

I Buonomini di San Martino: Patrons and Facilitators of the Visual Arts in Quattrocento Florence

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“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matthew VI: 1–4

Summary: The charitable activities carried out by the Buonomini di San Martino during the Quattrocento have been reasonably well documented by modern historians. Nevertheless, the patronage and financial aid bestowed on fifteenth-century Florentine artists and artisans by this lay confraternity remains unexplored. Accordingly, this article, by employing previously unpublished archival data, will demonstrate how the Buonomini used social networks to procure artworks for the confraternity. Furthermore, the investigation will establish that the confraternity also provided financial aid to artists both famous and obscure who required temporary economic assistance.

Founded in 1442 by Archbishop Antoninus of Florence (1389–1459) and aided by the munificence of Cosimo the Elder de’ Medici, the Good Men of Saint Martin brought relief to those who had fallen upon hard times but were considered too honourable to beg for themselves.¹ Their charitable activities

¹ Trexler, “Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites,” 87–89, states that the document that explains the Buonomini’s constitution is likely a copy of the original and dates from around 1480. He goes on to explain that “this document does not suggest that Antonino Pierozzi ... played any role in bringing the first Buonomini together, stabilizing their rule, or acting in the role of spiritual father.” Nevertheless, the confraternity has revered the archbishop saint since the *Quattrocento* and a bust of Antoninus, produced during this century by Verrocchio’s *bottega* and modeled

were, and remain to this day, shrouded in secrecy which would suggest that this lay brotherhood, also known as the Buonomini or the Procurators of the Shamed Poor of Florence, found theological precedent for the confidential manner in which they execute and record their acts of charity in the writings of Saint Matthew, apostle and evangelist.²

Secrecy, however, does not normally aid the historian. When that same requirement of confraternal covertness is accompanied by voices speaking with various degrees of clarity, one must find a methodology that will simultaneously suit such testing circumstances and allow the researcher to collect the required data in order to satisfactorily answer the research question. By placing the confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino at the centre of this study and exploring the myriad of ties that bound various artists and artisans to the sodality, a better understanding of this relationship of mutual convenience will be obtained. The patronage network is, by its very nature, a complex cosmos or, as Ronald Weissman termed it, “a fragmented world”; still, what is important to understand, as regards this particular study, is that it is the patron who provided the requisite links and consolidated this network of mutual convenience.³ Weissman may illustrate our confraternity-centric model quite well and what he states clearly supports the rationale behind the choice of such a representation, however, this does not constitute a methodological approach. This will come to us by way of Georg Hegel. As Ernst Gombrich so eloquently paraphrased, “there was something in the Hegelian intuition that nothing in life is ever isolated, that any event and any great creation of a period is connected by a thousand threads with the culture in which it is embedded.”⁴ If an object or an event can possess a millenary of social fibres, so can the greatest “creation” of all — man. So, with this notion in mind, the

on Pierozzi's death mask, can be seen to this day upon the main altar of the little church of San Martino. Trexler explains this reverence as a post mortem act of Pierozzi's biographers who made it common practice to ascribe “to a saint any significant charitable foundation started during his life.” Conversely, Ugo Silli, a serving Procurator of the Buonomini, admits that had Pierozzi been archbishop when the writer of the original list of rules transcribed them, the first brothers would certainly have “been pleased to rank him and proud to name him” as founder of the confraternity (*Sulla datazione*, p. 4). Nevertheless, he also skillfully and convincingly argues that Pierozzi was, in fact, connected with the confraternity and that the original constitution was written before the Buonomini came to their current home in San Martino, while they were still a small operation run from Primerano di Jacopo's house. The document, which dates from around 1480, is ostensibly a copy of a document originally produced in 1445 — a time when Florence was actually without an archbishop. This would be between August 1445 when Archbishop Zabrella died and the following January when Pierozzi was nominated.

² Francesco De Peverelli Luscì, one of the current Procurators of the Buonomini, states that “what you have to be aware of is that we're the only ones who know about it [our ‘contribution’] because we're sworn to secrecy so we don't tell anyone, but within the organisation each Sixth has information and human relationships that carry on for years and years.” Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 32.

³ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 22.

⁴ Gombrich, “In Search of Cultural History,” 166.

methodology of this study will allow for the following: a concentration on tracing the most important fibres that run from confraternity to artist or artisan; the collection of data from these strands and the reconstitution of these threads back into the cultural fabric but, in a clear formation that allows us to easily trace the path from patron to client and understand the journey from one point to another.

The masters and craftsmen that have been selected for this study proffer their presence to us through the veils of time by various methods and on disparate frequencies. Some are conspicuous in the company's written records while others are present in contemporary literary sources or in objects produced for, and retained by the confraternity. Perhaps the best way of describing the search for these individuals is to compare it to manually tuning a transistor radio to various stations — some of the signals will be loud and clear, some will just be discernible through the static and others still will provide the most succinct blip of clarity before descending into white noise. The most accessible will be those artists or craftsmen who are mentioned in the Buonomini ledgers as recipients of charity, for often the reasons why they had been accorded aid are listed alongside their names. A little less accessible are those artisans and masters whose names are associated with the confraternity through direct and indirect ledger entries. For example, some artists may have been mentioned by name but the reasons why the Buonomini have funded them are unclear, or an artist or workshop may have been closely tied to the confraternity through artistic or charitable patronage but in the records the names of individuals within their familial orbit, not the artists themselves, appear. The third and most elusive group are those creative individuals for whom the only evidence of their association with the confraternity is found in written primary sources not associated directly with the Buonomini di San Martino and visual texts that take the form of artworks belonging to, and produced for the confraternity.⁵

This article will examine the relationships between the Buonomini di San Martino and two well-known Florentine artists: Domenico Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi. It will also examine the bonds that linked the company to one of Florence's most sought after miniaturists, Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico. Additionally it will reflect on the confraternity's dealings with less illustrious masters and artisans such as the goldsmith, Filippo (Pippo) di Baldo.

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO

An overview of the relationship between the Buonomini and Domenico Ghirlandaio does not come to us easily despite the fact that nine of the cycle of ten frescoes adorning the walls of the little oratory of San Martino were

⁵ For a discussion on the "period eye" see Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, 172 and on the 'episteme' see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

executed by artists employed in his *bottega*.⁶ In the first instance there is no formal contract of works pertaining to the decorations, so it is only through connoisseurship that the paintings have been attributed to, and generally accepted as being executed by the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio.⁷ There are many visual indicators present in the cycle that suggest the workshop's continued use of pattern books in most scenes, which advances the argument that the project could well have been carried out relatively quickly and economically. For example, Ghirlandaio completed another project, tantamount to the Buonomini cycle in area, for which he charged between 18 and 19 florins; as Jean Cadogan mentions, that payment for the Buonomini undertaking could have been "included, as a rather small part, of the total 179 florins paid for the restoration of 1478–1479" of the *Last Supper* in the Badia di San Michele e Biagio in Passignano.⁸ Nevertheless, it is not clear how this Vallambrosian monastery might be connected to San Martino, with its Dominican roots. What is more perplexing is that there has recently been a logical argument made that dates the Buonomini paintings to between 1486 and 1490.⁹ Scholars supporting the hypothesis that the frescoes were executed in 1479, while renovations to the oratory were taking place, perhaps do so on the basis of a document initially published by Tommaso Rosselli del Turco in *La chiesetta di San Martino dei Buonomini a Firenze*. The original document is located in the Archivio dei Buonomini di San Martino and accounts for the expenditure on 31 December 1479 of some 1037 lire, 7 soldi and 8 denari on "lime, lumber, sand, bricks and gravel" that were likely used for structural work carried out on the oratory prior to the confraternity's purchase of the buildings in 1482.¹⁰ Nevertheless, little consideration has been given to the kind of construction taking place. The Buonomini ledgers transparently record that the materials were purchased in order to "make the said

⁶ The *Dream of Saint Martin* has recently been attributed to Lorenzo di Credi. Please refer to Hughes-Johnson, "Divergent Hands."

⁷ For a historiography of attributions see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 209. For the most recent dating and attributions see Hughes-Johnson, "Divergent Hands."

⁸ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 213.

⁹ Hughes-Johnson, "Divergent Hands."

¹⁰ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 209, cites the document published by Rosselli del Turco: "Per tanti si sono spesi tra in magistero, calcina, legname, rena, amtoni ghiaia, conci, ferramenti per insino a questo di come partitament appare a Libro del camarlingo segna B a c. 5 e tirato a c. 24 e qua' denari si sono pagati per farre la detta muraglia (e acconcini)." A twenty-first century procurator, Dr Ugo Silli also mentions this document in his, *Sulla datazione* and allows us to be privy to the entire entry: "Spese fatte nella chasa della nostra residenza allato alla chiesa di sammartino a di 31 dicembre 1479 Y (lire) mille trentasette B (soldi) 7 d (denari) 6 per tanti si sono spesi tra in magistero calcina legname rena matto ni ghiaia conci perramenta per insino a questo di come partitamente appare a Libro del carmalingo segnato B a carta 5 e tirato a carta 24 e qua denari si sono pagati per fare la detta muraglia come rimanemo d accord per rendergli a detti poveri tra della nostra borsa e d altro che per nostro mezzo praccacciasso in cio ricordando a ciascuno la sua coscienza."

wall and tidy up.” Furthermore, the ledger entry also mentions *ferramenti* or ironmongery which, as I have suggested in a previous paper, refers to two iron studded doors that were likely not part of the oratory’s original configuration.¹¹ Nevertheless, in 1479 the confraternity was still renting its rooms from the monks of the Florentine Badia. Returning to the frescoes *per se*, during a recent restoration programme, financed by Cassa Risparmio, that included “cleaning the painted surface; consolidating the plasterwork; putting cracks and gaps and painting over the puttied areas and abrasions on the frescoed surface,” Laura Luciola, who oversaw the project, concluded that each lunette would have taken between four and five days to complete.¹² A total of forty to fifty days of work for several assistants would perhaps not have constituted a colossal expense for the confraternity, although there are some who believe that Ghirlandaio’s workshop would not have been recompensed directly. The Italian scholar Ludovica Sebregondi states that “the congregation wasn’t allowed to spend money even on decorating or improving the premises”¹³ and Paolo Giustiniani, an assistant to the Procurators of the Buonomini since 2006 also insists that “even [the] frescoes must have been donated.”¹⁴ The money needed to purchase the oratory from the monks of the Badia certainly came by way of a donation from one of the confraternity’s members, as in 1482 one of the brothers, Domenico di Giovanni Bartoli, munificently donated 218 florins towards the purchase of the San Martino property.¹⁵

Despite the various arguments concerning payments, what we can say with some certainty is that time was likely saved during the production of the Buonomini frescoes. It had, after all been common practice for some time to reverse and reuse cartoons.¹⁶ There are also additional signs, over and above the usual manifestations of rapid execution connected with painting in *buon fresco*, that reveal that the project was perhaps rushed and certainly relegated to the lower ranks of the workshop. A prime example of this can be found in the *Taking in Pilgrims* fresco (Fig. 1), where one of the figures is made up of a well executed face, sitting atop an average body, which is in turn supported by a pair of extremely naive legs. If, on the other hand, we are to stand by the theory whereby payment for the Buonomini frescoes is tagged onto and consumed into the accounts of another disassociated commission, surely we should be giving credence to archival entries that at least refer to the Buonomini and coincide with the later dating of the oratory’s frescoes. For instance, within the fund of Buonomini documents held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

¹¹ Hughes-Johnson, “Divergent Hands,” 119.

¹² Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 39, 58 and 65.

¹³ Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 48.

¹⁴ Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 48.

¹⁵ Silli, *Sulla datazione*, references the document in [ABSM] 1.1.4.0.1 no.2.

¹⁶ For Ghirlandaio’s ability to restrict the amount of work done by him personally and therefore causing a reduction in price for his work see O’Malley, “Finding Fame,” 9 and 114. See also Ames-Lewis, “Drapery,” 50–51.

di Firenze there is a ledger containing entries that are highly pertinent to this argument. The *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi 1485 al 18 Maggio 1487 e Ottobre 1489* contains both indirect documentary evidence that connects Ghirlandaio's extended family to the confraternity and, crucially, mentions the painter in the months following the completion of the Buonomini murals. For instance, in 1487 the painter's cousin, Ambrogio, was given 140 lire for the dowry of a female relative of his wife, "at present in the house of Domenico del Ghirlandaio painter."¹⁷ A second ledger entry in January 1490 reveals that a further 25 lire was donated to Ambrogio (Domenico's cousin) for clothes for the family while a third, final and unspecified amount is given for a child in the household of Tommaso Bigordi (Domenico's father) who wished to enter a convent.¹⁸ It is also important to note that by 1484 Domenico's father had emancipated all of his sons; this meant that they each became *Paterfamilias* of their own branch of the family and were responsible for all legal and financial obligations pertaining to their particular unit.¹⁹ Nevertheless, documentary evidence shows that the children of the Ghirlandaio brothers and the offspring of more distant relatives could often be found in their various uncles' and cousins' homes, and this despite their lodging addresses; in other words, they were still subject to the financial benefits or constraints of their closest kin.²⁰ By 1491 Domenico had completed both the humble Buonomini project and the magnificent commission in Santa Maria Novella and could be found working at the Convent of Santa Elisabetta delle Convertite decorating the "secondo piano a Francesco [or Francesca] Buonamici."²¹ The text within the ancient document is dense and difficult to decipher, but whether the rooms belonged to a male or a female, the patronymic conjures associations with Francesco Buonamici, who was both a generous patron of the Buonomini and subsequently (1501) called to become the *Proposto* of their Procurators.²²

¹⁷ For the 140 lire dowry see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 212, who mentions Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco's publication in 1928 of various documents belonging to one of the Buonomini funds and Amleto Spiccianni's discussion of a 1428 donation of 140 lire to dower a woman from the household of Domenico Ghirlandaio's cousin. For the original manuscripts see the BNCF, ms *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi*, fol. 3v in particular.

¹⁸ A section within the BNCF, ms *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri* details the 25 lire donation "per vesture lo una famiglia." For the dowering of a child in Tommaso Bigordi's household see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 212, who mentions Rosselli-Sassatelli del Turco's publication of the document in 1928.

¹⁹ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 16, 213, and 348.

²⁰ According to various Florentine tax returns, Domenico Ghirlandaio appears to have had a good income at this time and yet other branches of the family were much less well off. Also, as discussed previously, various family members were receiving help from the Buonomini at the close of the fifteenth century. For reproductions of personal documents and tax returns pertaining to Domenico Ghirlandaio and his family see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 335–381.

²¹ BNCF, *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi*, fol. 18v.

²² BNCF, *Libro per Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi*, fols. 3v, 15r, 18v. For Francesco Buonamici's generous donation of 400 lire to the Buonomini see ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita del Proposto*,

Domenico's connection with the Buonomini does not end with a few lines written in an ancient ledger because patronage and consanguinity by way of relatives, neighbours, and friends "were inescapable" in Renaissance Florence.²³ What is more, it is perfectly legitimate to accept that deals, much more lucrative than a small fresco cycle, would have been brokered and attested verbally in the streets, piazzas, confraternities, and private residences of *Quattrocento* Florence.²⁴ It is also possible that this confraternal connection formed the impetus for the initial introduction of Domenico Ghirlandaio to the Buonomini di San Martino. Records from the flagellant company of San Paolo show that Domenico and his brothers Davide and Benedetto attended meetings there on a regular basis from 1472 to 1494 and it is there that their membership would have coincided with that of another artist and Procurator of the Buonomini, Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico.²⁵

Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico (also known as Francesco d'Antonio (*miniature*) was certainly working in service to Buonomini in the 1470s. Records show that he was still active during the 1480s,²⁶ when Lorenzo de' Medici's presence within the Buonomini and that of his assassinated brother, Giuliano were replaced by those of Pandolfo Rucellai and Carlo Biliotti.²⁷ According to Konrad Eisenbichler, Rucellai had previously been placed in the Company of the Neri, or Blacks, (a confraternal organization that provided comfort and support to those sentenced to death) in order to keep abreast of the machinations that inevitably took place in their "clandestine" meeting place.²⁸ Carlo Biliotti, too, had been a ubiquitous presence at San Martino

(1479–1481), fol. 8v. For the record of past *proposti* one must request the ledger from the current Buonomini because it is still in use and is kept in their Sala Riunione.

²³ Eckstein, "Neighborhood as Microcosm," 220. Dale Kent explores the remit of "parenti, vicini e amici" in *Friendship, Love and Trust in Renaissance Florence*.

²⁴ Eckstein, "Neighborhood as Microcosm," 219–239, and Strocchia, "Theatres of Everyday Life," 55–80, discuss the possibilities of what went on in the streets, buildings, and districts of Renaissance Florence.

²⁵ See Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 213, for the connections between Domenico and Francesco d'Antonio. See also 337–340 for membership records of the Confraternity of San Paolo.

²⁶ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, particularly a loose leaf dated 6 May 1482. Francesco d'Antonio *miniature* is mentioned frequently in this ledger. There is also a further ledger that records the confraternity's debits and credits from 1468 to 1477. This tome has been rebound and the pages re-set, although part of the original cover has been secreted in an envelope attached to the new cover. This piece of velum has upon it a depiction of Saint Martin and the Beggar that appears to have been begun by Francesco d'Antonio, but remains unfinished.

²⁷ By 1478 Carlo Biliotti's presence within the Buonomini is discernible from the fact that he regularly takes his turn as scribe at their weekly meetings and is mentioned repeatedly in the ledgers. Pandolfo Rucellai is also mentioned in the ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1468–1477*, although it is perhaps from 1485 that his presence increases significantly. During this same year the ledgers abound with Carlo Biliotti's name. By 1486 mentions of Lorenzo de' Medici are few.

²⁸ For detailed information on Lorenzo de' Medici's proclivity for placing supporters and key members of his circle within lay institutions see Eisenbichler, "Lorenzo de' Medici e la

while simultaneously attending the Neri with Rucellai, at least since 1478. Thus, if Lorenzo de' Medici had gained this type of control vicariously at the Neri, there is no reason to doubt that he could have implemented a similar system at San Martino. In fact, the confraternity's records show that by 1486 references to Lorenzo de' Medici in the Buonomini account books had almost disappeared while, correspondingly, references to both Rucellai and Biliotti became omnipresent.²⁹ Pandolfo Rucellai was clearly a man who got things done, a character trait that Lorenzo would certainly have found very useful both politically and socially. This characteristic was actually confirmed by Pandolfo's brother, Bernardo, who stated that he "does everything else before he attends to his and my affairs."³⁰

So, it was into this pro-Medicean milieu that Francesco d'Antonio may have introduced Domenico Ghirlandaio to those men who ostensibly controlled the confraternity during the last two decades of the *Quattrocento*³¹ and in turn to the commission that would illustrate, in visual terms, the Buonomini's close bonds with the Medici. The confraternity had, after all, included portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici performing an activity associated with the Buonomini that was based on one of the seven corporal Works of Mercy (Fig. 2).³² Alternatively, if the bonds with the brotherhood of San Paolo had in fact not made it possible for Ghirlandaio's introduction to the decision makers at San Martino, certainly by 1486 Francesco d'Antonio and Pandolfo Rucellai had, in fact, become closely acquainted with Domenico's work. Both procurators, acting as arbiters of artistic taste and conversant with the associated costs of such appetites, were appointed that year to appraise the artist's *Coronation of the Virgin* painted for the Franciscan friars at Narni.³³

Congregazione de' Neri," 343–370 and Eisenbichler, "The Suppression of Confraternities in Enlightenment Florence," 262–279.

²⁹ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482* and ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1468–1477*, which actually runs until 1488.

³⁰ F.W. Kent, *Household and Lineage*, 71.

³¹ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1468–1477*, which runs until 1488, illustrates well Rucellai and Biliotti's various terms as *proposti*. It is interesting also to consider that each term as *proposto* lasted for a month (and still does). This is meant to ensure that the power within the confraternity does not remain with one person. See also Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 46, for a contemporary discussion on maintaining the balance of power within the confraternity.

³² For a discussion on the involvement of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici with the Buonomini di San Martino and the notion that the confraternity's oratory could be appreciated as Medicean ritual space, see Hughes-Johnson, "Early Medici Patronage and the Buonomini di San Martino," 3–25.

³³ Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 213 and 357.

LORENZO DI CREDI

Described in the twentieth century as “an insipid artist, in whom we can trace no development at all from his twenty-fifth year to the end of his life,” Lorenzo di Credi was in reality a decent artist whose skills were eclipsed by his co-workers, Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli.³⁴ His position within Verrocchio’s atelier is illustrated well by his annual earnings in 1480, recorded as being 12 guilders.³⁵ In comparison, two years earlier, Leonardo da Vinci was paid 25 guilders and Verrocchio 60 as an initial payment towards an altarpiece that they were working on.³⁶ Nevertheless, for reasons personal, professional, or a mixture of both, Verrocchio chose the pedestrian Credi as heir to his lucrative business empire and in 1488, when Verrocchio died while working in Venice, Lorenzo assumed the mantle of responsibility.³⁷

A reasonable amount of Credi’s artistic output has survived to the present day, among which is *The Dream of Saint Martin* (Fig. 3) which has recently been attributed to him.³⁸ Because there exists no contract of works, the argument that this painting is the only extant work in buon fresco by Credi has been brought to our attention through data acquired by comparative stylistic and iconographic analyses and connoisseurship.³⁹ Accordingly, in the absence of documentary sources that refer directly to the painting, it is a struggle to hear the voices that will reassure us of Credi’s connection to the Buonomini. The artist himself, however, makes his presence at the Buonomini felt loudly and relatively clearly through the artistic signatures he has left behind on the oratory’s walls, but how he came to be painting there must remain a hypothesis.

Having previously mentioned that the Buonomini frescoes were likely produced between 1486 and 1490, while the most experienced or skilful artists in Ghirlandaio’s workshop were at work at Santa Maria Novella, we can now speculate that Ghirlandaio likely found his business oversubscribed. If Vasari’s report of what Domenico is supposed to have said to his brother Davide is correct (or even if the gist of it rings true), then one can detect a little irony amongst the hubris concerning the amount of work that came the brothers’ way:

³⁴ Valentiner, “Leonardo as Verrocchio’s Coworker,” 49. Martin Davies mentions that “He would have been a painter who developed little; this can be stated positively as regards his mature works, but the evidence concerning his earlier style is weak.” Davis, *The Earlier Italian Schools*, 303. I extend profound thanks to the National Gallery, London, for allowing me on 16.11.2011 to access their dossier on Lorenzo di Credi’s *Virgin and Child* painting.

³⁵ For documentary evidence of Credi’s position within the artistic hierarchy of Verrocchio’s workshop see Valentiner, “Leonardo as Verrocchio’s Coworker,” 49.

³⁶ Valentiner, “Leonardo as Verrocchio’s Coworker,” 49.

³⁷ For the Verrocchio’s will, dated in Venice on 25 June 1488, see Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d’artisti*, 367.

³⁸ Hughes-Johnson, “Divergent Hands.”

³⁹ Hughes-Johnson, “Divergent Hands.”

Leave me to the work while you provide: for now that I have begun to understand the ways of this art it is a grief to me that I am not given the whole circumference of the walls of Florence to cover with frescoes.⁴⁰

Conversely, during the late 1480s Lorenzo di Credi, although perhaps reasonably occupied with small commissions, did not appear to be able to gain or retain the more lucrative, large projects that had historically come into Verrocchio's workshop.⁴¹ For instance on 3 October 1488 Credi signed a contract to complete the Pistoia monument, a commission originally secured by his deceased master, yet by 1514 it was still unfinished; similarly Credi was not invited back to Venice to complete the equestrian statue begun by Verrocchio and by January 1489 the Venetians had allowed the exiled Alessandro Leopardi to return in order to complete it.⁴² Credi did, however, manage to take on a series of small commissions for the Convento di San Gaggio and, during the last part of the *Quattrocento*, produced four paintings for them: *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*; *The Annunciation*; *Grieving Virgin and St. John* and *Noli me tangere*; additionally, during the last decade of the fifteenth century or thereabouts, he managed to complete *Portrait of a Young Man* for an anonymous patron.⁴³ Almost contemporary with these commissions was Credi's involvement in a series of litigations connected to his late master's bequests. By 1489 Credi and Verrocchio's brother, Tommaso, were both being sued by Francesco di Giovanni and Biagio di Bartolommeo; additionally, Giovanni di Domenico, Verrocchio's nephew-in-law, launched a separate suit in order to secure a dowry that had supposedly been bequeathed to his wife but which had not been received by the couple; finally, legal proceedings reached their peak in complexity in 1490 when Tommaso began proceedings against Credi and Domenico Gregorio declared bankruptcy, which meant that "the titleholder to his property, Jacopo di Lucca Totti, continued the suit against Credi and Tommaso."⁴⁴ It is likely, then, that Lorenzo di Credi, unwanted in Venice and Pistoia and caught up in litigation, found himself available to help out the

⁴⁰ "Lascia lavorare a me e tu provedi, che or anche io ho cominciato a conoscere il modo di questa arte, mi duole che non mi sia allogato a dipignere a storie il circuito di tutte le mura della città di Fiorenza." Vasari, *Le vite*. For an English translation of this passage, see Marchini, "The Frescoes of the Choir of Santa Maria Novella," 320.

⁴¹ Passavant, *Verrocchio*, 9 mentions the unsuccessful negotiations regarding the completion of the Forteguerri cenotaph. Covi, "Four New Documents," 97–103, mentions Credi's failure to secure the completion of the equestrian statue in Venice and the Pistoia monument. For further discussion on this subject see also Planiscig, *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 40–43.

⁴² Covi, "Four New Documents," 98.

⁴³ All these paintings are on permanent display at the Cenacolo di Fuligno, Via Faenza 42, Florence, and were listed in the inventory of the city's Convento di San Gaggio in 1890.

⁴⁴ Covi, "Four New Documents," 97.

busy Domenico Ghirlandaio in Florence.⁴⁵ The two men would have known each other both quasi socially and professionally after all. In the first instance Ghirlandaio would have encountered Credi when he purchased a quantity of wine from him sometime between Verrocchio's death in 1488 and when the document, which listed Verrocchio's assets that had been sold, was produced in November 1490.⁴⁶ Such sales, often organised in order to turn bequeathed assets into cash, were not uncommon and various local artists and other buyers would have expressed an interest in, or would have purchased materials and items from the workshop of a recently deceased master. Some years later, in 1498, Cosimo Rosselli organised a similar event when he found himself executor to Benedetto da Maiano's will. Rosselli oversaw the drawing up of an inventory of "real and personal property belonging to his master and the sale of completed sculpture and marbles outside the woodworking shop, not worked up."⁴⁷ He also recorded that Lorenzo di Credi had given him "1 large florin" for a small wooden crucifix that had once belonged to Benedetto da Maiano.⁴⁸ It was inevitable, then, that artists would have happened upon each other at these sales.

Returning briefly now to our discussion of the relationship between Credi and Ghirlandaio, a second strand of connections exists, one that unites them via a third party, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci, with whom both Verrocchio's *atelier* and Ghirlandaio's *bottega* shared sculpted models and sold various decorative items to each other.⁴⁹

In 1498, Credi's name is mentioned in correspondence between the merchant Francesco Bongianini and Pandolfo Rucellai, the latter already an associate of Girolamo Savonarola⁵⁰ and so taken with aspects of Dominican

⁴⁵ Dalli Regoli, *Verrocchio*, 16, produces a timeline for Credi; between 1488 and 1490 she does not associate the artist with any known commissions, or any projects. This is not to say that Dalli Regoli's publication was lacking in academic rigour, quite the contrary, as Davies states "There is enough fact to form a good idea of Lorenzo di Credi's style, but his chronology is not very sure"; *The Earlier Italian Schools*, 303.

⁴⁶ Covi, "Four New Documents," 99 and 103. In a document related to the litigation between Lorenzo di Credi and Tommaso del Verrocchio, we read, "item che dipoi che decto Andrea fu ito a Venegia, decto Lorenzo vend[?] a Domenicho del Ghirlandaio dipintore barili sei di vino. Non credit. Item ebbe ancora per decto Andrea da Giovanni per Mona Brigida Lire 14 soldi XI piccioli. Item che decto Lorenzo dopo la morte di decto Andrea, vend[?] a Michele d'Antonio fabro certi feramenti, che lui nebe Lire XL. Non credit ..." See also Cruttwell, *Verrocchio*, 234–256. The first part of this document, which relates to Domenico Ghirlandaio, is translated as follows, "item that was later that the said late Andrea prepared in Venice, the said Lorenzo sold to Domenico Ghirlandaio painter six barrels of wine. Not credit" See Passavant, *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 214–231, for published documents regarding the various legislations.

⁴⁷ Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400–1500*, 44–45.

⁴⁸ Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400–1500*, 47.

⁴⁹ Pisani, "The Exchange of Models," 269–274.

⁵⁰ Fumagalli, "I Trattati di Fra Santi Rucellai," 295, mentions correspondence between Rucellai and Savonarola in 1487. The former, according to a letter found in the Florentine State Archive,

piety that he would soon take the habit and become Fra' Santi Rucellai.⁵¹ The letter reveals that Bongianni, as a patron of the artist, had popped into Credi's Florentine workshop to be told a tale of "two brace of ... [Dominican] friars" who had been there some time before and recounted details of a miracle performed by Savonarola. Clearly this correspondence and the encounter that it records cannot be used as evidence to support Credi's previous connection to the Buonomini, but what is transparent is that it provides, as F.W. Kent mentions,

a rare reference to what must have been a constant flow of citizens and, as it were, city life and experience, in and out of artists' *botteghe*. It supplies a concrete if still ultimately tantalising example of that process of complex interaction between individuals — citizens, patrons and artists — in a small community, the contemplation of which reveals the preconditions of artistic production and even creativity in the period better than recourse to grand abstractions about the relationship between 'society' and 'creator'.⁵²

Although the process behind Lorenzo di Credi coming to paint the *Dream of Saint Martin* comes to us in dissociated fragments, we can be certain that the confraternity he came to work for made quite an impression on him. As he approached the end of his life Credi, like his master Verrocchio before him, made his last will and testament; in it there were instructions to leave a generous bequest to the Buonomini di San Martino. "His universal heirs ... [were] to be the Society and Procurators of Saint Martin of Florence, which is called the Confraternity of the Shamed Poor" and the three executors were instructed to "attend to the sale of Lorenzo's furniture and goods" which would mostly "relate to the art of the painter [and] exchange everything for cash."⁵³ This programme of asset liquidation would certainly have appealed to the way the Buonomini operated both then and now. Paolo Giustiniani, a

paid 20 florins to the latter from his own account in order to help fund the dowry of Girolamo's sister.

⁵¹ See Ristori, *Un mercante savonaroliano*, and for a brief but informative biography of Pandolfo Rucellai see also Fumagalli, "I trattati di Fra Santi Rucellai," 289–332. See 299 in particular for Pandolfo's entrance into the convent of San Marco in 1495 and also his change of name.

⁵² F.W. Kent, "Lorenzo di Credi," 540.

⁵³ Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti*, 372. "In omnibus autem aliis suis bonis et rebus, iuribus et actionibus, et nomine debitorum, quae restabunt in hereditate dicti Laurentii tempore mortis suae quae omnia maxime erunt mobilia, suos heredes universales fecit, instituit et esse voluit societatem et homines gubernatores Sancti Martini da Florentia, quae appellatur la Compagnia de' Poveri Vergognosi, cum infrascriptis oneribus et obligationibus, videlicet: quod predicti gubernatores et provisoros dicte societatis, quanto ocus pieri poterit, post mortem dicti Laurentii procurant, ut vendantur et sive vendant omnes masseritias et mobilia dicti Laurentii, et reducant omnia, salvis infrescriptis legatis, in pecunia numerata. Et quas venditiones, de his maxime quae

current assistant to the Buonomini, explained recently that “everything that the Congregation receives is handed out at once ... it doesn’t capitalize, accumulate, or make money out of donations.”⁵⁴ Similarly, their account books from the fifteenth century attest to the fact that even then, just decades after its founding, the confraternity did not capitalise.⁵⁵

FILIPPO (PIPPO) DI BALDO

The Buonomini were not only interested in artists, so far as the decorative scheme of their oratory was concerned, but were also benefactors of craftsmen who, at one time or another, could have been considered amongst the *poveri vergognosi*. In June 1488 the confraternity can be seen to be aiding a goldsmith named Bartolomeo di Cione whose sons were ill;⁵⁶ in 1482 they proffered financial help to the painter Jacopo di Piero who had also fallen upon hard times.⁵⁷ An extraordinary amount of help, however, was given to another craftsman, who operated from the Carmine and whose documented existence was initially uncovered by Nerida Newbigin during her research concerning the Compagnia di Santa Maria e Sant’ Agnese.⁵⁸ Filippo (Pippo) di Baldo was a goldsmith about whom, before he is found in the ledgers of Sant’Agnese, ‘virtually nothing’ is known.⁵⁹ There is, however, an entry pertaining to him in the Florentine Catasto of 1442 that reveals that he was 25 years old and dependent of his father, the tailor Baldo di Filippo.⁶⁰ In 1441 Pippo is mentioned as attending the Company of Sant’Agnese and can be found creating wigs and beards to be worn by those chosen to play the disciples in the confraternity’s famous Ascension play.⁶¹ A decade later he is the head of the household with his elderly mother listed as his only dependent.⁶² By 1453 he is “one of the major figures responsible for technical innovation”

pertinent ad artem pictoris, exortatur ipse testator prefatos gubernatores sociatatis.” My profound thanks to David Shaw for overseeing my Latin translation.

⁵⁴ Bradburne, *Hidden Voices*, 20 and 48.

⁵⁵ The total incomes and expenses for March 1478 are typical for this confraternity, which did not accumulate funds. Income for this month was y. 1009.19.8.76.56.46. Expenses amounted to y. 105.10.10.67.56.46. The resulting balance is a paltry y. 4.8.10.

⁵⁶ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, “Bartolommeo di Cione orafo bisogni ... sua figlioli malaria.”

⁵⁷ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1468–1477*, fol. 81v.

⁵⁸ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*.

⁵⁹ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 117.

⁶⁰ Archivio di Stato Firenze (ASF), Catasto, 654, fol. 336r. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to Nerida Newbigin who generously shared with me the unpublished Catasto data that she holds for Filippo di Baldo.

⁶¹ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 117.

⁶² ASF, Catasto 692, fol. 510v.

concerning the Ascension machinery.⁶³ Newbigin actually goes so far as to state that “Filippo di Baldo is, I believe, the person responsible for experimenting and developing the disappearing light device in the Carmine” and further explains that “local legend may have easily confused Filippo di Baldo with the far more famous goldsmith, Filippo di Ser Brunelleschi” as legend has accorded the latter (incorrectly) with the invention of the machinery used in the Ascension play.⁶⁴ Despite Filippo di Baldo’s relative lack of fame when compared with the stellar personality of Filippo Brunelleschi, in 1467 he was a respected member of Sant’Agnese and was recorded by Neri di Bicci as one of the “three property masters responsible for the protection and care of the property” owned by the confraternity.⁶⁵ In 1471 we can catch Filippo’s presence in the sodality for one final time when he is mentioned making star lights.⁶⁶

For the next eleven years Filippo di Baldo remains almost invisible, with the exception of a short mention in 1481 in the *Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi*.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1482 he reappears, but, unlike his appearance at the Carmine which we could perceive as clear, proud, and full of success, this time his appearances in the ledgers of the Buonomini di San Martino, seems to be muted by what are perhaps the mournful tones of temporary financial difficulty. The Florentine Catasto of 1457 had described a man who appeared to believe that he had progressed in life to a greater extent than his father. Whether this suggestion is attributable to the accurate recording of Pippo’s words or to the literary styling of the notary who filed the report, one cannot say. Nevertheless, when one reads the line, “Baldo di Filippo tailor my father he did not have anything,” one can reason that the young goldsmith, unlike his father, did.⁶⁸ Conversely, as the wheel of Fortune turns and Pippo finds himself at the bottom, his voice assumes the sorry tone of a man seeking alms. On at least six occasions in 1482 Filippo is helped by the Buonomini⁶⁹ and once more in September 1483.⁷⁰ Between October 1483 and 1484, he is again deemed by the confraternity to be in a vulnerable economic position and in need of continuing charity.⁷¹ Interestingly enough, the Buonomini help not only Filippo, who is the head of his family, during his hour of need, but also his sick child. Furthermore, a male and a female who share the artist’s patronymic are also

⁶³ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 27 and 117.

⁶⁴ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 126.

⁶⁵ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 67.

⁶⁶ Newbigin, *Feste d’Oltrarno*, 126.

⁶⁷ ABSM, *Ricordanze di Messer Bongianni di Bongianni di Giovanni Gianfigliuzzi*, inventory dated 26 May 1481. Filippo di Baldo is mentioned in the exposition.

⁶⁸ ASF, Catasto 794, fol. 545r.

⁶⁹ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fols. 81r–v, 93v, 94v, 95v, 103v.

⁷⁰ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fol. 108r, “Filippo di Baldo orafo ... suo figlio lo malato.”

⁷¹ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fols. 111v, 116r, and 119v.

listed as recipients of charity. At the start of 1482, a male known as Francesco di Filippo di Baldo is granted a small amount of charity by the confraternity and in 1483, Madonna Maddalena di Baldo is given money for a cape for her daughter.⁷² In the absence of supporting evidence, which would perhaps serve to corroborate that these individuals who share the same surname were actually kin, one cannot say with certainty that Filippo di Baldo's nuclear family was considered vulnerable by the Procurators of San Martino. Conversely, however, it is not unreasonable to assume that in the twenty five years between the time when Filippo is last listed in the Catasto until the time when he first makes an appearance in the Buonomini ledgers, his aged mother had died and the goldsmith had perhaps married and had certainly fathered a child.⁷³ Furthermore, this theoretical scenario would appear all the more credible given "the unusually late age for marriage for [Florentine] men, around thirty or thirty-one on average."⁷⁴ Additionally if the fresco painting found in the Buonomini's oratory entitled *An Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Family in Need* (Fig. 4) is brought to bear, one could almost visualise this scene in relation to Filippo di Baldo and see it, perhaps, as a reflection of his plight, should the individuals sharing his surname be close kin.

The painting offers an unprecedented look into the home of a morally upstanding, yet poor family. The matriarch of the household, standing in ragged clothes, is narrating their tale of woe to the Procurator acting as notary while her equally ragged husband and son are showing another procurator that their home is now almost devoid of possessions. Other figures included in the scene are a toddler crouched by the fireplace and the daughters of the house who are standing chatting in the doorway, a sure sign that these young women are on the verge of disaster, should poverty work to corrupt their morality and force them over the threshold and, symbolically, into vice.⁷⁵ Such admonishments may appear harsh and indicative of a worst case scenario, but when one considers that most artisans, and even successful artists, often lived on credit and metaphorically walked the fine line between solvency and insolvency, we can be assured that fear of falling into financial and moral disaster was intrinsic to working class and middle class life during the Renaissance. Of course there were pawn shops where "the possessing class"⁷⁶ could trade belongings for cash with either the Jewish moneylenders or, from the Quattrocento onwards, with Christian pawnbrokers at the *Monti di Pietà*.

⁷² For the entry concerning Francesco da Filippo di Baldo see ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fol. 90v; for the information on Madonna Maddalena di Baldo see ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fol. 118r.

⁷³ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fol. 110r mentions Filippo's sick child.

⁷⁴ Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 14.

⁷⁵ For a more detailed interpretation of this particular fresco see Hughes-Johnson, "Fashioning Family Honour." See also Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art*, 167 for Archbishop Antoninus's opinion on women who stand in doorways and chatter.

⁷⁶ Trexler, "Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites," 84.

Either way, as the Capuchin friar Ludovic De Besse explained, “it was not the proletariat and day labourers who were aided, but those who had something to pawn.”⁷⁷ For instance Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis inform us that most artisans’ inventories listed hats, jewellery, and clothing items that were in hock and that even artists would customarily pawn their possessions during times of financial hardship; Neri di Bicci, for example despite his prolific artistic output, lived on credit and relied on pawnbrokers as many as fourteen times during a four-year period.⁷⁸ So, if we postulate that Filippo di Baldo, the busy goldsmith, conducted his finances in a manner not dissimilar to the painter Neri di Bicci, it would appear that circumstances would not permit the former to avail himself of the aid that pawnbrokers could offer and would thus have to rely on a charitable confraternity — the Buonomini di San Martino.⁷⁹ If we return to the entry for Filippo in the 1457 Catasto once more, it is clear that the goldsmith was certainly gathering a fair amount of debt by acquiring goods and/or services on credit.⁸⁰ Consequently, the deferred payments or debts that he had accrued so far and the financial needs of his one elderly dependent left him, even after the sale of a house, in credit to the tune of only 398 soldi.⁸¹ Clearly, by the 1480s, the Procurators of the Shamed Poor considered Filippo di Baldo to be needing help. He was given money for bread because his child was ill in hospital and, most often, simply because of his continuing need.⁸² The final entry for Pippo in the Buonomini ledgers is dated July 1484 and is a last, pitiful call to us before time and circumstance demand that he disappear from the records once more.⁸³

FRANCESCO D’ANTONIO DEL CIERICO (*MINIATORE*)

Francesco d’Antonio *miniature* was not simply a jobbing book illustrator, but also a prolific and skillful illuminator who was patronized by the Church and

⁷⁷ Trexler, “Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites,” 84.

⁷⁸ Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis, *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, 73.

⁷⁹ Trexler, “Charity and the Defence of Urban Elites,” 75–76 explains the distinction between the poor who could publically receive alms and those “who had to be sought out at home and helped.” He also shows that apart from the pawnbroker, the shamed poor had only recourse to three other avenues should they require financial help: their families or *consorterie*; the commune’s governing body or charitable confraternities.

⁸⁰ Catasto 794, fol. 545r. This entry shows that Filippo owed 38 lire and 3 soldi to Berto di Nicholo, *dipintore* and a further amount to Giovanni di Michele di Fruosono *buccaio*.

⁸¹ Catasto 794, fol. 545r.

⁸² ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1482–1489*, fol. 95v, details that Pippo was given money “*per pane*,” fol. 110r explains that he is getting help as “suo figliuolo lo malato” and multiple entries including fols. 81r–v and 118r state that the help is “*per più suo bisogni*.”

⁸³ The remit of this study has not permitted me to search for entries pertaining to Filippo di Baldo that could appear after 1485. By this time the goldsmith would have been 67 and elderly, that is if he was in fact still alive in 1485.

several European secular rulers including Duke Federigo da Montefeltro, and kings Ferdinand I of Aragon, Louis XI of France, and Matthias Corvinus of Hungary.⁸⁴ Furthermore, it is likely that his introductions to some of the most illustrious individuals in Christendom, were brokered by his friend, Vespasiano da Bisticci.⁸⁵ Francesco also had an extraordinary rapport with Lorenzo de' Medici, which is evident from the "light and flirtatious" tone that he takes while writing to this merchant prince.⁸⁶ In a letter, brought to our attention by F.W. Kent, we see Francesco calling himself "vile homiciuolo" while labeling *il Magnifico* equally as sarcastically as "uomo tanto sublime," all this while the rest of Florentine society in their written correspondence to Lorenzo was addressing him with the greatest respect and deference.⁸⁷

Born in 1433, Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico came to lead an existence that allowed him contact with highborn and influential individuals yet, paradoxically, he also acted as servant to the poor and served the commune through his confraternal associations and memberships. Francesco was a member of the flagellant confraternity of San Paolo and thus a *confratello* of Domenico Ghirlandaio.⁸⁸ Being a flagellant confraternity, San Paolo was more concerned with "fraternal piety" that emphasised "personal conversion and penance" through the imitation of Christ's suffering.⁸⁹ At the same time, the company did carry out acts of charity such as the distribution of bread that usually took place on a Saturday.⁹⁰ Francesco was also a member of the twelve Buonomini di San Martino and it was in this role, as a procurator of the Shamed Poor, that the paradox between being a well-known illuminator and a servant to those in need becomes most apparent.

During the *Quattrocento*, just as they do now, the twelve good men met regularly to consider those requiring aid. Once their decisions were reached, the brothers did not simply delegate the task of providing help to an assistant, but took turns themselves to carry out the confraternity's charitable work. The only members excepted from this work that I have discovered for the *Quattrocento* were Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici who, although they often appeared to be present at the company's meetings, are not recorded as actually going among the poor and carrying out the confraternity's acts of charity. Francesco d'Antonio, on the other hand, like his other *confratelli*, actually worked closely with the shamed poor, fetched and carried for them and acted as a representative for them. For instance it is not difficult to find occasions when Francesco is recorded as taking goods, including linen, cloth,

⁸⁴ Silli, *Sulla datazione*, 2.

⁸⁵ For more detailed information on the artist and his opus see Kren and Barstow, *Italian Illuminated Manuscripts*.

⁸⁶ F.W. Kent, "Patron," 295.

⁸⁷ F.W. Kent, "Patron," 295.

⁸⁸ Cadogan, *Ghirlandaio Artist and Artisan*, 213, mentions the connection between the two men.

⁸⁹ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 50.

⁹⁰ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 130.

and a capon to two different women in childbed.⁹¹ When he was not out and about on the streets of Florence the procurator can be seen working on cases that had been brought to the confraternity's attention, though this time in an administrative capacity. Each entry penned into the confraternity's debit and credit book explains who is being aided, how much money is being spent on them or given to them, and what the amount is for. It also records who hands over the goods or cash and documents the individuals who have given permission for this charitable transaction to take place. In 1488 Francesco can be found making a number of decisions such as who would benefit from the confraternity's charity and he is also seen as someone who solves problems. In 1478 the records show that arrangements had been made for Francesco to be accompanied to the jail by a friend or relative of the prisoner so that he could then pay for, and oversee the release of the prisoner and so "resolve it all."⁹² Francesco's time would also have been taken up with what appears to be a round of rent collections. A letter from the Buonomini archive (dated 1482 but looks to have been copied in a hand more likely to be from the *Cinquecento* than the *Quattrocento*) mentions the purchase of a house for some unnamed clients who previously lived in rented accommodation provided by the monks of the Badia. The correspondence then goes on to explain that "they really need to vacate that which the monks of the Badia [provide] if only they don't have to satisfy the rent collected by Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore."⁹³

Not all of Francesco's time with the confraternity, however, was filled with errands to run, decisions to take, and people to see. On at least one occasion the artist must have sat in one of the rooms attached to the oratory and commenced a design for the cover of one of the Buonomini ledgers. Secreted in a small envelope in the *Entrata e Uscita 1468–1477* is a piece of vellum, just a few inches square, that bears an image of Saint Martin and the Beggar (Fig. 5). Clearly, the small piece of vellum belonged to the ledger's original cover and was considered precious enough to have been saved when this account book was rebound during the eighteenth century.⁹⁴ The image consists of a

⁹¹ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, fol. 131v, "a Madonna Marghirita di Betto ... inparto. 2 peze lane. 2 line ... porto Francesco Miniatore" and "a Madonna Sandria di Giorgio di Giovanni ... inparto. 2 peze lane 2 line ... e D15 [15 soldi] per i cappone. porto Francesco Miniatore."

⁹² ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, fol. 132v, mentions "Borsi lanaiuolo" and adds that Francesco d'Antonio will "parito di tutti."

⁹³ ABSM, *Entrata e Uscita 1478–1482*, fol. 132v: "Da la casa et abitazione dela residenza de Procuratori de Poveri Vergognosi di S. Martino y invio ? d ... quali avemmo da un amico de poveri quali ceda perche si L prendino y comprare la sopra detta casa overamente liare quella da monaci della Badia di Firenze che non se n'abbi apagare pigione recogli Francesco d'Antonio Miniatore e insieme consegno 3 panni di S. Martino con condizione che del ritratto che fornissi il pagamento di detta nuova abitazione il quali ritratto fatto L mettera a entr ab li."

⁹⁴ Sistema Informativo Unificato per le Soprintendenze Archivistiche informs us that in 1718 there was a reorganization of the Buonomini archive and this was perhaps when the rebounding took place; see <http://siusa.archivi.beniculturali.it/cgi-bin/pagina.pl?Chiave=218286&TipoPag=comparc>

round medallion that looks to have been drawn with the aid of a compass; within the illusionary plane of its innermost circle one can see a mounted Saint Martin and a standing beggar, naked apart from the portion of Martin's cloak that he clutches to his body. Seeing that Francesco d'Antonio was one of the Buonomini, it would be tempting to immediately attribute the miniature to him, but one must not be tempted to do so because, sometimes, confraternities encouraged skilful amateurs to produce similar small scale works. For example the Buonomini's *Entrata e Uscita 1441–1445 dal 1446* has a small pen, ink, and wash drawing of Saint Martin and the beggar, but the work is far too naïve to be attributed to a top Renaissance illuminator.⁹⁵ The image in the Archivio di San Martino, though unfinished, reveals instead an extremely skillful hand. The horse is posed with one of its forelegs raised in an identical manner to the steeds present in an illumination produced by Francesco d'Antonio to accompany *The Triumphs and Songs of Petrarch*.⁹⁶ Although the animals in the painting are shown facing the viewer and the Buonomini horse is drawn, instead, in full profile, it is immediately clear that the Buonomini horse is a far less cubby model than those in the *Triumphs*. Nevertheless, the animals do share the same expressive almond shaped eyes and extremely flat noses. Turning to the depiction of Saint Martin, it is clear that his physiognomy is identical to the countenance of any of Francesco d'Antonio's painted figures. The artist had a tried and tested formula for constructing a face, which was rarely deviated from. Each visage, whether male or female, consists of rounded cheeks and forehead with an oval chin. The eyes are always pale and heavy lidded and the nose small and snubbed. Finally, the face is completed with tiny unsmiling rosebud lips. The Buonomini's patron saint follows this formula. Martin's long, thin hands are also a common feature of Francesco d'Antonio's work and the fine elongated vertical pleats in Martin's robes are also commonly used in Francesco's drapery. Moving on to the depiction of the partially naked beggar, it is clear that the musculature on the figure's back bears a good resemblance to that of the individual shown being baptised in *St John the Baptist Baptizes the Crowds*.⁹⁷ That the artist includes the entire depiction within a round medallion shape is also revealing because Francesco d'Antonio made much use of such shapes within his designs. In an illustration for the prayer book of Lorenzo de' Medici Francesco placed small medallions containing images of prophets and sibyls around the main scenes (an annunciation and a nativity). He also used them in the illustrations for his *De vanitate fortunae*.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ BNCF, *Entrata e Uscita 1441–1445 dal 1446*, fol. 1r.

⁹⁶ *The Triumphs and Songs of Petrarch*, 1456, Manuscript (Ms. Ital. 545), 270 x 170 mm Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

⁹⁷ *San Giovanni Battista Battezza le Folle*, 1450–60 (Ms. Urb. lat.) Biblioteca Apostolica Vatican.

⁹⁸ Poggio Bracciolini: *De varietate fortunae*, c. 1470, (Ms. Urb. Lat. 224) Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican.

The ledger miniature is apparently not the only illustration that Francesco d'Antonio executed for the Buonomini di San Martino while serving as their procurator. Produced between 1481 and 1482, a small manuscript illumination showing the saint gathering a half-naked beggar into his protective embrace is also unanimously attributed to our miniaturist.⁹⁹ Produced in order to illuminate an updated copy of the confraternity's *Capitoli*, this ornate letter "A" which, commences the exposition "Ad laude et gloria del nostro signore iesu christo: et della sua gloriosa madre vergine maria et del beato sancto martino nostro protectore et advocato", certainly appears to contain all of the artistic signatures expected of a miniature painting produced by Francesco d'Antonio.¹⁰⁰

There is no indication that the Buonomini ever recompensed Francesco d'Antonio for his art works; as it is, he probably would never have expected to receive any form of remuneration for them. Francesco had already willingly agreed to give regular donations to the confraternity and had spent what appears to be quite a considerable amount of time performing various activities for the brotherhood.¹⁰¹ Much of what he did for the poor was "for the love of God."¹⁰² The exposition of the confraternity's *Capitoli* goes further and delineates who and what was to be gained by the founding of the confraternity and who would benefit from their activities:

To praise and glory of our lord Jesus Christ and from his glorious Virgin Mother Maria and of the blessed Saint Martin our protector and advocate: and overall of the celestial court. To the honour of the Holy Church in Rome: and the most holy in Christ, father and lord, Pope Eugenius IV and of the reverend in Christ, father and lord sir, the Archbishop of the city of Florence, the shamed poor of the said city and countryside and district.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Silli, *Sulla datazione*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ For a full transcription of the *Capitoli* see Silli, *Sulla datazione*, 2008, Appendix I.

¹⁰¹ Rule 7 of the congregation states that "item che chiaschuno de detti dodici procuratori debbeno ogni anno dare delloro proprio oer distribuire a poveri et per dare buono exemplo di loro al proximo staia tre di grano o quell piu volessi dare: et detto grano sia la prima parita che l proposto metta a entrata distribuendo le dette tre staia o qiel piu avessi per ciaschuna settimana durante el tempo suo accio che continuamente ogni settimana si facci qualche limosina et se caso fusse che per alchuno sinistro alchuno de detti procuratori non potessi darlo chiendendo lo per amore di dio se egli lasciato."

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ The transcribed passage reads: "Ad laude et gloria del nostro signore iesu christo: et della sua gloriosa madre vergine maria et del beato sancto martino. nostro protectore et advocato: et di tutti la celestiale corte. ad honore del la sancta chiesa di Roma: et del sanctissimo in christo padre et Signore papa Eugenio III. et del reverendo in christo padre et signore messere l'arciveschovo della citta di Firenze ad utilita de poveri vergognosi della detta citta et contado et distretto."

Having established, from their own records, that the Buonomini di San Martino provided aid to artists and their families, all that there is left to do is to consider the notion of artistic patronage in relation to the confraternity. The title of this article does, after all, imply that the Buonomini were supporters of the visual arts. Clearly, they did not pay directly for any of the paintings that were executed for their benefit, yet this does not exclude them from being patrons of Renaissance art. Except in certain circumstances when large donations or payments of money from powerful institutions or individuals were tied to the production of specific works of art, patronage and philanthropy during the *Quattrocento* did not actually depend on an exchange of currency for services. It depended, instead, on a reciprocal agreement that consisted in the exchange of a gift for a gift or a favour for a favour. This fit in well with the essence of Buonomini patronage, which lay outside of purely fiscal considerations; their web of co-operation depended heavily on the relationships between “vicini, parenti [e] amici.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, I would suggest that the many and varied links that existed between the confraternity and the Florentine artists and artisans selected for this study, although typical in some ways of the “complex patronal networks”¹⁰⁵ that criss-crossed every aspect of Renaissance society, are also unusual. This is certainly the case when considering the confraternity’s relationships with Domenico Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi. Unusual does not, however, mean unprecedented. Mindful of this point, it is perhaps more helpful (in this instance) to leave the final words of this paper to the ancient stoic, Seneca, whose his ideas on benefaction best suit the literal meaning of the word Buonomini:

No one writes down his gifts in a ledger, or like a grasping creditor demands repayment to the day and hour. A good man never thinks of such matters, unless reminded of them by someone returning his gifts; otherwise they become like debts owing to him. It is a base usury to regard a benefit as an investment ... the book-keeping of benefits is simple: it is all expenditure; if any one returns it, that is clear gain; if he does not return it, it is not lost, I gave it for the sake of giving.¹⁰⁶

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¹⁰⁴ D. Kent, ‘A Window on Cosimo de’ Medici,’ 356.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas, ‘The Workshop as the Space of Collaborative Artistic Production,’ 428.

¹⁰⁶ Seneca, *On Benefits*, 4–5.



1. The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, detail from *Taking in Pilgrims*, 1486–1490, fresco, Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, (© Antonio Quattrone).



2. The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Releasing the Debtor from Jail*, 1486–1490, fresco, Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, (© Antonio Quattrone).



3. Lorenzo di Credi, *The Dream of Saint Martin*, 1486–1490, fresco, Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, (© Antonio Quattrone).



4. The workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Initial Visit by the Buonomini to a Family in Need*, 1486–1490, fresco, Oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, (© Antonio Quattrone).



5. Francesco d'Antonio del Cierico, *Saint Martin Dividing his Cloak for the Beggar*, 15th century, Archivio dei Buonomini di San Martino, Florence, (© Samantha Hughes-Johnson).

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