



DEODATO ORLANDI

ITALIAN (SCHOOL OF LUCCA),

ACTIVE C. 1288–1308

Virgin and Child with Two Angels, c. 1290

Tempera painting on lindenwood panel

Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

Provenance: Private collection, Florence; Count Contini-Bonacossi, Florence; Samuel H. Kress Collection, acquired 1950 (K. 1716); Columbia Museum of Art since 1954.

The Artist

Previous catalogues have attributed this little panel to the School of Cimabue but stylistic comparisons point to it having come from a workshop in Lucca rather than from Florence. In fact, the hand of one of the most prominent Lucchese painters of the late Middle Ages, that of Deodato Orlandi, seems likely. This attribution is supported not only by similarities to such paintings by Deodato as his full-length *Enthroned Madonna*, now in the Louvre, but also by the presence of a particular punch stamp decoration on the Columbia panel.¹ This identical punch mark also was used on a crucifix that was signed by Deodato and dated 1301 and now is in the Diocesan Museum in San Miniato al Tedesco.

The style of painting associated with the school of Lucca during the thirteenth century was developed by Berlinghiero Berlinghieri (active 1228-36/42), who had arrived in the Tuscan city from Lombardy, and was continued by his son,

Bonaventura Berlinghieri (active 1235-74). Dominating the Tuscan scene for much of the century, the School of Lucca closed out its development with Deodato Orlandi. The last major representative of Lucchesean painting, Deodato's stylistic evolution opens the door to the overwhelming Florentine artistic impact initially of Cimabue and, then, of Giotto.

Little is known concerning the life and career of Deodato aside from what he has left in terms of panel and mural paintings. A number of these paintings, however, have the unusual distinction, for their day, of being signed and dated. Although it is likely that Deodato received his initial training as an apprentice in the workshop of Bonaventura Berlinghieri, he seems already to have come under the influence of Cimabue when he produced his first dated work, a large crucifix now in the Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi in Lucca, in 1288. This cross is clearly imitative of the celebrated Florentine example from the church of Santa

Croce, executed by Cimabue around 1285. So similar is it to Cimabue's prototype that it even has been suggested that Deodato served an apprenticeship under Cimabue.² Later, however, Deodato fell under the spell of that great Florentine precursor of the Renaissance, Giotto di Bondone. Giotto's impact is seen in the crucifix noted earlier that Deodato painted in 1301 for the church of Santa Chiara in the town of San Miniato al Tedesco. This cross is a rather prosaic copy of Giotto's Santa Maria Novella crucifix of ca. 1290-1300.

In addition to working in his native Lucca, Deodato Orlandi was active as an artist in Pisa and at the nearby Basilica of San Piero a Grado where he was commissioned by the Contari family of Pisa to paint in fresco thirty scenes from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul, as well as 'portraits' of all the popes. The San Piero a Grado frescoes reveal Deodato's interest in attempts at realism and in trying to come to grips with problems of perspective. Among his surviving paintings on wood are two altarpiece wings with six scenes from the life of John the Baptist now in Berlin. The contrast between Deodato's earlier manner that would situate him within the circle of Cimabue and his later work which shows the decided impact of Giotto's naturalistic innovations not only betrays the eclectic and derivative style of the artist but also the many currents of artistic expression being activated at the start of the Trecento.

The Painting

The most recent conservation treatment has indicated the series of steps undertaken by the artist in realizing this little painting; The gessoed surface of the panel was covered with a red bole adhesive upon which a broad area of water gilding was laid. Incisions outlined the halos and punch stamps were used to decorate them. The actual painting began with the flesh tones and garments of the Madonna and Child. Midtone colors provided the base color and highlights (opaque white) and shadows (transparent glaze) were added on top. Next came the cloth of honor, followed by the green exterior of the cloth, then the Christ Child's cape was painted, and finally the Madonna's overmantle was completed. Final shadows using red lake and green glazes were then added, as were white highlights. Lastly, more gold leaf was applied as an embellishment to the Madonna's robe and the cloth of honor. Careful examination also has revealed the presence of underdrawing by the artist in the area of the Christ Child's skirt.

Certainly, a painting of this small size and intimate character would have been intended for personal devotion. Garrison, however, suggested that this panel may actually be a "fragment of [a] small Madonna and Child Enthroned and [the] left wing of a diptych."³ He believed it to be of late 13th-century Florentine origin. Compositionally, Deodato's *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* takes its place in a Lucchese tradition that passes through two generations of the Berlinghieri family. Three panels by the founder of the dynasty, Berlinghiero, offer good comparisons: a *Madonna and Child* in New York's Metropolitan Museum, another in the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, and a small triptych of the *Virgin and Child with Saints* in the Cleveland Museum of Art. His son, Bonaventura's place within this thematic evolution is secured by the diptych in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence depicting the *Madonna and Child with the Archangel Michael and Saints*. While clearly indebted to this lineage, Deodato's rendition takes a further step in the direction of realistic portrayal. The vivacity of Deodato's depiction owes a debt to the increased emphasis being given to establishing a physical presence within the panel. The former attribution of the panel in Columbia to the circle of Cimabue is quite understandable given the fact that Deodato's manner in its early stages, as seen here, does display the strong influence of the Florentine master.

In terms of Deodato's own style, the Columbia painting clearly relates to his *Enthroned Madonna* in the Louvre, a work which also displays Cimabuesque features and dates from early in Deodato's career. Mojmír Frinta, who made the connection, noted earlier, between the punch marks decorating the Columbia painting and their use in other examples of Deodato's work believed it to date to ca. 1288.⁴ The facial features of mother and child in both the Columbia and Louvre paintings are nearly identical and, even more convincingly, the left hand of the Columbia Virgin is practically a mirror image of the right hand of the Madonna in the Louvre. Furthermore, both paintings present mother and child with heretofore unseen tenderness. The result is the injection of a greater degree of naturalism and it is in such a painting as the one considered here that we can see the phasing out of the iconic Italo-Byzantine style that had dominated Tuscan painting in the earlier part of the century. It also signals the advent of an incipient naturalism that ushers in the Gothic style of medieval art and, at the same time, predicts the coming of the Renaissance.

by Charles R. Mack

Exhibitions: National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1951-53.

Kress Foundation File Opinions: Roberto Longhi (1950) who believed it to be Florentine, close to Cimabue, and datable to ca. 1290.

Specific Literature: Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting*, Florence: Olschki, 1949, p. 230, no. 638; *Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection*, Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1951, p. 24, no. 1; *Catalogue 1954*, pp. 8-9; *Catalogue 1962*, pp.34-35; *Shapley 1966*, p. 6; *Census, 1972*, p. 575.

Additional Bibliography: Bruce Cole, *Giotto and Florentine Painting, 1280-1375*, New York/Evanston/San Francisco/London: Harper & Row Icon Edition, 1976, p. 46; Alastair Smart, *The Dawn of Italian Painting, 1250-1400*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1978, pp. 19-20; Mariagiulia Burrelli and Antonino Calca, *Cimabue a Pisa: la pittura pisana del duecento da Giunta a Giotto*, Pisa: Pacini, 2005.

Condition: Shapley suggested that the panel might be a fragment of a larger composition presenting a full-length image of an enthroned Virgin and Christ Child. The barbed edges of the panel suggest, however, that it is close to its original size and that it had an engaged frame. Repair is noticeable to the lower hand of the Madonna and to the upper foot of the Christ Child. These areas display a greenish tinge that would not have been present originally. Some repair to the upper edge of the gold backdrop is also visible. The panel underwent treatment in 1993 to halt possible infestation and more extensive structural treatment in 2000-01 under the supervision of George Bisacca at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and by Sue Ann Chui at the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. Despite some local abrasions and minor losses, Chui reported the support and paint layers to be in good condition but the gold gilding less so. In her conservation process, the surface was cleaned with saliva-moistened cotton swabs before the varnish was removed with a 50/50 mixture of ethanol and heptane. Old restorations were cleaned away resulting in a reemergence of the original, cooler color palette. Cracks in the support were stabilized and filled and finally some regilding in areas of loss was done prior to varnishing the painted areas with a polycyclohexanone resin with the gilded areas protected with a patina of watercolor and Maimeri solution.

The Frame: The outer frame with velvet panel is of the "Kress" type. The interior frame of the panel is of the cassetta variety. This poplar wood frame is covered with gold gilding over red bole and gesso. The mitered corners indicate that the frame has been cut down to suit the present purpose. Although this frame may be of sixteenth century origin, the punchwork decoration would suggest a dated contemporary with the painting.

Notes:

1. Frinta, p, 535. Frinta identifies this punch as octa-rosette Na4.
2. Alastair Smart, *The Dawn of Italian Painting, 1250-1400*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1978, p. 19.
3. Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting* Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1949, p. 230, no. 638
4. Opinion expressed by Professor Frinta when examining the painting in Columbia in 1988. The angels' halos are composed of a ring of eight- and nine-lobed floret punch marks; that of the Christ Child has an outer ring of circles with center point punches surrounding a pattern of vertical almond and floret punches between single punch stripes alternating with a string of eight-lobed marks. The most elaborate halo is that of the Madonna. It is framed like that of her Son but inside of this ring an alternating pattern of vine scrolls made with single punches and a composite floret made from a ring of six eight-lobed floret punch marks surrounding one eight-lobed punch mark has been used.