

Paolo Uccello and Fra Angelico in the Early Quattrocento

This article examines the still little understood nature of Uccello's early career, proposing that a common characteristic of the earliest paintings now securely attributed to him as well as a few earlier, more tentatively attributed ones, is their stylistic proximity to Fra Angelico's paintings. In particular, two quatrefoil panels of the Annunciation from the early quattrocento that have been attributed to Angelico exhibit distinctive characteristics in their execution also found in a number of Uccello's paintings, confirming that Uccello was very familiar with Angelico's early work. The suggestion is also advanced tentatively that they might indeed have collaborated on these works as young artists.

At first glance two artistic sensibilities such as those of Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) and Paolo Uccello (c. 1397–1475) could hardly be more different. Angelico is renowned as a painter of magical, highly decorative, and refined compositions, such as his *Coronation of the Virgin* (c. 1435) in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence,¹ while Uccello is celebrated as a pioneer of a rigorously geometric, robust, and often austere manner, exemplified by the *Flood and the Recession of the Flood* (c. late 1430s–1440s) in the Chiostro Verde of S. Maria Novella in the same city.² Yet a number of recent discoveries suggest that early in their respective careers the two artists may have been closer than has hitherto been supposed. Of particular interest are two small quatrefoil panels representing the *Angel of the Annunciation* and the *Virgin of the Annunciation* from a private collection, first published and exhibited in the recent Fra Angelico exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.³ In his penetrating analysis of the works Laurence Kanter attributed them to Angelico at the beginning of his independent career,

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¹ Fra Angelico, *Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1435. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 112 x 114 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Orlandi, 1964, pp. 30–31.

² Uccello, *Flood and the Recession of the Flood*, c. late 1430s–1440s. Detached mural painting, 215 x 510 cm. Museo di Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Borsi and Borsi, 1994, pp. 323–25.

³ Fra Angelico (and Uccello?), *Angel of the Annunciation; Virgin of the Annunciation*, c. 1415–25. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 29 x 31.2 cm; 29.8 x 31.5 cm respectively. Private collection. Kanter, 2005b, pp. 22–24.

around 1415, on the basis of their delightful naturalism, the style of the heads and faces, and the similarity between the manner of the tooling of the haloes and that found in the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels* in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.⁴ The attribution of the latter to the young Angelico had been proposed by Roberto Longhi in 1928, and since Miklós Boskovits' endorsement in 1976 has been routinely accepted.⁵

However, the quatrefoil paintings also bear strong resemblances to three works by Uccello datable to the 1430s. The distinctive, sketchy, wash-like execution of the 'grassy' ground is closely paralleled in the *St George and the Dragon* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne,⁶ notably the unevenly applied horizontal brushstrokes in a thin, wash-like pigment overlaid with fine vertical strokes for blades of grass scattered with little blobs of colour for flowers. The long, thin, spiky-leaved lily stem with three main branches held in Gabriel's hand in the quatrefoil is similar to the one held by Gabriel standing before the Virgin in the *Annunciation* in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.⁷ The expedient manner in which the painter of the quatrefoil showed Gabriel holding the lily stem in his left hand, peeking out from behind his leg, is also mirrored in the underdrawing of the Oxford *Annunciation*. Infrared reflectography of the painting in Oxford shows that Uccello first depicted Gabriel holding the lily stem in his left hand, appearing from behind his sleeve, but in the paint layer amended the design to move the hand out of sight behind Gabriel's body.⁸ The herringbone pattern of the mordant gilt highlights on the feathers of Gabriel's wings in the quatrefoil recalls the gold *sgraffito* highlights in the angels' wings of the *Adoration of the Child* in the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe.⁹

⁴ Fra Angelico, *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels*, c. early 1420s. Tempera on panel, 103.8 x 53.9 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Schmidt, 2005, pp. 48–50.

⁵ Schmidt, 2005, p. 48.

⁶ Uccello, *St George and the Dragon*, c. early 1430s. Tempera, silver and gold leaf on panel, 62.2 x 38.8 cm. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, inv. no. 2124/4. Hudson, 2006b, pp. 7–15.

⁷ Uccello, *Annunciation*, c. early 1430s. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 64.6 x 47.5 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. A. 80. Hudson, 2006b, pp. 7–15.

⁸ Hudson, 2006a, p. 11.

⁹ Uccello, *Adoration of the Child with SS Jerome, Mary Magdalene, and Eustace*, c. late 1430s. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 111 x 48.5 cm. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle, inv. no. 404. Borsi and Borsi, 1994, pp. 290–92.

The Virgin's posture and drapery in the quatrefoil are very similar to those in the Oxford *Annunciation*, and the haloes in the quatrefoils, tooled with simple patterns consisting of a ring of small circles, each with a smaller circle inside, is closely matched by the haloes of the musical angels in the Oxford picture. The principal difference between the two sets of haloes is that the quatrefoil haloes have punched stippling to create the impression of relief while the haloes of the Oxford angels do not. However, the seraphim in the mandorla surrounding God the Father in the Oxford picture do exhibit this technique. Furthermore, the 'simplicity and unabashed Gothicism of the two [quatrefoil] paintings—and their undisguised dependence on Ghiberti's models', identified by Kanter as indications of an early date in Angelico's career, are also characteristics of Uccello's career in the early 1430s.

These correspondences suggest that Uccello was intimately familiar with Angelico's early work, but could they also be construed as evidence that Uccello was involved in the execution of these panels? And if so when should they be dated? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the nature of his early career. However, unlike the student of Masaccio, for whom there is the S. Giovenale altarpiece dated 1422,¹⁰ or of Masolino, for whom there is the *Virgin and Child* in Bremen dated 1423,¹¹ or of Angelico, for whom there is the Fiesole high altarpiece dateable to the early 1420s,¹² the student of Uccello has no reliable evidence for the nature of his work in the early 1420s. Uccello's earliest securely attributed works are dateable to the late 1420s or early 1430s: these being the *Creation Stories* in the first bay of the east wall of the Chiostrro Verde of S. Maria Novella,¹³ the del Beccuto *Virgin and Child* in the Museo di San

¹⁰ Masaccio, S. Giovenale altarpiece, 1422. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 110 x 155 cm overall. Cascia di Reggello, Pieve di S. Pietro. Bellucci, Frosinini, and Parri, 2002, pp. 134-39.

¹¹ Masolino, *Virgin and Child*, 1423. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 149.2 x 73.5 cm overall. Bremen, Kunsthalle. Bellucci, Frosinini, and Parri, 2002, pp. 140-43.

¹² Fra Angelico, S. Domenico high altarpiece, c. early 1420s. Tempera on panel, 212 x 217 cm. Fiesole, S. Domenico. Gordon, 2003, pp. 2-3.

¹³ Uccello, *Creation Stories*, c. early 1430s. Detached mural painting, 210 x 452 cm (above), 244 x c. 478 cm (below, the bottom of the painting is destroyed). Florence, Museo di S. Maria Novella. Most important for assessing the date of the *Creation Stories* is Paatz's observation (1934, p. 142) that the depiction of God the Father raising Adam from the ground is almost identical, though reversed, to Ghiberti's depiction of the subject in the *Doors of Paradise*. The exact dates of production for the panels of the *Doors of Paradise* are unknown but must fall between 1425, when Ghiberti received the commission, and April 1437, when all the panels were cast, while they were not installed until July 1452 at the earliest. Krautheimer and

Marco, Florence,¹⁴ the Oxford *Annunciation*, and the Melbourne *St George*.¹⁵ These paintings are

Krautheimer-Hess (1956, pp. 167, 191–92, 208–10) concluded Uccello probably gained access to Ghiberti's drawings for the doors after his return to Florence from Venice. Uccello left for Venice after 5 August 1425 (when he wrote his will in Florence: Gaye, 1839, 1, pp. 147–48) and stayed there until at least 12 July 1427 (when Deo Beccuti submitted his tax return in his absence: ASF, Catasto, 55, fols 707r–707v).

There is no clear indication of the date of Uccello's return to Florence. His *portata* of January 1431 is written in the third person ('*suoi incharichi*') and so seems not to be autograph. The handwriting is very close to that of Deo Beccuti's *portate*. The writing of the name 'Deo di Deo Becchuti' in Beccuti's 1431 *portata* (ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 552r) is almost identical to the writing of the name in Uccello's 1431 *portata*, in which Beccuti appears as a debtor (ASF, Catasto, 381, fol. 779r), notably in the abbreviated form of the 'e's as short horizontal strokes. Beccuti may have submitted Uccello's 1431 *portata* as well as the previous one, although it cannot be excluded that he had a secretary write his and Uccello's *portate*. Whether Uccello was away at the time, perhaps still in Venice or living peripatetically, or whether he simply relied on Beccuti's financial expertise for tax matters at this stage of his career is unclear. The *portata* declares that Uccello was owed a little over 36 *lire* by Beccuti (ASF, Catasto, 381, fol. 779r). Though undated, the *portata* is between others dated 30 January 1431 in the series compiled in chronological order. Padoa Rizzo (1991, p. 26) observed this debt might have been for work Uccello had done since his return from Venice, as the amount was not recorded owing in Uccello's 1427 *portata*. From a later *portata* it is known that Uccello made an investment in the Florentine Monte on 9 March 1431 (ASF, Catasto, 826, microfilm reel 2063, fol. 56v). Though not conclusive, these facts suggest that Uccello had probably returned to Florence by the beginning of 1431, if not earlier (Hudson, 2006a, note 27 on p. 11).

¹⁴ Uccello, *Virgin and Child*, c. early 1430s. Detached mural painting, 90 x 102 cm. Florence, Museo di San Marco. Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 284.

¹⁵ Boskovits (2002, p.67) dated the Oxford *Annunciation* and Melbourne *St George* to the second half of the 1420s. Padoa Rizzo (1991, p.26) argued that the del Beccuto *Virgin and Child* can be dated to the early 1430s on the basis of an association with the debts declared owing by Deo Beccuti in Uccello's tax returns from 1431 and 1433. The close affinities of the *Annunciation* and *St George* with the *Virgin and Child*, such as their gold grounds, extensive use of lapis lazuli, and dependence on Ghibertian compositional formulae, suggest a dating in the early 1430s also, although the late 1420s cannot be excluded. For further arguments concerning Uccello's chronology in this period, see: Hudson, 2005, pp. 93–106.

characterised by a strong reliance on Ghibertian compositional formulae and lyrical style,¹⁶ and, in the case of the last three, by the use of precious gold grounds and copious amounts of the costly pigment lapis lazuli. Stylistically, these works also show the influence of painters such as Lorenzo Monaco, Masaccio, and Angelico.

Can anything at all be established concerning Uccello's activity as a painter prior to this period? It is known that he was in Ghiberti's workshop in the second decade of the century, but probably did not do much painting during this time, since Ghiberti was primarily a sculptor.¹⁷ In his autobiography Ghiberti claimed to have been a painter early in his career,¹⁸ and in 1446 he accepted a commission for a mural painting with another artist, which was ultimately undertaken by others.¹⁹ However, no paintings by Ghiberti survive, nor do any executed by his assistants while in his workshop. The closest we get to them are works of polychrome sculpture, such as the high relief stucco *Virgin and Child* in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.²⁰ Yet by 1415

¹⁶ For a discussion of the reliance of these works on Ghiberti's compositions for the *Doors of Paradise* and *Virgin and Child* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, see: note 13 and Hudson, 2006b, pp. 10–11.

¹⁷ Uccello's name appears in a seventeenth-century compilation of documents relating to the second convention of 1407 for Ghiberti's first set of bronze doors for the Baptistery, which serves as a rough *terminus post quem* (see: Müntz, 1890, pp. 15–18, citing: Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Libro della Seconda, e Terza Porta di Bronzo dalla Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze. 1403. 23 Novembre*). Beck (1980, p. 837) divided Uccello's total wages as a *garzone* by the annual rates of his salary to arrive at the approximate duration of his employment as a *garzone* as three years, and estimated that Uccello stayed on for about another fifteen months, probably as a young master. By correlating the second, significant increase in his rate of pay with his entry into the Doctors and Pharmacists' Guild in October 1415, Beck arrived at the dates of Uccello's time in the shop as about 1412 to 1416, between the ages of about fifteen and nineteen. Padoa Rizzo (1991, pp. 6–7), however, argued that the modest increases in Uccello's salary may simply reflect his growing experience in the shop, and that Uccello's membership of the guild would have required a much higher rate of pay. Thus, Uccello's four or so years in Ghiberti's workshop may have come to an end before October 1415.

¹⁸ Ghiberti, 1998, pp. 92–93.

¹⁹ Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1956, p. 418, citing documentation in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze for the fresco commission; and p. 404, citing documentation in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze referring to painting done for the niche of the statue of *St John the Baptist* at Orsanmichele.

²⁰ Workshop of Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Virgin and Child*. Polychrome stucco, 89.5 cm high. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. Pope-Hennessy and Lightbown, 1964, 1, pp. 59–61. Tentative attributions of a panel

Uccello had matriculated into the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* (Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild) as a painter,²¹ at which time he was living in the *popolo* of S. Maria Nepotica, and so was in the vicinity of the Corso degli Adimari (at the northern end of the present-day Via Calzaiuoli), the street where many painters' workshops were located.²²

Sixteenth-century sources suggest that Uccello collaborated with Masaccio on the painting of the Carnesecchi altarpiece in the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Florence (on which Masolino is now known also to have worked), datable on a combination of documentary and circumstantial evidence to about 1423.²³ In 1425 he recorded in a will that he was living in the *popolo* of S. Maria Novella in the north-west quarter of the city,²⁴ before he left for Venice in the same year. There he is documented as having designed a now lost figure of St Peter in mosaic on the façade

and a mural painting to Ghiberti were made by Salmi (1956, pp. 223–37) in the context of a discussion of Ghiberti's designs for stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Florence.

²¹ ASF, *Arte Medici e Speziale*, 21, fol. 69v: '*Paulus olim doni paulj pitore pppli st maria nepotum*'. Uccello was not required to pay the usual matriculation fee, a privilege afforded the sons of guild members, as Uccello was. Uccello also joined the Confraternity of St Luke, the painter's confraternity, but as the text recording his inscription (ASF, *Accademia del Disegno*, 1, fol. 14v) is partly illegible, the date can only be narrowed to between 1414 and 1423. Roccasecca, 1997, note 8 on p. 126) transcribed the text as '*Pagholo di dono dipintore MCCCCX[...].IIII*', describing the seventh numeral in the date as illegible, and arguing that it could have been an I or an X. It might also have been a V. The document was missing in 2003.

²² Padoa Rizzo, 1990, pp. 7–8.

²³ Albertini, 1972, [p. 6]; Vasari, 1966–87, 3, pp. 63–64: 1550 and 1568 eds; Borghini, 1967, p. 309. Of the three panels in the altarpiece described by Vasari, the panel depicting Saint Catherine is lost, the central panel showing the Virgin and Child has not been seen since it was stolen in the 1920s, although its appearance is known from photographs, and the *St Julian* is now housed in the Museo Arcivescovile di Arte Sacra in Florence (Tempera and oil, gold and silver leaf on panel, 114 x 54 cm). The two panels known to modern art historians are now attributed to Masolino on stylistic grounds. Vasari also described three predella panels: a *Scene from the Life of St Catherine* and a *Nativity*, which are lost, and a *Scene from the Life of St Julian*, which has been identified with the predella panel in the Museo Horne, Florence (Tempera on panel, 33.5 x 41.5 cm). For a recent review of the evidence for the entire altarpiece, see: Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002, pp. 81–86, and Bellucci, Frosinini, and Parri, 2002, pp. 149–155.

²⁴ Gaye, 1839, 1, pp. 147–48.

of S. Marco. Plausible survivals of Uccello's work in S. Marco are geometric figures of a mosaic in the atrium and two *pavimenti*.²⁵

Although it can be assumed that Uccello had some prior experience in designing mosaics, *pavimenti*, or works in similar media, in order to win such commissions in Venice, this does not necessarily imply that he had been working primarily in these media. Florentine early Renaissance artists were frequently proficient in a variety of media. A near contemporary of Uccello's was Alesso Baldovinetti (1427–1499), who executed panel and mural paintings, made designs for intarsia, made and repaired mosaics, and designed and painted stained glass.²⁶ The reason for Uccello's activity as a designer of mosaics and *pavimenti* at this time may have been mostly opportunism. In 1424 the mosaicist at S. Marco in Venice, Jacopo della Chiesa, died leaving unfinished the refacement of the upper level of the church that had been damaged in a fire in 1419. After unsuccessful efforts to recall one of its former masters who had left the Veneto, the Venetian Senate looked to Florence for a replacement.²⁷ It seems likely that Uccello's designs were carried out by Venetian artisans, and there are no clear indications that he was ever active in these media again, although it might be argued that the geometric nature of these designs found expression in Uccello's compositions throughout the rest of his career. The date of Uccello's return to Florence from Venice is unrecorded, but was certainly after July 1427 and most probably before January 1431.²⁸

Uccello's tax returns shed almost no light on his early activity as an artist. His return of 1427 (submitted in Florence on his behalf by his relative Deo Beccuti while he was in Venice)

²⁵ The document concerning Uccello's mosaic-making in Venice, is in the Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo di Firenze, F, Delib. 1425–26, fol. 156v (in Poggi, 1988, 1, p. 147: doc. 773). For a discussion of the attribution based on stylistic evidence of the *Wheel with Ribbon* in the lunette of the fifth cupola of the atrium (mosaic, diameter 100 cm), the *Stellated Dodecahedron and Geometric Designs* under the door of St Peter (diameter 88 cm—central circle, cut stone with mosaic border), and the *Stellated Dodecahedron and Geometric Designs between Two Roundels with Geometric Motifs* inside the church (dimensions unrecorded, cut stone), see: Hudson, 2005, pp. 83–85.

²⁶ Wedgwood Kennedy, 1938, pp. 60–64, and pp. 236–38 for the transcription of Baldovinetti's *Ricordi* recording the various media he worked in.

²⁷ Saccardo, 1896, pp. 32–33; Merkel, 1994, p. 313.

²⁸ For a discussion of the date of Uccello's return to Florence from Venice see note 13.

and that of 1431 (possibly also submitted on his behalf by Beccuti)²⁹ refer to a debt owed to him by a certain ‘Giovanni goldsmith’, which presumably was incurred before Uccello left for Venice in 1425.³⁰ His 1433 return refers to a debt he was owed by the Hospital of St Anthony (‘*Spedale di S. Antonio*’) in Castello dating from twenty years earlier, that is, around 1413.³¹ None of these returns state what these debts were for, although some light can be shed on the circumstances surrounding the latter debt, as will be discussed presently.

The S. Jacopo *Crucifix*

Apart from his lost contribution to the Carnesecchi altarpiece, there are three main candidates for paintings by Uccello dating to the period before his departure for Venice in 1425.³² The first is the cut-out (*sagomato*) *Crucifix* in the ex-church of S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini in Florence.³³ In

²⁹ For a discussion of the possibility that Deo Beccuti submitted Uccello’s 1431 tax return see note 13.

³⁰ For 1427: ASF, Catasto, 55, fols 707r: ‘*avere da g^o horafo l[ibre] 7 ocircha*’. For 1431: ASF, Catasto, 381, fol. 779r: ‘*dagiovannj horafo l[ibre] 7*’.

³¹ For 1433: ASF, Catasto, 475, fol. 483r: ‘*debo avere dalo ispedale di santo antonio achastello giafal degliannj piu 20 Ilquale o fatto chonpeztione mene dial ognjano ff[iorin]j 2 chomjcio ora p[er]che prjma non sepi maj chio/ gliavessi avere p[er] nonavere leghiarege sono ff[iorin]j 23 Il chi/arjto.*’

³² Parronchi (1966, pp. 45–57) has also argued for the attribution of the *Thebaïd* in the Galleria degli Uffizi not to Angelico but to the young Uccello, without finding any supporters. On this work, see Palladino, 2005, pp. 34–37. Some small fragments of detached mural paintings, recorded as coming from an unspecified part of the Chiostro Verde of S. Maria Novella, are now held in storage by the Soprintendenza Patrimonio Storico Artistico ed Etnoantropologico di Firenze, Prato, e Pistoia, and are listed on its website (www.sbas.firenze.it/db/catalogo.asp) as the work of Uccello from 1424 (I am grateful to Dr Maria Sframeli for providing information on the provenance of these fragments). The authorship and date of the fragments are almost impossible to determine on the basis of the meager surviving visual evidence, although there are hints of Uccellesque style in the ‘V’ shape formations of the rocky ground in one fragment. An attribution of the work to Uccello might be entertained if the work could be dated to the very beginning of his career, to account for the unsophisticated execution of certain figures. A fragmentary inscription, ‘...*SICOME P[RE]XPSS...*’ might indicate that the subject was a Nativity, in which case the work would not have belonged to the Genesis cycle in the cloister.

³³ Early fifteenth-century Florentine artist (Uccello?), *Crucifix*, 1413. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 120 x 82 cm. Florence, ex-church of S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini, Società Faenza Service s.p.a. Sebregondi, 2005, pp. 46–49.

1998 Alessandro Parronchi published it as Uccello's earliest known work, and associated it with the debt owed Uccello by the Hospital of St Anthony in Castello dating from about 1413 (speculatively, as will be shown below). The date fits, since at the bottom of the crucifix a damaged inscription indicates that in '1413 Ser Bartol... had this crucifix made...'.³⁴ S. Jacopo was, according to Parronchi, the principal seat in Florence of the 'Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre' (*Religioni dei Cavalieri di San Sepolcro*) during the eighteenth century and he claimed that the hospital in Castello (which he mistakenly referred to as an oratory) belonged to this order, noting also that Uccello rented premises nearby in Campo Corbolini many years later in 1433 (to suggest, improbably, that this showed that Uccello had a longstanding relationship with the order). According to Parronchi's argument, the *Crucifix* would have been commissioned for the 'Oratory' of St Anthony in Castello, before being moved by the 'Knights' to their church of S. Jacopo in the sixteenth century.

Parronchi's interpretation must, however, be corrected at a number of points. He believed that the link between the hospital and the order at S. Jacopo (described by Parronchi as the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre but more correctly identified as the Military and Hospitaler Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta (*Ordine Militare e Ospitaliero di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme, di Rodi e di Malta*—known as the '*Gerosolomitani*')³⁵ was established by an inventory of the order's possessions made during a pastoral tour in 1763 by the Florentine patrician Pietro Guadagni. This refers to an Oratory of St Anthony Abbot among the sites belonging to S. Jacopo.³⁶ However, the oratory Guadagni visited was in fact in Bagnolo, near Prato,³⁷ quite distinct from the Hospital of St Anthony in Castello, although the *Gerosolomitani*

³⁴ Parronchi, 1998, pp. 44–47. The inscription at the base of the cross reads: 'M^oCCCC^oXIII^o ♦/ QUESTO ♦ CROCIFISO ♦ AFATO ♦ FAR ♦ S[ER] BARTOL[...]'.

The ex-church of S. Jacopo and its artworks, including the *Crucifix*, were acquired by the società Faenza Service s.p.a. in the late 1990s (Bei, 2005, p. 12).

³⁵ Sebregondi, 2005, p. 28.

³⁶ Parronchi, 1998, p. 44, and note 2 on p. 47.

³⁷ The oratory at Bagnolo is referred to in the inventory taken by Guadagni as belonging to the order based at S. Jacopo, in ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, 2, fol. 186r: '...Oratorio dedicato a S. Antonio/ Abate poco distante da l^a Città di Prato, e dalla Strada/ Maestra in Riva di fiume Bagnolo posto nel popolo/ della V. chiesa prevania di S. Giovanni decollato comune di/ Monte Murlo, Potesteria di Campi...'

did possess land near the latter in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁸ A series of inventories of S. Jacopo shows that the *Crucifix* was in the church from at least 1722,³⁹ and possibly as early as 1588,⁴⁰ but it cannot be linked by documents to the Hospital of St Anthony in Castello.

³⁸ I am grateful to Dr Ludovica Sebgondi (personal communication, 6 November 2004) for confirming that the Oratory of S. Anthony at Bagnolo was located in the *potesteria* of Campi, in the *popolo* of S. Giovanni Decollato di Monte Murlo, and belonged to the order based at S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini. The order at S. Jacopo is recorded as a neighbouring landlord of Deo Beccuti's at Castello in 1427, in: ASF, Catasto, 53, fol. 712r. The order's archives record that it still owned land in Castello in 1763–64: ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, 2, fol. 193r.

³⁹ The *Crucifix* appears in many of the surviving inventories of S. Jacopo. Between 1766 and 1768 it was listed in the sacristy (ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, 2, fols 133r–133v). The inventories of 1763–64, 1754, and 1722 provide similar descriptions (ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, 2, fols 98r, 93r, 161r; ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, 3, fol. 530r; and ASF, CRSGF, 132, 298 (one bundle), [fol. 2v], respectively). However, the inventory of 1696 lists only 'a crucifix above the sacristy bench painted on wood' ('*un crocifisso sopra il banci di sagrestia dipinto di legno*', ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, 1, fol. 22v). The inventory did not provide any date, attribution, or any other information that might help to identify this as the work in question. However, its location in the sacristy makes the identification plausible because the 1722 inventory no longer listed a crucifix above the bench (ASF, CRSGF, 132, 298 (one bundle) [fol. 3r]). The only other cross listed in the sacristy was in a box, described as: 'a worn wooden cross finished in blue, and threaded with gold with a Crucifix painted in oil' ('*una Croce di legno usata tocca d'azzurro, e filettata d'oro con Crocifisso dipinto a olio*'), which shows that it was not the *Crucifix* in question. Presumably, the *Crucifix* above the bench was taken down and adapted to function as a tabernacle between 1696 and 1722. Two earlier inventories, one of 1657 and another of 1651–54, also list a crucifix over the bench in the sacristy (For the 1657 inventory: ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, 2 [fol. 27v]; for the 1651–54 inventory: Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz, Biblioteca, *Cabrero della Commenda in S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini fatta dall. Ill.^{mo} Sig.^r Commendatore f. Bartolomeo Galilei, 1651–54, [fol. 54r]).*

The documents for the provenance of the *Crucifix* presented here were found and transcribed by me in late 2003, following the lead published by Parronchi. Subsequently, Dr Ludovica Sebgondi's research on the same topic was brought to my attention. I am grateful to Dr Sebgondi for discussing her work on this subject (personal communication, 5 November 2004).

⁴⁰ Sebgondi (2005, pp. 149–78) has published transcriptions of three of the inventories specified in the above note (1657, 1696, and 1766–68), together with others mentioning either the *Crucifix* dated 1413, or a crucifix above the bench in the sacristy, the earliest of the latter dating to 1588.

Ludovica Sebregondi assumed that the *Crucifix* was originally commissioned for S. Jacopo,⁴¹ however, the appearance of labels on the *Crucifix* bearing what appear to be Jesuit symbols suggests it may have been acquired for S. Jacopo in the mid-sixteenth century.⁴²

Nevertheless, Parronchi is probably correct to suggest that Uccello was in some respect professionally active as early as 1413, at about the age of sixteen, when the hospital incurred the debt referred to in Uccello's tax return.⁴³ At this time, the hospital (officially called the Hospital of SS John and Anthony—'*Spedale di S. Giovanni e di S. Antonio*') was acquired by the Confraternity of St Peter Martyr, based in the Dominican convent of S. Maria Novella in Florence. The confraternity's *proveditore* (the man responsible for its day-to-day running) was the little-known painter Michele di Giovanni del Tria,⁴⁴ who received a substantial sum at around the same time from Uccello's wealthy and powerful relative Deo di Deo del Beccuto to renovate

⁴¹ Sebregondi, 2005, pp. 46–49.

⁴² Parronchi (1998, p. 46) noted two fragmentary labels attached to the ends of the arms of the *Crucifix*, which he thought showed the date 1531 and the emblem of the little known Confraternity of the Nail (*Compagnia del Chiodo*). He interpreted the date as that of the *Crucifix*'s transference to S. Jacopo. He did not explain how the confraternity might have acquired the work or why they transferred it to S. Jacopo. However, I believe Parronchi misread the 'numbers' 1531 upside-down; read right-side up (from the centre of the label—as the other fragmentary inscriptions on the labels clearly must be) the inscription appears to represent the letters: '...IE SV...'. Furthermore, the images in the middle of the labels of a heart surmounted by three nails, with the monogram of Christ above it, also surmounted by three nails, seem to be Jesuit symbols. Since S. Jacopo was never owned by the Jesuits, this raises the possibility that they owned the *Crucifix* prior to its being in S. Jacopo. Since the Jesuits arrived in Florence in the sixteenth century, and the work is manifestly Florentine, they were almost certainly not the *Crucifix*'s patron—who remains unknown.

⁴³ Hudson, 2005, pp. 70–72. The subject was also addressed in this author's paper *Paolo Uccello and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr: Themes of Reciprocal Obligation in Life and Art* at the conference *Sociability and its Discontents: Civil Society, Social Capital, and their Alternatives in European and Australian Society*, 19–21 August 2005, The University of Sydney, convened by Nicholas Eckstein, publication planned.

⁴⁴ Colnaghi (1986, p. 181) noted that Michele di Giovanni del Tria was born in 1369, lived near S. Maria Novella, and was inscribed in the Confraternity of St Luke in 1400, but was not able to attribute any work to him securely. Hueck (1990, note 14 on p. 35) observed that he painted black letters in the Chiostrino dei Morti of S. Maria Novella, and painted and gilded angels and painted a crucifix for the Confraternity of St Peter Martyr in the late fourteenth century.

it.⁴⁵ At such a young age, it seems unlikely that Uccello would have had business dealings with the hospital directly, so the debt could conceivably have been the result of work he had done there connected with the renovation paid for by his relative.

If the documentary evidence for the S. Jacopo *Crucifix* having an association with Uccello's early activity is at best inconclusive, the work does nevertheless exhibit certain of Uccello's stylistic traits. The voluminous rippling drapery is found in the drapery of the Archangel Gabriel in the Oxford *Annunciation*, in the drapery of the angels in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* and, as Parronchi observed, in the drapery of the figure of *Hope* in the Marcovaldi Chapel in the Cathedral of Prato (c. 1435–36).⁴⁶ Christ's proportions—a massive body with a small head—and his barely defined musculature are similar to those of Adam in the lunette of the *Creation Stories* in the Chiostro Verde at S. Maria Novella.

In other respects the *Crucifix* relates to the work of Lorenzo Monaco and Angelico. The work's format and style depend on a series of cut-out crucifixes by Monaco and his workshop datable to the early decades of the fifteenth century.⁴⁷ For this reason the *Crucifix* was attributed to the school of Monaco in a manuscript catalogue of S. Jacopo compiled in 1919 by the art

⁴⁵ Records of the confraternity's acquisition of the hospital in 1413 are found at ASF, CRSGF, 102, 295, fol. 212r, and ASF, CRSGF, 102, 321, fols 101r, 103r. Records of Deo Beccuti's land adjacent to the hospital are found at ASF, Catasto, 53, fol. 711v, and ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 549r. Records of Beccuti's funding of the renovation of the hospital are found at ASF, Catasto, 53, fol. 716r, and ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 550v, in the latter, of 1431, he specified that the debt arose some two decades previously: '...e mi debitore di ffiorin]j 54 piu che/ 20 anj fa a li[br]o 60'. This coincides to within a few years of the incurring of Uccello's own debt by the hospital.

⁴⁶ Uccello, *Stories of the Virgin and Saint Stephen, Virtues, and Saints*, c. 1435–36. Mural paintings—mostly detached. Marcovaldi Chapel, traditionally called the 'Assumption Chapel' ('*Capella dell'Assunta*'), Prato Cathedral. Padoa Rizzo, 1997.

⁴⁷ Parronchi, 1998, p. 46. Eisenberg's 1989 monograph on Monaco lists the following examples by Lorenzo: Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts (p. 90); Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia (pp. 102–3), Florence, Museo Horne (pp. 111–12); Florence, S. Giovannino dei Cavalieri—a cut-out *Crucifixion with the Virgin and St John the Evangelist* (pp. 125–27); Florence, S. Giuseppe (pp. 127–28); Florence, S. Marta, convent (p. 128); Monte S. Savino, S. Maria delle Vertighe (p. 147). He also lists one by Lorenzo's workshop, which was converted into a rectangular painting by Neri di Bicci: Toulouse, Musée des Augustins (pp. 170–71).

historian Matteo Marangoni.⁴⁸ Another cut-out *Crucifix* in the Museo di San Marco in Florence was attributed to the School of Lorenzo Monaco until 1959, when Umberto Baldini recognised it as a work by Angelico dating from the 1420s.⁴⁹ This and many other correspondences in style between works by Monaco and Angelico have led the majority of authors to conclude that Monaco was probably Angelico's master in painting.⁵⁰

Monaco's influence also extended to Uccello. Long before the S. Jacopo *Crucifix* was published, Georg Pudelko observed the influence of Monaco on works by Uccello such as the *Resurrection* and *Nativity* stained glass windows in the Cathedral, and proposed that Uccello's pre-1425 works were most likely influenced by Monaco also.⁵¹ The influence of Monaco is certainly felt in Uccello's earliest reliably attributed works, such as the Oxford *Annunciation* and Melbourne *St George*. For example, the costume and pose of the aristocratic figure of the Oxford Virgin recall those of the Virgin that Monaco painted in the *Annunciation* for the Bartolini Salimbeni Chapel in S. Trinita,⁵² and St George's elegantly stylised white horse seems to have been inspired by the one in Monaco's *Adoration of the Magi* in the Galleria degli Uffizi.⁵³

Prior to Parronchi's article, the most recent attribution for the S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini *Crucifix* was Boskovits' suggestion, made orally to Sebgondi in 1980, that it may be by the Master of 1416, an opinion accepted in her monograph on the church.⁵⁴ The oeuvre of this genial, if obscure, painter was constructed by Federico Zeri around the *Virgin and Child with SS Peter, John the Baptist, Anthony Abbot, and Julian* dated 1416 in the Galleria dell'Accademia in

⁴⁸ Sebgondi, 2005, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Fra Angelico, *Crucifix*, c. mid-1420s. Tempera on panel, 164 x 100 cm. Florence, Museo di San Marco. Cole Ahl, 1980, p. 369.

⁵⁰ Cole Ahl, 1980, pp. 367–68.

⁵¹ Uccello, *Resurrection*; *Nativity*, both 1443. Stained glass, diameters of 468 cm and 473 cm respectively. Florence Cathedral. Pudelko, 1934, pp. 250–53.

⁵² Lorenzo Monaco, *Annunciation* altarpiece, c. 1422–23. Tempera on panel, 300 x 274 cm overall. Florence, S. Trinita. Eisenberg, 1989, pp. 134–36.

⁵³ Lorenzo Monaco, *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1420–22. Tempera on panel, 155 x 183 cm overall. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Eisenberg, 1989, pp. 118–20.

⁵⁴ Sebgondi, 2005, p. 46.

Florence.⁵⁵ A similar work attributed to the artist is housed in the Museu de Arte de São Paulo,⁵⁶ and another was sold at Christie's in London on 7 July 2000.⁵⁷ A *descho da parto* depicting scenes from Boccaccio's *Commedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has also been attributed to the painter.⁵⁸ Essentially a conservative, late-Gothic artist, the Master of 1416 fell under the more progressive influence of Angelico in the work sold at Christie's, which on stylistic grounds should be dated to the early 1420s. While the S. Jacopo *Crucifix* shares with these works a mix of rustic and refined characteristics, its drapery style is considerably more lively, the figure style more imposing, and the overall effect more moving. The attribution to Uccello is in this author's opinion more plausible in a number of ways than to the Master of 1416, so that, in spite of the uncertainty surrounding its patronage and early provenance, the *Crucifix* should not yet be ruled out as a possible work by Uccello from the very beginning of his career.

The Del Lippi Tabernacle

The second candidate for a work by Uccello dating from before 1425 is the del Lippi tabernacle. This tabernacle was built on the corner of the present day Via Fanfani and Via dei Perfetti Ricasoli, which in the fifteenth century was a few kilometers north-west of the walls of Florence, on a property called the Villa di Macia. This was acquired by the Lippi family in 1470, and so came to be known as the del Lippi tabernacle, but until that point had belonged to the Bartoli family. It was painted with the *Virgin and Child with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Angels, and*

⁵⁵ Master of 1416, *Virgin and Child with SS Peter, John the Baptist, Anthony Abbot, and Julian*, 1416. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 231.8 x 122.5 cm. Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia. Zeri, 1964, pp. 48–49.

⁵⁶ Master of 1416, *Virgin and Child with SS John the Baptist, James, Julian, and Anthony Abbott (?)*, c. early 1410–1415. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 106 x 57 cm. Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

⁵⁷ Master of 1416, *Virgin and Child with a Goldfinch, with SS John the Baptist, and Anthony Abbot, and Two Angels*, c. early 1420s. Tempera on panel, 73.5 x 46 cm. Sale of Christie's London: Friday, July 7, 2000, Lot 65.

⁵⁸ Master of 1416, *Ameto's Discovery of the Nymphs; A Contest between the Shepherds Alcesto and Acaten*, early fifteenth century. Tempera on panel (separated sides of a *descho da parto*), 53.7 x 56.2 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Baetjer, 1995, p. 10.

Saints.⁵⁹ The tabernacle was a significant local landmark, since the parish where it was found was called ‘Santo Stefano dalla Vergine del Mazza’, after the local church, S. Stefano, the Virgin of the tabernacle, and Via del Mazza, the old street corresponding to the modern Via dei Perfetti Ricasoli.⁶⁰ The mural paintings have been detached and are now housed in the nearby church of S. Maria Mater Dei a Lippi. A label previously on the tabernacle carried a Latin inscription indicating that ‘Paolo Uccello painted this tabernacle in the year of Our Lord 1416 and Luca di Alberto Lippi restored it on 8 October in the year of Our Lord 1716’.⁶¹ The paintings are in a conservative, late Gothic style and if not for the label it is unlikely they would ever have been associated with Uccello. So what trust can be put in it?

Matteo Poggi and Leonardo Bucciardini have recently argued that eighteenth-century attributions to Uccello must have credibility since Uccello was virtually forgotten at this time, so that works were unlikely to be attributed to him in the absence of some specific local tradition.⁶² Yet his imposing *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in the Cathedral bears the most conspicuous signature of any work of art in the city’s principal church, and the publication of the first volume of Baldinucci’s *Notizie dei Professori del Disegno* in 1686 and the first volume of Lanzi’s *Storia della Pittura* in 1795, which maintained and occasionally corrected the biographical data in Vasari’s *Vite*, would have kept his reputation alive.⁶³ In any case eighteenth-century attributions to Uccello can be problematic. A case in point is a lost *Virgin and SS John*

⁵⁹ Early fifteenth-century Florentine artist (and Uccello?), *Virgin and Child with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Saints, and Angels*, 1416 (?). Detached mural painting, 309 x 176.5 cm (central section). Florence, S. Maria Mater Dei a Lippi, formerly in the del Lippi tabernacle on the corner of Via Fanfani and Via dei Perfetti Ricasoli. Padoa Rizzo, 1991, pp. 18–25.

⁶⁰ Mannini, 1984, p. 150.

⁶¹ Guarnieri, 1987, p. 136–67. The lost inscription read: ‘ANNO DOMINI MCCCCXVI TABERNACULUM A PAULO UCCELLO DEPICTUM DINOTIUS ET LUCAS ALBERTUS DE LIPPIS RESTAURAVRUNT ANNO DOMINI MDCCXVI DIE VIII OCTOBRIS’.

⁶² Poggi and Bucciardini, 2006, pp. 108–13. The authors argued that the *Crucifixion with SS Nicholas and Francis* in the Oratory of the Confraternity of St Nicholas ‘del Ceppo’ in Florence (of which the bust of St Francis is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art), usually attributed to Angelico or an assistant, could conceivably be attributed at least in part to Uccello, based primarily on an eighteenth-century attribution of the work to Uccello in an inventory of the Confraternity’s possessions.

⁶³ Vasari, 1966–87, 3, pp. 61–72; Baldinucci, 1974–5, 1, pp. 439–51; Lanzi, 1968, 1, pp. 57–59.

the Evangelist, Jerome, and Mary Magdalene painted on the wall behind the altar in the chapel of the Confraternity of St John the Baptist (known as the ‘*Scalzo*’) on the present day Via Cavour. Eighteenth-century documents from the confraternity are uncertain about its authorship. In a description of the rooms of 1708 the work is attributed to a pupil of Uccello, while in an index to the confraternity’s documents of 1745 the painting is referred to as being by Uccello in one entry and by the little known artist Salvadore di Giuliano in another.⁶⁴ Eighteenth century Florentines clearly knew that Uccello was one of the leading mural painters of the early Renaissance but were not always certain what he had painted.

In the case of the del Lippi tabernacle, Anna Padoa Rizzo has found documentation for dealings between the Bartoli family, its original owners, and Uccello’s relative Deo di Deo del Beccuto.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the location of the tabernacle near Castello, a few streets away from the Hospital of St Anthony near where Deo owned land and where, as we have seen, Uccello may have worked in 1413, three years before the date given by the label on the tabernacle, may well be significant.⁶⁶ The coincidences of Uccello’s name, the place, the time, and contact between the Bartoli and Deo Beccuti suggest that the tabernacle’s label should not be dismissed. If this work were indeed by Uccello (in part or in full) it would suggest that his career at this time had a provincial aspect, and that he was working in the *contado* on projects connected with his relative Deo’s social network.

There has been no consensus about the authorship of the del Lippi tabernacle paintings on the basis of their style. In 1968 Boskovits attributed them to the Master of S. Verdiana, subsequently identified as Tommaso del Mazza.⁶⁷ However, Tommaso del Mazza’s career is now thought to have ended in the first years of the fifteenth century, making it less likely, though not

⁶⁴ For the 1708 reference: ASF, CRSPL, Moreniana Misc. 99–94, fol. 47r; for the 1745 reference: ASF, CRSPL, 1189:1, fols 11r, 64r. These references were kindly brought to my attention by Dr Alana O’Brien, personal communication, 20 Mar. 2004.

⁶⁵ Padoa Rizzo (1990, pp. 57–58) cited one of Deo Beccuti’s tax returns, but did not specify the precise nature of the evidence for a connection between Beccuti and the Bartoli. However, a debt owed to Beccuti by a Luigi Bartoli is recorded in Beccuti’s 1433 *campione*: ASF, Catasto, 498, microfilm reel 1234, fol. 188r.

⁶⁶ For the locations of Hospital of St Anthony and the del Lippi tabernacle, see also: Mannini, 1984, pp. 142, 146, 150.

⁶⁷ Boskovits (1967–68, p. 59) included the paintings as an addendum to a list of works by the Master of S. Verdiana.

impossible, for him to have been the artist responsible for the tabernacle (assuming the validity of the date of 1416 given by the eighteenth-century label), and the del Lippi tabernacle paintings were not included in Deimling's entry for the artist in the *Corpus of Florentine Painting*.⁶⁸ In 1975 Boskovits re-attributed the paintings to Pietro Nelli, dating them between 1395 and 1400.⁶⁹ However, two scholars have persisted with the attribution to Uccello given by the eighteenth-century label. In 1990 Padoa Rizzo described the *sinopie* as being identical in style with those in Uccello's *Creation Stories*, and attributed all of the paintings to Uccello himself.⁷⁰ In 1998 Parronchi wrote that Uccello worked on the tabernacle with the Master of S. Verdiana, attributing to Uccello the *sinopie*, the angel at the top right of the central scene and the figure of St Peter (identified by him as St Joseph), the two standing saints on the right side of the tabernacle, and, possibly, the vault with the four Evangelists.⁷¹

The *sinopia* for the central scene of the tabernacle does indeed have a similar style to the *sinopia* of Uccello's *Creation Stories*, with emphatic, rough outlines accompanied by webs of fine, more searching lines for contours of drapery. The *sinopie* for the saints on the sides of the tabernacle, however, seem more economical and controlled, notwithstanding the *pentimenti* in the positions of their heads. These stylistic differences suggest they may be by a different, more experienced artist than those in the central scene.

The eighteenth-century restoration necessitates caution in attributing the painting of the *intonaco* to a specific artist or artists. However, Padoa Rizzo provided a compelling visual comparison when she noted the close affinity in style of the central scene with the *Virgin and Child* panel painting sometimes attributed to the Pseudo-Ambrogio di Baldese, previously in the parish church of Pástine in the Val d'Elsa and now housed at the Museo Diocesano di Santo Stefano al Ponte in Florence. Padoa Rizzo observed that the painting from Pástine is of a higher quality than the majority of works attributed to the Pseudo-Ambrogio di Baldese, noting also that some of the works of this master may perhaps be attributed to Ventura di Moro. In this context Padoa Rizzo alluded to the possibility that Uccello might have had an early association with artists working in studios on the Corso degli Adimari, such as Ventura di Moro, an idea also

⁶⁸ Deimling, 2000, pp. 108–43, especially p. 143.

⁶⁹ Boskovits, 1975, p. 419.

⁷⁰ Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 22.

⁷¹ Parronchi (1998, pp. 44–46) also noted differences in the handling of perspective between the *sinopie* and the paint layers suggestive of the work of different artists.

suggested by Uccello's having lived in the *popolo* of S. Maria Nepotica when he matriculated as a painter in 1415.⁷² But would this suggest that Uccello worked with or was only influenced by such artists?

Since it is difficult to discern Uccello's mature style in any part of the tabernacle paintings other than the *sinopia* of the central scene, the question of the extent of his potential involvement must be left in abeyance. He may have collaborated with a more experienced artist whose name was forgotten in local sources, and who was overshadowed by Uccello's subsequent fame, which would explain why only Uccello was mentioned in the label. But on the basis of the available stylistic and historical evidence Uccello's involvement in the painting of the tabernacle can best be described as a hypothesis worth entertaining.

The Martello *Virgin and Child*

The third candidate for a work by Uccello dating from before 1425 is a small and damaged *Virgin and Child* in the so-called Martello Collection (named after the villa in Fiesole in which the collection is housed). In 1992 Boskovits published this work as being by Uccello.⁷³ There is no original documentation, so that the attribution is based on stylistic criteria alone. The Virgin is depicted in half-length format, wearing a dark mantle with a deep-green lining, holding the Child in a dark pink cloth, against a gold ground with elaborate punchwork. Boskovits argued persuasively that the painting is probably Florentine and dates from the first decades of the fifteenth century, noting that the Virgin's mantle, lined with green, is similar in versions of the subject painted by Gentile da Fabriano in Florence between 1420 and 1425. He also observed stylistic features related to Donatello and Masaccio in support of his argument for a Florentine origin for the work.⁷⁴

The lively Child is certainly comparable to those in Uccello's del Beccuto *Virgin and Child* and Dublin *Virgin and Child*⁷⁵ as Boskovits observed, and the motif of the Child following the flight of a tiny bird also occurs in the *Virgin and Child* (Prato, Private collection) attributed to

⁷² Padoa Rizzo, 1990, p. 57; 1991, pp. 7–8.

⁷³ Uccello (attrib.), *Virgin and Child*, c. early 1420s. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 67 x 46 cm. Private collection. Boskovits, 1992, pp. 140–43.

⁷⁴ Boskovits, 1992, pp. 140–43.

⁷⁵ Uccello, *Virgin and Child*, c. early-to-mid-1440s. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 57 x 33 cm. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland. Borsi and Borsi, 1994, pp. 314–15.

Uccello by Berti in 1961, but perhaps better attributed to an anonymous assistant following a design by Uccello.⁷⁶ The decorative details of the Martello Collection *Virgin and Child*, such as the elaborate gold border of the mantle and the punchwork around the edge of the panel, are richer than in other works attributed to Uccello. The punchwork does, however, bear comparison with that in the halo of the S. Jacopo *Crucifix*. The attribution of the *Virgin and Child* to Uccello rings true because of the robust and lively depiction of the subjects, and in view of the rounded features of their heads, comparable with Uccello's tendency throughout his career to reduce complex forms to pure geometric ones.

Another artist whose style the Martello Collection *Virgin and Child* recalls is Angelico. The Virgin's pale skin and flushed pink cheeks, the Christ Child's vitality, and the warm palette of rich red, gold, and dusky pinks, are also present in Angelico's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels*, which is datable to around the early 1420s.⁷⁷ This brings the discussion back to the question of the relationship between Uccello and Angelico.

Uccello and Fra Angelico

The influence of Angelico on Uccello's Oxford *Annunciation* and Melbourne *St George* was already recognised by Pudelko in 1935.⁷⁸ It is discernable in aspects of their pastel colours, their delicate and refined execution, and above all in their shimmering aureoles. For the latter features Uccello adopted an Angelesque treatment of the gold grounds by creating extensive radial

⁷⁶ Here attributed to an anonymous workshop assistant of Uccello, *Virgin and Child*, c. late 1440s–1450s. Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 64 x 43 cm. Prato, Private collection. Berti (1961, p. 298) attributed the painting to Uccello, noting stylistic affinities with Sassetta and Fra Angelico and a suggestion of perspective in the relationship between the gazes and arrangement of the bodies. Judging from Berti's reproductions, the design of the Child's body is reminiscent of the stylised, rounded body of the Child in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* and the modelling of the Virgin's hands is reminiscent of the page's hands in the *Battle* in the National Gallery, London (on this work see: Gordon, 2003, pp. 378–397). Nevertheless, the heavy eyebrows and the dark shading in the Virgin's and the Child's faces are not directly comparable with any work by Uccello. The combination of Uccellesque design and non-Uccellesque execution suggests this work may have been produced in Uccello's workshop from a drawing by the master (for Uccello's authorship of the design, see: Melli, 1998, p. 27), c. late 1440s–1450s, not excluding the possibility that a work by Uccello has been maladroitly restored.

⁷⁷ Schmidt, 2005, p. 50.

⁷⁸ Pudelko, 1935, note 8 on p. 72.

incisions around the haloes, further embellished with vegetal and geometric designs, and punched stippling. Arguably, then, Uccello was closely familiar with Angelico's style and technique. But how closely could the two artists have worked?

The *Annunciation* panels provide the best evidence with which to address this question. On the face of it, the case for Angelico as their author is a strong one. The elegant and finely detailed faces are manifestly Angelic in style. The haloes are very close to those in the Rotterdam *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels* in their tooling with punched stippling used to create an illusion of relief. On the other hand, the many affinities between the *Annunciation* panels and Uccello's works in Oxford, Melbourne, and Karlsruhe point suggestively to Uccello's involvement. In particular, the idiosyncratic execution of the 'grassy' grounds in the quatrefoils seems more compatible with Uccello's occasionally experimental style, than with Angelico's usually fastidious manner. In her 1980 reappraisal of Angelico's early career, Diane Cole Ahl reiterated the widely held belief that Angelico painted with the assistance of his shop throughout the 1420s, even on small works.⁷⁹ Consequently, recent studies have assigned various parts of these works to different hands. For example, a recent publication of the National Gallery, London, describes the predella panels of the S. Domenico altarpiece in the following terms: 'broadly speaking, the central panel and most of the right-hand panel seem to be by Fra Angelico, the left hand panel by several members of his workshop, and the Dominican Blessed [panels] by a single hand which is probably Fra Angelico'⁸⁰ It should not come as a surprise, then, that the small quatrefoil *Annunciation* panels might have been designed and partly painted by Angelico but completed by a collaborator. But who could that collaborator have been? Given the observations made above, he could be identified as Uccello. The works' date remains difficult to define precisely in view of their small size and relative simplicity, but most likely falls somewhere between the middle of the second and third decades of the fifteenth century. If anything, they may date closer to the end of this period, in view of their similarity to Uccello's paintings from the late 1420s or early 1430s.

Uccello, Fra Angelico, and the Dominicans

It is worth looking again at the biographical evidence for Uccello's early training. It seems certain that Uccello received specialised training in one or more painters' workshops in addition to the

⁷⁹ Cole Ahl, 1980, note 13 on p. 363.

⁸⁰ Gordon, Wyld, and Roy, 2002, p. 6.

four or so years he spent as a *garzone* with Ghiberti. Vasari's suggestion that Uccello trained with the fourteenth-century painter Antonio Veneziano⁸¹ was abandoned by all authors by the twentieth century, for obvious reasons of chronology, not to mention style.⁸² As I have shown, after matriculating in the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild in 1415 Uccello must have been active as a painter for at least part of the 1420s, and part of his formation as a painter took place close to Fra Angelico. This could conceivably have been in the mid-teens of the century in Lorenzo Monaco's workshop, or later in Fra Angelico's own shop.

Fra Angelico was, of course, a Dominican friar, and the Dominican aspects of Uccello's career are worth noting. The Hospital of St Anthony, for which Uccello seems to have worked around 1413, was bought by the Dominican Confraternity of St Peter Martyr of S. Maria Novella in that year. By 1423, Guido di Pietro became the Dominican friar Fra Giovanni—or as he is better known, Fra Angelico.⁸³ However, Carl Brandon Strehlke has argued that before becoming a friar Angelico had worked on a program of decoration at S. Maria Novella in preparation for the visit of Pope Martin V from February 1419 to September 1420, at which time he observed the consecration of the church. Strehlke went so far as to attribute to Angelico the severely damaged mural painting *Crucifixion with SS Dominic and Thomas* above the door in the Chioostro Verde leading to the Chioostro Grande, opposite Uccello's *Creation Stories*.⁸⁴ Pia Palladino came to a somewhat similar conclusion concerning Angelico's involvement with Dominican patrons in Florence in the period c. 1417–20.⁸⁵ While this alone does not demonstrate that the two artists met in this period, it does suggest they operated in a similar milieu in the second decade of the quottrocento.

It is well known that Uccello and Angelico worked for the convent's friars from the 1430s, so that the paths of two of the leading painters in Florence at the time would have crossed at that point. Certainly, it is in this period that the most literal borrowing by the one artist from the other occurred: Uccello's figure of St Paul (c. 1435–36) on the intrados of the Marcovaldi Chapel at Prato derives from the figure of the same saint in the middle compartment of the right pilaster of

⁸¹ Vasari, 1966–87, 2, p. 268: 1568 ed.

⁸² The myth survived until at least the mid-nineteenth century, when Lord Lindsay reiterated it in his travel diaries during his trip to Italy (Brigstocke, 2003, p. 191).

⁸³ Kanter, 2005a, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Strehlke, 2003, pp. 21–22.

⁸⁵ Palladino, 2005, pp. 227–39.

Fra Angelico's *Deposition* (Museo di San Marco, Florence), which was probably painted only a few years earlier.⁸⁶ However, the cumulative stylistic and documentary evidence discussed here suggests that they had met, and just possibly worked together, before 1425, perhaps as early as the middle of the second decade of the quattrocento, but more likely a few years later.⁸⁷

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⁸⁶ Volpe (1980, p. 10) was the first to observe the relationship between the two figures of St Paul, without specifying which depended on the other. Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 298) favoured the dependence of Uccello on Angelico, based on a dating of the *Deposition* to c. 1432 and the Prato paintings to c. 1434–35.

⁸⁷ Uccello and Angelico were far from alone in profiting from the rich sources of patronage associated with S. Maria Novella in the early fifteenth century. To the still shadowy figures of the artists who worked on the *Scenes from Genesis* mural painting cycle in the Chiostro Verde in the early 1420s (for a recent reappraisal of the identity of these artists see: Frosinini, 2003, pp. 27–37) can probably be added one better known artist, as is suggested by the predella panel *SS Nicholas of Bari, Lawrence, and Peter Martyr, with a Donor* in the Kunstmuseum in Bern. While painted in an Angelicesque manner, it is more likely a work of Giovanni Toscani from the 1420s, and as has been reasonably argued, was probably commissioned by a lay brother of the Confraternity of St Peter Martyr, depicted kneeling in a white Dominican scapular before the confraternity's patron saint (Kanter, 2005c, pp. 50–51). Furthermore, of course, Masaccio's *Trinity* was painted in the nave of the church in the second half of the 1420s, testimony to the quality to which the Dominicans and their secular patrons aspired in the early quattrocento.

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