

FRA ANGELICO

Florentine school, ca.1400 - 1455.

This artist was born Guido di Pietro da Vicchio (Vicchio is in the Mugello). The date of his birth, given by Vasari as around 1386-87, is now placed by the findings of Orlandi around 1400-02.<sup>(2)</sup> He entered the Dominican friary of San Domenico, near Fiesole, around 1420-22, and from then on was known as Fra Giovanni. He lived for a considerable time in the friary at Fiesole and eventually became its friar. He probably received his training as a painter under Lorenzo Monaco or another artist of that generation in Florence. The first references to his activity as an artist come in 1417-18, and the earliest works of his which are documented and extant are of the later 1420s. He is recorded as working in Orvieto in 1447, and worked a great deal in Rome during the last decade of his life. He is now commonly called in Italian "Il Beato Angelico". He does not seem to have been formally beatified, but his tombstone calls him "Venerable", and the sobriquet "Angelico" was perhaps used already<sup>in</sup> in his lifetime as a term of praise --it is so used in Landino's 1481 edition of Dante.

Nativity

tempera on panel, 10X 20 ins.

Condition

Examined by the Conservation Dept. of the Fogg Art Museum in 1935. Reported by them to be seriously abraded all over and extensively repainted, especially in the sky.

Provenance

Kilényi family, Hungary (?)<sup>(1)</sup>; Ercole Canessa, New York; American Art Association sale, New York, Jan. 11-13, 1934, no. 537. ~~1934~~<sup>(3)</sup>.  
Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Exhib. hist.  
Inteldone

AAAGollk. Robert Lehman, New York, previously  
Int., 1959, no. 1

## Versions

1. Colln. Robert Lehmann, New York ; previously in the colln. of Frank Channing Smith, Worcester, Mass.<sup>(4)</sup> 21×30 cm.<sup>(8)</sup> Belongs to the same predella as the Visitation and Adoration of the Magi formerly in the Gambier-Parry colln<sup>(6)</sup>, and the Flight into Egypt in the Altenburg Museum, Lindenuau.

2. Sotheby's sale, June 14, 1961, no.100 (ill.) ; from the colln. of the Duke of Sachsen-Meiningen.<sup>(5)</sup> 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ×17 ins. There are angels here on top of the cave.

3. Vatican Gallery, Rome, no.255.<sup>(6)</sup> 23.5×49 cm. Quite close to the Clowes version in the position of the Madonna and Child and the shape of the cave ; the animals are also similar.

## Provenance

Certified by W.Suida (1934) as a work of Fra Angelico, around 1430-40.<sup>(7)</sup> He was followed in this opinion by G.Gluck and R.Eisenberger (1934 also)<sup>(8)</sup> ; L.Venturi at the same time suggested Domenico di Michelino -- a pupil of Fra Angelico's.<sup>(9)</sup> Panofsky, however (1942), gave the work to the school of Lorenzo Monaco, comparing the painting in the Vatican Gallery (see above)<sup>(10)</sup>.

In view of the condition of the painting (q.v.), it is not possible to go beyond Panofsky's opinion. Essentially this panel is based, in its composition, on the Lorenzo Monaco predella ~~panel~~<sup>panel</sup> of the same subject in ~~St.~~<sup>Santa</sup> Trinita, Florence, which forms part of this artist's altarpiece of the Annunciation. As noted by E.Fahy,<sup>(11)</sup> (~~orally, 1966~~) it is also related to the corresponding predella panel of Gentile da Fabriano's altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi in the Uffizi. In view of this, it may not be Florentine.



Notes.

1. S.Orlandi, Beato Angelico, Florence, 1964, ch.1.
2. According to information given at the time of purchase.
3. It was <sup>then</sup> in a columniated frame which carried below the inscription "IPSUM QUEM GENUIT ADORAVIT MARIA" (see the reprodn. in the sale cat.), and was certified as a Fra Angelico by Prof. Giacomo di Nichola.
4. E.Sandberg-Vavala, "Early Italian Paintings in the Collection of Frank Channing Smith Jr", Worcester Museum Annual, 3, 1937-38, p.37, (as Fra Angelico). The connection with the companion panels was first ~~pointed out~~ <sup>noted</sup> by O.Siren, Don Lorenzo Monaco, Strassburg, 1905, pp.57f.
5. J.A.Crowe and G.B.Cavalcaselle, A New History of Painting in Italy, <sup>ed. by Douglas and Berenson, 1903-14</sup> 6 vols., London, 1864-66, II, p.301 (as Lorenzo Monaco) ; Siren, op.cit., p.160 (as Fra Angelico).
6. R.van Marle, The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting, <sup>19 vols., The Hague, 1923-33,</sup> IX, 1927, p.187 (as school of Lorenzo Monaco) ; B.Berenson, Pittura Italiana del Rinascimento, Milan, 1936, <sup>with Figures of the Renaissance, ed. by, 1932,</sup> p.314 <sup>p. 365</sup> (as Domenico di Michelino).
7. Expertise of June 25, 1934, Clowes archives. The picture is identified there as the "nostra Donna piccola" mentioned by Vasari (Le Vite, ed. G.Milanesi, Florence, 1878-85, II, p.512) as belonging to the steward of the Innocenti Hospital in Florence. It is claimed that Vasari stated that this steward, Bartolommeo Gondi, also owned three other paintings by Fra Angelico ("un quadro grande, un piccolo ed una croce") ; and a reconstruction ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> offered on this basis, connecting the Clowes ~~picture~~ <sup>painting</sup> with the Crucifixion in the Accademia, Florence, and the Birth of the Baptist in the Uffizi. In fact Vasari names Don Vincenzo Borghini as the steward who owned the Madonna painting, and Gondi as the owner of the remaining works in question.

Notes, cont.

8. Docs. of Jul.7 and 19, 1934 (Clowes archives).

9. This opinion is cited in the 1934 sales cat.

10. Letter to Dr Clowes, Nov.12, 1942.

11. Orally, to the compiler, 1966.