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The Crucified Christ

Pietro da Rimini Italian

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The moving depiction of Christ is a damaged fragment of a large painted crucifix and is inspired by a Crucifix painted by Giotto in the church of San Francesco, Rimini. A highly original and expressive painter, Pietro da Rimini was among the local painters most influenced by his example. This is a late work and is usually dated to the 1330s.

Large painted crucifixes were usually hung over the high altar of churches or, alternatively, suspended above the rood screen dividing the public space from that reserved for clerics.

Object Details

Title: The Crucified Christ

Artist: Pietro da Rimini (Italian, Riminese, active 1324–33)

Medium: Tempera and gold on wood

Dimensions: 40 7/8 x 18 in. (103.8 x 45.7 cm)

Classification: Paintings

Credit Line: Gift of Mrs. W. Murray Crane, 1939

Accession Number: 39.42

Catalogue Entry

The Artist: Our understanding of this accomplished artist—a key figure in the vibrant school of Rimini that emerged following Giotto’s activity there—is based on the scholarship of the last half century. The primary influences on his work were Giovanni (active 1292–1336) and Giuliano da Rimini (active ca. 1307–24)—both close followers of Giotto, and probably brothers—and Pietro Lorenzetti’s frescoes in the lower church of San Francesco, Assisi. Unfortunately, Pietro’s documented altarpiece commissioned in 1324 by friar Niccolò di Santa Cecilia for the Paduan church of the Eremitani does not survive; importantly, it was painted in

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SANCTA CECILIA ET FACTUM FUIT PER MANUS IULIANI [ET] PETRUCII DE ARIMINO—was copied in the sixteenth century: see A. Moschetti, "Studi e memorie di arte trecentesca padovana: Giuliano e Pietro da Rimini," *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova* 7 [1931], pp. 201–7.) In Ravenna Pietro was witness to two legal documents: on 14 February and 3 May 1338 (O. De Lucca, *I pittori riminesi del Trecento nelle carte d'archivio*, Rimini, 1992). Other inscriptions that have been tentatively connected with him—albeit without general approval—relate to a fresco in the church of San Marco in Cupramontana (Ancona), destroyed in the nineteenth century, and to a detached fresco representing Saint Francis from the church of St. Nicolò in Jesi (now in the convent of St. Francis, Montottone, near Ascoli Piceno). By contrast, some detached frescos from the chapterhouse of the Augustinian convent of the Eremitani in Padua (now in the Museo Civico), have been attributed to him and are taken to document his activity in Padua. Moreover, it is now generally accepted that the so-called Master of the Refectory of Pomposa, the Master of Tolentino, the Master of San Pietro in Sylvis, and the Master of Santa Maria in Porto Fuori (Volpe 1965) are all connected to his production. Indeed, Pietro da Rimini, sometimes with his workshop, was probably responsible for the decorations in all these monuments: the abbey of Pomposa (near Ferrara); the Cappellone degli Spagnoli in Tolentino (in the Marches); the apse of San Pietro in Sylvis in Bagnacavallo (near Ravenna), the church of Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, in Ravenna (lost), and the Church of Santa Chiara (the detached frescoes are now held in the Museo Nazionale in Ravenna). Some panel paintings and illuminations have also been attributed to him (Medica 1995).

The Picture: This impressive, if damaged, fragment from a large painted crucifix was first attributed to Pietro da Rimini by Corbara in 1969. The attribution is widely accepted today. Zeri (1976, 1986) suggested that the bust-length figures of the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist in the

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the top of the crucifix. From the point of view of style, there is much to recommend this idea, were it not for the fact that, as pointed out by Mauro Minardi on the basis of his firsthand study of the fragments, the three figures in Baltimore are larger in scale when compared with the corpus of Christ than one would expect (see fig. 1 above for the reconstruction). On balance, it seems more likely that the pieces come from two crosses of strikingly different dimensions. The Met's painting differs in style and form from Pietro's signed crucifix in Urbania (Casteldurante), in which the figures are more elongated and distorted for expressive purposes. Only recently has it been possible to begin to construct a chronology of Pietro's work. The Met's crucifix is currently understood as late, relating most closely to some frescoes formerly in Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, Ravenna (destroyed), painted in the 1330s. As already noted, Pietro's work was strongly influenced by Giotto, of whose work in Rimini there remains only a magnificent painted cross in the church of San Francesco (the so-called Tempio Malatestiano). This cross certainly provided the model for The Met's crucifix.

Large painted crucifixes were usually hung over the high altar or, alternatively, suspended above the rood screen—as can be seen in a fresco in the basilica of San Francesco, Assisi. They functioned as substitutes for sculpted ones and the raised haloes were a carryover.

Keith Christiansen and Mattia Vinco 2017

Provenance

[Girolamo Palumbo, Rome, until 1929; as attributed to Baronzio; sold to Crane]; Mrs. W. Murray Crane, New York (1929–39)

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Bernhard Berenson. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*. Oxford, 1932, p. 44, lists it as a fragment by Giovanni Baronzio.

Mario Salmi. Letter to Mrs. W. Murray Crane. November 21, 1932, calls it a beautiful work of the Riminese school, possibly superior to the work of Baronzio.

Antonio Corbara. Letter to Mrs. W. Murray Crane. December 16, 1934, relates it to a crucifix in the church of Sant'Agostino, Rimini, noting the influence of Pietro Lorenzetti.

Mario Salmi. "La scuola di Rimini, III." *Rivista del R. Istituto d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 5, nos. 1–2 (1935), pp. 104, 124 n. 6, fig. 10, considers it similar to works by followers of Pietro da Rimini, rejecting the attribution to Baronzio.

Bernhard Berenson. *Pitture italiane del rinascimento*. Milan, 1936, p. 37.

Harry B. Wehle. "A Riminese Crucifix." *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 34 (June 1939), pp. 140–41, ill., attributes it to Baronzio's workshop; discusses the influence of Giotto's crucifix in the Arena Chapel, Padua.

Harry B. Wehle. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Catalogue of Italian, Spanish, and Byzantine Paintings*. New York, 1940, pp. 83–84, ill., as Workshop of Baronzio.

Edoardo Arslan. Letter. April 21, 1952, calls it possibly Riminese, but not from Baronzio's school.

Josephine L. Allen and Elizabeth E. Gardner. *A Concise Catalogue of the*

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Carlo Volpe. *La pittura riminese del Trecento*. Milan, 1965, pp. 54, 80, no. 62, fig. 180, attributes it to an anonymous painter of the Riminese school and dates it 1330–40.

Bernard Berenson. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central Italian and North Italian Schools*. London, 1968, vol. 1, p. 357, lists it among anonymous Riminese Trecento paintings.

Antonio Corbara. Letter to Olga Raggio. January 28, 1969, attributes it to Pietro da Rimini or to his circle.

Burton B. Fredericksen and Federico Zeri. *Census of Pre-Nineteenth-Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*. Cambridge, Mass., 1972, pp. 166, 287, 607.

Federico Zeri. *Italian Paintings in the Walters Art Gallery*. Baltimore, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 60–61, states that it is uncertain whether this fragment is part of the same painting as three terminals from a crucifix in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; tentatively dates the Baltimore fragments to Pietro's later period, possibly to the early 1340s.

Federico Zeri with the assistance of Elizabeth E. Gardner. *Italian Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, North Italian School*. New York, 1986, pp. 53–54, pl. 1.

Miklòs Boskovits. "Per la storia della pittura tra la Romagna e le Marche ai primi del '300 – II." *Arte Cristiana* 81 (May–June 1993), p. 176 n. 47, attributes it to Pietro.

Massimo Medica [in](#) *Il Trecento riminese: maestri e botteghe tra Romagna*

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Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, Ravenna, and believes the Baltimore fragments to have formed its terminals.

Katharine Baetjer. *European Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art by Artists Born Before 1865: A Summary Catalogue*. New York, 1995, p. 110, ill. p. 111.

Andrea De Marchi in *Fonds d'or et fonds peints italiens (1300–1560)*. Exh. cat., G. Sarti. Paris, 2002, p. 26 n. 1, attributes it to Pietro's workshop, listing it among other Riminese crucifixes with raised haloes.

Notes

The panel, which has been cut down all around, is cradled. It is not easy to read the state of the picture due to an old, oxidized varnish, but the background has suffered many paint losses and the raised portion of the halo has largely crumbled away. However, the original gilding is still present, and the head and body of Christ are fairly well preserved. It should be noted that linen was laid between the original wood panel and the layer of gesso. (Zeri and Gardner 1986)

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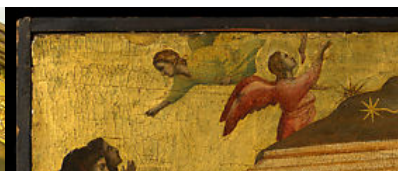


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 Sandro Banchi (Italian, Florence, active ca. 1320–46)
 Giotto di Bondone (Italian, Florentine, 1266/76–ca. 1290–1300)
 ca. 1290–1300

ca. 1326 ca. 1340 possibly ca. 1320 p



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