, knitting up a dialogue of sentiment.

According to Marco Chiarini, this painting could be inspired by the bronze on the same subject by Massimiliano Soldani Benzi, which can be referred to the years around 1715-1720, known through versions and replicas.

Giovanna Giusti Galardi



34.

EMILIO SAVONANZI

(Bologna 1580-Camerino 1660)

The Burial of Christ

circa 1613

oil on canvas; 53.8 x 35.3 cm

1890 inventory no. 531

With the end of the human adventures of Christ, his burial marks an interval before the prophecy of his mission of salvation comes true and is subsequently concluded with the resurrection. His body, deposed from the cross and taken to the sepulchre, is prepared for burial with loving devotion. In this small painting we see a group of men, young and not so young, occupied in washing him with the water transported in a large pot, while at the doorway the holy women are entering with the unguents. The curved posture of the men and the mute exchange of their glances convey the industrious reverence of their gestures, while the vastness of the surroundings carved out of the rock loom above, silent as a cathedral. In the left foreground is a basket, protruding from which are the pliers and hammer used to remove the nails from the wounds and, on the right, the crown of thorns and the twisted nails. A small naked putto to the left of the group didactically points out to the spectator the wound in the centre of Christ's right hand. The abandon of his supine, white body, the blood washed away, accentuates the physicality of his sacrifice to which the celebration of the Eucharist refers.

The painting entered the Medici collections at the end of the seventeenth century as a work by Ludovico Carracci, and at the end of the nineteenth it was referred to his brilliant pupil Emilio Savonanzi, with a dating in the youthful period prior to his Roman sojourn in 1620, during which he established a fertile relationship with the painting of Orazio Gentileschi and the Caravaggeschi. A type of composition featuring small figures such as this is unusual for the artist, and was very probably due to a specific requirement of the commissioner in relation to the subject. The compactness of the colours and the luminous faceting of the surfaces also suggest a relationship with the painting of Bartolomeo Schedoni.



35. after FEDERICO BAROCCI,
(Urbino 1535-1612)
The Burial of Christ
first decade of the seventeenth century
tempera on panel; 56 x 32 cm
1890 inventory no. 9982

The painting, a copy in miniature of the original by Federico Barocci executed in 1582 for the church of Santa Croce in Senigallia, was recorded in the collections of the Gallery as a *Descent from the Cross*. In reality it represents the burial of Christ, as already correctly identified in 1975 by Andrea Emiliani.

This small panel, despite being faithful to the original in iconographic terms, is distinguished by a metallic rendering of the forms which is far removed from Barocci's sweet and gentle style. The unknown author of this piece may have seen one of the numerous engravings that were already in circulation at the end of the sixteenth century, such as the famous one by Philippe Thommasin, which was executed precisely between 1585 and 1590. The critical success of Federico's painting is also referred to by Bellori: "in view of its beauty, this work was continually being copied and it was almost lost through the recklessness of one who, in polishing it, penetrated the colour and thereabouts and spoiled it all." A copy of the same painting, but by a different hand, is conserved in the Museo Civico of Pistoia. The scene is distinguished by the concentration of the figures, outstanding among them that of Mary Magdalene with her hands joined in contemplation of the body of Christ who, having been taken down from the cross, is being carried to the sepulchre in the winding sheet, borne up by Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and Christ's favourite disciple John. In the middle distance we can observe the dramatic fainting of the Virgin, borne up by the two holy women. Immediately and strikingly evident in the left foreground: the crown of thorns, the nails, the hammer, the pliers and also the jar of unguents with a cloth draped over the top. The view in the background is particularly fascinating, showing the city of Urbino, Barocci's birthplace, reproduced in the guise of Jerusalem. By underscoring Christ's salvific sacrifice, the composition stimulates a mediation on the value of the Eucharist in Jesus's own words: "...this is my body. [...] This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." (Mark 14:22-24).



Serena Nocentini

36.

CRISTOFANO ALLORI

(Florence 1577-1621)

Resurrection

circa 1605

oil on canvas; 86 x 52 cm

1890 inventory no. 6976

This sketch is a study for the altarpiece of the Duomo of Pistoia, requested by the deacon Bartolomeo Rospigliosi and executed with the collaboration of Filippo Furini. Another two sketches for the same work are conserved at the Uffizi (inventory no. 19114) and in a private collection. According to the astute reconstruction of Claudio Pizzorusso, that on display here is to be considered the definitive study where, for the arched figure of the risen Christ, the artist takes inspiration from the Hellenistic model of the *Torso Gaddi*, now in the Uffizi but up to 1677 in the Villa Medici in Rome, and already used by Andrea del Sarto almost two hundred years before Allori. Despite the small dimensions, the work has a remarkable dynamism and spatial depth, produced primarily by the contrasts of light and colour and by the plunging gashes the artist gouges out of the natural backdrop and, beyond the angelic hosts, even out of supernatural infinity. In comparison to the event of the resurrection, the figures of the soldiers below appear like larvae, inert or propelled by an unjustified and futile terror.

In the Gospels, the moment of Christ's resurrection is not described, but we can intuit – especially in the words of John (John 20:1-10) when he observes that Peter had noted inside the sepulchre the shroud that had been laid over the face of the dead Christ folded in a corner and not thrown aside as during a violent action – that the event took place without violent crashing or thunder, but sweetly and in silence, as when Elijah recognises the voice of the Lord in a “still small voice” (I Kings 19:11-13), rather than in other dramatic and extraordinary phenomena.

Although the work does not diverge from the tradition of portraying the scene in a turbulent manner, in the “soft and suffused” pictorial matter (Del Bravo), it appears to us like one of the most fitting translations of the passage in John's Gospel on the resurrection, which was unfortunately not reflected in such a convincing manner in the definitive version set up in the Duomo of Pistoia.



Grazia Badino

37.

ALVISE BENFATTO, known as DAL FRISO

(Verona 1544-Venice 1609)

Resurrection of Christ

1575-1600

oil on canvas; 154 x 90 cm

1890 inventory no. 9635

On the sepulchre at lower right: «ADF»

Purchased by the State in 1980 this painting, which is monumental in composition but not in size represents a rare work of probably private destination painted by Alvise, nephew and assistant of Paolo Veronese in the 1580s, in the years when Aliense and Claudio Ridolfi, as well as his sons Gabriele and Carletto, were also gravitating around the master's workshop. Alvise did not register in the *Fraglia* or guild of Venetian painters until 1584. In its general layout, this *Resurrection* is close to those that emerged from Paolo's workshop at the end of the 1580s, for example that in San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, albeit with the addition of an unusual elegance and of a superabundance of details that appear to suggest contacts with the resident Flemish painters.

In the powerful image of Christ rising in an angelic exultation, supported by a cherub, triumphantly flaunting the banner bearing the cross, his promise to be the bread of life materialises. While the angel dressed in white rearranges the slab of the sepulchre, the soldiers on guard lie in contorted poses on the ground, apart from one wearing a breastplate and helmet who attempts to protect himself from the luminous apparition. The Marys can be seen approaching in the background.



Francesca de Luca

38.
CRISTOFANO ALLORI
 (Florence 1577-1621)
The Supper at Emmaus
 circa 1605
 oil on canvas; 54 x 39 cm
 1890 inventory no. 1507

No finished work by Cristofano on this subject is known, but the sketch has been generally dated to the same period as that of the *Resurrection*, it too on display here. A manuscript note by Balducci, made known by Miles Chappell, appears to refer to a study on panel for the same subject, a singular mention which is probably indicative of the appreciation that Cristofano's sketches must have met with in the circles of the art connoisseurs, despite the fact that they were essentially functional to the drafting of the final work.

The artist portrays the conclusive episode of the apparition of the risen Christ to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The disciples, however, do not recognise him, despite the fact that he expounds to them the Scriptures – namely the Old Testament – in which his resurrection is prophesied, until that is, having arrived at their destination, they invite him to share their supper, when finally their eyes are opened at the moment that Jesus breaks the bread and offers it to them, as he did when he established the Eucharistic ritual (Luke 24:13-34). In his staging of the scene, Cristofano does not take into consideration the gloaming hour at which the miracle took place, since the light flooding from the loggia that opens out onto a hilly landscape is springtime daylight and, one would be led to say, morning light. It is almost as if the artist did not wish to deny natural light to such a shining event in the history of the Church. Moreover, the airy architecture, which could recall for example the portico of Santissima Annunziata, suggests more the refectory of a convent or the entrance of a church, than a private dwelling or a tavern, sites which would be more plausible in a total adherence to the text of the Gospel narration. It is precisely such poetic licence on the part of Cristofano, and his own personal approach – almost “a spontaneous reflection of his eminent personal gentleness” – that appears to be revealed in the serene and yet extraordinarily solemn gesture of Christ, justifying the definition of Cristofano Allori as “the best Florentine painter of the first twenty years of the century” (Del Bravo).

Grazia Badino



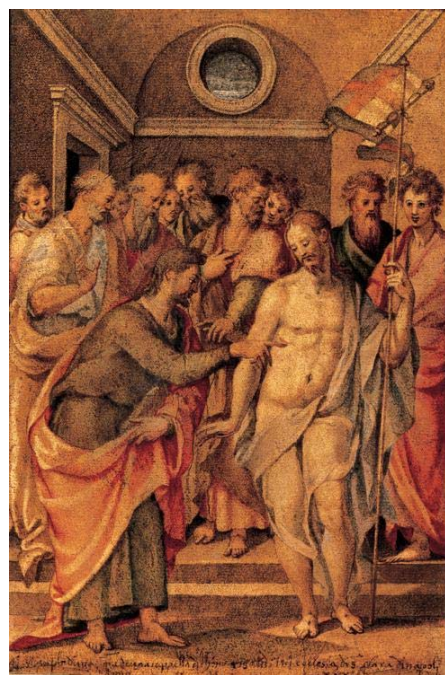
39.
GIROLAMO MACCHIETTI
 (Florence, 1535-1592)
The Incredulity of Saint Thomas
 1580

black pencil, diluted oil colours on paper glued to panel; 28.7 x 19.4 cm
 1890 inventory no. 10099

At bottom, in pen, handwriting of Girolamo Macchietti: «Per exempio di una pa [pittura] d'una Cappella di Thomaso Risaliti nel ecclesia di S. Clara di Napoli. Anno del Signore MDLXXX ab [incarnazione]»

In the passage from the Gospel of Saint John (20:24-29), from which the episode of the incredulity of the apostle, surprised and disconcerted before the unforeseen manifestation of the Risen Christ is taken, Jesus redeems Thomas's hardness of heart by offering himself to his fingers as a living Eucharist. Piety and charity, understood as a tangible reflection of divine love, must therefore have played a not inconsiderable part in the choice of the subjects of the panels commissioned from Girolamo Macchietti by Tommaso Risaliti – a Florentine who lived at length in Naples in the second half of the sixteenth century – to decorate his chapels in the churches of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini and Santa Chiara in that city.

Risaliti, who according to Scipione Ammirato was a man of great religious fervour, commissioned for the former a *Samaritan Woman at the Well*: an authentic manifestation of his desire to consecrate that space, watched over by the presence of Our Lord welcomed in a foreign land, to all the Florentines who died in Naples without being buried. As regards the latter, instead, the Tuscan nobleman decided to leave a more incisive trace of his name, setting it under the protection of his namesake saint. When he was about to execute the



painting, Macchietti delivered to his commissioner the small coloured sketch displayed here (and then conserved the reminder of it for himself, as we can deduce from the legend applied to it).

Moreover, the simple and austere composition of the work, which was a cardinal moment in the painter's Neapolitan sojourn and can be placed between 1578 and 1584, clearly illustrates Risaliti's adherence to the spiritual dictates of the Counter-Reformation. In particular, the figurative significance assigned to the colours: the red "dominating around the figure of Christ" evoking the virtue of sacrifice and love for one's neighbour; the white of his cloak alluding instead to his purity and the certainty of the resurrection.

Andrea Baldinotti

40.

ALESSANDRO TURCHI, known as L'ORBETTO

(Verona 1578-1649)

Christ in Limbo

circa 1620

oil on black jasper (aka touchstone); 46 x 37.2 cm

1890 inventory no. 1426

The subject of the descent into Limbo was appropriate to a shadowy support such as slate, and for this reason too the version that Turchi offers is highly evocative. According to the Apostolic creed, Jesus "descended into hell", that is into the world of the dead, and his sojourn there, albeit temporary, has to be seen as a consequence of his human nature. However, to the extent that he was God, he could not remain a prisoner of death and moreover "When he ascended on high, he took many captives" who were languishing there (Eph. 4:8-10). The term limbo, from the Latin "limbus" meaning "edge" and hence the edge of hell, is in terms of artistic iconography to be considered interchangeable with Hell, a concept used to explain how the just who lived before the coming of Christ, relegated to Limbo as a result of the original sin not yet washed away by baptism, were saved at the moment of his resurrection.



For this subject, the artists drew above all on the *Golden Legend* (the chapter on the resurrection), and Orbetto too avails of it. Jacopo da Varagine, it's true did not insist overly on the presence of Satan in this region unknown to the living, but although the painter illustrates it as a dark space to which the risen Christ brings light by his mere presence, he does not portray any demoniac figure. There are Adam and Eve, the first to be redeemed since they were the first to sin, thus generating their lineage tainted with original sin, and, low down, a youth – possibly John the Baptist, that is the Baptiser, of whom Jesus had said there was no man of woman born who could compare with him – and an old man, possibly Simeon who had been in time to see the Messiah before he died. The identity of the two figures is not certain, considering that there are other characters in the *Golden Legend* with whom they could be identified, from Seth to Elijah. On the right is the good robber, to whom on the cross Jesus had promised "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). The representation is serene and pervaded by hope.

Grazia Badino

41.

ALESSANDRO VAROTARI, known as IL PADOVANINO
(Padua 1588-1649)

Adoration of the Deposed Christ
circa 1620

oil on canvas; 150 x 130 cm

Repositories inventory no. 474

In view of the presence of suggestions taken from Palma the Younger, the painting could be dated around 1620. The subject of the angels adoring the dead Christ does not follow any evangelical, canonical or apocryphal text, but appears to have had its origin in painting precisely in Veneto, with the examples of Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini inspired by the reliefs of Donatello. Nevertheless, the first to introduce adult angels into this type of iconography was Andrea del Sarto, in *The Dead Christ with Angels*, circa 1515, known from an engraving by Agostino Veneziano, already a model for Rosso Fiorentino and, in more recent times, for Taddeo and Federico Zuccari in works that were all painted in Rome. In these last three *Pietà* the angels are bearing torches, recalling the torches of the geni of death of antiquity, but – as noted by Antonio Natali in relation to Rosso Fiorentino – also the candles of a Eucharistic altar.



The uncertainty regarding the specific, original location of this painting prevents a clarification regarding its meaning, whether it was intended in the sense of a devout meditation on the Passion and death of Jesus or on that of the mystery inherent in the renewal of Christ's sacrifice in the daily Eucharistic sacrifice. In the *Golden Legend*, moreover, one of the tasks of the angels is to "impress in our minds the memory of Christ's passion": this concept is expounded twice in the passage dealing with Saint Michael, one of the archangels whose name is known, together with those of Gabriel and Raphael, and the three figures portrayed in this painting may indeed be they. Nevertheless, the body of Christ appears to be offered here in its live, mystical beauty, rather than in grief and death, and the daring recourse (but is not faith also daring and lovingly unprejudiced?) on the part of the artist to the same pose as that of Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (Dresden) – a painting of which Padovanino had made at least one copy – would also support this latter interpretation, if we dare to construe this not as profanation on the part of Padovanino but as an ulterior act of faith.

Grazia Badino

42.

Copy after GIOVAN FRANCESCO BARBIERI, known as
IL GUERCINO

(Cento 1591-Bologna 1666)

The Dead Christ Mourned by Two Angels
seventeenth century

oil on copper; 23 x 31 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 89

A copy of the original conserved in the National Gallery in London, dated around 1617-1618, and only slightly larger, this small painting on copper was part of the Feroni Collection, in which it was recorded as being by the hand of the Emilian master. Despite this it proves to have never been displayed during the course of its successive peregrinations from the Cenacolo di Foligno to the repositories of San Marco, then those of the Pitti Palace and finally of the Uffizi, probably in view of its inferior quality. When compared with the London bronze, formerly in the Borghese Collection in Rome, the hesitations of the unknown copyist emerge. Especially in the figures and above all the faces of the two angels, he has reined into an ingenuous stiffness the natural, soft, suppleness of Guercino, recognised by Mahon also for the singular fluidity of his touch. Next to the lifeless body of Christ, the two angels – their faces distraught by profound grief – appear to draw solace from that painful leaning against a ruined wall. In contrast with the dramatic darkness of the background, the figures take light – and Christ in particular, over whose body spreads a thrust of light, lightening the drapery and even the wings of the angels. It is the moment of the lamentation, which appears to move from an impossible, mute dialogue, while a composed Christ displays the signs of the passion and engages the space slantwise with his deposed body.

Giovanna Giusti Galardi



43.

CRISTOFANO ALLORI

(Florence 1577-1621)

Christ Ministered to by the Angels

second decade of the seventeenth century

oil on canvas; 32 x 52 cm

San Marco and Cenacoli Inventory no. 100

For this sketch, traditionally attributed to Giovanni da San Giovanni, the critics have on several occasions proposed the paternity of Cristofano Allori on the basis of comparison with the sketch on copper of the same composition, it too conserved in the Uffizi (Castello inventory 513), as illustrative of the interior tensions in Cristofano's most mature work. Instead, due to Giovanni da San Giovanni is the small copper of the Palatine Gallery (1890 inventory no. 1529), where the same subject, set in a landscape of Nordic sensibility, is addressed with a different and more domestic narrative vivacity.

The subject of Christ being ministered to by the angels recurs frequently in the paintings of the Counter-Reformation period, especially in the rooms of the convents destined for use as refectories, such as that frescoed by Bernardino Poccetti in 1611 in the Carmelite monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli (now the Greater Seminary) and that which Giovanni da San Giovanni painted in 1629 for the Badia Fiesolana, both divided into three lunettes and with explicit didactic intentions.

In the painting on display here, which arrived at the Uffizi with the Feroni bequest, the interpretation of the Gospel passage that ends the forty days which Jesus spent in the desert being tempted by the devil – “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” (Matt 4:11) – is addressed by Cristofano with a lively and warm palate that reveals the artist's closeness to the stylistic research and Venetian colouring that was practised in Florence by Ludovico Cigoli, Gregorio Pagani and Domenico Passignano. In the sketch – a resource that Allori frequently used in his creative practice – the painter resolves the composition with consummate naturalness, setting in the centre Jesus' angelic banquet, defined by bright colours and a fluid pictorial matter, drenched with light in the drapery. On the left a blazing devil escapes into the shady woods, a figurative recollection of the preceding narrative episode of the temptations which does not interfere with the celebrations offered to Jesus by the angels: those same angels to whom the exegetes have always entrusted the role of protecting, adoring or, as in this case, ministering to Christ.

Novella Barbolani di Montato

44.

JACOPO DA EMPOLI

(Florence 1551-1640)

The Saviour

second decade of seventeenth century

oil on panel; 32 x 16 cm

1890 inventory no. 3186

This painting, which in terms of dimensions and subject would appear to be a tabernacle door, originates from the ancient hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. It shows Christ already risen but still bleeding, in allusion to the sacrifice that is repeated daily, a subject entirely in keeping with a tabernacle used to house the hosts: the vital presence of Christ and “reminder” of his death and resurrection. The figure of Jesus is portrayed in the classic pose of the *contrapposto*, with both leg and arm bent on one side and straight on the other, as in numerous sculptures by Donatello or Michelangelo, who adopted the canons of Greek and Roman sculpture. Empoli had set the figure of Christ in the same pose in a drawing on the same subject as this and constructed in a fairly similar manner which is now in Lille, at the Musée des Beaux-Arts (inventory no. PL 178), but where the blood spurts forth not from Christ's side as here, but from the hole made by the nail of crucifixion in his right hand.

A precedent for a subject of this kind can be found in Giovanni Bellini's *The Blood of the Redeemer*, now in the National Gallery of London, which can be dated around 1464. It was in fact in this year that Pope Pius II banned the cult of the blood of Christ, probably because he deemed it expedient to put a stop to excesses of a pietistic character. However, after the Council of Trent it returned to fashion, with the elimination of the false relics of the Passion and the reaffirmation of the sacraments that distinguished Catholicism from Protestantism. The risen Christ, bearing the cross in his right hand, is wearing a blue cloak over his shoulders which has nothing to do with the purple garment of the hours of his Passion, but which instead indicates that the miracle has taken place. It is



moreover a blue typical of Empoli, and of his maturity, like the Pomino *Supper at Emmaus* of 1609, where the countenance of Christ too has features similar to those of this *Salvatore*, or the *Saint Ives Protector of Widows and Orphans*, 1617, of the Palatine Gallery.

Grazia Badino

45.

ALESSANDRO ALLORI

(Florence, 1535-1607)

Grieving Madonna with the Symbols of Christ's Passion

1581

oil on canvas; 94.5 x 82.5 cm

1890 inventory no. 10121

Signed at bottom left: «A.D. MDLXXXI ALEXANDE ALL: FA:»;

On the outer edge of the parapet: «NON VI SI PENSA QUANTO SANGUE COSTA»

It was a line from Dante's *Paradiso* ("You do not think what blood it cost", XXIX, 91) that, upon a muted and grieving note, introduced to the vision of the painting those who wished to fix their gaze, with that of Mary, upon the symbols of the passion of Christ. Fervent words, which Michelangelo had used before him as a seal to the drawing portraying the *Pietà* that he executed for Vittoria Colonna.

Enclosed within a room, evoked simply by an indistinct stretch of wall, above a parapet of grey stone that separates her from the observer, the mother of the Son of God contemplates the splendour of the chalice which, filled with the blood of Christ, also bears the symbols of his suffering. Emerging from it are the nails of the crucifixion, while the base is encircled by the crown of thorns. Resplendent and terrible presences that appear almost to have dried out Mary's grief to the point of gathering its essence into the cloth that her hands clasp to her breast, possibly after she has used it to wash the body of Jesus and anoint it with perfumes and aromatic substances.

Just a year earlier, Alessandro Allori had made this image one of the most poignant elements of the altarpiece, now in the Uffizi, commissioned from him by the then abbot Aurelio da Forlì for the chapel of the body of San Giovanni Gualberto, situated within the Vallombrosian Badia of Santi Michele e Biagio at Passignano. A paradigmatic fin de siècle work, in which the mystic vision of the mother of Christ appeared to be suddenly dilated in the foreground, almost obliging the observer to join the three angels bearing up the blood of her blood abandoned in death. It is scarcely surprising then, in view of the immediate success of a composition so perfectly calibrated in its at once subtle and vibrant visual eloquence, that Allori's workshop drew numerous replicas from this image of Mary. In the painting on display here, sustained by an indubitable and sophisticated quality of execution, it may in fact be possible to recognise – according to what he himself wrote in his memoirs – the only version that the painter admitted he himself had actually executed for a certain "Giovanna del signor Montalvo", a noblewoman whose name has survived the oblivion of history solely by virtue of Allori's work.



Andrea Baldinotti