SIENESE PAINTING
AFTER
THE BLACK DEATH
ARTISTIC PLURALISM, POLITICS, AND THE NEW ART MARKET

This book provides a new perspective on Sienese painting after the Black Death, asking how social, religious, and cultural change effect visual imagery and style. Judith Steinhoff demonstrates that Siena’s artistic culture of the mid- and late fourteenth century was intentionally pluralistic, and not conservative as is often claimed. She shows that Sienese art both before and after the Black Death was the material expression of an artistically sophisticated population that consciously and carefully integrated tradition and change. Promoting both iconographic and stylistic pluralism, Sienese patrons furthered their own goals as well as addressed the culture’s changing needs. Steinhoff presents both detailed case studies and a broader view of trends in artistic practice and patronage. She offers a new approach to interpreting artistic style in the Trecento, arguing that artists and patrons alike understood the potential of style as a vehicle that conveys specific meanings.

Judith B. Steinhoff is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Houston. She has published articles in Renaissance Studies, Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, the Art Bulletin, and Renaissance Siena: Art in Context.
Dedicated to
Elizabeth H. Beatson,
friend and colleague,
and
John Plummer,
inspiring teacher and mentor.
CONTENTS

Illustrations ix
Acknowledgments xiii

Part I: Trecento Art History and Historiography

One: Introduction 3

Two: Meiss and Method: Historiography of Scholarship on Mid-Trecento Sienese Painting 9

Part II: Patrons and Artists: Working Relationships in Transition

Three: Patrons and Artists 29

Four: Economic, Social, and Political Conditions and the Art Market after 1348 64

Five: Artists' Working Relationships in the Early Trecento 72

Six: Artists' Working Relationships after the Black Death: A Sienese Compagnia, circa 1348–1363 78

Part III: Transmission and Transformation of Civic–Religious Imagery

Introduction to Part III 115

EIGHT: SIENESI CIVIC–RELIGIOUS IMAGERY AT THE MID–TRECENTO 150

PART IV: ARTISTIC STYLE: TRADITION AND TRANSITION

NINE: STYLISTIC PLURALISM IN THE 1330S AND 1340S 175

TEN: THE POLITICS OF STYLE IN THE 1350S AND 1360S: THE CASE OF SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA 190

ELEVEN: STYLE AS ICONOGRAPHY: GENERAL REFLECTIONS 210

PART V: CONCLUSION

Notes 223
Works Cited 243
Index 255
# Illustrations

## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andrea di Cione (Orcagna), <em>The Strozzi Altarpiece</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Siena, Palazzo Pubblico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anonymous, <em>Siena, Memoriale delle Offese</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aerial view of Siena Cathedral and Palazzo Pubblico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>San Gimignano Polyptych</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>St. Peter Martyr</em> (detail of San Gimignano polyptych).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>Tabernacle with Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints and Angels</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, interior of <em>Tabernacle wings</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ambrogio Lorenzetti, <em>Maesta</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>St. Mary Magdalen</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Andreà di Bartolo, <em>St. Mary Magdalen</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>Palazzo Pubblico Triptych</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bartolommeo Bulgarini, <em>Sestano Altarpiece</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

23 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, halo design (detail: St. Catherine). 84
24 Palazzo Venezia Master, St. Corona (detail of halo). 84
25 Palazzo Venezia Master, St. Corona (detail of fabric). 85
26 Niccolò di ser Sozzo, Madonna and Child. 86
27 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Madonna and Child. 86
28 Niccolò di ser Sozzo, Madonna and Child (detail of Child’s head). 87
29 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Child’s face (detail from San Gimignano polyptych). 87
30 Niccolò di ser Sozzo (attributed), Madonna and Child. 88
31 Bartolommeo Bulgarini (with assistant), Madonna and Child. 89
32 Luca di Tommè, Madonna and Child Enthroned. 91
33 Luca di Tommè, Madonna and Child Enthroned. 92
34 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Madonna and Child. 93
35 Luca di Tommè, St. Bartholomew (from Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine altarpiece). 95
36 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, St. Bartholomew (detail from Pisa polyptych). 95
37 Luca di Tommè, Madonna and Child (detail: fabric design). 96
38 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Ovile Madonna (detail: fabric design). 97
39 Jacopo di Mino del Pellicciaio, Coronation of the Virgin. 98
40 Pellicciaio, Coronation (detail of pastiglia). 99
41 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Ovile Madonna (detail of pastiglia). 99
42 Bartolommeo Bulgarini, St. Peter (detail from San Gimignano polyptych). 100
44 “Master of the Rebel Angels” (Giovanni da Milano?), Fall of the Rebel Angels. 103
45 “Master of the Rebel Angels” (Giovanni da Milano?), St. Martin Dividing His Cloak with a Beggar. 103
46 Bartolo di Fredi, Griffi-Cacciati Altarpiece. 109
47 Bartolo di Fredi, Adoration of the Shepherds, St. Augustine, and St. Anthony Abbot. 110
48 Simone Martini, The City Seal (detail of Maestà). 120
49 Anonymous, Gabella cover of 1483: Presentation of the Keys of the City to the Virgin. 121
50 Anonymous, Madonna degli Ochì Grossi (or Madonna of the Vow). 122
51 Guido da Siena (and workshop), Madonna delle Grazie (Madonna of Thanks) or Madonna del Voto. 123
52 Duccio di Buoninsegna, Maestà. 125
53  Siena, Palazzo Pubblico, Sala del Consiglio or Sala del Mappamondo.
54  Simone Martini, Maestà. Siena, Palazzo Pubblico, Sala del Consiglio.
55  Duccio di Buoninsegna, Stained-glass Oculos.
56  Lippo Memmi (attributed), Assumption of the Virgin.
58  Siena, Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala.
59  Siena, Piazza del Duomo with Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala.
60  Duccio di Buoninsegna, Maestà (detail of patron saints).
61  Lippo Memmi, Maestà. San Gimignano, Palazzo Comunale.
62  Bartolomeo Bulgarini, St. Ansanus (Palazzo Pubblico triptych).
63  Niccolò di ser Sozzo, St. Ansanus (detail of frontispiece, Caleffo dell’Assunta).
64  Plan indicating the locations of the patron saint altars. Siena, Cathedral.
65  Lippo Memmi, Madonna della Misericordia.
66  Francesco di Giorgio and assistants, Biccherna Cover of 1467: The Virgin Protecting Siena in Time of Earthquakes.
67  Master of the Palazzo Venezia Madonna, St. Corona.
68  Pietro Lorenzetti, Birth of the Virgin (St. Savinus altarpiece).
69  Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Purification of the Virgin (St. Crescentius altarpiece).
70  Duccio di Buoninsegna, Nativity (from the Maestà).
71  Ambrogio Lorenzetti (workshop), Adoration of the Child.
72  Embroidery, Nativity/Adoration of the Shepherds.
73  Bulgarini, Inscription on Virgin’s Halo (detail of Fogg Adoration of the Shepherds).
74  Libro dei Censi (1400), detail of city.
75  Sano di Pietro, San Bernardino with a Model of Siena.
76  Pietro Lorenzetti, Arezzo Altarpiece.
77  Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Luca polypych.
78  Bartolommeo Bulgarini, St. Catherine of Alexandria.
79  Bartolommeo Bulgarini, St. Catherine of Alexandria (x-radiograph).
80  Niccolò di Segna, Saints Benedict, Michael, Bartholomew, Nicholas.
81  Bartolommeo Bulgarini, Madonna and Child (from Palazzo Pubblico triptych).
ILLUSTRATIONS

82 Palazzo Venezia Master, *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine* (from the Ospedale).
83 Naddo Ceccarelli, polyptych (from Ospedale).
84 Ceccarelli, predella (from Ospedale polyptych).
86 Bartolommeo Bulgariini, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels*.
87 Pietro Lorenzetti, *Carmelite Altarpiece*.
90 The Limbourg Brothers, *October* (calendar page from *Très Riches Heures*).

COLOR PLATES

Color plates follow page 112

I View of Siena, Palazzo Pubblico campanile.
II Siena Cathedral.
V Reconstruction of the St. Victor Altarpiece.
The ideas and research for this book developed over a period of more than twenty years. During that long gestation, my thinking about the subjects I address here benefited enormously from many conversations reaching back to my years as a graduate student and right up until the summer of 2004. I can thank directly only some of those who took the time to engage in those discussions, but I am grateful to all.

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As an art historian, I have long felt the challenge of approaching historical material, not as a mere backdrop for understanding art, but with (at least as nearly as possible!) as complex and nuanced an understanding as scholars trained in that field. I am therefore especially grateful for the dialog I have had with Sam Cohn over the years. His work on Siena and the Black Death has been a key source of both intellectual stimulation and support for my own. In addition, he has been extremely generous in reading and critiquing the social and economic aspects of my work and making valuable suggestions of additional literature to consider. I have also been extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to carry on numerous discussions with Norman Muller and Erling Skaug about techniques used in trecento panel paintings and their implications for a possible “compagnia” of painters in Siena. Gaudenz Freuler gave me valuable feedback on my speculations about the relationship between Bulgarini and Bartolo di Fredi, and ultimately
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