

THE LATE TRECENTO FRESCO DECORATION OF THE PALAZZO DATINI IN PRATO

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Art

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(October, 2010)

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Abstract

Francesco di Marco Datini (c. 1335-1410) left his native city of Prato, near Florence, in about 1350 to become a successful merchant in Avignon, France. He returned three decades later to decorate his newly built private residence in the historic center of Prato. Under his patronage, frescoes of sacred and secular subject matter were executed in the residence from 1389-95.

The artists that have been concretely identified, or suggested, as working in the Palazzo Datini include: Arrigo di Niccolò, from Prato; minor painters Dino di Puccio, Jacopo d'Agnolo, and Agnolo; Florentine artists Tommaso del Mazza, Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, and Pagolino d'Ugolino; and the master artists Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Agnolo Gaddi.

Many of the original frescoes were uncovered during renovations of the 1950s. Those in the entry hall and ground floor rooms survive in varied condition. This recovery is significant because the survival of large scale private works of this kind in Italy is rare. Datini's legacy also comprises hundreds of ledgers, account books, and thousands of personal and business letters dating from 1363 to 1410. These are now contained in the Archivio Storico di Prato.

Using the surviving visual and written material as a reference point, this thesis examines the contexts behind Datini's choices as patron. In particular, the influence of predominant values in merchant culture will be considered. The frescoes are explored in comparison with the interior decoration in the palaces of contemporaries. Precedence is given to residences in Florence and other urban centers in Tuscany. Related paintings from Avignon are also considered, as Datini lived there for many years. Visual parallels can also be drawn between the Datini frescoes and manuscript illuminations, among other sources. The murals were influenced by Datini's own interests, larger cultural values, and the painters, who derived from the Florentine tradition.

This thesis seeks to examine the cultural and artistic environment in late Trecento Prato, Datini's contact with the artists, the subject matter and style of the frescoes, and their reception.

Acknowledgements

In producing this thesis, I am indebted to the support of my supervisor, Dr. Cathleen Hoengier. Her extensive knowledge, thoughtful opinions, and enthusiasm for the topic have helped to guide me through the research, writing, and editing processes. I would like to thank Dr. Hoeniger for her constant encouragement and advice, which have been a great benefit to my work.

I would also like to thank Lorenzo Lapi, President of the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, and Gabriele Ciolini, of the same institution, for their generous support in providing high quality digital images of the interior fresco decoration at the Palazzo Datini. As well, I would like to thank Simonetta Cavaciocchi, at the Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica “F. Datini” Prato, and Dr. Anne Dunlop, Associate Professor at Yale University, for providing advice and recommending articles that have been fundamental to this thesis.

My professors and colleagues at Queen’s University must be recognized for their support. I would like to thank Michelle, Susan, and Andrea in particular for their friendship and for listening, offering advice and providing the perfect distraction, when needed. As well, I would like to thank Dr. Anne Higgins, Associate Professor at Simon Fraser University, for introducing me to Datini and his painted palace.

Finally, but most importantly, I would like to thank my family for their support. The unconditional encouragement of my mother, in particular, has been instrumental for me in continuing my studies. I must also thank James for his patience and understanding; for encouraging and challenging me; for offering valuable suggestions; and for knowing how to make me laugh when I needed it the most.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Literature Review

This thesis will consider how one wealthy Tuscan from the mid fourteenth-century, a period identified as the Trecento in Italian, had his urban palace richly decorated with mural paintings that were characteristic of the day. The patron at our focus is the well-known “Merchant of Prato,” Francesco di Marco Datini, who was born in Prato in about 1335 and died there in 1410.¹ Datini left his native city at a young age to establish his fortune in Avignon, France, which was at that time the site of the Papal Court. Three decades later, an affluent Datini returned to Prato with his young Florentine wife, Margherita Bandini, whom he had met and married in Avignon. The couple inhabited a newly-built private residence, now known as Palazzo Datini, which still stands at the corner of via Ser Lapo Mazzei and via Rinaldesca in the historic quarter of the city (Fig. 1). The palazzo, admired by contemporaries, rivaled the richly decorated urban palaces in nearby Florence.

Datini spent the years following his return to Prato, in 1389, consumed with decorating the interior of his home. The merchant commissioned sacred and secular frescoes, including forest landscapes and hunting scenes populated with birds and other wildlife. These were executed by both local artists and established Florentine painters. A few of the paintings have positive attributions, based on style and surviving documentation. The authorship of other murals in the palazzo, however, is still disputed. Some of the paintings have been attributed to the

¹ This title was first given to Datini by Iris Origo in *The Merchant of Prato: Daily Life in a Medieval Italian City* (London: Penguin Books, 1957). See also Michele Cassandro, “Aspects of the Life and Character of Francesco di Marco Datini,” *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*, ed. Giampiero Nigro (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 3-51, 5. Cassandro points out that the exact date of Francesco Datini’s birth is uncertain. Scholars have generally accepted 1335 as the approximate date of birth for the merchant. Yet recent archival research by Simonetta Cavaciocchi indicates that Datini’s date of birth may have been later, in 1337 or 1338.

Florentine master artists Agnolo Gaddi (c. 1333-October 15, 1396) and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (d. 1414-5).² Other artists that have been identified as working within the Palazzo Datini include the Florentine painters Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Tommaso del Mazza, Paganino d'Ugolino, Dino di Puccio, and Jacopo d'Agnolo as well as local Pratese artist Arrigo di Niccolò.



Figure 1 Lapo Martini with Goro di Niccolò, Palazzo Datini, Via Ser Lapo Mazzei and Via Rinaldesca, Prato, c. 1383-92.

(Source: Bruce Cole, "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 63. Photo © Bazzechi.)

See Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "Il vezzo del mercante. Qualche curiosità sulla data di nascita di Francesco Datini," *Prato, storia e arte*, n. 105 (2009), pp. 23-33.

² Dates from Sir Dominic E. Colnaghi, *Colnaghi's Dictionary of Florentine Painters from the 13th to the 17th centuries*, Carlo E. Malvani, ed., (Florence: Archivi Colnaghi Firenze, 1986), 111-12, 114. Facsimile reprint of D. E. Colnaghi, *A dictionary of Florentine painters* (London: J. Lane, 1928).

The palazzo is a valuable site for art historical research because of the remarkable survival of many of the original wall paintings. These were uncovered during renovations executed in the palazzo from 1954 to 1958, under the direction of architect and art historian Nello Bemporad. During the course of this restoration, a thick layer of whitewash was removed from the walls and the original frescoes were subsequently restored.³ The recovery is significant because, although fresco decoration appears to have been quite common in palaces during the fourteenth-century, the survival *in situ* of large scale secular and private works in Italy is rare.

The notable endurance of the visual program of the Palazzo Datini is complemented by a rich collection of extant primary source material. Over five hundred ledgers and account books and thousands of personal and business letters belonging to the merchant, dating from 1363 to 1410, were discovered enclosed under a stairwell in 1870.⁴ These were compiled into an archive now known as the Archivio Datini. It is housed in the upper storey of the Palazzo Datini and is affiliated with the Archivio di Stato di Prato, which is also based there.

Within the collected papers, aspects of the design and execution of the frescoes at Palazzo Datini are discussed in personal correspondence between Datini, his friends and associates. A few *conti* (bills or contracts) related to the interior decoration indicate the subject matter and, in some cases, the location of the murals in the residence. This information is useful for identifying the original frescoes that have since been severely damaged or lost. Such documents as exist for this palace are rare because very few Trecento art works have surviving

³ Andrew Martindale, *Painting the Palace: studies in the history of medieval secular painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995), 137. Martindale states that “much secular medieval painting has survived only beneath whitewash.” He provides a few examples of fresco cycles that have survived *in situ* in this manner.

⁴ Origo, 7. Due to the sheer volume of surviving documentation, intensified by duplicated, misfiled, and loose papers, quantitative reports on the Archives differ. The Fondazione website indicates that there are 600 codices and approximately 150,000 letters. See “The Datini’s Archive: The Correspondence,” and “The Datini’s Archive: The Ledgers,” *Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di*

documents that describe their iconography in any detail. In addition, letters written by Datini's friends and associates express the contemporary reception of the completed palazzo and its decoration. Additional documents shed light on the personal and professional relationships established between Datini and the artists employed in his residence.

The abundance of extant documentation is exceptional. The bulk of the art related papers have been compiled by later archivists at the Archivio Datini in a file labeled D., *Miscellanea n. 1173, Documenti d'arte*. In addition, inventories of the palazzo, dating from the late 1390s and early 1400s, as well as personal correspondence discussing the mural commissions, are also stored in this file. The various papers all contribute to an understanding of the interior. It is from this file that most scholars draw their information regarding the interior frescoes although recent research has extended beyond this file and new information relating to the murals has been located in other areas of the archive.

The architectural fabric of the site, including the frescoes and the archive, is stewarded by the "Ceppo dei poveri di Francesco di Marco," now called the Casa Pia dei Ceppi. The institution was first founded by Datini himself with the bequest of his accumulated wealth, valued at more than 100,000 gold florins, and a stipulation in his will that the Ceppo, as his heir, was to serve the poor of Prato. Today, the decorated ground floor rooms of the palazzo are open to the public as the Museo Casa Francesco Datini. The survival of both the visual and textual material facilitates an art historical examination that is not possible for most works of the period.

A Description of the Frescoes in the Palazzo Datini

The detailed frescoes in the entry hall and main ground floor rooms of the Palazzo Datini survive in varying condition. In some areas they are damaged and the pigments have flaked or faded. Other sections, however, are well preserved. On the *primo piano* (second storey) of the residence, the original frescoes are completely lost. Trace fragments of the underlying *sinopia* (ochre under-painting) that survive for the upstairs frescoes will be excluded from this study. In addition, the exterior of the palazzo, once richly decorated with scenes from Datini's life executed by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini with Ambrogio di Baldese, Alvero di Piero (known as Alvaro Pirez of Evora), Lippo di Andrea, and Scolaio di Giovanni, will also be excluded.⁵ The surviving *sinopie* on the exterior, having been long exposed to the elements, are in poor condition. Residual fragments of these external frescoes have been removed from the façade. The exterior is now decorated with rough copies of the original scenes as well as fragmentary painted panels of imitation marble (Figs. 2-3). The remains of the original murals are preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Prato, located in the palazzo.

Since the exterior frescoes were commissioned after Datini's death by the executors of his will, they cannot be associated as closely with Datini as the paintings that were commissioned inside the palace during the merchant's lifetime. No documentary evidence survives to suggest that Datini personally requested these exterior scenes.⁶ Visual and cultural historian Anne Dunlop speculates, based on a letter written by Datini's wife Margherita in 1410, that during

⁵ Anne Dunlop, *Painted Palaces: the rise of secular art in early Renaissance Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2009), 40.

⁶ Renato Piattoli, "Un mercante del Trecento e gli artisti del tempo suo: Part 4," *Rivista d'arte*, vol. 12, n. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1930), pp. 97-150, at 17. Piattoli discusses the frescoes on the façade of Palazzo Datini representing scenes from the life of the merchant. He states that Torello di Niccolò Torelli, a Pratese jurist and friend of Datini's, and Luca del Sera, Datini's business partner, organized a call for painters in Florence shortly after Datini's death and requested that the artists submit drawings for approval. Luca was a witness when Datini drew up his will on July 31, 1410 and Torelli was

Datini's lifetime the façade of the palazzo may have been decorated with "a different kind of portrait of him, made up of the arms of his clients and patrons, just as public buildings were marked by the arms of successive officeholders."⁷ Therefore, to focus on the interior murals completed before Datini's death in 1410 will arguably lead to a more accurate consideration of his role as an art patron.



Figure 2 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini with Ambrogio di Baldese, Alvero di Piero (known as Alvaro Pirez of Evora), Lippo di Andrea, and Scolaio di Giovanni, exterior of the Palazzo Datini, detail of painted imitation marbles, fresco, Palazzo Datini, Prato.

(Source: Image ID: SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039931529, ARTstor [database online]. Available from ARTstor, Inc., New York, New York, or on the World Wide Web: <http://www.artstor.org>. Photo © SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y., 2006.)

identified in the will as one of the administrators of the Ceppo, yet there is no evidence that the murals they commissioned for the exterior of the palazzo stemmed from a personal request of the merchant. It appears that they were enacting the wishes of the executors of Datini's will and of the Ceppo to honor the merchant's final charitable act.

⁷ Dunlop, 40, 233. Dunlop cites a letter dated January 5, 1410 in which Margherita states that Datini had the arms of the Chardinale d'Albana painted "in su l'uscio" (on the door). She presumes that Margherita means of the palazzo, since she then mentions it. See Archivio Storico di Prato, *Le Lettere di Margherita Datini a Francesco di Marco (1384-1410)*, Valeria Rosati, ed. (Prato: Cassa di Risparmi e Depositi, 1977), 334.



Figure 3 Alvaro Pirez, Scene from the *Storia di Francesco Datini*, sinopia, Palazzo Datini, Prato.

(Source: Luciano Bellosi, *Come un Prato Fiorito: Studi sull'arte tardogotico*, Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2000, Illustrazione 109.)

Within the palace, the ground floor rooms are painted in a distinctly Florentine manner. They collectively create a public space that would have been open to both family and visitors. This was the most lavishly decorated part of the palazzo. The entry hall contains two religious frescoes. The wall to the right of the main entrance, facing the stairway to the *primo piano*, holds a life sized, full-length, fresco of Saint Christopher with the Christ Child on his shoulders (Fig. 4). The figures are surrounded by painted imitation marble inlay in a pattern reminiscent of the thirteenth-century Cosmati pavement decorations. A lunette containing a Blessing Christ is situated on the right hand wall of the hallway, positioned above the door to one of the two largest rooms on the ground floor (Fig. 5). These are the only two frescoes of religious subject matter that survive in the palazzo.



Figure 4 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *Saint Christopher*, fresco, entry hall, Palazzo Datini, Prato, 1391-94.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)



Figure 5 Tommaso del Mazza, *Blessing Christ*, fresco, entry hall, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c. 1383-1392.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

The remainder of the ground floor decoration is of a secular nature. The walls of the hall are decorated with panels of fictive green and red marble mottled with veins of yellow and blue, respectively. These are surrounded by imitation stone inlay. The wall space that is not embellished with this design contains residual pigments that indicate it was once painted a terre-verte ground. The ceiling has a motif of fleur-de-lis on a rich blue ground that is repeated throughout the entire palazzo (Fig. 6). Slight variations between each painted lily suggest that they were executed by hand and not with a stencil. Dunlop believes that the painted lilies on the ceiling may have, at one time, been embellished by gilded tin fleur-de-lis, attached with balls of wax, to catch and reflect ambient light.⁸ This seems to have been a common decorative element of the period and Cennino Cennini, a student of the painter Agnolo Gaddi, recommends a similar



Figure 6 Front entry during the restoration of 1954-8, with a view of the *Saint Christopher* and *Blessing Christ*, Palazzo Datini, Prato.

(Source: Nello Bemporad, *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato*, Prato: Associazione Turistica Pratese, 1958, Tavola 24.)

adornment of tin stars in his generalized art treatise of the 1390s, titled *Il Libro dell'Arte*.⁹

The walls of the room to the right of the hall contain four expansive vaults. Each one depicts a lush forest landscape with trees bearing flowers and fruit. The ground below is populated by wildlife. The upper branches of the trees support a multitude of birds (Figs. 7-8).

⁸ Dunlop, 35.

⁹ Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), 61-63. For the original Italian see Cennino Cennini, *Il Libro dell'Arte*, ed. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932), 60-61.



Figure 7 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, fresco, camera delle due letta, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Bruce Cole, "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 67. Photo © Bazzechi.)

The bottom third of the wall is composed of a painted band, framed by imitation marble panels arranged in geometric patterns. These panels contain large representations of the *stemma* (coats-of-arms) of Datini and his wife, Margherita Bandini. The Datini *stemma* is defined by diagonal stripes of red and white while the Bandini *stemma* is distinguished by a silver field crossed by a



Figure 8 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, detail, fresco, camera delle due letta, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

horizontal red band. Over time, the latter ground, composed of silver or tin leaf, has degraded and is now black. Tin embellishment seems to have been commonly used in the Trecento, although in his treatise Cennini warns the painter to “work with as little silver as you can, because it does not last; and it turns black, both on wall and on wood, but it fails sooner on a wall.”¹⁰ The room also contains a quadripartite vault with a fleur-de-lis patterned ground and four large Datini and Bandini *stemme* in quatrefoils (Fig. 9). This room is identified in the scholarship by various titles including the *camera terrena*, *camera delle due letta*, and office or *sala della scrittoio*.¹¹

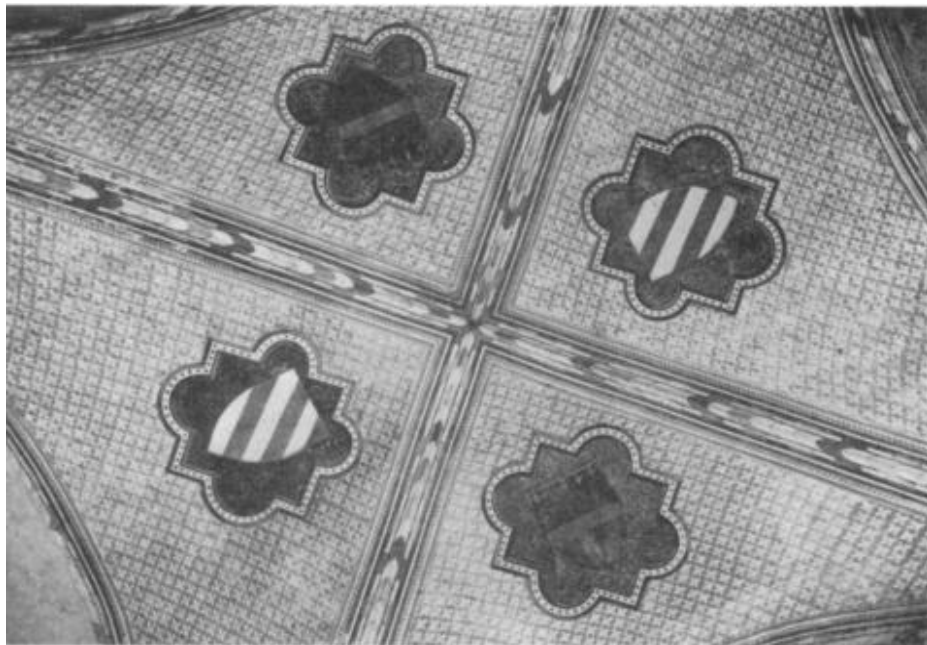


Figure 9 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, vault, fresco, camera delle due letta, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Bruce Cole, “The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 64. Photo © Bazzechi.)

¹⁰ Cennini, *Craftsman's Handbook*, 60.

¹¹ These titles have been provided by Dunlop, Romagnoli, Bruce Cole and Nello Bemporad, respectively. See Bruce Cole, “The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82. See also Nello Bemporad, *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato* (Prato: Associazione Turistica Pratese, 1958), Tavole 25 and 26. Note that the title “camera delle due letta” [sic] has been taken from the archival documents and is the identification currently used for the room by the administrators of the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi.

The different labels indicate that researchers have proposed conflicting hypotheses for the original function of the room.

The spacious room to the left of the entry hall is decorated by a painted imitation tapestry that takes up three quarters of each wall (Fig. 10). To create the illusion that the fresco is a real wall-hanging, the mural is painted as if the fictive cloth is suspended from a bar that runs the length of the room. The “material” contains a diamond pattern of alternating golden crowns on red ground and fleur-de-lis on blue ground divided by white diagonal latticework. This tapestry is topped by a red band that encircles the room and is decorated with a pattern of Datini and Bandini *stemme* in quatrefoils surrounded by flowering vines. Diminutive nude figures are

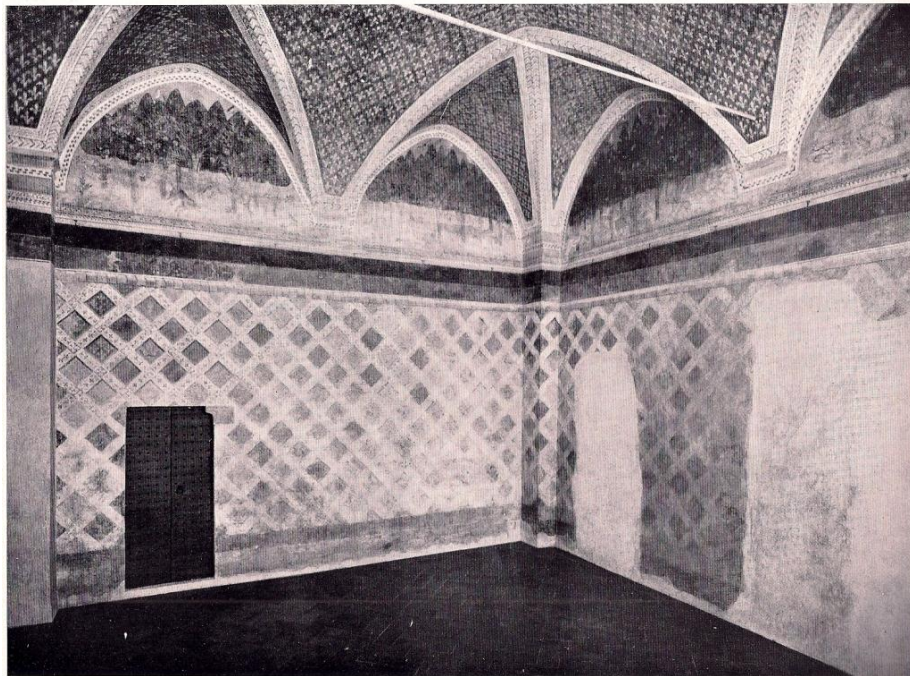


Figure 10 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestry with lunettes of hunting scenes, fresco, camera dell’uno letto, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Nello Bemporad, *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato*, Prato: Associazione Turistica Pratese, 1958, Tavola 25.)



Figure 11 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestry with lunettes of hunting scenes, detail, fresco, camera dell’uno letto, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini)

depicted running through the vines. The upper portion of the wall contains lunettes of forested hunting scenes populated by birds and other wildlife (Fig. 11). They are stalked by a few disproportionately sized human figures armed with spears. The ceiling is decorated with a fleur-de-lis motif anchored by Datini and Bandini *stemme* at the center. These are flanked by male and female heads positioned frontally and in profile (Fig. 12). Scholars have identified this room as the *camera dello scrittoio*, *camera dell’uno letto*, *sala delle udienze* or guest room.¹² Again, the

¹² These titles have been provided by Dunlop, Romagnoli, Cole, and Bemporad, respectively. Note that the title “camera dell’uno letto” has been taken from the archival documents and is the identification currently used for the room by the administrators of the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi.



Figure 12 Vault decoration of the Datini and Bandini *stemme* with male and female heads, camera dell'uno letto, paper, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c. 1392-1402.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

various titles are accompanied by different proposals for the original function of the space.

The central courtyard and vaulted loggia are the only areas of the Palazzo Datini containing frescoes of secular figures. The few small hunters in the lunettes from the room to the left of the entry hall, overshadowed by the surrounding foliage and wildlife, cannot be considered in the same capacity as the nearly life-sized figures found elsewhere in the palace. The *conto* for the courtyard figures is the most comprehensive of the art documents that survive for the decoration of Palazzo Datini. It outlines the subject matter, compositional layout, and material

costs of the paintings. While the list of figures is abridged, it is a valuable asset for art historical studies of the palace since the original frescoes are deteriorated and in many areas are completely lost.

The loggia that frames the courtyard once contained representations of the Liberal Arts coupled with the Virtues and the Vices, including seated personifications of the Virtues, with contrasting Vices at their feet, and the Sciences, with Philosophies at their feet. These were accompanied by additional Philosophies.¹³ The figures which were depicted on the vaults were surrounded by a field of fleur-de-lis on blue ground while those on the lunettes below were surrounded by fleur-de-lis on red ground. Today, only the figures of Hope, Prudence, and Temperance survive on the loggia walls (Figs. 13-14).

In the courtyard, fourteen figures identified as Heroes, Worthies, or *uomini illustri* (“illustrious men”), were contained in fictive niches. These were decorated with geometric patterns of imitation stone inlay and divided by *trompe l’oeil* carved stone pillars topped with capitals.¹⁴ Four of the original figures survive and are contained within a single lunette (Figs. 15-16). The existing palazzo frescoes, and the related extant documentation, will be explored in the second chapter.

¹³ Federigo Melis, *Aspetti della vita economica medievale: Studi nell’ Archivio Datini di Prato* (Siena: Monte dei Paschi di Siena, 1962), 59. The *conto* for Niccolò di Pietro Gerini includes “7 virtù, cho’ vizi da pie’, ne la logia,” “7 scienza, con filosafi da pie’ e con adornamenti s’apartenghono a le dette virtù,” and “quatro filosofie.”

¹⁴ Melis, 59. The same *conto* also identifies Gerini as depicting “lle figure che sono ne le faccie della corte, cioè 14 figure in tutto; a spese di Franciesco e’ colori; solo della mano, netto d’ogni spesa, cho’ gl’adornamenti d’intorno e marmi da pie’.



Figure 13 Photograph of the loggia during the restoration of 1954-8.

(Source: Bruce Cole, "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 64. Photo © Bazzechi.)



Figure 14 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini with designs by Agnolo Gaddi, *Hope* and *Prudence*, fresco, Loggia, Palazzo Datini, Prato, c. 1391-95.

(Source: Anne Dunlop, *Painted Palaces: the rise of secular art in early Renaissance Italy*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009, p. 29. Photo © Anne Dunlop, by permission of the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi.)



Figure 15 Photograph of the courtyard, detail of the *Uomini Illustri*, fresco, Palazzo Datini, Prato.

(Source: Nello Bemporad, *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato*, Prato: Associazione Turistica Pratese, 1958, Tavola 32.)



Figure 16 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *Uomini Illustri*, fresco, courtyard, Palazzo Datini, Prato, 1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

Historiography: An Examination of the Literature on Datini's Patronage with Problems and Recent Revisions

The substantial collection of documents in the Archivio Datini has survived due to several circumstances. Following the merchant's death in 1410, the executors of Datini's will were obliged to enact a stipulation "that all the archives of the various houses he had founded and those of the trading companies with which he had been associated, as well as all the letters received from his numerous correspondents, should be brought to Prato and preserved in the palace which he had built."¹⁵ In 1560, Pratese scholar Alessandro Guardini organized Datini's papers, which had been stored haphazardly by the Ceppo administrators. Later renovations, completed in the seventeenth century, altered the original layout of the palazzo and the documents were sealed under a cellar staircase and forgotten. In 1870, Don Martino Benelli, Archdeacon of Prato, discovered the papers and these were reorganized with the assistance of Don Livio Livi.¹⁶ The scholarship on Datini, therefore, does not begin until the late nineteenth century with this recovery.

A significant portion of the pioneering research on Datini, published from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth century, was carried out by Italian scholars. These have primarily focused on the economic and mercantile aspects of the archive made available in the collection of *quadernacci* (account books), *ricordanze* (merchant records), and correspondence from Datini's trading and banking businesses. Some attention has been given to the merchant's private

¹⁵ Robert Brun, "A fourteenth century merchant of Italy: Francesco Datini of Prato," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II, 1930, 3, pp. 451-66, 454-5. Copies of Datini's will survive in Latin and the vernacular (*volgare*) in the Archivio Datini. It has been published by Cesare Guasti in *Lettere di un notaro a un mercante del secolo XIV con altre lettere e documenti*, vol. 2 of 2 (Florence: Le Monnier, 1880), 271- 310. It is also accessible as an annotated version online. See Joseph Byrne, "Francesco di Marco Datini, The Wills and Codicils of Marco (1348) and Francesco di Marco (1410) Datini," Belmont University, <http://campus.belmont.edu/honors/datwill.html>.

¹⁶ Origo, 347-8.

documents, as well as the personal correspondence of his wife Margherita.¹⁷ Both sources are valuable for socio-historical studies. Overall, there has been less focus on the cultural value of the collection despite the fact that many documents in the Archive relate to Datini's art patronage, the decoration of his home, and his relationships with the artists he hired. Critical studies of Datini's art patronage and the interior decoration of his palazzo were initiated much later than the economic studies.

In the research focused on Datini's patronage, the textual evidence for the interior decoration in the Palazzo Datini has long been overemphasized at the expense of the visual. This is because, as mentioned earlier, a direct examination of the frescoes was not possible until the overlying whitewash was removed in the 1950s and the complete nature of the surviving frescoes was revealed. From the 1960s on, English language scholarship has directed attention to the interior murals of the palazzo and various aspects of their execution. Recent research by Italian and German scholars has also begun to focus on the frescoes themselves. Scholars discuss the processes involved in hiring the artists, overseeing their work in the palazzo, and Datini's relationships with these painters, as evidenced by the archival material. In addition, they describe the completed murals and suggest prototypes for the imagery, based on surviving comparable visual material. However, these studies show that consideration for the contexts shaping Datini's aesthetic choices remains limited.

The lack of continuity in the art historical scholarship on Datini's art patronage is reflected in the historiography for this thesis, which concentrates on the available sources relevant to a critical study of the frescoes in the Palazzo Datini. Datini was a prominent art patron in Prato

¹⁷ For Margherita's correspondence see Archivio Storico di Prato, *Le Lettere di Margherita Datini a Francesco di Marco (1384-1410)*. Valeria Rosati, ed. (Prato: Cassa di Risparmi e Depositi, 1977). See also Archivio Storico di Prato, *Per la tua Margherita: lettere di una donna del '300 al marito mercante, Margherita Datini a Francesco di Marco, 1384-1401*. (Prato: Archivio Storico di Prato, no date). CD-Rom.

and commissioned works of art for a number of churches in the city, in addition to the murals in his own home. However, because of the necessity for establishing parameters and defining the current objectives for this thesis, the commissions that Datini oversaw outside of his residence will not be discussed, except when necessary for a consideration of the palazzo decoration itself.

In this thesis, significant attention has been given to the research of Margherita Romagnoli, Anne Dunlop, and Bruce Cole, for their direct analyses of the visual program at the Palazzo Datini. Earlier Italian scholars discuss the architectural fabric of the palazzo but provide little examination of the interior decoration. A salient exception is Renato Piattoli's four part article of 1929-30 in the Italian art journal *Rivista d'arte*. However, his research focuses on the palazzo commissions as discussed in Datini's correspondence alone and he does not qualify the subject matter or style of the murals, which were unavailable for viewing at the time of his publication.

Although a direct examination of the interior frescoes was initiated in English with Iris Origo's monograph *The Merchant of Prato*, first published in 1957, there is no critical analysis until a decade later with Bruce Cole's article "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini," in the journal *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, in 1967. Most research on the frescoes and Datini's art patronage has been confined to brief articles or chapters within larger studies of the Datini archives, Pratese socio-cultural history, merchant culture, or secular wall decoration of the Trecento.

Studies on Datini were instigated with Cesare Guasti's two volume publication *Lettere di un notaro a un mercante del secolo XIV con altre lettere e documenti* (1880). It is the first essential biography on the merchant. The importance of this pioneering text is emphasized by its continued citation by scholars today. A philologist and archivist of Pratese origin, Guasti culled numerous written exchanges between Datini and his friend Ser Lapo Mazzei, as well as related

supplementary sources from the archives. The first volume opens with a lengthy *proemio* describing Datini's personal life in twenty parts. A shorter biography is provided for Mazzei.

The biographical content is framed by larger historical and socio-political events in Prato, Florence, and Avignon. Precedence has been given to archival sources, although secondary historical texts are also cited.¹⁸ Following his lengthy introduction, Guasti reproduces previously unpublished correspondence from the Archivio Datini, although he provides limited analysis. Within the dialogue between Datini and Mazzei, some context is established for aspects of the interior decoration of the palace, Datini's role as patron, and his relationship with the artists. It was to Mazzei that Datini turned to for legal advice during a payment dispute with hired painter Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, to be discussed shortly, and Mazzei mediated an arbitration with the *Consiglio* (Council) of the *Arte dei Medici e Speziale* (Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries) in Florence.¹⁹ Many of the available documents related to the interior decoration of Palazzo Datini were first reproduced in Appendix II of Guasti's second volume as "Lettere e documenti di artefici e di cose d'arte."²⁰ This includes letters from the artists to their patron Datini, *conti*, and payment records from the merchant's *ricordanze*. Guasti does not evaluate the content of these artistic documents and they receive no significant analysis until later studies.

In the early twentieth century, the scholarship on Datini and his palazzo was largely isolated to Italian publications in the local journal *Prato, Storia e Arte* (PSA). Articles also appeared in the annual *bollettino* (newsletter) *Archivio storico pratese* (ASP). Today, the ASP is affiliated with the Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini." The

¹⁸ Guasti relies on a wide scope of archival material and primary material from, among other sources, the Archivio Datini, Archivio del Comune di Prato, Archivio Diplomatico Provenienza della Propositura de' Ceppi di Prato, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, and the Archivio Storico Italiano. He frequently references the *Croniche* of the Villani family, Dino Compagni, and Buonaccorso Pitti of Florence.

¹⁹ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 1, 18, 20, 21, 22-23.

²⁰ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 439-443.

institute was founded in 1968 by economic historian and Datini scholar Federigo Melis, whose contribution to the scholarship on Datini will be discussed shortly, and is located in Prato near the Palazzo Datini.

The articles in these two journals examine the palazzo's architecture, decoration, archives and conservation and include Angiolo Badiani's "Il Palazzo Datini" (ASP, vol. 19, 1941), Maurizio and Serena De Servio Cresci's "Francesco di Marco Datini e la sua casa di Prato" (PSA, n. 17, n.s. 7, 1966), as well as Cristina Cnomi Mavarelli's recent "Il più bel castello al mondo. La decorazione pittorica di Palazzo Datini. Il restauro" (PSA, n. 104, n.s. 10, 2008). The journals have been used by various scholars as platforms for innovative research on Datini and for proposing preliminary analyses of the archival material. A few Italian scholars, such as Enrico Bensa, Renato Piattoli, and Federigo Melis, built academic careers upon their studies of the merchant's papers and published monographs of their findings. However, the articles from these Italian journals have proved to be difficult to obtain at the Master's level of research.

Following Guasti's publication, art historian Iginio Benevenuto Supino produced a supplementary document in his article "Una Ricordanza Inedita di Francesco di Marco Datini" in the journal *Rivista d'arte* (1907). He explores an unpublished memorandum, written by Datini, from what he identifies as the "Archivio del Ceppo." The document addresses payment claims made by the painters Bartolomeo [di Bertozzo] and Angniolo [Gaddi] [sic]. As an entry point, Supino references Guasti's earlier discussion of the same letter, which initiated a protracted payment dispute between Datini and the artists employed in his residence, including Niccolò di Pietro Gerini. This issue will be discussed shortly. Supino explores contractual documents dated between 1392 and 1395 which establish that Gerini and Agnolo Gaddi were able to maintain professional relationships with Datini following the dispute. Gerini worked with Lorenzo di Niccolò in 1395 on a cross "in the style of Giotto" at the church of San Francesco, in Prato, while

Agnolo Gaddi was asked to provide designs “in his hand” (“delle sue mani”).²¹ Bartolomeo, however, appears to have severed his ties with Datini.

The *ricordanza*, dated by Supino to 1392, is a memorandum from Datini to his agents Giovanni di Gherardo and Stoldo di Lorenzo. He criticizes the sums remitted by the artists for the murals in the palazzo because he considers the work to be largely of a preparatory nature.²² Datini asks the agents to check the recent work of other Florentine artists as a measure to establish fair prices for painted imitation marbles (“il muro a marmi”), a vault of lilies (“la volta a gigli”), and other decorative work.²³ Supino’s contribution filled a gap for researchers by providing insight into Datini’s personal opinions on patron expectations, artistic practices and labor. Subsequent scholars Renato Piattoli and Joseph Byrne have benefited from this *ricordanza* because their respective research concentrates on the payment dispute between the merchant and the artists working at Palazzo Datini.

Enrico Bensa’s *Francesco di Marco da Prato. Notizie e documenti sulla mercatura italiana del secolo XIV* (1928), was the first monograph on the merchant’s business practices. The details of Datini’s background and family life, discussed in Chapter Two: “Francesco di Marco Datini,” are quickly superseded by a lengthy examination of Datini’s commercial legacy

²¹ I. B. Supino, “Una Ricordanza Inedita di Francesco di Marco Datini,” *Rivista d’arte*, 5:9/12 (1907), pp. 134-38, 135. Supino notes that in a letter dated May 6 1395, Datini tells Stoldo di Lorenzo in Florence that “Sarò con lui di presente, e dirovi quanto arò seguito con lui, che Idio mi traggha delle sue mani et delli altri suoi pari chè tutti sono fatti a uno modo. Mai non farò più dipingere.”

²² Supino, 136. Supino cites Datini, who argues that “E ci venono a dì XVIIIj di settembre 1391, e andaronsene a dì XXj di dicembre, anno detto, e in questo mezo mandorono alchuna volta a Firenze a fare loro faciende. Il perchè io truovo (sbattendo le feste comandate, e possono avere lavorato circha a due mesi o meno) che la metà di questo tempo ano messo il tempo in fare i ponti e macinare cholori e dipigniere regholi da palcho che (*manca la carta*) questo arebe fatto bene come loro, che per soldi otto il dì, o il più soldi x, sarebe stato di grazia, e voi vedrete per quello che domandano ch’a chostoro tocherebe fior. Uno il dì per uno, contando cholori e spese, che quando Giotto era vivo credo faciea migliore merchato.”

²³ Supino, 137-8. Datini specifically identifies a few sources, telling his agents “Cercate uno maestro ch’è scianchato, che dipinse le due logie di Mess. M... [...] Anchora trovate Guccio che à uno fratello che sta con quello fabbro grosso in merchato vecchio dirinpetto a la chiesa, che dipinse la casa di

as Bensa concentrates on the abundant business records in the Archivio Datini. The first chapter, “L’Archivio Datini,” is informative for Bensa’s explanation of the circumstances behind the organization of the archive. The remainder of the text is dedicated to examining Datini’s *fondaci* (mercantile companies), international trade, and commerce in textiles, transportation contracts, insurance, and banking. Unfortunately, in discussing Datini’s early trading practices, Bensa does not reference the merchant’s interest in works of art nor is there any discussion of the decoration of Palazzo Datini.

The concentration on commercial aspects of the archive in Bensa’s text served as a model for subsequent research on the merchant within an economic framework. This is the focus of most of the research on Datini, including Robert Brun’s article “A fourteenth-century merchant of Italy: Francesco Datini of Prato,” in the *Journal of Economic and Business History* (1930) and Raymond de Roover’s *Business, Banking, and Economic Thought in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (1974). De Roover defines Bensa’s work as “the best study on Datini,” before acknowledging a broader issue in the scholarship. Despite the abundance of Datini’s surviving papers, and the initiative of several historians, the files “have barely been tapped and much remains to be done.”²⁴ These studies identify the wealth of the archives yet do little to forward research on the palazzo and its decorative fresco cycles, the central subject of this thesis. The narrow focus of such earlier studies reveals the necessity for a shift in the scholarship that has continually prioritized commercial documents over equally valuable artistic ones.

The available art documents are first analyzed in Renato Piattoli’s article “Un mercante

Biagio di Lapo Peruzzi [...] E richordovi della casa di Gherardo Bartolini e de la chamera del Podestà e ogni altra dipintura [...]

²⁴ Raymond de Roover, *Business, Banking, and Economic Thought in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 74, 207. De Roover erroneously identifies the author as Enrico Besta [sic].

del Trecento e gli artisti del tempo suo,” published in four parts in *Rivista d’arte* (1929-30).²⁵

Many of the papers Piattoli cites are said to be from a file in the archive labeled *Carteggi privati diversi*, rather than the *Documenti d’arte* file that they are stored in today. In his first, second, and fourth articles Piattoli focuses on Datini’s extensive patronage of art outside of the palazzo, including smaller works such as painted *tavole* (panels), “sacred furnishings” including chandeliers, chalices, and basins, and larger crosses, tabernacles and altarpieces commissioned from the time of Datini’s return from Avignon until his death in 1410. Although a few *tavole* were made to adorn his palace, many of the other images and so-called decorated “furnishings” were commissioned for religious centers in Prato, including San Piero Forelli in Porta Fuia, San Francesco, and the Duomo of Santo Stefano.

Piattoli’s research suggests that Datini was a powerful patron in his native city. He employed many artists of varying expertise to execute a wide range of art objects for sacred and secular functions in both his home and other sites throughout Prato. References to the artists affiliated with the decoration of Datini’s palace are scant and scattered in these articles. It is in his third article (Oct.-Dec. 1929) that Piattoli closely examines the visual program at Palazzo Datini and the merchant’s relationships with the painters. His research does not include any descriptive analysis of the frescoes themselves but rather concentrates on information from the documents in the archive. A direct examination of the visual material at Palazzo Datini was not possible at the time of Piattoli’s publication since many of the frescoes were still hidden under whitewash.

Through his research in the archives, Piattoli brings to light correspondence between Datini and his associates, particularly Domenico di Cambio, the merchant’s agent in Florence,

²⁵ See also Robert Brun, “Notes sur le commerce de objets d’art en France et principalement à Avignon à la fin du XIV^e siècle,” *Bibliothèque d’École des Chartes* (1934), pp. 327-346.

which discusses the artists and their work at the palazzo. Many of these letters had not been referenced in Guasti's earlier publication or by other scholars. Piattoli begins with the wall decoration by minor painters Paganino d'Ugolino, Dino di Puccio, and Jacopo d'Agnolo. He then works through the hiring of master artist Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and local painter Arrigo di Niccolò, as well as the Florentines Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Tommaso del Mazza, and Agnolo Gaddi. He discusses the murals executed by each painter and Datini's relationships with these men and pays significant attention to the payment dispute, with a particular interest in the lawsuit filed by Bartolomeo.²⁶

Piattoli maps a complexly interconnected social and professional network for the painters that had not been suggested in earlier studies. He shows, using letters from the archive, that Paganino, Jacopo and Dino worked together on the loggia and in an unidentified *camera* in the palace.²⁷ Tommaso del Mazza is identified as Niccolò di Pietro Gerini's "chompagno" [sic], yet the latter painter worked in the palace with two unnamed assistants ("govani") and partnered with Arrigo di Niccolò for the decoration of the loggia and courtyard, though it is not clear if the two worked alongside Paganino, Jacopo, and Dino.²⁸ Meanwhile, Bartolomeo is linked to Gerini through friendship, although he arrived at the palazzo with a painter called Agnolo in the documents and identified as Florentine master Agnolo Gaddi.²⁹ Piattoli's scholarship is drawn directly from the papers in the Archivio Datini and he corroborates his conclusions with the publications of Giovanni Livi, Enrico Bensa, I. B. Supino, and Cesare Guasti; archivists familiar with the Datini papers. Like Guasti, Piattoli closes each article with an appendix of Datini's letters, cited in full. This addition is useful for researchers unable to access the archives directly.

²⁶ Renato Piattoli, "Un mercante del Trecento e gli artisti del tempo suo: Part 3," *Rivista d'arte*, vol. 11, n. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1929), pp. 537-579, 554-9. Piattoli discusses Gerini's payment dispute on pp. 551-554.

²⁷ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 538-9.

²⁸ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 544, 548. See also Aldo Petri, "Un pittore pratese del trecento: Arrigo di Niccolò" *Prato, storia e arte*, Dec. 1962, pp. 47-50, 47.

Nello Bemporad's *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato* (1958) does not examine the merchant's papers, but rather is the first study of the architectural fabric and decoration of the palazzo. Bemporad, an architect and historian, describes the structural changes executed in the residence during the restorations from 1954 to 1958, which he supervised. An attempt was made to reclaim the original layout of the palazzo using, as a reference point, fragmentary documents describing the original construction ("di poche frammentarie notizie sulla costruzione").³⁰ The sources are not identified. Bemporad addresses the value of the frescoes in providing rare insight into a wealthy merchant residence of the period but he does not analyze the decorative murals.³¹

Bemporad identifies the courtyard Hero cycle, largely lost, and the Saint Christopher in the front hall as Gerini's only extant work in the palazzo.³² The *stemmi* on the ceiling of the so-called *sala della scrittoio* ("room of the writing-desk") are mentioned with no reference to the frescoes of trees, animals, and tapestries in the same room.³³ Only the final two pages of this short text discuss the interior decoration.³⁴ Bemporad addresses the conditions at the onset of the restoration in addition to issues of conservation. The ground floor frescoes, covered by *calce* (lime plaster), were cleaned with diluted acetone and deteriorated geometric motifs were recreated using removable temperas. The courtyard Heroes were restored without repainting and covered with a protective silicone spray. The walls of the loggia, severely flaking and loaded with dirt and mold, could not be cleaned and were sprayed with a reversible vinyl resin to prevent further deterioration. Bemporad's study is important for a consideration of the conservation of the decoration in the palazzo. However, his discussion of the subject matter, style and layout of

²⁹ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 549.

³⁰ Bemporad, 15.

³¹ Bemporad, 10.

³² Bemporad, 11. Bemporad notes that "del vasto ciclo di affreschi, opera di Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, all'interno, restava solo la figura di S. Cristoforo e si ignorava praticamente l'esistenza della parte maggiore che si svolgeva nel cortile."

³³ Bemporad, 16, 20.

the frescoes, the focus of this thesis, is scant.

Iris Origo's *The Merchant of Prato: Daily Life in a Medieval Italian City* (1957) is the first English language monograph on Datini, his companies, and residence. Though it was written for a popular audience it is often referenced by later scholars. Cultural historian Joseph Byrne argues that such citations are often uncritical of Origo's flawed methodology. In her text, archival material is not always accurately referenced and he states that "at least one document upon which she relied heavily – the book of *ricordanze* that covered the years 1386–1388, which she cites as *Quadernaccii e memoriale di Francesco di Marco proprii, Quadernaccio A* (1386 – 1388) – cannot be located by the archive's staff," who "continue informally (and rather bitterly) to characterize the book as *un romanzo* because of its lack of scholarly rigour."³⁵ Her citations are infrequent and when discussing a document, Origo often fails to identify its location in the archive's files. At no point is it clarified that the research for this book was completed by Italian scholar and archivist Gino Corti and in the "Bibliography and Sources" Origo states that she personally culled the material from the Archivio Datini and the Archivio di Stato Florence.³⁶

Origo briefly discusses the interior frescoes in the ninth chapter: "The House." Her analysis is dependent on inventories from October 1394, July 1397 and April 1407 in File 236, *Carte del fondaco di Prato* and *Libro giallo A* (1380-90).³⁷ The Saint Christopher fresco is mentioned and Origo states that "the walls and vaulted ceilings of the rooms were decorated – some of the ceilings with a pattern of gold stars on blue ground, still faintly visible, and the walls with either a frieze of little trees or formal patterns."³⁸ She does not clarify which room contains this imagery. This is a problematic omission as there are similar motifs in both of the main

³⁴ Bemporad, 24-5.

³⁵ Joseph Byrne and Eleanor Congdon, "Mothering in Casa Datini," *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 35-56 (1999), 37.

³⁶ Origo, 347. Italics added.

³⁷ Origo, 225-243, 370.

ground floor rooms, although the “frieze of little trees” probably references the lunettes of hunting scenes in the room to the left of the entry hall, rather than the large wooded landscape in the room to the right. Origo also fails to distinguish the so-called “guest room,” which is an issue since the function of the main ground floor rooms has been debated.³⁹ As her text was published before the end of the restorations led by Bemporad, Origo likely had little opportunity to view the frescos. This limitation no doubt shaped her focus on other aspects of the palazzo.

Economic historian Federigo Melis’ extensive *Aspetti della vita economica medievale: Studi nell'Archivio Datini di Prato* (1962) is the result of a methodical examination of the Archivio Datini. His research is largely confined to the economic aspects of Datini’s businesses in trade and banking. Yet Melis also references a number of previously unpublished documents from the *Documenti d’arte* file and related correspondence from file D, n. 1092, *lettere Firenze-Prato* and D, n. 698, *lettere Prato-Firenze*. The papers reference the artistic commissions in the palazzo. This includes the *conto* for Gerini’s figures, executed in 1391, in which the painter outlines the subject matter, materials, and costs after their completion, as a result of his payment dispute with Datini. As well, there are records of the work executed by painters Bartolomeo di Bertozzo and Agnolo, again identified as Agnolo Gaddi.⁴⁰ Other documents reference Datini’s patronage beyond the palazzo, at San Francesco and his villa *il Palco*, outside Prato.⁴¹ Aside from brief references in the footnotes, to establish connections between particular documents and commissions, Melis does not critically analyze the artistic accounts. He seeks to present primary

³⁸ Origo, 232.

³⁹ Origo, 232. Origo notes that Arrigo di Niccolò “painted, for fifteen florins, in the guest-room on the ground floor, a ‘ceiling’ and bed curtains.” The same painter “painted, for ten florins, the walls of the passage [...] between the main bedroom and the kitchen.” Taken from an extant *conto* of Arrigo’s in an unspecified archival file. See also Dunlop, 21, 226. Dunlop identifies this bill as ASP Datini 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d’arte*, folio di lavori di Arrigo di Niccolò, c. 1, which is also cited in Mazzei, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 412-14.

⁴⁰ Melis, 59-61.

⁴¹ Melis, 60, 94-9.

documentation previously unavailable in the scholarship. Subsequent research on the frescoes of the palazzo is dependent upon Melis' archival work.

Art historian Bruce Cole's article "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," in the journal *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* (1967), is a pioneering study that introduced the Palazzo Datini frescoes to English language art historical scholarship. Cole's critical analysis is corroborated by *ricordanze* and *conti* from the archives, as well as observations stemming from the recent restoration. He relies on what he calls Origo's "brilliant biography" and the texts of Guasti, Bensa, Bemporad, and Melis. Cole traces the merchant's history and his building of the palazzo before examining the ground floor frescoes. He briefly discusses the Saint Christopher, Christ, and courtyard Hero figures but concentrates on the decoration of the so-called "office" and "guest room." The subject matter and style of the murals are compared to frescoes in contemporary Tuscan palazzi and the Palais des Papes at Avignon as Cole seeks to establish visual precedents for the Datini frescoes. The recent scholarship of Margherita Romagnoli, however, discredits Cole's arguments of the function of the two ground floor rooms and his attribution of the Blessing Christ but does not question his proposal of visual prototypes for the landscape frescoes.

In the "office," Cole describes a forest where "graceful storks, small birds, and other animals walk in front of a row of trees whose trunks serve as a screen separating the foreground plane from the dark depths of the forest beyond," which is accompanied by a band of imitation tapestries.⁴² He isolates similar landscape scenes in fresco fragments salvaged from Florence's destroyed historic quarter, now in the collection of the Museo di San Marco, in Florence. He also draws visual links to the Trecento wall decoration in the Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, herein called the Palazzo Davanzati, in Florence. Cole also suggests the Tour de la Garde-Robe in the Papal

Palace as a visual prototype. The courtyard figures are identified based on their attributes yet Anne Dunlop's recent publication disputes Cole's conclusions. Cole states that the lunettes of hunting scenes in the "guest room" are "a 'banded' type of landscape" related to those at Palazzo Davanzati.⁴³ He attributes these lunettes to Arrigo di Niccolò, whom Cole says repainted the earlier frescoes by Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo to commemorate the royal visit of Louis of Anjou in 1409, a detail that Romagnoli questions.⁴⁴ Some of Cole's arguments have been discredited by recent research, yet his work cannot be overlooked due to its foundational contribution to studies on the frescoes at the Palazzo Datini.

Under the supervision of Cole, Joseph Byrne produced a doctoral dissertation entitled *Francesco Datini, "Father of Many": piety, charity and patronage in early modern Tuscany* (1989). In this text Byrne explores elements of Datini's piety and charity. The merchant's patronage is discussed within a religious framework and Byrne examines Datini's commissions for the church of San Francesco in Prato. These included small donations of painted *tavole* (panels), but culminated in costly works of art such as decorated crosses and altarpieces.

Datini's role as an art patron is assessed in two chapters: "Datini and the Artistic Community," and "Datini as a Patron of Religious Art." In the first, Byrne discusses the merchant's role in the international art market in Avignon and explores the processes of artistic production and the movement of works in the period. Through this examination, he seeks to define the origins of Datini's artistic sensibilities. In the second chapter, Byrne explicates the *conti* and correspondence related to: the process of hiring the painters Tommaso del Mazza, Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Niccolò Gerini, and Agnolo Gaddi; the arrival of the artists at the palazzo; and the long process of extracting payment from Datini. Byrne acknowledges his debt to

⁴² Cole, "Interior Decoration," 61-82, 66-70.

⁴³ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 76, 79.

Piattoli's groundbreaking research and, in addition to archival documents, his reliance on the research of Guasti and Melis.⁴⁵ The importance of Byrne's archival analysis of Datini's patronage cannot be denied, yet his research does not directly discuss the subject matter or style of the mural paintings in Palazzo Datini.

An examination of the subject matter and style of the Palazzo Datini frescoes is found as a case study in the first chapter of Anne Dunlop's *Painted Palaces: The rise of secular art in early Renaissance Italy* (2009). Dunlop provides a significant and much needed contribution to the study of secular wall painting from the late Trecento and early Quattrocento. Many of the fresco cycles she discusses, including those in the Palazzi Paradiso and Del Sale in Ferrara, La Manta in Piemonte, Sabbionara d'Avio, and Palazzo Trinci at Foligno are located in privately-owned buildings, often inaccessible to the public. Her analysis is based on *in situ* examination and is supplemented by previously unpublished photographs.⁴⁶ In a critique of the study of secular Italian fresco decoration, Dunlop expresses the concern that "most authors continue to treat early secular painting in passing."⁴⁷ In the past, this issue has affected art historical examinations of the Palazzo Datini and its archive. Yet the emergence of several relevant studies in recent years means that the Datini frescoes are being examined more thoroughly. As a result,

⁴⁴ Margherita Romagnoli, "La dimora di un mercante pratese nel XIV secolo (II parte): La decorazione interna di Palazzo Datini," *Arte Cristiana*, vol. XCVII (Jan-Feb 2009), pp. 19-30, 21-22.

⁴⁵ Joseph Byrne, *Francesco Datini, "Father of Many": piety, charity and patronage in early modern Tuscany* (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1989), 292. The correspondence is filed as Archivio Datini, Cart. Priv. e Fam., Florence-Prato.

⁴⁶ Dunlop, 5. In her Introduction Dunlop acknowledges the issues that accompany such a substantial project, as "the paintings discussed are drawn from the decoration of Italian palaces and homes between the later thirteenth century and the mid-Quattrocento; some, like La Manta, have been studied and published, but most are essentially unknown. Almost all are anonymous, like La Manta, undocumented, undated, and located well outside the usual centers of Renaissance art. [There is] a whole corpus of secular painting that has been too long overlooked."

⁴⁷ Dunlop, 7, 8. Dunlop argues that secular painting should be recognized as a new aesthetic category defined in the Trecento for framing contemporary values also expressed in vernacular writing and poetry. A seminal study of mural painting in Tuscany is Eve Borsook's *The Mural Painters of Tuscany, from Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto* (London: Phaidon Press, 1960).

there is now more information available on this decorative cycle than exists for many other Trecento murals.

The title of Dunlop's first chapter, "Una chasa grande, dipinta," is taken from a description of Datini's palace in an inventory from 1407, first cited by Melis. Dunlop describes the merchant's commissions in the palazzo and discusses the hiring campaign and the subsequent payment dispute. Unlike the previous studies of Byrne and other scholars, her work concentrates on a consideration of the subject matter of the paintings and the division of labor. She uses the surviving documents and murals to argue that the decorative schemes applied in Datini's rooms were common throughout Tuscany. Dunlop discusses the ephemeral nature of fresco and mixed media techniques to identify the vulnerable nature of domestic frescoes and explain the lack of surviving frescoes of a comparable nature. She proposes visual prototypes for the figures in the courtyard and loggia to argue for a fluid artistic exchange between Prato and Florence.

The courtyard cycle of Heroes, or *uomini illustri* ("illustrious men"), has been discussed in detail by Tania Bastianich Manuali in her Oxford University dissertation, entitled *An Illustrious Man and his Uomini Illustri: Francesco di Marco Datini and the decoration of his palace in Prato* (2000). Unfortunately, this text has proved to be inaccessible at the Master's level. Dunlop, however, has suggested that elements of Bastianich's research are problematic.⁴⁸

Archivist Margherita Romagnoli reviews the scholarship to-date on the palazzo frescoes and re-examines the art documents in the Archivio Datini. Her article was published in the journal *Arte Cristiana* in two parts as "La dimora di un mercante pratese nel XIV secolo. Palazzo Datini attraverso un'analisi dei documenti d'archivio (Parte I)" and "Una dimora di un mercante pratese del XIV secolo. La decorazione interna del Palazzo Datini (Parte II)" in 2008 and 2009

⁴⁸ Anne Dunlop, Yale University, email correspondence with author, March 9 2010. See also Dunlop, 221, in which she states that she "do[es] not always accept the author's conclusions."

respectively. In Part 1, Romagnoli examines the various inventories of the palazzo from 1394, 1397, 1399, 1407, and 1411 and expands on Origo's analysis of the organization and furnishing of the interior. She also addresses Datini's costly preoccupation with building and decorating his palazzo and lavishly stocking his garden.⁴⁹ Her clarification of the layout and function of the *piano terreno* (ground floor) is valuable, yet it does not advance an understanding of the interior fresco decoration.

In Part 2 of her study, however, Romagnoli provides a significant examination of the decoration of Palazzo Datini. She corrects some inaccuracies in the scholarship, most notably in Cole's article. In analyzing the decoration of the ground floor rooms, Romagnoli begins with the hiring and arrival of the artists at the palazzo and supports art historian Barbara Deimling's argument that Tommaso del Mazza was involved in the decoration of the palazzo, despite his conspicuous absence from the records following Datini's initial call for artists in 1391.⁵⁰ It should be noted that Deimling's suggestion has also been accepted by the Fondazione Datini and the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi since scholars at both institutions cite plausible stylistic linkages between the *oeuvre* of Tommaso and the murals at Palazzo Datini. This proposed attribution will be discussed shortly. As well, Romagnoli corroborates Dunlop's argument that Datini's commissions were unoriginal in subject matter and copied familiar Tuscan iconography. She references, like Cole, fresco fragments from the Museo di San Marco, in addition to the interior murals from Palazzi Manassei and Bizzocchi in Prato.

Romagnoli's second article is groundbreaking for her suggestion that the "Agnolo, pittore" discussed in many of the Datini documents is not the Florentine master Agnolo Gaddi

⁴⁹ Margherita Romagnoli, "La dimora di un mercante pratese nel XIV secolo. Palazzo Datini attraverso un'analisi dei documenti d'archivio (Parte I), *Arte Cristiana*, vol. XCVI (Nov-Dec 2008), pp. 413-422, 413, 415.

⁵⁰ Romagnoli, Part 2, 20-21.

who, she argues, would have been identified by his full name of Agnolo di Taddeo.⁵¹ Her proposal suggests that an anonymous artist was substantially involved in the central visual campaign at Palazzo Datini and yet escaped the attention of a number of earlier scholars. Her conclusion is supported in the recent research of Datini archivist Simonetta Cavaciocchi.⁵²

Simonetta Cavaciocchi's contribution to the studies on Datini's art patronage is found in the latest publication on the merchant, entitled *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant* (2010). The anthology of scholarly essays has been produced by the Fondazione "F. Datini" to commemorate the six hundredth anniversary of Datini's death in August of this year. Of relevance to this thesis is the section "A Large and Beautiful House," which contains four articles by Cavaciocchi on various aspects of the building and decoration of the palazzo.⁵³ Although she does reference secondary sources in her research, Cavaciocchi first and foremost corroborates her work with archival sources whenever available. Most notably, she expands her research beyond the papers in the *Documenti d'arte* file of the Archivio Datini. A number of written exchanges that discuss the building and decoration of the palazzo, and relay contemporary reception, have been located in other files in the Archive that otherwise have not been examined in the scholarship to-date. This includes correspondence between Datini and his associates in Pistoia, Florence, Avignon, Pisa, and elsewhere. In addition, Cavaciocchi has identified related notations in various *Libri*, *Memoriale*, *Ricordanze*, *Quaderni di ricordi* and other similar registers stored in the archive.

⁵¹ Romagnoli, Part 2, 22.

⁵² Simonetta Cavaciocchi, Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini," email correspondence with the author, March 18 2010. Lorenzo Lapi, President, Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi Onlus, letter to the author, March 29 2010. See also Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," *Francesco Di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*, Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 213-26, 217.

⁵³ Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "The Merchant and Building," "The Economics of Building," "A Taste for Living," and "Francesco Datini and the Painters," *Francesco Di Marco Datini: The Man, the*

In her fourth article, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” Cavaciocchi outlines the objectives of her research by stating that “in order to better understand Francesco’s role within his social and cultural context an attempt at a wholesale re-evaluation of the scattered sources on the subject is essential.”⁵⁴ She seeks to substantiate the previous scholarship by providing greater detail on the processes of purchasing the property and decorating the palazzo. Her study is based on new information culled from the archives. Cavaciocchi addresses aspects of Datini’s patronage discussed by previous scholars, such as the merchant’s participation in the Avignonese art market, examined by Byrne; the materials and pigments employed by the painters, considered by Dunlop; and Datini’s relationships with the artists, explored by Piattoli. In unison with Romagnoli, she argues that “a careful analysis of the sources makes it clear that this Agnolo, Bartolomeo’s employee, [was] an entirely marginal figure and probably a salaried employee or junior partner of the workshop [who] cannot be the, by then, well established Agnolo Gaddi, who was a “figure painter” with his own workshop.”⁵⁵

Cavaciocchi separates her work from the research of others by attempting to distinguish the merchant’s personal taste from larger artistic currents of the day. She concludes that Datini “was less indifferent than has generally been thought to the Florentine artistic currents of the day.”⁵⁶ Yet the suggestion that other scholars have identified Datini as indifferent to the aesthetic values of Florence is puzzling, since it has already been shown that the merchant mostly hired painters from the larger city and requested images found in Florentine palazzi.

Merchant, Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), 131-163, 165-199, 201-212, 213-226, respectively.

⁵⁴ Cavaciocchi, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” 213.

⁵⁵ Cavaciocchi, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” 217. See also Simonetta Cavaciocchi, “The Merchant and Building,” *Francesco Di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*, Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), 156. Cavaciocchi states that “It was only when this book was being printed that I found out about the interesting essay by M. Romagnoli[.] Furthermore, the author’s conclusions agree as far as the issue of the hypothesized participation of Agnolo Gaddi to the decoration of the *palazzo* is concerned.”

Continuation of the Scholarship

The revisions presented by Romagnoli and Cavaciocchi confirm the need to re-assess and further explore the evidence preserved in the Archivio Datini, as well as the Palazzo Datini murals themselves. Additional information on the paintings may be found beyond the art related papers explored to-date. They also reveal that there is a continued interest in studying the interior frescoes at the palace and suggest that there is potential for a new understanding of the visual and social stimuli behind the Datini commissions. As both de Roover and Dunlop have pointed out, there is still much cultural and art historical information to be uncovered.

This thesis will present a reading of the interior decoration of Palazzo Datini that considers some of the contexts shaping Datini's choices since previous research has not given much consideration to this aspect of the murals. In their letters, neither Datini nor his associates identify the visual or ideological influences on the merchant's choices of imagery. This type of information was rarely recorded in the period. I will examine the available documents and corroborate my analysis with comparable visual and written material concerning works commissioned by contemporaries. This will allow me to identify the values that dominated merchant culture in the late Trecento since such overarching cultural trends may have influenced Datini's aesthetic choices. My research will be supplemented by the wide-ranging secondary scholarship on the topic.

It has already been made clear that while the palazzo is exceptional for its *in situ* secular frescoes, Datini's commissions were not original in form or function as he requested images with strong visual precedents in Tuscany and further afield. Italian, English, and German scholars have observed that many of the motifs, including forests, wildlife, imitation tapestries, marble,

⁵⁶ Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," 213.

and *stemma* (coats-of-arms), found in Palazzo Datini parallel the interior decoration of contemporary private and secular sites. Fragments from other locations suggest that many patrons of the period commissioned similar imagery of hunting scenes; landscapes with birds and other wildlife; and personifications of the Liberal Arts, *uomini illustri*, and religious figures, though these subjects were not always depicted together.

A few comparative examples have been identified in extant palaces of the period, most notably the Trecento Palazzo Davanzati in Florence. Most visual linkages to the Palazzo Datini, however, derive from fresco fragments salvaged from destroyed private residences that are now preserved in museum collections such as the Museo di San Marco. Additional examples from Florentine palaces were documented by conservators and restorers in the nineteenth century before their destruction during the city's program of renewal in the *Risorgimento* (Italian Unification).⁵⁷ In these records, researchers restrict their comparisons to the medium of fresco. Setting such parameters, however, disregards the fact that imagery similar to the murals at Palazzo Datini can be found in other media of the period, such as literary descriptions taken from poetry and *novelle* as well as illuminated manuscripts.

While most scholars do not explore the influence of artistic media beyond fresco on the Palazzo Datini, there are a few salient exceptions. To identify the impact of popular iconographic styles in the decoration at Palazzo Datini, Dunlop considers ekphrastic descriptions of painted palaces in contemporary writing. The fictive rooms described in episodes from Giovanni Boccaccio's mid-century *Decameron*, Franco Sacchetti's *Trecentonovelle* of the 1390s, and an anonymous Duecento poem *L'Intelligenza*, depict murals with motifs of trees covered in birds or

⁵⁷ For more information regarding the documentation of the fourteenth century interiors of Florentine private palaces during this restoration period see Monika Dachs, "Zur ornamentalen Freskendekoration des Florentiner Wohnhauses im späten 14. Jahrhundert," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 37, Bd., H. 1 (1993), pp. 71-129.

lush flowering gardens.⁵⁸ Dunlop also considers the influence of marble figural decorations from the Florentine Palazzo Vecchio and the Loggia della Signoria on Datini's courtyard Hero cycle.⁵⁹ Bruce Cole draws a link between the forest scenes in the Palazzo Datini and those at the Palais des Papes in Avignon, which he suggests were inspired by tapestry designs. However, he does not propose specific examples of tapestry patterns or consider how Datini or the artists he hired may have been influenced by such designs.⁶⁰ Margherita Romagnoli proposes a visual correlation with the thirteenth-century Sicilian mosaics of the Stanza di Ruggero in the Palazzo Reale, also called the Palazzo dei Normanni, in Palermo. The mosaics depict forests populated with exotic animals that are stalked by hunters. Unfortunately, Romagnoli does not draw specific parallels between the mosaics and the hunting scenes in Datini's own palace.⁶¹ To advance studies of the possible influences on the Palazzo Datini decoration, it is necessary to examine visual material in addition to fresco, and written sources, to situate the subject matter and style of Datini's commissions.

Comparative research suggests that the trees in the hunting scenes at Palazzo Datini may derive from plant imagery found in contemporary illuminated manuscripts, such as herbals and the Lombard *Tacuinum sanitatis* texts. The depictions of birds and other wildlife that populate these scenes may be influenced by illustrated tracts on hunting or animal studies taken from artists' sketchbooks, which were frequently distributed between workshops in this period. The survival of other art media depicting comparable subject matter with stylistic similarities reinforces the fact that Datini did not establish new visual standards, but rather requested

⁵⁸ Dunlop, 15, 22, 25.

⁵⁹ Dunlop, 37-8. Agnolo Gaddi provided the original designs for the figures in marble on the façade of the Loggia.

⁶⁰ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 70-71. Cole directs the reader to Léon-Honoré Labande, *Le Palais des Papes et les monuments d'Avignon au XIV siècle* (Marseille: Detaille, 1925), vol. II, 29.

⁶¹ Romagnoli, Part 2, 26. Romagnoli directs the reader to Eva Börsch-Supan, *Garten- Landschafts- und Paradies-motive im Innenraum* (Berlin: Hessling, 1967), 224-26.

conventional images for the decoration of his home. Some motifs in the palazzo, such as the Saint Christopher in the entry hall, were functional and related to Datini's professional background. Others, including the trees inhabited by birds and the imitation tapestries, were traditional in private homes. Such wall decoration was intended to delight the viewer while the laborious detail and costly materials required of these murals served as a measure of the patron's wealth.

A few details in Palazzo Datini stand out from the customary iconography found in wall decoration of the period and will be discussed in the next chapter. The perceived idiosyncrasies, however, may stem from the incomplete contextual framework available to the modern-day viewer. Because of the loss of a significant portion of the Datini frescoes on the *primo piano* (second floor), and areas of the ground floor rooms, a comprehensive reading of the original decoration is not possible. Furthermore, the very low survival rate for similar wall painting *in situ* and the fragmentary nature of those that have been preserved further complicate comparative analysis. The particular details from the interior decoration at Palazzo Datini that vary from the traditional iconography may also reflect the merchant's personal preferences. The Datini frescoes cannot be studied in isolation and comparison with other works from Tuscany and Avignon is necessary in order to separate what is conventional from what is original in Datini's commissions.

The Origin and Development of Datini's Aesthetic Sensibilities

Because of his humble beginnings, Datini's role as a patron did not develop without significant effort. His father Marco was a taverner who died, along with Datini's mother Mona Vermiglia, in the Black Death of 1348.⁶² Once orphaned, Datini was put in the care of the cloth

⁶² Byrne and Congdon, 38. See Origo, 30. See also Cassandro, "Aspects of the Life," 5. Cassandro states that Marco Datini was a merchant as well as a member of the taverner's guild and as such, "Francesco's early years were thus spent in an environment which presaged his future vocation of

merchant Piero di Giunta del Rosso, as his father's will stipulates, though he actually was raised by Mona Piera di Pratese Boschetti. Archival correspondence indicates that Datini accepted Mona Piera as his surrogate mother and the two maintained a life long relationship.⁶³ In about 1350, Datini left Prato and went to Florence, the city to which Prato was subject. He apprenticed in several merchant *botteghe* (workshops) there before heading to Avignon. The move was not an arbitrary one since Avignon, as the seat of Clement VI's papal court, was frequented by foreign merchants, money-lenders, artisans, and administrators, and supported a significant Tuscan population. With its position on the Rhône, the city became a gateway for both the Northern and Southern European markets. In the commercial business that he developed there, Datini dealt largely in textiles, as well as arms and foodstuffs.⁶⁴ He formed a number of partnerships with Tuscan merchants and founded a collection of modest trading companies in Avignon, Genoa, Pisa, Catalonia, Florence, and Prato. The Florentine branch of Datini's company was also involved in banking.

The merchant's flourishing trade soon included works of art, including *tavole dipinte* (painted panels). As early as 1355, an inventory of Datini's shop with Bonaccorso di Vanni shows that the merchandise included valuable works such as "two large crucifixes worth 285 florins each, [and] 'an image of Our Lady, with a crown and child' worth 180 florins."⁶⁵ In

businessman." Yet Cassandro seems to be the only scholar to link Marco Datini to a mercantile background.

⁶³ Byrne and Congdon, 38. See also Origo, 30-1, 43-9. Origo excerpts correspondence between Datini in Avignon and Mona Piera in Florence. Datini's foster mother continually begged him to return to Prato to settle and establish a family. These letters were often signed "your mother in love" ("tua madre per amore").

⁶⁴ For information on Datini's involvement in the textile industry see Michele Cassandro, "Commercio, manifatture e industria," in *Prato, storia di una città I*: Ascesa e declino del centro medievale (dal Mille al 1494)* Vol. 1, Giovanni Cherubini, ed., (Prato: Le Monnier, 1991), 406-35, Tavole 18-20. For his trade in arms see Mario Scalini, Appendix III of "Commercio, manifatture e industria," in *Prato, storia di una città I*: Ascesa e declino del centro medievale (dal Mille al 1494)* Vol. 1, Giovanni Cherubini, ed., (Prato: Le Monnier, 1991), 474-477.

⁶⁵ Origo, 39. Origo cites Renato Piattoli's "Un inventario di oreficeria nel Trecento," *Rivista d'Arte*, a. XIII (1931), pp. 241-59. The document is dated May 5, 1355. See also Byrne, "Father of Many," 249.

Avignon, Datini continued to trade in panels of a religious nature well into the 1370s, receiving them in “bales” delivered by ship from Florence. Origo pejoratively states that these works had “very slight artistic merit,” since “their value depended on their size rather than on the artist’s skill – for that came very cheap, while paint was dear.”⁶⁶ However, the expense of a panel was not determined solely by its size or the cost of the materials used but was also related to the quality of the figures depicted and, therefore, to the skill of the artist responsible.

In an order sent July 10, 1373, to his partners Niccolò and Lodovico del Bono in Florence, Datini requests, among other works, “a panel of Our Lady on a background of fine gold with two doors, and a pedestal with ornaments and leaves, handsome and the wood well carved, making a fine show, with good handsome figures by the best painter, with many figures.” He continues, “let there be in the centre Our Lord on the Cross, or Our Lady, whichever you find – I do not care, so long as the figures are handsome and large.”⁶⁷ It is evident that significant weight is placed on financial value as the prudent merchant sets a price limit of “no more than 5½ or 6½ florins.” John Larner identifies an order from Datini dated March 1373 in which he asks for “four square panels [...] with good figures, *cheap*.”⁶⁸ While orders from the Datini *fondaci* did not always specify the subject matter for a panel, a price range was always outlined and often spanned from 8 to 12 florins.⁶⁹ As Byrne points out, “the price to be paid, [...] was] not arbitrary,”

Byrne identifies a shop inventory of 1367 as the earliest reference directly connecting Datini to a work of art. The list includes “a panel painted with Our Lady...worth one gold florin.” This reference is from Brun, “Notes sur le commerce,” 329. The original document is in Archivio Datini file Ragione d’Avignon, *Memoriale* 47, 25 October, 1367.

⁶⁶ Origo, 41-2. See also Byrne, “Father of Many,” 248-51. Byrne references three shipments of *tavole dipinte* (painted panels) that were delivered to Datini in Avignon in 1371, which were “packed in bales of cloth and were accompanied by other Tuscan goods, according to the notices of receipt.”

⁶⁷ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 251-252. Origo, 42. See also John Larner, *Culture and Society in Italy 1290-1420* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1971), 313. Byrne and Larner both reproduce this letter in full, in English.

⁶⁸ Larner, 313. Italics added.

⁶⁹ Origo, 42. See also Byrne, “Father of Many,” 251-2, 253-254. Byrne reproduces the letter from 1373 in full. He also identifies the letter of 1384, which requests images “in the usual way,” as written by Boninsegno di Matteo in Avignon to Datini in Prato.

but was based on the size and quality of the final work, as well as the current market conditions.⁷⁰ He argues that painters in the period “created a commodity whose value was far more dependent on materials costs, man hours and customer demand than upon any aesthetic attributes of the work itself.”⁷¹ However, other remarks in these letters indicate that customer demand and aesthetic value were inextricably linked.

In the letter dated 1373, Datini states that the figures in the panels must be “the best and finest you can buy,” as they are needed “for men who want them to be fine,” and he cautions his agents by stating: “if you do not find anything, wait until you find something that is really good.”⁷² By 1384, following his return to Prato, Datini’s Avignon *fondaco* was ordering ready-made panels “of the usual kind” from unnamed artists. However, while specific painters are almost never mentioned, a letter from Tieri di Benci, Datini’s associate in Avignon, advises that works were only to be acquired from “a good master.”⁷³ The aesthetics of a panel relied upon similar market conditions as those that determined the price. As Boninsegno di Matteo, Datini’s partner in Avignon, stated in a letter to the merchant dated 1387, panels “with good figures do sell well; ugly things don’t go here.”⁷⁴ Even though Datini sought the lowest prices available, it is clear that the aesthetic aspects of a panel were also vitally important. A poorly executed work would be difficult to sell and, therefore, had little value to the merchant.

In his widely read and influential book *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (1988), Michael Baxandall examines the relationship between merchant identity and valuations of art in Datini’s period and later. He identifies what he calls the “Period Eye,” defined as “a stock of patterns, categories and methods of inference; training in a range of

⁷⁰ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 252.

⁷¹ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 244.

⁷² Byrne, “Father of Many,” 251.

⁷³ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 255. The letter is dated December 18, 1390. Byrne cites from the French in Brun, “Notes sur le commerce,” 335.

representational conventions; and experience, drawn from the environment [...]”⁷⁵ These factors, Baxandall argues, shaped the interpretive skills a viewer brought to a painting, thus affecting the individual’s visual experience and understanding of the image. For merchant art patrons in Tuscany, consideration for a work of art was dependent upon specialized training obtained through secondary schooling at the *abbaco*, in which “the weight of teaching was now on [...] a commercial mathematics adapted to the merchant.”⁷⁶ Economic historian Giampiero Nigro states, based on Datini’s skill in written and spoken Italian, mathematics, and bookkeeping, that “it seems reasonable to assume [...] that his father had sent him to an abacus school.”⁷⁷ Baxandall argues that the geometry and other mathematics learned in the abacus school would have taught merchants to “gauge” paintings as exercises in calculating. In this way, painted figures could be broken down and understood in terms of volume, shape, geometric masses, ratios, proportions and patterns.⁷⁸

This education also encouraged merchants to consider art works mathematically, in terms of their value. Value was determined by several factors, including the relationship between the quality of the materials and the skills applied in a painting. Another level of “gauging” could be practiced in which works were measured in terms of cost. Although Datini gives some consideration to subject matter, the way he assigns value to a painting he has purchased reveals the characteristics of a businessman who is aware of workshop operations, market mechanisms, and the negotiation techniques that could have been acquired at the *abbaco*. Datini appears to

⁷⁴ Larner, 314.

⁷⁵ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 32.

⁷⁶ Baxandall, 86.

⁷⁷ Giampiero Nigro, “The Merchant and His Wealth,” *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 75-99, 75. Nigro briefly describes the nature of the abacus education in this chapter. See also Cassandro, “Aspects of the Life,” 29. Cassandro notes that Datini’s education “does not seem to have risen significantly above the average level of education of merchants of his day.”

view art almost as currency, as he discusses how the art objects can be bought and sold with minimal turnaround and maximum profit.

Joseph Byrne states that Datini's commercial involvement in the international art market formed the basis of his artistic sensibilities. He continues, however, by arguing that the merchant cannot be distinguished as a patron during his time in Avignon. This is because Datini had no direct communication with the artists producing the panels acquired by the agents of his *fondaci* (firms or warehouses). His control over the subject matter and style of the works was equally limited. These ready-made panels, once received, were made available for resale and purchased by a third party. They were never intended for Datini's personal consumption or enjoyment. Datini acted as an informed intermediary between the producer and the purchaser. Although at times he specified in his orders the subject matter, size, and material quality of the panels to be sent to a *fondaco*, Datini rarely commissioned a specific work.⁷⁹ In his correspondence, Datini always discusses works with a merchant's business acumen, asking for images by unnamed Florentine artists at the best rates. Datini's role as a principal patron did not come to fruition until later, with the interior decoration of his private palazzo.

The Building and Decoration of the Palazzo Datini

Building plans for Datini's private palace in Prato were begun as early as 1354. In that year Datini sent a letter to his guardian Piero di Giunta, asking that he purchase a tract of land with a small *casolare* (country house) at the corner of Via del Porcellatico. The site acquired in

⁷⁸ Baxandall, 86-108.

⁷⁹ Byrne, "Father of Many," 258. Byrne presents one case of a specific commission organized by Datini in which the purchaser was a friend of Tieri di Benci's, Datini's partner in Avignon (along with Boninsegno di Matteo). Byrne notes that "the choice of the artist was left to the discretion of the immediate agent's partners, and they in turn may have consulted yet others before placing the commission. Thus, there may have been as many as three layers of intermediaries between the purchaser and the painter, and the two probably never even met."

the original purchase did not comprise the complex of buildings and the central palazzo that survives today. When Datini was still in Avignon, the protracted construction of the palace was supervised by Datini's neighbor Niccolozzo di Ser Naldo.⁸⁰ Romagnoli argues that Datini was consumed with the development of his palazzo. This is supported by numerous letters to his neighbor Niccolozzo, as well as his close friend Ser Lapo Mazzei, in which Datini continually sends detailed instructions regarding each step of development and questions them on the building progress.⁸¹ His fixation with the house prompted friend and business partner Niccolò di Bono to exclaim: "I beseech you, do not destroy yourself!"⁸²

The end result was the largest private residence in Prato at the time. Significantly, in a letter dated August 1391, once the edifice was complete and the interior was richly frescoed, Datini's friend Ser Lapo Mazzei called it, "the finest castle in the world."⁸³ The importance of the newly built Palazzo Datini for the cityscape of Prato is emphasized by its salient inclusion in Pietro di Miniato's *Allegory of Prato with Saints Stephen and John the Baptist and the Benefactors Michele Dagomari and Francesco Datini* (Fig. 17).⁸⁴ The scale of the residence is exaggerated as it looms behind the *campanile* (bell tower) and dichromatic façade of the Duomo.

⁸⁰ Origo, 226. For a reconstruction of the building process, see Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "The Merchant and Building," pp. 131-163.

⁸¹ Margherita Romagnoli, Part 1, 413-422. Romagnoli writes that, "una volta rientrato a Prato il Datini seguì personalmente la posadi ogni mattone: preoccupato di dotare edificio al più presto di copertura, trascurava gli affetti la riprovazione di parenti e amici." She cites a chastizing letter from Niccolò and Ludovico di Bono to Datini, dated June 3 1383. See Origo, 227.

⁸² Origo, 227. Excerpt of letter from Niccolò del [sic] Bono, 1383. This behavior was symptomatic of Datini's larger personality. See also Cole, "Interior Decoration," 61-2. Many scholars echo Cole's observation that Datini "was obsessed by details and fanatically concerned over even the smallest matter of his personal and business life."

⁸³ Guasti, *Lettere*, xc, 14. In the letter, dated August 20, 1391, Mazzei writes, "[...] pensai che si contentasse, nel mezzo della vostra loggia, in mezzo di que' capoletti e di quel candido splendore delle delicate mura, nel più bello castello del mondo, e nella più nobile parte del castello."

⁸⁴ Miklòs Boskovits, *Pittura Fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370-1400* (Florence: Edam, 1975), 416. See Alick McLean, *Prato: Architecture, Piety, and Political Identity in a Tuscan City-State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), iv, vi. Boskovits dates the fresco c. 1420-25 while McLean says the work was completed after 1395. The distinctive façade of Palazzo Datini, with its arched windows framed by a painted dichromatic design, is absent in Agnolo Gaddi's



Figure 17 Pietro di Miniato, *Allegory of Prato with Saints Stephen and John the Baptist and the Benefactors Michele Dagomari and Francesco Datini*, detail of the Prato cityscape, fresco, Palazzo Pretorio, Prato, after 1395.

(Source: Giampiero Nigro, ed., *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*, Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010, Tavola 43. Photo © Museo Civico, Prato.)

depiction of the city in *Michael Dagomari Arrives at Prato* from the Cappella della Sacra Cintola (Chapel of the Sacred Belt) in the Cathedral of Santo Stefano, Prato, dated 1392-4. Otherwise, the

Miniato's fresco is located in the Palazzo Pretorio, which was formerly the Palazzo Comunale and currently is the site of the Museo Civico.

The façade of the Palazzo Datini is an unassuming rusticated stone. Origo calls it a "plain, uncompromising square house," yet the opulence of the palace is revealed in its scale.⁸⁵ The property contains many rooms, including a study for Datini, surrounding an open central courtyard with a covered loggia. At one time all of the interior and exterior walls were frescoed. A large walled garden and an additional complex of buildings belonging to Datini were situated across the street. In a letter dated February 28, 1399, Datini tells Bernardo de' Rossi that he has spent more than six thousand florins in total constructing and decorating the house, garden, associated buildings and *fondaco*.⁸⁶ A later inventory dated June 1407 also identifies Palazzo Datini as lavish and costly, and it is described as: "a large house, painted, with a loggia and court [...] valued at one thousand florins."⁸⁷ Cavaciocchi points out that the costs generated in building and decorating the palazzo were significant. In one letter, an associate of Datini's complains that the merchant "certainly wants to do a good job here but he's spending a lot of money!"⁸⁸ Yet in accordance with the socio-economic values of the period, the palazzo was an appropriate medium for Datini to demonstrate his bourgeois status. As well, it served to distinguish and celebrate his triumphant return to his native city.

cityscapes by Pietro di Miniato and Gaddi are remarkably similar.

⁸⁵ Origo, 226.

⁸⁶ Melis, 60-61. The letter, filed as D, n. 1087, *copia di lett. Prato-Roma*, F. Datini a Bernardo de' Rossi, 28.2.1399, reads: "I' òe speso la maggiore parte dello tenpo mio in murare e no' m'è bastato in fare una chasa chon uno giardino dirinpetto e altre chasette e uno bello fondacho, che mi chostano piùe di semila fiorini..."

⁸⁷ The 1407 inventory describes "una chasa grande, dipinta, cho' logia e chorte e pozo, posta in Prato, in Porta Fuia, chon belisimi abituri e volta sotterra e sopra terra, grande, la quale Franciescho fe' murare a suo piacere [...] Stimialla f. mille." See also Dunlop, 17, who points out that the associated buildings of the palazzo included a commercial office, stables, bake house and other structures, in addition to a lavish garden stocked with exotic plants and animals.

⁸⁸ Cavaciocchi, "The Merchant and Building," 138. The letter is identified as Archivio Storico di Prato (ASPo), *Datini*, Prato-Pisa, Francesco Datini, 27.10.1383.

The Palazzo Datini epitomizes the values – personal, familial, spiritual and worldly – of an individual navigating a generational change that Piattoli calls “the transition from medieval to modern man.”⁸⁹ He describes the last quarter of the fourteenth-century as a period that represented the death of the medieval age, as old dogmas and ideals were dismantled. The values formed by Datini’s generation were shaped by the emergence of the new mendicant orders, coupled with the rise of the merchant class. The potent nature of these religious and social classes influenced cultural and economic revivals. The development of new institutions was accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of learning. Meanwhile, many guilds initiated a process of corporate organization. All of these changes were indicative of the rapid flourishing of urban life.⁹⁰ In this period, men and women were directly affected by changes stemming from the formation and growth of city states.

Datini, for one, seems to have attempted to shed some aspects of the older traditions of piety and moderation for the values of the emerging commercial marketplace. These included the principles of ambition, enterprise, expansion and individualism. Such forward thinking, however, was still accompanied by a conventional and deeply rooted concern for the afterlife and for personal legacy. As economic historian Luigi Einaudi points out, citing Niccolò Rodolico, a man of this new generation “was assessed by what he had made of himself.”⁹¹ For Datini, and others, the ideology of achieved identity was articulated in the construction of “a magnificent palace” (“un palagio magnifico”) that displayed to contemporaries and future generations both financial and familial successes, as well as the personal values of the merchant. Einaudi points out that

⁸⁹ Renato Piattoli, “Un mercante del Trecento e gli artisti del tempo suo: Part 1,” *Rivista d’arte*, vol. 11, n. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1929), pp. 221-253, at 223-4.

⁹⁰ A thorough discussion of changing social values far exceeds the parameters of this thesis. For an examination of the larger development of social, cultural, religious, and political systems in Italy’s medieval communes and the new urban form that was concretized in Prato in the period, see McLean’s text *Prato*.

while Datini's business practices encompassed the changing standards of the new generation, his final bequest to the Ceppo revealed that the merchant's moral values were still rooted in tradition and local custom.⁹²

The economic historian Richard Goldthwaite has discussed how large-scale family palazzi constructed in Florence during the fourteenth-century served both public and private functions. These structures, as Goldthwaite remarks, "represented the families' collective public status and expressed their outward involvement in communal affairs."⁹³ Private urban palaces communicated the desires of a patron to publicly display personal wealth and status while also contributing to the beautification of the cityscape. Such expressions of personal splendor seem to have appealed to Datini. Having overcome his non-aristocratic origins and returned to Prato financially prosperous, he sought to create a home that would serve as a measure of his standing. Indeed, Goldthwaite suggests that the temptation for wealthy individuals like Datini to display their affluence would have been irresistible. He poses a rhetorical question, asking: "in a society of entrepreneurs, where personal magnificence and dynastic ambitions could find such conspicuous public expression, where the competitive instinct must have taken its own course once men started to build, how was [one] to resist the challenge?"⁹⁴ As a youth in Avignon, Datini seems to have developed a competitive instinct. This same spirit may have been the impetus behind the construction of his palazzo. As consumed as Datini was with the building of his palazzo, however, he was even more concerned with the interior decoration. Inside, the

⁹¹ Luigi Einaudi, "Introduction" in Iris Origo's *The Merchant of Prato: Daily Life in a Medieval Italian City* (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 17.

⁹² Einaudi, "Introduction," 17.

⁹³ Richard A. Goldthwaite, "The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (Oct. 1972), pp. 977-1012, 980, 989. See also Richard Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: an economic and social history* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). The factors which contributed to the building of the great merchant *palazzi* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were already apparent in the Trecento.

⁹⁴ Goldthwaite, "The Florentine Palace," 992.

merchant could retreat to a private world that was embellished to astonish and delight.

The Hiring Campaign, the Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini and the Artists Involved

A decorative program was first initiated within the Palazzo Datini in 1389. At this time Datini sought out the “esteemed” Florentine painter Paganino d’Ugolino (d. 1393?) to prepare the walls for fresco with an application of *calce* (lime plaster).⁹⁵ It is unclear whether he was employed in any decorative painting at this early stage. In a notation entered in a ledger of Datini’s, identified as *Quadernaccio A*, a c. 159t, and dated July 15, 1389, Paganino is identified as a *dipintore* (painter).⁹⁶ Yet, as Millard Meiss has pointed out, in this period, according to the 1314 statutes of the Florentine guild of the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali*, the term ‘painter’ simply referred to “men who buy, sell, and work colors.”⁹⁷ Therefore, it could be applied in various capacities ranging from an ordinary house painter to an artist executing a detailed panel.

Regardless of the level of complexity it entailed, Paganino’s work seems to have met Datini’s standards since he was later consulted regarding the decoration of the courtyard loggia, for which he suggested a terre-verte ground.⁹⁸ This natural green earth color was the most suitable pigment for applications of green in wall decoration and Cennini writes in his *Libro dell’Arte* that terre-verte “is good for use [...] in fresco, in secco, [and] on wall.”⁹⁹ Paganino’s

⁹⁵ Colnaghi, 199. Romagnoli, Part 2, 19. Romagnoli notes that in “terminati i principali lavori di muratura, Francesco si rivolse a Paganino d’Ugolino, stimato decoratore di palazzo e immatricolato all’Arte dei Medici e Speziali di Firenze il 27 di novembre 1375, per un prima sistemazione. Nel luglio del 1389 si registra infatti un pagamento a favore del pittore incaricato di *inbianchare la chasa*.”

⁹⁶ Guasti, “Appendice II – Lettere e Documenti di Artefici e di Cose d’Arte: Paganino di Ugolino, Pittore,” *Lettere*, Vol. 2, 385.

⁹⁷ Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 63. Meiss points out that in the guild lists of the 1340s and 50s, painters of panels and frescoes are differentiated from painters of chests and other furniture.

⁹⁸ Dunlop, 18.

⁹⁹ Cennino Cennini, *Libro dell’Arte*, 30. Cennini writes “Verde e un colore naturale di terra, el quale si chiama verdeterra [...] E buono allavorare [...] in fresco, in seccho, in muro, in tavola, e dove voi.

advice was heeded because Datini then entrusted his business partner Domenico di Cambio, who was based at the merchant's *fondaco* in Florence, with the task of gathering artists for the execution of a monochromatic green ground on the walls of the loggia.¹⁰⁰

In December of 1389, Datini hired Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo, artists of unknown origin, to fresco a large room on the ground floor of the palazzo. The two painters worked under the direct supervision of the merchant. The room in which they executed their murals is identified in the surviving *conto* for the artists, dated December 1389, as "la camera terrena."¹⁰¹ However there is not enough information in the document to isolate which room this was since there is no description of the subject matter or style of the paintings executed by Dino and Jacopo.

Romagnoli has suggested that the ground floor room decorated with imitation tapestries and lunettes of hunting scenes can be attributed to Paganino and Jacopo.¹⁰² Therefore, according to her attribution, the room defined as "la camera terrena" in the various documents is the one situated to the left of the palazzo entrance. According to Piattoli, the painters Dino and Jacopo worked in collaboration with Paganino in the palazzo.¹⁰³ However, the letter he cites fails to specify the *camera* in which the men were painting as well as the subject matter. It is unclear whether the work of Dino and Jacopo was decorative in nature. If Romagnoli's suggestion is to be accepted, and Jacopo was responsible for some of the frescoed scenes within the palace, it is

¹⁰⁰ Romagnoli, Part 2, 19. Romagnoli identifies correspondence between Datini and di Cambio dated 1387 in which Datini's business partner is charged with "di raccogliere informazioni e pareri presso le maestranze fiorentine circa la migliore sistemazione della loggia di casa. Questi, insieme ad altri pittori interpellati successivamente da Domenico, consigliava una pittura monocroma a terretta verde perche di maggior pregio ed effetto rispetto al bigio." In Renato Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 537. See Origo, 229, 231.

¹⁰¹ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 385-6. See also Cole, "Interior Decoration," 76-8. Romagnoli, Part 2, 19. Romagnoli isolates Iacopo [sic] as the "garzone o chonpagno" of Dino, as identified in a detailed *Ricordanza* which outlines the dates the work was to be completed, and the final payment of 8 florins, 2 lire, and 18 soldi,"

¹⁰² Romagnoli, Part 2, 26, 28.

possible that he and his associate Dino applied decorative murals to cover the terre-verte ground that was originally painted by Paganino. Perhaps at this later stage Paganino even moved beyond painting monochrome ground and assisted them with these decorative designs.

It is clear from both the surviving correspondence and the contracts that early on in his decorative campaign Datini sought Florentine artists, rather than local painters from Prato. Most of the artists employed at Palazzo Datini were based in the larger city and had membership with the principal Florentine guilds of the *Arte dei Medici e Speciale* and the *Compagnia di San Luca* (Confraternity of Saint Luke).¹⁰⁴ However, this does not mean that Datini avoided hiring local craftsmen. The merchant patronized Pratese stonemason Goro di Niccolò for over twenty-four years, and the local painter Arrigo di Niccolò worked for Datini at the Palazzo Datini, at his country villa, called *Il Palco*, and at the church of San Francesco.¹⁰⁵ Cavaciocchi estimates that Datini employed more than one hundred men in the course of constructing his palace, from simple laborers to specialized artisans, and that many were from Prato and the surrounding region.¹⁰⁶ In hiring such a large group of workers Datini clearly relied upon a local, yet complex, social and professional networking system.

It appears, however, that for the interior decoration of his palazzo, Datini primarily chose Florentine painters. Just as he relied on the advice of his partner Domenico di Cambio when he hired Paganino, Datini also depended on his mercantile connections and experience to hire the other artists for his decorative program. While he no doubt respected the decisions of his business partners, because they were based in larger city centers than Prato, they also had the opportunity to cast a wider net for appropriate artists to send to the palace. Datini's decisions to

¹⁰³ Piattoli, "Un mercante," Part 3, 539.

¹⁰⁴ See individual artists' entries in Colnaghi's *Dictionary*.

¹⁰⁵ Origo, 241. Dunlop, 18. Dunlop argues that Datini "turned first to local artists before he looked elsewhere," yet Paganino d'Ugolino, Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo, the first painters hired, were all of Florentine origin.

contract particular artists seem to have been shaped by connections first established when he was living and working abroad. In addition, some of the images depicted in the palace reflect merchant values.

Following the initial work of Paganino, Dino, and Jacopo, a significant campaign to execute a large cycle of murals throughout the entire palace was initiated in the summer of 1391. Local painter Arrigo di Niccolò (1372-1446?) was the first artist to be hired and he arrived at the palazzo in June of that year.¹⁰⁷ However, Datini soon commissioned Florentine painter Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and his occasional collaborator Tommaso del Mazza (Flor., b. c. 1350).¹⁰⁸ Gerini was likely first introduced to Datini through Tommaso, who had been patronized by the merchant as early as 1384. Tommaso had completed work of an unspecified nature for Datini that was subsequently adjudicated by the master painter Agnolo Gaddi.¹⁰⁹ Gerini and Tommaso had previously worked together in Pisa, and prior to the Palazzo Datini commission in 1391, they were hired by the merchant to execute frescoes in the church of San Francesco in Prato.

Gerini's employment at the Palazzo Datini may have also been influenced by mercantile connections. A record of receipt from Datini's Avignon *fondaco*, dated March 6, 1386, lists "four panels of fine gold, with good figures of Our Lord and Our Lady with several saints, without flowers, by Jacopo di Cione."¹¹⁰ This receipt is one of the few times that a specific artist is

¹⁰⁶ Cavaciocchi, "The Economics of Building," 179.

¹⁰⁷ Colnaghi, 22. Romagnoli, Part 2, 21. See also Petri, 47. Petri states that Arrigo was born in 1374.

¹⁰⁸ Colnaghi, 261.

¹⁰⁹ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 383. See also Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 62. This adjudication is likely regarding Tommaso's now-lost frescoes in San Francesco, Prato. For more information see Barbara Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)" in *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: Tradition and Innovation in Florentine Trecento Painting: Giovanni Bonsi – Tommaso del Mazza*. Sec. IV, Vol. VIII. Essays by Simona Pasquinucci and Barbara Deimling. Miklós Boskovits, ed. Florence, Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 2000, pp. 145-6.

¹¹⁰ Origo, 42. Origo does not include the identification of the archival file. See Richard Offner and Klara Steinweg, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting, sec. IV, vol. III: Jacopo di Cione* (New York: College of Fine Arts, New York University, 1965), 2, 11. The receipt, in Prato, Archivio di Stato, Archivio di Francesco di Marco Datini, Memoriale, reads "III tavole di Nostra

named for the works acquired by Datini and his agents. Jacopo di Cione was a well-established master painter in Florence. He executed high quality works of significant value. Jacopo was part of an important family of artists including his highly gifted brother Andrea, called Orcagna, who was famed for his abilities in painting and sculpture and left a significant legacy with his large marble tabernacle in Orsanmichele. The Cione family also included Jacopo's brothers Nardo and Matteo, both of whom were painters. The style of many later painters derived from the visual traditions first established by the Cione family.

A number of documents related to Jacopo di Cione's workshop mention a painter called 'Niccolaio,' with variant spelling in each record. This 'Niccolaio' has been connected to Gerini and the identification is now generally accepted in the scholarship. As a result, it appears that prior to his work in Prato, Gerini collaborated with Jacopo on a number of important commissions in Florence, including the Guildhall of the Judges and Notaries in 1366, San Pier Maggiore in 1370-71, and the Zecca (Mint) in 1383.¹¹¹ Carl Brandon Strehlke suggests that this indicates that Gerini received his artistic training either with Jacopo di Cione himself or his older brother Orcagna.¹¹²

Donna messe ad oro fine con buone figure di Nostro Signore e di Nostra Donna e di più santi, senza fioretti, da Iachopo di Cione. I tavola di Nostra Donna messa ad oro fine a più figure di santé e santi a II porti e chon fioretti da detto, costò per tutto di primo costo dette V tavole f. XXVI di camera." Offner argues that Gerini negotiated this commission for Jacopo.

¹¹¹ Offner, *Corpus*, Sec. IV, Vol. III. For the San Piero Maggiore commission see III, 37-8, 40-41. For the Zecca commission see 2, 8, 86, 88-9. Offner states that the layout of the composition for the *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece (London, N.G.), attributed to Jacopo di Cione and workshop, for San Pier Maggiore, Florence (1370) "is by *Niccolaio dipintore*, probably Niccolò di Pietro Gerini," he continues, "a certain *Niccolaio dipintore* [...] received twelve *fiorini d'oro* in November 1370 *per disegnare la tavola dell'altare*." This 'Niccolaio dipintore' was first identified as Gerini by Osvald Sirén in *Giottino und seine Stellung in der gleichzeitigen florentinischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1908). The connection is further solidified by the fact that Gerini lived in the parish of San Pier Maggiore. Gerini is identified as the *Niccholaio* listed with *Iacobo Cini* (Jacopo di Cione) in the *conto* for the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Florence, Accademia) commissioned by the Zecca (Mint) in 1373.

¹¹² Carl Brandon Strehlke, "Niccolò di Pietro Gerini," *Italian Paintings 1250-1450 in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004), 151.

In his formative *Dictionary of Florentine Painters* (1928), archivist Dominic Colnaghi associates Gerini's partner Tommaso with a painter identified as "Tommaso di Marco," whom Vasari names as a pupil of Orcagna.¹¹³ The shared visual tradition of Gerini and Tommaso, derived from the workshop of the Cione brothers, no doubt solidified their partnership and their ability to execute larger projects that were visually cohesive. When the scaffolding had been set up in the Palazzo Datini and it was time for Gerini and Tommaso to begin fresco work in July of 1391, their arrival was delayed. The latter painter fell ill, as relayed to Datini in a letter from his agent Domenico di Cambio, in which Tommaso is said to be very sick ("è forte malato").¹¹⁴ Tommaso's documented connection to Datini and his palace ends with this letter.

It appears that Tommaso was in poor health for a significant period of time and did not arrive at the palazzo as originally planned. Instead, Gerini arrived at the end of August, without his partner, but accompanied by two assistants, and they soon produced a tabernacle of the Virgin and Child with Saints, called the *Tabernacolo del Ceppo*, for the corner of Datini's garden, facing the street (Figs. 18 and 19).¹¹⁵ Today, the tabernacle is preserved in the Museo di Pittura Murale in Prato and a copy sits in the original location. Gerini also filled Tommaso's now-abandoned position at San Francesco.¹¹⁶ Yet according to Barbara Deimling, Tommaso likely arrived at the palazzo later, after he had recovered from his illness. This conclusion is supported by both Piattoli and Romagnoli. Deimling's hypothesis is based on compelling circumstantial evidence, as there is no surviving documentation to support Tommaso's presence in Datini's home.

¹¹³ Colnaghi, 261.

¹¹⁴ Piattoli, "Un Mercante: Part 3," 544. Romagnoli, Part 2, 20-21.

¹¹⁵ Romagnoli, 21. Dunlop, 38. It is possible the letter cited by Melis, referencing Gerini's use of two assistants for an unspecified work, may relate to this tabernacle, rather than the Saint Christopher fresco. The original is in the Museo di Pittura Murale di San Domenico a Prato. See Gabriele Badiani, *L'area Pratese: Storia, Arte, e Turismo, Nuova guida artistica dei Comuni del comprensorio*. (Florence: Editrice, 1989), 91-2.



Figures 18 and 19 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *Tabernacolo del Ceppo*, with detail of the Virgin and Child, fresco, Museo di Pittura Murale, Prato, 1391.

(Source: Renzo Fantappie, *Il Bel Prato*, Vol. 1, Prato: Edizioni del Palazzo, 1983, p. 444.)

It has already been established that Tommaso received a commission from Datini in 1384. The painter was also in contact with the merchant in June and July of 1391, following his return from Pisa with Gerini. The second connection between Tommaso and Datini can be found in three letters dated June 25 and 27, and July 15. All three letters, written by Datini's agent Domenico di Cambio and addressed to Datini, discuss the impending arrival of Tommaso and Gerini in Prato to begin work of an unspecified nature. Deimling believes these letters concern the interior decoration of the palazzo. This is because in one of the letters Gerini is mentioned in relation to the unidentified work and we know that he arrived soon after, in August, to begin a

¹¹⁶ Dunlop, 19.

fresco cycle in the palace. Deimling posits a reconstruction of events after 1391 for the interior decoration of Palazzo Datini, when she argues:

We may assume that Tommaso del Mazza (i.e. the Master of Santa Verdiana), after recovering from his illness, went to Prato to work for Datini, as originally planned, on the interior decoration of his house. The other three artists had left Prato at the end of 1391, although the work in the Palazzo Datini had still not been entirely completed. Tommaso intervened in their absence and painted the lunette fresco over the entrance to Datini's office.¹¹⁷

Deimling's conclusion is reinforced by her proposal that other paintings, formerly attributed to the anonymous Master of Verdiana, are actually by the hand of Tommaso. This identification, based on stylistic similarities, is now widely accepted in the scholarship. If accurate, it reinforces Tommaso's later presence in Prato, after 1391, as the Master of Verdiana was present in the city in 1392 and in June of that year produced a polyptych for Donna Filippa that was placed in the Regnadori Chapel at San Francesco.¹¹⁸ It is possible, then, that Tommaso did in fact produce fresco decorations in the Palazzo Datini despite his absence from the documents in the Archives.

Gerini's contribution to the interior frescoes has been positively identified in the figural murals of Heroes in the courtyard, the Liberal Arts with Virtues and Vices in the loggia and the Saint Christopher in the entry hall. These attributions are all corroborated by documentation. It also appears that upon his arrival, the Florentine master collaborated with the local painter Arrigo di Niccolò in the loggia. Although Arrigo is said to have assisted Gerini, he later worked independently and Colnaghi says that the artist had assistants of his own.¹¹⁹ Piattoli identifies the collaboration between Gerini and Arrigo as the first of the decorative murals in the palazzo, in contradiction to Romagnoli's argument that Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo completed

¹¹⁷ Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)," 140, 147.

¹¹⁸ Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)," 140.

¹¹⁹ Colnaghi, 22.

decorative work earlier in 1389.¹²⁰

Shortly after Gerini's arrival, the Florentine painter Bartolomeo di Bertozzo (d. 1399) was hired. He may have been recommended to Datini's agent Domenico di Cambio by Gerini, since Datini notes, in the memorandum published by Supino, that the two artists were friends.¹²¹ When Bartolomeo arrived at the palazzo on the nineteenth of September, it was not to collaborate with Gerini. Instead, he came with another painter called Agnolo and before the two initiated their work they were wined and dined by the merchant.¹²² The nature of Bartolomeo's painting in the palazzo is outlined in two documents: the *conto* for Bartolomeo and Agnolo, which records their work between September and December of 1391 and the extant memorandum published by Supino, in which Datini carefully outlines Bartolomeo's work in order to clarify the bill remitted by the artist.¹²³ It seems that Bartolomeo and Agnolo were responsible for decorative painting, including applications of lime plaster, imitation marbles in the courtyard and garden, and painted vaults with tin lilies.¹²⁴ They are also identified as working on murals in "la camera terena" [sic], although, once again, there is no indication of the subject matter or style of the imagery.

Traditionally in the scholarship, the painter called Agnolo in the Datini documents, who was affiliated with Bartolomeo, has been identified as Agnolo Gaddi. The Florentine master was the heir to a significant artistic lineage. His father Taddeo Gaddi was known for his *Life of the Virgin* and *Life of Christ* fresco cycles in the Cappella Baroncelli in Santa Croce, Florence. Taddeo was a successor of Giotto di Bondone, who was famed for his frescoes of the same two

¹²⁰ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 548. Piattoli states that "i due pittori presero per primo lavoro ad adornare la casa; è certo che Arrigo e Niccolò dipinsero la loggia, ma non tutta, perchè la loro opera fu continuata da altri artisti che sopravvennero di lì a pochi giorni."

¹²¹ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 549. See also Supino, 136.

¹²² Melis, 96. Melis cites a letter from file D, n. 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d'arte*, Conto di opere di Agnolo Gaddi e Bartolomeo Bertozzo: "A di 19 di settenbre 1391, venono da Firenze detto Bartolomeo e Angiolo, per dipingniere. E, detto di, inchominciorono a dipingniere e tornorono in casa con noi a mangiare e bere e a dormire."

¹²³ Melis, 96. Supino, 136-138.

subjects in the Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua (c. 1305) as well as his increasingly naturalistic techniques in fresco. A letter dated 1383, the year of Datini's return to Prato, marks the first known connection between Datini and Agnolo Gaddi when the artist recommended several sculptors to the merchant.¹²⁵ Two years later he served as appraiser for Datini and, as mentioned earlier, evaluated work by Tommaso del Mazza.¹²⁶ Later, in 1389, Agnolo Gaddi painted a small diptych for the merchant.¹²⁷

The connection between the two is further solidified by Agnolo Gaddi's relationships with important associates of Datini's commercial businesses. He was related to Stoldo di Lorenzo, who was Datini's main agent in Florence, and Agnolo's brother Zenobi Gaddi worked for Datini's firm in Venice.¹²⁸ By the time Datini was ready to commit to a major artistic campaign in his palace these personal and professional connections made Agnolo Gaddi a natural choice. This was augmented by the fact that Gaddi was the master of the most active workshop in Florence. However, in recent scholarship, Romagnoli and Cavaciocchi question whether the Agnolo connected with Bartolomeo is, in fact, Agnolo Gaddi. Their proposals contradict the general agreement among other scholars. Cavaciocchi states that: "a careful analysis of the sources makes it clear that this Agnolo, Bartolomeo's employee, an entirely marginal figure and probably a salaried employee or junior partner of the workshop cannot be the, by then, well

¹²⁴ Supino, 137-138.

¹²⁵ Cole, *Gaddi*, 5, 61. Cole cites the letter, dated October 20 1383, in full. See also Renato Piattoli "Un mercante" Part 1, 245-6. It is in the archival file Prato, Archivio Datini, Carteggi private diversi, cart. 1092. A facsimile of the original document is available in Giovanni Livi, *Dall'Archivio di Francesco di Marco Datini, Mercante Pratese* (Florence: F. Lumachi, 1910), 17.

¹²⁶ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 383. See also Cole, *Gaddi*, 62.

¹²⁷ Dunlop, 19, 226. Dunlop cites Melis, 147. Melis references file D, n. 1086, *lettere Prato-Firenze*, 16.12.1389. See also Cole, *Gaddi*, 7, 66. Cole cites an earlier letter, dated January 24 1395/6, in which Datini asks a Florentine correspondent about the completion of a *tavola* (altarpiece) of Saint Peter and a Crucifix commissioned to Gaddi, although neither of these paintings can be identified. The letter is in file n. 699, *lettere Prato-Firenze*, Archivio Datini, Prato, and also cited by Melis, 1962, p. 94. Dunlop corrects Cole's citation, stating that these works were stored in Datini's home and that the panel of Saint Peter was actually a work of unknown subject matter meant for Datini's parish Church of San Pietro Forelli.

established Agnolo Gaddi, “figure painter” with his own workshop.”¹²⁹ The evidence for corroborating her statement is limited. Romagnoli constructs a similar argument, assigning Agnolo a secondary role under Bartolomeo as *capomaestro* (master painter) in the relationship between the two painters. This is because, in the documents, Agnolo is always identified after Bartolomeo, if at all. Sometimes he is only identified as a “chompagno” [sic] (assistant) whereas Bartolomeo is always named.¹³⁰

The relationships between the artists employed in painters’ workshops in this period were stratified and highly regimented. A master artist overseeing painters in training would doubtless be given precedence in the related documents as it was the renowned skill of the master that garnered commissions. Once a project was secured, a significant portion of the work might be completed by minor painters under the watchful eye of the master. However, the leading artist was responsible for providing the overall design of the work and would often carry out complex elements of the fresco, including the faces and hands of figures. The workshop, trained to emulate the style of the *maestro*, facilitated the progression of a project so that the master was free to acquire additional commissions and, therefore, increase the number of patrons who could claim ownership of a work by that master.

Romagnoli also states that the Agnolo linked with Bartolomeo is only identified by his first name, whereas Agnolo Gaddi is almost always acknowledged by his full name and his associated lineage: ‘Agnolo di Taddeo Gaddi.’¹³¹ It is true that in all of the extant documents compiled by Bruce Cole in his monograph on Agnolo Gaddi, the master artist is identified by his full name in Latin and vernacular variations, including ‘Angelus Taddei Gaddi Pictor,’ ‘Angelo

¹²⁸ Dunlop, 19.

¹²⁹ Cavaciocchi, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” 217.

¹³⁰ Romagnoli, Part 2, 23.

¹³¹ Romagnoli, Part 2, 22.

Taddei, pictori,’ and ‘Agnolo di Taddeo Gaddi pittore.’¹³² The only time he is referenced by his first name alone is in personal correspondence, as demonstrated in a letter written to Datini, dated October 20, 1383, and positively attributed to Agnolo Gaddi, in which he identifies himself to the merchant as ‘Angiolo vostro,’ (‘your Agnolo’).¹³³ The uncertain identity of the Agnolo in many of the Datini documents complicates the understanding of the artists present at the palace.

The many examples provided by Romagnoli make for a persuasive proposal. It is puzzling that Agnolo Gaddi, a painter already famed for his vast fresco cycle in Santa Croce, Florence, with its complex fictive architecture and large figural groupings, would commit to a project in which he was hired to execute minor decorative details. The distribution of labor at the Palazzo Datini is odd if it is to be believed that Agnolo Gaddi was immediately involved in the decoration. Yet it is possible that Agnolo Gaddi had a role in the Palazzo Datini frescoes as a designer. In fact, Dunlop attributes the design of the personifications of the Virtues, located in the loggia and executed by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, to Agnolo Gaddi. In the article published by Supino, it has been shown that in 1395 Agnolo Gaddi provided the designs for a work in San Francesco that was commissioned by Datini. In the archival letters positively attributed to Agnolo Gaddi, the painter is shown serving Datini in an advisory capacity on projects both before and after the decoration of the palazzo.¹³⁴

Agnolo Gaddi was present in Prato during the execution of Datini’s murals as he was employed in painting frescoes in the Cappella della Sacra Cintola (Chapel of the Sacred Girdle)

¹³² See Cole, “Appendix III: Documents,” *Gaddi*, 60-67.

¹³³ Cole, *Gaddi*, 61. See also Piattoli, “Un mercante: Part 1,” 245-246. Piattoli identifies the letter as Arch. Dat., *Carteggi privati diversi*, cart. 1092 – N – 1-7.

¹³⁴ Cole, *Gaddi*, 61. In a letter dated October 20, 1383, Agnolo Gaddi recommends several sculptors to Datini. See also Supino, 135. In a letter dated May 6, 1395, Datini writes to his agent Stoldo di Lorenzo in Florence inquiring about designs by the hand (“delle sue mani”) of ‘Agnolo di Taddeo.’

and other areas of the Pratese Duomo from 1392-95.¹³⁵ In addition to his relationship with Datini, Agnolo Gaddi had direct professional links with artists working in the palazzo who emulated his Florentine style, including the painter Tommaso del Mazza. Finally, Guasti references a payment of ten florins given to Agnolo Gaddi by Datini's firm on May 6, 1395, for an unspecified cause.¹³⁶ Cole reasons that it was for work completed in the Palazzo Datini. It is possible that this moderate sum was awarded for designs produced by Agnolo Gaddi, or for a consultation regarding the work in the palazzo. However, it is necessary to consider that the artist completed commissions for Datini later on and the payment may be for a work executed outside the palace.

As compelling as Romagnoli and Cavaciocchi's arguments are, the fact that they have been introduced into the scholarship so recently means that there has been little time for scholars to fully absorb, and respond to, these proposals. There is no doubt, given time and the continuation of the literature, that a response will be formulated. It is necessary to introduce their conclusions in this thesis for their contribution to the historiography. Yet the complexity of the arguments makes it difficult to integrate this new information into the present thesis. Nevertheless, wherever possible an effort will be made to specify when an artist has been positively identified as Agnolo Gaddi, as corroborated by documentation, and when it is possible that an artist is the "other" or pseudo-Agnolo.

Once Bartolomeo and Agnolo arrived in September to work alongside Gerini, it is unclear whether Arrigo's contract was terminated. He may have continued to work in another part of the palace. Arrigo's undated *conto*, submitted to Datini's estate following the merchant's

¹³⁵ Cole, *Gaddi*, 63. Cole notes, citing G. Poggi in "La Cappella del Sacro Cingolo nel Duomo di Prato e gli affreschi di Agnolo Gaddi," *Rivista d'arte*, 14, 1932, 355-76, that Agnolo Gaddi's first payment for the frescoes in the Cappella are from June 19, 1392 and the final payment is dated May 25, 1395. However, Alick McLean states that Agnolo Gaddi received the commission to paint the Cappella as early as 1359. See McLean, 210.

death in 1410, shows that he completed decorative fresco work in a number of areas in the palace including the courtyard, kitchen and other unidentified rooms.¹³⁷ However, there is no evidence indicating that he collaborated with any of the Florentine painters in addition to Gerini. Outside of the palazzo, Arrigo continued to be patronized by Datini until the merchant's death.

It is clear that the artists working at Palazzo Datini had richly interconnected personal and professional relationships beyond their associations through the merchant. Many of the painters had previously collaborated on projects and were quick to recommend one another to Datini. The artists hired by Datini were all direct heirs to a shared visual tradition that originated in Florence and derived from Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and the Cione brothers. The result was a visual coherence that extends throughout all of the murals in the ground room floors. This unity, in which color schemes and compositions flow easily from one space to the next, linked by common stylistic elements, suggests that the artists approached the project collaboratively, rather than competitively.

Dunlop describes Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Agnolo Gaddi as “the most important painters in Florence” during their time.¹³⁸ The shift in Datini's hiring choices, from local artists, or minor Florentine painters, to a group of renowned artists is notable. Prato was not an isolated city, culturally or otherwise, and had connections with Florence. The historian Enrico Fiumi observes that in 1361, one hundred and twenty Florentines lived in Pratese territory, which indicates that there was a more complex relationship between the two communes than that of center and periphery.¹³⁹ Richard Marshall notes that there was a steady traffic into Prato from Tuscany and beyond, as shown in numerous documents. A roster from the Trecento account

¹³⁶ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. II, 394. Guasti notes that the payment is recorded in *Quadernaccio A*, a c. 182.

¹³⁷ Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 412-14.

¹³⁸ Dunlop, 19.

books of the Stella Inn in Prato shows that guests came from Northern and Central Italian urban centers. In addition, the books record the presence in Prato of three ambassadors from Naples.¹⁴⁰ German craftsmen came to build the city walls, completed in 1384, and visitors also arrived from France, Geneva, Catalonia, and Portugal.¹⁴¹ A variety of professional and social classes came to Prato, including laborers, bankers, doctors, merchants, administrators, students, and artisans.

During the Trecento, the quantity and quality of commissions executed in Prato by notable artists, for the city as well as for private patrons such as Datini, was significant. Art historian Luciano Bellosi observes that during Datini's time there was a notable influx of painters to Prato, as many of the major churches in the city and surrounding area commissioned large fresco cycles.¹⁴² This concentration might provide a patron such as Datini with greater access to artists than would be typical at other times, as they arrived in the city to take commissions. Yet public projects could also infringe upon the plans of private patrons to build and decorate their residences. This is because experienced artists were often called away from smaller homes to work in churches and civic buildings since such large-scale projects required a significant amount of labor and expertise. Cavaciocchi points out how Datini's stonemason Goro, in a letter dated

¹³⁹ Richard Marshall, *The Local Merchants of Prato: Small Entrepreneurs in the Late Medieval Economy*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 89-90. See also Enrico Fiumi, *Demografia, movimento urbanistico e classi sociali in Prato*. (Florence: Olschki, 1968), 93 n. 11.

¹⁴⁰ Marshall, 58. Visitors included Northern Italians from cities such as Venice, Genoa, Milan, Padua, Parma, Ferrara, and Modena. Central Italy was represented by travelers from Urbino, Rimini, and Ancona and included many from the Tuscan centers of Pistoia, Pescia, Lucca, Pisa, Florence, Empoli, Arezzo, and Cortona.

¹⁴¹ Marshall, 58. See also McLean, 211.

¹⁴² Bellosi, Luciano with Alessandro Angelini and Giovanna Ragionieri. "Le arti figurative" in *Prato, storia di una città I*: Ascesa e declino del centro medievale (dal Mille al 1494)* Vol. 2. Edited by Giovanni Cherubini. Prato: Le Monnier, 1991, pp. 907-962, 919. See the section "I tempi di Francesco Datini," pp. 919-25. Bellosi writes that "In questo stesso periodo il Duomo di Prato vede nascere gli affreschi che decorano le pareti della cappella del Sacro Cingolo, della cappella Manassei, [...] della cappella di Santo Stefano [...]. Ma un notevole incremento della decorazione ad affresco si ha anche nelle altre grandi chiese di Prato (San Francesco, San Domenico, Sant'Agostino, ecc.) come nelle chiese del territorio (Santa Maria Maddalena, Sant'Anna in Giolica, Santa Cristina a Pimonte, San Giusto in Piazzanese, San Bartolomeo in via Cava, Galiciano, San Martino a Paperino, Parmigno, ecc.).

1387, complained about the “dearth of Maestri” in Prato, because painters, sculptors and builders had left to work on major commissions, such as the Duomo in Florence.¹⁴³ She continues that:

This obliged private citizens to open their purse strings a little further. It cannot be excluded, then, that something similar occurred in Prato, in the years under examination, as a result of the work undertaken between 1386 and 1390 on the Cappella della Cintola precisely, that is, the years in which the Palazzo Datini was being built.¹⁴⁴

This may explain why the artists employed by Datini charged what he considered to be prohibitive rates, apparently in order for the artists to justify taking a private contract when larger public sites, including the Duomo of Prato, were calling for their work.

Many prominent artists came to work in Prato both before and after Datini’s time. As early as 1211, the architect Guidetto da Lucca, famed for his work on the cathedral of San Martino in Lucca, arrived to reconstruct the Duomo and its *campanile*.¹⁴⁵ Lombard sculptor Girollo da Como came later and, after 1312, Giovanni Pisano, son of the famous sculptor Nicola Pisano, carved the statue of the *Madonna della Cintola* (Madonna of the Girdle) for the Duomo.¹⁴⁶ The painter Niccolò di Segna came from Siena, as did the sculptor Niccolò di Cecco del Mercia, who worked on the Duomo from 1357-60.¹⁴⁷ A noticeable Giottesque influence was also seen in Prato. In addition to Agnolo Gaddi, and the artists employed by Datini, there were other painters working in the city whose style derived from Giotto. A *predella* depicting the *Storie della Cintola* (History of the Sacred Girdle), dated c. 1337-8, which was originally in the Duomo and is now in the Museo Civico di Prato, is attributed to Bernardo Daddi. The painter

¹⁴³ Cavaciocchi, “The Economics of Building,” 177. The letter is identified as ASPo, *Datini*, Firenze-Prato, Goro lastraiolo, 22.8.1387.

¹⁴⁴ Cavaciocchi, “The Economics of Building,” 177

¹⁴⁵ Bellosi et al., 909. See also McLean, 93-104.

¹⁴⁶ Bellosi et al., 910, 911-12.

¹⁴⁷ Bellosi et al., 912-13.

Giovanni da Milano, of Lombard origin and active in Florence and Rome, painted a polyptych with the Madonna and Saints for the Pratese *Spedale della Misericordia* 1355-60.¹⁴⁸

Established artists received prominent commissions in Prato well into the Quattrocento. Donatello and Michelozzo came from Florence to sculpt the marble pulpit of the Duomo from 1428-38.¹⁴⁹ The Florentine painter Paolo Uccello, along with Andrea di Giusto, frescoed the Cappella dell'Assunta in the Duomo in 1435-40. The painter Filippo Lippi executed his cycle of the Lives of St. Stephen and St. John the Baptist in the Duomo 1452-66, in collaboration with Fra Diamante and others.¹⁵⁰ Filippo Lippi's son Filippino produced two major altarpieces for the city: the *Tabernacolo del Mercatale*, in 1498, and a Madonna and Child for the Audience Hall of the Palazzo Comunale, in 1502-3.¹⁵¹ This rich history of commissions executed in Prato by notable artists attests to the city's long-standing position as a vibrant cultural center.

Prior to his appointment of the artists decorating the interior of his residence, Datini had not been a prominent patron. None of the works the merchant had commissioned previously matched the grand scale, cost, and labor of the fresco cycles executed in the palazzo. Yet art historian Andrew Martindale argues that "it is absolutely certain that the best available artists [...] were used by the principle secular patrons for art."¹⁵² It has been shown that a considerable population of artists was supported in Prato. By the 1390s, Datini had the necessary components to actively fulfill his role as a principal patron since he was both financially established and well connected. As well, he aspired to the same goals as leading patrons of the period: to captivate guests and amaze rivals.

¹⁴⁸ Bellosi et al., 915.

¹⁴⁹ Bellosi et al., 931-5.

¹⁵⁰ Bellosi et al., 939-43.

¹⁵¹ Bellosi et al., 948.

¹⁵² Martindale, 1.

The Cost of Decorating: The Payment Dispute between Datini and the Artists

The completion of the murals in his residence came at a high cost for Datini, both financially and emotionally. Historian Robert Brun misleadingly states that one of the merchant's notable accomplishments was his ability to win "the friendship of [...] artists of great renown."¹⁵³ It is certainly true that Datini established connections with artists of significance, yet the archival material indicates that his relationships with the painters were troubled.

Work was carried out in the Palazzo Datini until December 1391, when the painters returned to Florence for the winter holiday.¹⁵⁴ Gerini, Bartolomeo, and his partner Agnolo submitted bills to their patron on January 12, 1392, but they were denied payment. This was not unusual for Datini. The Pratese stonemason Goro worked under Datini's patronage for twenty-four years without payment and the merchant greeted the eventual bill with indignation before taking six months to pay.¹⁵⁵

Gerini argued that he was owed at least ninety florins by Datini and the others requested a daily rate of one florin for labor, pigments, and various expenses. Yet Datini felt this fee was excessive because, in his opinion, a significant portion of the artists' time had been dedicated to preparatory work – adjusting scaffolding, grinding pigments, and arranging patterns – rather than painting.¹⁵⁶ A protracted dispute unfolded and a great deal of correspondence was exchanged between Gerini, who at first wrote on behalf of all the artists, and Datini. The merchant's partners Stoldo di Lorenzo and Domenico di Cambio, his acquaintance Giovanni di Gherardi, and notary friend Ser Lapo Mazzei served as mediators. The exchange has been discussed by Piattoli

¹⁵³ Robert Brun, "A fourteenth century merchant," 455.

¹⁵⁴ Dunlop, 20. Melis, 96. Melis cites Datini's account: "A dì 21 di diciembre, anno detto, il detto Niccolò e Angniolo n'andorono a Firenze, sicchè mesi 3 e dì 2 sarebono stati in casa a nostre spese." Datini's expenses in housing the artists are then listed.

¹⁵⁵ Origo, 241. Origo does not identify the archival document.

¹⁵⁶ Dunlop, 20. Byrne, "Father of Many," 295, 297. See also Supino, 136.

and Byrne.¹⁵⁷

The payment dispute was further complicated by lax contracts. Bartolomeo had never established a fee with Datini. Instead, the artist had stated that he would remit a bill following completion of his work. The rate, he had promised, would be “less than the merchant would be willing to pay,” and the disbursement of fees “would be left to Datini’s conscience.”¹⁵⁸ After months of dissatisfaction, Bartolomeo filed for litigation and took his case to the *Consilio* in Florence.¹⁵⁹ Gerini submitted a bill in January of 1392 that requested sums for pigments used in the front hall and loggia and he indicated in other correspondence that he was willing to continue working for the merchant, once the pending debt was cleared.¹⁶⁰ In December of 1393, Gerini’s work in the palazzo was evaluated by Giovanni di Gherardi and Agnolo Gaddi and a settlement was negotiated, although he did not receive payment until 1394.¹⁶¹ Gerini continued, however, to benefit from Datini’s patronage and he completed his work at San Francesco that had previously been interrupted.¹⁶² It is unclear how the fees for Agnolo, Bartolomeo’s partner, were distributed and Arrigo was absent from the records of the payment dispute.

Many of the *conti* preserved in the Archivio Datini were submitted after the original dispute, rather than being written up prior to the initiation of the work. The contracts were produced in order to specify what paintings each artist had executed and their estimated costs. Strehlke argues that Datini may have asked each artist to submit a list of their contributions to the

¹⁵⁷ Renato Piattoli, “Un mercante: Part 3,” 550-60. See also Byrne, “Father of Many,” 295-314.

¹⁵⁸ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 294. Supino, 138.

¹⁵⁹ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 299-300, 310, 313-14. Byrne notes that Bartolomeo wanted to sue Datini in the Apothecaries and Physicians and Painters Guild court. When he found out the merchant was not a member he sought to forcibly matriculate him into the guild (arguing his trade in ground spices and dyes). In April, following an estimation of Bartolomeo’s work by Gaddi, the involvement of the *Consilio* (Guild consuls), and the mediation of Mazzei, Bartolomeo was paid 23 florins and change. This sum, declared as trivial by the guild consuls, was further diminished by Bartolomeo’s loss of patronage and future recommendations.

¹⁶⁰ Melis, 59. Byrne, “Father of Many,” 300-301.

¹⁶¹ Byrne, “Father of Many,” 302.

palazzo decoration because “he seems not to have been able to recognize their [stylistic] differences.”¹⁶³ As stated earlier, this unified appearance emphasized the artists’ shared visual inheritance of the Florentine tradition and articulated their ability to work collaboratively, despite the fact that they were hired to decorate separate areas of the palace.

In addition to his concern for the quality and scale of the work executed at the palazzo, Datini was consumed by the same issue that defined his earlier participation in the art market: cost. In the surviving documents, Datini is defined by his “strong and difficult personality” and Piattoli bluntly calls him “irascible.”¹⁶⁴ The merchant is presented in the scholarship as an unsympathetic miser defined by his commercial sensibilities and preoccupied with the values he learned as a young trader in Avignon. Even as a patron in direct contact with the artists he commissioned, Datini still depended upon the advice and mediation of his merchant colleagues.

In the next chapter, a comparison of the Palazzo Datini decoration to murals in contemporary palazzi, and related visual media, will confirm that Datini absorbed and applied many of the values of his class. Some elements of the decoration in his residence indicate that the *nouveau riches* merchant found it difficult to emulate the aesthetic values of his aristocratic contemporaries. Many have argued that Datini simply did not possess the wide vision or fine taste of more learned patrons of the period. It is clear, however, that his commissions were directly affected by larger visual and cultural trends. Scholars have been able to identify a number of external influences that shaped Datini’s aesthetic sensibilities. While some of these arguments are compelling, others remain problematic. The limitations of the historiography and

¹⁶² Supino, 135.

¹⁶³ Carl Brandon Strehlke, “The World of Tommaso del Mazza: Considerations in the Work of Tommaso del Mazza,” *Discovering a Pre-Renaissance Master: Tommaso del Mazza*. Anne Short, et al. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery, 2009), pp. 33-49, 41, 46.

¹⁶⁴ Cassandro, “Aspects of the Life,” 5. Piattoli, “Un mercante: Part 3,” 550. Piattoli argues that “I rapporti tra il mercante e i pittori divennero tesi soprattutto per le pretese a parer suo esagerate che avevano in animo, tanto che lui – irascibile com’era – non esitò un istante a congedarli su due piedi.”

the recent developments in the study of Datini's patronage, already discussed, reveal the need for further examination.

Chapter 2

The Palazzo Datini: “Una chasa grande, dipinta”

An Examination of the Interior Frescoes of the Palazzo

This chapter will examine the surviving murals of the Palazzo Datini which are contained in the main ground floor rooms. As was shown in the historiography of this thesis, studies of the last thirty years have focused on various aspects of Datini’s patronage. As well as examining the murals in the merchant’s private residence, uncovered with the removal of whitewash from the palazzo walls, scholars have culled from the written material available in the Archive. These sources have provided a wealth of information about the development of Datini’s aesthetic values and choices; motives behind the interior decoration; the subject matter and style of the paintings; the merchant’s relationships with the artists employed in his home; and contemporary reception of the completed project.

However, there has been less examination of the larger socio-cultural influences, or the predominant values of merchant culture, which may have also influenced Datini’s commissions. Although comparable fresco decoration has been examined by scholars, studies remain limited to other visual and written media that the Datini imagery may have derived from. This is despite the fact that many manuscripts contain iconography that was widespread in the Trecento and had strong visual correlations with the paintings at the Palazzo Datini. Manuscripts and other sources will be considered in the second chapter to further an understanding of the Datini frescoes.

In order to discuss the murals, it is necessary to begin with a review of the literature on the artists involved. This serves to familiarize the reader with some of the known works for each painter in order to consider the styles, compositions, and color schemes applied in the palace, as

well as the division of labor. This is essential because the authorship of many of the murals, and the nature of the various collaborations, is still contested in the scholarship.

Artists' Backgrounds

As was stated in the first chapter of this thesis, the artists that have been both concretely identified and hypothesized as working at the Palazzo Datini include: the local painter Arrigo di Niccolò; Florentine artists Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, Agnolo Gaddi, Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, Tommaso del Mazza, and Paganino d'Ugolino; minor painters Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo; and an unknown painter identified only as Agnolo.¹⁶⁵ While the documents in the Archivio Datini provide some information about these artists, regarding their employment at the Palazzo Datini and their relationships with their patron Datini, there is little material available about the *oeuvres*, or lives, of most of these artists outside of the palazzo or beyond the city of Prato.

Since little extant work survives, and documentation for these painters is incomplete, the scholarly studies they have respectively generated are equally scant. Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, for example, is practically a *désoeuvré* artist with little work attached to his name beyond his murals in the Palazzo Datini. Information on his artistic style and production is confined to his *conto*, payment correspondence, and related papers in the Archivio Datini. He is, however, identified in Dominic Colnaghi's *Dictionary of Florentine Painters* (1928) as being employed in the church of

¹⁶⁵ Margherita Romagnoli, "La dimora di un mercante pratese nel XIV secolo. Palazzo Datini attraverso un'analisi dei documenti d'archivio (Parte I)," *Arte Cristiana*, Vol. XCVI (Nov-Dec 2008), pp. 413-422, 416, 417. Romagnoli identifies other painters working on projects in Palazzo Datini, including painter Checco di Francesco da Lione, and Marco di Giovanni da Venezia. Since other scholars do not identify their presence and there is no discussion of the works they produced, they will be excluded from the present study.

Santa Cecilia, near the Florentine Piazza della Signoria, from 1388-89.¹⁶⁶

There is no information about work by Dino di Puccio or Jacopo d'Agnolo outside of the Palazzo Datini. Their origins are also unclear. They are defined by their *conto* for the merchant and the two are indirectly mentioned in some of Datini's correspondence. In addition to the notations found in Datini's *ricordanze* and letters, Paganino d'Ugolino is referenced by Colnaghi regarding his matriculation in the *Arte dei Medici e Speziale* on November 29, 1375, and his later involvement with the *Compagnia di San Luca*. The entry for Paganino does not discuss any paintings by the artist outside of the Palazzo Datini.

The scholarship on Arrigo di Niccolò is more extensive. In his article on the Palazzo Datini decoration, Bruce Cole erroneously identifies Aldo Petri's article "Un pittore pratese del trecento: Arrigo di Niccolò" published in the journal *Prato, storia e arte* (1962) as the only study of Arrigo.¹⁶⁷ A select bibliography also includes the articles of Renato Piattoli in *Rivista d'Arte* (1929-30), Colnaghi's *Dictionary* (1928), Miklós Boskovits' *Pittura fiorentina alla vigilia del Rinascimento, 1370-1400* (1975) and Luciano Bellosi's article "Tre note in margine a uno studio sull'arte a Prato," first published in the journal *Prospettiva* (1983-4).¹⁶⁸

Petri's article is one of the more focused studies of Arrigo's life and work. However, he relies on a limited bibliography and does not corroborate his statements with footnotes, making it difficult to differentiate his sources. Arrigo's developing style was influenced by many of the artists associated with Datini, Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Agnolo Gaddi in particular.

¹⁶⁶ Sir Dominic E. Colnaghi, *Colnaghi's Dictionary of Florentine Painters from the 13th to the 17th centuries*, Carlo E. Malvani, ed. (Florence: Archivi Colnaghi Firenze, 1986). Facsimile reprint of D. E. Colnaghi, *A dictionary of Florentine painters* (London: J. Lane, 1928), 34.

¹⁶⁷ Bruce Cole, "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 78. See Aldo Petri, "Un pittore pratese del trecento: Arrigo di Niccolò" *Prato, storia e arte*, Dec. 1962, pp. 47-50.

¹⁶⁸ Carl Brandon Strehlke, *Italian Paintings 1250-1450 in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004), 65, 67-68. Strehlke provides a select bibliography for works by Arrigo di Niccolò.

According to Petri, Arrigo had contact with the latter artist in Prato when he was working on minor projects in the Duomo. Agnolo Gaddi was employed there at the same time with his fresco cycle of the *Life of the Virgin* for the Cappella della Sacra Cintola.¹⁶⁹

It is now believed, based on the proposal of Bellosi, that Arrigo is also responsible for the murals attributed to an anonymous artist called the Master of the Manassei Chapel. The chapel, in the Duomo, contains scenes from the legends of Saints James Major and Margaret. While the chapel was under the patronage of the Manassei family, it is documented that Datini oversaw the decoration of the chapel and that the commission had originally been assigned to Gerini.¹⁷⁰

In addition to his work at the Palazzo Datini, and other commissions for the merchant in the church of San Francesco and his villa called *Il Palco*, outside Prato, Arrigo has been identified working in the Pratese churches of San Piero Forelli and San Domenico. The frescoes for the latter, completed in 1397, and the artist's first major commission following his work for Datini, are now lost.¹⁷¹ In the same year he received a commission to complete murals outside of the city, in the church of San Salvatore in Bologna.¹⁷² Petri has also linked Arrigo to the decoration of the Choir in the rural church of the Pieve.¹⁷³ The painter continued to benefit from Datini's patronage since he is recorded as working at the palazzo in November of 1396 and was supported

¹⁶⁹ Petri, 47.

¹⁷⁰ Strehlke, *Italian Paintings*, 65. Renato Piattoli, "Un mercante del Trecento e gli artisti del tempo suo: Part 3," *Rivista d'arte*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1929), pp. 537-579, 548. See also Luciano Bellosi, "Tre note in margine a uno studio sull'arte a Prato," *Prospettiva* (1983-4), pp. 33-36. The article was reproduced in *Come un Prato Fiorito: Studi sull'arte tardogotico* (2000). Bellosi proposes stylistic connections between the murals in the Manassei Chapel and Arrigo's tabernacle of the Crucifixion, executed for Datini's villa called *Il Palco*.

¹⁷¹ Petri, 48. Petri describes the lost frescoes as "a large Crucifixion, recently damaged, found in the rooms west of the Cloister, and those half figures of saints depicted in the round, located adjacent to the chapel of the Chapter."

¹⁷² Strehlke, *Italian Paintings*, 65. Petri, 48. According to Petri, and others, Arrigo's work in Bologna, possibly a large fresco of the Crucifixion, was terminated when he fell from scaffolding and was seriously wounded. The work was continued by an anonymous Trecento artist

¹⁷³ Petri, 47.

by the merchant until Datini's death in 1410.¹⁷⁴

Arrigo's work appears to have been largely composed of decorative designs such as those executed in the Palazzo Datini, including imitation marbles, foliated scrolls, and imitation tapestries. However, in his later commission at San Francesco, the painter executed various half figures in fresco. As well, he produced a panel depicting Datini and his wife Margherita as supplicants at the feet of Saint Francis.¹⁷⁵ It appears that during his employment at the Palazzo Datini the artist was still young, and a relatively un-established painter, because he served as Gerini's assistant and later collaborator. With the maturation of his style, Arrigo worked in Datini's palace on his own, with assistants, and following his employment there he took on several projects involving more complex figural compositions.

As with Arrigo di Niccolò, the scholarship on Tommaso del Mazza has expanded significantly in recent years. A select bibliography includes references to Tommaso's work in C. Pini and G. Milanesi's *La scrittura di artisti italiani* (1876); Colnaghi and Piattoli; and Boskovits' *Pittura fiorentina* and *Der Meister der Santa Verdiana* (1967). Tommaso has been discussed by other scholars, such as William Suida, Dorothy Shorr, Roberto Longhi, and Federico Zeri.

In the multi-volume series *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*, begun by Richard Offner in 1930 and continued by Klara Steinweg, Mina Gregori and Miklós Boskovits, following Offner's death, Barbara Deimling's contribution in *Tradition and Innovation in Florentine Trecento Painting: Giovanni Bonsi – Tommaso del Mazza* (2000) is

¹⁷⁴ Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "The Merchant and Building," *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 131-163, 155. Cavaciocchi observes that Arrigo arrived to paint the ground floor bedroom, but she does not describe which room this is, or the subject of the decoration.

¹⁷⁵ Colnaghi, 22-23. Petri, 48. Petri states that in 1407, Arrigo painted half-figures on a beam in San Francesco, small figures of Prophets, and a large composition of the Apostles with twelve brothers in adoration.

significant for forwarding an understanding of Tommaso and his *oeuvre*. Deimling connects the paintings of Tommaso to other works formerly attributed to the anonymous Trecento artist called the Master of Santa Verdiana, or less often, the Master of the Louvre Collection. This is based on stylistic similarities and professional connections. Her suggested link is now accepted in the scholarship. Her study is also important for producing the available documents on Tommaso.

Other recent sources on the artist include Carl Brandon Strehlke's *Italian paintings, 1250-1450, in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (2004) and *Discovering a Pre-Renaissance Master: Tommaso del Mazza* (2009) with essays by Deimling, Strehlke, Anne Short, John M. Nolan, and Yvonne Szafran.¹⁷⁶ The latter was published in conjunction with the exhibition *The Twilight of a Tradition*, held in 2008, at the Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery. It was the first monographic exhibition of Tommaso's work.

Within the research, it is widely accepted that Tommaso's Florentine style was influenced by an apprenticeship in the workshop of the Cione brothers, in the 1360s, as well as by the art practices of the masters Orcagna and Jacopo.¹⁷⁷ During his stylistic maturation, over the course of his activity from 1377 to 1392, Tommaso absorbed and adapted the influential techniques of other artists from Florence, such as Pietro Nelli, Agnolo Gaddi, and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini.¹⁷⁸ As well, he retrospectively referenced Giottesque elements in his paintings.

¹⁷⁶ Strehlke, *Italian Paintings*, 413, 416. Strehlke provides a select bibliography for works by Tommaso del Mazza.

¹⁷⁷ Barbara Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza: The Portrait of a Painter in Late Trecento Florence," *Discovering a Pre-Renaissance Master: Tommaso del Mazza*. Anne Short, ed. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery, 2009), pp. 1-15, 2. For the influence of the Ciones on Tommaso see also Barbara Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)" in *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: Tradition and Innovation in Florentine Trecento Painting: Giovanni Bonsi – Tommaso del Mazza*. Sec. IV, Vol. VIII. Miklós Boskovits, ed. (Florence: Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 2000), pp. 107-369, 125-128.

¹⁷⁸ For dates of activity see Carl Brandon Strehlke, "The World of Tommaso del Mazza: Considerations in the Work of Tommaso del Mazza," *Discovering a Pre-Renaissance Master: Tommaso del Mazza*. Anne Short, ed. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery, 2009), pp. 33-49, 33. Deimling explores in-depth the influences of these painters on Tommaso in Offner's *Corpus*.

While Tommaso might be considered by some to be a minor painter, his legacy now includes a significant corpus of over fifty paintings and a number of panels such as his *Annunciation* in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the *Madonna and Child with Saints* at the Birmingham Museum of Art. Outside of Datini's earlier patronage, Tommaso completed an altarpiece for the Impruneta, near Florence, in partnership with Pietro Nelli. During his 1384 commission for Datini, he also completed frescoes in the Duomo at Prato.¹⁷⁹

Tommaso's mature work is defined by an exploration of pictorial space and depth. His figures are often set against golden backgrounds and sacred figures are framed by halos incised with rays and decorative punching.¹⁸⁰ Although such decorative elements might prohibit the impression of depth, the figures are adorned with garments that billow and flow in fluid patterns that form dynamic contour lines. Rich colors are employed, including deep pink, blue, red, and yellow, with gold detailing in the backgrounds and borders. Many of these elements are found in the mural decorations of the Palazzo Datini, particularly the lunette of the Blessing Christ that Deimling attributes to Tommaso del Mazza.

The work of Agnolo Gaddi is first discussed in detail by Giorgio Vasari in his text *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, e scultori italiani*, first published in 1550.¹⁸¹ Vasari praises Agnolo's style and acknowledges the artist's debt to the visual tradition of "the house of Gaddi," established by his father Taddeo, stating: "today [it is] very noble in Florence and of great repute in all of Christendom."¹⁸² Yet Vasari erroneously argues that Agnolo was more interested in trading and traffic, rather than the art of painting, revealing his confusion of the artist with his

¹⁷⁹ Colnaghi, 261.

¹⁸⁰ Deimling, "Portrait of a Painter," 3-4. A discussion of Tommaso's punch work and halo patterns is found in John M. Nolan, "Considerations on the Halo and Garment Patterns in the Work of Tommaso del Mazza," *Discovering a Pre-Renaissance Master: Tommaso del Mazza*. Anne Short, ed. (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery, 2009), pp. 17-31.

¹⁸¹ See Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*. Gaetano Milanesi, ed. (Firenze, G.C. Sansoni, 1878-1885).

merchant brother Zanobi Gaddi.¹⁸³ Joseph Byrne points out that Vasari also confuses Agnolo's work with that of Bernardo Daddi. Although Vasari mentions the frescoes that Agnolo Gaddi painted in the Duomo and the Pieve, in Prato, there is no mention of his employment at Datini's residence.¹⁸⁴

The principal studies on Agnolo Gaddi include Roberto Salvini's *L'arte di Agnolo Gaddi* (1936), Miklós Boskovits' article "Some Early Works of Agnolo Gaddi," in *The Burlington Magazine* (1968), and Bruce Cole's monograph *Agnolo Gaddi* (1977).¹⁸⁵ Salvini analyzes the stylistic differences between the artist and his workshop in order to identify Gaddi's *oeuvre*.¹⁸⁶ Boskovits seeks to define the origins of his style and continues Salvini's task of isolating Agnolo Gaddi's paintings. He uses *The Coronation of the Virgin* panel in the National Gallery, London, positively attributed to Agnolo Gaddi, as a measure for identifying other works by the master. Cole compiles previously unpublished documents to chronologically trace Gaddi's life and career and to define the progression of his formal style and its influences.

A number of positive attributions and several extant documents can be linked to Agnolo Gaddi, which is not the case for many of the artists employed at the Palazzo Datini. Yet little is known of the beginnings of his artistic development since his earliest surviving work is dated 1384. By this point, Cole observes: "his first years are over, his early training is masked, [and]

¹⁸² Vasari-Milanesi, 635.

¹⁸³ Vasari-Milanesi, 636. Vasari states that "essendo nato e allevato negli agi che sono molte volte d'impedimento agli studj, fu dato più a'traffichi ed alle mercanzie, che all'arte della pittura."

¹⁸⁴ Vasari-Milanesi, 639-40.

¹⁸⁵ Miklós Boskovits, "Some Early Works of Agnolo Gaddi," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 781 (Apr. 1968), pp. 209-215, 209. Boskovits references additional literature on Gaddi, including contributions by J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle (1864), O. Sirén (1920), R. van Marle (1924), and B. Berenson (1932).

¹⁸⁶ Roberto Salvini, *L'arte di Agnolo Gaddi* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1936). While Salvini discusses Gaddi's work on the frescoes of the Cappella del Sacro Cingolo, pp. 115-138, there is no reference in his text to his participation in the decorative cycle at Palazzo Datini.

his stylistic origins are unclear.”¹⁸⁷ Agnolo Gaddi is first documented in Rome at the Palazzo Vaticano, in 1369, where he worked on frescoes, now lost, with his brother Giovanni, as well as Giotto, Giovanni da Milano, and Bartolomeo Bulgarini. He is also recorded working at San Piero Maggiore, Florence, in 1376.¹⁸⁸ His Florentine commissions included frescoes in the Loggia dei Lanzi from 1383-6 and the Duomo of Santa Maria del Fiore in 1387, 1390-91 and 1394-5.¹⁸⁹

Agnolo Gaddi’s legacy includes three large-scale fresco cycles: the *Life of John the Baptist* in the Cappella Castellani in Santa Croce, Florence (c. 1384), in collaboration with Gherardo Starnina; the *Legend of the True Cross* in the choir of Santa Croce (c. 1388-93), for the Alberti family; and the *Life of the Virgin* in the Cappella della Sacra Cintola in the Duomo at Prato (1393-5).¹⁹⁰ His style is defined by figures with soft, broad, drapery and a pastel color palette, saturated with pink, green, and yellow, punctuated by red, blue, and grey. Cole identifies the impact of the new Florentine style of the Cione brothers on Agnolo Gaddi, which shed the stiff, austere, style of earlier artists. In addition, he was influenced by his father, Taddeo Gaddi, who was indebted to the Giottesque tradition. Cole argues that stylistically, Agnolo Gaddi moved beyond the Ciones and “rediscovered Giotto and the world of volume, space, and warmth.”¹⁹¹ A

¹⁸⁷ Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 18.

¹⁸⁸ Cole, *Gaddi*, 4-6, 68-69. Cole cites J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavalcaselle who reference a final record of payment for work in the Palazzo Vaticano between July 19 and October 2 1369. See Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *A New History of Painting in Italy*, 6 vols., London. 1903, ii, 187-88. Cole cites a now-lost Gabella record of 1376. Florence, Archivio di Stato, Ancisa (A.A.), p. 667^v. For the Lanzi payments, Cole cites Carl Frey who references payments from June 27, 1383, December 29, 1383, August 12, 1384, and March 27, 1386. Florence, Archivio dell’Opera del Duomo, Delib. vol. 20, p. 29b, 9b, 6a, and 15b, respectively. See Carl Frey, *Die Loggia dei Lanzi in Florenz* (Berlin: Geistesgeschichte, 1885), 302-5. For the Duomo payment Cole cites Giovanni Poggi who references a payment to Gaddi on September 5, 1387. See Giovanni Poggi, *Il Duomo di Firenze. Documenti sulla decorazione della chiesa e del campanile tratti dall’Archivio dell’Opera*, (Berlin: Cassirer, 1909), 10. Florence, Archivio dell’Opera del Duomo, Delib., vol. 24, p. 12.

¹⁹⁰ For further information on the Castellani, True Cross, and Sacra Cintola frescoes see Cole, *Gaddi*, 9-15, 21-25, and 32-39 respectively

¹⁹¹ Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi*, 19.

similar rich color palette, exploration of volume and space, and parallel decorative motifs are found in the frescoes at Palazzo Datini, although direct comparison is irrelevant since the subject matter, scale, function, and site of the cycles are fundamentally different.

Although it has been proposed that Agnolo Gaddi was not directly involved in the interior decoration of the Palazzo Datini, it has also been put forward that the artist may have served Datini in an advisory capacity. If so, he could have provided designs for the murals. As well, Agnolo Gaddi had significant stylistic influence on many artists of the period, including those working in the palace. His use of color and compositional style was assumed by the others, either as a result of observation or collaboration.

Niccolò di Pietro Gerini's *oeuvre* has also received moderate scholarly attention. Although extant documents reference the artist and several works bear his signature, there is no definitive study of his style, which reflects the influence of the Cione brothers and Taddeo Gaddi. The literature on Gerini is confined to brief entries in surveys of Trecento painting. A select bibliography includes the work of Mazzei and Guasti and the later studies of Offner and Boskovits. As well, his work has been discussed in the foundational texts of many of nineteenth and twentieth century art historians such as Karl Friedrich von Rumohr's *Italienischen Forschungen*, vol. 2 (1827), J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle's *A New History of Painting in Italy* (begun 1864), Osvald Sirén in Thieme-Becker, vol. 13 (1920), and Raimond Van Marle's *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 3 (1923), among others, including Bernard Berenson. More recently, Gerini's work has been evaluated in the gallery catalogues compiled by Martin Davies, with Dillian Gordon, for the National Gallery London (1988) and Carl Brandon Strehlke for the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2004).¹⁹²

¹⁹² Martin Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Early Italian Schools Before 1400*, Revised by Dillian Gordon (London: National Gallery Publications, 1988), 88-93.

Described by Crowe and Cavalcaselle as an artist of “third-rate talent,” Gerini is identified by other scholars as a minor painter who stands out due to the scope of his output.¹⁹³ His activity is documented from 1366, following his matriculation in the *Arte dei Medici e Speziale*, in Florence, until his death in 1415. He collaborated with Jacopo di Cione, brother of Orcagna, on a number of prominent Florentine commissions, including the Guildhall of the Judges and Notaries in 1366 and San Pier Maggiore in 1370-71, in addition to the Palazzo dei Priori in Volterra in 1383.¹⁹⁴ Despite his professional connections with esteemed artists, Gerini, unlike Agnolo Gaddi, is neglected in Vasari’s *Vite*. However, the quantity of compelling attributions and surviving paintings indicates that Gerini held a secure position as a master artist. As a result, he obtained commissions and patronage within, and beyond, the competitive Florentine art market.

Gerini’s work in Santa Croce, Florence includes a *Crucifix*, c. 1380, in the Cappella Castellani, the *Resurrection*, *Ascension*, and *Calvary* in the Sacristy, and the central panel for the High Altar.¹⁹⁵ Other Florentine commissions include the façade of the Bigallo, in 1386, with Ambrogio di Baldese; the high altarpiece of Santa Felicità, with Spinello Aretino and Lorenzo di Niccolò in 1401; and San Carlo dei Lombardi.¹⁹⁶ In Pisa, likely assisted by Tommaso del Mazza, Gerini executed a cycle of the *Passion* at San Bonaventura, and frescoes at San Francesco, in

¹⁹³ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 432.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Offner and Klara Steinweg, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: Jacopo di Cione, sec. IV, vol. III* (New York: College of Fine Arts, New York University, 1965), 1, 2, 4, 10, 115-119. Offner attributes the compositional layout of the Volterra Coronation to Gerini. The archived documents, dated March 12 and November 15, 1383, identify Gerini as *magistro Nicolao Pieri*. See also Strehlke, *Italian Paintings*, 151.

¹⁹⁵ For the Castellani Chapel cross see Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century, sec. III, vol. V* (New York: College of Fine Arts, New York University, 1947), 131. For the High Altar panels see Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: The Fourteenth Century, sec. III, vol. II, pt. II* (New York: College of Fine Arts, New York University, 1930), 194. Offner attributes the central panel of the High Altar, depicting the Madonna and Child with two saints, and two predella scenes, to Gerini.

¹⁹⁶ Piattoli, “Un mercante: Part 3,” 557. Strehlke, 151.

Prato, also bear his signature.¹⁹⁷ Gerini's absorption of stylistic elements from many artists of the period has contributed to a number of problematic attributions. Crowe and Cavalcaselle observe: "it might be possible to quote, as by Niccolò, an infinity of works assigned in numerous galleries to Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and Orcagna."¹⁹⁸ Many of his paintings were collaborative efforts, making it even more difficult to isolate the characteristics of Gerini's style.

Gerini's figures are solid and monumental, lacking significant spatial depth. He uses strong, dark, earth tones of brown, tan, cream, and black, with rich reds, blues, and greens, all accented by gold and yellow detailing. These characteristics are found in his frescoes at the Palazzo Datini, as well as his work at San Francesco. In the palazzo, the courtyard Hero figures are shallowly depicted in their fictive niches while other murals exemplify his characteristic tonal range and contain residual flecks of gold, indicating that gold leaf was once liberally applied to the frescoes *a secco*, once the plaster had dried.

"Murare a suo piacere": The Decoration of the Ground Floor Rooms, Visual Precedents, and Socio-Cultural Contexts

Saint Christopher

The fresco of *San Cristoforo* (Saint Christopher) is located in the entrance hall, to the right of the main door (See Ch. 1, Fig. 4). The saint is depicted with his muscular legs shoulder-width apart and his feet immersed in water filled with grotesque hybrid fish. His knee-length red

¹⁹⁷ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 432-3, 435. The work is signed by Gerini and dated 1392. The inscription for the Pisan frescoes is read by Paolo Lasinio as: NICOLAUS PETRI PITR DE FLORENTIA DEPENDIT AN. D.MCCCLXXXII (sic). The date should read: MCCCLXXXII. See Richard Offner, *A Critical and Historical Corpus: The Fourteenth Century, Andrea di Cione, sec. IV, vol. I* (New York: The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1962), 1. Offner states the Pisan cycle was completed in 1392.

¹⁹⁸ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 436.

mantle, fastened at the throat and cinched at the waist, is draped over a pale green undergarment and the folds, gathered in his left arm, expose a pale purple lining. His right hand grips a wooden staff that blossoms into green fronds above his haloed head. Christopher gazes at the viewer descending the staircase, from the upper storey to the entry hall, while presiding over visitors on the ground floor. His eyes are dark and almond shaped. A slender nose emphasizes his oval face, which is framed by light brown waves and sparse facial hair.

On Christopher's left shoulder sits *il Bambino* (the Christ Child), in a vibrant yellow robe lined in pale green. Pale lavender highlights echo the lining of Christopher's robe. Fluted and scalloped sleeves float stiffly in a nonexistent breeze in imitation of feathered wings. His head, framed by a crossed halo, tilts towards Christopher. Christ grips a lock of the saint's hair in His left hand while the right hand holds an orb behind the saint's head. It is a tripartite *mappa mundi* of the known world. The upper sphere is identified as Asia while the lower sphere is divided between Africa ('AFRICK') and Europe ('VROPIA'), written in Gothic script. The figures are enclosed within an arch that is bordered by imitation marble inlay in geometric designs, stylized foliage scrolls and decorative carvings.

The fresco was recovered during the restoration of the 1950s using archival correspondence from Datini's friend Ser Lapo Mazzei that indicated it was located near the original staircase.¹⁹⁹ It survives in moderate condition, although areas of pigment have flaked and

For Crowe and Cavalcaselle, these include an altarpiece of the *Madonna Enthroned* in San Giovanni in Pesaro, c. 1400, and a panel of Saint Thomas receiving the Virgin's Girdle in the Palazzo Reale in Parma, undated and attributed to Giotto.

¹⁹⁹ Nello Bemporad, *Il Restauro del Palazzo Datini a Prato* (Prato: Associazione Turistica Pratese, 1958), 18. It was "con l'aiuto di una lettera di Ser Lapo Mazzei che indicava come il dipinto di S. Cristoforo affrescato si trovasse a capo della scala originale si sono, attraverso opportuni saggi, potuti ritrovare gli elementi di partenza e di arrivo della scala e l'andamento che ne scaturisce conferma quello segnato nei disegni del plantario settecentesco già accennato."

faded.²⁰⁰ The background is a deep red earth color and appears to be the now-exposed preparatory layer of under painting for what was originally an azure ground. The pigment used for the water has degraded to a pale blue-green, indicating the presence of moisture in the walls which has caused the azurite to transform into malachite. The underlying plaster around Saint Christopher's feet has also been exposed. Three grey fish survive in fragmentary condition and residual marks indicate there once were several more.

The painted garments of Christopher and Christ have altered over time, yet meticulous details remain. Traces of gold scrolls and stylized floral motifs on the torso, hem, and sleeve of the saint's green robe reference decorative damask and lampas silks. Such silks were imported from Byzantium to Italy by the fourteenth century and were reproduced in a number of city centers, including Lucca.²⁰¹ The left side of Christ's robe is punctuated by remnants of a geometric pattern of red stars along the sleeve, torso, and waist. These textural details pay homage to Prato's own textile industry, and Datini's international trade in silks, while also reflecting the influence of Simone Martini, Bernardo Daddi, Jacopo di Cione, and others.²⁰²

Although the techniques used for depicting textiles in panel are different from those applied in fresco at the Palazzo Datini, the figures of Gabriel and Saint Catherine in Simone Martini's panels of the *Annunciation* (1333) and *Maestà* (1315-16), respectively, wear robes

²⁰⁰ Bemporad, 25. The fresco was cleaned with an ammonia solution diluted with water to remove layers of dirt and lime.

²⁰¹ Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, Princes and Painters: Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings, 1300-1550* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 4.

²⁰² Italian merchants played a significant role in the textile industry, importing costly dyes and fibres to Italy and exporting and trading in woven fabrics from Lucca, Genoa, Venice and elsewhere. Historically, Prato's economy was almost entirely dependent on the textile industry and its decline mid-late trecento was reversed by Datini's return to the city as he founded a woolen mill and dye house in addition to introducing various international contacts to the Pratese. Further information on the Italian textile trade in the trecento, as well as the influence of patterned textiles in painting, see chapters 1-3 of Monnas' text. For examples of Datini's commercial documents on textiles see Giovanni Cherubini, ed., *Prato, storia di una città I*: Ascesa e declino del centro medievale (dal Mille al 1494)* (Prato: Le Monnier, 1991), vol. 1, Tavole 18-20.

enriched by stylized flowers and leaves. The garments of Saint Stephen, patron saint of Prato, in the Gambier-Parry polyptych (1348) by Bernardo Daddi and workshop are “adorned with tracery-like patterns of arabesques,” and other works by the artist depict textiles with designs of scrolling grapevines.²⁰³ This imitation of small-patterned silks of orientalized design is continued by Jacopo di Cione, who depicts textiles with stylized birds and foliage in his *Coronation of the Virgin with Saints and Angels* (1370-71). Jacopo di Cione’s sometime collaborator Niccolò di Pietro Gerini adopted similar motifs, perhaps aided by a stencil, in his *Virgin and Child with Angels* (no date), now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.²⁰⁴ The Christopher fresco is indebted to this visual tradition and the reference to costly decorative silks no doubt pleased Datini, whose wealth was based on such luxury items.

The Datini Saint Christopher is attributed to Gerini, based on the extant *conto* of the artist, dated 1391. In the document, Gerini requests from Datini four gold florins to cover all of the expenses (“a ogni spesa”) for the materials needed to complete the fresco.²⁰⁵ Dunlop argues that: “it is possible that Gerini was billing in advance for an image as yet only traced out,” and Origo states that ultimately the master artist did not complete the fresco of the saint.²⁰⁶ In a letter addressed to his agent Stoldo di Lorenzo, dated January 14, 1394, Datini states “that he had promised to pay ten gold florins to ‘two young painters, who have come here to finish the Saint

²⁰³ Monnas, 73, 77-8.

²⁰⁴ Monnas, 86

²⁰⁵ Federigo Melis, *Aspetti della vita economica medievale: Studi nell’ Archivio Datini di Prato* (Siena: Monte dei Paschi di Siena, 1962), 59. The archived document D, n. 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d’arte*, Conto di Niccolò Gerini is cited: “Cose adomanda Niccolò di Piero, dipintore, di cose fattoci: [...] per lo San Cristofano, a ongni spesa di Franciesco, di fatica di detto Niccolò, conpiendolo, f. quatro d’oro [...]” The document lists a number of other works, including materials and fees, to be executed by Gerini in the Palazzo Datini, of which only the Saint Christopher survives.

²⁰⁶ Anne Dunlop, *Painted Palaces: the rise of secular art in early Renaissance Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 21, 227. See also Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato: Daily Life in a Medieval Italian City* (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 229, 370.

Christopher begun by Niccolò.”²⁰⁷ A letter written by Gerini, dated 1392, recommends two men to Datini, named Simone and Istoldo, to complete an undefined work (“della adimanda del detto lavoro”).²⁰⁸ Melis connects the earlier letter to that of 1394, identifying the men as Gerini’s assistants.

In composition and style, the Saint Christopher fresco in the Palazzo Datini is almost identical to a detached fresco from Florence, which depicts the same subject in half-length. The latter work is attributed to Tommaso del Mazza, Gerini’s sometime collaborator, and is now in the collection of the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon (Fig. 20). The fresco attributed to Tommaso, dated c. 1385-90, survives in poor condition with serious flaking and cracks, having been exposed to the elements in its original location on the façade of a house in the Borgo Allegrì in Florence (old street number 7242).²⁰⁹ Despite its current, damaged, state, it is clear that the fresco derives from the same design as the Datini Saint Christopher.

The Saint Christopher in the Avignon collection is clothed in a red mantle that is cinched at the collarbone and worn over a patterned robe. The excess material of the mantle is draped over his left arm, which is raised to support the Christ Child on his shoulder. His right hand holds a palm staff. As in the Datini fresco, Christ gently touches the saint’s head with His left hand while the right holds up a *mappa mundi*. Although the textile patterns differ between the two paintings, the cut of the robe worn by the Avignon Christ is the same as that worn by the Christ

²⁰⁷ Melis, 59. Melis, stating that “questo affresco [di San Cristoforo] fu ultimato dopo il gennaio 1394, da altre mani,” cites the archived document D, n. 698, *lettere Prato-Firenze*, F. Datini, 14.1.1394: “è venuto qua due giovani dipintori, per chonpiere il San Cristofano, che chominc(i)ò Nicholò dipintore”

Dunlop identifies the young painters as “garzoni.”

²⁰⁸ Melis, 59. Melis cites archived document D, n. 1092, *lettere Firenze-Prato*, Niccolò Gerini a F. Datini, 25.1.1392. It states: “Preghovi che mi ispacciatee di darmi i’ resto che debbo avere da vvoi dello lavoro che d’io v’òne fatto: sapete che gli è u’ mese e più che mi achomiatasti...Però vi vo’ preghare che vvi debbia piacere – se ssiete chontento alla iscritta che feci iscrivere a sSimone, presente Istoldo – della adimanda del detto lavoro.”

²⁰⁹ Barbara Deimling, “Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana),” 284.

Child in the Datini fresco, as seen in the fluted and scalloped sleeve that floats in the air before ending in a defined point. The pattern of Christ's incised halo decoration is also the same in both images.



Figure 20 Tommaso del Mazza, *Saint Christopher*, detached fresco, Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, c. 1385-90.

(Source: Ministère de la culture, France – base Joconde [online database], “Peinture murale: Sainte Christophe et l’Enfant Jesus, Tommaso del Mazza.”

http://www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/joconde_fr?ACTION=CHERCHER&FIELD_1=REF&VALUE_1=000PE012732.)

The visual connection between the two frescoes serves to further the professional ties that have already been established between Tommaso and Gerini. It is possible that the two artists worked from the same sheaf of sketches and designs during their employment in both Pisa and Prato. Since the fresco attributed to Tommaso was executed earlier, it is possible that he provided

Gerini with the design since there is no reference in Gerini's *conto* to the origin of the composition. The fact that Gerini may have used a design by Tommaso indicates that the latter painter may not have been simply Gerini's "assistant," as Piattoli defines the term *compagno*. It appears that Tommaso was more likely Gerini's collaborator.²¹⁰

The similarity between the two frescoes strengthens Barbara Deimling's argument that Tommaso was directly involved in the interior decoration of the Palazzo Datini. However, she does not establish a connection between the Saint Christopher in the Avignon collection and the one in the Palazzo Datini. Since, as was discussed earlier, Tommaso was unable to come to the palazzo during Datini's original call for artists, due to illness, perhaps he presented the design to the merchant as a gift to be executed by Gerini. This sign of good faith may have secured Tommaso a later commission with Datini, as the artist recovered and the interior decoration of the palace progressed.²¹¹

Origo identifies Saint Christopher's role as a guardian of the house, stating: "it was believed that before his martyrdom the Saint had prayed that wherever his body lay, 'no harm should come, either from hail or fire, famine or pestilence.'"²¹² Other scholars confirm this

²¹⁰ Piattoli, "Un mercante: Part 3," 544. Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)," 145. In her publication of "Documents and Authenticated Facts and Dates of Tommaso del Mazza," Deimling reproduces several letters from the Archive's folder 330 (letters from Florence to Francesco di Marco Datini, 1391) dated from June and July of that year in which Datini's agent Domenico di Cambio discusses the planned arrival of Tommaso del Mazza and Niccolò di Pietro Gerini to begin the interior decoration. The term *compagno* is used interchangeably for Tommaso and Gerini so that, in a letter dated June 25, 1391, Gerini is identified as the "chompagno" of Tomaso [sic], whereas in a letter dated July 15, Tommaso is described as the "chompagno" of "Nicholò dipintore."

²¹¹ Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 213-226, 220. In fact, Cavaciocchi observes that Datini was so pleased with Tommaso's work for him in 1384, as evidenced by a letter in which he describes the object as "a beautiful work and in lovely colors," that the merchant asked the painter several times to execute other works for him. This included panels and a fresco on the back of the palazzo's façade, although Tommaso was not always available due to prior commitments.

²¹² Origo, 229.

protective role. Romagnoli points out that the saint was frequently represented in private buildings to protect against *mala mors*, or sudden death.²¹³ Yet nowhere in the scholarship on the palazzo's decoration is it explained why Datini commissioned a Saint Christopher for the entrance of his home. Historical and visual precedent, however, provides a connection between the merchant as patron, the subject matter of the fresco, and its location in the palazzo.

Reverence for a pantheon of major and minor saints was ubiquitous in Italy.²¹⁴ Saints were depicted on a variety of media, including banners, panels, and buildings. Sacred images did not function simply as representations since it was believed that they contained the real presence, or served as a physical embodiment, of the saint depicted. These figures were not expected to oversee daily life passively, as it occurred before them, but rather to actively receive prayers, perform miraculous intercession, and provide protection. Individual saints were appealed because of protective attributes they had acquired in their lifetime (whether legendary or actual), posthumously, or in the process of their martyrdom. They were venerated publicly, but were also imported to the domestic sphere to witness, and bless, the daily lives of supplicants and honor significant occasions such as births, deaths, marriages, and even business transactions.

Ties between business and divine patronage were not unusual in this period, as the boundaries between the sacred and secular spheres were frequently blurred. In company correspondence, Datini opens with the invocation: "in the name of God" ("al nome del Dio") before outlining his transactions. Richard Marshall notes that this convention is found in many

²¹³ Margherita Romagnoli, "La dimora di un mercante pratese nel XIV secolo (II parte): La decorazione interna di Palazzo Datini," *Arte Cristiana*, vol. XCVII (Jan-Feb 2009), pp. 19-30, 24. Romagnoli states that "la figura del *San Cristoforo* [...] frequente raffigurazione in edifici privati per la sua funzione protettiva: era diffusa la credenza che il santo evitasse ai devoti la *mala mors*, ovvero la morte improvvisa che, impedendo l'ultima confessione, destinava l'anima alla dannazione eterna."

²¹⁴ The parameters of this thesis do not allow for an in-depth discussion of the saints' cults that were so pervasive in urban environments in this period. A fundamental study is André Vauchez's *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge* (Rome: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises

contemporary merchant documents, such as *ricordi*, *libri segreti* (“secret books” or diaries), and account books, from Prato and elsewhere. He poses a rhetorical question, asking: “Can the religious invocations at the beginning of each account book be interpreted as anything more than adherence to custom?”²¹⁵ Alick McLean also identifies an explicit merging of sacred and secular in merchant exchanges, stating:

The connection between faith in monetary transactions and religious faith is apparent in the financial records and commercial correspondence of Pratese merchants and shop owners, as late as that of the late fourteenth-century Francesco di Marco Datini. The letters often begin with the phrase ‘In the name of God and of Profit.’ Such a purposeful confusion of money and faith may be a characteristic element of the bourgeois economy.²¹⁶

Datini, fueled by both a commercial drive and his personal piety, did not see the two as mutually exclusive. Merchants appealed to divine figures, either in documents or through art patronage, to guarantee saintly intercession and ensure the success of business ventures, in addition to personal and familial interests. McLean argues that this symbolism was not unidirectional, as it was also “the most effective means to remind merchants of religious economic morality and the punishment for subverting it.”²¹⁷ The Christopher fresco, therefore, also functioned to remind Datini that if he conducted himself morally in the marketplace, and in the home, he might be rewarded both spiritually and financially.

By the Trecento, Saint Christopher was venerated in many city centers in Tuscany and

d’Athènes et de Rome, 241, 1981), published in English as *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²¹⁵ Richard Marshall, *The Local Merchants of Prato: Small Entrepreneurs in the Late Medieval Economy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 30, 56. Marshall notes that a number of ledgers, account books, and correspondence for merchants, brokers, and tradesmen contemporary to Datini survive in the Archivio di Stato Prato and the Biblioteca Roncioniana di Prato, but are often ignored in lieu of the more abundant Datini archives.

²¹⁶ Alick McLean, *Prato: Architecture, Piety, and Political Identity in a Tuscan City-State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 82. See also Raymond de Roover, *Business, Banking, and Economic Thought in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1974), 71. The original Italian reads: “A nome di Dio e guadangnio” (“In the name of God and of profit”).

the Marche.²¹⁸ A *statuto* (statute) of 1544 notes that in Siena, the saint's feast day of July 25th "was marked by carrying an offering of candles into the church of SS. Jacopo and Cristoforo, whence the procession moved on to the Cathedral to offer a palio of silk and candles[... a]nd, of course, the Palio was run."²¹⁹ The record states that the ruling is in accordance "with ancient custom" ("per antichissima consuetudine"), since the regulations had been imposed as early as 1200 ("le disposizioni che erano in vigore nel 1200 erano rimaste immutate").²²⁰

Worship for Saint Christopher in Italy, however, did not match the fervor that was shown in Dalmatia and Spain.²²¹ Yet reverence for the saint in Italy developed with the establishment of churches, monasteries, and confraternities in his name. Supplicants invoked his protection over difficult travel, illness, and sudden death; particularly along waterways and pilgrimage routes such as the *Via Francigena*.²²² A link between Christopher's importance in Dalmatia and in Prato rests in the fact that a community of Pratese merchants was based in the seaport city of Ragusa, today known as Dubrovnik, in Croatia. From their position on the Dalmatian coast, the Pratese engaged in trade with their native city and centers throughout southern Italy.²²³ Historically,

²¹⁷ McLean, 82.

²¹⁸ See George Kaftal, "St. Christopher," *Saints in Italian Art*, vol. 1 (Florence: Sansoni, 1952), 267-70.

²¹⁹ Alessandro Falassi and Giuliano Catoni, *Palio* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1983), 328. See also Diana Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City-states* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1996), 311.

²²⁰ Falassi and Catoni, 329. See also Giovanni Cecchini and Dario Neri, *Il Palio di Siena* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1958), 69, 70, 155. Cecchini and Neri cite the original Latin document, in which the passage dedicated to the palio of Saints James and Christopher emphasizes the "Vetustissimae constitutionis et consuetudinis est in posterumque perpetuo servandae, ut singulo quoque anno in die festi Assumptionis divae Virginis, in exaltationem et honorem sacratissimae Virginis praedictae, nec non in die sancti Ambrosii senensis et in die divorum Iacobi et Cristophori de mense iulii...ex aere fisci decernatur et constituatur auctoritate et officio quattuor Provisorum generalis Bicchernae et ipsorum thesaurarii [...]" (155)

See also Mario Ascheri, *L'Ultimo Statuto della Repubblica di Siena (1545)* (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati Siena, 1993), 374-5.

²²¹ Maria Maddalena Paolini and Laura Vanni, *Il Gigante Buono* (Fermignano: Edizioni Centro Studi "G. Mazzini," 2003), 10.

²²² Paolini and Vanni, 33; 43.

²²³ Marshall, 7-8; 27. Marshall refers to surviving documentation of the sons of doublet-maker Marco di Sandro, Sandro and Giuliano, born in 1379 and 1386 respectively; prominent international

Saint Christopher had been honored and depicted in Tuscany, yet it seems that Datini's devotion to the saint may also have been influenced by more recent mercantile exchanges of a cultural and religious nature.

The saint's iconography was widespread in Italy by the end of the fourteenth century. General knowledge of Saint Christopher's hagiography derived from the popular *Legenda Aurea* (*Golden Legend*) of the thirteenth century.²²⁴ In his foundational *Saints in Italian Art* (1952), George Kaftal provides an additional, later, hagiographical bibliography for the saint.²²⁵ In earlier traditions, Saint Christopher was depicted as a member of a dog-headed race, called Cynocephali in Greek, but he was later transformed into a giant in the iconography. As manuscripts of the *Legenda* circulated Christopher became known as a Christian martyr associated with the Fourteen Holy Helpers, a saintly cult invoked against illness and natural disasters.²²⁶ Written by Dominican friar Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1260-75), of Genova, the text popularized writings on the lives of the saints. Maria Maddalena Paolini points out that Voragine's hagiographies were not understood by contemporaries as "legends," as in the modern use of the word, but rather were seen as a collected history of the Latin tradition. Although largely fanciful, they functioned didactically to espouse Christian values and teach the faithful by example.²²⁷ Voragine's *Legenda* dominated Western hagiographical literature and had a great influence on the development of saintly imagery.

In his entry for Saint Christopher, Voragine writes about a man named Reprobis,

merchants: "Sandro remained in Prato and by his thirties was purchasing and exporting textiles to Giuliano, who for many years made his headquarters at Ragusa on the Dalmatian coast. Giuliano also maintained a lively trade in products from southern Italy and later engaged in moneylending at Ragusa." The expatriate merchant community in Dalmataia became large enough to justify the election of its own Consul in the early Quattrocento. See also Cherubini, vol. 1, 433-4.

²²⁴ Paolini and Vanni, 11. The *Legenda* derived from earlier Germanic imagery and traditions of the Eastern Church.

²²⁵ Kaftal, 269.

²²⁶ Paolini and Vanni, 11.

meaning “outcast,” who was later named Christophorus, or “Christ-bearer.” He is described as “a man of prodigious size – he was twelve feet tall – and fearsome of visage.” Voragine cites unidentified “ancient” accounts in order to explain how Christopher sought to serve Christ.²²⁸ The giant used his strength to become a ferryman, but when a child asked to be carried across the river the journey was difficult as the waves became rough and the child’s weight increased. In confronting his passenger, he was told: “Don’t be surprised, Christopher! You were not only carrying the whole world, you had him who created the world upon your shoulders! I am Christ, your king, to whom you render service.”²²⁹ Christopher’s staff blossomed, to indicate Christ’s presence, and he converted to Christianity. He then went to Lycia, to convert others, but was tortured and beheaded there by the king. In describing Christopher’s martyrdom, St. Ambrose of Milan wrote: “The saint besought [divine] forgiveness and by his supplications obtained the cure of diseases and infirmities.”²³⁰ Therefore, through the *Legenda*, the saint’s role as a protector of travelers with difficult itineraries, like his own, was secured.²³¹

It is possible that Datini’s fresco was executed to reflect Voragine’s literary description. The scale of the fresco dominates the entry hall and emphasizes the giant’s proportions. The combined presence of the flowering staff, the Christ Child, and pool of water collapses the timeframe established by Voragine and concentrates the text within a single moment. An inventory from the Palazzo Datini shows that the merchant owned several manuscripts, including

²²⁷ Paolini and Vanni, 31.

²²⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, Vol. 2. William Granger Ryan, trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 10-11.

²²⁹ Voragine, 12.

²³⁰ Voragine, 14.

²³¹ Paolini and Vanni, 12. Vanni states that “Ben si comprende allora come San Cristoforo sia legato soprattutto alla protezione dispensata a viandanti e viaggiatori nel percorrere itinerari difficili e pericolosi, anche se invocato contro la morte improvvisa, la peste, il mal d’occhi e quindi spesso rappresentato in compagnia di altri santi e nel corso dei secoli assunto a protezione di altre categorie [...]”

a “big book of the *Life of the Saints*, bound in red leather.”²³² Its value is emphasized by its costly binding, whereas other books in the merchant’s collection were simply protected by parchment or boards. At one point, Mazzei asked Datini to loan this “fine” volume, and another record shows that he later lent it to Frate Piero de’ Frati degli Agnoli.²³³ It is unclear if this book was, in fact, a copy of Voragine’s text. Yet the friar’s hagiographies were widely distributed in both Latin and the vernacular and because of their popularity they generated many imitations. The high demand of Datini’s book, with his friends and associates, emphasizes the popularity of the subject matter. In the Datini fresco of Christopher, despite careful reference to a number of details from the literary and visual traditions, one element of Voragine’s hagiography is contradicted. The erect posture of the saint, while retrospectively referencing the stiffness of medieval figures, does not correspond to the weight of Christ and the world that Christopher is said to carry on his shoulders.²³⁴ However, representations of Saint Christopher standing solemn and erect were common in the Trecento, as more realistic depictions showing Christopher bent and fatigued from Christ’s weight do not appear in the iconography until the mid-Quattrocento.

A contemporary representation of Saint Christopher is found in the Palazzo Davanzati. The residence was built in the late fourteenth century by the Davizzi family, wealthy members of the *Arte della Lana* (Wool Guild), and later owned by the merchant Davanzati family (Fig. 21). This Christopher is also situated close to an entry way. Depicted outside the *sala grande* on the *primo piano*, the fresco faces the stairwell of the interior courtyard. In this location, it would

²³² Origo, 276.

²³³ Origo, 277-78.

²³⁴ Paolini and Vanni, 14. The authors cite, as examples, the detached fresco of Saint Christopher in the Chiesa di San Francesco a Pesaro, attributed to the Maestro della Beata Serafina, active in the first half of the fourteenth century, and the fresco by Antonio da Fabriano for the Palazzo Bigonzetti-Baravelli, Fabriano, in 1457.

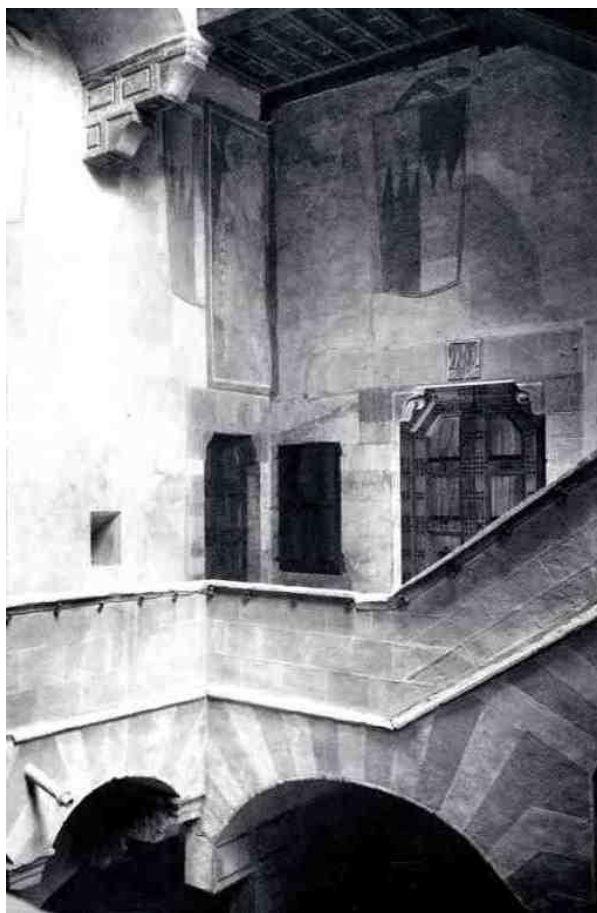


Figure 21 *Saint Christopher*, fresco, courtyard, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpa*, Firenze: Centro Di, 1994, p. 37.)

have been visible to both family and visitors.²³⁵ Christopher is standing in the river. He supports the Christ Child on his left shoulder and his right hand grasps a palm-staff, topped by densely tapered leaves. A red mantle, clasped at the throat, drapes over the saint's shoulders and exposes a lining of vair – a traditional heraldic representation using patches of squirrel or ermine fur in a tessellated pattern of blue and white.

²³⁵ Museo dell'antica casa fiorentina, *Palace Davanzati, Florence: Historical notes, description of the palace*. (Florence: G. & R. Obsner, no date), 24. See also Louis Conrad Rosenberg, *The*

The fact that two merchant palazzi depict Christopher in their entry halls reveals the significance of the saint's role in safeguarding travel. This protection had great importance for the merchant class. Surviving fresco fragments show that other contemporary merchant residences contained similar imagery and Luciano Berti states that the practice of depicting Saint Christopher, as a source of protection, was widespread in Tuscan households.²³⁶ Most examples have now been lost, due to circumstances of either deterioration or destruction.²³⁷ Yet a "gigantic image" of Saint Christopher, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, can be found in the private quarters of the *podestà* at the Palazzo Comunale in San Gimignano. A few examples also survive throughout Tuscany and the Marche.²³⁸

The convention of depicting Christopher near entrances stems from a long association of his image with transitional spaces such as doors, gates, and hallways, because of his protective role over travelers. Byrne explains the meditational, didactic, and thaumaturgic functions of sacred imagery in such spaces, stating:

Because of their fixed position, they lent a degree of sacrality to the places they inhabited, yet they did not belong in places where questionable or defiling behavior might occur. Hence their presence in churches and graveyards, street corners and byways; hence also their absence from bedrooms, where improper sexual conduct might take place, and business offices where questionable deals might be consummated. In homes like Datini's these ever-vigilant protectors

Davanzati Palace, Florence, Italy: A Restored Palace of the Fourteenth Century (New York: Paul Wenzel and Maurice Krakow, 1922), 11.

²³⁶ Luciano Berti, *Il Museo di Palazzo Davanzati a Firenze* (Italia: Electa Editrice, 1971), 11. Berti states: "Dinanzi alla rampa di accesso delle scale, sul ballatoio del primo piano, è affrescata l'immagine di S. Cristoforo (secolo XV), che era molto diffusa nelle case e che aveva valore protettivo."

²³⁷ Romagnoli, Part 2, 29. Romagnoli notes a similar image of Saint Christopher near the entrance at the Palazzo Beni in Gubbio, Umbria, built at the end of the fourteenth century. See also Paolini and Vanni, 37. Following the Council of Trent (1545-63), the authenticity of the cult of Saint Christopher was questioned and many images were destroyed. Paolini states that "il popolo però continuava la sua devozione nei confronti del santo anche se diminuivano le chiese, gli oratori e le confraternite a lui dedicate e molte immagini si andavano perdendo." For a discussion of the destruction (and subsequent reconstruction) of the historic center of Florence in the late nineteenth century, see Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpa* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1994), 21-29.

²³⁸ C. Jean Campbell, *The Game of Courting and the Art of the Commune of San Gimignano, 1290-1320* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 52.

found their places in areas of transition – hallways and doors – guarding and blessing inhabitants and visitors alike as they came and went, but keeping their gaze averted from the perversed, which could be expected to occur elsewhere. The sacred was not, however, entirely banned from places in the house where decidedly secular activities took place. To enter temporarily and sacralize the otherwise worldly was an important function [...]²³⁹

This further explains the placement of Saint Christopher in Datini's entry hall. In fact, all of the sacred imagery in the palazzo is concentrated in the front hall. Various inventories record that Datini had moveable panels of religious subjects throughout the house, yet these smaller objects could be closed off from provocative activity with the closing of a curtain or panel door.²⁴⁰ The permanence of the frescoes, which are embedded in the architectural fabric and open to all viewers, means they could not have been located in the merchant's private rooms, where they would have risked exposure to any potentially "questionable" activity.

Saint Christopher's value as a guardian of merchants is further articulated in the *proem* to Libro I of the *statuti* for the *Collegio dei Mercanti* of Lucca from 1376. Here, Christopher is invoked as the "glorious martyr [...] protector of the college and university of merchants in the city of Lucca," in order to watch over officials implementing ordinances in the districts of Lucca.²⁴¹ Libro III of the statutes reinforces the saint's importance by stating that the College "could congregate in no place other than the church of San Cristoforo or its own administrative court."²⁴² In this period, the saint gradually began to be included in more civic administrative documents and was increasingly distanced from his Christological origins. Christopher's

²³⁹ Joseph Patrick Byrne, Francesco Datini, "Father of Many": piety, charity and patronage in early modern Tuscany (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Reprints, 1989), 246.

²⁴⁰ Romagnoli, Part 1, 416-17. Origo, 239-240.

²⁴¹ A. Manchini, U. Dorini and E. Lazzareschi, eds., *Lo Statuto della Corte dei Mercanti in Lucca del MCCCLXXVI* (Firenze: Leo Olschki Editore, 1927), 9, 10, 82. The editors cite the document: "[...] et del glorioso martire messer sancto Cristofano protettori del collegio et università de mercadanti della città di Lucha [sic], e di tutta la corte celestiale [...]" See also Webb, 105.

²⁴² Manchini et al., XI. The editors state that "Sebbene il Collegio dei Mercanti fosse regolarmente riconosciuto ed i suoi statuti approvati (lib. III, cap. 27) fu imposto che in nessun altro luogo

protective faculties were adapted to suit the needs of the merchant class and veneration for the saint was framed in an urban context.

As historian Diana Webb points out, “by the latter half of the thirteenth century, some city statutes included detailed regulations” for carrying out appropriate tributes and ceremonial rites which now included the participation of civic authorities, allowing them to exert socio-political influence in a way that further blurred sacred and secular boundaries.²⁴³ The increasingly civic aspect of these practices, and the urbanization, or “folklorization,” of the perceived function of saints, to the point where “the cult of saints was vulgarized,” is discussed in detail by André Vauchez.²⁴⁴ Vauchez points out the “inextricable overlappings of the sacred and the profane,” in the fourteenth century, so that “in late-medieval Italian communes, cults of saints were so thoroughly integrated into social life that they became a fundamental element of it,” removed from the encroachments of the clergy and the Church.²⁴⁵ Vauchez states, like Webb, that the documentation for this shift “is found mainly in communal statutes and *Libri di riformanze* [Books of Decrees].”²⁴⁶ Entries found in these sources show that civic authorities were increasingly involved in controlling the public practice of showing devotion to the saints, including the use of their images.

The *statuti* of Vicenza, from 1264, establish a precedent for Christopher’s new urban presence, as well as a possible explanation for his placement at the entrance of the Palazzo Datini. The *Primus Liber* of the statute identifies that the saint’s image was depicted on the façade of the

potesse congregarsi se non nella chiesa di S. Cristofano, o nella propria Curia “et tunc solum pro factis mercadantie et non alijs;” [...]

²⁴³ Webb, 3.

²⁴⁴ André Vauchez discusses the development of civic cults in “Patronage des saints et religion civique dans l’Italie communale à la fin du Moyen Age,” in *Patronage and Public in the Trecento*, V. Moleta, ed. (Florence, 1986), pp. 59-80. An English translation is available as “Patronage of Saints and Civic Religion in the Italy of the Communes,” in *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, M. J. Schneider, trans. (Notre Dame, 1993), pp. 153-68.

²⁴⁵ Vauchez, “Patronage of Saints,” 167.

city gates and, later on, it was common for urban centers to have images of Saint Christopher crowning the entrances.²⁴⁷ Webb states that “at both Vicenza and Verona in the late thirteenth century, St Christopher, among other saints, was to be depicted over the gates of the city, presumably to exercise his well-known protective role over travelers.” The *statuti* of Osimo, from 1308, indicate that Christopher was to be painted on the gates, “so that honour may be paid [...] by passers-by,” and in 1424, he was depicted on the city walls of Camerino.²⁴⁸ The saint was also depicted on confraternity buildings, hospitals, and convents, where rooms often were reserved for travelers, including pilgrims and merchants.²⁴⁹ Though it did not operate in a comparable way, Datini’s palazzo was a site that welcomed merchant visitors of its own.

The veneration of Christopher had sacred origins, yet because parts of the saint’s hagiography were adaptable to secular needs, he was integrated into the everyday practices of the city and its inhabitants. He was a public defender, overseeing the daily movement of citizens who traveled through the city gates, and a private patron, keeping a watchful eye on Datini, his family, friends and associates. The saint’s protective attributes could also extend to the business and commercial interests of the merchant. Every time he descended the staircase, or passed through the doors of his palazzo, Datini would see the fresco of Saint Christopher and celebrate

²⁴⁶ Vauchez, “Patronage of Saints,” 153.

²⁴⁷ Fedele Lampertico, ed., *Statuti del Comune di Vicenza, MCCLXIV* (Venezia: A Spese della Società, 1886), 3-7. Lampertico cites the original Latin document: “*Capitulum de picturis faciendis in quinque portis Civitatis Vicentie*. (3): Itam stat. et or. quod in quinque portis Civitatis principalibus fiant picture ad honorem beate Virginis, beati Michaelis archangeli, sancti Christofori, beatis Petri apostolic et beatorum sanctorum Felicis et Fortunati [...]” He continues that Professore Remigio Sabbadini, in an article from 1884, “Erroneamente poi si è letto *Carpofori* in vece di *Christofori*. L’invocazione <beatorum Martyrum Leoncii et Carpofoi> venne aggiunta nel proemio del 1311. Quanto alle Porte della Città, si spiega benissimo l’immagine del Santo, che era schermo dei viandanti, e dalla peste.” See also Paolini and Vanni, 17-18.

²⁴⁸ Webb, 124-125. André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècle du Moyen Age* (Rome: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 241, 1981). Published in English as *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*. J. Birrell, trans. (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 450. Vauchez notes “Salimbene’s diatribes against the inhabitants of the towns of Lombardy, Emilia and Romagna, who covered their walls with portraits of popular but uncanonized saints, with the approval of the secular clergy (*Cronica*, II, p. 733).

the goods, correspondence, and agents that had survived arduous journeys, by land or sea, to arrive at his international *fondaci*. These journeys would have been particularly difficult during times of political unrest or plague. Datini might also appeal to the saint for future protection over the shipping of merchandise, or as an individual commuting between his Pratese home and his Florentine office. At the Palazzo Datini, Saint Christopher was a figure to be called upon in times of need as well as celebration.

Blessing Christ

In addition to the decorative motifs of imitation marble and geometric patterns on the walls; *gigli* (lilies or fleur-de-lis) on the ceiling; and the figure of Saint Christopher, already discussed; the entrance hall contains a fresco of a *Cristo benedicente* (Blessing Christ) (See Ch. 1, Fig. 5). He is depicted in half-length in a lunette situated on the wall adjacent to the Saint Christopher. The lunette is bordered by imitation marble panels in green and red, framed by a white ground, all of which is severely deteriorated. A pale tint to the surrounding plaster indicates that the wall was once painted a monochromatic green, a design that is echoed throughout the palazzo.²⁵⁰ Christ's face is framed by stiff, broad, blond-brown curls that fall close to the nape of the neck before spilling across the shoulders in defined coils. The arrangement is reminiscent of hairstyles of the Giottesque and Orcagnesque traditions and its static nature may derive from ancient Greco-Roman sculpture. Christ's youthful, flushed, cheeks are covered by a sparse mustache and beard.

Christ is depicted wearing a pink robe, which deepens to crimson as the fabric folds. A

²⁴⁹ Paolini and Vanni, 35.

²⁵⁰ Origo, 229, 231. Dunlop, 33. Romagnoli, 19. Bemporad, 24. While Bemporad notes that the walls missing original fresco work remain a neutral color, Origo cites an inventory of 1405 which identified *la loggia della corte* as painted green, rather than frescoed, while Datini's "real office," located opposite the palazzo, was painted "grass-green."

yellow lapel secures the robe below the collarbone and it is worn over a white undergarment. A cream colored mantle, trimmed in yellow and green, has been draped over the left shoulder. Christ's left hand grips a golden orb and provides a direct visual connection to the Christ Child in the Saint Christopher fresco. The right hand is raised in benediction with the index and middle fingers extended.²⁵¹ The pigment from the cross-nimbus that surrounds Christ's head has been lost, although traces of gold indicate that the halo was once covered in gold leaf. The *intonaco* (plaster) is incised with radial lines, to provide texture, and the points of the cross have holes in the plaster which, at one time, may have held colored glass. These pseudo gemstones, along with the gold, would have reflected ambient light, giving the fresco an impression of depth and movement.

Compared to the Saint Christopher, the painting of the Blessing Christ survives in poor condition. The paint surface is badly deteriorated, with significant flaking and fading. Like much of the interior decoration of the palazzo, the fresco was concealed under thick layers of whitewash up until the restoration of the 1950s.²⁵² After being uncovered, it was subsequently cleaned with a solvent of diluted acetone and sealed with a vinyl resin varnish.²⁵³ The mural was retouched during the course of this restoration, in a way that altered the fresco. Christ's fingers, which are extended in blessing, look plastic and oddly elongated while the hand holding the orb is awkwardly depicted.²⁵⁴

The background of the lunette is a murky black-brown with remnants of blue pigment. Severe flaking has also exposed the underlying plaster. The original ground was likely composed

²⁵¹ Clifford Davidson. *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2001), 85-86, 139, 145.

²⁵² Bemporad, 24. Bemporad notes that "le decorazione erano nascoste da uno spesso strato di calce, a volte durissimo, che è stato rimosso completamente a secco."

²⁵³ Bemporad, 24. "Eseguita questa operazione si è proceduto all' opera di consolidamento con resina vinilica, asportandone poi la parte eccedente con solventi, quali l'alcool, l'acetone, il diluente."

of azurite, which has degraded to reveal the black under painting or has discolored due to the presence of a darkened varnish.²⁵⁵ It is unclear if this is the result of the deterioration of the original pigments or the intervention of later artist-restorers who may have applied glues, oils, or varnishes, which also discolor over time. Blue pigments of lapis or azure of high quality and expense required painstaking preparation and were usually reserved for images of elevated figures, such as Christ or the Virgin, as a means of honoring the subject. It seems that the less costly *azzurro* (azure) was used in many of the frescoes in Palazzo Datini.²⁵⁶ The pigment has a tendency, over time, to react to humidity and moisture, producing black stains.

The pigments used for Christ's garments have also suffered. The lapel of the robe has flaked to reveal the underlying plaster ground while the mantle's hem, once edged in yellow and green, is now mottled. The mantle and lapel both have areas of dark discoloration. The golden orb has no overlying text to identify it as a *mappa mundi*, though it is commonly associated with the iconography of the Blessing Christ. A deep crack runs the length of the right arch of the lunette while a horizontal split runs through the center, across Christ's chest and shoulders and through his raised right hand. This second fracture has left an exposed plaster scar across the work, which is emphasized by the loss of pigment surrounding it.

The poor condition of the Blessing Christ fresco, coupled with the retouched paint

²⁵⁴ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 71. Cole observes that "the two raised fingers of the right hand seem to have been extended at a later date and part of the left hand has been overpainted."

²⁵⁵ Paulo and Laura Mora with Paul Philippot, *Conservation of Wall Paintings* (London: Butterworths, 1984), 66; 114. Mora, Mora, and Philippot state that "the examination of earlier works of art (at least up to the fourteenth century) shows that the blue background often consisted of a layer of black (charcoal) painted *a fresco* followed by a layer of azurite applied with lime...It is also possible that blues were applied in tempera on a black background painted in fresco, as in Italy during the Trecento." Changes in the color value of lapis and azurite pigments are attributed to light and humidity: "Azurite [...] may be changed to copper sulphide by prolonged exposure to moisture and sulphur dioxide producing black stains." See also Rutherford J Gettens and George L. Stout, "Pigments and Inert Materials," *Painting Materials, A Short Encyclopedia* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), 95, 166.

²⁵⁶ Melis, 59.

surface, is further complicated by a lack of direct documentation. This has made it difficult to provide a confident attribution for the painting. No direct record survives for the work and there is no reference to a related painting in any of the other artists' *conti*. Cole attributes the compositional design to Agnolo Gaddi but argues that the finished fresco is crude compared to the master's earlier works. He assigns the final execution to Bartolomeo di Bertozzi. This attribution is based on comparison with a fresco of the same subject for the Cappella della Cintola in the Duomo of Prato, dated c. 1395, which is positively attributed to Agnolo Gaddi (Fig. 22).²⁵⁷

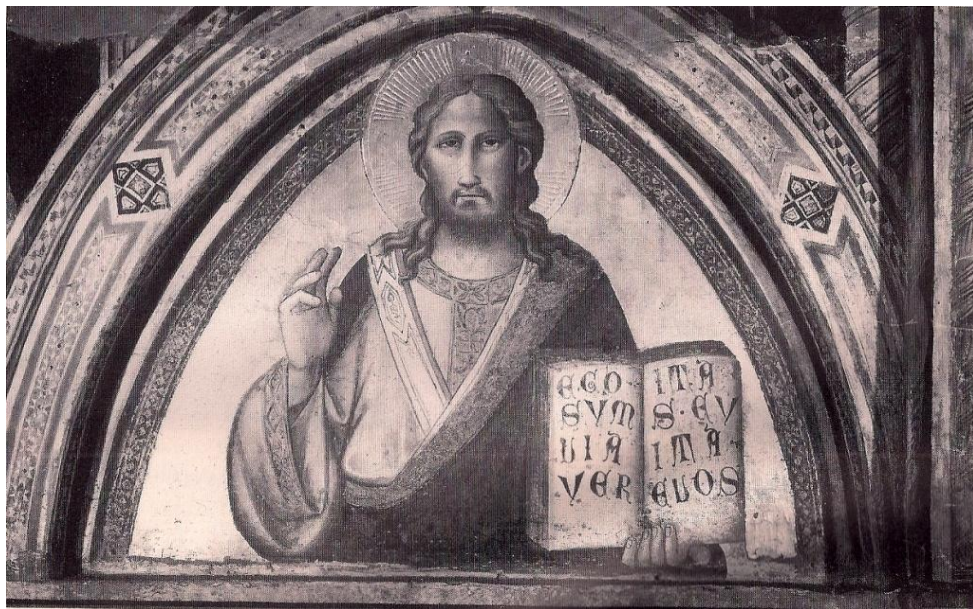


Figure 22 Agnolo Gaddi, *Blessing Christ*, fresco, Cappella della Sacra Cintola, Duomo di Prato, Prato, 1392-1395.

(Source: Giovanni Cherubini, ed., *Prato, storia di una città 1*: Ascesa e declino del centro medievale (dal Mille al 1494)*, Vol. 2, Comune di Prato: Le Monnier, 1991, Fig. 187.)

²⁵⁷ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 71. Salvini, 134, *Tavola 36*. Compositional and stylistic similarities to depictions of Christ by Taddeo Gaddi, including the Santa Maria Nuova *Resurrection* and the *Last Supper* in the Santa Croce Refectory, reveal the visual inheritance of the artist depicting the Blessing Christ at Palazzo Datini. The features of Christ in this fresco also closely resemble those of a *Baptism* by Gerini, dated 1387, now in the National Gallery, London. See Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 171-4, 185.

While the two murals share stylistic and compositional similarities, Cole's attribution is unconfirmed.

As has already been discussed, the more recent scholarship of Barbara Deimling has assigned authorship of the Blessing Christ to Tommaso del Mazza, an attribution that is now widely accepted in the scholarship.²⁵⁸ Tommaso's work is defined by applications of gold and vibrant color, attention to surface detail, and a highly stylized manner that prioritizes symbolism over realism. These elements are all present in the Blessing Christ fresco. Oddly, while Simonetta Cavaciocchi also attributes the work to Tommaso, she argues that the painting was completed in 1383, during the early stages of the building of the palazzo.²⁵⁹ Unfortunately, she does not provide a reason for this proposal.

An understanding of the fresco depends on an accurate evaluation of the original use of the ground floor rooms, which has been highly debated in the scholarship. Cole states that the lunette is situated above the door to Datini's office and, therefore, it served to contribute to the "iconography" of the room by blessing the merchant and his clients as they passed through the door.²⁶⁰ This suggestion is supported by Barbara Deimling, who states that:

The appearance of an image of Christ over the entrance to the room in which Datini conducted his business affairs, and ran his far-flung mercantile and banking empire, is characteristic of the religious attitude of merchants in the later middle ages. Since their professional activity comprised one of the forms of conduct explicitly banned by the church, the exaction of interest [usury],

²⁵⁸ Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)," 306. The Blessing Christ was first attributed to the Master of Saint Verdiana by Federico Zeri and Miklós Boskovits in 1975 and later Luciano Bellosi in 1991. Richard Fremantle argued that the fresco was by Bartolomeo di Bertozzo (1975), whom Giovanni Cherubini identifies with the Master of Saint Verdiana. The Master of Santa Verdiana has since been identified by Deimling as Tommaso del Mazza, a conclusion that is now widely accepted. For the evolution of this identification see Deimling, 136-142.

²⁵⁹ Cavaciocchi, Simonetta. "The Merchant and Building," 138, 218. Cavaciocchi states that "the fresco of Christ giving grace on the main entrance of the ground floor room probably date to this first stage of work." She cites a letter identified as Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, Firenze-Prato, Lorenzo di Matteo Boninsegni, 11.9.1383. Yet while the letter discusses the preparation of walls for painting, neither the subject matter of the painting nor the identity of the painter are specified.

²⁶⁰ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 71.

they were particularly concerned about the salvation of their souls. Through pious deeds they sought to compensate for the intrinsic sinfulness of their everyday life.²⁶¹

In fact, an inventory of 1405 does specify that one of the ground floor rooms functioned as an office. Even though Datini hosted clients in his home, it is difficult to imagine that one of the largest rooms in the palazzo was reserved as an office space.²⁶² The identification of this room is complicated by Origo's statement that a room on the *primo piano*, listed as "Francesco's office," was small and doubled as a storeroom. What Origo identifies as his "real office" was a warehouse in the property complex situated across the street from the palazzo. In addition, Datini had a central office in Florence. Origo cites an inventory of 1397 that describes the warehouse office as containing "four writing-desks – one 'with a cover,' and one 'with a little chest, in which Francesco keeps his writings.'"²⁶³ Dunlop identifies the room off of the entrance hall as a *camera terrena*, or ground-floor room, and not as an office. However, she does agree with the proposals, of both Cole and Deimling, that the fresco served to stress Datini's piety.²⁶⁴

Though Christ's body and head are positioned frontally, His eyes are averted to the left. Rather than addressing the viewers that pass in front of, or through, the door over which the fresco is situated, Christ's gaze is directed at the palazzo entrance and the visitors that cross the threshold. This suggests that the function of the fresco was to bless relatives and friends leaving the worldly streets of Prato and stepping into the familial environment of the merchant, rather than explicitly addressing a select audience of Datini's clients, as Cole argues. The hallway served as a semi-public space and the ground floor rooms were made available to a number of

²⁶¹ Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)," 306.

²⁶² Origo, 229. Origo points out that the 1405 inventory for "the rooms on the ground floor included an office, a small cellar, a guest-room with two beds, and the loggia called, to distinguish it from the upstairs one, *la loggia della corte*."

²⁶³ Origo, 231. Dunlop, 17. Dunlop corroborates that "at one end of the Datini property was the main commercial office," opposite the palazzo and garden.

²⁶⁴ Dunlop, 21, 22.

non-mercantile guests over the years. In addition to friends and family, this included Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua in 1392, Venetian ambassador Leonardo Dandolo in 1393, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly in 1409, and, most notably, Louis of Anjou, titular King of Naples, who visited in 1409 and 1410.²⁶⁵

The redirected gaze also ensures that Christ's attention is not directed at the stairway, across the corridor from the fresco, which ascends to the private quarters of the house. This reasserts Byrne's argument that sacred images could not preside over areas that might be subject to potentially questionable acts, such as sexual encounters and financial or political dealings, as these inappropriate exchanges threatened to subvert the sacrosanct presence of the divine figures. Therefore, the position of the Christ fresco, between the stairs to the family's private quarters and Datini's office, seems unsuitable. Yet recent scholarship has identified the room as the *camera delle due letta* ("room with two beds"), a title that questions its former categorization as an office. If this reading is correct, the primary function of the Blessing Christ fresco would have been, in conjunction with the Saint Christopher, to sacralize the threshold of the palazzo and welcome a variety of visitors – family, friends, clients, and associates – as guests in the merchant's home.

Forest Scenes Populated with Birds and Other Wildlife (The room to the right of the entry hall, called the *camera delle due letta*)

The two main rooms of the *piano terrena* (ground floor) are located at the front of the house and are accessed from the entry hall. The frescoes in these rooms survive in varied condition. The room on the right, with large forest scenes, is entered by the door over which the Blessing Christ lunette is situated. As noted earlier, the function of this room has been debated in the scholarship. An understanding of its original use is dependent upon information found in the

²⁶⁵ Dunlop, 37.

surviving inventories.

Cole states, citing Origo, that “from an inventory of 1405 it is clear that this was an office, and it is from here that the merchant must have conducted a great deal of his business.”²⁶⁶

Yet Origo, in discussing a list of the inventoried rooms, does not distinguish the office.

Bemporad identifies this room the *sala dello scrittoio* (“writing room”).²⁶⁷ Dunlop simply categorizes the room beyond the Blessing Christ as the *camera terrena* and does not define it as the merchant’s office since, contrary to Bemporad, she calls the room across the hall the *camera dello scrittoio*.²⁶⁸ This correction is accepted by Romagnoli, who also argues that the room to the left of the entry, with lunettes of hunting scenes, is the *camera dello scrittoio*. She corroborates her statement with the inventory of 1399, which defines the left-hand room as the *camera terrena delle scritture*, and of 1405, which she says, contrary to Cole, calls that same room the *chamera dello scrittoio terrena*. This is further supported by a *conto* from 1406 which identifies the room as the *chamera dove si scrive*.²⁶⁹ These identifications invalidate Cole’s argument that the room on the left of the entry was the guest room (“la camera degli ospiti”).²⁷⁰ If the murals of the two rooms are to be examined and compared iconographically, the decoration of the room to the left seems more appropriate as an office space, or *sala delle udienze*, as Bemporad calls it, since the assemblage of identifiable birds and wildlife could be read as symbolic imagery directed at

²⁶⁶ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 65. Origo, 229. Cole cites Origo’s observation that “According to an inventory dated 1405, the rooms on the ground floor included an office, a small cellar, a guest-room with two beds, and the loggia [...]”

²⁶⁷ Bemporad, *Tavole* 27-28.

²⁶⁸ Dunlop, 22.

²⁶⁹ Romagnoli, Part 1, 414, 417. The *conto* is for the stonemason named Goro, who worked for Datini for over twenty-four years.

²⁷⁰ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 76. Cole identifies this room left of the entry as “la camera terrena” – the identification Dunlop had given to the room on the right. He supports this by referring again to Origo’s citation of the 1405 inventory which problematically does not distinguish the listed rooms. See also Romagnoli, Part 1, 414.

Datini's associates, who would have been the primary viewing audience.²⁷¹ Yet, the lack of surviving furnishings makes it difficult to identify positively the original functions of these rooms. Romagnoli's recent work has labeled the room on the right as the *camera delle due letta* and on the left as the *camera dell'uno letto* ("room with one bed"), based on the contents listed in the surviving inventories. These names are also recognized by the Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi and will be used in this thesis.

In the *camera delle due letta*, the ceiling is decorated with fleur-de-lis on blue ground and four Datini and Bandini *stemme*, enclosed in quatrefoils, are situated at the crossing of the groined vault. At the base of the wall, a band of rich green, punctuated by Datini and Bandini *stemme* and framed by geometric patterns in red, white, and green, encircles the room. It is topped by a *trompe l'oeil* border of crenellated marble with imitation marble panels on white ground, largely lost, below. The wall space is dominated by four expansive lunettes depicting a comprehensive forest scene (Figs. 23-24). Tree branches extend and intertwine and the trunks are aligned in staggered fashion. Cole notes that "the immediate foreground of the landscape is occupied by forest wildlife [including] storks [...] and other animals."²⁷² (Fig. 25) Yet the long-legged wading birds, possibly egrets, ibis, or herons, that populate the forest floor seem out of place in this habitat and are accompanied by the unlikely presence of a grey tabby cat eyeing a nearby blackbird (Fig. 26, see also Ch. 1, Fig. 7).

²⁷¹ Bemporad, *Tavole* 25-26.

²⁷² Cole, "Interior Decoration," 66.



Figure 23 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, fresco, *camera delle due letta*, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Regione Toscana - Toscana Musei, "Palazzo Datini, Prato," http://www.cultura.toscana.it/musei/case_della_memoria/scheda_datini.shtml.)



Figure 24 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, detail, fresco, *camera delle due letta*, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Bruce Cole, "The Interior Decoration of the Palazzo Datini in Prato," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 13, Bd., H. 1/2 (Dec. 1967), pp. 61-82, 65. Photo © Bazzechi.)



Figure 25 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, detail of bird, fresco, *camera delle due letti*, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)



Figure 26 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, detail of cat, fresco, *camera delle due letta*, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

The birds perched atop the trees, including a magpie with its distinctive white breast and long black tail feathers, seem more suitable for the environment (Fig. 27). The room contains many birds of colorful and distinctly patterned plumage. The variations suggest particular breeds and encourage an iconographic reading. As art historian Richard Klingender points out, animal imagery was increasingly realistic and identifiable in this period.²⁷³ Rich in meaning, it conveyed both emotional content and symbolic associations. The unusual juxtaposition of the forest landscape with waterfowl and domesticated animals indicates that the artists at the palazzo were not concerned with accurate representations that were true to nature. As well, there is no record

indicating that Datini requested the depiction of specific breeds with symbolic contexts. The inclusion of so many birds seems to have been dependent upon the creativity and initiative of the artists. Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, for example, arrived at the palazzo with a draughtsman's sample book of images.²⁷⁴ These collected designs served as a measure of the quality of an artist's craftsmanship and range of ability in pictorial design. It seems that at the Palazzo Datini, the



Figure 27 Bartolomeo di Bertozzo with Agnolo, Trees with birds and wildlife, detail of birds, fresco, *camera delle due letta*, Palazzo Datini, 1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

²⁷³ For information on bird and animal symbolism in this period see chapters 10 and 12 of Francis Klingender, *Animals in art and thought to the end of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1971), 339.

²⁷⁴ I.B. Supino, "Una Ricordanza Inedita di Francesco di Marco Datini," *Rivista d'arte*, 5:9/12 (1907), pp. 134-38, 136. Datini notes in the *ricordanza* for Gaddi and Bartolomeo that the latter arrived with "rechò molti asepj di charte."

artists sought to create the impression of a lush and lively wilderness brought indoors that would function as a diversion from the urban environment outside the palazzo.

Traditionally, scholars attribute the decoration of this room to Bartolomeo di Bertozzo, with Agnolo Gaddi, citing various documents.²⁷⁵ Dunlop references the *ricordanza* published by Supino, in which the artists request payment for work completed in the “chamera terena” [sic].²⁷⁶ In the document they are identified simply as Bartolomeo and Angniolo [sic], but Supino has inserted the artists’ surnames. Romagnoli cites a *conto*, published in abridged form by Melis, that identifies Agnolo and Bartolomeo as responsible for decorations of yellow lilies on an azure ground, heraldic arms, and trees.²⁷⁷ Arrigo may have been involved in painting ornamental details in the same room, although it is unclear if this was during the decorative program of 1391.²⁷⁸ Romagnoli describes the completed mural as “a rich garden with fruit trees and birds.”²⁷⁹ The identification of the mural as a garden, rather than a forest, is supported by the fact that Datini’s own garden, which was filled with exotic wildlife such as peacocks and a “thorny pig” (*porco spinoso*), as well as flowers, and citrus trees, was situated immediately outside of this room.²⁸⁰

The large scale of the painted trees encourages the viewer’s gaze to sweep through the

²⁷⁵ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 65. Dunlop, 22. Romagnoli, Part 2, 24.

²⁷⁶ Dunlop, 22, 227. Supino, 138. The *ricordanza* states “per la chamera terena, che vi penarono suso meno di xv dì, ma contiamo 15, adomandono lire lxxvj solid vj den. Diij a mie spese e mie’ cholori, come sapete che lire ciento o più verebe che la pari di questa, che credo non vadi meno, che questa mi vene meno che la metà.” The decorative scheme for the room is not described.

²⁷⁷ Romagnoli, Part 2, 24. Melis, 59-60. Romagnoli cites Archivio Storico di Prato (A.S.P.), D, 1173, c. 4v, identified by Melis as *Miscellanea, Documenti d’arte*, “misure di lavorii dipinti per Bartolomeo e Agnolo, ecc,” cit., c It.: “la volta della chamera dipinta a gigli gialli nel campo azuro, con IIII compassi dipinti armi in tutto cho rrigoglio [...] le mura di detta chamera, intorno dipinta ad alberi e panchali [...] ghuancie di due finestre di deta chamera [...] el palcho di detta chamera, dipinto con compassi e rose.”

²⁷⁸ Dunlop, 226. An undated document, ASP Datini 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d’arte*, folio di lavori di Arrigo di Niccolo, c. 1 states “e piu dipinsi nella chamera terrana a lato alla schala uno sopraciolo cholle pareti da lato, cioe sopra a letto chon una lettiera murata e intonichata per me Arrigo e dipinta. Viensene fiorini quindici...fior xv.”

²⁷⁹ Romagnoli, Part 2, 24.

room and out the window to what would have been a vista of trees outside, although the garden no longer exists. The imitation of elements from the garden beyond allows the similarities between real and depicted greenery to be collapsed, furthering the illusion of the *camera delle due letta* as an exterior landscape brought indoors and a visual and situational escape from the city. This connection is continued with the painted crenellated border that surrounds the lunettes and separates them from the band of imitation tapestry painted below. It creates the impression that by looking at the mural, the viewer is gazing through a frame to the landscape beyond.

Dunlop describes the wall decoration as containing “forests of rosebushes and small trees.”²⁸¹ The upper registers of the lunettes contain bushy foliage with red roses. The colorful orbs in the branches of the trees that neatly line the lower half of each lunette, however, do not have defined petals and more closely resemble oranges. Datini placed great importance on owning a variety of citrus trees, perhaps because they served as to demonstrate his elevated socio-economic status. Even before his return to Prato, the merchant sent a letter to his agent Stoldo di Lorenzo, requesting that he purchase: “an orange tree, the largest you can find.”²⁸² Several orange trees were purchased for Datini from Prato and nearby Valdinievole.²⁸³ Simonetta Cavaciocchi observes that “there were several fruit trees in the garden – figs, a plum, a pear, an oak and a beautiful citron which ‘had fruit like large cucumbers’.”²⁸⁴ An associate, in describing Datini’s residence, made a point of including the “lovely garden full of the fragrant flowers of the

²⁸⁰ Romagnoli, Part 1, 415, 417.

²⁸¹ Dunlop, 22. Dunlop argues that rose motifs were popular in private secular decoration in Florence. They were found as early as 1250 in Giacomo Ricci of Asti’s residence in Genoa and later in Castelbarco at Sabbionara d’Avio, Palazzo d’Este at Copparo, Palazzo Trinci at Foligno, and the Visconti castle at Pavia.

²⁸² Origo, 227.

²⁸³ Cavaciocchi, “The Merchant and Building,” 149. The information for these purchases is found in the Archivio Storico di Prato, registro 352, and *Datini*, 218, c. 279.

²⁸⁴ Cavaciocchi, “The Merchant and Building,” 135.

orange trees.”²⁸⁵ This fixation on citrus was part of a larger cultural phenomenon in the period.

In Florence, the Via del Melarancio, located near Santa Maria Novella, was surrounded by gardens dedicated to the cultivation of oranges and *melarancio*, a citrus fruit that originated in Persia and became popular in Tuscany. The nearby Palazzo Arrighetti-Gaddi, belonging to the family of master artists Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi, was known for its so-called “Paradise of the Gaddi” (“Paradiso dei Gaddi”), a garden that was celebrated for its large collection of orange trees. However, Datini’s preoccupation with eating large quantities of citrus fruit went well beyond a desire to pursue larger cultural values or to imitate aristocratic eating habits. At one point, the Pratese doctor Lorenzo Sassoli criticized the merchant for his “excess in fruit consumption,” which, coupled with his habits of overeating, led to frequent problems with indigestion.²⁸⁶ There are a number of other letters in the Archive that reference the merchant’s fixation on his many citrus trees. In reading the painted foliage of the *camera delle due letta* as orange trees, an explicit visual connection is established between this room and the garden beyond.

Romagnoli’s garden identification corresponds with the changing cultural values of the Trecento that placed increasing value on the garden (“il giardino”). As urban centers expanded, life within the city walls became increasingly cramped and citizens sought to overcome these conditions. Wealthy families cultivated gardens filled with herbs, vegetables, and fruit trees, which were populated by birds and animals, in addition to owning countryside villas with well-

²⁸⁵ Maria Giagnacovo, “What Francesco and his extended family ate,” *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Edited by Giampiero Nigro (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 101-113, 132. The cited letter is Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, Pistoia-Prato, Stefano Guazzalotti, 18.5.1391.

²⁸⁶ Giagnacovo, 104. Giagnacovo cites a letter from the Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, Prato-Firenze, Lorenzo Sassoli, 1.7.1395.

stocked gardens.²⁸⁷ This ideal proliferated with the treatise *Ruralia Commoda* (c. 1306), written by Pietro Crescenzi of Bologna. Crescenzi argued that the ideal palazzo garden should contain herbs such as mint, thyme, rosemary, and basil; flowers such as roses, violets, and lilies; fruit trees, including oranges and pomegranates; and even wild animals such as hare and waterfowl.²⁸⁸ The *topos* of the garden also pervaded the literature of the period. French romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries described amorous couples who consummated their relationships in lush gardens. Their private pleasures were paralleled by the delights of the garden setting and the flora and fauna within were described at length. Works such as Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose* and the Arthurian romance *Tristano Riccardiano* were translated to the Tuscan vernacular and readily consumed by Italian audiences.²⁸⁹

Italian writers, including Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarch, and Giovanni Boccaccio, described gardens with plants and beasts, many of which were interpreted in allegorical terms.²⁹⁰ The protagonists of Boccaccio's *Decameron* spend their third day in a palace garden that seems

²⁸⁷ Luigi Dami, *Il Giardino Italiano* (Milan: Casa Editrice d'Arte Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1924), 7. Dami states that "bisogna arrivare verso la fine del XIII o i primi del XIV, quando più sicure si eran fatte le condizioni di vita, per aver notizia, come Giovanni Villani ci dà per Firenze, 'che la maggior parte dei ricchi e nobili e agiati cittadini con loro famiglie stavano quattro mesi l'anno in contado e tali più.' Fabbriavano costoro belle residenze fino a tre miglia e anche più lontane dalla città, e il cronista specifica che consistevano in 'ricchi palagi, torri, cortili, e giardini murati.'" In addition to an elaborate garden in Prato, Datini had a country residence outside of Prato called Il Palcho. See also John Harvey, *Mediaeval Gardens* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1981), 76.

²⁸⁸ Dami, 8. Crescenzi suggests "forse parte principale, è un prato d'erba minutissima, variegato d'infinite sorte di fiori, circondato da file di aranci, cedri, palmizi, melagrani [...] da un lato il verziere d'odorifere herbe' o 'erbaio': menta, rosmarino, timo, salvia, basilico, ruta, e quante più medicinali; da un altro lato di giardino de' fiori: rose, viole, gigli, giaggioli, etc. [...] in un altro punto del giardino è il 'pomario,' ove sono radunati tutti i più varii alberi da frutto [...] Qui sarà il rifugio degli animali selvatici che vivono per il giardino, conigli, lepri, caprioli, uccelli acquatici e via dicendo."

²⁸⁹ Lucia Battaglia Ricci, "Gardens in Italian Literature during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *The Italian Garden: Art, Design, and Culture*. John Dixon Hunt, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6-9.

²⁹⁰ Ricci, 16-32. Ricci discusses the application of garden motifs in numerous *novelle* of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and his *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, Petrarch's *Epystolae* and *Il Canzoniere*, as well as Dante's *Divina Comedia*. See also Dami, 7. Dami points out that Dante's family and Petrarch both owned villas with elaborate gardens.

to be directly derived from Crescenzi's text, although Lucia Battaglia Ricci argues it was based on descriptions from classical texts such as Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Alberto Magno's *De vegetalibus*.²⁹¹ In Boccaccio's Introduction for the third day, he describes a garden of "wondrous beauty," in which the paths are edged in vines "all in flower, drenching the garden with their aroma, which, mingled with that of many other fragrant plants and herbs," and "almost entirely hemmed in by white and red roses and jasmine," while the lawn is "dotted all over with possibly a thousand different kinds of gaily-coloured flowers, and surrounded by a line of flourishing, bright green orange- and lemon-trees, which, with their mature and unripe fruit and lingering shreds of blossom, offered agreeable shade to the eyes and a delightful aroma to the nostrils;" all populated with songbirds and wildlife.²⁹²

Many of the motifs described by Boccaccio are present in the *camera delle due letta* at the Palazzo Datini. The significance of the garden space in the aforementioned texts was translated in Tuscany into physical spaces in many city centers, both to delight and to serve as a retreat from the labors of daily life. These values were also incorporated into the decoration of private palazzi. Datini's palazzo exemplifies his commitment to this cultural ideal. Early in the building campaign, the merchant was as concerned with the development of his garden as he was his home and a letter from his neighbor Nicolozzo, dated 1380, lists measurements for both the house and the garden, in response to the merchant's repeated demands for the information.²⁹³ The walled garden contained animals and plants directly derived from the pleasure garden literature, including a caged hog, a pair of peacocks, fruit trees, and jasmine.²⁹⁴ Datini appears to have

²⁹¹ Ricci, 19, 21.

²⁹² Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*. G. H. McWilliam, trans. (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1972), 190-91.

²⁹³ Romagnoli, Part 1, 413.

²⁹⁴ Romagnoli, Part 1, 415. Romagnoli cites document A.S.P., D. 705, 26 dicembre 1393, stating, "Datini aveva in animo di allevare *un gatto mammone, un porco spinoso in una gabbia, due pavoni*

regretted the costly investment of this project. His tone in a letter, dated July 1389, is one of complaint commingled with pride, in which he describes: “the garden in front of my house, 32 by 14 *braccia*, full of oranges, roses, violets, and other beautiful flowers. The cost is more than 600 florins. It is a great folly and would have been better put into a farm! It makes but little sense.”²⁹⁵ Romagnoli points out that the principal indication of a family’s prestige in the Trecento lay in the size of the home and the garden, rather than the sumptuousness of the furnishings within.²⁹⁶ In order to display his wealth and status to the citizens of Prato, such an investment was necessary.

Dunlop notes that motifs of forests, gardens, and flowers were a “default decoration” in Tuscany and could be found “in any painted house in Italy.”²⁹⁷ However, few surviving fragments match the scale of the wooded fresco cycle at the Palazzo Datini, which takes up three-quarters of the wall space. Parallel examples have been suggested by a number of scholars, but they are more contained and similar to what Cole describes as a “banded landscape” in which trees are depicted in tidy rows and often seen through an artificial barrier such as a painted arcade.²⁹⁸ These examples more closely relate to the forest motifs found in the hunting lunettes in the other main room on the ground floor of the Palazzo Datini, called the *camera dell’uno letto*, which will be discussed shortly. Cole proposes that the decoration of the so-called *camera*

maschio e femina e un gallo marino. Il giardino, con alberi da frutto, gelsomini e castagnuoli era delimitato da mura [...]”

²⁹⁵ Romagnoli, Part 1, 415. The letter of July 7 1389, A.S.P., D. 1086, Firenze-Prato, reads: “uno giardino dinanzi a chasa mia, lungho bracia 32 e largo bracia 14, pieno di melaranzi e rose e viole e altri begli fiori. Costa piu di f. 600: ch’è istata una grande follia: sarebe meglio ad avergli messi in uno podere. Ma chi à pocho senno fa chosi.” See also Cavaciocchi, 168. Cavaciocchi points out that in a letter written ten years later, Datini estimated that the total construction of his house, surrounding buildings, and garden cost approximately 6000 florins whereas in a letter dated May 1395, the market value of the complex was set at 2000 florins.

²⁹⁶ Romagnoli, Part 1, 418. Romagnoli notes that “alla fine del Trecento, gli indici di prestigio di una famiglia benestante risiedessero nelle dimensioni dell’edificio e del giardino, piuttosto che nella sontuosità del loro arredo.”

²⁹⁷ Dunlop, 22. Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 68. Fresco fragment from the destruction of the historic quarter of Florence reveal landscapes were commonly depicted in fourteenth century palazzi.

terrena was inspired by the wall decoration in the rooms of the Tour de la Garde-Robe in the Palais des Papes in Avignon. These frescoes contain large scale scenes of fully developed, unconfined, woods, like those at the Palazzo Datini, are dated c. 1343-45 and are attributed, by Enrico Castelnuovo, to Italian painter Matteo di Giovanetto and his workshop.²⁹⁹

While there is no evidence that Datini viewed the rooms of the Palais des Papes directly, the merchant did have commercial connections to the papal court and may have seen the interior decoration during a business meeting or an exchange of goods.³⁰⁰ As well, in 1369, Agnolo Gaddi is recorded as working on a commission in Rome, with his brother and Giovanni da Milano, for Pope Urban V.³⁰¹ Although he was not personally in Avignon, Agnolo Gaddi had direct access to the artistic circles of the papal court and may have learned of the decorative cycles through interactions with other artists at the court or exchanges of sketches and sample books. Eve Borsook notes that in the Trecento, studies for murals were collected into such model books, along with patterns gathered from a variety of sources, and were frequently traded and reused. Such collection and exchange allowed for the fluid dissemination of particular visual

²⁹⁸ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 68.

²⁹⁹ See Enrico Castelnuovo, *Un Pittore Italiano alla Corte di Avignone: Matteo Giovannetti e la pittura in Provenza nel secolo XIV* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1962). The frescoes are found in the Camera della Guardaroba and the Chambre du Cerf.

³⁰⁰ Robert Brun, "A fourteenth century merchant of Italy: Francesco Datini of Prato," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II, 1930, 3, pp. 451-66, 458. Brun notes that Datini supplied the papal court with goods from his trade in arms, as "sometimes the marshal of the pontifical palace, the seneschal of Provence, or an equerry of the Duke of Anjou came to order a basinet, a coat of mail, or to have his cuirasse polished; sometimes, even, the bishop of Avignon bought a dress saddle." See also Monnas, 9. In Avignon, Datini traded in woolen and linen textiles and imported costly Lucchese silks and embroidered orphreys to sell to the papal market.

³⁰¹ Roberto Salvini, *L'arte di Agnolo Gaddi* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1936), 181. See Castelnuovo, 137. See also Alessio Monciatti, *Il Palazzo Vaticano nel Medioevo* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, Editore, 2005), 317, 323-24. Monciatti notes Gaddi's involvement in the decoration of the *Capella magna* and la cappella *parva* o *secreta* for Urban V in Rome as noted on fol. 6v, 7r, and 7v in the register *Camera apostolica, introitus et exitus 334* in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano: "Angelus magistri thadei de florentia laboravit v dietis pro XII s. In dieta et sic sunt – lib. III."

motifs throughout Tuscany.³⁰² The frescoes of Matteo di Giovanetto were well known throughout Italy by the time Datini was ready to initiate the decoration of his palazzo. In a letter, dated 1380, Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti, the first Duke of Milan, requested images of “diverse figures and animals,” like those in “the rooms of our chaste Pope,” for his residence in Pavia, Lombardy.³⁰³

The frescoes at the Palazzo Datini and in the Chambre du Cerf (Room of the Stag), in the Tour de la Garde-Robe, of the Palais des Papes are similar in style and scale (Fig. 28). Large trees overtake the wall space, overlapping and becoming intricately intertwined. The treetops are represented as nebulous blocks of color with overlying details of delicate foliage. The leaves that have been individuated are punctuated by bright orbs of fruit or flowers. Above, the trees are populated by birds that are differentiated by their varied markings, forms, and colored plumage. Cole notes: “it has been suggested that the Avignon frescoes derive from tapestries,” as seen in their “decorative flatness” and the abstract patterns developed by the intertwining branches.³⁰⁴ Datini’s forests are defined by a similarly defined, yet it is unclear if his commission was executed in an attempt to imitate tapestries, or nature, although the former artistic challenge might have appealed to his mercantile interests in the textile industry.

A marked difference between the Avignon and Prato frescoes lies in the concentration of human figures: hunters accompanied by hounds and engaged in fishing, falconry, and hunting

³⁰² Eve Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany, from Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto* (London: Phaidon Press, 1960), xxxvi.

³⁰³ Luigi Osio, *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivj Milanesei*, vol. 1 (Milan: Tipografia di Giuseppe Bernardoni di Giovanni, 1864), 212. In the letter, dated September 25 1380, Visconti writes to Ludovico Gonzaga, requesting that he send painters of good quality. He writes: “Magnifice frater carissime. Pro picturis certarum sallarum et camerarum castri nostri Papie, quas presentialiter facimus dipingi ad Caxias et ad diversas figures et quas appetimus de presenti compleri, indigemus pictoribus in bona quantitate.” Later in the letter he requests “bonos depictores qui sciant bene facere figures et animalia.” See also Martindale, 143.

³⁰⁴ Cole, 71. Cole directs the reader to L.H. Labande, *Le Palais des Papes et les monuments d’Avignon au XIV siècle* (Marseille: Detaille, 1925), vol. II, p. 29.



Figure 28 Matteo di Giovanetto and workshop, Hunting scenes, fresco, Chambre du Cerf, Palais des Papes, Avignon, c. 1343-45.

(Source: Emil Kren and Daniel Marx, "Chambre du Cerf, Papal Palace, Avignon," *Web Gallery of Art*, <http://www.wga.hu/index1.html>. Photo © Web Gallery of Art.)

birds, found in the Chambre du Cerf. Datini's landscape is devoid of any human presence. The subject matter of the papal commission, in its depiction of hunting scenes, draws closer parallels to the lunettes of the same subject in Datini's *camera dell'uno letto*. The visual parallel that Cole proposes between the two sites is compelling, yet it is difficult to trace any direct derivation since they appear to be the only surviving examples of such large-scale landscapes. However, the letter of the Duke Visconti indicates that at one time, it may have been a common visual type.

Imitation Tapestries with Lunettes of Hunting Scenes (The room to the left of the entry hall, called the *camera dell'uno letto*)

The walls of the room to the left of the entry, identified as the *camera dell'uno letto*, are dominated by a large imitation tapestry (Figs. 29-30). It is decorated with a pattern of diamond-shaped panels that alternately contain four silver fleurs-de-lis on blue ground, a gold crown on red ground, and what Romagnoli identifies as lion heads, although these are in very poor condition (Fig. 31). The panels are positioned on a white ground which creates a latticed frame. Stylized



Figure 29 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, fresco, *camera dell'uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Provincia di Prato Centro Servizi Distretto Museale, “Palazzo Datini – Archivio di Stato,”

http://www.musei.provincia.prato.it/tsc/cgi-bin/op95f8.html?d=prato&tpl=LargeImage.tpl&d_cid=48&d_cid_h=&d_cls=file&d_cid_w=. Photo © Provincia di Prato.)

foliage and floral motifs, framed in a geometric border, overlay the lattice. The *trompe l'oeil* effect of the wall hanging is provided by the painted red tabs that “suspend” it from a fictive bar that runs the length of the room (See Ch. 1, fig. 11). The diamond panels are painted to give the impression that they are set into the latticework, lending an artificial textural depth to the material.

Above this imitation tapestry, a solid red band encircles the room. It contains fragments of a stylized floral scroll pattern interspersed with nude figures, possibly *putti*, and the Datini and Bandini *stemme*, which are enclosed in quatrefoils painted in imitation of carved marble. This is

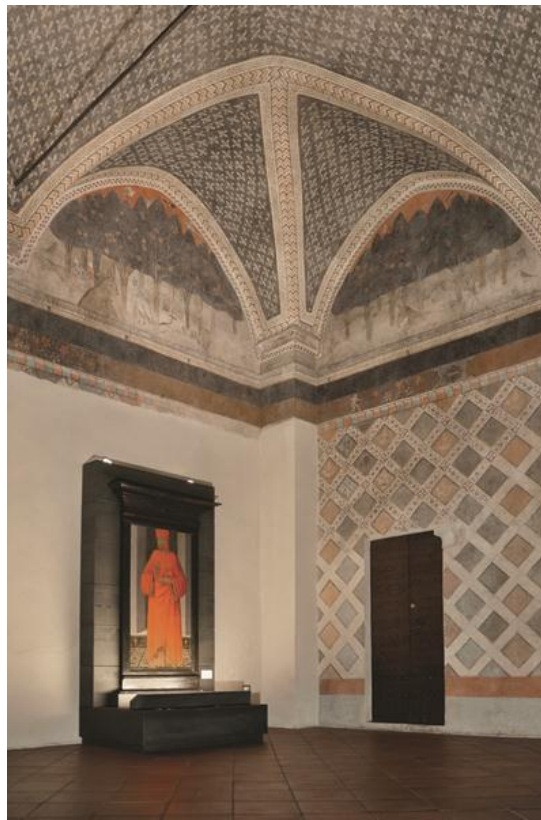


Figure 30 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, fresco, *camera dell’uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Regione Toscana - Toscana Musei, “Museo Casa Francesco Datini,”
[http://web.rete.toscana.it/cultura/musei?command=showDettaglio&codice=642&provincia=PRATO+++++++.\)](http://web.rete.toscana.it/cultura/musei?command=showDettaglio&codice=642&provincia=PRATO+++++++.)



Figure 31 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo, with Paganino d'Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of tapestry pattern, fresco, *camera dell'uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

topped by a blue band of equal width, decorated by thin cross-hatched lines, while above it a thin fictive pole is painted, as if resting on black hooks, awaiting the hanging of a second tapestry. The bands visually separate the tapestry from the lunettes that encircle the room and are set in the wall space formed by the ribbed vaults. These lunettes depict dense groves of trees, laden with fruit and flowers, set against a rich red ground. Diverse birds rest on the upper branches and a variety of wildlife populates the forest floor (Figs. 32-34). Many of the creatures are easily identifiable, although many are not depicted true to life. These include a boar, wolf, stag, and white peacock. In several of the lunettes, these creatures are pursued by armed hunters, accompanied by falcons and hounds. Many of the animals allude to the beasts found in the



Figure 32 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of lunette with a hunting scene, including a palm tree, birds, and other wildlife, fresco, *camera dell’uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)



Figure 33 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of lunette with figure in red tunic, fresco, *camera dell’uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

hunting scenes described in the courtly romance literature of the period.³⁰⁵

According to Cole, who mistakenly identifies this room as the *camera terrena*, based on a misreading of the archival documents, the room was painted twice in Datini’s lifetime. The first decorative campaign was completed by Dino and Jacopo in 1389, as discussed earlier. While their *conto* survives, there is no indication of the original design scheme they executed.³⁰⁶ The second campaign is attributed to Arrigo, c. 1409, and, as Cole argues, it included the execution of

³⁰⁵ Klingender, 461-471.

³⁰⁶ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 76. Cole cites document ADP, Ricordanze, 1387-90, a.c. 181 t, as referenced in Guasti, II, pp. 385-86.



Figure 34 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of lunette with figure in grey tunic, fresco, *camera dell’uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

the imitation tapestries and lunettes of hunting scenes that are found in the palazzo today.³⁰⁷

However, Arrigo’s surviving *conto* does not clearly identify the artist as painting hunting scenes or related subject matter. His work, as listed in the *conto*, included general decorative details painted throughout the house: in the kitchen and adjoining *camera*, hallway, *camera terrena*, and garden. These included vaults of tin lilies on an azure ground, imitation marbles, “compass”

³⁰⁷ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 78. Cole cites undated document ADP, B. 1090, *Nota della pitture fatte per Francesco Datini da Arrigo di Niccolò, pittore pratese* as published in Guasti, II, pp. 412-14. Dunlop identifies the same document as ASP Datini 1173, *Miscellanea, Doucmenti d’arte*, folio di lavori di Arrigo di Niccolò, c. 1 (see Dunlop, 226). The document identifies Arrigo as painting “nella chamera terrena,” work valued at fifteen florins, of subject matter not clearly identified.

designs, and monochrome terra-verde.³⁰⁸ There is no mention of his involvement any specific aspect of the central decorative campaign within the palazzo, such as the depiction of figures, animals, or forest scenes.

Dunlop questions Cole's reading of the archival material, arguing that Arrigo's documented work appears to have been completed on the second floor, yet she does not propose an alternative attribution for the room with hunting scenes.³⁰⁹ Romagnoli also critiques Cole's argument, since the document he references is undated and does not explicitly identify Arrigo's work as a "repainting" of an earlier wall decoration. She states that the imitation tapestry with crowns, fleur-de-lis, and lion heads can be attributed to Paganino d'Ugolino and Jacopo d'Agnolo.³¹⁰ Cavaciocchi specifies that Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo were responsible for the lunettes of the hunting scenes, which were begun during their original commission in 1387, but she does not include the imitation tapestries in this attribution.³¹¹ It is unclear which elements of the decoration in this room, if any, were executed during the visual program of 1391.

Romagnoli analyzes the unusual vault decoration of *stemme* with heads to provide a *terminus post quem* of 1392 for the decorative cycle (See Ch. 1, Fig. 12). The heads were not applied *a fresco*, but rather were painted on paper and glued to the ceiling. Citing a *filigrana* (watermark) embedded in the paper, Romagnoli proposes a chronological framework of 1392-1402 for the work, using Charles Moïse-Briquet's influential, and widely referenced,

Given the contested identification of the ground floor rooms, this document is also applicable to the room with forest landscapes.

³⁰⁸ Dunlop, 226. See also Guasti, *Lettere*, vol. 2, 412-14.

³⁰⁹ Dunlop, 22, 227. Romagnoli furthers Dunlop's conclusion, attributing the lost frescoes of the so-called *camera a vai* on the second floor to Arrigo. See Romagnoli, Part 2, 21. See also Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," 218. Cavaciocchi also states that in the summer of 1391, Arrigo painted a room on the first floor. In Italian, the "primo piano" or first floor is not the main, or ground, floor but the second level of a residence.

³¹⁰ Romagnoli, Part 2, 26, 28. Oddly, Romagnoli does not make this attribution in the body of her text, even when discussing this particular wall decoration. The proposed authorship of Paganino and Jacopo is given in the text accompanying Figure 9 of her article.

compendium of watermarks, *Les Filigranes*, first published in 1907.³¹² Yet the ceiling decoration in this room may not have been completed in conjunction with the wall frescoes, and Romagnoli's compelling argument ignores the fact that paper, a valuable material in this period, was often conserved and could be used years after its original production. Romagnoli also states the solution was applied by a painter of lesser skill than the master artists working in other parts of the house, yet she does not identify Arrigo as the author, nor does she provide an alternate attribution.

Many stylistic elements of these forest scenes parallel the landscapes from the *camera delle due letta*. As Cole observes: "the populated foreground plane, the row of tree trunks, and the tapestry-like pattern formed by the overlapping branches, are common to both sets of frescoes."³¹³ Yet the scale of the scenery in each room is not comparable. The band of small trees, set within lunettes, in the *camera dell'uno letto* derives from a traditional Tuscan iconography. It appears that the rooms of many private palazzi were decorated with painted borders containing trees framed by arches or set within fictive niches. Variations of this decorative type are found in the Camera della Castellana di Vergi (also called the Camera Nuziale), Sala dei Pappagalli (Room of the Parrots), and Sala dei Pavoni (Room of the Peacocks) in the Palazzo Davanzati (Figs. 35-37). As at the Palazzo Datini, the Davanzati tree motifs are confined to the upper register of the wall and run the circumference of the room.

Related examples can be found in fresco fragments salvaged from private residences of Florence's historic quarter, now demolished. Many are now in the collection of the Museo di San

³¹¹ Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," 218.

³¹² Romagnoli, Part 2, 20. Romagnoli references Charles-Moïse Briquet's description of the type of watermark: "two circles, one above the other, crossed through by a line that ends in a Latin cross." This chronological bracket, she argues, shows that the surviving fresco work cannot be that first executed by Dino and Jacopo in 1389. See Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les filigranes : dictionnaire historique des marques du papier dès leur apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600* (Leipzig : K.W. Hiersemann, 1923).



Figure 35 Imitation tapestries and trees, detail of figures in arched niches, Camera della Castellana di Vergi, fresco, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpa*, Firenze: Centro Di, 1994, p. 42.)



Figure 36 Imitation tapestries and trees, Sala dei Pappagalli, fresco, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Luciano Berti, *Il Museo di Palazzo Davanzati a Firenze*, Italia: Electa Editrice, 1971, Tavola 13.)

³¹³ Cole, "Interior Decoration," 79.

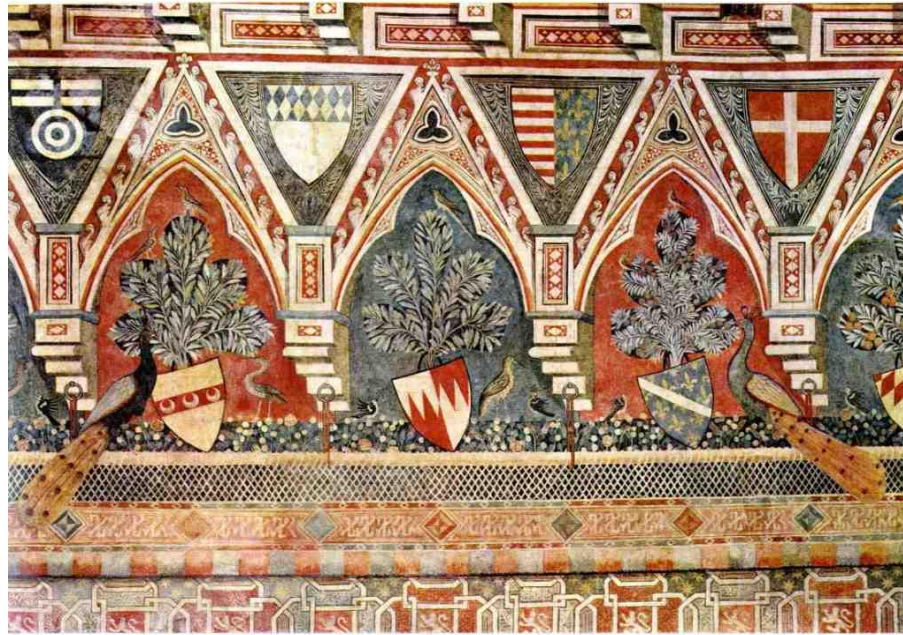


Figure 37 Imitation tapestries and trees, Sala dei Pavoni, fresco, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpa*, Firenze: Centro Di, 1994, p. 147.)

Marco. In *La casa Fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV* (1908) Attilio Schiaparelli explores similar interior wall decoration, found in Trecento paintings depicting interior scenes and from surviving fragments of Florentine palazzi, including the Palazzo Machiavelli and others from the city's *Centro* (historic center).³¹⁴ His many examples show that the decorative motif of imitation tapestries, accompanied by trees on the upper register of the wall, was commonly used in the decoration of bourgeois and aristocratic homes of the period. A more recent study is art historian Monika Dachs' in-depth article "Zur ornamentalen Freskendekoration des Florentiner Wohnhauses im späten 14. Jahrhundert," published in the journal *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz* (1993). Dachs discusses related Trecento imagery either

³¹⁴ Attilio Schiaparelli, *La casa Fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV*, vol. 1 (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, Editore, 1908), 141-159.

recorded in, or salvaged from, Florentine residences in Via Porta Rossa, Via degli Zuffanelli, Via dei Pescioni, Via degli Strozzi, Via San Miniato tra le Torri, and Via dei Sassetti, among others. However, the design was not isolated to Tuscany, and Dachs cites examples from Angera (Lago Maggiore), Verona, Cremona, and Avignon.

Dachs explains that the iconography of trees with tapestries was widespread in private residences in Florence and served to reflect the elevated social position of the inhabitants within. Such murals required a significant financial investment and evoked certain comforts of daily life that were still rare in the Trecento. The basic pattern found throughout Florence reflects the same designs employed at the Palazzo Datini and Dachs points out that the details of this style did not vary greatly from site to site. It includes decorative architectural details, such as moulding, cornices, and arches; imitation tapestries, falsely suspended by nets or rings onto a bar, encircling the room; and flowering rose hedges and trees appearing from behind the architecture or tapestry, their crowns often laden with painted birds.³¹⁵ These elements collectively functioned to delight the senses of the viewer and to blur the boundaries between the painted and material worlds. They provided the suggestion that the birds might come to life and fly away, as described in a scene from Sacchetti's *Trecentonovelle*, or as seen in the paintings of empty birdcages in the Chambre du Pape in Avignon, while the tapestries could be drawn back to reveal a flourishing garden beyond.³¹⁶

Some of the painters employed in these residences played with the visual effects of *trompe l'oeil* and spatial depth, yet the results were not consistent. For example, Dachs points out

³¹⁵ Monika Dachs, "Zur ornamentalen Freskendekoration des Florentiner Wohnhauses im späten 14. Jahrhundert" *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*, 37, Bd., H. 1 (1993), pp. 71-129, 71, 72-74.

³¹⁶ See also Andrew Martindale, *Painting the Palace: studies in the history of medieval secular painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995), 138, 139. He discusses the use of fictive curtains in secular and ecclesiastical settings, which conceal, and yet extend an invitation to be drawn back, while also suggesting a sense of depth and inaccessible space.

how colored or gold leaf grounds, such as the red used in the lunettes at the Palazzo Datini, reduce the illusion of depth and deny a realistic reading of the landscape.³¹⁷ The employment of an illusionistic style is limited throughout the Palazzo Datini, as is the playful exploration of the wall surface found in other residences. As mentioned earlier, Cole points out this perspectival lack with his observation that the Datini murals were painted with “decorative flatness.” Beyond the painted tabs and bar which “suspend” the imitation tapestries in the *camera delle due letta*, there is no detail that attempts to push beyond the flat surface of the wall. In fragments from the Museo di San Marco, discussed by Dachs, the tapestries sink and droop and are painted as if pulling at the hooks at the top, to imitate the weight of hanging fabric. An example is found in a fresco fragment from the Trecento Palazzo Verzoni, in Prato, in which the painted fabric dips to reveal the foliage behind (Fig. 38). At the Palazzo Davanzati, the frescoed tapestries curl and fold at the corners of the room, as if tied or pulled back, and reveal flowering gardens beyond (Fig. 39). Such details are not found at the Palazzo Datini. However, the limited use of *trompe l’oeil* effects in the Palazzo Datini might be purposeful. Borsook notes that Giotto, the artist emulated by later painters of the Florentine tradition, often confined his perspectival illusionism to a few details within the larger framework of a mural.³¹⁸

Dunlop refers to a drawing from the Archivio Datini to corroborate her argument that the design scheme of tapestries with trees was common in Tuscany (Fig. 40). Cavaciocchi states that this drawing was acquired by Datini during his payment dispute with the artists, discussed in Chapter 1, when he instructed his agents to examine fresco work commissioned by acquaintances,

³¹⁷ Dachs, 77-78.

³¹⁸ Borsook, xxx.

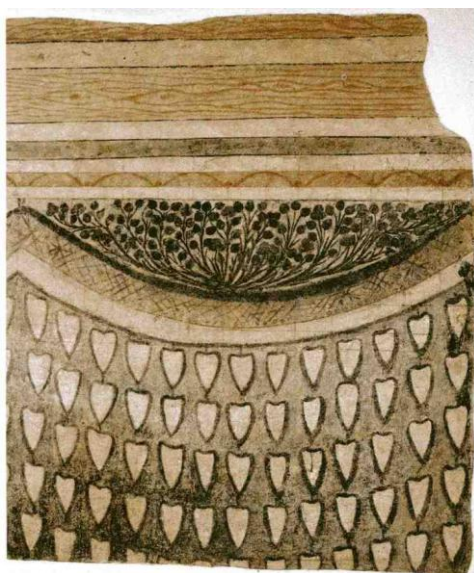


Figure 38 Imitation tapestry, fresco, Palazzo Verzoni, Prato, fourteenth century.

(Source: Renzo Fantappie, *Il Bel Prato*, Vol. 1, Prato: Edizioni del Palazzo, 1983, p. 154.)

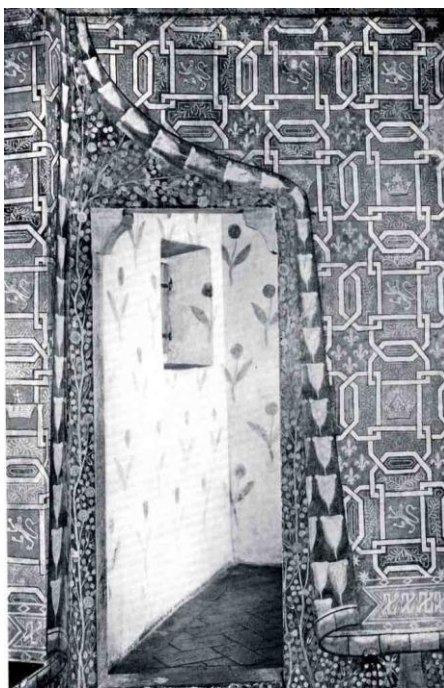


Figure 39 Imitation tapestry, fresco, Sala dei Pavoni, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Luciano Berti, *Il Museo di Palazzo Davanzati a Firenze*, Italia: Electa Editrice, 1971, Tavola 18.)

in order to compare costs.³¹⁹ According to this argument, the sheet can be dated to 1392. It outlines a proposed room decoration that includes a band of small trees within arches positioned above a painted tapestry of a geometric pattern. The draughtsman has even indicated the false wall hooks and strings from which to “hang” the tapestry.³²⁰ While it was arguably used for a different purpose, this single sheet is a record of the practice, common after 1340, of copying and circulating sample drawings, similar to those Bartolomeo offered to show his patron Datini.³²¹

Figure 40 Donnino, attr., designs for a decorated ceiling and frescoed walls for Giovanni, son of the Prato Podestà, brown ink on paper, Archivio Storico di Prato, Prato, c. 1392.

³¹⁹ Cavaciocchi, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” 218, 225. Cavaciocchi states that the drawing was of “a painting by a certain Donnino for Giovanni, son of the Prato *podestà* costing 17 florins.” It was attached to a letter from Baldo Villanuzzi, dated 4.1.1392 and is now stored in the Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, 235.6, Miscellanea.

The painted trees at both the Datini and Davanzati palaces are depicted as rotund, monochromatic, masses with delicate overlying details of stylized leaves, fruit, and flowers. This style of tree representation is found in several contemporary herbal manuscripts. The trees at the Palazzo Datini reflect the influence of the Florentine tradition of Taddeo Gaddi and the Cione brothers and similar examples are found in the monumental fresco cycles by Taddeo, as well as Agnolo Gaddi, Gerini, and their contemporaries. The style differs from the work of earlier artists, in which tree branches are individuated and leaves are not depicted against a solid ground. At the Palazzo Datini, the dark ground provides some illusion of depth without the laborious layering of a multitude of branches. The foliage of the trees in the Datini hunting lunettes is stylistically similar to that found in depictions of trees at the Palazzo Davanzati and elsewhere. Comparable imagery can also be seen in illustrations representing herbs, flowers, and trees from four *Tacuinum sanitatis* manuscripts produced in Lombardy in the late fourteenth-century and attributed to the workshop of Giovannino de' Grassi.³²²

These manuscripts are connected to the court of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, who, as shown earlier, expressed interest in commissioning works rich in naturalistic detail, including elaborate landscapes populated by figures and animals. The *Tacuinum sanitatis* derived from an eleventh century Arabic compendium of medical and lifestyle advice, attributed to Ibn Butlan of Baghdad, that included discussion of various plants and animals. The Lombard manuscripts, designed to engage the Italian audience, emphasize representations of local plants. These manuscripts are a possible stylistic prototype for the depiction of trees and shrubbery in the Datini frescoes, which visually parallel illuminations in contemporary herbals and other botanical

³²² For the history and development of the iconography of the Northern Italian *Tacuinum sanitatis* manuscripts see Cathleen Hoeniger, "The Illuminated *Tacuinum sanitatis* Manuscripts from Northern Italy ca. 1380-1400: Source, Patrons, and the Creation of a New Pictorial Genre," *Visualizing Medieval Medicine and Natural History, 1200-1550*. Jean A. Givens, Karen M. Reeds, Alain Touwaide, eds. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 51-81.

texts.

As Cathleen Hoeniger observes, the visual formula of the Lombard manuscripts includes trees that are depicted as “flattened silhouette[s],” in which “little attention is paid to the correct proportional and spatial relationships among the parts, and leaves are not precisely shaped or naturalistically colored.”³²³ This stylized pattern likely circulated amongst artists’ workshops by way of model books or draughtsman’s folios, demonstrating the rapid standardization of this stylized approach. In his *Libro dell’Arte*, Cennini instructs artists to depict trees in this manner, stating:

First lay in the trunk of the tree with pure black, tempered, for they can hardly be done in fresco; and then make a range of leaves with dark green, but using malachite, because terre-verte is not good; and see to it that you make them quite close. Then make up a green with giallorino, to that it is a little lighter, and do a similar number of leaves, [...] But before this, when you have got the trees laid in, do the base and some of the branches of the trees with black; and scatter the leaves upon them, and then the fruits; and scatter occasional flowers and little birds over the foliage.³²⁴

Cennini says that to depict trees efficiently, and in an aesthetically pleasing style, it is necessary to compose a dark, or black, background on which to overlay defined branches, fruits, and birds.

Hoeniger notes that “the imagery developed for the *Tacuinum sanitatis* influenced other pictorial media,” as evidenced by fresco fragments of related subject matter from the Palazzo del Tribunale, now housed in the Museo del Castelvecchio, in Verona, and the later Torre dell’Aquila, in Trent.³²⁵ At the Palazzo Datini, the trees are similar to many of the fruit and nut trees illustrating the folios of the Lombard manuscripts, including “Apricots,” from f. 7v of the Ms. Lat. 9333, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, produced c. 1400, and f. 9v of the Ms. S.N. 2644, in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Parallels are also found in “Sour

³²³ Hoeniger, 65, 67.

³²⁴ Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman’s Handbook*, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), 56. For the original Italian see Cennino Cennini, *Il Libro dell’Arte*, ed. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932), 54.

Pomegranates” (Vienna, f. 7v; Paris, f. 5v) and “Sweet Almonds” (Vienna, f. 18v), as well as “Sweet Marjoram” (Paris, f. 30) and “Sour Apples” (Paris, f. 7), among others (fig. 41).³²⁶ The delicate foliage, heavy with fruit or flowers, is stenciled over a dark ground and, in many folios, is occupied by birds.

Close visual links are also found in the trees depicted in the *Theatrum sanitatis*, Ms. 4182, now in the Casanatense Library in Rome. It is dated to the late Trecento and is closely connected, stylistically, to the illustrations of the Vienna *Tacuinum sanitatis* codex.³²⁷ The image for “Sour cherries” (f. 17) contains decorative elements found in the lunettes of the *camera*

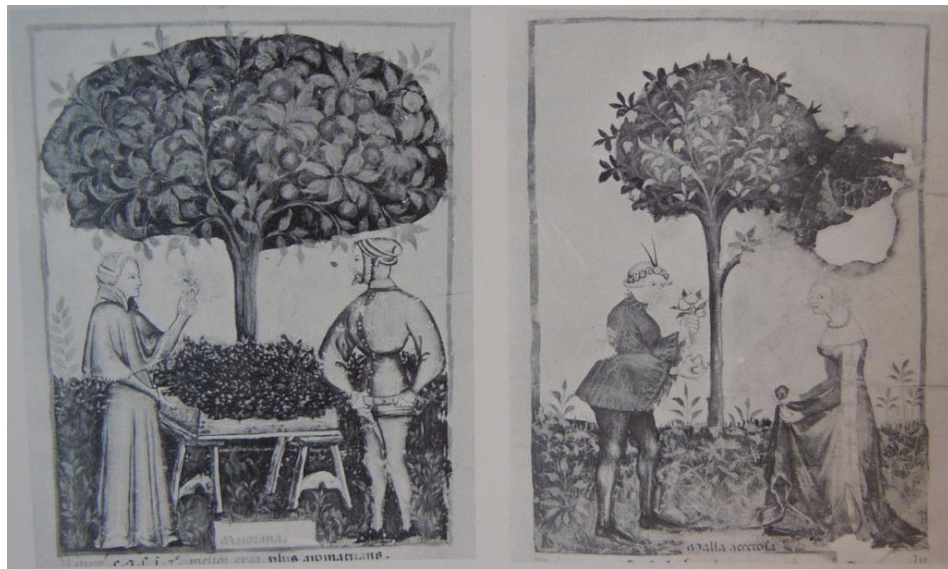


Figure 41 Giovannino de' Grassi and workshop, *Sweet Marjoram* and *Sour Apples*, fols. 30 and 7 of Ms. Lat. 9333, paper, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, c. 1400.

(Source: Luisa Cogliati Arano, *The Medieval Health Handbook, Tacuinum Sanitatis*, Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook, eds., New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1976.)

³²⁵ Hoeniger, 63.

³²⁶ Luisa Cogliati Arano, *The Medieval Health Handbook, Tacuinum Sanitatis*. Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook, eds. (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1976), Plates 108, 109, 166, 167, 98, respectively.

³²⁷ Arano, 37, 39.

dell'uno letto at the Palazzo Datini (fig. 42).³²⁸ The tree is composed of a dark green-black ground with overlying detail of light-green, leafy, branches, laden with bright orbs, representing cherries, similar to the citrus fruits frescoed in the merchant's home. The trunk is rooted in packed earth, painted neutral shades of beige and tan, and punctuated by delicate clusters of grasses and wild flowers. The forest floor in the Datini lunettes is a similar solid grey, dotted with flowers and seedlings. Close parallels are also found in the depiction of "Sour Apples," (f. 11), and "Figs" (f. 2) or "Grapes" (f. 3) in this manuscript and the trees are populated by various birds.³²⁹



Figure 42 *Sour Cherries*, fol. 17 of Ms. 4182, paper, Casanatense Library, Rome, fourteenth century.

(Source: Luisa Cogliati Arano, *The Medieval Health Handbook, Tacuinum Sanitatis*, Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook, eds., New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1976, Color Plate VII, p. 46. Photo © Dr. Minko Zagnoli, Archivio di Cassa di Risparmio.)

³²⁸ Arano, Color plate VII.

³²⁹ Arano, Plates 158, 186, Color plate XLIII.

The treetops of the Datini lunettes are heavily populated by several different bird species. Many have easily identifiable markings and it is possible some, although certainly not all, were drawn from life. These include long necked herons, ibis, or egrets, similar to those depicted on the forest floor in the *camera delle due letto*; distinctive magpies with their white breast, black back and long tail; and small brown and tan birds that could be common breeds such as finch, lark, and sparrow. Similarly identifiable birds populate the frescoes of the Palazzo Davanzati rooms. The trees in the painted niches of the Sala dei Pavoni are surrounded by magpies, peacocks, and chickens, among others. Many of these birds have symbolic meanings which derive from, among other visual and literary traditions, medieval bestiaries.³³⁰

Jean Campbell notes a recurring magpie motif in the tower room, the private quarters of the *podestà*, at the Palazzo Comunale in San Gimignano, which was frescoed in the early fourteenth-century (c. 1290-1318).³³¹ The decoration in the rooms of the *podestà*, like those on the ground floor of the Palazzo Datini, present a blurring of the boundaries between private space and public display, a commingling which Campbell states was often “uneasy.”³³² She identifies magpies as chattering and confrontational birds, stating that “their presence there can be taken quite literally, as fanfare: which is to say, as superfluous color or noise.”³³³ Indeed, the magpies in the ground floor rooms at Palazzo Datini have all been painted with open beaks, as if issuing birdsong. Though this first reading does not directly relate to Datini as patron, Campbell also describes a fable, recorded by Leonardo da Vinci, in which the magpie “appears as a master

³³⁰ Klingender, 341, 439.

³³¹ Campbell, 13, 35.

³³² Campbell, xv.

³³³ Campbell, 176. Campbell draws visual parallels between the magpies in the tower room at San Gimignano and those in the *Camera nuziale* at Palazzo Davanzati, in which white flowers issue from their beaks to indicate birdsong. See Ferrazza, 42.

rhetorician.”³³⁴ If the *camera dell’uno letto* is to be read as “il scrittoio,” Datini’s office, as Romagnoli argues, this symbol of persuasive communication would appropriately convey to visitors one of the valuable skills used by the merchant to acquire his status and wealth. At one point, Datini even received a gift of a “magpie which talks,” sent from an associate in Florence.

The magpie can also be found in another part of the room: above one of the two windows that overlook the Via Ser Lapo Mazzei (Fig. 43). Here, it is accompanied by birds of several different species and is depicted chattering at a large owl. It is possible that the fresco is referencing a traditional tale, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, which was made popular in a twelfth-century Middle English poem of the subject and was subsequently adapted to convey the courtly allegories of Provençal France.³³⁵ However, the presence of several different types of birds indicates that the painting might relate more closely to imagery of the owl being mobbed by birds, popular in both France and Britain in the period, because the owl, among other traits, was traditionally associated with an ignoble reputation.³³⁶ The iconography of the owl, accompanied by birds, derived from a number of fables of the Latin tradition, which were adapted into new variations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Datini’s period, the fashionable literature contained folkloric elements that originated in much earlier beast-tales and served both to explain and to caricature the classes of society.

Cavaciocchi, in discussing the animal imagery in the Palazzo Datini, further notes that the merchant’s collection of animals, most of which were kept in the garden, included “caged birds probably attached to the bars on the windows or put on the windowsills like those we see in

³³⁴ Campbell, 179. See *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. and trans. Jean Paul Richter (New York, 1970), 2: entry 1279. The notation may have been based on a description from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

³³⁵ Klingender, 365.

³³⁶ Klingender, 364.



Figure 43 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d’Agnolo, with Paganino d’Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of lunette with owl and other birds, fresco, *camera dell’uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

fourteenth century paintings.”³³⁷ Klingender observes that “the fashion, thereafter followed by great princes, of keeping exotic menageries in which the creatures then became the symbols of chivalry,” was first established in the thirteenth century by King Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, before being adopted by courtly circles, the aristocratic class, and the rising merchant class.³³⁸ However, the multitude of birds in the Datini lunettes does not permit a salient reading of the magpie’s symbolism. Other birds in the fresco cycle have no symbolic value and function decoratively. Ultimately, the group creates a playful atmosphere for the forested scenes,

³³⁷ Cavaciocchi, “A Taste for Living,” 206. For the reference to Datini’s magpie gift, see Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, 205, Quaderno di ricordanze, c. 61v.

providing color and textural detail in their varied plumage, suggesting a cacophony of birdsong, and contributing to the illusion of a pleasure garden brought indoors.

The forest floor in each lunette is populated with wildlife. One scene contains a tropical palm, amidst a forest of citrus trees, and portrays local and exotic animals, including a white peacock and a large, black, wild boar, perhaps a direct reference to Datini's own garden menagerie (See Ch. 2, Fig. 32). White creatures, possibly ermines, dash through the trees while a stag is pursued by a wolf. Other lunettes contain human figures armed with weapons and accompanied by hounds, defining the fresco cycle as an example of the hunting genre made popular by the courtly literature from Provence. The Florentine Palazzo Cerchi, once owned by a powerful commercial and banking family, contains related frescoes of wooded hunting scenes, in addition to imitation tapestries and related chivalric scenes of jousting knights, dating to the early fourteenth-century.³³⁹ Hunting scenes are also found in the private quarters of the Palazzo Comunale at San Gimignano and in the courtyard of the Palazzo Davanzati.³⁴⁰ However, at the Palazzo Davanzati, the landscapes are populated by men and women in courtly dress, creating the impression that the scene is that of a pleasure garden, rather than of a hunt.³⁴¹

A possible influence on the hunting scenes at the Palazzo Datini is found in the *Livre de Chasse* ("Book of the Hunt") produced before 1391 by Gaston Phoebus, Comte de Foix.³⁴² The habits of wild beasts are described, followed by a discussion on the training of huntsmen, breeds

³³⁸ Klingender, 449.

³³⁹ Romagnoli, Part 2, 25. Romagnoli directs the reader to E. Neri Lusanna, "Interni fiorentini e pittura profana tra Duecento e Trecento. Cacce e giostre a Palazzo Cerchi," in *Opere e Giorni. Studi su mille anni di arte europea dedicate a Max Seidel* (Venice: Marsilio, 2001), pp. 123-130.

³⁴⁰ Campbell, 78.

³⁴¹ Maria Fossi Todorow, *Palazzo Davanzati: Storia del palazzo e delle sue collezioni* (Florence: Becocci, 1979), 12.

³⁴² Klingender, 473. Phoebus' text may have been influenced by an earlier fourteenth century French treatise, *Le Livre du roy Modus*, attributed to Henri de Ferrières. See Gunnar Tilander, *Le Livre du roy Modus et de la royne Ratio* (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1932). Tilander reproduces text from manuscripts Paris, Bibl. nat., fr. 12399 and Bibl. nat., fr. 1299.

of hounds and devices used to capture game. Phoebus isolates, among other creatures of the forest: stags, deer, hares, wild boar, wolves, and foxes.³⁴³ Many elements of the text are represented in the Datini lunettes, which also find close parallels in the hunting scenes from the *Chambre du Cerf* in Avignon. One of the earliest copies of Phoebus' *Livre*, MS. Fr. 619 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from the late fourteenth-century, contains uncolored drawings of animal studies with a high level of naturalism. Several of the animals are similar in composition and style to the creatures depicted in Datini's own hunting scenes.

Towards the end of the Trecento, increasingly natural depictions of animals could be found in the illustrations of bestiary manuscripts.³⁴⁴ As well, studies of animals were executed by artists to be as true to life as possible, and were often drawn from life. These latter drawings were principally created for the sake of study and to distribute design ideas amongst workshops. A well-known example of this practice is the *Taccuino di disegni* (model book) attributed to the Milanese artist Giovannino de' Grassi and his workshop, now at the Biblioteca Civica in Bergamo. Produced under the patronage of the Visconti court, and dated c. 1390-1405, the manuscript contains elaborate and realistic drawings on parchment of a variety of exotic, wild, and domestic animals. While many of the animals produced for the Datini frescoes are stylized and lack the level of realism found in Giovannino's studies, particular animals, such as the hawk found in one lunette, or some of the bird species, contain a higher level of detail and indicate that they may have been influenced by, or copied from, specific studies.

One lunette at the Palazzo Datini contains two hunters, clothed in tunics, leggings, and

³⁴³ Gaston Phoebus, *Illuminated Manuscripts: Hunting Scenes, "The Hunting Book" by Gaston Phoebus*. Text by Gabriel Bise, J. Peter Tallon, trans. (S.I.: Miller Graphics, 1978), 16, 18-9, 22-5, 28-9. The images in this text are reproductions of an early fifteenth century copy of the manuscript that is in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris as MS. Fr. 616. The original compositions of the earlier MS. Fr. 619 are copied and enriched with coloring to create designs emphasizing "tapestry-like flatness" at the expense of the animals' naturalism. See Klingender, 473-475.

³⁴⁴ Klingender, 439.

boots, who hide behind a tree with spears, awaiting game (See Ch. 2, Fig. 30). An immense brown beast sits on its hindquarters in the foreground while a collared hound lunges against its tether towards a creature that might be a bear, whose mate ambles on the other side of the lunette. Another lunette depicts a diminutive hunter, in a long grey tunic, white leggings, and grey boots, holding a spear and shield (See Ch. 2, Fig. 34). Three birds on the forest floor match the hunter in size while a large, tawny, fox runs in the foreground, its tongue lolling. A third lunette portrays a second small hunter, in a red tunic, white leggings, and grey boots, carrying a spear and surrounded by game (See Ch. 2, Fig. 33). A grey wolf runs in the foreground, and an ermine runs up a tree while a hound dashes ahead, perhaps following a scent. The remaining lunettes circumscribing the room show similar scenes. Their scale is problematic as the hunters are dominated by the sheer size of the wildlife, which is not portrayed in a relative manner. It is unclear if this is the result of perspectival experimentation, or if the painters were working from model books that distorted the relative dimensions of the creatures.

Another lunette depicts a large hawk at the bottom of the scene (Figs. 44-45). Its sharp talons grip the frame bordering the lunette, which is intersected by the hawk's overhanging tail feathers. This intrusion on the frame explores the liminal space between image and reality to delight the viewer with the suggestion that the bird of prey might depart the picture plane and fly into the real space of the *camera*. A large hare sits behind a tree, surrounded by participants in the hunt: a hound dashes by in the foreground while two hunters stand in the lower left of the frame. One stands upright, holding a bow while the other stoops over, possibly preparing nets or snares. Phoebus' text describes the practice of using string to make nets and to set snares for capturing hares.³⁴⁵ The presence of the hawk points to the possible influence of a second text on the hunting scenes at Palazzo Datini. Since it is rendered realistically and in great detail, unlike,



Figure 44 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo, with Paganino d'Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of lunette with hunting scene with hawk, fresco, *camera dell'uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)



Figure 45 Dino di Puccio and Jacopo d'Agnolo, with Paganino d'Ugolino, Imitation tapestries and hunting scenes, detail of hawk, fresco, *camera dell'uno letto*, Palazzo Datini, c. 1389-1391.

(Source: Fondazione Casa Pia dei Ceppi, Prato. Photo © Gabriele Ciolini.)

³⁴⁵ Phoebus, 43, 94-5, 99-104.

for example, the stylized rabbit nearby, it is possible the artist was copying from a specific source.

The manuscript *De arte venandi cum avibus*, or “The Art of Falconry,” was published c. 1244-50 by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, whose many titles included Holy Roman Emperor and King of Italy. In this text he vividly describes the practice of hunting with birds, such as falcons, eagles, and hawks.³⁴⁶ The marginalia of the “Manfred manuscript,” a thirteenth-century copy of Frederick’s text, preserved as Codex MS. Pal. Lat. 1071 in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, in Rome, is famed for its beautifully detailed marginal illustrations of over 900 bird and animal species.³⁴⁷ Illuminated copies of the text were produced in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, including a translation into French, c. 1300, with the MS. Fr. 12400 at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, in which the illustrations of birds are identical to those in the Vatican manuscript. These copies attest to the continued popularity of both the subject matter and the iconography.³⁴⁸ In Datini’s time, the imagery of falconry had become widespread in courtly circles and was inherited by the rising merchant classes in Italy who, despite strong anti-aristocratic feeling, still sought to emulate aristocratic tastes and lifestyles. Even Datini is recorded by Cavaciocchi as having “sometimes [...] let himself be tempted by the customs of his aristocratic friends and in his ‘light blue cloth riding *cioppa* lined with green cloth’ he went out to ‘shoot birds’.”³⁴⁹ Given this interest of the merchant, it is possible he was familiar with some aspects of the “Art of Falconry.”

These references to the “Art of Falconry,” together with the lunettes of hunting scenes, and the images of the pleasure garden found elsewhere in the palazzo, manifest Datini’s interest

³⁴⁶ See Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, *The Art of Falconry, being the De arte venandi cum avibus*. Trans. and eds. Casey A. Wood and F. Marjorie Fyfe (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1943).

³⁴⁷ Wood and Fyfe, lxii-lxix.

³⁴⁸ Wood and Fyfe, lvii-lxxxvii.

in the chivalric tradition of courtly love that was popularized in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Italian tradition stemmed from the Romance literature, already discussed briefly, which originated in France, and the related imagery that derived from these descriptive sources. It was adopted and emulated by the aristocratic class which, in turn, influenced the mercantile class. At the Palazzo Davanzati, figures in the banded landscapes from the Camera Nuziale are believed to be influenced by the *Chastelaine de Vergy*, a short French romance of courtly love from the thirteenth-century, as well as the Donna del Verzù. In the *podestà*'s quarters at San Gimignano, the walls are painted with three narrative sequences: the seduction of men by women with hunting and adventure scenes.³⁵⁰ Campbell points out that this imagery "constitutes an early stage in a process of translation of the language and themes of the literature of the medieval courts into an Italian civic context."³⁵¹ She traces the history of this imagery to the Italian poetry of the thirteenth-century and related permutations of earlier oral traditions, arguing that the developing Italian vernacular was strongly influenced by the political and cultural presence of the Angevin court in Italy, ruled by Charles I of Anjou.³⁵²

Yet despite his clear connections to this courtly and romance imagery, Datini avoids explicit references to the acts of seduction that are painted in other garden or hunt scenes. At the Palazzo Datini, there are no depictions of figural groupings and couples engaged in amorous acts or playful games. In fact, as has been mentioned earlier, Datini's landscape scenes in the *camera delle due letta* and a few of the hunting scenes from the lunettes in the *camera dell'uno letto*, are unusually devoid of any human figures. This is in stark contrast to the courtly figures in the

³⁴⁹ Cavaciocchi, "A Taste for Living," 207. Cavaciocchi cites Archivio Storico di Prato, *Datini*, 218, Spese varie, c. 93.

³⁵⁰ Campbell, 5-6.

³⁵¹ Campbell, 20.

³⁵² Campbell, 138, 170. For an in-depth discussion of the influence and proliferation of the French romance tradition in Italy see Chapter Three, The Chamber: Stories to Delight and Nourish the Body, of Campbell's text.

Triumph of Death, for example, from the influential cycle in the Camposanto in Pisa (c. 1345), attributed by scholars to either Buonamico Buffalmacco or Francesco Traini. The figures sit in a garden of rich, yet flat and tapestry-like, foliage. Many surviving fresco fragments from private residences, which depict similar garden scenes, also include such courtly figures, as seen in the “hunt” scenes at the Palazzo Davanzati, for example, mentioned earlier.

Beneath the lunettes at the Palazzo Datini, the wall space contains imitation tapestries with patterns that are similar to those at Palazzo Davanzati in both content and design (See Ch. 2, fig. 31). The painted tapestry in the Sala dei Pavoni, for example, is nearly identical to that in the Datini *camera dell'uno letto*. It depicts alternating squares of crowns on red ground, four fleurs-de-lis on blue ground, and rearing lions (fig. 46). These are not set against a latticed ground, as at the Palazzo Datini, but are instead connected to one another by a geometric pattern of interlinking chain. A variation of this same tapestry design is also found in the Camera Nuziale.

Cole argues that Datini's impetus for commissioning this decorative motif directly relates to the visit of Louis II, Duke of Anjou and King of Naples, who arrived in Prato in November 1409 and was hosted at Datini's palazzo.³⁵³ The symbols of the crown and the fleur-de-lis are combined in the *stemma* of the House of Anjou and Cole points out that the painter Piero di Miniato was commissioned by the merchant to paint the arms of Louis. However, Miniato's *conto* places his work on the exterior of the house, above the entrance to the palazzo.³⁵⁴

Origo also points out that Louis presented Datini with a royal charter, providing the

³⁵³ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 79-80. Cole is influenced by Origo's discussion of the visit and her conclusion that this ground floor room must have served as the guest-room, which at another time also hosted Francesco Gonzaga. See Origo, 234, 338-341.

³⁵⁴ Cole, “Interior Decoration,” 80. Cole references document ADP, *Libro di mercatanzie*, F, 1410-16, a.c. 139: Piero di Miniato da Firenze dipintore de' avere per questo lavoro fato alla chasa, cioè per l'arme de' re Luigi sopra la porta della chasa grande del Ciepo (Palazzo Datini), lire dodici. See also Guasti, vol. 2, 423.

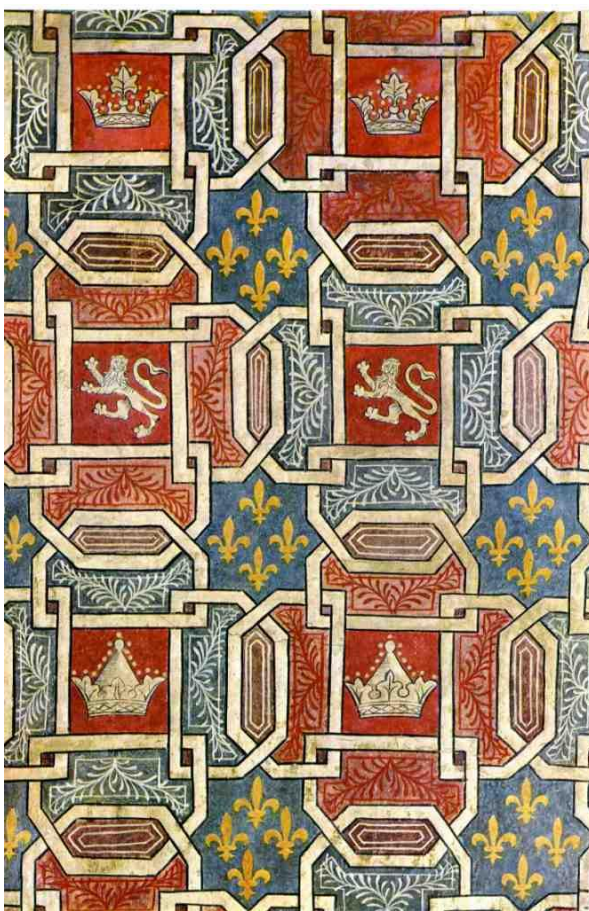


Figure 46 Imitation tapestry, detail, fresco, Sala dei Pavoni, Palazzo Davizzi-Davanzati, Florence, fourteenth century.

(Source: Luciano Berti, *Il Museo di Palazzo Davanzati a Firenze*, Italia: Electa Editrice, 1971, Tavola 20.)

merchant with the right to use “the royal lily of France, ‘gold, on an azure ground.’”³⁵⁵ Yet the charter explicitly states that Datini could apply the heraldic image to his own arms. It does not authorize the use of the crown symbol, or a general application of the fleur-de-lis, at Datini’s

³⁵⁵ Origo, 340. Origo quotes Guasti, Proemio, pp. CXXVII-CXXIX (Cole cites the same, beginning at CXXCIII). It seems that the charter was never applied in Datini’s lifetime. The only instance where it seems to have been heeded is in Filippo Lippi’s fresco of Herod’s Feast from his cycle of Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist, in the Duomo of Prato (1452-66). In the middle of the scene there is a shield with the familiar diagonal red and white stripes of the Datini *stemma*. In the center rests a blue fleur-de-lis. Lippi was commissioned by Datini’s Ceppo to produce a tabernacle, now in the Museo Civico in Prato, and may have been influenced by this connection.

discretion, which, in actuality, was present in the decoration of the palazzo several years prior to Louis' visit. The absence of a lily in the merchant's *stemma* shows that the rights issued in the charter were not accepted verbatim.

Cole's explanation also fails to explain the prevalence of the same design at other Florentine residences, such as the Palazzo Davanzati or the Villa Beccari. Similarly decorated wall fragments from the Palazzi Lamberti, in Via San Miniato fra le Torri and Via Pellicceria, are contained in the Museo di San Marco.³⁵⁶ Romagnoli suggests that these examples point to a local decorative custom, rather than a specific political alignment with the House of Anjou. Homage to illustrious persons was represented through direct heraldic imagery: *stemme* and similar familial iconography.³⁵⁷ Crown and lily motifs were requested by Florentine or Tuscan patrons for their implicit association with themes of power and affluence, since concepts of nobility and power were extremely fluid in Italy in this period. Romagnoli argues against the conclusions of Cole and Origo regarding this motif in the Palazzo Datini, stating: "although the heraldic reading is convincing, no proof exists to indicate a second painting intervention in the room, furthermore, as we have observed elsewhere, [the *camera dell'uno letto*] had to carry out the function of an office and not of a room destined to receive guests of the merchant."³⁵⁸ If we are to accept Romagnoli's reading of the surviving inventories, and her identification of the uses of the ground floor rooms,

³⁵⁶ Romagnoli, Part 2, 22, 26.

³⁵⁷ Romagnoli, Part 2, 22. "Esempi questi che attestano una consuetudine decorativa, piuttosto che costituire un tributo alla casa d'Angio, fatta eccezione forse per una più generica manifestazione di schieramento politico. Concluderemo poi che le immagini realizzate al fine di rendere omaggio ad un personaggio illustre presentano caratteristiche più chiaramente esplicite." Romagnoli cites the 1310 visit of Robert of Anjou (also known as Robert of Naples, and Florence) to the Villa of the Courts of Ruballa, belonging to the Peruzzi family, bankers who served a number of sovereigns. His visit to the Peruzzi palace was honored with frescoes depicting the Anjou *stemma*, accompanied by a representation of the king accompanied by dignitaries.

³⁵⁸ Romagnoli, Part 2, 21-22. "Sebbene la lettura araldica appaia convincente, non esiste alcuna prova che indichi un secondo intervento di pittura nella stanza che per di più, come abbiamo osservato altrove, doveva svolgere la funzione di ufficio e non di camera destinata ad accogliere gli ospiti del mercante."

then there is no archival documentation directly linking Arrigo, or any other artist, to the decoration of the camera dell'uno letto following the earlier work attributed to Dino and Jacopo.

Surviving fragments of related decorative frescoes indicate that the application of imitation tapestries, with or without a banded tree border, was common in private residences throughout Tuscany in the Trecento. In Prato, as mentioned earlier, the contemporary Palazzo Verzoni, located on Via Santa Trinità near Palazzo Datini, contains frescoes of vair drapery with floral motifs (See Ch. 2, Fig. 38).³⁵⁹ Romagnoli identifies similar depictions of imitation textiles, painted marbles, and vegetation, in other Pratese residences of the period, including Palazzi Manassei and Bizzocchi, which “consist of a flowering garden, usually developed in the upper register above imitation fabrics, composed, at regular intervals, of trees full of fruit circled by various birds.”³⁶⁰

Uomini Illustri and the Liberal Arts: The Figures in the Courtyard and Loggia

Archival documents indicate that the courtyard walls were once decorated with a cycle of fourteen *uomini illustri* (“illustrious men”), also known as Heroes or Worthies. Such figures were often depicted in the halls of communal government buildings and, less frequently, were found in aristocratic and middle class residences throughout Tuscany. They derive from the French heroic novels of the courtly tradition. As well, the figures served to express the interests of the patron in the art and literature of antiquity. Only four of Datini’s courtyard figures survive (See Ch. 1, Fig. 16). Read from left to right, these include: a she-wolf, suckling two children in front of a rocky backdrop; a crowned figure in a short Roman-style tunic, decorative breastplate and cloak, who indicates to a miniature walled city held in his arms; a bearded male figure in similar dress who

³⁵⁹ Renzo Fantappie. *Il Bel Prato*, 2 vols. (Prato: Edizioni del Palazzo, 1983), 154.

³⁶⁰ Romagnoli, Part 2, 25.

holds a long sword and a *mappa mundi*; a male in armor with embossed floral motifs and a dagger and sword sheathed at his hips brandishing a large axe; and a man in a short tunic and helmet who treads on two fallen men.

Each figure is isolated in a niche separated by spiral pillars similar to the Solomonic columns of St. Peter's Basilica. The foliated arches, framed by mosaic-like geometric patterns of imitation marble inlay, parallel details found in many contemporary Pratese altarpieces, such as the *Pietà* in the Chiesa di Sant' Agostino, Pietro di Miniato's *Madonna col Bambino in trono tra i santi Stefano e Lorenzo* in the Cappella di Santo Stefano sotto le "Volte," Agnolo Gaddi's frescoes in the Cappella della Sacra Cintola of the Duomo, and Gerini's *Tabernacolo del Ceppo* (See Ch. 1, Figs. 18-19), once located at the corner of Datini's garden.³⁶¹ The imitation mosaics are composed of inlay "tiles" of black, cream, yellow, and red. Residual pigments indicate that the background was azure, which has now deteriorated to the red-brown preparatory base. The figures stand on a perspectival floor of ochre and black tile. In contrast to the multicolored decorative detail, the figures are depicted in grey.

A visual prototype for the grey figures is found in Giotto's cycle of Virtues and Vices in the Cappella degli Scrovegni nell'Arena, Padua (c. 1305), in which monochromatic personifications of the Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices are painted to imitate statuary (Fig. 47). Giotto also painted a cycle of Worthies for the Sala dei Uomini Famosi, in the Neapolitan palace of Robert of Anjou, in 1332. Diana Norman observes that "the closest analogies to such ambitious painted schemes to not occur within private family residences but in such civic buildings as the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, the Palazzo dei Priori, and the Palazzo del Podestà in

³⁶¹ Badiani, 70-1, 84. Fantappie, 258-9. Cherubini, vol. 1, 920, *Tavola* 184. Badiani attributes the *Pietà* to the School of Agnolo Gaddi. The Miniato fresco is located in the cloister of the Duomo of Prato, now part of the *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo*. Badiani notes that the frescoes in the Cappella di Santo Stefano were framed by a monochromatic ground of terre-verde, as at Palazzo Datini.



Figure 47 Giotto di Bondone, *The Seven Virtues*, detail of Justice, fresco, Cappella degli Scrovegni nell'Arena, Padua, c. 1305.

(Source: Image ID: SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039928819, ARTstor [database online]. Available from ARTstor, Inc., New York, New York, or on the World Wide Web: <http://www.artstor.org>. Photo © SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y., 2006.)

Florence.³⁶² The Palazzo dei Priori program was painted in the 1380s and the figures of the twenty-two famous men depicted were accompanied by epigrams written by the famed humanist and orator Coluccio Salutati. It would seem, then, that Datini's commission of the *uomini illustri* in his private residence was somewhat unusual for the period. However, the fourteenth-century decoration of the principal city residence of the Carrara family, called the Reggia Carrarese, in

³⁶² Diana Norman, "Splendid models and examples from the past': Carrara patronage of art," *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)*, vol. 1. Diana Norman, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 155-176, 171-172.

Padua, included a similar program of famous figures from antiquity, drawn from classical texts.³⁶³

In seeking to explain the presence of such figures in the Reggia, Norman argues: “it is likely that the flattering analogies were being made between the deeds of the great figures of antiquity and those of the signore and his family.”³⁶⁴ It is possible that such a parallel would have appealed to Datini as well, who was determined to validate the social and financial standing he had acquired without a noble background.

The vaulted loggia surrounding the courtyard at the Palazzo Datini once contained seated Christian and Aristotelian Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity; with Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, and Prudence, juxtaposed by contrasting Vices. These were accompanied by personifications of Sciences taken from the Trivium and Quadrivium, which formed the foundation of the liberal arts education, and included Dialectic, Grammar, and Rhetoric; with Mathematics, Astronomy, Geometry, and Music. Four Philosophies of Poetry, Theology, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence, were also depicted, topped by lunettes of fleur-de-lis on red ground and a vault of the same on blue ground with large *tondi* (roundels), now largely destroyed.³⁶⁵ Today, only fragments of the figures of Charity, Hope, and Prudence survive, in poor condition, on the back wall of the loggia.

The figures are seated within foliated arches, set against a solid red ground, and are framed by Solomonic columns and decorative imitation marble inlay. These last two elements visually link the loggia figures to the *uomini illustri* of the courtyard. Like the courtyard figures, the Virtues are identifiable based on their accompanying attributes, but they are also clearly labeled, whereas the courtyard heroes are not. Hope and Prudence, therefore, are labeled as

³⁶³ Diana Norman, “Astrology, antiquity, and empiricism: art and learning,” *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)*, vol. 1. Diana Norman, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 197-216, 212.

³⁶⁴ Norman, “‘Splendid models and examples from the past’,” 172.

³⁶⁵ Cole, 74-5. Cole argues that the *tondi* likely contained portraits of philosophers

‘SPERANZA’ and ‘PRUDENZIA’ (See Ch. 1, Fig. 14). They, too, appear to be influenced by Giotto’s statue-like cycle of Virtues and Vices in Padua, as the figures are a monochromatic grey, drawing a further visual parallel to the courtyard figures. Particular details stand out, such as the attributes of the Virtues, because they have been painted in color. However, a reading of the loggia figures is compromised by the severely deteriorated condition in which they survive.

A similar program of enthroned figures, representing the three theological and four cardinal Virtues, including Fortitude and Temperance, is found on the West wall of the Salone of the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua. The design is attributed to the Paduan scholar Pietro d’Abano and was executed by Giusto de’ Menabuoi, c. 1370-80.³⁶⁶ These were accompanied by personifications of the calendar months, the seven planets, and the signs of the zodiac. Dunlop argues that it was more unusual to have paintings of the Seven Liberal Arts in private residences, but murals of the Virtues could be found in palazzi of the period. This is exemplified by late-Trecento fragments of four Virtues from a residence in Venice, now in the Museo Correr. The Palazzo Isidori in Perugia, and the Palazzo Trinci at Foligno, also contained figures of the Liberal Arts. A cycle of Virtues and Vices survives in the Palazzo Beni at Gubbio, which was executed in the early Quattrocento by the painter Ottaviano Nelli.³⁶⁷

Gerini’s *conto* of 1392 shows that, aside from the Saint Christopher fresco, most of his work in the palazzo was concentrated in the central courtyard and surrounding loggia. The master painter was responsible for the figures depicted on the walls, including the fourteen figures in the courtyard (“lle figure che sono ne le faccie della corte”), and the Virtues, Vices,

³⁶⁶ Diana Norman, “‘The glorious deeds of the Commune’: civic patronage of art,” *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena (1260-1555)*, vol. 1. Diana Norman, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 133-154, 141-142.

³⁶⁷ Dunlop, 27-28.

Sciences, and Philosophies in the loggia.³⁶⁸ Only a few figures are directly referenced in the *conto*, including *Charllo Mangnio* (Charlemagne), *Giuditta* (Judith), and *Chamilla*. Dunlop hypothesizes that the lack of identification in Gerini's list may simply be due to the fact that a complete list of all painted figures would have been too long.³⁶⁹ In his *ricordanza* entry on the work of Bartolomeo and Agnolo, Datini notes that the artists were responsible for imitation marbles in the courtyard.³⁷⁰ This likely references the fictive tabernacles framing Gerini's figures. A third document also isolates the hand of Arrigo in the execution of the courtyard marbles, although it is unclear what work can be attributed to the painter.³⁷¹

The lack of identification in Gerini's *conto* is problematic, as the attributes of the figures do not facilitate a clear understanding of their personality. While Dunlop and Cole agree that the nursing wolf references the Roman foundation myth of Romulus and Remus, and speculate that the figure with the city could be Romulus with Rome, the other figures are ambiguous.³⁷² The man with the sword and orb is identified by Cole as Julius Caesar while Dunlop argues that he represents Alexander the Great. Yet Charlemagne, directly referenced in Gerini's *conto*, was often represented holding an orb of the world. Cole hypothesizes that the man with the axe is the biblical figure Joshua and the final figure, trampling fallen victims, is a personification of his victories. He cites the Hero cycle at La Manta as a visual parallel. Dunlop does not provide a

³⁶⁸ Melis, 59. Document D, n. 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d'arte*, Conti di Niccolò Gerini is cited. The listed works include "le 7 virtù, cho' vizi da pie' [...] le 7 scienze, con filosafi da pie' [...] quatro filosofie, sono in deta logia, del cielo de la volta e sotto."

³⁶⁹ Dunlop, 30.

³⁷⁰ Melis, 59. As above. Supino, 137. In listing the completed works for which Gaddi and Bartolomeo were demanding payment, Datini notes "E' domandano de' marmi de la corte, per braccia 218, soldi I den. X per braccio." See also Cole, 73.

³⁷¹ Dunlop, 18, 226. Dunlop cites document ASP Datini 1173, *Miscellanea, Documenti d'arte*, folio di lavori di Arrigo di Niccolo, c. I. In addition to frescoes in other areas of the palazzo, Arrigo "a fatto di sua mano [...] Dipinse e marmi di tutto il chortile, cioe infresco e intonicho e dipinti da chapo infino a terra chome lalteza della chasa, a tutti messi cholori di mio. Vienesi di tutto questo fior xx."

³⁷² Cole, 74. Dunlop, 30. Dunlop argues that the round building in the center of the city could be read as the Pantheon or the Castel Sant'Angelo.

definite answer for the final two figures, although she suggests that the man with the axe could be T[itus] Manlius Torquatus, an ancient Roman ruler, as he is found in related cycles.

These uncertain readings are further complicated by the poor survival of the frescoes themselves. The remainder of the cycle has been destroyed due to prolonged exposure to the elements and dampness in the walls. A few years after its completion, Gerini wrote to Datini regarding corrections for the loggia figures and in 1510 these were heavily retouched, along with the vaulted ceiling. Dunlop has attributed the surviving Virtues to the hand of later artist Michele di Francesco.³⁷³ A more thorough exploration of the *uomini illustri* figures at the Palazzo Datini can be found in Manuali's Oxford dissertation of 2000.

This thesis has shown that there were many external influences shaping Datini's personal choices as a patron. While several possible sources have been explored, there are certainly other research avenues that can be addressed in future study to further our understanding of Datini as an individual, larger cultural values, and the artistic environment in Prato and beyond, in the period.

³⁷³ Dunlop, 26.

Conclusion

In the same manner that Anne Dunlop describes the heraldic façade decoration of the Palazzo Datini as a “kind of portrait” of the merchant; a similar statement can be made of the interior murals of the residence. Yet the term “portrait” does not mean that the artists included a direct likeness of either Datini or his family in the frescoes. While the earliest recorded portraits, in the modern sense, have been attributed to Giotto and Simone Martini, Andrew Martindale argues that the practice of incorporating portrait characterizations into wall decoration developed later, in the early fifteenth century.³⁷⁴

At the Palazzo Datini, the Datini and Bandini *stemme* function as a stronger form of representation. Martindale emphasizes the significance of these coats-of-arms by stating that: “it would not have occurred to [the painters] to attempt distinctions of persons via their faces [...because] heraldic imagery did the same job much more distinctly.”³⁷⁵ This heraldry fulfills a number of roles: to perpetuate ancestral memory and celebrate family lineage, whether or not it pertains to aristocratic bloodlines; to represent the immediate occupants of the household; and to project notions of power using symbols related to positions of status and office.³⁷⁶

It is not unusual, therefore, that the Palazzo Datini did not contain frescoed images of the merchant during his lifetime. What is remarkable is the fact that, despite the lack of such imagery in his residence, Datini had himself portrayed in many of the works he commissioned outside of the palace. Even if this dichotomy was motivated by Datini’s efforts to project a specific public identity, it must be remembered that, in addition to his own family and friends, the merchant

³⁷⁴ Andrew Martindale, *Painting the Palace: studies in the history of medieval secular painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995), 13, 78.

³⁷⁵ Martindale, 95.

hosted business associates and powerful members of society in his home. Such individuals were the very audience at which such portraits were directed. Barbara Deimling states that the merchant had himself depicted as a donor in *all* of the paintings he commissioned for the church of San Francesco and it has already been established that Arrigo di Niccolò produced a panel for that church which portrayed Datini and his family.³⁷⁷ Portraits of the merchant were also executed for other sites.

The *Trinità* (c. 1405-10), depicts Datini, his wife Margherita, and his illegitimate daughter Ginevra as patrons at the foot of the cross, upon which Christ is crucified (Fig. 48). Today it is in the collection of the Musei Capitolini in Rome. The panel was believed to be executed by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, an attribution still supported by the Musei Capitolini. However, later research by Klara Steinweg and Luciano Bellosi assigns authorship to the anonymous Maestro di Coniugi Datini.³⁷⁸ Simonetta Cavaciocchi now proposes Giovanni di Tano Fei, an artist who was based in Florence and was friends with Datini's associate Domenico di Cambio. Giovanni produced four panels for Datini between 1404 and 1406 and Cavaciocchi argues that the "Trinity," now in Rome, was executed by Giovanni at a cost of 25 florins and was displayed in Margherita's room.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Martindale, 7.

³⁷⁷ Barbara Deimling, "Tommaso del Mazza (Master of S. Verdiana)" in *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: Tradition and Innovation in Florentine Trecento Painting: Giovanni Bonsi – Tommaso del Mazza*. Sec. IV, Vol. VIII. Essays by Simona Pasquinucci and Barbara Deimling. Miklós Boskovits, ed. (Florence, Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 2000), pp. 107-369, 142.

³⁷⁸ Luciano Bellosi, "Tre note in margine a uno studio sull'arte a Prato," *Come un Prato Fiorito: Studi sull'arte tardogotico* (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2000).

³⁷⁹ Simonetta Cavaciocchi, "Francesco Datini and the Painters," *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 213-226, 222.

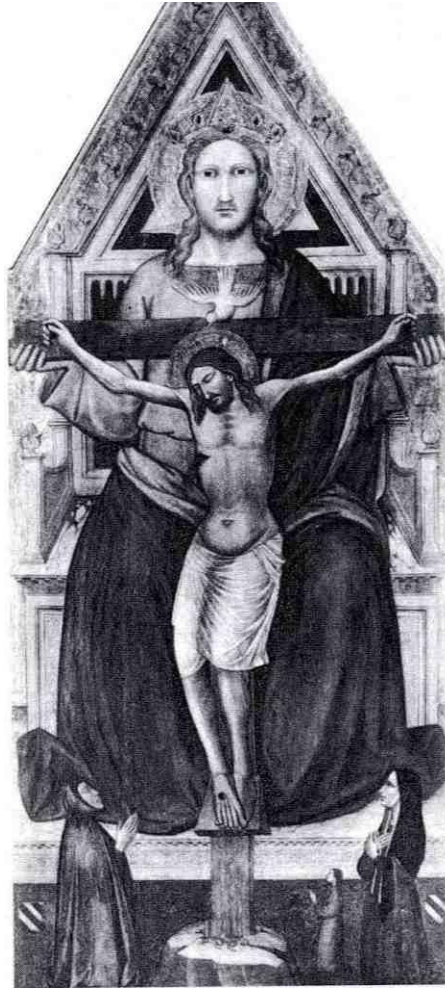


Figure 48 Maestro di Coniugi Datini, *Trinità*, tempera on panel, Musei Capitolini, Rome, c. 1405-10.

(Source: Luciano Bellosi, *Come un Prato Fiorito: Studi sull'arte tardogotico*, Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2000, Illustrazione 85.)

Another portrait of Datini is included in the *Tabernacolo della Romita*, completed by Pietro and Antonio di Miniato in about 1418 for a property that belonged to the merchant (Fig. 49-50). It was located near the Romita, outside of the town walls, along the present day Via Roma by the church of Santa Maria del Soccorso.³⁸⁰ The *Trinità* and the Romita tabernacle were

³⁸⁰ Giampiero Nigro, "The Merchant and His Wealth," *Francesco di Marco Datini: The Man, the Merchant*. Giampiero Nigro, ed. (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), pp. 75-99, 85.



Figures 49 and 50 Pietro and Antonio di Miniato, *Il Tabernacolo della Romita*, fresco, via Roma, Prato, c. 1418.

(Source: Renzo Fantappie, *Il Bel Prato*, 2 vols, Prato: Edizioni del Palazzo, 1983, Vol. 1, p. 444; Vol. 2, p. 174.)

commissioned in Datini's lifetime, in addition to the paintings in San Francesco, although the tabernacle was not completed until after the merchant's death. Later images were commissioned by Datini's heir, the *Ceppo*, including the *Madonna del Ceppo*, executed by Filippo Lippi in 1452-3 for the garden of the institution. A portrait of Datini was completed by Ludovico Buti in 1588 and is today in the collection of the Museo Civico di Prato. In all of these paintings, Datini

is shown in the red “cloak and hood with cap that he usually wore.”³⁸¹

It is possible that Datini’s relationships with the artists in his employ influenced other, indirect, representations of the merchant patron. In the *Money Changers as Benefactors*, from the cycle of the *Story of Saint Matthew*, executed by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (c. 1395) in the chapter house of San Francesco, Alick McLean observes that: “once vilified moneychangers [are now depicted] as munificent patrons.”³⁸² (Fig. 51) The money changers are saliently depicted within



Figure 51 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *Story of Saint Matthew*, fresco, Church of San Francesco, Prato, c. 1395.

(Source: Image ID: SCALA_ARCHIVES_1039932038, ARTstor [database online]. Available from ARTstor, Inc., New York, New York, or on the World Wide Web: <http://www.artstor.org>. Photo © SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y., 2006.)

³⁸¹ Cavaciocchi, “Francesco Datini and the Painters,” 222. Datini’s outfit is described in a letter, dated October 15, 1410, which states that Arrigo di Niccolò is should be approached to produce a design for Datini’s tombstone, since “he knows well what Francesco looked like.”

³⁸² McLean, 198.

an arcade in the middle of the lunette. They are seated at a desk with a detailed inlay design that is covered by a tapestry with an elaborate orientalized pattern in gold, blue, and red. Such objects suggest rarity and value. The scene appears to celebrate a newly elevated role for the money changers, in contrast to the traditional iconography, in which they are depicted being expelled from the temple by Christ. One of the money changers wears a red cap with a rolled edge, in similar fashion to that worn by Datini, while the other is dressed in the merchant's characteristic red robe. It may be that Gerini sought to publicly honor his own generous patron who could, because of his banking business, be appropriately inserted in the scene. As has been shown, Gerini was eager to maintain Datini's patronage following the payment dispute in 1392. Three years later, the artist had regained Datini's support and was again working for the merchant in San Francesco.

In the Palazzo Datini, a particular "portrait" of the merchant is presented in the subject matter and style of the interior paintings. Byrne emphasizes that the importance of the palazzo rests in its role as "a monument to the family, but in addition, it served as a sanctuary for its members, a storehouse for its wealth, and was thus a focal point for the energies of its *capo di famiglia*," literally the "head of the family," or the patriarch.³⁸³ While the commissions Datini requested in his home served as visual respite to delight and awe viewers, the murals primarily functioned to express the merchant's commitment to larger cultural values, as well as his personal and professional interests, to his friends, family, associates, and other guests. The close association between Datini, as patron, and the paintings, as the product of his benefaction, means that a great deal of information can be gathered about him from the images. However, an understanding of the merchant, the interior decoration of his residence, and the artistic environment in Prato in the Trecento, is greatly furthered by the survival of his correspondence,

business documents and related paperwork, since archival documents are simply unavailable for most works of the period.

In examining the surviving visual and material culture, it is clear that, in large part, Datini's patronage was shaped by his occupation as a merchant. This is because his success in international trade provided Datini with: the wealth required for building and decorating a private urban residence, the professional contacts necessary for establishing relationships with artists of repute, and exposure to a wide range of cultural values both within Italy and beyond. Through the connections that Datini established, the merchant ensured that his residence was decorated both by developing local artists as well as prolific adherents of the Florentine tradition. As such, the composition, color palette, and style of the murals in the palazzo are all directly derived from the manner of painting associated with the larger city. In addition, the subject matter was influenced by the merchant's lengthy residence in the city of Avignon, during which time he was exposed to many aspects of the international art world.

Yet while Datini requested murals with traditional iconography, the paintings at the Palazzo Datini include many individualizing aspects. Although it is possible that such distinctive details resulted from the merchant's lack of a more refined vision, it may be that Datini adapted popular imagery to suit his personal tastes and values. After all, the merchant was not outmoded in his choices but instead appears to have been interested in some of the most fashionable literary, artistic, and cultural ideals of the period.

Scholars have acknowledged the great interest that Datini took in emulating the interior wall paintings commissioned in the private residences of his bourgeois peers and aristocratic contemporaries in other urban centers. Yet comparative research has suggested that Datini was also influenced by additional visual and written sources beyond fresco. The iconography and

³⁸³ Byrne, 262.

design of the palace murals have been linked to a variety of other sources, including illustrated manuscripts. These sources, however, have yet to be explored at any length in the scholarship. It is to be expected that Datini was influenced by other values in addition to the *topoi* of the cult of saints, the pleasure garden and herbal traditions, the medieval bestiary and related animal studies, the courtly rituals of hunting and hawking, and the chivalric romances of Provençal origin proposed in this thesis. Further study might consider other prevalent cultural values of the period, as expressed in popular literature, manuscript sources, and related material culture beyond those already considered. There is also potential for future research in the Archive.

As Simonetta Cavaciocchi has shown, there is a significant amount of material in the Archivio Datini that remains unexplored. In order to further studies of Datini's patronage, it is necessary to go beyond the file of miscellaneous art documents, studied in-depth by previous researchers, to examine related papers in which Datini or his peers may have discussed aspects of the building and decoration of the residence, as well as art commissions outside of the palazzo. Another direction for future study might include examination *in situ* of other private palaces in Tuscany or elsewhere in Italy. Anne Dunlop's case studies have suggested that there are many sites in which original Trecento wall paintings have been recovered and restored that have yet to be fully analyzed in the scholarship. Comparative research of such sites and the related local archives would permit a better understanding of whether the experiences and influences that shaped Datini's expectations as a patron are cohesive with those of contemporary patrons.

While Datini had the foresight to save all of his documents, it is difficult to assume that the merchant was fully aware of the legacy he was leaving. This year, the six hundredth anniversary of Datini's death, has been marked by extensive public celebration in the city of Prato. This, coupled with the continued scholarly interest in Datini and his patronage, demonstrates the enduring impact that the merchant has left behind in cultural and art historical

studies. The murals and documents of the Palazzo Datini continue to provide scholars with insight into the values and practices of the Trecento in a way that is not possible for most works of the period.

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