NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Italian Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Paintings

Andrea di Bartolo
Sienese, active from 1389 - died 1428

The Nativity of the Virgin

c. 1400/1405

tempera on poplar panel
painted surface: 44.2 × 32.5 cm (17 3/8 × 12 13/16 in.)
overall: 46.7 × 33.9 × 0.6 cm (18 3/8 × 13 3/8 × 1/4 in.)
framed: 48.3 x 36.8 x 4.1 cm (19 x 14 1/2 x 1 5/8 in.)
Samuel H. Kress Collection 1939.1.42

ENTRY

The three panels in the National Gallery of Art collection (this work, *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple*, and *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*) form part of a larger series of scenes from the childhood of Mary, of which a fourth component is also known: *Joachim Leaving Jerusalem* now in the Keresztény Múzeum at Esztergom in Hungary [fig. 1].[1] Since two of the episodes, *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple* and *Joachim Leaving Jerusalem*, are seldom found represented in art, there are good reasons to assume that the sequence would have originally comprised at least four other, more commonly illustrated scenes, namely, the Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple, the Annunciation to Joachim (and/or to Anna), the Meeting at the Golden Gate, and the Betrothal of the Virgin.[2] These (and possibly other) scenes would have accompanied a central image of the Madonna and Child,[3] or of Saint Anne with the Madonna and Child,[4] a Coronation of the Virgin,[5] or a theme such as the Annunciation or Pentecost.[6] It is difficult, therefore, to reconstruct the dismembered and dispersed altarpiece of which our three panels would have formed part, also because we do not know exactly how the surviving scenes from the life of the Virgin were related to the main image of the altarpiece. The fact that the grain of the wooden support is vertical would seem to exclude the proposition that they are fragments of a predella,[7] and the hypothesis advanced in the past, that our panels could be fragments of a reliquary cupboard, seems to have no foundation.[8] They could have been fragments of a *vita-icon* type panel, with a whole-length figure of the Madonna and Child flanked by a vertically arranged series of scenes of her life.[9] Such an image, however, would appear decidedly old-fashioned in Siena after the

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

mid-fourteenth century. A more likely alternative format is suggested by the cases in which Sienese painters of the late fourteenth century, such as Taddeo di Bartolo or Andrea di Bartolo himself,[10] produced paintings in a form similar to thirteenth-century dossals, with a large-scale representation at the center, flanked by narrative scenes in two superimposed orders [fig. 2] (see also *Reconstruction*). A round-arched termination, enriched on the inside with cusped moldings, would be very appropriate for this kind of altarpiece. In Siena in this period, and in Tuscany in general, the wood grain of the support in a vertical panel is invariably aligned vertically, and in a horizontal panel horizontally. It cannot be excluded, of course, that the painting was realized during the artist's stay in Venice or in the Marche and not in Siena, as Laurence Kanter, in correspondence, suggests. He points out that carpentry practice in the Venetian territories frequently aligned panels parallel to the shorter axis, so in the case of a horizontal altarpiece the wood grain would run vertically.[11] He further notes that the incised profiles of the original frame moldings on our panels argue for a Venetian provenance. In Tuscany, engaged frames were applied before the panels were gessoed or gilt. In Venice, they were added afterward, and their profiles are often found inscribed on the picture surface as a guide to the painter.

The scenes from the life of the Virgin painted by Andrea are based on an apocryphal text called *De Ortu Beatae Mariae et Infantia Salvatoris*, attributed to the evangelist Matthew. Later sources enriched this narrative with additional episodes. According to the legend, the marriage of Joachim (father of the Virgin Mary) and Anna remained childless for many years, a state that was interpreted by the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem as punishment for grave sins. Therefore, Joachim's offering of a sacrificial lamb was rejected, and he was expelled from the temple. The scene represented in this work is usually identified as Joachim and the Beggars but refers instead to a previous episode in the life of Mary's parents. A version of the legend, evidently familiar in Tuscany, recounts that Joachim and Anna lived in a particularly charitable way, dividing all their worldly goods into three parts: a third was allocated to the poor, another third to the temple, and only a third was kept for their own needs.[12] In the panel at the Gallery, we see, to the left, Joachim distributing loaves of bread to the poor, while his wife is presiding over the delivery of sacks of grain to the temple, where a priest receives them. This episode would have been followed by the lost scene of the priest's rejection of the offering of a sacrificial animal and the Expulsion from the Temple, the premise for Joachim's Abandonment of the City, which is described in the painting now in Esztergom.

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

At this point in the sequence, other episodes usually illustrated in cycles of the childhood of Mary are likely to have followed: namely, the Angel's Annunciation of the Birth of Mary both to Joachim and to Anna, and the Return of Joachim to the City, linked with the Meeting of Husband and Wife at the Golden Gate. In the following scene of the Nativity of the Virgin, Andrea faithfully followed the model proposed by his father, Bartolo di Fredi, in the cycle of frescoes in the church of Sant'Agostino at San Gimignano and elsewhere:[13] in the foreground at the center we see a young woman seated on the ground, supporting with one arm the newborn child who stands on her lap, back turned to the viewer, while another woman, also crouched on the ground, is gesturing with both hands towards the child, as if inviting the baby girl to come to her arms. Further in the background we see two standing women: one is just entering the room through a door in the rear wall, bearing a bowl of food in her hands; the other is pouring water into a basin for the child's mother to wash her hands. Anna is shown reclining on the skillfully foreshortened bed to the right, its curtain drawn back. On the other side of the scene, Joachim and another elderly man are seated in a barrel-vaulted loggia adjacent to the room of the childbirth, awaiting news of the event. The following scene, *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, also resembles the corresponding fresco by Bartolo in San Gimignano,[14] but in this case both paintings reveal the influence of a celebrated prototype frescoed by *Pietro* and Ambrogio Lorenzetti on the facade of the Ospedale della Scala in Siena.[15] The scene represents the episode of the three-year-old Mary being taken by her parents to the temple; the child spontaneously ascends the flight of steps to the temple, where she would reside until the age of fourteen. By painting the temple at an angle to the picture plane, displaced to the right side of the composition, Andrea seems, however, more faithful to his father's more dynamic and "modern" composition than to the Lorenzettian model.

After initial attempts to attribute the three panels to Bartolo di Fredi,[16] art historians in general accepted them (and also the fourth now in Esztergom) as the work of Andrea.[17] The generally accepted date for them is c. 1400 or shortly thereafter.[18] A proposal to insert them into the catalog of Giorgio di Andrea[19] has found no acceptance in the literature. G. Fattorini described the three Washington panels as akin to the *Adoration of the Magi* in the Salini collection (Castello di Gallico, near Asciano, Siena), which he dated to the first decade of the fifteenth century.[20]

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

From a stylistic point of view, the scenes from the childhood of Mary can be compared with such paintings as the six stories of Saint Galgano now divided between the Museo Nazionale in Pisa and the National Gallery in Dublin (these, too, most likely originated as parts of a panel in the form of a dossal);[21] various portable triptychs in the museums of Altenburg,[22] Philadelphia,[23] Prague,[24] and Siena;[25] or the paintings on a casket in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena.[26] Unfortunately, none of these paintings is securely dated. Since the only documented works of the painter have been lost, the one secure point of reference for the chronology of his career remains the fragmentary polyptych in the Church of the Osservanza at Siena, dated 1413.[27] The lack of other secure points of reference explains why the chronological reconstruction of Andrea's works remains so beset by uncertainty. For example, his signed *Assumption of the Virgin* (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond) sometimes is considered to belong to his early period, and sometimes to his full maturity.[28] Some clues for a reconstruction of the artist's career can, I believe, be deduced from the miniatures painted by Andrea for the choir-books of the Eremo di Lecceto near Siena, probably during the 1390s.[29] The strong compositional simplification and charged color of these miniatures reveal significant affinities with the scenes from the life of the Virgin being discussed here, and thus seem to confirm that they belong to a relatively precocious phase in Andrea's career.

Comparisons of the Gallery's panels with the figures of saints in the Church of the Osservanza in Siena (1413), on the other hand, show that the latter belong to a more advanced phase in the artist's career. Some lateral panels of polyptychs, such as that in Tuscania Cathedral, of which the predella has also survived, are easier to compare with the Osservanza saints. In contrast to the tall and slender saints of the Osservanza, who wear draperies furrowed by long, close-set, sharply undercut folds, those of Tuscania are more robust in physique and more placid in expression; their statuesque figures seem to indicate an earlier date of execution, somewhat closer in style to the group of miniatures Andrea probably realized in the last decade of the fourteenth century.[30] If this conclusion is correct, and if therefore the crowded scenes thronged with corpulent and largely immobile figures in the predella in Tuscania testify to Andrea's art around 1405–1410, it seems reasonable to propose a dating to the very first years of the Quattrocento for the Gallery's scenes from the life of the Virgin. The compositions in these panels are reduced to essentials, and no signs are yet visible either of the more spacious layout of the scenes or of the greater liveliness of the figures that can be seen in the stories of Christ in the now dispersed predella that should probably be

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

connected with the Assumption in Richmond and in other altarpieces reasonably considered later than the Osservanza saints.[31]

The closest stylistic affinities of the Gallery's panels therefore are with works whose figures are more robust and more sedate in character. Paintings that fall into this category—apart from the polyptych in Buonconvento and the altarpiece now in the museum in Murano, both datable to the last decade of the fourteenth century—include the fragment with the Virgin Annunciate formerly in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the fragmentary Saint Michael Archangel in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena (no. 63), for both of which Laurence Kanter (1986) proposed a provenance from the same altarpiece of which the Gallery's panels originally formed a part.[32] Apparently, during these years—that is, the first fifteen years of the fifteenth century—Andrea especially painted small-scale works for private devotion, such as the abovementioned portable triptych no. 133 in the Pinacoteca of Siena; this resembles our scenes from the life of Mary not only in the proportions and physiognomic types of the figures but also in its peculiar compositional devices.[33] In another triptych datable to this period, that of the Lindenau-Museum in Altenburg, the cloak of the young female saint of the left leaf is closely comparable with that of the majestic Saint Anne of *The Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple*. Another comparable work [34] is the *Adoration of the Magi* now in the Salini collection, which recalls the Washington panels both in the statuesque pose of its figures and in the characteristics of its architectural backdrop.[35]

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

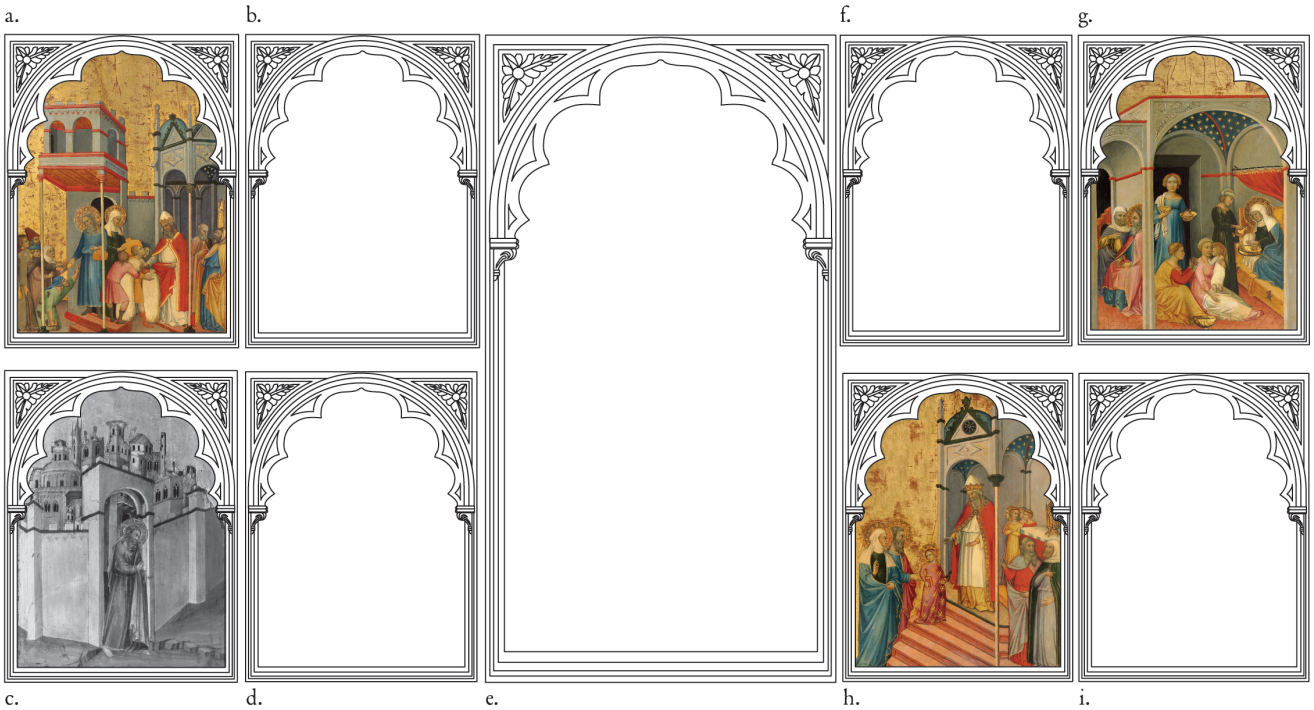
fig. 1 Andrea di Bartolo, *Joachim Leaving Jerusalem*, c. 1400/1405, tempera on panel, Keresztény Múzeum, Esztergom, Hungary

fig. 2 Reconstruction of a dispersed altarpiece by Andrea di Bartolo (color images are NGA objects): a. *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple*; b. Expulsion of Joachim (?), lost; c. *Joachim Leaving Jerusalem* (fig. 1); d. Annunciation of the Birth of Mary (?), lost; e. Lost; f. Meeting at Porta Aurea (?), lost; g. *The Nativity of the Virgin*; h. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*; i. Marriage of the Virgin (?), lost

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

RECONSTRUCTION

Click on any panel in the altarpiece reconstruction below to see an enlarged version of the image. Color reproductions in the reconstruction indicate panels in the National Gallery of Art collection.



Reconstruction of a dispersed altarpiece by Andrea di Bartolo:

a. *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple*
b. Expulsion of Joachim (?), lost
c. *Joachim Leaving Jerusalem* (Entry fig. 1)
d. Annunciation of the Birth of Mary (?), lost
e. Lost
f. Meeting at Porta Aurea (?), lost
g. *The Nativity of the Virgin*
h. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*
i. Marriage of the Virgin (?), lost

NOTES

[1] No. 55.148; 46 × 34 cm. The painting, its provenance unknown, was purchased by Cardinal János Simor, perhaps in Rome, for the museum in Esztergom between 1867 and 1878; see Miklós Boskovits et al., *Christian Art in Hungary: Collections from the Esztergom Christian Museum* (Budapest, 1965), 52. Its original gold ground was evidently removed at an early date, and it, like the Washington panels, was regilded during a nineteenth-century

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

restoration.

[2] On the role of Joachim in Italian cycles of the childhood of Mary, cf. Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantin et en Occident*, 2 vols. (Bruxelles, 1964–1965), 2:154–159; Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 6 vols. (Gütersloh, 1966–1990), 4, pt. 2: 38–54.

[3] As an example we may cite the *vita-icon*, name piece of the Master of San Martino in the Museo Nazionale in Pisa, in which the main image at the center is flanked on either side by six superimposed stories from the life of the Virgin. See Enzo Carli, *Il Museo di Pisa* (Pisa, 1974), 41–43 and fig. 48.

[4] Cf. the retable of Bernat de Puig in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, repro. in Josep Gudiol and Santiago Alcolea i Blanch, *Pintura gotica catalana* (Barcelona, 1986), fig. 57.

[5] As in the polyptych commissioned from Bartolo di Fredi for the church of San Francesco at Montalcino; cf. Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, 1994), 188–221.

[6] The Annunciation is placed at the center of an illuminated page with scenes from the childhood of Mary, executed by the Bedford Master, in a *Book of Hours* in the Oesterreichisches Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, cod. 1855; Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 6 vols. (Gütersloh, 1966–1990), 4, pt. 2: pl. 467. The scene of Pentecost occupies a central position in the cycle of frescoes by the young Bartolo di Fredi in the church of Sant'Agostino at San Gimignano. See Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, 1994), 32–45.

[7] On the structural characteristics of the predella in late medieval altarpieces in Tuscany, see Monika Cämmerer-George, *Die Rahmung der toskanischen Altarbilder im Trecento* (Strasbourg, 1966), 9394; Christoph Merzenich, *Vom Schreinerwerk zum Gemälde: Florentiner Altarwerke der ersten Hälfte des Quattrocento* (Berlin, 2001), 55.

[8] Cesare Brandi formulated this hypothesis, and various scholars accepted it, in Cesare Brandi, *Quattrocentisti senesi* (Milan, 1949), 243.

[9] Joanna Dunn of the National Gallery of Art conservation department tells me that, judging from the cracks lining up, it seems a "strong possibility" that *The Nativity of the Virgin* was placed above *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*. However, the x-radiographs do not show the wood grain clearly enough to prove this.

[10] On the typology of *vita-icon* in Tuscany, see Victor M. Schmidt, "Tipologie e funzioni della pittura senese su tavola," in *Duccio: Siena fra tradizione bizantina e mondo gotico*, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli et al. (Cinisello Balsamo,

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

Milan, 2003), 541–544; Rita Sauer, "'... so be ye holy in all manner of conversation': The Vita Retable," in *Kult Bild: Das Altar- und Andachtsbild von Duccio bis Perugino* (Petersberg, 2006), 131–176. For *vita-icons* with horizontally arranged scenes, see Taddeo di Bartolo's panel *San Geminianus Enthroned and Eight Stories of His Legend*, or Andrea di Bartolo's panel with the Crucifixion at the center and eight scenes from the life of Christ and of saints to the sides, formerly in the Stoclet collection in Brussels. Cf. Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 2, *The Sienese School of the 14th Century* (The Hague, 1924), fig. 354; Pierre Bautier, "I primitivi italiani della collezione Stoclet a Bruxelles," *Cronache d'arte* 4 (1927): 315 and fig. 6.

[11] Taddeo di Bartolo's San Geminianus dossal (see note 10 above) has been transferred to a modern panel support with a vertical wood grain and so cannot be adduced for comparison.

[12] The narrative of the Pseudo-Matthew was supplemented with other episodes by a German priest named Wernher in the mid-twelfth century. His *Driv liet von der maget* (*Three Books on the Virgin*) is the first source to mention the story of the division of Joachim's worldly goods for charitable purposes; see Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 6 vols. (Gütersloh, 1966–1990), 4, pt. 2: 54–55; W.J. Hoffman, "Wernher," in *Marienlexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, 6 vols. (St. Ottilien, 1994), 6:716–717.

[13] The scene frescoed by Bartolo in Sant'Agostino at San Gimignano was repeated with small variations by the same painter in the predella fragment, part of the altarpiece commissioned from Bartolo for the church of San Francesco at Montalcino and now in the local Museo Civico. See Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, 1994), figs. 34, 37. The young Andrea probably collaborated in the execution of this part of the Montalcino altarpiece.

[14] Reproduced in Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, 1994), fig. 27.

[15] This lost cycle on the façade of the Ospedale della Scala is now known only from descriptions in the sources. Various scholars have proposed the involvement in it not only of the Lorenzetti brothers but also of Simone Martini (Sienese, active from 1315; died 1344); cf. Daniela Gallavotti Cavallero, "Pietro, Ambrogio e Simone, 1335, e una questione di affreschi perduti," *Prospettiva* 48 (1987): 69–74, and for a recent summary of the status questionis, see Wolfgang Loseries, in *Maestri senesi e toscani nel Lindenau–Museum di Altenburg*, ed. Miklós Boskovits and Johannes Tripps (Siena, 2008), 130 n. 17.

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

[16] In manuscript expertises (some of them dated 1934), Giuseppe Fiocco, Raimond van Marle, Osvald Sirén, Wilhelm Suida, and Adolfo Venturi all proposed an attribution of the three panels to Bartolo di Fredi. According to the manuscript opinion of F. Mason Perkins, however, the panels were attributable not to Bartolo himself but to an "exceptionally close and as yet unidentified pupil." See Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:4, and copies of the expertises in NGA curatorial files.

[17] Roberto Longhi made the attribution to Andrea di Bartolo in an undated expertise most likely written in 1934, like the others cited in the previous note; see Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:4. Bernard Berenson endorsed this proposal (in an autograph annotation written on the back of a photograph of *The Nativity*), though with the specification "in great part." Copies in NGA curatorial files.

[18] The dating "c. 1400" already appeared in the entry relating to the three panels in the National Gallery of Art, *Preliminary Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture* (Washington, DC, 1941), 3, and was confirmed in the various successive catalogs of the Gallery, as well as by Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, xiii–xv Century* (London, 1966), 65–66; Enzo Carli, *I pittori senesi* (Siena, 1971), 138; Enzo Carli, *La pittura senese del Trecento* (Milan, 1981), 238; Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, in *Il gotico a Siena: Miniature, pitture, oreficerie, oggetti d'arte* (Florence, 1982), 317; Valentina Maderna, ed., *Il polittico di Andrea di Bartolo a Brera restaurato* (Florence, 1986), 17; and Philippe Lorentz, "De Sienne a Strasbourg: Posterité d'une composition d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti, la Nativité de la Vierge de l'Hôpital Santa Maria della Scala à Sienne," in *Hommage à Michel Laclotte: Etudes sur la peinture du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1994), 125 repro., 126, 127, 130–131 n. 45. Miklós Boskovits, *Early Italian Panel Paintings* (Budapest, 1966), 40; András Mucsi, *Katalog der Alten Gemaldegalerie des Christlichen Museums zu Esztergom* (Budapest, 1975), 42; Eberhard Kasten, "Andrea di Bartolo," in *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, ed. Günter Meißner (Munich, 1992), 3:512, 514, proposed, instead, a less specific date for the three panels in the first decade of the fifteenth century.

[19] Laurence B. Kanter, "Giorgio di Andrea di Bartolo," *Arte cristiana* 74 (1986): 22. Corrado Fratini rejected this rather audacious attribution in *Pinacoteca comunale di Città di Castello*, vol. 1, *Dipinti, Catalogo regionale dei beni culturali dell'Umbria*, ed. Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia, 1987), 143–144; see also Elisabetta Avanzati, in *La Sede storica del Monte dei Paschi di Siena: Vicende costruttive e opere d'arte*, ed. Francesco Gurrieri and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 276–280; Michel Laclotte and Esther

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

Moench, *Peinture italienne: Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon* (Paris, 2005), 56; and Andrea De Marchi, in *Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, catalogo generale*, vol. 1, *Dal Duecento a Francesco Francia*, ed. Jadranka Bentini, Gian Piero Cammarota, and Daniela Scaglietti Kelescian (Venice, 2004), 183–184.

[20] According to G. Fattorini, in *La collezione Salini: Dipinti, sculture e oreficerie dei secoli XII, XIII, XIV e XV*, ed. Luciano Bellosi, 2 vols. (Florence, 2009), 1:238, the painting was possibly decorated with the very same punches as the Washington stories of the Virgin.

[21] Enzo Carli, *Il Museo di Pisa* (Pisa, 1974), 61–62. Suggested dating: probably before 1400.

[22] Francesca Pasut, in *Maestri senesi e toscani nel Lindenau–Museum di Altenburg*, ed. Miklós Boskovits and Johannes Tripps (Siena, 2008), 104–106, with dating c. 1395–1400.

[23] No. JC Cat. 99; see Carl Brandon Strehlke, *Italian Paintings, 1250–1450, in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, 2004), 37–41. Suggested dating: c. 1394.

[24] Nn. O11.919–O11.921. See Olga Pujmanová, *Italienische Tafelbilder des Trecento in der Nationalgalerie Prag* (Berlin, 1984), no. 20. Suggested dating: c. 1400.

[25] No. 133; see Piero Torriti, *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena*, vol. 1, *I dipinti dal xii al xv secolo* (Genoa, 1977), 203, with dating to the early years of the fifteenth century.

[26] Alessandro Cecchi, in *Il gotico a Siena: Miniature, pitture, oreficerie, oggetti d'arte* (Florence, 1982), 328–331, with dating to c. 1400–1410.

[27] See Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 2, *The Sienese School of the 14th Century* (The Hague, 1924), 576, and Antonio Vannini, *L'Osservanza di Siena: Guida artistica della chiesa e del convento di San Bernardino all'Osservanza* (Siena, 2004), 40–41.

[28] Hendrik W. van Os, "Andrea di Bartolo's Assumption of the Virgin," *Arts in Virginia* 2 (1971): 5, dated the painting now in Richmond (no. 54.11.3; 230.2 × 85 cm) "in the seventies" of the fourteenth century. Gaudenz Freuler, "Andrea di Bartolo, Fra Tommaso d'Antonio Cafarini, and Sienese Dominicans in Venice," *The Art Bulletin* 69 (1987): 584, pushed its date forward to the latter years of the century, given that Ser Palamedes, in whose memory the painting was commissioned, was still alive in 1394. Art historians in general, however, have continued to regard the panel as a youthful work of the artist. See Elisabetta Avanzati, in *La Sede storica del Monte dei Paschi di Siena: Vicende costruttive e opere d'arte*, ed. Francesco Gurrieri and Luciano Bellosi (Florence, 1988), 282; Carl Brandon

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

Strehlke, *Italian Paintings, 1250–1450, in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, 2004), 27. The present writer has long maintained (and still believes) that Andrea di Bartolo's stories of Christ, divided between the museums of Toledo in Ohio, Bologna, and private collections, probably belong to the Richmond Assumption. It is generally recognized as a work of the artist's full maturity; cf. Andrea De Marchi, in *Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, catalogo generale*, vol. 1, *Dal Duecento a Francesco Francia*, ed. Jadranka Bentini, Gian Piero Cammarota, and Daniela Scaglietti Kelescian (Venice, 2004), 183–184, with a suggested dating of c. 1420. The common origin of the dispersed predella and the Richmond panel is suggested both by their stylistic character and their size. The width of the panel with the Assumption (measuring 230.2 × 85 cm) matches that of the Toledo Crucifixion (50 × 84.3 cm) that would in origin have been placed below it, at the center of the predella. See Miklós Boskovits and Serena Padovani, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Early Italian Painting 1290–1470* (London, 1990), 21.

[29] The miniatures of antiphonary H.1.7 now in the Biblioteca Comunale of Siena are dated c. 1400; cf. Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, in *Il gotico a Siena: Miniature, pitture, oreficerie, oggetti d'arte* (Florence, 1952), 320–321; Gaudenz Freuler, "La miniatura senese degli anni 1370–1420," in *La miniatura senese 1270–1420*, ed. Cristina De Benedictis (Milan, 2002), 182–186. The illuminations of a missal, G.III.7 in the same library, are at least in part probably attributable to Andrea in a slightly earlier phase, as Chelazzi Dini proposed in *Il gotico a Siena: Miniature, pitture, oreficerie, oggetti d'arte* (Florence, 1982), 317–318.

[30] On the Tuscania polyptych, cf. Luisa Mortari, in *La pittura viterbese dal xiv al xvi secolo: Catalogo delle opere*, ed. Italo Faldi and Luisa Mortari (Viterbo, 1954), 29–30, and Laurence B. Kanter, "Giorgio di Andrea di Bartolo," *Arte cristiana* 74 (1986): 17–24. Kanter's proposed reconstruction of the altarpiece, and his addition to it of components now situated elsewhere, seems correct, but it is difficult to share his attribution of it to Giorgio d'Andrea or his dating to the 1420s. This date, formerly accepted also by the present writer, now seems to me too late and should, I believe, be modified to 1405–1410; cf. Miklós Boskovits and Serena Padovani, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Early Italian Painting 1290–1470* (London, 1990), 21. Gabriele Fattorini came to similar conclusions concerning the date of the Tuscania polyptych in *La collezione Salini: Dipinti, sculture e oreficerie dei secoli XII, XIII, XIV e XV,* ed. Luciano Bellosi, 2 vols. (Florence, 2009), 1:242–249.

[31] Apart from polyptych no. 220 of the Pinacoteca in Siena, generally considered a late work of Andrea, I refer to the polyptych in Sant'Angelo in Vado, now divided between the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan and the Galleria Nazionale in Urbino, and the dispersed predella reconstructed

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

around the Crucifixion no. 12.6 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For these paintings, see Piero Torriti, *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena*, vol. 1, *I dipinti dal XII al XV secolo* (Genoa, 1977), 207; Valentina Maderna, "Il polittico di Andrea di Bartolo a Brera," in *Il polittico di Andrea di Bartolo a Brera restaurato*, ed. Valentina Maderna (Florence, 1986), 9–15; Federico Zeri, in Federico Zeri and Elizabeth E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings: Sienese and Central Italian Schools; A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980), 1–2; and Miklós Boskovits and Serena Padovani, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Early Italian Painting 1290–1470* (London, 1990), 16–21. In my discussion of this predella in 1990, I wrongly connected it with two lateral panels of paired saints from a dispersed triptych, now in a private collection. These panels, *Saints Louis of Toulouse and John the Baptist* and *John the Evangelist and Francis*, now seem to me relatively early works of the artist, probably datable to the first decade of the fifteenth century, whereas the predella I had placed in the period c. 1415–1420 ought to be closer in date to the latter end of this spectrum.

[32] Laurence B. Kanter, "Giorgio di Andrea di Bartolo," *Arte cristiana* 74 (1986): 22–24. The Minneapolis fragment was deaccessioned, and its present whereabouts are unknown to me. For the fragment no. 63 in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena, cf. Piero Torriti, *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena*, vol. 1, *I dipinti dal XII al XV secolo* (Genoa, 1977), 205.

[33] The somewhat naive compositional device proposed by the painter in the Nativity of the central panel of the triptych in Siena, namely that of displacing sharply to the left the little tree in the background to avoid its branches being concealed by the cusped border of the frame, recalls the improbable displacement—for the same reason—of the dome to the left margin of the temple in *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple* in the National Gallery of Art.

[34] We may further recall as works exemplifying Andrea's phase at the turn of the century a portable triptych in the Brooklyn Museum in New York, no. 34. 839; see Carl Brandon Strehlke, *Italian Paintings, 1250–1450, in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, 2004), 41, and the little panels with saints, formerly belonging to the museums in Altenburg, Oslo, Oxford, and in private collections; see Francesca Pasut, in *Maestri senesi e toscani nel Lindenau–Museum di Altenburg*, ed. Miklós Boskovits and Johannes Tripps (Siena, 2008), 107–111.

[35] *Gold Backs: 1250–1480* (Turin, 1996), 122, 124; Gabriele Fattorini, in *La collezione Salini: Dipinti, sculture e oreficerie dei secoli XII, XIII, XIV e XV*, ed. Luciano Bellosi, 2 vols. (Florence, 2009), 1:236–249. The painting, cut on all sides, measures 25.5 × 21 cm. The fragment at first sight might also seem

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

the companion panel of these in the Gallery, but its original size must have been slightly smaller than that of the Washington panels.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This painting, along with its companions *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor and Offerings to the Temple*, was executed on a single-member poplar panel with vertical grain.[1] The edges of the three panels probably were cropped slightly. Wooden strips measuring 0.6–0.8 cm wide have been attached to the edges along all four sides of each painting. The x-radiographs show three round marks along the bottom of *The Presentation* and *The Nativity*, which may be the sites of old holes from nails that attached a horizontal batten.

The paintings most likely were executed on a gesso ground. The x-radiographs of *The Presentation* suggest the presence of a fabric interlayer beneath the ground, but such a layer is not evident in the x-radiographs of the other two paintings. Infrared reflectography (Vidicon)[2] proves the presence of extensive underdrawing, particularly in the draperies of the figures and the placement of the architectural forms. Incised lines were used, on the other hand, to delineate the main contours of the figures, of architectural details, and of the original frame, now lost, against the gold.

Stephen Pichetto thinned and cradled the panels shortly after their acquisition by Samuel H. Kress in 1930.[3] X-radiographs made prior to the attachment of the cradles show extensive worm damage, as well as structural damage in the form of a large crack in the central area of each panel. A large knot may have caused the vertical split in *The Presentation*. The cracks of *The Presentation* and *The Nativity* line up, if the latter is positioned above the former. However, this could be purely coincidental and may not relate to the original positions of the panels. The painted surface contains only very small losses, but all panels have been generously retouched and partially regilded. The inpainting is disturbing, especially in the faces of the three figures at the center of *The Nativity*. The frames are modern. Photographs made at the time of the paintings' donation to the National Gallery of Art show the panels unframed. A note in the Gallery's curatorial files mentions their reframing in 1944. Before this intervention the spandrels originally covered by the frame had been regilded and appear as such in the photos published in the 1941

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

catalog of the Gallery.[4] The cusped inner molding of the present frames follows approximately the incised lines for the original framing. Pichetto removed discolored varnish and inpaint during his 1930 treatment of the paintings. In 1955 Mario Modestini again treated *The Nativity* and *Joachim and Anna*.[5]

TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] The NGA scientific research department identified the wood using optical microscopy (see report dated September 15, 1988, in NGA conservation files).

[2] Infrared reflectography was performed using a Hamamatsu c/1000-03 Vidicon camera.

[3] Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:4.

[4] Reproduced still unframed in Cesare Brandi, *Quattrocentisti senesi* (Milan, 1949), pl. 9; National Gallery of Art, *Paintings and Sculpture from the Samuel H. Kress Collection* (Washington, DC, 1959), 36. However, *The Presentation* and *The Nativity* are reproduced with their modern frame in George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1955), pl. 21.

[5] Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:4. Kress Foundation records (copies in NGA curatorial files) mention only that Modestini “revived color under white stains...and applied protective coat.”

PROVENANCE

This panel, along with NGA 1939.1.41 and 1939.1.43, are stated to have come from the collection of a contessa Giustiniani, Genoa;[1] (Count Alessandro Contini-Bonacossi, Rome); sold July 1930 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York;[2] gift 1939 to NGA. [1] See the bill of sale described in note 2. No documented collection of the conti Giustiniani at Genoa seems to have existed, at least in the early years of the twentieth century. The works that Elisabeth Gardner (*A Bibliographical Repertory of Italian Private Collections*, ed. Chiara Ceschi and Katharine Baetjer, 4 vols., Vicenza, 1998-2011: 2(2002):183) cites as formerly the

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

property of the contessa Giustiniani almost all seem to have been purchased on the art market shortly before 1930, when Contini Bonacossi sold them to Samuel H. Kress. The contessa is thus more likely to have been a dealer, or agent, than a collector. See also Miklós Boskovits and David Alan Brown, *Italian Paintings of the Fifteenth Century*, National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue, Washington and New York, 2003: 616 n. 3. [2] The painting is included on a bill of sale dated 15 July 1930 that included eight paintings from the Giustiniani collection (copy in NGA curatorial files).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1941 National Gallery of Art. *Book of Illustrations*. Washington, 1941: 51 (repro.), 236.

1941 *Preliminary Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1941: 3, no. 153.

1942 *Book of Illustrations*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1942: 242, repro. 53.

1949 Brandi, Cesare. *Quattrocentisti senesi*. Milan, 1949: 243, pl. 9.

1955 Ferguson, George. *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*. 2nd ed. New York, 1955: pl. 21.

1959 *Paintings and Sculpture from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1959: 36, repro.

1964 Mojzer, Miklós. "Vier sienesische Quattrocento-Tafeln des Christlichen Museums zu Esztergom." *Pantheon* 22 (1964): 1, 2 (repro.), 6 n. 5.

1965 Boskovits, Miklós, Miklós Mojzer, and András Mucsi. *Das Christliche Museum von Esztergom (Gran)*. Budapest, 1965: 44.

1965 Boskovits, Miklós, Miklós Mojzer, András Mucsi, Alfréd Schiller, Elizabeth Hoch, and Susanna Horn. *Christian Art in Hungary: Collections from the Esztergom Christian Museum*. Budapest, 1965: 52.

1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 7.

1966 Boskovits, Miklós. *Early Italian Panel Paintings*. Budapest, 1966: 40.

1966 Schiller, Gertrud. *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*. 6 vols. Gütersloh, 1966-1990: 4, pt. 2:64, 65, 71, 246, 316, fig. 520.

1966 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XIII-XV Century*. London, 1966: 65-66, fig. 176.

1968 Berenson, Bernard. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Central Italian and North Italian Schools*. 3 vols. London, 1968: 1:8.

1968 *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1968: 1, repro.

1971 Carli, Enzo. *I pittori senesi*. Siena, 1971: 138, fig. 123.

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

1971 Os, Hendrik W. van. "Andrea di Bartolo's Assumption of the Virgin." *Arts in Virginia* 2 (1971): 4.

1972 Fredericksen, Burton B., and Federico Zeri. *Census of Pre-Nineteenth Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections.* Cambridge, Mass., 1972: 7, 300, 645.

1975 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1975: 12, repro.

1975 Mucsi, András. *Katalog der Alten Gemaldegalerie des Christlichen Museums zu Esztergom*. Budapest, 1975: 42.

1979 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*. National Gallery of Art. 2 vols. Washington, 1979: 1:4-5; 2:pl. 3.

1981 Carli, Enzo. *La pittura senese del Trecento*. 1st ed. Milan, 1981: 238, fig. 279.

1982 *Il gotico a Siena: miniature, pitture, oreficerie, oggetti d'arte*. Exh. cat. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. Florence, 1982: 313, 317.

1983 Kasten, Eberhard. "Andrea di Bartolo." In *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*. Edited by Günter Meissner. 3 vols. Leipzig, 1983-1990: 2(1986):974, 976.

1983 *L'Art gothique siennois: enluminure, peinture, orfèvrerie, sculpture*. Exh. cat. Musee du Petit Palais, Avignon. Florence, 1983: 280, 284.

1984 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Rev. ed. New York, 1984: 82, no. 38, color repro.

1985 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985: 18, repro.

1986 Kanter, Laurence B. "Giorgio di Andrea di Bartolo." *Arte cristiana* 74 (1986): 21-22, 24, repro. 26.

1986 Maderna, Valentina, ed. *Il polittico di Andrea di Bartolo a Brera Restaurato*. Exh. cat. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Florence, 1986: 17.

1988 Gurrieri, Francesco, and Luciano Bellosi, eds. *La Sede storica del Monte dei Paschi di Siena: vicende costruttive e opere d'arte*. Florence, 1988: 276.

1991 Chelazzi Dini, Giulietta. "Andrea di Bartolo." In *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*. Edited by Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana. 12 vols. Rome, 1991-2002: 1(1991):595.

1992 Kasten, Eberhard. "Andrea di Bartolo." In *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*. Edited by Günter Meissner. 87+ vols. Munich and Leipzig, 1992+: 3(1992):512, 514.

1994 Lorentz, Philippe. "De Sienne a Strasbourg: posterité d'une composition d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti, la Nativité de la Vierge de l'Hôpital Santa Maria della Scala à Sienne." In *Hommage à Michel Laclotte: Etudes sur la peinture du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*. Edited by Luciano Bellosi, Pierre Rosenberg, Cecile Scailliérz, and Dominique Thiébault. Milan and Paris, 1994: 125 (repro.), 126, 127, 130-131 n. 45.

1997 Chelazzi Dini, Giulietta, Alessandro Angelini, and Bernardina Sani.

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

Sienese Painting From Duccio to the Birth of the Baroque. New York, 1997: 200-201.

1997 Chelazzi Dini, Giulietta. "La cosidetta crisi della metà del Trecento (1348-1390)." In *Pittura senese*. Edited by Giulietta Chelazzi Dini, Alessandro Angelini and Bernardina Sani. 1st ed. Milan, 1997: 200.

1998 Frinta, Mojmír S. *Punched Decoration on Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting*. Prague, 1998: 69.

2009 Bellosi, Luciano, ed. *La collezione Salini: dipinti, sculture e oreficerie dei secoli XII, XIII, XIV e XV*. 2 vols. Florence, 2009: 1:238.

To cite: Miklós Boskovits (1935–2011), “Andrea di Bartolo/*The Nativity of the Virgin*/c. 1400/1405,” *Italian Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Paintings*, NGA Online Editions, http://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/183/2016-03-21 (accessed March 21, 2016).

© National Gallery of Art, Washington