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Madonna and Child with Saints

ca. 1520

[Girolamo dai Libri](#) Italian

 On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in [Gallery 961](#)

The saints (left to right) are Catherine of Alexandria, Leonard, Augustine, and Apollonia.

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especially defined the landscape and enormous leafy tree. With the Madonna and Child

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Object Details

Title: Madonna and Child with Saints

Artist: Girolamo dai Libri (Italian, Verona 1474–1555 Verona)

Date: ca. 1520

Medium: Tempera and oil on canvas

Dimensions: Arched top, 157 x 81 1/2 in. (398.8 x 207 cm)

Classification: Paintings

Credit Line: Fletcher Fund, 1920

Accession Number: 20.92

Catalogue Entry

The Artist: Girolamo dai Libri (ca. 1474–1555) belonged to a four-generation family of miniaturists (Stefano, Francesco, Girolamo, and Francesco di Girolamo). The first member known by the name "dai Libri" (of the books) was Girolamo's grandfather Stefano (active by 1433–died by 1482) as documented by his tax assessment from 1433. In the following years he was also documented as both "scriptor" (writer) and "aminiator" (miniaturist) (Castiglioni 1985). Unfortunately we do not know any works

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Rinascimento, ed. Gino Castiglioni and Sergio Marinelli, exh. cat., Verona, 1986, pp. 137–38) tentatively attributed to Stefano a body of illuminations catalogued under the sobriquet Maestro degli Offici di Montecassino. The only documented illumination by a member of this family of miniaturists is a late work by Girolamo's father, Francesco dai Libri, dating from 1503 (he died between 1503 and 1514), which depicts *God the Father Blessing a Worshipper*. This discovery allowed scholars to identify other illuminations by Francesco, an artist strongly influenced by Andrea Mantegna (*Miniatura veronese del Rinascimento*, ed. Gino Castiglioni and Sergio Marinelli, Verona, 1986; Castiglioni et al. 2008). So far as we know, his son Girolamo was the only member of the family who also painted large-scale works. Girolamo signed monumental altarpieces for churches in Verona (Eberhardt 1974, pp. 150–51) and these are also the point of reference for his activity as miniaturist.

The Picture: The Madonna and Child are seated on a throne beneath a large laurel tree, flanked by, on one side, Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Leonard—the patron of the church—and, on the other, Augustine and Apollonia. Three music-making angels are grouped below the Madonna and Child and in the distance is an elaborate landscape with, on the left, a rocky mountain crowned by a fortress. A peacock is perched in a dead tree, these two features being a common symbol of immortality and of Christ's victory over death. We are indebted to Vasari and his local source, Fra Marco de' Medici, for the first detailed description of The Met's altarpiece when it was still on the high altar of the Olivetan church of San Leonardo in Monte, in the hills around the city of Verona.

"For S. Leonardo nel Monte, also, near Verona, he painted at the commission of the Cartieri family the altarpiece of the high altar, which is a large work with many figures, and much esteemed by everyone, above all for its very beautiful landscape. Now a thing that has happened very often

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great chair on which the Madonna is seated. This tree, which has the appearance of a laurel, projects considerably with its branches over the chair, and between the branches, which are not very thick, may be seen a sky so clear and beautiful, that the tree seems to be truly a living one, graceful and most natural. Very often, therefore, birds that have entered the church by various openings have been seen to fly to this tree in order to perch upon it, and particularly swallows, which had their nests among the beams of the roof, and likewise their little ones. Many persons well worthy of credence declare that they have seen this, among them Don Giuseppe mangiuoli of Verona, a person of saintly life, who has twice been General of his Order and would not for anything in the world assert a thing that was not absolutely true, and also don Girolamo Volpini, likewise a Veronese, and many others." (translation by Gaston du C. de Vere, 1912, ed. 1996, p. 46)

Despite Vasari's account, we do not know precisely who the patron of this work was, because while Vasari, Dal Pozzo (1718), and Dalla Rosa (1803–4) name the Carteri (or Cartieri) family as proprietors of the chapel, Lanceni (1720) and Biancolini (1750) allude to the Cartolari family: both were from Verona. The cloister of St. Leonardo was particularly famous in the Renaissance because it was decorated by an anonymous cycle of frescoes and inscriptions invented by Matteo Bosso in 1493–94 (G. Soranzo, "Il monastero veronese di San Leonardo e Matteo Bosso," *Vita veronese* 12 [1959], pp. 264–67). They are unfortunately lost now, but they could be identified with those described by Giovan Battista da Persico (*Descrizione di Verona e della sua provincia*, Verona, 1821, vol. 2, p. 150): "Qui da una loggia, dal moderno padrone signor Biadego ornata di buone epigrafi in onor del luogo, presentasi al guardo la bella Verona . . ." (Beautiful Verona can be seen from a loggia of the present owner, signor Biadego, furnished with good inscriptions recalling the memory of the site). Although the monastery was suppressed in 1769, we know much

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Beadego, who bought the church and convent with their furniture (Dalla Rosa 1803–4). Subsequently, the altarpiece was acquired by a member of the Gianfilippi family (Dalla Rosa 1803–4, p. 224), and through the Bolognese antique dealer Giovanni Battista Armano it was sold in April 1801 to Alexander Douglas, Marquess of Douglas, later 10th Duke of Hamilton, who installed it on the staircase of Hamilton Palace in Lanark, near Glasgow (Waagen 1854, Gardner 1972, Tormen 2009); the painting probably never belonged to a Genoese family, as Bernasconi (1864) believed.

The Met's painting is unquestionably the most spectacular of Girolamo dai Libri's altarpieces, all of which were painted for Veronese churches. As with The Met's work, these altarpieces all are set in open landscapes and testify to Girolamo's education as miniaturist, to which he remained faithful his whole life. In a document from 1530, in which he was asked to judge the work of a certain Girolamo Arloti (or de' Arlati), his assessment was introduced by the following words: "Un bon et valente depentor bisogna chel sapia ben imitar la natura, et fenzer quello che fa la natura, et essere universale in depenzer paesi, figure de ogni sorta, animali et paesi, et casamenti, et generaliter tute le cose che produse la natura" (A good and valiant painter must know how to imitate nature well, and imitate what nature does, and to be universal in painting landscapes, figures of all sorts, animals, landscapes and buildings and in general all the things that nature produces; Castiglioni et al. 2008, p. 129).

A similar flourishing laurel tree appears in the *Madonna dell'ombrello* (1530), in which an angel supports an umbrella (formerly in Santa Maria della Vittoria Nuova, now in the Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona). The *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne* (1518), formerly in the church of Santa Maria della Scala (now in the National Gallery, London), and the *Madonna and Child with Saints Lorenzo Giustiniani and Zeno*

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the organization of the setting can be found in the *Madonna and Child with Saints Anne, Joseph, and Joachim* in S. Paolo in Campo Marzio, Verona, and the *Madonna della quercia* (Madonna of the Oak), formerly in S. Andrea (now in the Museo di Castelvecchio). Girolamo probably employed the same cartoon for the angels in the *Madonna and Child with Saints Bartholomew and Zeno*, formerly in Santa Maria in Organo (now in the Bodemuseum, Berlin).

As is the case with the early Renaissance painters of Verona, Girolamo was strongly impressed by Andrea Mantegna's *San Zeno Altarpiece*, painted between 1457 and 1459. After more than half a century, Girolamo still looked to that work as a model, copying the group of the Madonna and Child in the *Pala Centrego* in Sant'Anastasia. Andrea Mantegna's work, together with that of the most important Venetian painters from the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, played an important role in the education of two generations of Veronese artists. Domenico Morone, Francesco dai Libri, and, later, Girolamo's colleagues Francesco Bonsignori, Francesco Morone, and Michele da Verona (see [27.41](#)) created their particular "Veronese" interpretation of the early Renaissance in the North of Italy from the legacy of Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, and Cima da Conegliano.

Mattia Vinco 2017

Provenance

Cartolari ("Cartieri") chapel, San Leonardo nel Monte, Verona (suppressed, 1769; sold to Beadego); Giovanni Battista Beadego, Verona (after 1769; sold to Gianfilippi); Paolino de' Gianfilippi, Verona; [Giovanni Antonio Armano,

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Glasgow (1800–d. 1852); William Alexander Anthony Archibald Douglas, 11th Duke of Hamilton, Hamilton Palace (1852–d. 1863); William Alexander Louis Stephen Douglas, 12th Duke of Hamilton, Hamilton Palace (1863–d. 1895; his estate, 1895–1919; his estate sale, Christie's, London, November 6–7, 1919, no. 32, for £2730 to Sulley); [Sulley and Co., London, 1919; sold to Douglas]; [R. Langton Douglas, London, 1919–20; sold to MMA]

Exhibition History

New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Loan Exhibition of the Arts of the Italian Renaissance," May 7–September 9, 1923, no. 33.

New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Girolamo dai Libri and Veronese Art of the Sixteenth Century," November 16, 2015–February 7, 2016, no catalogue.

References

Giorgio Vasari. *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*. Ed. Gaetano Milanesi. 1906 ed. Florence, 1568, vol. 5, pp. 328–29, describes it on the high altar of the Cartieri family in the church of San Leonardo nel Monte, near Verona.

Bartolomeo dal Pozzo. *Le vite de' pittori, de gli scultori, et architetti veronesi*. Verona, 1718, pp. 42–43, 311, as on the high altar of the Carteri family in San Leonardo.

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universale delle pitture nelle chiese, e luoghi pubblici della città, e diocesi di Verona. Verona, 1720, vol. 2, p. 6, as on the high altar of the choir of San Leonardo, noting that the choir was built by the Cartolari family.

Giambatista Biancolini. *Notizie storiche delle chiese di Verona*. Vol. 3, Verona, 1750, p. 28.

Giovanni Antonio Armano. Letter to Giovanni Maria Sasso. April 1, 1800 [published in Tormen 2009, p. 481, letter no. 410], remarks that he has sold this picture to "Milord" [Douglas].

Giovanni Antonio Armano. Letter to Giovanni Maria Sasso. April 28, 1801 [published in Tormen 2009, p. 494, letter no. 428].

Saverio Dalla Rosa. *Catastico delle pitture e sculture esistenti nelle chiese e luoghi pubblici situati in Verona*. 1803–4, vol. 2, pp. 150, 244 [published by Istituto Salesiano "San Zeno", Verona, 1996, pp. 180, 269], as in the collection of Gianfilippi; states that the church of San Leonardo was purchased by Giovanni Battista Beadego after its suppression, and that Beadego subsequently sold the paintings to Gianfilippi.

[Gustav Friedrich] Waagen. *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*. London, 1854, vol. 3, p. 296, as hanging on the large staircase at Hamilton Palace; notes the influence of Mantegna.

Cesare Bernasconi. *Studi sopra la storia della pittura italiana dei secoli XIV e XV e della scuola pittorica veronese dai medi tempi fino a tutto il secolo XVIII*. repr. 1977. Verona, 1864, pp. 290–91,

incorrectly states that it is in a Genoese collection.

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[Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, 2027/12209/1], as on the staircase of Hamilton Palace, and as painted for San Leonardo, Verona.

J[oseph]. A[rcher]. Crowe and G[iovanni]. B[attista]. Cavalcaselle. *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*. London, 1871, vol. 1, pp. 495–96, note the influence of Mantegna.

[Franz] Kugler. *Handbook of Painting: The Italian Schools*. Ed. [Elizabeth Rigby] Eastlake. 4th ed. London, 1874, vol. 2, p. 303.

[George Redford]. "Hamilton Palace." *Times* (February 6, 1882), p. 4 [reprinted in "Art Sales," London, 1888, vol. 1, p. 319, and in "The English as Collectors," Frank Herrmann, ed., New York, 1972, p. 350].

Selwyn Brinton. *Humanism and Art*. London, 1907, p. 72.

Luigi di Canossa. *La famiglia dai Libri*. Verona, 1911, pp. 21–22 [reprinted in "Atti e memorie dell'Accademia d'Agricoltura Scienze Lettere Arti e Commercio di Verona" (serie 4, vol. 12), Verona, 1912, pp. 103–4].

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Amalia Fried. "Girolamo dai Libri." PhD diss., Universität Wien, 1912, pp. 98–99, fig. 65.

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HISTORY OF PAINTING IN NORTH ITALY: VENICE, PADOVA, VICENZA, VERONA, FERRARA, MILAN, FRIULI, BRESCIA, FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. Ed. Tancred Borenius. 2nd ed. [1st ed 1871]. London, 1912, vol. 2, pp. 202–3.

"In the Sale Room." *Connoisseur* 56 (January 1920), p. 45.

B[ryson]. B[urroughs]. "The Acquisition of a Girolamo dai Libri." *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 15 (June 1920), pp. 137–39, ill., dates it before 1526; notes that the hill at left is in the manner of Dürer.

R[udolph]. Wittkower. "Studien zur Geschichte der Malerei in Verona." *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* [4] (1927), p. 210, no. 19 [reprinted in "Idea and Image: Studies in the Italian Renaissance," [London], 1978, p. 224, no. 19].

Raffaello Brenzoni *in* *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*. Ed. Hans Vollmer. Vol. 23, Leipzig, 1929, p. 188, erroneously lists it as still at Hamilton Palace.

Lionello Venturi. *Pitture italiane in America*. Milan, 1931, unpaginated, pl. CCCXVI, notes the influence of Mantegna and Francesco Morone.

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Lionello Venturi. *Italian Paintings in America*. Vol. 2, *Fifteenth Century Renaissance*. New York, 1933, unpaginated, pl. 424.

Flora Martinelli. "Girolamo dai Libri: miniatore e pittore veronese." PhD diss., Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, 1935, pp. 74–75.

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Bernhard Berenson. *Pinacoteca italiana del Rinascimento*. Milan, 1930, p. 222.

Harry B. Wehle. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Catalogue of Italian, Spanish, and Byzantine Paintings*. New York, 1940, p. 156, ill.

Josephine L. Allen and Elizabeth E. Gardner. *A Concise Catalogue of the European Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York, 1954, p. 43.

Carlo Del Bravo. "Francesco Morone." *Paragone*, n.s., 13 (July 1962), p. 8.

Licisco Magagnato, ed. *Le vite de' pittori, de gli scultori et architetti Veronesi*. By Bartolomeo dal Pozzo. reprint [1st ed., 1718]. Verona, [1967], vol. 2, p. 33 [see Ref. Zeri and Gardner 1986].

Bernard Berenson. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central Italian and North Italian Schools*. London, 1968, vol. 1, p. 195.

Elizabeth E. Gardner. "Dipinti rinascimentali del Metropolitan Museum nelle carte di G. B. Cavalcaselle." *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 8 (1972), pp. 71–72, figs. 11 (sketch), 12, publishes a sketch after the painting made by Cavalcaselle when he saw the work in the Hamilton collection; traces the history of its ownership, noting that it was sold to Hamilton by Armano in 1800.

Burton B. Fredericksen and Federico Zeri. *Census of Pre-Nineteenth-Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*. Cambridge, Mass., 1972, pp. 92, 339, 375, 376, 384, 423, 606.

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Hans-Joachim Eberhardt *in* *Maestri della pittura veronese*. Ed. Pierpaolo Brugnoli. Verona, 1974, pp. 146, 151, fig. 95, lists it under works attributed to Girolamo dai Libri; relates it to organ shutters painted by Girolamo and Francesco Morone in 1515–16, now at Marcellise.

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Denys Sutton. "Robert Langton Douglas, Part III, XVII: Dramatic Days." *Apollo*, n.s., 109 (June 1979), pp. 454, 456, fig. 6.

James Byam Shaw. *Disegni veneti della collezione Lugt*. Exh. cat., Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice. Vicenza, 1981, p. 19, notes that the pose of the Christ Child corresponds to that of the Child in a drawing attributed to Mantegna in the Lugt collection.

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Godfrey Evans. "The Hamilton Collection and the 10th Duke of Hamilton." *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History* 8 (2003), pp. 56, 69 nn. 29–30, fig. 1, dates it about 1520; notes that it appears in numerous inventories of the Hamilton collection between 1825 and 1876.

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L'epistolario Giovanni Antonio Armano Giovanni Maria Sasso. Ed. Gianluca Tormen. Verona, 2009, p. 481 n. 470.

Diana Gisolfi. *Paolo Veronese and the Practice of Painting in Late Renaissance Venice*. New Haven, 2017, pp. 34–35, 265 n. 77, fig. 46 (color).

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The saints, from left to right, are: Catherine of Alexandria, Leonard, Augustine, and Apollonia. Leonard's dalmatic is decorated with representations of Saints John the Baptist and Jerome, while Saints Veronica, Anthony Abbot, and five unidentifiable figures appear on Augustine's cope.

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