

What a Difference a Hundred Years Makes

There is no such thing as “progress” in art. Unlike modern concepts of science, art cannot be “dated” or outmoded. One work of art is not more important because it was made after another. Nor does it make its predecessor obsolete. In fact, some of the most valuable works of art are some of the oldest known to us – a Sumerian statue, an Egyptian crown, a Greek tombstone, for example. So, we may ask, why does time matter: why do we study the history of art and not just “art”?

Time is not an enemy invented by the gods to confuse us. On the contrary, in the history of art it is our friend. By paying attention to it we can understand many things that might otherwise elude us. A work of art can, for example, be remarkable in the year that its features were invented, whereas the very same work of art copied a generation later may have less or little value. Even so, in the big picture of the history of art, one hundred years is not much. An ancient Egyptian temple, for example, might be dated within several hundred years, or even a thousand, because styles and materials did not change much in ancient Egypt. But in the Italian Renaissance, a hundred years is a stellar leap in the chronological ordering of artistic events. This is even more true when we take into account that time is colored by geographic locality, for in different places developments occur at different paces. When we think about such things we can more easily extract the significance of a work of art.

Both Masaccio’s *Trinity* (fig. 1.1) and Pontormo’s *Deposition* (fig. 1.2) were important commissions, about a hundred years apart, and both were

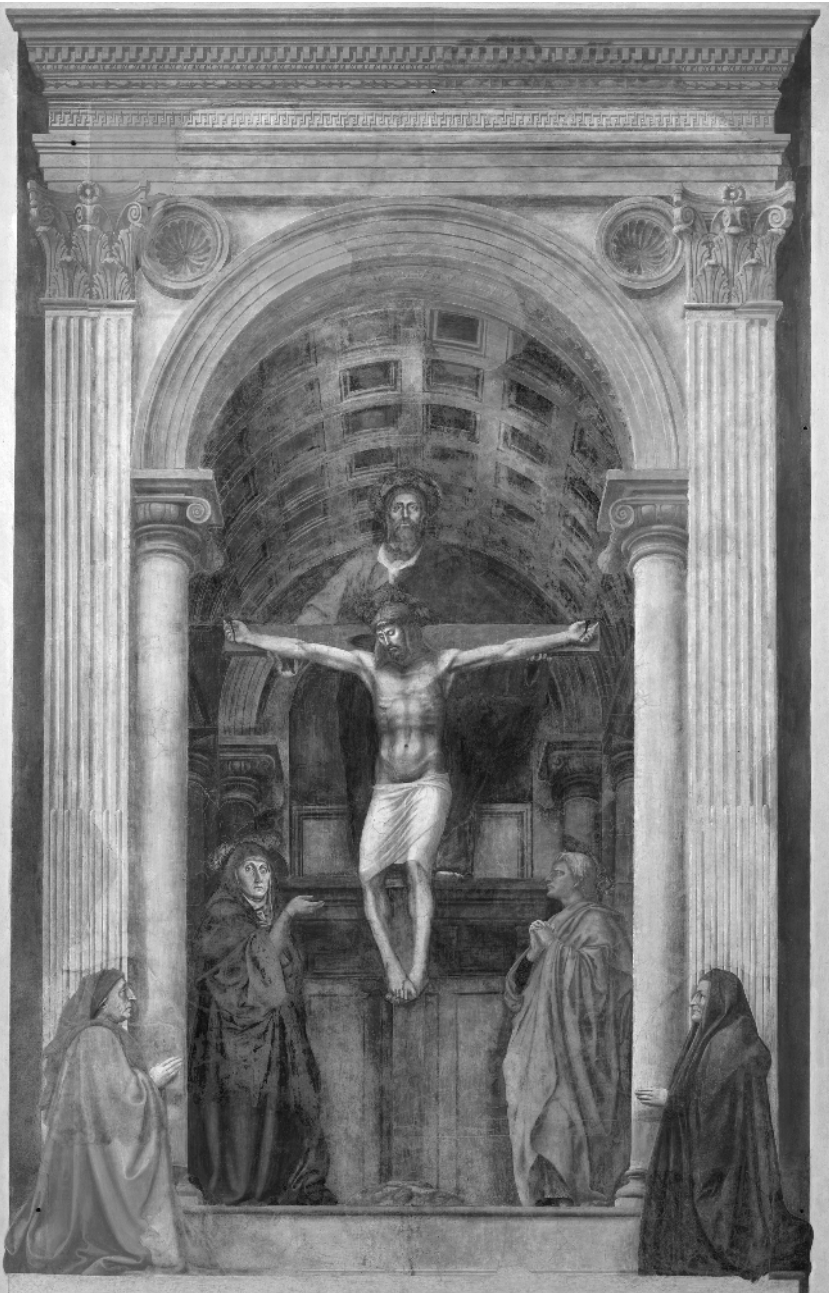


Figure 1.1 Masaccio, *Trinity*. Sta. Maria Novella. (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)



Figure 1.2 Pontormo, *Deposition*, Florence, Sta. Felicità. (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

painted for churches in Florence. Both represent the same subject, the dead Christ. Yet they are completely different.

The painting by Masaccio depicts the wounded and lifeless body of Christ hanging from a cross which is grasped from behind by the hands of God the Father. Christ is being mourned by two figures who stand below

in the space of the picture and worshipped by two figures who kneel in front praying in what seems to be our space. One of the mourners looks out at us and gestures to us, inviting us to enter the picture and participate in the sorrow they feel. The other figures pray: they are us. The object of their attention is the mortal figure of Christ, who has expired after a long agony and tragic death. Though dead, Christ is victorious: for, standing behind him, God the Father enlarges the image of Christ so as to allow it to dominate the picture space. Christ is the center and the focal point. By dropping the floor out of our sight and articulating the receding coffers of the ceiling to assure that we are seeing it from below, the artist suggests to us that we are looking up with reverence and respect. Thus the eye ascends slowly to its ultimate destination in the center, the figure of Christ being displayed to us by God himself.

Above the center, a huge barrel vault is represented in perspective, ingeniously imagined for the first time in the history of painting. Its compartments diminish so that the fresco appears to be hollowed out of the actual wall it was painted on. It creates a chamber that defines and measures a space that is clearly structured and related to the space of the viewer. Inside the cube of space, the mourners stand on a platform; the worshippers kneel on the ground in a space of their own – their space is our space. A rational light enters the scene from our world, illuminating the fresco from the front and casting shadows behind the forms it defines. The colors illuminated by this light are earthy and naturalistic. Their chromatic accents convince us that the forms they describe really do exist and really do project. All the figures, including the divine ones of Christ and God the Father, are naturalistically formed. They behave in rational ways. Their actions, thoughts, and struggles are clear. They are ennobled figures participating in an ennobled drama.

Standing in front of the painting and riveted to its center, the viewer becomes an unseen participant in the painting. Taking into account this position in the forward center, the triangular arrangement of the painting's figures is enlarged to form a pyramid whose fourth point is anchored by the viewer and symmetrically embraced by the architectural elements to either side. This is the first time in the history of art that such a geometrical scheme has defined the situation of a painting. Through the viewer's participation in the pyramidal arrangement of the whole, human measure has, also for the first time, become the fundamental element of a painting. The unseen viewer thus becomes a yardstick for the conception of all the figures in the painting, human and divine, as well as of the architecture. Every part

in this painting is conceived on the human scale and interlocked in a geometrical order that is indissoluble and exudes a profound calm. And so the contemplative character of this painting is based on a deliberately conceived scientific concept which results in a total harmonic equilibrium. Thus must this painting have stood out in an art world that was essentially medieval at the time of its conception. In this painting everything is clear; everything is sure.

Masaccio's dead Christ, painted in 1427 when the artist was but 26 years old and shortly before his untimely death in the following year, leaves the viewer with no doubts on these matters.

In contrast, Pontormo's work, painted in about 1527, presents us with a myriad of doubts. Though it also depicts the body of Christ, we cannot tell if Christ is dead, or alive, or asleep. We do not know the identities or the roles of the other figures in the painting, though we may assume that of the Madonna. We do not even know if some of the figures, especially those in the lower part of the painting, are men or angels. How these two figures can manage to carry the body of a grown man while on tip toes is a mystery. An arm that belongs to nobody reaches out from nowhere to touch the left hand of Christ. The head above Christ has no body because there is no room for any. Almost in vain, the viewer searches for the focus of the painting. Its center is an empty space, a hollow – home to a gnarl of convoluted, writhing, hands and distorted wrists which limpidly seek to move in dislocated gestures. Indeed, the eyes of participants and observer alike look away from, rather than towards, the center.

In this picture there is no triumph. Far from being inspirational, the wounds of Christ are absent; rather Christ appears to be experiencing a euphoric sleep. This sleep is a source of irresistible agonized ecstasy privately expressed by those around him. The artist has diverted the eyes of his figures so that only one of them looks at Christ, and she is passing out. The others twist and turn, like demented characters who are in search of a theme. A small man to the far right is physically and psychologically disconnected from all the others. This irrational combination of figures whose roles we cannot ascertain suggests an image far removed from triumph – that of total and complete despair.

In Pontormo's painting everything is left vague. There is no architecture, no cross, no landscape, no space, no distance – in short, no nature. There is no reference to an actual place or to actual people. No boundaries exist. Elongated and incoherent, the androgynous bodies form an endlessly meandering pattern over a surface where one lone cloud has as much value

as a human figure. Their scale is incomprehensible. If the Madonna were to stand, she would be far taller than any of the variously sized other figures. While she looks longingly at her son, he appears to have glided off her lap, a fact of which she is unaware. The figures are separated psychologically not only from each other, but also from the viewer. Their bodies are described, yet the surfaces of the bodies waver and vacillate, fluctuating in emptiness. Their owners do not comprehend physical strain, but only mental strain. Disinclined to be declamatory, they gesture hopelessly, like haunted phantoms, as they float before us in a world where there is no physical order but only environmental ambiguity. Instead of collaboration between the mind and the body there is emptiness; heads look away from what the arms are doing. The figures are distracted; unable to concentrate, their bodies are here while their minds are somewhere else.

The timeless frozen world of Pontormo's figures is also described by its color: rather than the glowing light of day it is set in a grey, stony bluish light. The figures are all dressed in translucent colors – cool tones of rose pink, pale chartreuse, glowing mauve, shimmering orchid, beige green, mustard yellow, and powder blues. Color is modeled as though from nature, but nature is absent.¹ Off-shade greens conflict with pale pinks, yellow greens with cranberry, pink areas cast orange shadows. Much of the emotionally disruptive impact the spectator suffers is due to the juxtaposition of opposed colors: through this method, Pontormo expresses the grief and emotional disturbance of his images. Only one figure is dressed in warm colors, and he remains isolated and bewildered in the far right.

Because the order of Pontormo's painting is not determined by nature, the figures are allowed to act out their roles in individualistic ways that, since each figure is divorced from the others in the painting, result in the isolation of each. Each stares hauntingly out of the picture, into an empty space of his or her own. As a group they gesture hopelessly. Not one of them connects with the viewer. The viewer is unnecessary in this rarified world where figures are made of soft, flexible matter that disregards the necessity for organic infrastructure; where cloth and flesh fade into one another; where solids are treated like liquids; and where surging undulations of drapery billow and defy the laws of gravity.

Whereas in Masaccio's painting the geometry tells the story, in Pontormo's it is the colors that do so. And the story is in each case very different. Masaccio's great invention, in a world still medieval and attached to irrational color and space, was rational color and space. Pontormo's great invention, by contrast, in a world that valued rational color and space, was

irrational color and space. For Masaccio the emotion of the painted surface exists in discovering the laws of nature, while for Pontormo emotions are expressed by breaking the laws of nature. All the elements that were clear in Masaccio's painting in 1427 have become unclear in Pontormo's work of 1527. The projecting parts of Masaccio's painting really do project, whereas the modeled parts of Pontormo's painting melt into a surface web of dislocations. The receding parts of Masaccio's painting really do recede. For Pontormo, the problem of recession does not exist. Masaccio's sense of unified color, light, space, structure, and measurement is replaced in Pontormo's painting by a world in which color is fractured, light ruptured, space dislocated, structure uncertain, and geometry broken into bits. Masaccio's centripetal organization, in which all components of the painting are drawn to the center, is replaced in Pontormo's painting by a centrifugal arrangement in which all parts are impelled outward from the center and sent into rotation around it.

It would be unfair to say that one picture has order and the other does not. They both have order, but order is very different in the two works. For each artist the struggle is distinct. The continuation of our world into the penetrating, focused, world of a painting where the eye of the observer comes to rest on its center was a brilliant invention in Florence of 1427, while the fracturing of that world into segments that can be dislodged and rearranged on the surface so as to invite the eye of the observer to travel constantly over the surface and never come to rest was an equally brilliant invention in Florence of 1527. That these works were not anomalies is proved by two other works by the same hands and from the same time.

A painting representing a *Birth Scene* (fig. 1.3), surely painted by Masaccio and in about 1427, and one by Pontormo, painted about a hundred years later, representing the *Birth of Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 1.4), are both round and both made of wood.² Both these are secular works in that they were commissioned for households. Both were commissioned in the Florentine area and both for the same purpose, to serve as birth salvers, or trays, in order to celebrate the births of babies.

Masaccio's painting is organized by the brand-new concept of perspective and painted on the basis of observation. Skill in perspective construction implied the study of geometry as a means for simulating three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. Observationally, we can measure the relative size and diminution of objects in a painting which includes a grassy lawn, an orderly architecture that recedes into depth and extends to either side, and figures who act out their roles in the painting – whether



Figure 1.3 Masaccio, *Birth Scene*, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. (Photo credit: bpk, Berlin/(Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany)/(Joerg P. Anders)/Art Resource, NY.)

to facilitate the birth, to pay their respects, or to make celebratory music. In accordance with its orderly three divisions, the occupations of the inhabitants of the space are divided. In every respect, nature rules.

Pontormo's representation is entirely different. It does not invite the viewer to consider the world of space. Rather than certainty, it seeks to create uncertainty. Its creator appears to have relied on intuition rather than on observation. There appears to be no end to the movement of the individual figures, some of who stand with bent knees, unaware that the function of knees is to transmit the weight of the human body to the legs below and ultimately to the ground. Indeed, a uniform ground level



Figure 1.4 Pontormo, *Birth of Saint John the Baptist*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

does not exist. Pontormo's figures float erratically into the field of vision so as to ensure that the entire surface of the painting is occupied. Interlaced over the surface of the painting, each figure bends and yields so as to hold his or her spot in the coloristic weaving of the surface. As opposed to the absolute symmetry of Masaccio's design, Pontormo's is decidedly asymmetrical. There is here no regard for naturalism or human scale. Given the absence of architecture, a background is lacking. The setting is dark, thus allowing each of the eccentrically behaving figures to be imprisoned as its own design which interlocks in counterpoint with the designs of the others.

For this achievement, the descriptive value of line was of the greatest importance for Pontormo, whereas Masaccio's unitary texture was based entirely on his vision of form. Together with line, Pontormo values the two-dimensional surface, rejecting the importance of the three-dimensional world Masaccio had so thoroughly investigated as the result of his interest in form. Pontormo's colors – varying from orange-yellow to red to pink to green to violet-grey – are decidedly un-natural and shaped without consideration to light and position, as opposed to Masaccio's, which are more earthly and modeled with highlights that suggest their position in the space of the painting.

The two artists' different views of architecture are equally clear in these paintings. Masaccio's scene takes place in a civic setting where the everyday life of everyday people is represented. In Pontormo's scene architecture disappears completely and its distorted inhabitants lack a common scale. The role of architecture in mapping out Masaccio's painted world shows that its projections, indentations, and abutments were important in defining his spaces and ordering his painting. Familiar as that architecture may look to the modern eye, its style, characterized by a horizontal arrangement of arches, was only first being experimented with in the 1420s. At that very time, in the architectural world of Florence (which was decidedly Gothic) the first studies of classical architecture and the use of horizontally aligned semi-circular arches were being made by Masaccio's fellow citizen, the architect Brunelleschi.

Remains of classical architecture, that is, architecture built by the Romans, existed everywhere in Italy. From Brunelleschi's time on, these ruins – and particularly those of Rome – would be studied by aspiring architects and incorporated into paintings as visual aids for obtaining measurement and suggesting the nobility of antiquity. While the architecture of Masaccio's *Trinity* painting shows his understanding of the form and function of classical parts – columns, pilasters, vaults, and compartments – that of his *Birth Scene* shows a different kind of classical architecture. It suggests the new arrangements, or “revisionist” arcades, of Brunelleschi's Ospedale degli Innocenti (which will be discussed next), an orphanage for foundling children whose external structure Brunelleschi was in the process of designing in 1427.³ In that building arches were supported by columns in a way that showed an understanding of the potentialities of classical elements to be recombined in order to create new forms. Masaccio had every opportunity to study Brunelleschi's emerging novel structure, for he lived in the Via dei Servi, the same small street (essentially only one block long) on



Figure 1.5 Florence, Ospedale degli Innocenti (Brunelleschi). (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

which Brunelleschi's new building was being constructed at the very time this painting was made.⁴ The architecture of Masaccio's *salver* suggests the same repetitive arches resting on columns that Brunelleschi was beginning to articulate. This constitutes yet another reason than the many that have already been suggested to point out the closeness of the young Masaccio at this very early time (for he would be dead in the following year) to his great contemporary, the architect Brunelleschi. The divergence of Pontormo's artistic aims, one hundred years later, is made ever so clear in the fact that he was not interested in architecture, despite the fact that in 1518 he executed one of his most important paintings in a church on that very same street, just a few steps from the Ospedale degli Innocenti which had so inspired Masaccio a hundred years before.⁵

Though the architect Brunelleschi received the commission to design the first children's orphanage in Europe in Florence as early as 1419, the Ospedale degli Innocenti (fig. 1.5) was not completed until the late 1430s. Its portico defied existing Gothic predilections for ornamentality and irregularity. The original portico (now expanded) consisted of nine semicircular arches, all exactly the same, resting on columns and supporting a horizontal moulding. This moulding (or entablature) is not the only horizontal accent in the structure. The columns, arches, and windows are all horizontally



Figure 1.6 Mantua, Palazzo del Te, courtyard (Giulio Romano). (Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.)

aligned and equidistant from each other. The systematic arrangement of its elements, in which the height of the columns corresponds exactly to the space between each of them and therefore to the span of the arch above and where each window is positioned centrally over each arch, exudes rational measurement and geometry.

In comparison, the courtyard of the Palazzo del Te (fig. 1.6), a secular structure built in Mantua by Giulio Romano a hundred years later, shows a completely opposite tendency. It refutes the repetitive modularity of geometrically inspired design. Its columns are irregularly spaced and disguise the fact that there are actually three stories behind them rather than one. These can be seen in the small rectangular windows interspersed irregularly between the columns. Not only are the columns irregularly spaced, they also project so strongly from the wall to which they are attached that they appear to be more sculptural than architectonic. The windows between them on the lower level have heavily rusticated (or roughly cut) borders which contrast with the smooth flat borders of the smaller windows above. Though classical elements (columns, entablature, arches) are used here as

in Brunelleschi's Ospedale, they are activated in an unclassical way, causing the surface to appear to be confusing and its elements to weave in and out so that the surface is more remarkable for its extraordinary texture than for its clear geometry.

In Brunelleschi's Church of Santo Spirito (fig. 1.7), undertaken in Florence during the 1440s, we see white walls and grey arches and columns clearly articulated as white plaster and grey edges that define with absolute clarity not only the geometrical surfaces but also the spaces they create. Here the difference between wall and space is very clear. In contrast, the walls of the Palazzo Spada (fig. 1.8), built in Rome during the 1540s with stucco decorations by Giulio Mazzoni, have almost disappeared. They are covered with lavish stuccowork that confuses the spectator, who is unclear whether it should be viewed from close up or from a distance (neither of which is possible unless the viewer is equipped with a ladder or a telescope). Windows and stories vary in size, suggesting that the wall has become, essentially, a tapestry-like surface. Overcrowded with decoration and allegory, the wall has lost its integrity.

Nowhere can this contrast be seen more clearly than in comparing the interior walls of Brunelleschi's Pazzi Chapel (fig. 1.9), designed in Florence during the 1440s by a single architect, with one of the interior walls of the Château at Fontainebleau (fig. 1.10), designed in the 1540s under the direction of the Italian artist Primaticcio – but with the participation of numerous others. Here the disparity is apparent between simple walls articulated by geometrical boundaries and complex walls in which architecture, sculpture, and painting are intermixed creating a crowded and undefined surface. It is the difference between what is clearly perceived and what is indistinctly perceived, between what is measurable and what is immeasurable, and between proportional order and ornamental order. Such differences can also be observed in sculpture.

Executed in wood in Florence in about 1455, Donatello's *Mary Magdalene* (fig. 1.11) represents an emaciated old woman standing with her two feet on the ground, acting out her biblical role as a penitent who suffers while she prays.⁶ The reality of her image is as breathtakingly convincing as it is shockingly brutal. Though the interpretation of the Magdalene as a penitent with uncombed hair is a medieval one, there is no precedent for an image as brutally naturalistic as this. Nothing is done to falsify nature by making her appear elegant or charming. Very different from the physical strength portrayed here is the structural weakness of Benvenuto Cellini's marble figure of *Narcissus* (fig. 1.12) executed, also in Florence, in about



Figure 1.7 Florence, Santo Spirito, interior (Brunelleschi). (Photo credit: Scala/ Art Resource, NY.)

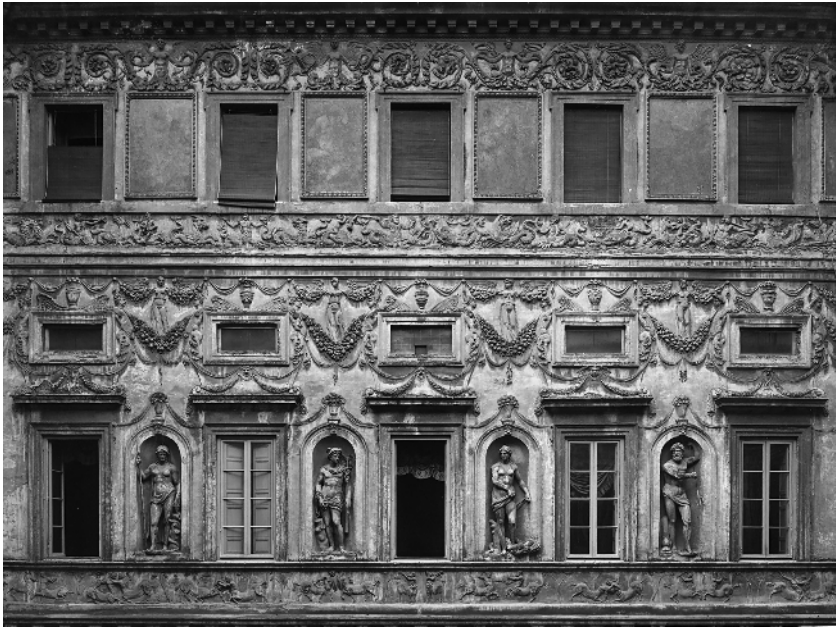


Figure 1.8 Rome, Palazzo Spada, exterior (Giulio Mazzoni). (Photo credit: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.)

1555. Instead of empirical truth, Cellini presents us with scintillating intuitions through a figure that is not anchored to the ground and so elegantly warped that it appears to flicker as unsteadily before our eyes as the *Mary Magdalene* is straight and steady. Gracious and decorative, Cellini's figure suggests that the impetus for naturalistic investigation has disappeared. Indeed, the figure has become so ornamentalized that it functions more as a decoration than as a rational construction.

Similar comparisons may be made between different media, for example sculpture and painting. Donatello's *Miracle of the Mule* (fig. 1.13), executed in Padua by the Florentine sculptor in about 1447, demonstrates an absolute clarity of composition in which we can, thanks to the measured architecture, observe and judge the depth and size of the chambers in which the event takes place.⁷ Nothing is done to embellish the onlookers who are grouped naturalistically in the space. Within a century, in about 1535, another Florentine, Rosso, was to paint a different subject, but also a religious one, a *Dead Christ with Angels* (fig. 1.14), with such ambiguity that



Figure 1.9 Florence, Pazzi Chapel, interior walls (Brunelleschi). (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)



Figure 1.10 Fontainebleau, Château, Gallery of François I, interior wall. (Photo credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.)

we cannot tell if Christ is really dead or asleep as his enormous body relaxes in the arms of attending angels smaller than he is in a world without space and in which structure and naturalism have disappeared.

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How and why did these changes take place within a mere hundred years of each other in the general period we call the Renaissance? If all these artists were great masters associated with the Renaissance, we are led to wonder what exactly was the Renaissance. There can be no question that the Renaissance began and saw its early development in Florence with Masaccio, Brunelleschi, and Donatello, who were all co-inventors of the scientific study of nature whose aim was to apprehend reality objectively. But what happened to this development? What are the sources of the anti-rational movement which is frequently called Mannerism, a label, however inappropriate, that suggests a style without rules that is the result of the collapse of the authority of observation?⁸ Represented by Pontormo, Cellini, Giulio



Figure 1.11 Donatello, *Mary Magdalene*, Florence, Museo del Opera del Duomo.
(Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)



Figure 1.12 Benvenuto Cellini, *Narcissus*, Florence, Bargello. (Photo credit: Scala/ Art Resource, NY.)

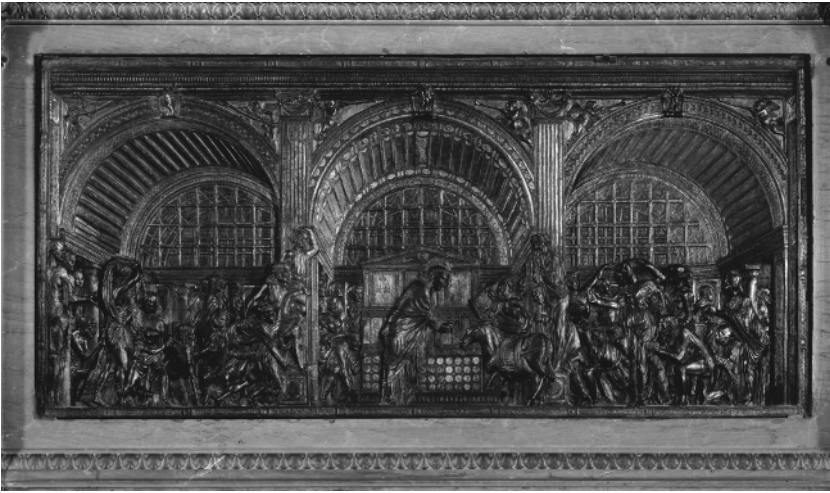


Figure 1.13 Donatello, *Miracle of the Mule*, Padua, Basilica of Sant'Antonio. (Photo credit: Alinari/Art Resource, NY.)



Figure 1.14 Rosso, *Dead Christ*, Paris, Louvre. (Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

Romano, Rosso, and others, this new style might be viewed as sophisticated, capricious, corrosive, or beautiful.

We shall see that in Florence the real meaning of the Renaissance was lost almost as soon as it was imagined, and completely abandoned by the very pupils of its inventors. In other parts of Italy, by contrast, this meaning was understood by some, whereas in yet other artistic centers the scientific rationality invented in Florence was either not known at all, or known and rejected. Thus if by the word “Renaissance” we mean a rational way in which to approach reality (which, when it first appeared, constituted an avant-garde movement), we shall see in the chapters that follow that the Renaissance was very short and very limited in terms of time and place. We shall also see that, ironically, its antithesis, Mannerism, an essentially anti-rational style, depended on it – and ultimately became the new avant-garde.

Notes

- 1 The changing relationship of art and nature in the Renaissance has recently been studied by Mary D. Garrard, in *Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art and Gender in Renaissance Italy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 2010.
- 2 Though there has been some discussion respecting the traditional attribution of this panel to Masaccio, largely based on the fact that its provenance is unknown, it is clear to me that the panel, which is widely recognized as having been painted in the late 1420s, is necessarily Florentine owing to its architectural content and cannot be associated with any painter active there at the time except Masaccio. This is largely due to the internal organization of the painting, the balancing of its solids and voids, and the spaciousness and depth of the area depicted. Numerous stylistic consistencies may be noted between this painting and another small panel unquestionably by Masaccio, the *Adoration of the Magi*, also now in Berlin. Among these are tiny streaks of white that denote highlights on the hair of figures in both works, head ornaments which are similar to the depiction of ornaments on horses' bridles and reins, the presence of partially hidden figures in both paintings, the presence of a slightly yellow underpainting that accentuates the use of pink colors in both, ears that are similarly constructed in both, and the depiction of most of the figures in both with mops of thick hair – even the older figures – except for one figure in each panel. In both cases that figure (one behind the trumpeter in the *Birth Scene* and one behind the horses in the *Adoration*) has thinning, partly baldish hair with a tuft in the front. Curiously, in both cases the figures are partly hidden and are the only ones who direct their gazes directly to the spectator, suggesting that they

are both self-portraits of Masaccio (whose very nickname, Masaccio, as opposed to his real name, Tomaso, suggests that he was awkward and unhandsome). These would be consistent with his self-portrait in the *Raising of Theophilus' Son and the Chairing of Saint Peter* as identified by Salmi in 1929 ("L'autoritratto di Masaccio nella Cappella Brancacci," *Rivista Storica Carmelitana*, I, 1929, 186–205). Salmi's identification has been discussed in several places, including by Paul Joannides, in *Masaccio and Masolino*, London, 1993, 336. It might also be noted here that despite their reservations about the obverse of the *Birth Scene* (which they attribute to "Circle of Masaccio"), Strehlke and Frosinini attribute the reverse side – which shows a single putto, or pagan infant angel – to a painter known as La Scheggia, who happens to have been Masaccio's younger brother who shared Masaccio's bottega with him (Carl Brandon Strehlke with Cecilia Frosinini, *The Panel Paintings of Masolino and Masaccio: The Role of Technique*, Milan, 2002, 250–3). Cf. n. 4 below for documentation of Masaccio and his brother.

The provenance of Pontormo's painting of the *Birth of Saint John Baptist*, which has been in the Uffizi since 1704, is also unknown. Nevertheless it has generally been regarded as an authentic panel by Pontormo since Clapp published it as such in 1916 (Frederick M. Clapp, *Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo: His Life and Work*, New Haven, London, and Oxford, 1916, 140–1). Cf. bibliography on the history of publications of this work in Philippe Costamagna, *Pontormo: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, Milan and Paris, 1994, no. A30, 281–2. Its dating is based on the presumption that it was made for the birth of Aldighieri della Casa on January 15 (1527), since the family arms are represented on the reverse of the circular-shaped painting, or tondo.

- 3 The Ospedale degli Innocenti, generally regarded as the first Renaissance building, was commissioned in 1419 though not completed until the late 1430s.
- 4 Masaccio's address is documented by his tax return of July 29, 1427 (under his real name, Tomaso di Ser Giovanni). In it he says he is 25 years old and living in Florence with his younger brother Giovanni (whose nickname was La Scheggia) and his mother in the house of a certain Andrea Macigni. The address of Macigni is known through his own tax return, in which he lists Masaccio as a tenant. The house in question was later torn down and replaced by the Palazzo Niccolini-Montanto. (See James Beck, *Masaccio: The Documents*, Locust Valley, NY, 1978, docs. XXVII–XXVIII, 24–9; also Luciano Berti, *Masaccio*, University Park, Pa., and London, 1967, 141, n. 92.)
- 5 Pontormo's painting, known as the Visdomini altarpiece, is in the Church of San Michele Visdomini in the Via dei Servi.
- 6 This great wooden sculpture, carved after Donatello's return from Padua, was formerly in the Florentine Baptistery.
- 7 The high altar of the Basilica of Sant'Antonio at Padua, whose two- and three-dimensional images were entirely in bronze, constituted a significant part

of Donatello's work in that city. Respecting this altar, whose organization was radically changed in the eighteenth century, John Pope-Hennessy's *Donatello Sculptor* (New York, London, and Paris, 1993, 211–44) is of fundamental importance.

- 8 A thoroughgoing discussion of the term "Mannerism" is provided in John Shearman, *Mannerism*, Harmondsworth and Baltimore, 1967, 1–48.