Artistic Personalities and Workshop Practices: Giovanni Francesco da Rimini and the High Museum Madonna Adoring the Christ Child
by Laura Maria Somenzi

Introduction
In 1910, Frederick Mason Perkins wrote in the Rassegna d’arte that the Madonna Adoring the Christ Child (c. 1460), now at the High Museum in Atlanta, “represents in the most complete manner, the artistic character of our painter.” The painter in question was Giovanni Francesco da Rimini (c. 1420-1470), whose artistic character and personality were in the process of construction in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was Corrado Ricci’s brief 1902 article, also in the Rassegna, which published photographs of two panels signed by a Hovanes Franciscus da Rimino hereunto considered lost, and which spurred a rapid and concentrated effort to compile an oeuvre for the quasi-forgotten master. Ricci’s paper trail began with the eighteenth-century Bolognese art writer Marcello Oretti, who referred to the two signed panels of 1459 and 1461, which at the time were in the Hercolani Library in Bologna. Once the paintings were located, the gates were opened wide for scholars to add to Giovanni Francesco’s oeuvre. By 1932, Bernard Berenson had attributed twenty-two paintings to Giovanni Francesco and many more have been added and dismissed since.

What for the eighteenth century had amounted to a disembodied collection of paintings and documents, became for the twentieth century the basis for building a coherent artistic personality whose life and works were stylistically relatable to emerging narratives about fifteenth-century painting. The legacy of connoisseurship that built Giovanni Francesco as an individual from a body of works has proved tenacious: it calls for pause to consider how it is that works such as the Atlanta Adoration prove difficult to write about, if not in relation to the stylistic progress of an individual artist. The intention of this paper is to offer an alternate avenue for discussing the three Adoration panels gathered under the name of Giovanni Francesco today in the High Museum, the Pinacoteca in Bologna (c. 1460), and the Tessé Museum in Le Mans (c. 1455) (figs. 1, 2, 3).

The Atlanta Madonna Adoring the Christ Child
In a field dotted by thistles and dandelions, clovers and plantains, the kneeling Virgin gently presses the tips of her fingers together as she tilts her head and gaze towards the sleeping Christ Child at her feet. Slightly set back on either side of the Virgin, Saint Helena and a young Saint John the Baptist mimic the Virgin’s prayerful gesture. John the Baptist looks upward, as if to recognize the blessing hand of God, which extends past the aureole he shares with two angels to shower gold light onto his Son. In the distance, hills are spotted with small city walls, towers, and churches. At the far left of the panel, a path spirals around a steep, vertical hill shows two monks: one still walking with provisions over his shoulder and cane in hand, while the other has already reached a small cave.
where he is prostrated in prayer. Continuing up the hill, small trees are precariously balanced at the profile of the crags and a large church with soaring steeple dominates the summit. The stillness of the Virgin and saints’ silent adoration for the sleeping Child, is contrasted to the shuffling action in the background of the traveling monk, chattering birds and ribbon-like clouds that animate the sky. This peripheral movement accentuates God’s blessing hand, whose gesture is central to the subject of the panel, as he sends his divine favor and recognition to his Son, materialized as ribbons of gold.

Despite the relatively good conditions of the panel, the overall tone of the painting would have been much brighter: what are now brown patches in the landscape, likely made with copper cuprite, would have been a vivid green, and the milky sky was intended as the vibrant blue that comes from azurite. Many areas have been inpainted over the years, most notably, the Virgin’s features, parts of the Christ Child’s body, Saint Helena, and God the Father. Layers of varnish, moreover, give the surface a mute gloss. Most significant, the wood panel has been pared to a shell of its original size and glued
to a modern wood cradle. At its thickest point, the panel is 3/16 of an inch, and at its thinnest, 1/64 of an inch. The edges are thus virtually nonexistent so that about an inch along the edges (normally covered by the modern framing) has been re-painted.6

No records survive of a provenance before the twentieth century for the Atlanta Adoration. We do know that the panel was in the collection of Ing. Corsini in Florence until 1910, when it was purchased by Baron Raoul de Kuffner for his private collection in Castle Diószegh in Hungary (present-day Slovakia), where it remained until 1918. The panel came to New York and was in the gallery of the art dealer Paul Drey until 1946, when it was displayed at the J. B. Speed Museum, in Louisville, Kentucky. The Speed Museum did not purchase the panel, and it became a Samuel H. Kress acquisition in 1948 and has since been in the permanent collection at the High Museum.7

When the Atlanta Adoration appears in the scholarly literature, it is often cited as a derivation of Filippo Lippi’s (c. 1407–1469) Adoration of the Christ Child (1450), now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (fig. 4).8 The combined iconography of Saint Bridget of Sweden’s mystic vision of the Christ Child and the Nativity of Atlanta’s Adoration was arranged into a recognizable type by Lippi about a decade earlier, in the mid-1450s.9 Although the Atlanta panel is in line with this novel combination, the similarity of Lippi’s Adoration type on the Atlanta Adoration pertains more to the iconographic register rather than the stylistic. And it is certainly not the case that in imitating Lippi, Giovanni Francesco aspired to a more progressive ideal of a Florentine Renaissance dominated by light and mathematical perspective. To make such an argument is only to reinstate the centrality of a Florentine Renaissance and to graft onto fifteenth-century painting narratives about the progress of art towards modernity.10

From Ricci’s first article on Giovanni Francesco, the oeuvre-building impulse was accompanied by the need to fit the artist within a regional school of painting. For Ricci, the Riminese painter belonged to the Umbrian style of painting, as represented by Benedetto Bonfigli.11 For Raimond van Marle, he was of the school of the Marches, while he retained a certain frigidity from the north.12 All this is to say, he is not quite Florentine and only “pseudo-renaissance.”13 In Luisa Becherucci’s turn of phrase, Giovanni Francesco participates [in the Renaissance] both by welcoming gothic lines from the Marches and by brushing up against the great Florentine conquests, in a provincial reduction that is nonetheless artistically coherent.14

For this line of thinking, no matter how close the artists outside of Tuscany came to being modern and up-to-date, they always retained something of a “poorly dissimulated accent from the periphery.”15 A few scholars allow Giovanni Francesco the label of the itinerant artist, but again only to stage a fortuitous encounter with Tuscan influences, either as a result of a stay in the Medicean city or by way of traveling Florentine-trained artists such as Lippi, Donatello, and Piero della Francesca.16 For others yet, the confusion of regional influences proves hard to bear:

In this zoppesque context, the interlaced threads of the squarcionesque norm, which he had come close to years prior, and of the donatellan construct, brought to clarity by the light of Piero, come to an end.17

Dizzying as these conflicting regional pulls might be for the reader to follow, one can only
Fig. 4 Fra Filippo Lippi (Italian, c. 1406–1469), *Madonna Adoring the Christ Child*, 1450; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Fig. 5 Andrea Mantegna (Italian, 1431–1506), *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1455–56, tempera on canvas, transferred from wood; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 32.130.2. Photo courtesy of Musée du Louvre.

Fig. 6 Carlo Crivelli (Italian, 1430–1495), *Adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1491; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg.

Fig. 7 Carlo Crivelli (Italian, 1430–1495), *St. George*, 1470, gold, silver, and tempera on panel; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, P16e13. Photo courtesy of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

suppose that the artist had no choice but to bring an entire stylistic period of his career to a close.

Rather than construe the relationship between Lippi’s *Adoration* and the Atlanta *Adoration* as one of progress and derivation, it is more productive to consider the way in which Lippi’s Adoration type was adapted, combined, and reassembled in the Atlanta *Adoration*. For instance, the Atlanta *Adoration* shares the devotional focus on the Christ Child with Lippi’s *Adoration*, but instills significant changes. Whereas in Lippi the concentrated attention on the Christ Child is rendered by way of the quasi-impenetrable forest and the tight circular arrangement of figures around the Child, the Atlanta *Adoration* extends the attitude of prayer across a wider landscape. The Virgin’s prayer is relayed to the middle ground of the painting by the two saints, and then brought into the background by the monk. In this manner, the act of the Virgin’s adoration is visually carried, like an echo, throughout the contemporary landscape of Italian hill towns.

In a similar fashion, artists working in the following decades, such as Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431–c. 1506) and Carlo Crivelli (c. 1423–c. 1495), used the Adoration type as a starting place for elaborating new pictorial inventions. Mantegna’s *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1455–56), now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and Crivelli’s predella panel of the same subject (c. 1491; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg) create variations on the Adoration type by setting the Adoration scene within a craggy landscape, populated by small animated people who go about various tasks (figs. 5, 6). On the other hand, Crivelli’s *Saint George* (1470) for the Porto di San Giorgio altarpiece, now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, presents a further reworking of the setting of the *Adoration*—rocky landscape, small praying figure on a hill—to update a Byzantine icon type of Saint George slaying the dragon (fig. 7). Crivelli also produced multiple Adoration scenes that introduce slight variations from one version to the other. A predella panel from Crivelli’s Ottoni altarpiece (1491), now in the National Gallery in London, shows the Nativity with many of the same elements—figures, architecture, and landscape—as the Adoration of the Shepherds (fig. 8). Workshop drawings were likely used to create the ox and ass, the Virgin and Saint Joseph, in both panels. Yet, as Stephen Campbell notes in the recent Crivelli exhibition catalogue, the transfer from one version to the next also introduces noticeable variations.

The Three Adorations: Atlanta, Bologna, and Le Mans

Multiples were also a part of Lippi’s workshop practice. In addition to the 1450 Berlin *Adoration*, two panels in the Uffizi in Florence, dated from 1455 and 1463, are clear indicators of Lippi’s consistent reworking of the type (figs. 9, 10). The production of multiples allows us to circle back to the Atlanta *Adoration*. As previously mentioned, there are three extant Adorations made by Giovanni Francesco and workshop, sometime between 1455 and 1460, now in Atlanta, Bologna, and Le Mans. By thinking about the workshop practices of copying and adapting a type, the relationship between Giovanni Francesco’s and Lippi’s Adorations can be reframed from one tied to the achievement of a Florentine standard, to one about a shared mode of production.

Corrado Ricci in 1903, Carlo Gamba in 1904, and Mary Logan Berenson in 1908, brought under the name of Giovanni Francesco the Adorations from Bologna, Atlanta, and Le Mans, respectively. The Three Adorations have since been considered within the gradual advancement of Giovanni Francesco’s artistic style: the simpler composition of
the panel in Le Mans is followed by the Atlanta panel, which leaves the Bologna version as the most mature work of the artist.\textsuperscript{22} If one resists a chronological order which narrates the development of a single artistic personality, what comes into focus is what the three panels share in terms of workshop practice.

As a basic configuration, all three panels show the Virgin in adoration of her Child. Her hands are gently cupped in prayer, and she is accompanied in her devotion by attendant figures. In the Bologna panel, Saint John the Baptist kneels next to the Christ Child, whose sleeping body is propped onto a tree stump and pillow. The ground is rocky and barren, in contrast to the other two versions, and two angles complete the circle of adoration around the Christ Child. In the background, a hilly landscape gives rise to towers and churches, and a small monk kneels in prayer at the mouth of a cave, much like the Atlanta panel. Whereas the Atlanta panel shows a generic church in the background, the church in the Bologna panel has a particular architectural rendering that may very well have had a specific referent. Rather than God the Father, the Bologna panel has Saint Dominic at the apex and two angels below him carrying the \textit{arma Christi}. Excluding the frames, the painted surface of the Atlanta panel is the largest of the three as it measures 82.6 by 54.6 centimeters, the Bologna panel is 84 by 50.2 centimeters, and the Le Mans panels is the smallest at 34.3 by 24.1 centimeters. The Le Mans panel is not only the smallest of the three but is also more sparsely populated.\textsuperscript{23} The only figure besides the Virgin and Child is a standing Saint John. As in the Atlanta panel, the figures in the Le Mans panel are situated in a verdant field, and a row of trees divides the figures from the hills and buildings in the background.

While the iconography and individual elements of the three panels are similar, each painting offers a distinct variation in which the combination of figures and landscape is arranged into a different composition. Take, for instance, the figure of Saint John. He is shown standing in the Le Mans panel but kneeling in both the Atlanta and Bologna panels, where he is rotated 180 degrees from the former to the latter. While the various components of Saint John’s attributes—his tunic, with its belt and fur tufts, the gold-patterned halo, and cross staff—are present in all three versions, the actual rendering of these details varies significantly. While it is certainly possible that the Bologna panel has
suffered less damage over the years, this conjecture does not fully account for the higher degree of finish and precision when it comes to the modeling of skin, the tight waves of his hair, and the rendering of the different effects of leather and fur tufts that are present in the Bologna panel. A similar argument can be made for the details of the church in the Bologna panel, such as the side portico supported by slender white columns and the marble-faced doorway, when compared to the generic church architecture in the Atlanta panel.

The differences in painterly execution are especially noticeable between the Atlanta and Bologna Saint Johns due to the high degree of consistency between the poses: back toes tucked under, knee lunged over the front toes so that the heel lifts slightly off the ground, staff leaned against the shoulder, and hands lightly pressed together in prayer. It is most likely that the workshop of Giovanni Francesco had a repertoire of stock drawings and models for figures such as the Saint John. This would account for the commonality of the stock type and the differences in execution. One might even imagine a three-dimensional statuette of Saint John which could easily be rotated to different angles. The process of making the various Adorations can also be thought about in terms of stock images and motifs that could be rearranged to various effects and purposes. For example, the small monks in the Atlanta panel, one at the cave and the other on the path, seem to migrate in the Bologna panel so that while one remains at the cave, the other is positioned at the entrance of a church.

These hypotheses follow what we know about fifteenth-century workshop practice and the reuse of cartoons, drawings, and models for executing paintings. That the workshop of Giovanni Francesco used cartoons for making paintings is evident on a round panel of God the Father, a fragment from a larger altarpiece, today in the Brooklyn Museum, in which occasional dark dotting lines, or pouncing, from the spolvero transfer technique are visible under infrared reflectography. Due to the varying sizes and scales of the three panels, it is not likely that the same cartoons were used for the three Adoration panels. However, this does not preclude that there were other panels of Adorations in the workshop of Giovanni Francesco, now lost, which would bear closer evidence of cartoon transfer. Also associated to Giovanni Francesco, a predella panel representing the Nativity.

Fig. 11 Giovanni Francesco da Rimini (Italian, c. 1420–1470), Nativity, c. 1455, tempera and gold on poplar wood; Musée du Petit-Palais, Avignon, MI 526.

Fig. 12 Giovanni Francesco da Rimini (Italian, c. 1420–1470), God the Father, c. 1460, tempera and gold on panel; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Gift of Mary Babbott Ladd, Lydia Babbott Stokes, and Frank L. Babbott, Jr., in memory of their father Frank L. Babbott, 34.835. Photo courtesy of the author.
(c. 1455) at the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon (fig. 11) and a panel of the Baptism of Christ (c. 1465; private collection) show the possible range and reuse of the models in the Adoration for different contexts and formats. Rather than a direct transfer via cartoons, at their core, the three surviving Adorations most likely share a stock group of drawings, painting, or models.

Similar techniques of workmanship are also traceable between the three panels and point to a communal mode of production. Although much of the original gilding has now been lost, the rendering of the halos shows a base level of consistency for how Giovanni Francesco’s workshop crafted gilded ornament. The bole, a red clay with size laid over the gesso preparatory layers of the panel, is now visible whereas the majority of the gilding has flaked off, especially in the Le Mans panel. Nonetheless, in the Atlanta and Bologna panels, the halos are both rendered with rays of gold that originate from an invisible central point, which is covered by the top of the Virgin’s veiled head. In all three panels, one can make out the decorative band of vegetal motifs which is framed on either side by a thin band of gold. Similar ornamental patterns are present on all three panels in places like the sleeves, cloak hems, and halos.

Other similarities in working method are more conjectural due to the highly thinned wood and for lack of x-ray photography to confirm the structure of the wood panels. However, from the painted surface, it is clear that all three versions place the ray of gold emanating from God the Father off-center. Cracks running vertically under the gold in all three panels may indicate that the panel join may be located under the gold rays. If this were the case, then it would add to the shared compositional strategies within the workshop in which the structure of the panel forms an underlying system of organization for the pictorial arrangement. What can be said with certainty is that even though the painterly execution varies form one panel to the other, the three Adorations share a mode of composition and technical assemblage. Stylistic similarity can here encompass more than a painterly hand to include process and technique. The sharing of a style can thus be understood as a function of a common body of materials, techniques, and tools.

Material Imagination: God the Father Bestowing the Holy Spirit

Thus far, we have considered the transfer of models within the same format of Adoration panels. Also intriguing is the evidence in the Atlanta panel of working across formats and within different frames. A circular panel now in the Brooklyn Museum by Giovanni Francesco shows God the Father surrounded by angels as he bestows the Holy Spirit (c. 1460), a motif that is echoed in the detail of the Atlanta Adoration representing God appearing in the heavens (fig. 12). The relation between the painted mandorla in the Atlanta and Brooklyn panels is, however, more than a matter of repeated gestures or figures. While the Brooklyn panel was once a framed element of the multi-panel altarpiece, the tondo motif is assumed into the unified pictorial field of the Atlanta panel in the form of a mandorla. The relation between the two works on this level prompts thinking about both paintings as material objects. The Brooklyn panel offers a way of looking at Giovanni Francesco’s Atlanta Adoration that includes a sculptural and material imagining of pictorial representation.

Within its original altarpiece setting, the circular Brooklyn panel would have been positioned at the apex of the altarpiece, likely over a central panel of a Madonna and Child. Cecilia Cavalca proposes that the central panel would have been the 1459
Madonna and Child (now in San Domenico in Bologna). Regardless of the exact panels that would have made up the altarpiece, the pairing of the Brooklyn panel with the 1459 Madonna and Child offers the possibility for envisioning the context for which the panel would have been produced and in which it would have been seen. As much as an altarpiece has painted surfaces that are often privileged in photographic reproduction, an altarpiece is also an impressive and complex material object. Its components, like the Brooklyn panel, could be redeployed within different formats, as is the case with the Atlanta painting.

Slightly foreshortened, the mandorla in the Atlanta panel has a three-dimensional presence within the painting that resembles the actual circular wooden panel in the Brooklyn Museum. Given that both were produced in the same workshop, where both the Adoration and the God the Father bestowing the Holy Spirit were recurring types, it is possible to conceive of a mode of pictorial representation that begins with the objects in the workshop to create novel compositions. If the Adorations combined various figures and types differently from one panel to the next, the transfer of parts of an altarpiece format into a single panel is yet another way to see the process of assemblage and synthesis at work in Giovanni Francesco’s workshop. The Atlanta Adoration shows how an altarpiece is reimagined into a single panel. When the mandorla is understood as the translation of a physical object, it is no longer necessary to divide so sharply between painterly illusionism and three-dimensional material. Just because the painted surface gives the impression of receding space, it does not mean that illusionistic painting ceases to also have physical presence as a representational mode.

That the mandorla recalls a circular panel at the top of an altarpiece, is also intriguing for what it conveys about painting and the devotional imagination. Similar to what Jackie Jung has eloquently argued for the late medieval period, in fifteenth century Italian painting, visions and visionary experiences were often represented materially or sculpturally. This is the case for the Atlanta Adoration in that the vision of the Divine is rendered visible as an altarpiece panel. A related example can be found in Crivelli’s The Vision of the Blessed Gabriele (c. 1489), now in the National Gallery in London (fig. 13). In Gabriele’s vision, the body of the Virgin and Child is rendered in relief against the mandorla in a way that closely recalls contemporary polychrome relief sculpture, such as the numerous sculpted reliefs of the Madonna and Child by Agostino di Duccio (c. 1418-c. 1481), or his tabernacle of the Trinity in Santa Maria delle Grazie, Fornò (1454-55) (figs. 14, 15).

By framing the relationship between the Brooklyn and Atlanta panels as one of translation from one material format to another of the representation of the Divine, it is possible to reevaluate the stylistic similarities beyond the boundaries of attribution and progress. As the Adorations reused types and motifs to create novel images, the altarpiece format provided the material for imagining visionary experience.

Further Considerations and Conclusions

Many questions remain yet unanswered for the body of works associated to Giovanni Francesco’s name. The connoisseurship that sought to construct a coherent artistic personality whose oeuvre follows a pattern of stylistic progress and traceable influence, has its limitations. Under such a rubric, style becomes the grounds for attribution and for the historical reconstruction of an individual who must fit into existing narratives about
the history of art: artistic practice, workmanship, and material considerations are marginalized. What I hope to have accomplished in these pages is to open the discourse on paintings such as the Atlanta Adoration, to include a rethinking of stylistic similarity within the parameters of making and meaning as workshop practices.  

Appendix I: Curatorial Choices
The challenge of translating issues of artistic process to museological display are not few. The display of art in modern museums generally favors the viewing of individual works of art as unique and singular productions by individual artists. For premodern works of art, white walls and isolating frames can be deceptive. While working within the framework of the existing exhibition galleries at the High Museum, how might a curator bring workshop practices of making into play for a work like the Atlanta Adoration? In particular, how might processes of transfer, assemblage, and combination present in the three Adoration panels and the Brooklyn panel be presented to the museum public? I wish to here propose a few possible exhibition and educational strategies.
One option for the regular display of the Atlanta Adoration would be to accompany the panel with photographic reproductions of the Bologna and Le Mans Adorations. In this case, the wall text would describe the three paintings as part of a workshop production in which a type—namely the Adoration—is composed of many variable elements that are selectively redeployed for new compositions. The adjacent text would explain the use of models, drawings, and other material within a workshop for pictorial composition. In addition, the text could call attention to figures such as Saint John, the monks, and the landscape, and ask viewers to consider the ways in which they remain consistent and the ways in which they are rearranged. A possible extension could include a hands-on component in which cutout figures and motifs from the various panels are arranged at a station and paper is provided for tracing and composing one’s own Adoration. This could take the form of a single event, such as a children’s workshop, or a temporary mini-exhibition.

A similar strategy could be put into effect for calling attention to the different formats of panel painting produced during the Italian Renaissance. A reproduction of the Brooklyn panel with a trace outline indicating its possible reconstruction as an altarpiece could be displayed alongside the Atlanta Adoration and the wall label would explain what the formats are and how the altarpiece is adapted in the panel painting. A further challenge in this project would be to account for the fragmentary nature of both panels. However, this would also provide an opportunity to engage the viewer in thinking about the framing of art in modern museums. Such a consideration could also be an opportunity to bring attention to the conservation of the panels and would provide the public with insight on how the paintings have been treated over time with photographs of the cradling and the thinning of the original wood support. An accompanying pamphlet could be produced with this information so to not overcrowd the wall with text.

Unlike the two Adorations, the Brooklyn panel is in a domestic museum. This would facilitate the borrowing of the painting for a focused mini-exhibition. In such an exhibition, the goal would be to present two different formats of panel painting and to show how artists used their own productions and material in different forms. The Brooklyn panel could be displayed on the wall with a line tracing around it that hinted at its original location within an altarpiece. A similar arrangement for displaying fragments of altarpieces without forcing single reconstructions can be seen in the display of panels by Giusto de’ Menabuoi at the Georgia Art Museum in Athens. A station about workshop production, like the one proposed for the Adorations, could add to the exhibition; educational pamphlets could be produced for the occasion. The aim of these proposals is that of creating a dialogue around the making of Renaissance art and the role of workshop production.

Appendix II: Conservation
The most recent technical examination reports in the registrar’s file at the High Museum are from 2000 by Charlotte Seifen and Mark Lewis and from 2001 by Charlotte Seifen. In 1949, the blistered pigment was secured, and the panel was mounted and cradled. In 1950, M. Modestini inpainted with dry colors and egg tempera and used a French varnish isolator with a protective coat of Rembrandt varnish plus wax. Conservation notes made by Dianne Dwyer in the mid-1980s state that Modestini thought the painting to have been mounted and cradled in Stephen Pichetto’s studio (Pichetto was curator and trustee of the Kress collection from 1932-49).34
I was able to observe the painting with conservators Larry Shutts and Renee Stein on three occasions in 2015. Close looking was conducted with raking light, ultraviolet light, and reflected digital infrared imagery. Under UV light, considerable cracking can be seen in the faces and the overall panel is cloudy from the varnish. The painting was removed from the frame, which revealed that the wood panel was thinned to 3/16 of an inch at its thickest, and to 1/64 of an inch at its thinnest. The panel is mounted on a wooden board that is ½-inch thick. The murky coloring of the varnish, visible under UV light, was speculated to be a polyurethane varnish.

Several places in the painting, such as the Virgin’s lips and hands, have a thin layer of paint that show traces of underdrawing to the naked eye. Digital reflected infrared imagery revealed the layer of underdrawing more fully (fig. 16). The drawing is in close correspondence to the layers of paint. There is also little indication of reworking with the exception of Saint John’s limbs (fig. 17). Hatch marks are most prominently visible in the figure of the Virgin as a technique for building up the modeling of fabric, flesh, and hair. A comparison of the Virgin’s robe with that of Saint Helena shows a simplified use of hatching but also shows the consistent use of curling lines—similar to commas with darkened oval ends—to define the recessing areas of folded cloth (fig. 18). The lines of the cloth fold under the Virgin’s arm are very dark and appear to have been reinforced. The Christ Child, much like a cutout figure, has very sharply defined contours (fig. 19). The treatment of his skin is slightly different from that of the Virgin in that it relies less on hatch marks and more on smudged marks. The background landscape and architecture are also detailed by precise drawn lines. No evidence of pounced dots is visible, but this does not preclude that a transfer technique was used. In a future study, it would be interesting to compare IR images of other panels by Giovanni Francesco with the Atlanta panel to see if there are significant similarities in drawing techniques.

— Laura Maria Somenzi, Emory University, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Graduate Fellowship Program in Object-Centered Curatorial Research, 2015

Fig. 16 Detail of *Madonna Adoring Christ Child*, Reflected digital Infrared imagery. Photo courtesy of the author.

Fig. 17 Detail of *Madonna Adoring Christ Child*, Reflected digital Infrared imagery. Photo courtesy of the author.
Fig. 18 Detail of *Madonna Adoring Christ Child*, Reflected digital Infrared imagery. Photo courtesy of the author.

Fig. 19 Detail of *Madonna Adoring Christ Child*, Reflected digital Infrared imagery. Photo courtesy of the author.

**Bibliography**


Notes


3 Oretti, ms. B 123. Successive eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mentions that follow Oretti can be found in Zani; Lanzi. A letter to the fabbrica di S. Petronio in Bologna, in which Giovanni Francesco requests a payment later allowed Giovanni Francesco to be connected to Bologna. It was first published by Gaye. Documents that connect Giovanni Francesco to Padua in the 1440s were published by Fiocco, 1336.

4 Bernard Berenson, 243. More recently, see Vertova, 3-8; Rowlands, 48-62. Although Vertova and Rowlands call attention to the way in which Giovanni Francesco’s oeuvre was assembled in the twentieth century, their own studies do not make an attempt to trace alternatives as each attributes (more or less assertively) more works to Giovanni Francesco.

5 Even the more recent work on Giovanni Francesco has been mostly concerned with attributions and situating the artist vis-à-vis the more progressive tendencies of Florentine art. See Mosso; Minardi, 116–25; Vertova, 3-8.

6 See Appendix II for additional conservation notes.

7 As noted in the Registrar’s files. Also attributed to Giovanni Francesco, two panels of saints, who have been identified in the past as Saints Philip and Paul, followed the same path from Baron Kuffner to Paul Drey in New York and were bought by the Zanesville Art Center. The provenance before Baron Kuffner differs, as the two saints were in the possession of Archbishop Leopold Maximilian Firmian of Salzburg (1766–1831) before they passed in inheritance to the Kuffners. The panels are now in a private collection in Munich, where I was graciously allowed to see the works.

8 For example, see Becherucci, 66-67. Gamba, 110; Mosso, 93-96, 202; Padovani, “Un contributo alla cultura padovana del primo Rinascimento: Giovan Francesco da Rimini,” 3-31; Rowlands; Zafran, 33.

9 Holmes, Fra Filippo Lippi, 172.

10 The Florentine hypothesis as a redeeming strain of “true” Renaissance in an otherwise Gothic painter is still very much present in the literature on Giovanni Francesco and the Atlanta panel. For examples, see Minardi; Mosso; Padovani, “Un contributo alla cultura padovana del primo Rinascimento”; Rowlands, 48-62; Vertova, 3-8. For alternatives to this reading, and for an expanded geography of Renaissance art, see Campbell, “Artistic Geographies,” 17-39; Campbell, Ornament & Illusion.


12 Van Marle, 36-46.

13 The term “pseudo-rinascimentale” in used by Mosso.

14 Becherucci, 67. “Ne partecipa sia accogliendo grafie gotiche marchigiane che sfiorando le grandi conquiste fiorentine, in una riduzione provinciale ma artisticamente coerente.” My translation.


16 Rowlands, 48-62; Mosso; Padovani, Giovanni Francesco Da Rimini; Vertova, 3-8.


18 Mantegna, 1431–1506; Campbell, Ornament & Illusion, 212-15.

19 Campbell, Ornament & Illusion,159.

20 Ibid., 212.

Mosso, 95. Based on stylistic analysis, Mosso speculates that the panel in Le Mans was made in Florence and that the following two were made in Bologna.

The proximity of measurement of the Atlanta and Bologna panels is misleading, as the height of the Bologna panel is measured to the apex of Saint Dominic’s mandorla. The figures are therefore smaller in proportion.

Holmes, “Copying Practices and Marketing Strategies,” 38–74. Lippi’s paintings were amongst the most widely copied in the fifteenth century.

See Bambach.

As recorded in the Conservation notes in the Brooklyn Museum Registrar’s files. I would like to thank Lauren Bradley, Associate Conservator of Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum, for sharing these files with me. See Appendix II for the underdrawing of the Atlanta panel visible with reflected digital IR imagery.

The Conservation report in the High Museum Registrar’s Files from 2000 records the preparatory layer of the Atlanta panel as gesso, or chalk.

For a related argument about the structural ruling of the support as guide to pictorial composition in manuscript illumination, see Byrne, 118–36.

For a tentative reconstruction, see Cavalca, 253.

Ibid.

Another circular panel of God the Father bestowing the Holy Spirit with Angels, now in a private collection, is also associated to Giovanni Francesco.


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See Registrar’s files at the High Museum.