

From the
Complete Catalogue of the Samuel H Kress Collection
Italian Paintings XIII-XV Century
by Fern Rusk Shapley
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GIOTTO and Assistants

K 1441 : Figure 45 ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

K 1442 : Figure 43 THE VIRGIN

K 1424 : Figure 47 CHRIST BLESSING

K 1444 : Figure 44 ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

K 1443 : Figure 46 ST. FRANCIS

THE PERUZZI ALTARPIECE. Raleigh, N.C., North Carolina Museum of Art (GL.60.17.7), since 1960.¹ Wood. Middle panel, 261x191 in. (66'7X49 cm.); side panels, each, 241x161 in. (62'3X42 cm.). Abraded throughout; small losses of paint; gold background in very good condition.

Because Sts. Francis, John the Evangelist, and John the Baptist are represented in this altarpiece, it has been proposed² that it may have been painted for the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence, the chapel which Giotto frescoed with scenes from the lives of the two Johns and for which he most likely painted one of the four altarpieces credited to him in Santa Croce by Ghiberti.³ Hence the polyptych has become known in recent years as the *Peruzzi Altarpiece*. Against this identification are dissenting opinions as to Giotto's execution of the altarpiece and the fact that the Evangelist is here shown as young, whereas he is elderly and bearded in the Peruzzi Chapel frescoes.⁴ After having been separated for an unknown length of time, the five panels as now shown are believed to present the altarpiece in its original form, except for the frame. Their date may be in the 1330'S.

Provenance: Middle panel (K 1424): Private Collection, Florence. Mrs. Frederic Stephens, New York. Kress acquisition, 1946. Side panels (K1441-1444): C. W. Mori, Paris (c. 1920). J. Goudstikker, Amsterdam, Apr.-May, 1930, nos. 18 and 19A, B, C of catalogue, the St. Francis as Giotto, the others as school of Giotto - exhibited (K1443 only) : 'Italiaansche Kunst in Nederlandsche Bezit,' Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, July I-Oct. I, 1934, no. 153 of catalogue, as Giotto. Leon Schinasi, New York (K1441, K1442, K1444 only); they were sold from the Schinasi Collection at Parke-Bemet's, New York, Nov. 4, 1944, nos. 312-314, as school of Giotto. Private Collection, New York. Wildenstein's, New York - exhibited: 'Italian Paintings,' Wildenstein's, New York, 1947, nos. 1-3, as Maso di Banco (K1441, K1442, K1444 only). Kress acquisition, 1947- exhibited (the entire altarpiece): National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1084) 1951-60;⁵ after entering the North Carolina Museum of Art: 'Art Treasures for America,' National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Dec. 10, 1961-Feb. 4, 1962, no. 36, as Giotto and assistants.

References: (1) Catalogue by F. R. Shapley, 1960, pp. 30 f., as Giotto and assistants. (2) W. E. Suida (in *Burlington Magazine*, vol. LIX, 1931, pp. 188 ff., and *Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection*, 1951, pp. 26 ff.), the first to recognize that all five panels were originally parts of the same altarpiece, attributes the *Christ*, the *St. Francis*, and the head of the *Baptist* to Giotto and suggests the identification of the polyptych as the Peruzzi altarpiece. (3) The original of Ghiberti's *Collellmellari*, written in the middle of the fifteenth century, is lost and the surviving fifteenth-century copy is so carelessly written and punctuated that, as J. von Schlosser (*Lorenzo Ghiberti's Dellkwürdigkeiten*, vol. I, 1912, pp. 36, II7 n. 15) notes, the passage here involved may be, implausibly, interpreted as meaning that the four altarpieces were painted for the church of the Franciscans in Padua. (4) O. Siren (in *Burlington Magazine*, vol. XLIII, 1923, pp. 259 ff.), the first to publish the four side panels, attributes them to a follower of Giotto, whom he

identifies tentatively as Stefano Fiorentino. R. van Marle (*Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. v, 1925, p. 468) thinks they may be by Pacino di Buonaguida (in *Bollettino d'Arte*, vol. XXVIII, 1934, pp. 301 f., van Marle modifies his opinion to admit one panel, the St. Francis, as the work of Giotto), a view opposed by R. Offner (*Studies in Florentine Painting*, 1927, p. 21 n. 21), who (in ms. opinion) attributes the panel of Christ to Giotto, as do also (in ms. opinions) G. Fiocco, R. Longhi, F. M. Perkins, P. Toesca, and A. Venturi. In *Corpus of Florentine Painting* (sec. IV, vol. I, 1962, p. 30 n. 7) Offner refers to the polyptych as Giottesque, painted for the Peruzzi Chapel. F. Zeri (in ms. opinion) refers to the polyptych as in large part by Giotto. B. Berenson (*Italian Pictures ••• Florentine School*, vol. I, 1963, p. 136) attributes it to Maso di Banco. E. Schaffran (in *Weltkunst*, vol. XXIII, June 15, 1953, p. 4) attributes it to a pupil of Giotto (c. 1340/45), possibly Maso di Banco, suggesting that it may be that artist's documented altarpiece of 1346 in which both Johns and Francis figure. C. Gnudi (*Giotto*, 1959, pp. 248 f.) classifies the work as by a pupil of Giotto and neither typologically nor stylistically appropriate for the Peruzzi Chapel. (5) See catalogue by Suida cited in note 2, above.