

# A Severed Bond?

Exploring Fourteenth-Century Art Across the Eastern and Western Christian World

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## ABSTRACTS

**Kayoko Ichikawa (University of Warwick)**

**The Iconography of *Christ Mounting the Cross* in the East and the West**

This paper focuses on a panel painting depicting *Christ Mounting the Cross* attributed to Guido da Siena here dated c.1267 and explores how this relatively rare iconography came to be included in a narrative cycle which can be considered a precedent of Duccio's *Maestà*. The earliest surviving visual example of this extra-biblical episode is found in an eleventh-century Armenian gospel illumination, and later it appears frequently in various media in Italy including panel paintings, manuscript illumination and mural cycles, as well as in the mural cycles in the Balkan area between the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. Anne Derbes rightly observed that the iconography eastern in its origin was reinterpreted by duecento Tuscan painters to suit their local audiences: Guido gives a prominently active role to Mary, the protectress of Siena, who compassionately embraces Christ. The depiction of Mary's sorrow imported from the East allowed the exploration of emotional expression, which formed the basis of the Renaissance. The shared interest in the human side of the biblical figures on both sides of the Mediterranean might have led to the shared phenomenon of the proliferation of developed narratives with increasing number of figures and their role in iconography, although it did not lead them to pursue the same degree of humanism and artistic naturalism.

**Vera-Simone Schulz (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florenz)**

**The Image in Arms: Christian Saints and Mongol Weapons in Florence and the Eastern Mediterranean**

The popularity of soldier saints in the Eastern Mediterranean is well established. Scholars have long noted that a change occurred in the thirteenth century: mounted warriors are no longer represented only with spears and swords, but bear bows and quivers filled with arrows, their presence counterbalanced by banners featuring a red cross against a white ground.

This paper discusses this phenomenon in its artistic and historical context, stressing the complex situation in the last decades of the Crusader Kingdoms, which led to the "invasion" of icons by Mongol armaments. However, the paper also compares this practice to a second mode of representing Mongol weapons in Christian painting: the

appearance of Mongol warriors in a fourteenth-century Florentine representation of St Sebastian. While before, the plague was thought to be a divine punishment, in this example the redeemer St Sebastian is tortured by Mongol archers, since they had come to represent the Eastern source of the disease.

In-depth analyses and the contextualization of these images will shed new light on the specific purposes regarding the introduction of such innovative iconographies in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Tuscany. Furthermore, the representation of Mongol weapons will be critically discussed in comparison with a second group of artifacts represented in Tuscan painting of that time, more commonly associated with the impact of the Mongol Empire: luxury textiles of Central Asian provenance. The paper will hence contribute to the understanding of the impact of the mobility of people, artifacts, and concepts, as well as to the understanding of multiple temporalities and cross-cultural contacts on the image production at that time.

**Maria Alessia Rossi (The Courtauld Institute of Art)**

### **Fourteenth-century monumental art in the Eastern Christian world: the role of narrative and architecture**

From the end of the thirteenth century, representational changes are visible in monumental depictions in the Eastern Christian world: new cycles are introduced, narrative is expounded and architectural settings increase in size. This paper aims to pair and contrast the visual formulas of fourteenth-century monumental depictions in the Byzantine Empire and the Serbian Kingdom.

Two case-studies will be presented. First, the iconography of the Marriage at Cana in Byzantine and Serbian churches will be compared. The aim is to assess the way the narrative is developed, especially the importance assumed by the banquet in contrast to the miracle of the transformation of water into wine, and the emphasis on emotions in the characterisation of the figures. Secondly, the episode of Christ Healing of the Paralytic at Capernum will be used to illustrate the function played by background architecture. Due to its narrative in the Gospels, this episode raises questions regarding the way interiors and exteriors are articulated, especially in connection to the use of draperies – a commonly acknowledged Byzantine device to show that the episode took place indoors. This paper will also address the intricate interaction between the use of existent architectures and the repetition of invented models. It will critically discuss and explore architecture and narrative in the fourteenth-century Eastern Christian world, questioning the assumption that architectural structures were just used as a frame, while shedding new light on their purpose and function.

**Livia Lupi (University of York)**

### **A Wall Between Us: Frescoed Architectural Settings in Eastern Italian Art**

This paper examines the representation of architectural structures in frescoes and their interaction with the narrative portrayed. It will focus on Trecento fresco cycles illustrating the lives of saints and located in Eastern Italy, with particular emphasis on the Veneto. Concentrating on an area traditionally associated with Byzantine artistic influence due to its geographical proximity to Eastern Europe, and also to the key role played by Venice amongst other cities in this respect, will provide a rich context for the

examination of contacts across the two halves of the Christian world during the fourteenth century.

This paper will address two key aspects of the painted architecture of the chosen examples, whilst also considering the use of background walls as a characteristic shared by both Orthodox and Catholic art. First of all, it will examine the extent to which architectural structures articulate settings for their narrative that are ambiguously placed indoors and outdoors at the same time. This allows to simultaneously showcase the interior and the exterior of painted buildings and enhances the accessibility of the events portrayed, thus bridging the gap between them and the viewer. Secondly, it will investigate how the figures interact with the architecture, and how this affects the narrative and the viewer's experience by reflecting on issues of inhabitability. Finally, it will concentrate on the representation of background walls, illustrating similarities and differences in its use across the Orthodox and the Catholic milieus, and also examining their possible meanings and purposes.

**Anthi Andronikou (University of St Andrews)**

***Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that' : The hybrid panels of a Medieval workshop in Cyprus***

This paper deals with a *pièce-de-résistance* of Cypriot painting, showcasing the complex visual culture that the diversity of patrons, clients and artists produced on the island. The panels under scrutiny, which display the *Dodekaorton* (Twelve Great Feasts), have hitherto received little scholarly attention. Different experts place them anywhere between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries without providing concrete evidence for their dates. The current study re-evaluates the paintings through closely assessing their iconography, style and technique and dates them by taking into account parallel developments in Italy, Cyprus and the Byzantine world. In addition, it offers information on the patrons, spectators and function of the panels, as well as on the space in which they were initially mounted, by combining historical knowledge with a discussion of their format. It also brings to light the artistic contacts that Cyprus had with Italy, thus, contributing to the broader field of artistic relations between Italy and Cyprus during the Late Middle ages.

**Alice Delage (CESR-Université François Rabelais, Tours)**

**Gold and Silver Altars in Northern and Central Italy (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

“[King Solomon] made a bronze altar, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high” (Chr. II, 4).

In the Middle Ages, adorning an altar with an *antependium* made of precious metal can be a reminder of the Old Testament as well as an image of Solomon's Temple and the New Jerusalem (Ap, 21-22). Since the studies of Angelo Lipinsky on the altars of Monza, Milan, Pistoia and Florence, Italian gold and silver *antependia* have not been grouped together in a scholarly study. Yet, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries, medieval *antependia* started to be transformed into new works, which were more in accordance with the liturgy or, quite the opposite, which became devoid of liturgical use. This paper aims to analyse the consequences of these transformations on the structure, the composition, and the iconology of the works. First, on a structural level, the location

of the precious coating of the altars changed: the gold and silver plates tended to cover not only the frontal part, but also the lateral parts and the panel above the altar. Then, as far as the composition is concerned, the relationship between the narrative parts, the non-narrative parts and the architectural frame became more intricate. Finally, on an iconological level, this paper will argue for the continuity of the remainder of the Solomonic altar. This is particularly relevant in Venice, where the old byzantine *antependium* was an important part of the discourse which identifies the city as another Constantinople and, thereby, as another Jerusalem.

**Katharine Stahlbuhk, (Hamburg Universität & Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florenz)  
The Ascetic Ideal. Monochrome Wall Paintings and the Eremitic Way of Life**

The paper focuses on a few aspects of the author's research on monochrome wall paintings in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in Italy. Monochrome cycles representing sacred themes first appear in the Sienese area around the middle of the Trecento and use local pigments: ochre and terra di Siena. Around 1400, green earth is increasingly used instead of ochre or terra di Siena for monochrome painting. According to the majority of the literature on the subject, the absence of colour might be explained as a result of the patron's lack of funds, and these cycles are therefore commissioned by minor figures and found in secondary collocations. This paper argues for a more accurate and satisfactory interpretation of this huge phenomenon. Rather than poor art, the monochrome cycles reflect the ideals of poverty and asceticism, thus becoming, in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a vehicle for the Observant reform. This paper will concentrate on some early examples of monochrome frescoes, especially those representing hermits. Emphasis will be laid upon the narrative of the scenes in order to investigate the relationship between the represented figures and their environment, since the fully monochrome figures are often surrounded by coloured nature or architecture. It will also explore the issue of whether the distance and estrangement caused by the unnatural, but homogenous colour of the painted figures might have articulated or reinforced specific practices of prayer and meditation in front of the images.

**Andrea Mattiello – University of Birmingham**

**The frescoed decoration of the upper galleries on the church of the Pantanassa in Mystras**

The katholikon of the monastery dedicated to the Theotokos Pantanassa was one of the last buildings to be completed in the Byzantine city of Mystras, under Palaiologan rule. Regarded as one of the highest achievements of Late Palaiologan art and architecture, the church features a three naves basilica plan on the ground floor and a cross-in-square plan on the upper floor and was sponsored by private individuals who probably were granted access to this monastic building through the upper galleries. The church still presents art historical issues that scholars need to address, especially with respect to the role of the patrons of the church.

Ioannēs Phrangopoulos was a member of a prominent aristocratic family in Byzantine Morea. He was *protostrator* and *katholikos mesazon*, prime minister to Theodore I and

Theodore II Palaiologos. He was mentioned as *ktētor* on an inscription, now lost, dating to 1428, and on monograms on one of the capitals in the naos. In the narthex, another man is portrayed in a funerary monument accompanied by an inscription. His name, Manuēl Laskaris, is recorded on an epitaph dating to 1445.

This abstract introduces, as a case study, the frescoed decorations of the upper galleries of the Pantanassa. It aims to contribute to the workshop by analyzing a selection of details, which are considered both as the product of a workshop within a Byzantine Orthodox tradition, as well as evidence of an artistic environment that reflects the visual tastes and cultural interests of the individuals who sponsored these frescoes.