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On the Panel with the *Risen Christ Adored by Brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinants* from the Collection of Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum and Its Author

The panel in the Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum (Ill. 116–117) constitutes a fundamental breakthrough in the reconstruction of the historical and artistic context of the early Quattrocento Emiliano, in particular that of Ferrara¹. This significance is primarily due to the painting's date, namely 1423, which narrows the focus and establishes the piece as a primary source document.

Secondly, the group of people kneeling before Christ can be identified as the brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinants, the one that patronized this work, which is a rare artifact in the field of the study of medieval confraternities. In fact, the artistic heritage of confraternities in Emilia is not as plentiful as in Veneto, Umbria, and Marche², despite the great and widespread presence of confraternities all over the region.

In 1909³, the work was acquired by the Alexander III Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (later known as the Pushkin Museum) as a bequest of Mikhail Sergheevich Schekin, a former Russian consul in Trieste and an important art collector of Italian primitives, whose collection was greatly valued by Lionello Venturi⁴. As I have already specified⁵, the painting was formerly in Giuseppe Villetti's collection in Ferrara. The collector (1831–1884) was an “industriante” (as we can read in the catalog), and, in 1877, he presented the work in the antique art section of the *Esposizione provinciale di Ferrara*⁶. After the show, the panel could

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¹ The work was studied by myself during my Ph. D. research C. Guerzi [14, pp. 86–88] and following cited in: C. Guerzi [15, pp. 378–379, figs. 11–12], where it was announced (note 71, p. 378) a more exhaustive study which is the present one; C. Guerzi [16, pp. 93–94, fig. 6]. What is hereby presenting must be considered the outcome of research done after the doctorate, above all in relation to the identification of the commission done by the confraternity.

² For the Marche environment, but not only, see: V. M. Schmidt [27].

³ V. Markova [20, pp. 26–27].

⁴ For the general information on the collector see: V. Markova [21, I, pp. 6–7]; L. Venturi [29, pp. 3–4].

⁵ C. Guerzi [15, pp. 378–379, figs. 11–12]; C. Guerzi [16, pp. 93–94, fig. 6].

⁶ That is to say: “n. 20. Giuseppe Villetti. Cristo Risorto, d'ignoto autore, del 1423”: *Esposizione provin-*

have been possibly taken away from Ferrara, considering that these sorts of events were often arranged to create conditions to alienate the works of art owned by private collectors⁷. This information, even if it does not determine the ultimate provenance of the work, allows us to assume that it came from Ferrara and to argue that the painting subsequently entered the collection of the Russian consul.

On the *recto*, the panel shows Risen Christ coming out from the sepulcher with his right foot raised from its edge; the right hand holds a vexillum with the cross on it, which bends around his head. The composition shows a non-ordinary solution, which is reflected in the lower undulated strip of the mantle flowing out from the scenic space. The flowing purple mantle with a golden hem (edged with floral stamps to form a unique regular filament; Ill. 118) drapes around the body of Christ revealing his wounded ribs. Two barren rocks surround the center of the Rising Christ; the foreground lower part is occupied by soldiers sleeping on both sides of the sarcophagus. They have complex and varied postures, which are characterized by chain mail iron shirts realized through evenly etchings on the pictorial surface with a widespread impressed “*unghiato*” (nail shaped, *ndr*)” motif, which is very distinctive for the artist’s technique [8, p. 38]. Right in the center, there is a group of brothers in adoration of Christ, which is clearly indicated by the left-hand finger of Christ. The capes worn by the brothers, with an opening in the back, leave no doubt about the customary discipline of the group. There are just traces left by the etchings, that is, the traces of the preliminary sketch with the very scarce remains of the original pigment, which determines the lack of information useful to recognize the actual brotherhood. Indeed, the fewest — just barely visible — white pigment traces could be associated with the preparation of the substrate rather than with the actual color of the confraternity’s own vest. The date 1423 is painted in black with Arabic numerals and located on the left side of the sarcophagus, just below of its edge. Some leafy branches on the left are squeezed between the sarcophagus and the pulled-out lid, forming a slight ascending trend from right to left. This solution could be either an effort to render the third dimension, though with a quite empirical application of perspective, or an *escamotage* to cope with the apparently problematic underestimated dimension of the sepulcher compared to the dominant figure of Christ, even if the disproportion is accentuated by the bottom-up vision of the composition. However, the idea of painting a larger sarcophagus, incontrovertibly better proportioned to the whole context, was incompatible with the width of the panel. Doing it in a different way, that is, omitting a part of it, implies a continuity with the external, out-of-the-panel, space, and is considered a weird inventiveness in the design of an important iconographic element involving the iconic image of the confraternity. Such a choice could have been seen as an iconographic risk since the image of the Risen Christ was distinctive and characteristic of the confraternity in public events. Its public function can be comprehended through the traces of painting still visible on the *verso* (Ill. 117), scarcely commented on by the critic likely because of its problematic state of preservation. In particular, Victoria Markova, who has published the most extensive research, claims that the *verso* “is prepared to present the Mother of God surrounded by rays” [20, pp. 26–27], on the basis of the information she found in the manuscript catalog of Schekin’s collection. Markova also states that the image was realized at a later

ciale [9, p. 21]; as for Giuseppe Villetti’s collection and his son Aldo, who would become an art dealer, see respectively: G. Agostini, L. Scardino [1, pp. 256, 279 nr. 23]; L. Scardino, A. P. Torresi [26, p. 19].

⁷ As already noticed in relation to the local exhibitions as a preparatory momentous to alienate works: M. Toffanello [28, p. 19].

time as proved by — not better specified — scientific analysis. In 2015, the work underwent another restoration to consolidate the painting surface⁸, which, however, could not improve the “readability” of the verso where just a faint shadow was discernible. On the *verso*, there was anything but a shadow. Despite all these constraints and even if I was not able to analyze the painting directly, I would say, with caution, that the most noticeable evidence for a tentative interpretation of the traces is an equilateral triangular halo right above the figure. The body is standing but not sitting on the throne; the trace of the drapery, although faint, seems to show leitmotifs compatible with an early Quattrocento work. However, the halo is the undeniable attribute of Our Lord as well the rays etched all around the outline of the figure. These latter, still, complete or simulate the almond of light through which the Divine reveals Himself, even if the rays do not count as the main attribute of God the Father. It is more important to underline instead that this representation is inserted inside a concave multilobe outline which is visible in the upper edge and placed in the uppermost area, which was probably done in a second phase⁹. The concavity that permitted to hook a protruding frame is now lost, as well as the whole frame of the works, and, as it often occurs with these fragile artifacts. The consequence is the loss of basic information. It comes to mind that if this theme had the function of framing the entire figure of God the Father, it could have been invented and/or conceived either to highlight the *verso* figure, or to link the *recto* and *verso* iconography, perhaps in connection with the devotional practices of the confraternity. Generally, mixtilinear frames were used to point out the principal subject of the painting, and even if there are some examples from Vitale da Bologna’s workshop, we need to mention the famous panel painted by Vitale for the Disciplinants Bianchi Brothers of Santa Maria Novella in Ferrara, a brotherhood founded in 1343. The work, now at the Pinacoteca Vaticana, is recorded as the first painting of the oratory¹⁰. The *recto* shows the brothers in the act of adoring the divine group surrounded by a rich and elaborate multi-lobed gilded engraved frame. The corners are surmounted by two overarches with an elegant flower that opens between two fleshy leaves, which an almost recent restoration confirmed as painted together with the main subject and not added in a later period, as it was stated in the past times¹¹. This motif is quite easy to trace in the very Trecento Bologna school. We can take as an example the panel by Simone di Filippo at the Museo di Santo Stefano in Bologna, already shifting toward the gothic as indicated by the turgid lushness of the corolla, also recently restored¹². Besides, if on the one hand it is difficult to imagine that the Risen Christ — an image, as said, venerated and identifiable element for the public and private acknowledgment of the confraternity — is not the principal side of the artifact, it seems equally difficult to think that the work was not conceived from the beginning with a *recto* and a *verso*. Indeed, besides the traces of pigment on both sides, the dimensions (105×54.8 cm), the verticality of the format, and the cusp-shaped typology suggest that it is a movable artefact — and thus a processional standard¹³. The support is made by a single 32 mm thick axis, flattened along the edge¹⁴, poplar wood, a typical essence used in the Padana region for this type of artifacts. The loss of the frame does not permit to figure out how a work

⁸ As precised by Natalia Svirina in a written communication on February, 13, 2023.

⁹ V. Markova [20, pp. 26–27].

¹⁰ On the oratory and the confraternity see: C. Guerzi [13, pp. 85–118].

¹¹ As already said: C. Guerzi [15, pp. 375–376; fig. 8].

¹² Recently restored: A. Pachera [25, pp. 114–129].

¹³ On standard on panel see: V. M. Schmidt [27, pp. 15–20].

¹⁴ V. Markova [20, pp. 26–27].

as such could be carried around, since the frame was also crucial to hook a pole or a support used to transport the standards¹⁵.

In Schekin's collection, the painting was attributed to Beato Angelico, as it was common in that time period, especially with regard to the works close to the so-called Italian Primitives. It was Markova (1986) who first published it as a work of an "Ignoto pittore italiano della prima metà del Quattrocento", observing similarities with the Salimbenis; this attribution is still kept in the recent Museum catalog¹⁶. It was Andrea De Marchi [7, p. 92 note 89; 8, p. 52 nr. 132] to return the work to an emiliano background, in particular to a *corpus* of works related to *Trinity* (Ferrara, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Palazzo dei Diamanti; Ill. 119), *name-piece* of Maestro G.Z.: a painter that nowadays is mainly identified with the documented Michele di Iacopo dai Carri, a pivotal personality to understand the artistic environment of Ferrara at the age of Nicolò III d'Este, in connection with Iacopo della Quercia in Ferrara and to Francesco Lola in Bologna¹⁷. This proposed attribution was fully accepted by Daniele Benati, Keith Christiansen, and then by myself¹⁸.

A comparison with the *Resurrection*, a fresco painted by the artist in the Oratory of Sant'Apollinare in Ferrara (Ill. 120), the former headquarters of the Confraternity of Battuti Neri, is necessary. The work was completed by the second decade of the Quattrocento, as we can assume from the reading of the incomplete date "141<...>", which can be seen on the sepulcher at the opening of the dedicatory inscription, of which the letters "MI <...>" are the only ones left and have to be related with the name of Dai Carri¹⁹. This juxtaposition reveals a stylistic evolution that must be considered with caution because of the state of preservation and different techniques and dimensions used in his works. When Dai Carri, the possible artist, makes mobile paintings, he prefers loose strokes and likes to paint motifs taken from Altichiero, the inspiring master, to whom he is indebted in the *Resurrection*. Indeed, at this time he was able to dramatically receive the lesson of Gentile da Fabriano. The way the artist realized the fresco shows the sensitivity to the naturalistic data and elements which derive from Gentile and make the *Resurrection*, painted for the Confraternity, a watershed in his production. The pattern he proposes in this work, as amply noted by the scholars, has a precedent, even if not exact, in the homonymous drawing found in the *Martirologio*²⁰ (Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini; Ill. 121). The codex probably belonged to the same brotherhood and was connected to the practice followed by the confraternity from the beginning. The oldest nucleus of the manuscript could probably be dated back to the beginning of the 15th century, as well as the above cited miniature. The work is by the Maestro del Martirologio dei Battuti Neri from Ferrara, who is renowned as one of the most typical personalities of early 15th-century Ferrara for his staunch adherence to the new reading of Giotto carried out by Altichiero. The adhesion is clearly evident in the spatial boxes used to set drawings, in the geometrically constructed figures, and in the use of vernacular models. This language detectable in Dai Carri's juvenile works is also present in the works of Maestro di San Romano and, in certain aspects, in the works of Maestro di Vignola²¹. However, after complet-

¹⁵ V. M. Schmidt [27, p. 62].

¹⁶ V. N. Krivova, I. Mironova [19, p. 190 (n. 136)]. I thank Natalia Svirina for the bibliographic advice.

¹⁷ To set the critical frame: D. Benati [4, pp. 60–83]; C. Guerzi [16, pp. 88–117]; C. Guerzi [18, pp. 203–245]. On the Bolognese activity, assigned by myself to the artist see also lastly: C. Guerzi [17 in c.s.].

¹⁸ D. Benati [3, p. 25]. K. Christiansen [5]; as for what concerns what I assumed: see *supra* note 1.

¹⁹ Assigned to Michele dai Carri by Andrea De Marchi [8, p. 37]; see: D. Benati [4, p. 72].

²⁰ On this codex (inv. 2501/2) see: C. Guarnieri [12, pp. 321–333].

²¹ I had already covered the similarities between the Maestro del Martirologio and the Maestro di San

ing this work, the likely-to-be Dai Carri imposes himself as the bridge-head to Gentile da Fabriano, whom he had known through his Venetian works and, perhaps, through those present in Ferrara, according to some ongoing research based on highly evaluated hypotheses²². Among Gentile's works in Ferrara there was the *Madonna con il Bambino* (now in the Pinacoteca in Ferrara, formerly in Vandeghini Baldi's collection), which probably came from the Church of Santa Maria dei Servi, where Dai Carri (worked?) from time to time, as permitted by other commitments he had gotten in Ferrara. In the city, Dai Carri collaborates with Francesco Lola²³. Around 1404, recent documentary findings suggest that he worked at the court of Nicolò III d'Este²⁴.

The relation between the subject matter of the fresco and that of the panel has convinced me that the work at the Museum in Nizhny Novgorod may have served as the standard of the Ferrarese confraternity. This conjecture is supported by the remaining black pigment still visible along the edges of the capes of the brothers²⁵. Notwithstanding the *lectio facilior* it is worth saying again that the year 1423 firmly puts the work in the context of the penitential movement in the 15th century. That was the time when the great penitential manifestations were over and new confraternities were about to flourish following up Manfredi da Viterbo's preaching (1417) or that of San Bernardino da Siena, one of the most inspiring Franciscan personalities²⁶. As an example, it is worth to remember that in Bologna, following up San Bernardino da Siena, the old and famous Disciplinants Confraternity of Santa Maria Mezzaratta, for which Vitale da Bologna had worked too²⁷, was founded again and named after the name of Good Jesus²⁸. This new phase is recorded in a *Memoriale* dating back as early as 1585 — *et del mille quattrocento trenta vel circa vene nella città di Bologna il glorioso Santo Bernardino a predicare et detti huomini ricorsero al detto Santo et li dissero come questa Compagnia d'huomini soleua essere in tanta copia et fervore et che era mancata di spirito et de huomini. Intendendo questo, detto Beato cominciò a predicare et ricordare alla città questa devota compagnia et fece tanto che detta Compagnia ritornò al suo pristino stato, anzi l'augmentò di huomini ed di fervore. Vedendo il predetto Santo havere fatto tal frutto non volse lassare detta Compagnia senza memoria di lui et volse che si domandasse la Compagnia del Bon Gesù <...> Et havendo detto Santo spirito di profecia, promesse a detti huomini ax parte Dei che tutti quelli che seriano d'essa non patirebbero morte di peste*²⁹. The year *del mille quattrocento trenta vel circa* — 1423 to be exact — is given in the scholarly sources of Bologna³⁰, which also provide the basic information related

Romano during my PhD research study: C. Guerzi [14, pp. 56–61].

²² A mindful discussion in: D. Benati [4, pp. 72–73].

²³ After my PhD results, this argument was recently studied — C. Guerzi [17 in c.s.] — even if a subsequent work, which collects sources, is being completed.

²⁴ D. Dameri, A. Ludovisi [6, pp. 32–33].

²⁵ C. Guerzi [16, p. 94].

²⁶ P. L. Meloni [22, p. 28]. San Bernardino preached in Bologna many times; for sure in 1424, but perhaps also before: D. Pacetti [24, p. 52].

²⁷ See: A. Volpe [30].

²⁸ It seems fair to launch the present hypothesis, even if on the brotherhood there is an ongoing broader documentary research conducted by myself. However, a first idea about the new and important headquarters of the confraternity can be seen: M. Fini [11, p. 44].

²⁹ ACV, Bologna, *Recuperi beneficiari*, fasc. 665, 4; this quote, excerpted from the memorial of the confraternity going back to 1585, is cited by M. Fanti [10, p. 57] and P. L. Meloni [22, p. 69 note 44].

³⁰ Starting from the bolognese scholar father Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi (sec. XVII–XVIII), see also: M. Fanti [10, p. 70].

to the white capes worn by the members of the confraternity³¹. Indeed, if the date 1423 could be contextualized in the historic information of the brotherhood, it would be sufficient to identify the confraternity as the commissioner of the standard, now in Nizhny Novgorod, and Dai Carri as its presumed author. Usually, the dates marked on the artifacts commissioned by confraternities refer to crucial events in their history, such as a refoundation and/or a statutory reform. Considering the existing relation between Dai Carri and Bologna, we must assume that the presumed standard was conceived for that context, where Dai Carri is documented from 1402 to 1419. At that time, the artist was highly acknowledged at home and he managed a network of relations with the families close to the court, which made the painter the pivotal artist in Ferrara at the sunset of the Middle Ages³². Therefore, he became a benchmark in the local artistic scenario and a leading protagonist among the active workshops of the city. Over the course of this extraordinary cultural season, which coincides with the reign of Alberto V d'Este (1388–1398) and of his son Niccolò III (1393–1441), Ferrara played a leading role in the context of the European courts and, above all, opened the path to the Renaissance which would bloom during the reigns of Leonello, Borso, and Ercole.

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³¹ On the cape of the confraternity of the Good Jesus there are news in *Vita di San Bernardino* by friar Amadio Maria da Venezia [2, p. 86] who states “<...>i quali vestono di bianco, lo portano <referring to the emblem of the name of Jesus> in fronte nel mezzo del traverso d'una croce di color azzuro profilata di bianco, dacché lo ricevertero dal Santo Padre”.

³² To set a frame of the overall artistic scenario of Ferrara between Gothic and early Renaissance, see: M. Minardi [23, pp. 182–191].

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Title. On the Panel with the *Risen Christ Adored by Brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinants* from the Collection of Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum and Its Author

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Abstract. The article is the study-case of the panel with the *Risen Christ Adored by Brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinants*, dated 1423, preserved at the Nizhny Novgorod State

Art Museum. This work is discussed in the context of the artwork of the painter Michele di Iacopo Dai Carri from Ferrara, the presumed author of a corpus of works grouped under the name of the so-called Maestro G.Z. The work from the Russian museum, which entered the artist's catalogue because of the undeniable stylistic relationship with the other works, is now the only surely dated painting of the group, and therefore, the only chronological reference which allows to establish the sequence of the works by the painter.

The article, besides demonstrating the significance of the Nizhny Novgorod panel and confirming its attribution to the Master G.Z. identified with Dai Carri, clarifies the provenance of the work, analyzes iconography of the depictions on the both sides of the panel, sheds light on its function as a processional standard of a disciplinants confraternity, and considers the painting in the artistic context of the Ferrara and Bologna during the reign of Nicolò III d'Este (1393–1441) and within the new artistic trends expressed by Alberto da Campione and Jacopo della Quercia, and those, originated by the presence of Gentile da Fabriano in Venice.

Keywords: Confraternity, Disciplinants, panel painting, Emilia confraternities, Ferrarese painting, Schekin collection, Nicolò III d'Este age, late Gothic age

Название статьи. О картине «Воскресший Христос с поклоняющимися членами братства флагеллантов» из коллекции Нижегородского государственного художественного музея и ее авторе

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается картина «Воскресший Христос с поклоняющимися членами братства флагеллантов», датированная 1423 годом и хранящаяся в собрании Нижегородского государственного художественного музея. Произведение анализируется в контексте художественной деятельности известного по документам феррарского художника Микеле ди Якопо даи Карри, которому исследователи приписывают работы, ранее сгруппированные вокруг давшего имя особой группе произведения, помеченного монограммой G.Z., а также и картину из Нижегородского музея. В статье, кроме этого, уточняются некоторые аспекты происхождения произведения и его бытования в исторических коллекциях, а также аспекты типологии самого произведения и его функции, в том числе и в свете возможных взаимоотношений между феррарской и болонской художественной средой.

Автор предлагает новую иконографическую трактовку плохо сохранившегося изображения на оборотной стороне доски и высказывает предположение о том, что произведение использовалось в качестве процессионного штандарта феррарским братством флагеллантов.

Ключевые слова: братства, флагелланты, живопись на дереве, братства в Эмилии, живопись феррарской школы, коллекция Щекина, Николо III д'Эсте, поздняя готика



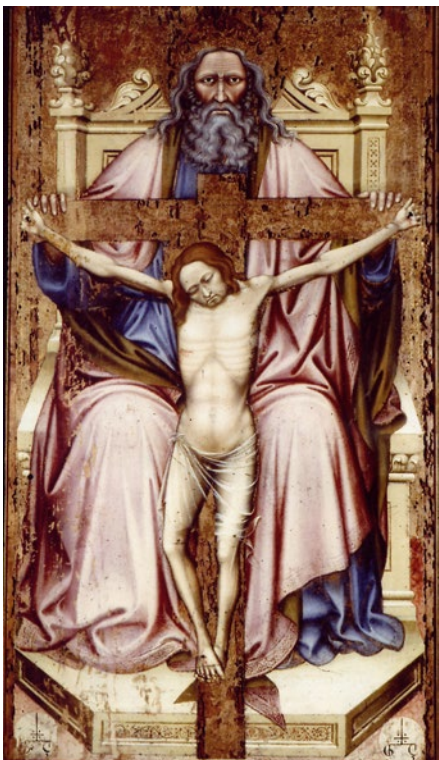
Ill. 116. Maestro G.Z. (presumably Michele di Iacobo dai Carri), Risen Christ adored by brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinati, 105x55 cm, recto. Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum. Courtesy of the Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum



Ill. 117. Maestro G.Z. (presumably Michele di Iacobo dai Carri), Risen Christ adored by brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinati, verso. Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum. Courtesy of the Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum



Ill. 118. Maestro G.Z. (presumably Michele di Iacobo dai Carri), Risen Christ adored by brothers of the Confraternity of the Disciplinati, detail of the recto. Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum. Courtesy of the Nizhny Novgorod State Art Museum



Ill. 119. Maestro G.Z. (presumably Michele di Iacobo dai Carri), Trinity. Ferrara, Pinacoteca Nazionale © Pinacoteca Nazionale di Ferrara



Ill. 120. Maestro del Martirologio dei Battuti Neri di Ferrara, Martirologio of the Battuti Neri of Ferrara, Risen Christ, carta 12 verso. Circa 1400, Fondazione Giorgio Cini. Venezia, © Fondazione Giorgio Cini



Ill. 121. Maestro G.Z. (presumably Michele di Iacobo dai Carri), Risen Christ adored by brothers of the Confraternity of the Battuti Neri. Ferrara, Oratorio dell'Annunziata. Photo: Chiara Guerzi