

The Technical and Historical Findings of an Investigation of a Fourteenth-Century Florentine Panel from the Courtauld Gallery Collection

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The *Conservation and Art Historical Analysis: Works from the Courtauld Gallery Project* aimed to carry out technical investigation and art historical research on a gothic arched panel from the Courtauld Gallery Collection [P.1947.LF.202] (**fig 1**).¹ The panel was undergoing conservation treatment and was thus well positioned for such investigation. The following report will outline the findings of this study. It will address the dating, physical construction, iconography, and attribution of the work, as well as the likely function of the work and the workshop decisions which contributed to its production.

Dating

Stylistic and iconographic characteristics indicate that this work originated in Florence and dates to the last decade of the fourteenth century. The panel is divided into two scenes; the lower scene depicts a Madonna of Humility, the Virgin seated on the ground surrounded by four standing saints, and the upper portion of the work is a Crucifixion with the Virgin and St John the Evangelist (the *dolenti*) seated at the cross.

It is difficult to trace the precise origins of the Madonna of Humility and the *Dolenti Seated at the Cross*. There is no consensus as to the origins of these formats, although numerous proposals have been suggested.² Millard Meiss proposed that the Madonna of Humility originated in Siena with a panel by Simone Martini,³ who also produced a fresco of the same subject in Avignon.⁴ Beth Williamson agrees that these mid fourteenth-century works were early examples of the Madonna of Humility, but suggests that the Avignon fresco came first and the panel, also produced during Martini's time in France, was sent back to the Dominican convent in Siena, an institution to which Martini had ties.⁵ The Madonna of Humility gained popularity throughout the second half of the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth century.

An early example of the *Dolenti Seated at the Cross* has been identified on a chalice made for Benedict XI, produced before 1304 when the Dominican Pope died.⁶ The imagery is described in the mid fourteenth-century Franciscan text⁷

¹ This panel was previously attributed to the style of Jacopo di Cione.

² For a thorough discussion of the history of this imagery see: Beth Williamson, *The Madonna of Humility: Development, Dissemination & Reception, c.1340-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009).

³ Millard Meiss, "The Madonna of Humility," *The Art Bulletin*, 18:4 (1936): Fig. 1. Now in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin.

⁴ Meiss, "Madonna of Humility", 436.

⁵ Williamson, *The Madonna of Humility*, 115.

⁶ Silvia Colucci, "L'iconografia del Crocifisso con I Dolenti in umiltà: una questione aperta," in *Il Crocifisso con I Dolenti in umiltà di Paolo di Giovanni Fei: un capolavoro riscoperto*, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli et al. (Siena: Nuova Immagine, 2005), 38. This work provides an extensive investigation of the history of the *Dolenti Seated at the Cross*.

Meditations on the Life of Christ, “his revered mother and her sisters, along with John and Magdalene, remained for a while, sitting off to one side near the cross”.⁸ While this imagery originated early in the fourteenth century, it did not become widespread until the later Trecento.

Panel Construction and Function

Physical evidence suggests that the Courtauld Panel is a ‘*colmo da camera*’, a term which appeared in Florentine documents at the end of the fourteenth century. The word ‘*colmo*’ originally referred to the pinnacle of a panel, but by the late fourteenth century came to mean a rectangular panel with an arched, or pointed, pinnacle. ‘*Da camera*’ referred to a category of objects intended for domestic use.⁹

With the frame, the panel measures approximately 100 cm high by 52.1 cm wide. These dimensions place it comfortably within the standard size for a *colmo da camera*.¹⁰ This is interesting to note when considering the construction of the panel. In X-Ray (**fig 2**), it is clear that the panel is made from three pieces of wood: two pieces are joined vertically and this supports the painted image, with a third piece at the pinnacle to support the weight of the frame. The two largest planks are presumed to be poplar—as this was readily available during the Trecento¹¹—and have been butt-joined and adhered with what is believed to be animal glue. The join was then reinforced with a canvas strip.¹²

On the reverse of the panel (**fig 3**) the join has been filled with a heavy element-containing pigment, on top of which gesso has been applied and then painted with a red earth pigment. A bright red layer can be seen in cross-section (**fig 4**), although the colour on the back of the panel appears a purplish-brown due to the build up of surface accretions. We initially interpreted this layer to be a mask for the join, in a colour which imitated the wood. However, the purplish-brown colour is actually the result of time, and the original appearance would have been bright red. This colour was not, however, a decorative addition because the neighbouring areas of wood have been left roughly tooled. Tooling was a standard practice for paintings that were not intended to be seen from the reverse. This indicates that the panel is likely to have hung on a wall, and further supports the suggestion that the panel was a personal devotional object.

⁷ Holy Flora proposes a *terminus post quem* of 1346 and a *terminus ante quem* of circa 1364 for the composition of this text. Holy Flora, *The Devout Belief of the Imagination: the Paris Meditationes Vitae Christi and Female Franciscan Spirituality in Trecento Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 30.

⁸ John of Caulibus, *Meditations of the Life of Christ* trans. and ed. Francis X. Taney et al. (Asheville, N.C: Pegasus Press, 2000), 257.

⁹ Victor Schmidt, *Painted Piety: Panel Paintings for Personal Devotion in Tuscany, 1250-1400* (Firenze: Centro Di, 2005), 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 36. Schmidt notes that a ‘*cholmo da chamera*’ listed in the records of Neri di Bicci which was considered modest in size measured 60x46 cm. The works referred to by Neri as ‘large’ vary in size from 67.5cm high to 210 cm high.

¹¹ David Bomford, Jill Dunkerton, Dillian Gordon and Ashok Roy, *Italian Painting Before 1400* (London: National Gallery Company Ltd, 2002), 12.

¹² Other paintings from the period have seen the whole face covered with canvas. In the case of this panel, the x-ray shows another long thin strip of canvas which has been used to reinforce a split or defect in the wood which we cannot see with the naked eye.

The use of the object can be seen in the wear and abrasion of the painted and gilded elements. During the conservation treatment, the removal of a non-original oil based bronze gold from the gilded area around the body of the crucified Christ revealed some wear that may suggest devotional rubbing (**fig 5**). This may be evidence of the worshiper interacting with the panel, touching or kissing it during veneration. Perhaps in leaning in to kiss the figure of Christ, they also rubbed their nose against the gold, slowly wearing it away.

The two scenes provide contrasting, yet complementary avenues of prayer for a medieval Christian devotee. The colours of the rock landscape where the *dolenti* are seated create a harsh, cold ambiance. The lower scene, set in a fertile green field, creates a more comforting scene (**fig 1**). This contrast, which became especially apparent after the removal of a yellowed varnish, reflects dual Christian interpretations. The upper scene emphasizes the suffering of Christ and the pain Mary and John endured while witnessing the Crucifixion. This scene would have allowed the devotee to meditate on Christ's sacrifice, and experience the pain of Christ, Mary and John. Conversely, the lower scene would provide a space for meditation on Mary's motherly love for Christ representative of Christ's enduring love for mankind.

Stock Panels

Throughout the trecento, personal devotional works in the form of triptychs were produced using repetitive imagery. These objects were not desired for their creativity or innovation, but rather reflected a demand for fashionable Gothic objects. As demand increased, workshops became structured to efficiently produce these desired commodities.¹³

In the late trecento, the production of devotional paintings for private use reached a high point.¹⁴ Unprecedented market demand prompted artists to produce "stock" works which could later be sold to buyers, a practice which continued throughout the Renaissance.¹⁵ Virtually nothing is known about the early history of the Courtauld Panel,¹⁶ but it is proposed that it was initially created as a "stock" panel and was subsequently sold to a local buyer.

Workshop Production

The stylistic variation within the panel makes it impossible to attribute to a specific master, or even workshop. By virtue of its function, this panel resists traditional models of attribution and forces us to examine the works of average workshop practice.

¹³ David G. Wilkins, "Opening the Doors to Devotion: Trecento Triptychs and Suggestions concerning Images and Domestic Practice in Florence," in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. Victor M. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 376.

¹⁴ Gaudenz Freuler, "The Production and Trade of Late Gothic Pictures of the Madonna in Tuscany," in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento*, ed. Victor M. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 427.

¹⁵ Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato: Francesco di Marco Datini Rev. ed* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963).

¹⁶ The work was bequest to the Courtauld Collection in 1947 by Lee of Fareham, Arthur Hamilton (1st Viscount).

In the early part of the trecento members of the workshop included *discepoli*, new pupils, *garzoni*, apprentices who had worked in the workshop for more than three years, *fanti* and *lavoranti*, trained painters who worked as general assistants, and the *maestro*, or head of the workshop.¹⁷ Erling Skaug refutes the traditional conception of the fourteenth-century workshop of a master surrounded by assistants who worked closely under his direction, proposing instead that the hierarchies and working methods of trecento workshops were far more complex.¹⁸

In the early trecento *lavoranti*¹⁹ strove to create integrated artworks by carefully mimicking their master's style, but the second half of the century saw less stylistic integration and a greater tolerance for visible collaboration.²⁰ Elizabeth Beatson suggests that changing attitudes among patrons toward the importance of stylistic unity and the impact of the Black Death, which took the lives of many artists, contributed to this trend.²¹

It is impossible to know for certain where the Courtauld Panel was produced. It may have been a large workshop in which stock panels were created by a group of *lavoranti* under the direction of a more experienced assistant, or *capomaestro*. Equally, it may be from a small workshop which specialized in stock panels. Technical interpretation indicates that the Courtauld Panel was almost certainly painted by several hands, but we propose that the overall composition of the piece, and the choice of iconography, was the decision of a single *capomaestro*.²²

We can imagine a scenario in which the *capomaestro* composed a drawing directly on the ground²³ and then set his team of assistants to fill in the composition with paint. Because the underdrawing has been executed in a carbon-based media we have been able to view the compositional design using infrared reflectography to penetrate the layers of paint (**fig 6**).²⁴ The underdrawing on this panel is principally in a dry and sketchy black ink. The use of thin, uni-directional lines is used to denote the forms of drapery whilst the addition of parallel hatched strokes has been used to allude to a sense of depth and three dimensional modelling.

Generally the paint application follows the underdrawing, although there are exceptions. The folds at the bottom of St Catherine's robe look to be carried out in

¹⁷ Erling Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico: attribution, chronology, and workshop relationships in Tuscan panel painting, with particular consideration to Florence, c.1330-1430 Vol. 1* (Oslo: IIC Nordic Group, Norwegian Section, 1994), 313.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 311.

¹⁹ This term will be used to refer to the assistants in the workshop who were responsible for the execution of paintings, but not necessarily the compositional design of the works.

²⁰ Elizabeth H. Beatson, Norman E. Muller, Judith B. Steinhoff, "The St. Victor Altarpiece in Siena Cathedral: A Reconstruction," *The Art Bulletin*, 68:4 (1986): 629, accessed February 15, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051044>.

²¹ *Ibid*, 630.

²² We do not believe that the *capomaestro* responsible for the design of the Courtauld Panel was necessarily the *maestro* of the workshop. It is more likely that the design of a stock work was assigned to one of the more experienced *lavoranti* who headed up the team of artists working on the panel.

²³ In preparation for painting, the wood is sealed with an animal glue and multiple layers of calcium sulphate – commonly referred to as gesso – are then applied. Following Cennino Cennini's treatise, this would consist of gesso grosso, followed by gesso sottile, which is then scraped down to produce an ivory-smooth surface, suitable for painting and gilding.

²⁴ Infrared reflectography was undertaken at The Courtauld Institute of Art, using a Hamamatsu Vidicon. Infrared reflectography detects carbon because it absorbs the infrared radiation which is recorded by the camera.

two campaigns (**fig 7**). The first campaign followed the original underdrawing which was probably composed by the *capomaestro*. This consisted of fairly smooth hanging drapery, with a single, noticeable fold, finished off with a smooth arc of fabric. However, it appears that the *lavoranto* who painted that section struggled to accurately render the wheel lying on the ground beneath Catherine's feet, with the drapery in this position. To avoid having to paint the complex hub of the wheel, the *lavoranto* extended the robe by adding folds to cover the hub. This detail is a fascinating window into the workshop process as it indicates that the *lavoranti*, who brought the panel to completion, did occasionally make changes to the *capomaestro's* initial drawing.

The faces of the figures lack stylistic unity (**fig 8-9**).²⁵ It was not uncommon for a *capomaestro* to paint the faces and hands of figures, but inconsistencies in the features of the figures from the Courtauld Panel suggest that this was probably not the case. Perhaps a stock panel was not important enough to warrant the attention of a highly trained assistant like the *capomaestro* and was instead finished by the *lavoranti*.

This lack of stylistic unity contrast the manner in which the paint was applied and the pigments which were used. The painting has been executed in egg tempera,²⁶ and the *lavoranti* have followed a traditional build up of layers. A green earth underlayer, also called *verdaccio*,²⁷ was applied in preparation for the upper layers of flesh paint (**fig 10**). *Verdaccio* functions to create the depth and shadows of skin. The upper layers of flesh were painted using lead white and red lakes, with additional varying quantities of yellow ochre, charcoal and vermilion to alter the tone of the skin. Due to the fading of the red lakes, the *verdaccio* layer is prominent. The consistency in the physical paint structure demonstrates the formulaic approach by the wider Trecento workshops. While there may have been several hands, with different stylistic approaches working on the Courtauld Panel, it appears that each contributor was following the same systematic procedure of paint application.

Iconography

In the creation of stock panels, the absence of patrons with a particular ideological message encouraged the use of imagery which would appeal to a range of devotees. The iconography of the panel provides evidence that it was not commissioned by a specific patron. The artists did not include a coat of arms, nor are there depictions of supplicants in prayer. There are no personalized inscriptions, and the represented saints are, for the most part, generic choices.

The lower scene of the Courtauld Panel depicts a Madonna of Humility, which was widely popular in Italy during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth

²⁵ Although there is some evidence of overpaint to the heads of the figures which has been a result of wear and abrasion to the original paint film, the application is isolated enough to the tops of the heads that it does not disturb the stylistic understanding of the work.

²⁶ Although this was not conclusive with protein staining tests, the visual evidence and paint application suggests the use of this media.

²⁷ Bomford *et al. Italian Painting Before 1400*. 40-41.

centuries.²⁸ The *Dolenti Seated at the Cross* also became popular in the latter half of the trecento. It is notable that both visual formats would have been understood by contemporary audiences as *current* or *modern* representations. Rather than render imagery with a particular theological message, the seated figures in both scenes emphasised the late-medieval virtue of humility,²⁹ and thus would have been suitable for devotional practices of the time.

The saints which surround the Madonna are generic choices, and would have complimented the practice of nearly any devotee. The two saints to the left of the Madonna are easily identified as St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Alexandria. The saints to the right of the Madonna are St Dorothy and an Evangelist.

St John the Baptist is an expected choice for a Florentine stock panel as he is the patron saint of Florence. St John is depicted in his traditional dress, a hair shirt covered by a red cloak. He holds a scroll that, though damaged, displayed his most common inscription “ECCE AGNVS DEI” (**fig 11**).³⁰

The other male saint carries a book and pen, and is almost certainly one of the Evangelists. Perhaps he is St Matthew, or St John as the author of Revelation. Yet, the Evangelist’s symbolic animal, which would have indicated his identity with certainty, is omitted. It would seem that the Evangelist’s identity is intentionally left open to the viewer’s interpretation.

St Catherine is identifiable by her attributes, a wheel and a martyr’s palm. Strangely, she does not wear a crown or regal robes. This is most likely a function of the stock nature of the panel, where a generic female saint model was slightly altered to suggest her identity.

St Dorothy, signified by her lap full of flowers, stands to the right of the Madonna.³¹ The underdrawing shows evidence of alterations during the painting process, and may provide further support for the use of a female saint model. The IR reflectogram of an area in St Dorothy’s robes reveals a loose, painterly application underdrawing beneath her lap of flowers (**fig 12**). This area of underdrawing is unique on the panel and stands out due to its fluid, confident and thick strokes. It is impossible to say for certain who rendered this distinct area of underdrawing, but we would suggest that it was an addition to the original sketch made by the *capomaestro*.

Perhaps, when Dorothy was chosen as the identity of this figure, the drapery from the female saint model had to be adjusted to depict the folds of fabric around her lap of flowers. The *capomaestro* made a gestural indication of how the drapery should be rendered with the paint, and this suggestion was followed by the *lavoranto*. As the paint was applied, however, the second layer of folds must have seemed too abrupt (**fig 12**). Thus, as was done at the base of Catherine’s robes, the *lavoranto* adjusted the finished paint layer to depict a full fold in the robe. Such

²⁸ Meiss, “Madonna of Humility”, 435.

²⁹ Wilkins, “Opening the Doors to Devotion,” 377.

³⁰ Behold the lamb of God. The scroll itself is rolled so the last word DEI is nearly obscured. The word AGNVS has a strange spelling “ANGNIVS”. A panel of St John from the same period, by *Spinello Aretino*, spells the word “ANGNVS”, but nevertheless the spelling in the Courtauld Panel is quite likely an error. This further supports the claim that religious advisors were not involved in the creation of this panel, and that the *capomaestro* had limited theological knowledge.

³¹ George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1985), 330.

changes, albeit slight, are evidence that while a *capomaestro* established an initial design, the *lavoranti* were permitted to adapt the design to better suit the depiction of the saint.

The two Madonnas are immediately recognisable from their iconographical blue robes. As is widely documented, two principle blues were used in the Trecento for the depiction of the Madonna: that is ultramarine and azurite. Initially it was thought that azurite had been used in this panel, because of its dark appearance in infrared analysis³² as well as the dark greenish tonal quality, suggestive of azurite in a darkened oil medium. However, it was quickly apparent in cross sections that the surface appearance of the robes was deceptive, because of the thick multiple applications of varnish and the use of wholesale nineteenth century overpaint. Through the removal of this later overpaint, as well as cross section analysis, we were able to determine that the blue pigment used was in fact ultramarine (**fig 13**). This is important as ultramarine represented status, was expensive, and limited in supply.³³ This often meant that the use of ultramarine was restricted to commissions with a patron specifying its use, and therefore significant when considering the stock nature of this work. This evidence may suggest that the work was a stock panel in its formative stages, but was altered once a buyer was identified.

Technically, the composition of the ultramarine layer is also slightly unusual. Ultramarine is extracted from the mineral lapis lazuli and is known to occur with impurities: these include Diopside, Forsterite, Muscovite, Wollastonite, Calcite (calcium carbonate), and pyrites (iron sulphides).³⁴ As can be seen in cross section (**fig 14**) ultramarine has not been mixed with lead white. Instead, there is a noticeable brown tinge, which is thought to be caused by the large proportion of impurities in the mixture. When considering the extraction process of ultramarine, which was well documented by the late Trecento, the large particles of ultramarine would have been siphoned off first and is therefore separated from the bulk of the impurities, producing the highest grade of pigment. The combination we are seeing, of large glassy ultramarine particles with impurities, such as calcites and pyrites, appears incongruous when considering they would be expected to have been separated.

A satisfactory explanation for this paint composition has not been reached. It may be due to poor supply, but it seems more likely that the workshop adapted this mixture in an attempt to counteract the dark dull pigment tones. Cennino Cennini states that if an artist knows that their lapis lazuli stone is not good in colour, or has been overworked so that the blue colour has not come out violet, it can be given a little boost. Take a “pound kermes and a little brazil” these are red lakes, and he says to cook them together until a perfect crimson is produced, which can be added to the ultramarine to improve its violet undertone.³⁵ Although this is not definitely the

³² Azurite appears black under infrared because it absorbs the radiation. In contrast, ultramarine is transparent in infrared, and would show the underdrawing beneath.

³³ Joyce Plesters, “Ultramarine Blue, Natural and Artificial.” *Studies in Conservation* 11:2 (1966): 64.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 62.

³⁵ Cennino D’Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman’s Handbook: Il Libro dell’Arte*. Translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960): 36-39.

case here, it shows a conscious effort to manipulate the material available to enhance its desirable properties.

Suggested Attribution

The very nature of the Courtauld Panel as a stock devotional object, makes it difficult to attribute to a particular workshop. Nevertheless, the *capomaestro* of the Courtauld Panel seems to have been affiliated, in some capacity, with other Florentine masters.

The punchwork on this panel is restricted to the haloes and a punched strip which divides scenes of the Madonna of Humility and the Crucifixion. The tooling on the Courtauld Panel is not meticulously executed. The motifs are standard, utilising designs such as pearls on a string, a three dot triangle and the singular dot. The only distinctive punch is identified by Skaug as punch 311 (**fig 17**).³⁶ This quatrefoil is used only in the halo of the Virgin in this painting, but has also been associated with the workshops of the Master of the Dominican Effigies, Cenni di Francesco di Ser Cenni, and possibly by the Master of the Misericordia.³⁷ Punch 311 is first identified within the workshop of Bernardo Daddi, who died during the Black Death pandemic of 1348. According to Skaug, Daddi's assistant, Puccio di Simone, inherited his punches. Furthermore, with the deaths of prominent Masters of the period due to the Black Death, sharing and redistribution of punches occurred in and around Florence.³⁸ Thus, we cannot tie the punch with a single workshop.³⁹

Two comparative panels from the late fourteenth-century, a panel from the Jarves Collection at Yale University [inv. 1871.16] (**fig 15**) and a panel from the Royal Collection in London [inv. RCIN 403954] (**fig 16**), show similarities in size, composition, and function to the Courtauld Panel. Of particular note is the division of the panel into two scenes with the *Dolenti* Seated at the Cross over a Madonna Enthroned, or in the case of the Courtauld Panel, a Madonna of Humility. The Jarves Collection Panel was originally used to attribute the Courtauld Panel to Jacopo di Cione. In fact, both the Jarves Collection Panel and the Royal Collection Panel were both, at one time, attributed to Jacopo.

The Royal Collection Panel has since been re-attributed to The Master of the Misericordia and the Jarves Collection Panel has been re-attributed by scholars at Yale to Cenni di Francesco di Ser Cenni.⁴⁰ Skaug, however, attributes the Jarves Panel to Niccolò di Pietro Gerini based on the punch work.⁴¹ Skaug also notes a sharing of punches between the Master of the Misericordia and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini which may explain a connection between these two works.⁴²

³⁶ Skaug, *Punch Marks*, 158.

³⁷ This was found by cross-referencing Skaug's tables of punches used by particular artists and workshops in *vol. II*. For a comprehensive list see sections 5 and 6 in *vol. II*. For use of the quatrefoil particularly, refer to The Punch Chart, no. 311, *vol. II*.

³⁸ Skaug, *Punch Marks*, 160. Skaug refers to this as the "Post 1348 Problem".

³⁹ *Ibid*, 161 and 214.

⁴⁰ "Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints John the Baptist, Nicholas, Dorothy and Reparata; with Crucifixion," Yale University Art Gallery E-Catalog, accessed June 21, 2011.

<http://ecatalogue.art.yale.edu/detail.htm?objectId=271>

⁴¹ Skaug, *Punch Marks*, 265.

⁴² *Ibid*, 266.

The iconography of the Courtauld panel show subtle links to other works of the period, suggesting that the designer of this panel may have been exposed to iconographies from a variety of Florentine workshops. Fully trained artists with significant experience would sometimes do free-lance work.⁴³ It is also possible that the *capomaestro* was trained in one master's workshop and moved to another to work as an assistant. This type of contact would explain the stylistic variation between the Courtauld Panel and these panels, while shedding light on the notable compositional similarities.

The Courtauld Panel shows several interesting links to the Jarves Collection Panel and other works by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, suggesting a tentative link between the *capomaestro* of the Courtauld Panel and Gerini's workshop. Gerini produced a number of devotional panels of similar size and iconography to the Courtauld panel. A description from the Christie's auction catalogue describes a *Maestá* panel (**fig 18**) attributed to Gerini as 'an independent altarpiece for private devotion....the six saints were no doubt chosen by the patron, whose coat-of-arms appear at the bases of the colonnettes of the frame. They were probably represented name-saints, and saints particularly favoured by the patrons for reasons connected with religious devotion or civic responsibility'.⁴⁴

The Christie's works is an example of the type of object that the Courtauld Panel artists were replicating. The fact that Gerini's workshop produced objects like this suggests that those who worked there would have been familiar with this category of objects.

Several other stylistic details provide further evidence of a link to Gerini. The first is this delicate fringe from the edge of the robes of the Madonna. This fringe does not have great iconographic significance, but would have been learned in the workshop as a part of the process of painting the Madonna's robes. A survey of Gerini's works reveals a great number of examples where gilded fringes were added to the Madonna's robes.⁴⁵

Another interesting detail is a decorative pattern found on the Madonna's shirt. This 3-dot patterning of losses in the paint layer is the reminiscent of a decorative design. A review of Gerini's works revealed that this type of decorative patterning is widely visible in the artist's body of works.⁴⁶ Although it is most often used in depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin, it is also used in at least one *Maestá* (**fig 19**). This is another example of a decision by the artist which would likely have stemmed from what he had seen, or painting, in previous works. If the *capomaestro* of the Courtauld Panel worked in Gerini's workshop, this patterning would clearly have been a familiar choice for the Madonna's robes.

Final Thoughts

⁴³ Ibid, 316.

⁴⁴ "Lot 240: Nicolo di Pietro Gerini," *Christie's Auction Catalog*, London Sale 19 April, 1996, 114.

⁴⁵ See: *Madonna Enthroned* in the Trafalgar Galleries in London; other examples available in Niccolò di Pietro Gerini Folder 904 Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art.

⁴⁶ See: *Coronation of the Virgin* from the Montreal Museum; *The Coronation of the Virgin* from the Collection of Sir Robert and Lady Mayer sold at a Ernst Rosenfeld sale 5 May, 1951. Reproductions available in the Niccolò di Pietro Gerini Folder 905 Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art.

The purpose of this study was to explore the Courtauld panel from both an art historical and technical perspective. What it has shown is that the two are not only mutually beneficial for a greater understanding and insight into the production of the piece, but also how they are inextricably linked. This partnership has been able to rationalise why members of the workshop may have changed aspects of an original design and how they have been implemented, whilst taking into consideration the original design and wider context of iconography, production practice and the relationship with end markets. This late fourteenth-century panel has enabled investigation into the unique nature of an otherwise standard private devotional object, and illustrated the depths which can be reached when all avenues of the art historical discipline are explored.

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- Figure 16: *Calvary and the Virgin Enthroned with Eight Saints* (Royal Collection London Panel) [RCIN 403954]. Attributed to the Master of the Misericordia (87.4 x 51.9 cm). c 1385. Image Courtesy of the Royal Collection.
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Figure 1: *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Gallery Panel) [P.1947.LF.202]. Attributed to Jacopo di Cione (82 x 47.5 cm). c. 1390. During varnish removal.



Figure 2: *Madonna of Humility* X-radiography.



Figure 3: Reverse side view. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel)

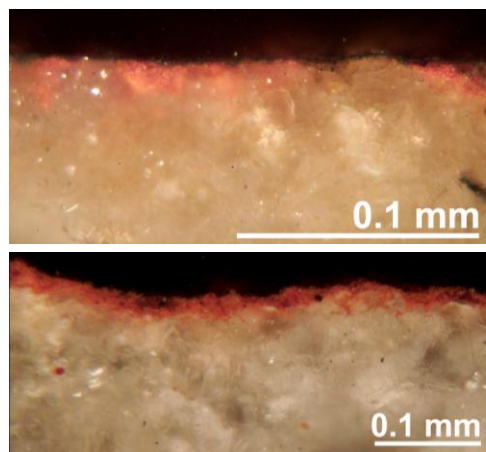


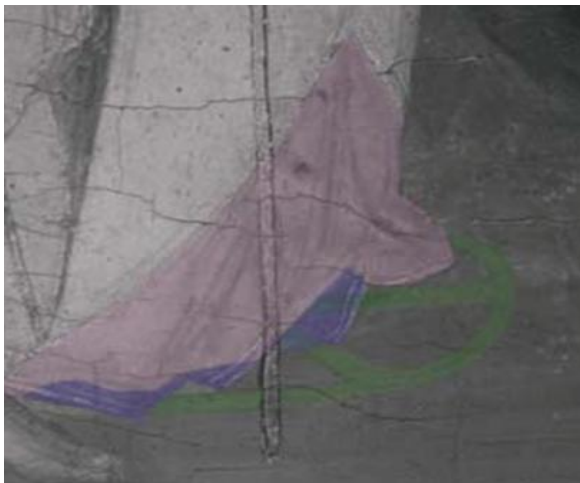
Figure 4: Cross Sections from the reverse of the panel. These show the layer structure to be: the lowest white layer is the calcium sulphate gesso ground. On top of which a red iron oxide (earth pigment) paint layer has been applied, which has accumulated a layer of dirt accretion, most noticeable in the upper cross section.



Figure 5: Wear around Christ's Body. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail.



Figure 6: Underdrawing from the robe of St John the Baptist. IR photo and visible light comparison. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail. This illustrates a typical area of underdrawing.



Pink – First Campaign following drawing.
 Purple – Second Campaign extending robes.
 Green – The Wheel.

Figure 7: Diagram of painting campaigns in the robe of St Catherine of Alexandria. IR photo and visible light comparison. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail.



Figure 8-9: Details of the faces of the Madonna and Evangelist.

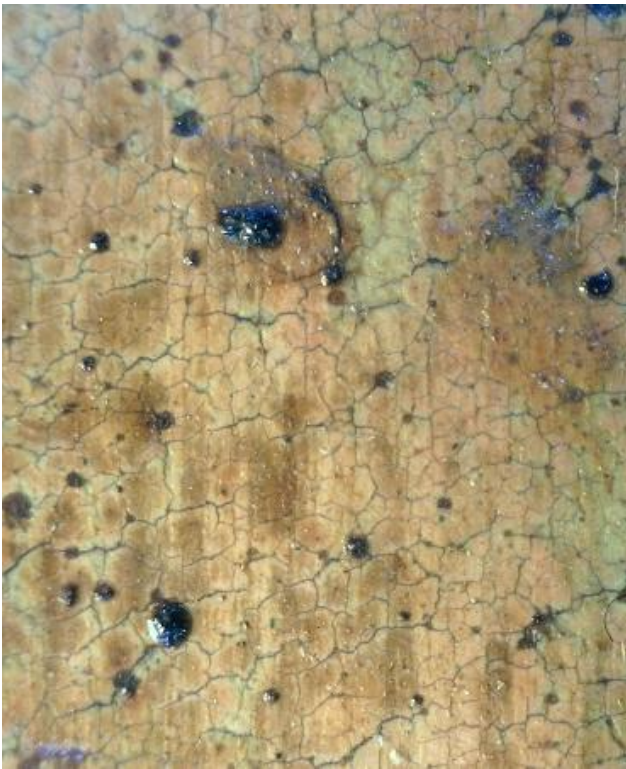


Figure 10: Details flesh paint from St. John the Baptist's arm demonstrating where the *verdaccio* has now become more apparent due to fading of the red lakes. The dark surface accretion is from old varnish residues and dirt.

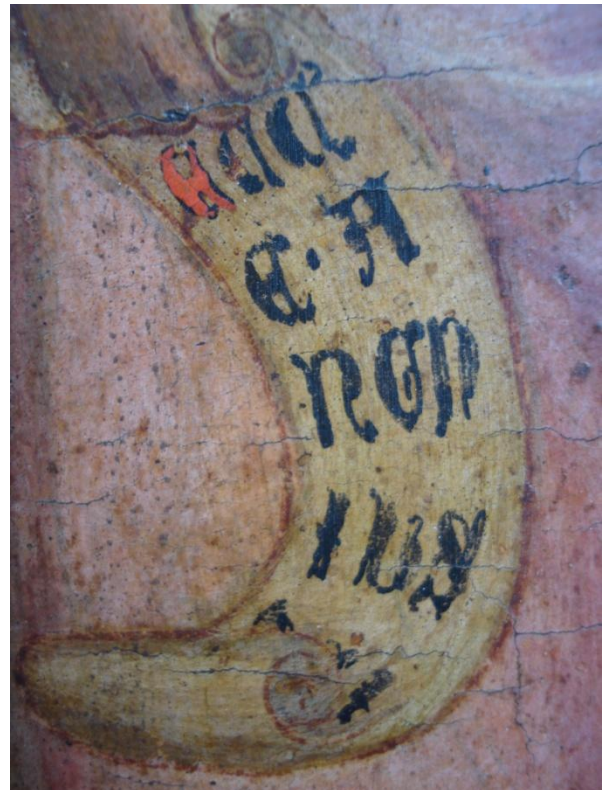


Figure 11: Scroll of St. John the Baptist. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail.

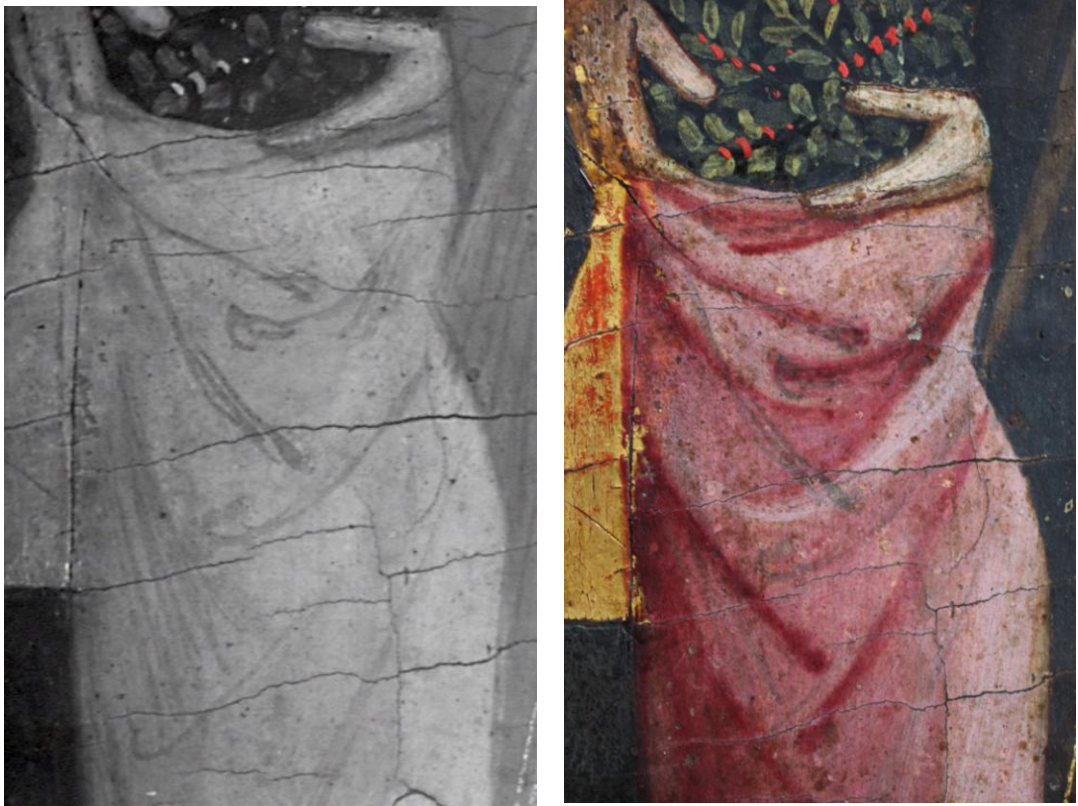


Figure 12: Underdrawing from the robe of St Dorothy. IR reflectogram and visible light comparison. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail.

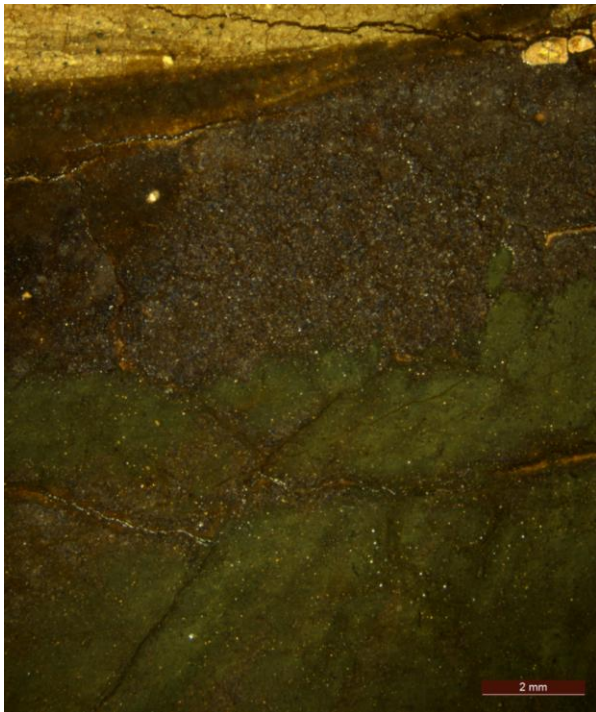


Figure 13: Detail of the Madonna of Humility's robes showing where the green nineteenth century overpaint has been removed from the centre of the image revealing the colour of the ultramarine layer beneath. *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel) detail.

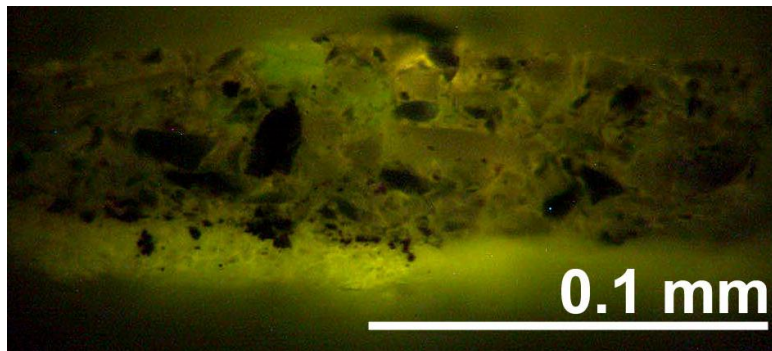
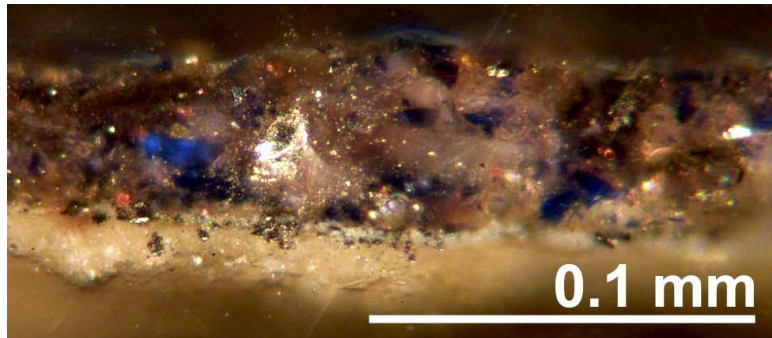


Figure 14: Cross Section 22 was taken from the robes of the Madonna of Humility. This shows the lower white layer is the calcium sulphate (gesso) ground, on top of which a grey imprimatura, composed of lead white and a carbon black pigment has been applied. Then the thick brown/blue layer is the ultramarine containing layer. The pinkish haze seen in the normal light image above is thought to be red lake particles. Their shape is more clearly defined when looking in Ultraviolet light, the lower cross section, *Madonna of Humility* (Courtauld Panel).



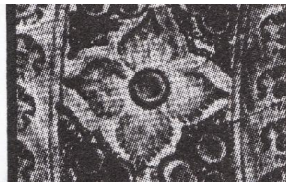
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311



Bernardo Daddi -> Jacopo del Casentino -> Master of the Dominican Effigies ----> Puccio di Simone -> The "Post-1348 Problem" ---//---> Cenni di Francesco

*

Figure 17: Punch 311 as identified by Skaug. Drawing (Cooper) and image from Skaug *Punchmarks* vol. II.



Figure 18: *Maesta Panel* attributed to Niccolo di Pietro Gerini. (116.5 x 60.3 cm). Niccolo di Pietro Gerini Folder #904, Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art.



Figure 19: *Maesta* attributed to Niccolò di Pietro Gerini. Niccolò di Pietro Gerini Folder #904, Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art.