

AGNOLO GADDI

Florentine school, active 1369 - died 1396.

Agnolo was one of the sons of Taddeo Gaddi, by whom he was probably trained. According to Vasari, when his father died (that is, in 1366) he was put in charge of Giovanni da Milano for painting. In 1369 he is recorded as working as an assistant, probably to his brother Giovanni, in the Vatican. He worked in Florence itself, where a dependable tradition attributed to him frescoes in Santa Croce ; and in Prato, where frescoes by him are definitely documented as late works of 1392-95. Some panels in San Miniato, Florence also appear to be documented works of his, from 1393-96. The probability is that the execution in all of these cases was at least partially the work of assistants, and the problem of attributing other paintings to him is therefore a troublesome one.

Four Saints (The Magdalen in the Wilderness? Benedict, Bernard and Catherine of Alexandria)

tempera on panel. Four panels reconstituted to go side by side, each 28½ x 8 ins.

Condition

Good.

Provenance

Keiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin (?).⁽¹⁾ Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Literature

B. Berenson, Italian Painters of the Renaissance, Florentine School, 2 vols., Phaidon Press, 1963, I, p.67.

Exhibited

Ind., 1959, no.27.

Attributed to Agnolo Gaddi by R. Offner (1927)⁽²⁾. He compared the triptych in the National Gallery, Washington (see below) and suggested that these were the side-panels of a similar altarpiece.

These panels are clearly by the same hand as a group of paintings which have sometimes been identified as the work of a distinct follower of Agnolo's, Gherardo Starnina (also called "Compagno d'Agnolo"). One should compare in this connection the triptych of the Madonna and Child with Two Angels and Saints in Washington⁽³⁾, the St. Julian in the Alte Pinakotek, Munich (no.7819)⁽⁴⁾, and most especially the Sts. Julian, James and Michael in the Jarves collection of the Yale University Art Gallery (1871.20)⁽⁵⁾. All of these works, along with the Clowes paintings, show somewhat blonder colors and somewhat sweeter expressions than appear to be characteristic of Gaddi himself. The attribution to Starnina --which would date the work around 1400⁽⁶⁾-- is, however, purely theoretical; and Berenson in 1963 attributed the whole group to Gaddi himself --taking the characteristics referred to to represent a phase in the work of Gaddi and his school.

Notes.

1. According to the record at the time of acquisition; I have not been able to verify this.
2. Letter of May 12, 1927 (Clowes archives)
3. L. Venturi, Pitture Italiane in America, Milan, 1931, pl.52 (as Starnina). ~~National Gallery of Art, Washington~~

Notes, cont.

4. R.van Marle, The Development of the Italian Schools of Paintings, 19 vols., The Hague, 1923-38, III, 1924, p.572, fig. 320 (as Starnina). It belongs to an ensemble which includes a corresponding panel of St Nicholas of Bari with a donor, and four scenes from the lives of these two saints --all in the same location (nos. 7818, 7818 a-b, 7819 a-b). See Alte Pinakotek, Munchen, Kurzes Verzeichnis der Bilder, 1958, pp.39f., where the whole group is now attributed to the circle of A.Gaddi.

5. O.Siren, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the Jarves Collection belonging to Yale University, New Haven, 1916 pp.51ff, no.20 (as Starnina (?)) ; R.Offner, Italian Primitives at Yale University, New Haven, 1927, pp.20f., as by an assistant of Gaddi's (not Starnina) ; Venturi, op.cit., pl.11 (as A.Gaddi).

6. Cf. on this point F.Rusk Shapley, Paintings from the Samuel H.Kress Collection, Italian Schools, XIII-XV Century, Phaidon Press, 1966, p.40, no.K563. According to Vasari (Vite, ed. G.Milanesi, Florence, 1878-85, II, pp.5ff.) Starnina was born in 1354, trained under Antonio Veneziano and died in 1408 (?). He is recorded as an artist in a Florentine register of 1387, and a document of Feb.1408 assigns to him the decoration of a chapel in S.Stefano at Empoli (see van Marle, op.cit., II, p.565). There are, however, no certain works by him.