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Dillian Gordon

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For Simon, Alice and Olivia

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Duccio di Buoninsegna

NG 566

The Virgin and Child with Saint Dominic and Saint Aurea, and Patriarchs and Prophets

Triptych

c.1312–15(?)

Egg tempera on wood, central panel 61.4 × 39.3 cm,

left wing (with Saint Dominic) 45.2 × 19.3 cm,

right wing (with Saint Aurea) 45.2 × 20.6 cm

The Virgin wears a blue cloak, with a gold star at her head and at her shoulder, over a white veil richly embroidered with gold stripes of pseudo-kufic lettering and with a gold fringe. The Child in her arms, wearing a transparent shift under a gold-edged purple cloak, is tugging at her veil as they gaze tenderly into each other's eyes. On either side of them are two adoring angels and two angels swinging thuribles. In the gable above are prophets and patriarchs from the Old Testament, all carrying scrolls except for King David in the centre. He is more richly dressed, wears a crown and holds a book (presumably the Book of Psalms), and is the only figure with the remains of his name inscribed on the background: *[Da]vid*. On either side of him are: on his proper right, Isaiah, with a damaged scroll, which Martin Davies read as probably: *Ecc[e]/uir[go]/[con]c[i]p[i]/[et]. et/[pa]ri/[et]fi/lium* (Isaiah 7:14) ('Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son'); on his proper left, Abraham, with a scroll inscribed with a text adapted from Genesis 22:18 or 26:4: *In seīe/ tuo be/medicen/tur omnes gē/tes* ('In thy seed shall be blessed all people'). Below Isaiah on the left is Moses, with a scroll inscribed from Exodus 3:2: *Vide[ham] q' [ru]b' / ardebat / [e]t non / combu/reba/tur* ('I saw that the bush burned and was not consumed'). Opposite Moses, on the right,

is Jacob with a scroll inscribed from Genesis 28:17: ... *[do]m' / dei et/ porta/ celi* ('[This is] the house of God and the gate of Heaven'). In the bottom left-hand corner is Daniel, his scroll inscribed with a text from Daniel 2:45 (see also v. 34): *[d]e m/ō[t]e ab/cisus/ est/ la/pis/ si/ne m[a]nib'* ('the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands'), and in the bottom right-hand corner is Jeremiah, whose scroll is inscribed with a text adapted from Jeremiah 31:22: *Nou[um] faciet/ [d?]o' s t/eram m[u]lier/ circū/dabit/ [ui/rum]* ('For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall encompass [a man]').¹

In the left wing is Saint Dominic, who is identified by the inscription: S DO/MINIC. He is wearing a Dominican habit and carrying a red book, and has a star above his left shoulder.

In the right wing is Saint Aurea, identified by a fragmentary inscription: SCA.AU[REA] (fig. 1). She wears a pink gold-edged cloak over a green dress and carries a blue double cross.²

Technical Notes

PANEL STRUCTURE AND CONDITION

The central panel is made from a wide board with a vertical grain, with a pointed top. Narrow strips have been added on either side (1.3 cm and 1.6 cm left and right respectively) to make up the required width.³ Attached to the panel is the gable made from a single piece of wood, cut away to make the rounded arch on its underside. At the bottom the projecting sill was attached directly to the front of the panel; the present sill is a replacement. The original pedestal may have borne an inscription, although the equivalent original pedestal in the almost identical triptych (see fig. 14) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is plain.

Overall height of central panel, including framing, gable and base, 61.4 cm; overall width of central panel 39.3 cm. Painted surface of central panel from base to top of arch 43.0 × 34.0 cm. Thickness of main panel, including frame moulding, c.2.0 cm. Thickness of gable, including main panel and frame moulding, 4.2 cm.

The vertical frame mouldings are of carved wood, while the curved mouldings around the arches of the central panel and the wings are made of gesso, as is evident from the X-radiograph (see fig. 3; see also p. 468). All the outer frame mouldings have been regilded.

Each wing is a single piece of wood with a vertical grain. Left wing: overall height 45.2 cm, overall width 19.3 cm; painted surface from base to top of arch 42.3 × 16.0 cm. Right wing: overall height 45.2 cm, overall width 20.6 cm; painted surface from base to top of arch 41.5 × 16.5 cm. Thickness of each wing, including frame moulding, 1.6 cm.

A narrow fillet of wood on the right wing overlaps a rebate on the left wing.

The hinges are modern (presumably the original ones were like those on the Boston triptych, which has its original hinges of simple interlocking rings; see below). Traces of where the original hinges were attached in NG 566 are visible in the X-radiograph (see fig. 3).

Overall the triptych is in excellent condition, although there is a split c.7.0 cm high towards the centre of the main panel.

Fig. 1 Photomicrograph of AU, part of the inscription on the panel with Saint Aurea. Black paint and gold have flaked, exposing orange bole.







Fig. 2 Infrared reflectogram detail of the Child.

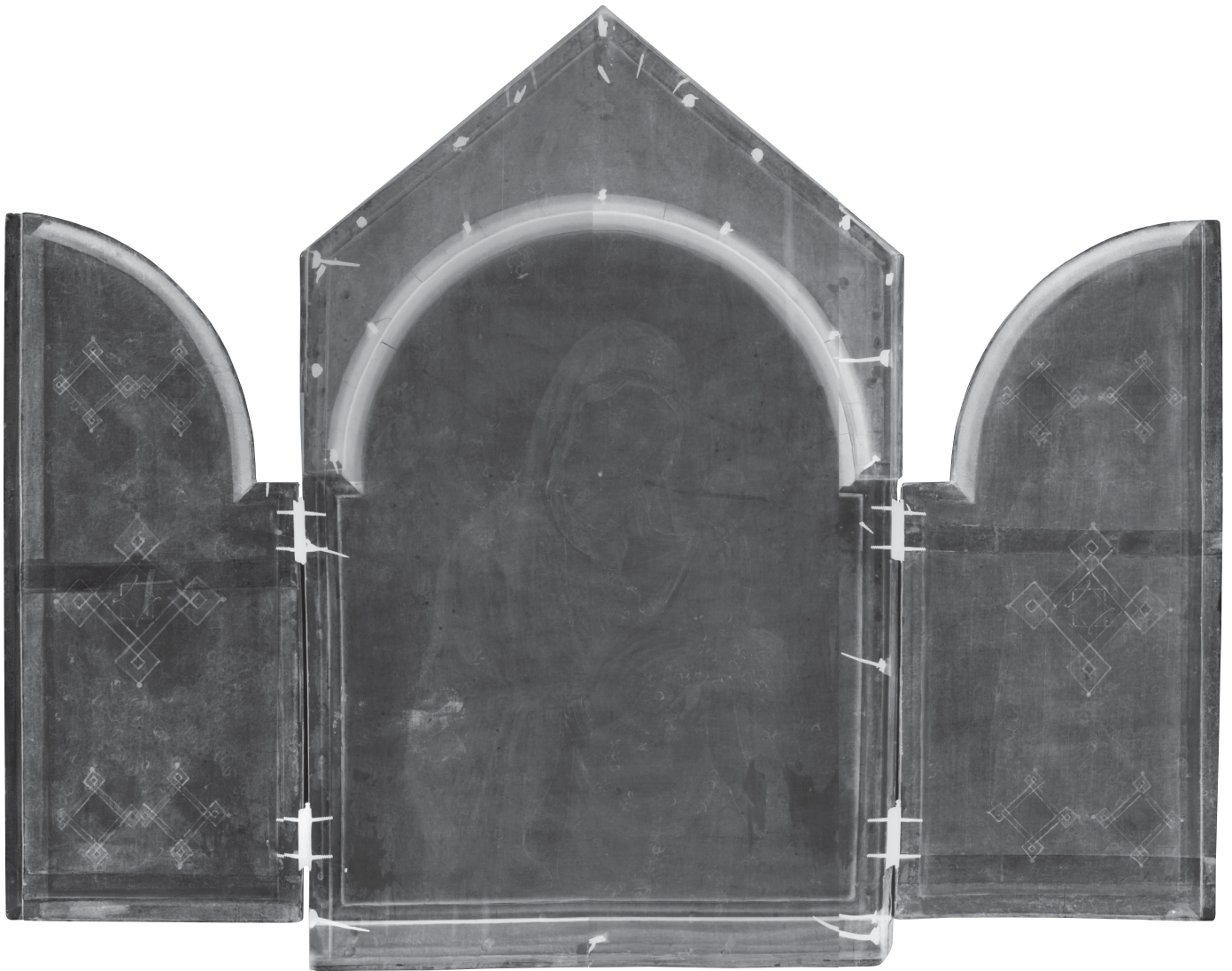


Fig. 3 Composite X-radiograph of NG 566.

PAINTING CONDITION AND TECHNIQUE⁴
 Cleaned and restored in 1959.

Infrared reflectography reveals the distinctive underdrawing, executed in a liquid medium probably with a brush, found also on panels from Duccio's *Maestà*, NG 1139, NG 1140 and NG 1330 (see pp. 154–73).⁵ Underdrawing is used to delineate drapery folds: very simple outlines are found in the angels' draperies, with more densely hatched lines for the folds of the Virgin and Child's cloaks. Their facial features have been underdrawn, as have the Child's legs, the Virgin's pointing index finger, and the Child's feet and toes (fig. 2). A series of darker-looking overlapping lines – characteristic of Duccio, particularly, for example, in the *Annunciation* (see p. 158, fig. 4) – establish the final solution in the more complicated areas of the Child's drapery. The position of the mordant-gilded edging of the Child's robe has not been underdrawn, although

it is difficult to think of it as an afterthought since its rippling, sinuous curves animate the whole pose of the Child's body.

The Virgin's drapery does not always follow the outlines incised in the gold, and there is a small change in the position of the Child's right arm as it was incised in the gold. The draperies of both standing saints were originally planned to be wider than they were finally painted. The incised line for the habit of Saint Dominic is further out to the right at the bottom, and the dark brown paint stops short of the underdrawn fold on the right (visible to the naked eye); Saint Aurea's drapery was also incised slightly further out to the right. The mordant-gilded border of her deep pink cloak does not always follow the underdrawn lines.

The water-gilded background is in generally good condition, although slightly abraded in some places, particularly to the left of the Virgin's head, with the result that the thurible

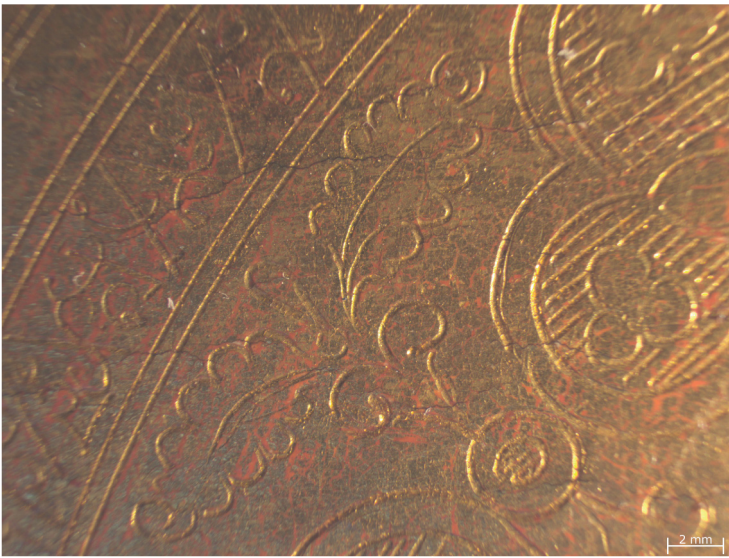


Fig. 4 Photomicrograph of the incised decoration of the Virgin's halo.



Fig. 5 Photomicrograph of the Child's hand grasping the mordant-gilded fringe of the Virgin's veil.

of the top left-hand angel has now largely disappeared; all that remains are a few traces of the white paint used for the chains. The faint black lines of the thurible swung by the angel on the right are still just visible.

The Virgin's halo consists of three outer concentric pairs of circles; between the second and third is a band decorated with pseudo-kufic lettering; the inner band has incised quatrefoils with a flower in the centre and a trefoil in each petal; between the quatrefoils are incised symmetrical sprigs of two oak leaves with round fruit, also legible as a fleur-de-lis with an oak leaf on each side (fig. 4).

The Child's halo is incised with a cross, and has a pattern of tendrils and freehand diamonds and circles.

Each angel has a slightly different halo pattern within double concentric rings. The angel at the bottom left has incised tendrils interspersed with a single dot punch, the one above has linked heart shapes; the top right-hand angel's halo has incised tendrils and that of the angel below has random spiral shapes.

The haloes of Saint Dominic and Saint Aurea are identical; both are plain, consisting of two fine double concentric rings.

Each of the haloes of the prophets and patriarchs is different: David's has diamonds and circles, Abraham's oak leaves, Daniel's tendrils, Moses' four-petal flowers interspersed with flourishes, Isaiah's a curling motif, Jacob's tendrils, and Jeremiah's flowers interspersed with punched dots.

The incised decorative border around the Virgin and Child is made up of rectangles containing four-petal flowers with a centre against a hatched background, alternating with hatched diamonds set against a plain background, two of them cross-

hatched. A similar pattern, but reversed, is to be found on the wings, where the four-petal flowers are hatched and alternate with plain diamonds on a cross-hatched background. In both wings the petals of a few of the flowers are inconsistently cross-hatched, vertically hatched or horizontally hatched. The incised border of the wings also runs across the background above the marbled step on which the saints stand.⁶

The border of the gable is similar but smaller, and likewise has insignificant inconsistencies. It has alternating cross-hatched diamonds against a plain background – with the exception of the top three on the left diagonal, which are plain diamonds against a cross-hatched background – interspersed with a curling motif, with one exception.

The mordant gilding applied with a thick yellow-brown mordant, which appears to be the same as in NG 1139, 1140 and 1330, is in good condition.

In the central panel, mordant gilding has been used for the stars at the Virgin's shoulder and forehead, the fringe (fig. 5) and pseudo-kufic letters decorating her veil, the pattern on the brown border of her headdress, the single edge border of her cloak and the decoration of her red and brown sleeve, the edging of the Child's purple cloak, and the decoration on the angels' robes and the feathers of their wings. The top right-hand angel wears a mordant-gilded diadem in its hair.

In the wings, mordant gilding has been used for the gilded clasps and decoration of Saint Dominic's book, Saint Aurea's diadem, and the border of her cloak.

In the gable mordant gilding has been used for David's crown and the pattern of his cloak and robe, for the folds in Isaiah's robe, and for the borders of all the prophets' robes.



Fig. 6 Photomicrograph of the Virgin's index finger and cloak, showing her cloak painted with ultramarine over red lake.

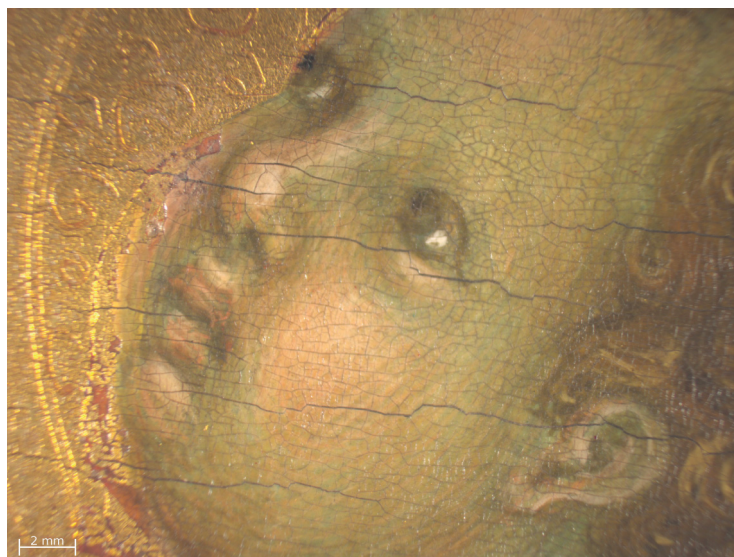


Fig. 7 Photomicrograph of the Child's head.

The condition of the paint surface is excellent. The flesh paint may have become more transparent with time, appearing greener than was probably intended. The Virgin's drapery has a few flake losses along her right shoulder where the blue overlaps the gold, and a loss from her veil just to the right of the base of her neck. High-quality ultramarine mixed with some lead white has been used for her drapery, with the deepest shadows painted with carbon black. In certain areas, particularly along fine details such as the edges of the Child's toes and the Virgin's left hand, it is possible to see that under the ultramarine paint is a red lake-containing layer, which suggests that the whole of the Virgin's cloak may have been undermodelled with a purplish underpaint (fig. 6).⁷ There has been a small amount of flaking where the Child's right cheek overlaps the gold (fig. 7). His purple cloak is painted with azurite, red lake and white.

The angels are painted in alternating colours across the panel, creating a syncopated rhythm. The lower left-hand angel wears a blue cloak painted with ultramarine mixed with white, over a pink robe containing red lake and white; its brown wings, edged with white, have vermilion tips edged with red lake. Diagonally opposite, the upper right-hand angel wears a pink cloak of red lake modelled with azurite in the shadows, over a blue robe of ultramarine and white; its brown wings are tipped with vermilion and white. The upper left-hand angel wears a pink cloak of red lake and white with azurite in the shadows, over a robe painted with green earth; its brown wings, edged with pale blue, have deep blue tips. Diagonally opposite, the lower right-hand angel wears a cloak painted with green earth modelled with ultramarine in the

shadows, over a pink robe of red lake and white with azurite in the shadows; its brown wings have blue tips.

The prophets and patriarchs are painted with the same palette using ultramarine and azurite for the blues, vermilion and red lake for the reds, purple made with red lake mixed with azurite, green earth and black.

The figure of Saint Dominic is in good condition, except that the outlines have flaked where his habit overlaps the gold background, and there is a small loss in his white scapular. The gold background is in good condition except for the inscription S. DO/MINIC, painted in black, much of which has flaked off. The star, which is painted with red lake with a small red dot in the centre, is in good condition. Dominic's habit is a deep brown, made by mixing vermilion and black. His red book, which was painted with vermilion with a red lake glaze, and the mordant-gilded clasps and decoration have survived very well. The straps are blue, and thin yellow lake stripes convey the edges of the pages.

The figure of Saint Aurea is in good condition apart from small flake losses in her cloak. To the right of her head there are losses in the gold background, which is otherwise in good condition. The losses obliterate the final letters of her inscription, SCA.AU (see fig. 1), which was painted in black; parts of the letters have flaked, exposing the orange bole. Saint Aurea's mordant-gilded diadem has been given black edges and white dots for pearls, like the border of her cloak. The brooch at her throat is painted with black paint over gold. Her cross is painted with ultramarine. Her pink cloak is red lake and azurite, with lead white, and her dress, painted with green earth, is modelled with azurite and black.



Fig. 8 The exterior of NG 566 (open).

The Back of the Panel and the Exterior of the Wings

As will be discussed below, the present painting of the back and the exteriors of the wings (fig. 8) is not original. The back of the central panel has been painted with two layers: a pink marbling pattern imitating that on the interiors of the wings, over which is a rather roughly applied red glaze.⁸ The back of the main panel has no canvas and an extremely thin layer of gesso.⁹

The exteriors of the wings are painted with pink marbling, also imitating that on the interiors of the wings (figs 9 and 10), decorated with geometric motifs: the green outer borders of these motifs are verdigris outlined with white; inside is a pattern of red, beige and black. Visible in the X-radiograph (fig. 3) are five dark areas: two quatrefoil shapes at the bottom, two within the arch, and a larger rosette shape in the centre. These seem to have been present in both wings, although more visible in the left wing (the quatrefoil and rosette shapes are also visible in the X-radiograph of Duccio's Boston triptych). Examination of a damage to one of the geometric motifs

has revealed gold leaf beneath (fig. 11) corresponding to the central rosette, which cannot be related to the upper design. There was therefore an earlier design, consisting probably of gilded rosettes on a painted background.

Also visible in the X-radiographs are two horizontal dark bands in each wing, indicating a difference in the build-up of ground and paint.¹⁰ These correspond with areas on the surface where the paint is disrupted by two horizontal bands approximately 2 cm wide: in the left wing the lower edge of the bottom one is 1.5 cm up from the base and the upper one 21 cm from the base; in the right wing the lower edge of the bottom one is 2.3 cm up from the base, the upper one 23.6 cm from the base (that is, they do not align; the bands in the right wing are slightly higher than in the left). The pink marbling and geometric motifs are continuous over these bands, indicating that this decoration was applied later (see fig. 8).

An added complication emerges in the X-radiograph of the right wing (see fig. 3) with Saint Aurea, where one can see straight vertical strips approximately 1.7 cm wide, laid



Fig. 9 Photomicrograph of the original fictive marbling on the interior of the right wing.

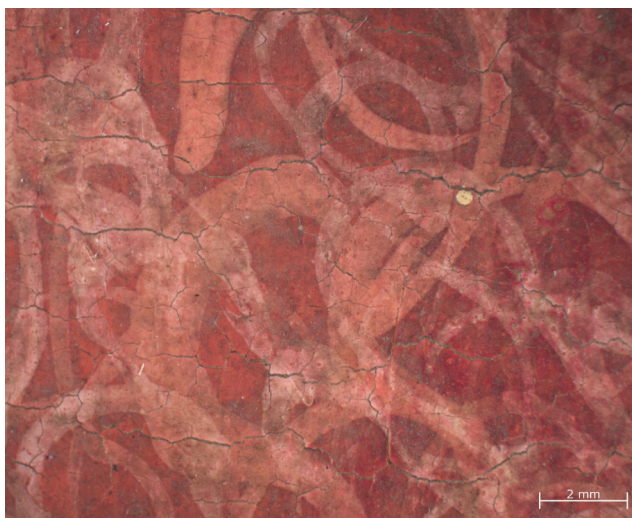


Fig. 10 Photomicrograph of the later fictive marbling on the exterior of the left wing.



Fig. 11 Photomicrograph of the geometric design on the exterior of the left wing showing gold leaf beneath later paint.

edge to edge and running from top to bottom. They do not appear to be canvas, since they do not have frayed edges or an obvious weave. They are causing cracks on the exterior pink marbled surface of the wing, visible in raking light, which proves that they are on the exterior. Their purpose is mysterious, particularly since nothing similar is visible in the X-radiograph of the left wing with Saint Dominic. They may perhaps be strips of parchment placed to conceal the earlier decoration.

It is possible that the wings originally bore decoration and/or arms personal to the patron, almost certainly Niccolò da Prato (see below), and were closed by means of leather straps attached to the wood (similar to those used for closing liturgical manuscripts), which overlapped at the centre with a clasp or pin. At some stage, after NG 566 and the Boston triptych had changed ownership, the personalised decoration or arms were suppressed, the straps removed or covered and the back redecorated with the pink marbling and geometric design visible today. The repainting is certainly old, although it is impossible to date accurately.

Victor Schmidt has drawn attention to the similarity of the geometric decoration to the recently discovered frescoes in the lower level of Siena Cathedral.¹¹ However, it may have been a relatively common pattern, since it is also found, for example, in the background of Pietro Lorenzetti's fresco of *Saint John the Baptist presenting a Knight to the Virgin and Child* in San Domenico, Siena.¹²

The geometric motifs (figs 8 and 12), which are identical on the Boston triptych (fig. 13), may be a clue that the right wing should be opened first. When the triptych is closed, the left-hand wing is closed first and the right wing over it: the top and bottom motifs are interlocking on the left wing but not on the right, acting as a prompt that the right wing with the design left unlocked should be opened first.

Iconography of the Gable

When the wings of the triptych are closed (fig. 12), the patriarchs and prophets (fig. 17) in NG 566 are the only figures visible, and they signal what may be found inside. Jacob's scroll conveys the message that the triptych represents the house of God, with the wings opening to reveal Heaven. The texts all refer to the Incarnation and Virgin birth: the burning bush referred to by Moses was a symbol of the Virgin birth.¹³ David, at the centre, who is given special emphasis by the inscribing of his name and by his crown and lavish cloak, was the ancestor of Christ and also had particular relevance for the Virgin, since the *Golden Legend* is insistent that Mary as well as Joseph was descended from King David.¹⁴

Subject and Iconography of the Wings

SAINT DOMINIC

Saint Dominic (died 1221, canonised 1234) was the founder of the Dominican Order. His book refers to the learning and preaching of the order. His star could refer to the fact that, according to the *Golden Legend*, when his godmother lifted him from the font at baptism, it seemed to her that he had on his forehead a brilliant star which shed its light over the whole world.¹⁵ Schmidt interprets the star as having an eschatological

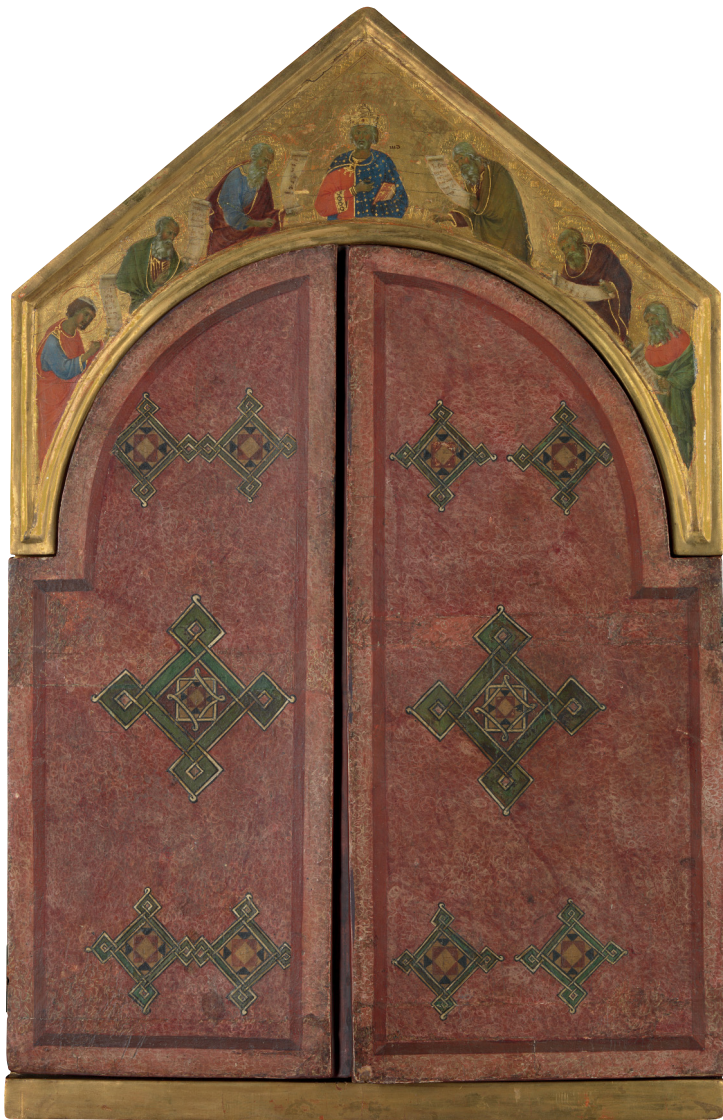


Fig. 12 The exterior of NG 566 (closed).

symbolism, since Humbert of Romans, in his *Life of Saint Dominic*, likened Dominic to Saint John the Baptist – just as John was the morning star announcing the coming of Christ, so Dominic was the evening star announcing the coming of the Last Judgement.¹⁶ However, nothing else in the triptych is apocalyptic. The presence of Saint Dominic indicates a Dominican patron.

SAINT AUREA

Saint Aurea, a virgin martyr, was the patron saint of Ostia (the seaport near Rome).¹⁷ She is rarely depicted. Martin Davies noted that Saint Aurea appears with Saint Dominic with the Virgin and Child enthroned in a triptych with scenes from the life of Saint Aurea in the wings, signed by Lippo Vanni and dated 1358, (presumably) formerly in Sant'Aurea, Rome, which was abandoned in the sixteenth century when the nuns moved to SS. Domenico e Sisto, Rome.¹⁸ A reliquary triptych attributed to Lippo Vanni, showing Saint Aurea with Saint John the Baptist on either side of the Virgin and Child enthroned, and Saint Dominic in one wing, is in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.¹⁹



Fig. 13 The triptych in Boston (see fig. 14) closed.

Patron

NG 566 is unlikely to have come from the Dominican nunnery of Sant'Aurea in Rome, as suggested by James Stubblebine and raised again by Julian Gardner,²⁰ since it appears to have been founded considerably later, and is not recorded in either a catalogue of Roman churches of 1320 or a catalogue of Dominican foundations of the same date.²¹

Joanna Cannon has plausibly argued that NG 566 could have been commissioned by the Dominican Cardinal Niccolò degli Albertini da Prato (d. Avignon, 1 April 1321), who was promoted to be Cardinal Bishop of Ostia and Velletri in 1303.²² This would give NG 566 a *terminus post quem* of 1303. Victor Schmidt has provided the substantiating evidence that the cardinal's seal featured Saints Dominic and Aurea on either side of his name saint.²³ The cardinal was extremely wealthy, leaving in his will, drawn up on 1 March 1321, 100 florins to each of his titular churches, one in Ostia and one in Velletri, and altogether 4,000 florins to San Domenico in his home town of Prato, and 11,000 florins to found a convent of Dominican nuns in Prato to be dedicated to Saint Nicholas



Fig. 14 Duccio and Simone Martini(?), *The Crucifixion with Saint Nicholas and Saint Clement, and The Blessing Redeemer between Two Angels*, c. 1312–15(?). Tempera on wood. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, Grant Walker and Charles Potter Kling Funds.

of Bari.²⁴ Among the many books, liturgical objects and furnishings from his own chapel that he bequeathed to San Domenico were three painted altarpieces ('tres tabulas pictas que ponuntur super altare').²⁵

Attribution, Date and the Iconography of the Central Panel

Since its acquisition in 1857, NG 566 has always been catalogued as being by Duccio. Martin Davies in 1961 dated it before Duccio's *Maestà*, which was completed in 1311 (see p. 174).²⁶ The attribution is accepted by the majority of scholars, including Curt Weigelt;²⁷ Cesare Brandi, who discussed it after the Stoclet *Madonna* (see fig. 15) and before the *Maestà*;²⁸ Giulio Cattaneo and Edi Bacceschi, who date it to around 1300–5;²⁹ John White, who dated it to around 1300;³⁰ Enzo Carli;³¹ Giovanna Ragionieri;³² Cecilia Jannella;³³ Victor Schmidt³⁴ and Luciano Bellosi,³⁵ who both discuss it before the *Maestà* and in conjunction with Duccio's *Virgin and Child* now in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia (see fig. 16; see further below); and Aldo Galli, who dates it to the first

decade of the fourteenth century.³⁶ It has been dated to the second decade of the fourteenth century by Miklós Boskovits and Serena Padovani.³⁷ The attribution has been doubted only by James Stubblebine, who attributed it to Simone Martini in Duccio's workshop, and dated it around 1310–13,³⁸ and by Florens Deuchler, who initially agreed with the attribution to Simone Martini and suggested a date of around 1315, later modifying this to circle of Duccio (Simone Martini?), around 1319.³⁹

The question of the date of NG 566 is linked to the almost identical triptych by Duccio in Boston (Museum of Fine Arts; figs 13 and 14), which has the *Crucifixion* in the centre, Saint Nicholas and a papal saint in the wings, a *Blessing Redeemer* between two angels in the gable, and the same pattern as NG 566 on the exterior of the wings.⁴⁰ The carpentry of the two works was minutely studied by John White, who showed that their dimensions and structure, as well as the tooling of the gold, are identical, and concluded that they were designed and produced contemporaneously in the same workshop.⁴¹

Recently Schmidt has suggested that the papal saint in the Boston triptych may not be Saint Gregory, as had hitherto been thought, but Saint Clement, and that the inscription may originally have read 'Clemens'. The triptych would thus show the name saint of Niccolò da Prato and the titular saint of his church in Velletri, San Clemente; both triptychs could therefore have been commissioned by him, as part of a 'set'.⁴² If this is so, presumably the third altarpiece – one of the 'tres tabulas pictas' mentioned in his will – although not necessarily a triptych, is missing.

Because of the physical similarity of NG 566 to the Boston triptych (and now the likelihood of the same patron) the two works have often been discussed in tandem, with opinion varying as to whether the *Crucifixion* in the Boston triptych is before or after the equivalent scene in Duccio's *Maestà* completed in 1311. Laurence Kanter and Hayden Maginnis, for example, see the triptych as postdating the *Maestà*,⁴³ Schmidt and Bellosi as anticipating it.⁴⁴

The *Crucifixion* scene in the Boston triptych is similar to that on the *Maestà*, but has evidently been adapted to its differing devotional purpose: the composition has been simplified and reduced, and the emotional tenor intensified by drawing into closer contact the figures around the Virgin, in particular John the Evangelist, and introducing the soldier at the right of the cross, whose out-turned gaze involves the spectator in the scene. Kanter plausibly suggested that NG 566 could have been commissioned by Niccolò da Prato between 1311 and 1318, possibly during his journey south from Avignon to Rome to attend the coronation of Henry VII as Holy Roman Emperor on 12 May 1312, or on his return. This idea was taken up by Schmidt, who also noted that Niccolò da Prato would have had many opportunities to commission the triptychs, even after the papal court had transferred to Avignon in 1309, since he made frequent visits to Italy.⁴⁵ If the cardinal journeyed between Avignon and Rome along the Via Cassia, he would have passed through Siena.

The question of the date of NG 566 is linked also to polyptychs by Duccio and his workshop, as well as to his independent panels of the half-length Virgin and Child. The iconography of the Virgin and Child in NG 566 develops that of the earliest in the sequence of his half-length Madonnas, namely the *Crevole Madonna* (Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), where the Child – dressed in a transparent shift and pale lilac cloak – is perched in the crook of the Virgin's arm and reaches for her headdress.⁴⁶ However, the iconography of the Virgin in the *Crevole* panel is still the Byzantine *Hodegetria* (see p. 344) in which the Virgin presents the Child, pointing at him with her right hand, which was extremely popular in central Italy during the thirteenth century. As Bellosi notes, the red cloth covering the Virgin's hair is replaced in later versions by a white veil, as in the *Madonna and Child* formerly in the Stoclet Collection and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 15), in which the Virgin looks towards the Child seated in the crook of her arm as he reaches for her veil.⁴⁷ This motif, repeated in NG 566, may reflect the medieval literary tradition identifying Christ's loincloth with the Virgin's veil, in which she wrapped the Child after his birth (see also p. 352).⁴⁸



Compared to the Stoclet painting, the faces of the Virgin and Child in NG 566 have been brought closer together and thus into a more intensely intimate and emotional relationship.

The motif of the Virgin's pointing finger found in the Stoclet panel occurs also in the *Virgin and Child* in Perugia (fig. 16) that was probably painted for San Domenico, Perugia, around 1304–8.⁴⁹ The sunburst at the top of the Virgin's head in the Perugian *Virgin and Child* has been changed to a star in NG 566 (as found already in Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna* of 1285), and the patriarchs and prophets gathered around the frame and leaning inward in NG 566 are very similar to the angels in the Perugian panel. It seems to the present writer that stylistically NG 566 moves away from the soft lines of the Stoclet and Perugian panels towards a harder, more enamel-like crispness, which is later taken up by Ugolino di Nerio (see p. 430) and Simone Martini, possibly even originating in the influence of Simone Martini on Duccio. The undulating ripples of the Child's cloak, as if caught by a breath of wind, develop those first found in the *Maestà* for Siena Cathedral (see p. 174, fig. 1).

In NG 566 the two motifs of the Virgin's pointing finger and the Child's crossed feet are very close to the Perugian painting. Schmidt argues with regard to the Perugian painting that the Virgin's gesture, rather than referring to the fact that Christ's feet will be pierced by nails in the *Crucifixion* or indicating a lost inscription, is without symbolic meaning and occurs frequently in Ducciesque works.⁵⁰ And in fact, if the original pedestal of NG 566 was like that of the Boston triptych, then it too was plain, without an inscription. However, as Luke Syson has pointed out to me, the Virgin's right hand and extended finger meaningfully frame the Child's foot.

OPPOSITE

Fig. 15 Duccio, *The Madonna and Child*, c.1305(?).
Tempera on wood, 28 × 20 cm. New York, The
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Rogers Fund,
Walter and Leonore Annenberg and The Annenberg
Foundation Gift, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, Annette
de la Renta Gift, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher,
Louis V. Bell and Dodge Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest,
2004 (formerly Stoclet Collection).

RIGHT

Fig. 16 Duccio, *The Virgin and Child*, c.1304–8.
Tempera on wood, 95.5 × 63.8 cm. Perugia,
Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria.



One plausible explanation of the iconography of NG 566 is that Niccolò da Prato asked for a Virgin and Child similar to the Dominican altarpiece in Perugia.⁵¹

The relationship with the polyptych from Santa Maria della Scala, Siena (now Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale, no. 47), may have a similar significance. Martin Davies noted that all the patriarchs and prophets in the gable of NG 566 appear in the Siena polyptych as similar types (although some are shown as more elderly in NG 566) and with the same texts (except for Jeremiah), while the figure of David in NG 566 is dressed almost identically to the equivalent figure in the Siena altarpiece.⁵² Schmidt develops this to show that NG 566 thus represents in many ways the programme of a polyptych condensed into a portable altarpiece.⁵³ The Siena polyptych, although now in very poor condition, is generally accepted as being by Duccio and is considered by some, although not universally, to have been painted just after his *Maestà*.⁵⁴ Roberto Bartolini, dating it after the *Maestà*, links its iconographic programme with that of Simone Martini's fresco for the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, completed in 1315, and suggests that

the same theological adviser was behind both works between 1311 and 1313.⁵⁵ If the same argument is applied to NG 566, it would mean that it was painted shortly after the Siena polyptych, a hybrid of that work and the Perugian *Virgin and Child*, presumably at the request of Cardinal Niccolò da Prato.

Function

If the triptychs in the National Gallery and Boston were indeed among the 'tres tabulas pictas que ponuntur super altare' (see above), then they functioned as portable altarpieces. The question is why, if they both belonged to Niccolò da Prato, he would have needed two almost identical works. It is possible that they were intended to be interchangeable, serving for prayer and devotion on differing Marian, Christological and hagiographical feast days.

Provenance

NG 566 was stated to be from a private collection in Pisa.⁵⁶ Purchased with the Lombardi-Baldi Collection, Florence, 1857.⁵⁷

NOTES

1. The transcriptions are from Davies 1961, p. 171 (the final quotation from Jeremiah here adjusted); Davies gives them in a different order, but the figures are evidently meant to be in a hierarchy of pairs.
2. Although several authors (see notes 27, 28, 32, 33 and 39 below) have considered her to be Saint Agnes, examination under a microscope confirms AU, not AG (see fig. 1).
3. For the structure see White 1973, pp. 92–105 and figs 1–3; precise dimensions of every single feature of the London triptych are given by White on p. 104 (where they are compared with the Boston triptych); see also White 1979, pp. 49–53; see the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, pp. 90–3, for a description of the structure. Schmidt (1996, p. 19) notes the precedent of this type of triptych in Byzantine painting, and significantly in Siene painting, in the triptych with a similarly pointed gable by the Master of the Clarisse in Cracow (see p. 348 of this catalogue).
4. For a full account see the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, pp. 90–7.
5. Advances in reflectography since 1989 now enable the underdrawing to be seen more clearly and show that the lines have not been made with a quill pen as stated in the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, p. 93, but with a brush.
6. The patterning of the gold background behind Saints Dominic and Aurea across the marble step is characteristic of Umbrian panel painting (see Gordon 1979, p. 351), which Duccio would have seen when he was in Perugia (and probably also in Assisi), and here has the effect of thrusting the figures forward in space. The tooling along the back of the step has been forgotten behind the figure of Saint Clement in the Boston triptych, although it appears behind the figure of Saint Nicholas. Duccio's response to Umbrian painting is seen also in the front predella of the *Maestà*, which appears to reflect the design of the altarpiece by the Master of Saint Francis in San Francesco al Prato; see Gordon (1998) 2002, p. 233.
7. The pink stripe described as running along the bottom of the panel below the Virgin and Child in the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, p. 95, appears to be a misreading of pink paint samples.
8. See the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, p. 96, pl. 91.
9. In the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, p. 93, it is incorrectly stated that there is linen under the gesso at the back.
10. In the exh. cat. *Art in the Making* 1989, p. 92, it is stated that these bands are bands of wood let into grooves in the panel below the paint surface. There is no evidence for this, since no wood grain is apparent in the X-radiograph.
11. Schmidt 2005, p. 49. The space below the cathedral was filled in in 1355 (see Strehlke 2004a, p. 58).
12. Illustrated in Frugoni 2002, p. 86; Schmidt 2005, p. 126, fig. 79.
13. White 1979, p. 53. See also van Os 1984, pp. 64–5, who analyses the texts in relation to polyptych no. 47.
14. Jacopo da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Ryan, II, p. 149.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
16. Schmidt 1996, pp. 22–3.
17. Kaftal 1952, cols 123–4. Davies (1961, p. 172) points out that she is not carrying a martyr's palm, as Saint Aurea should, but that in Siene painting martyrs are often shown without palms, and that a cross is not her usual attribute. She is sometimes shown with a vase. See note 19 below.
18. Davies 1961, p. 172, note 3. For Lippo Vanni see De Benedictis 1979, pp. 49–50 and 98–100; Pecchiai 1953, p. 26.
19. Zeri 1976, I, pp. 44–6, cat. 26 and pl. 22. Saint Aurea, identified by inscription, carries a vase.
20. Stubblebine 1979, p. 64; Gardner 1995, p. 49. Gardner (p. 49, note 91) states that the size of NG 566 is 'a powerful argument' against identifying it as one of the 'tres tabulas pictas' belonging to Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, suggested by Joanna Cannon, followed by Victor Schmidt (see below).
21. Pecchiai 1953, pp. 10–12. Sant'Aurea was later added to the list in a fourteenth-century hand. The earliest documentary evidence for its existence is 23 November 1367, with the triptych by Lippo Vanni dated 1358 indicating an earlier date of foundation. Pecchiai considered also NG 566 to have come from Sant'Aurea and thus to indicate a date of foundation earlier than 1320.
22. Cannon 1980, p. 270, and p. 315, note 240. The date of his promotion is given in Gams 1957, p. VI, and in Paravicini Bagliani 1980, p. 93, as 18 December 1303. Fineschi (1758, p. 3) explains that Niccolò da Prato's family name was Albertini, not Alberti.
23. Schmidt 1996, p. 27. For the seal he cites Sella 1937, note 116; and Gardner, 1975, pp. 72–96, and p. 96, pl. 14e.
24. Schmidt 1996, p. 28.
25. His will was transcribed by Fineschi 1758, pp. 48–54; see esp. p. 50; and by Paravicini Bagliani 1980, pp. 427–37; see esp. p. 430, items 24 and 25; with a codicil added 2 March 1321.
26. Wornum 1858, pp. 76–7; Davies 1951, pp. 133–4; Davies 1961, pp. 171–3.
27. Weigelt 1911, pp. 162–6. Weigelt identified Saint Aurea as Saint Agnes.
28. Brandi 1951, p. 40, and p. 14, note 22. Brandi identifies Aurea as Agnes on account of the double cross she carries.
29. Cattaneo and Bacceschi 1972, p. 87, nos 15–17.
30. White 1979, pp. 46–54.
31. Carli 1955, p. 50.
32. Ragionieri 1989, no. 42, pp. 136–7. She also identifies Saint Aurea as Saint Agnes.
33. Jannella 1991, p. 20, dismisses the identification of the female saint as Aurea and states that Brandi (see note 28 above) was correct in identifying her as Agnes.
34. Schmidt 1996, pp. 19–30; Schmidt in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, p. 198.
35. Bellosi in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, p. 135; Bellosi and Ragionieri 2003, pp. 20–3.
36. Galli in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, p. 349.
37. Boskovits and Padovani 1990, p. 216 (among the works which 'foreshadow the lyrical style of Simone Martini').
38. Stubblebine 1979, I, pp. 63–4. He compares the Virgin to the unrestored parts of Simone Martini's *Maestà* in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, dated 1315, and Saint Dominic to the Saint Dominic in Simone's Pisa polyptych.
39. Deuchler 1981, pp. 17–22, esp. p. 22, note 22; Deuchler 1984, pp. 45, 188, and p. 216, no. 13. He also calls Saint Aurea Saint Agnes; he relates her to the fresco of Mary Magdalene by Simone Martini on the entrance to the Saint Martin Chapel in the Lower Church of San Francesco, Assisi, and dates NG 566 around 1319, after Simone's polyptych for Santa Caterina, Pisa.
40. Kanter 1994, pp. 72–6. The earliest the Boston triptych can be traced back is to the collection of William Young Ottley (for whom see p. 464 of this catalogue).
41. White 1973, pp. 92–105; White 1979, pp. 46–54. He noted that the basis of the design is the Siene *braccio* of 60.1 cm, with the mathematical ratios creating internal harmonies, such as the diameter of the Virgin's halo in NG 566 (16.4 cm), which repeats the internal width of the wings from frame moulding to frame moulding.
42. Schmidt 2005, p. 252. The possibility that such 'sets' were not uncommon, perhaps even fashionable, in Avignon, is suggested by the fact that Cardinal Gozio Battagli (d. 10 June 1348) bequeathed two eight-part panel paintings (which may in fact have been four-part, painted on both sides) that sound almost identical to each other, one to Sant'Agnese, Rimini, and one to San Francesco, Rimini, of which one, presumably both, had been made in Avignon (see Tonini 1880, IV, Appendice, p. 168).
43. Maginnis 2001, p. 109. Kanter's division of hands in the triptych (Kanter 1994, p. 75) is entirely convincing, assigning the figures on either side of the cross to an assistant, and the figure of Christ, the gable and the two saints in the wings to Duccio himself. The latter two saints would certainly have required the hand of Duccio himself, given their importance to the patron.
44. Schmidt 1996, p. 19; Schmidt in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, p. 202; Bellosi in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, pp. 138–9. Bellosi cites with admiration Edgell 1946, pp. 35–41.



Fig. 17 Detail of the patriarchs and prophets in the gable of NG 566.

45. Kanter 1994, p. 75; Schmidt 1996, p. 28.

46. See Bellosi in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, cat. 22, pp. 152–5; and Bellosi in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, pp. 142–4.

47. Bellosi in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, p. 135; Bellosi and Ragionieri 2003, p. 20. Bellosi in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, p. 200, dates the *Stoclet Madonna and Child* after NG 566. Angelo Tartuferi (in Tomei 2009, p. 75) dates it around 1295–1300; Keith Christiansen (2007, pp. 40–7) dates it around 1295–1305.

48. Discussed by Schmidt (in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, cat. 30, p. 198; Schmidt in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, p. 196) in relation to the *Virgin and Child* by Duccio in Perugia. In one painting of the *Virgin and Child* (Siena, Museo Diocesano) from Duccio's workshop the Virgin is beginning to wind her veil around the Child (illustrated in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, cat. 37, pp. 258–9).

49. Elvio Lunghi, in Bon Valsassina and Garibaldi 1994, no. 15, pp. 99–102, esp. p. 101, dates its commissioning to around 1304. This is when the building of San Domenico began, with the granting of an indulgence by the Dominican Pope Benedict XI. It may be significant that there is no documentation for Duccio's being in Siena

between 1302 and 1308 (see the documents published in Satkowski 2000, pp. 66–9; the document of 1304 refers to his property in Siena, not to his presence). Joanna Cannon (Cannon 1982, pp. 69–93, esp. p. 82) suggests that the altarpiece was in place in time for the provincial Chapter Meetings held in Perugia in 1308 (and 1316).

50. Schmidt 1996, p. 20, taking up Lunghi's observation (in Bon Valsassina and Garibaldi 1994, p. 101) that in the X-radiograph it is evident that the fingers of the Virgin's hand were originally drawn bent back and that the pointing index finger was an afterthought. The interpretation of the motif of the Child's crossed feet in the Perugian painting as referring to the Crucifixion is made by Deuchler 1984, p. 46.

51. Schmidt 1996, p. 23. Schmidt (p. 28) notes that Niccolò da Prato was in Perugia for the conclave following the death of Benedict XI (1304). He might also have been in Perugia for the provincial Chapter Meetings held in Perugia in 1308 and 1316 (see note 49 above).

52. Davies 1961, p. 172. In NG 566 Jeremiah carries a text from Jeremiah 31:22, and in the Siena polyptych a text from Jeremiah 11:19.

53. Schmidt 1996, pp. 21–2.

54. For example Schmidt 1996, p. 22, dates the Siena polyptych no. 47 to before the

Maestà, whereas it is dated after the *Maestà* by Bellosi 1998, p. 20, and by Strehlke 2004, p. 124; and dated (together with NG 566) to the second decade of the fourteenth century by Boskovits and Padovani 1990, p. 216. Maginnis 2001, p. 147, suggests that polyptych no. 47 dates to shortly after Giovanni di Tese Tolomei became rector of the Ospedale of Santa Maria della Scala in 1314 (although see also Maginnis in Satkowski 2000, p. 18, where he seemed to date it before 1311).

55. Roberto Bartalini in the exh. cat. *Duccio* 2003, cat. 35, pp. 234–43; Bartalini in Bagnoli, Bartalini, Bellosi and Laclotte 2003, pp. 256–60. The rash of multi-tiered polyptychs around 1319/20 – altarpieces by Simone Martini for Santa Caterina, Pisa, around 1319; by Pietro Lorenzetti for the Pieve in Arezzo, 1320–4; by Meo da Siena for Montelabate, near Perugia, around 1319; by Ugolino di Nerio for Santa Croce, Florence, in the 1320s (for which see pp. 464–77 of this catalogue) – suggests that this was a comparatively recent innovation and is a further argument for dating no. 47 after the *Maestà*.

56. National Gallery MS catalogue 10/3; National Gallery Annual Report 1858/9 (NG 17/2), p. 60, VIII. 3.

57. See Davies 1961, Appendix I, pp. 565–7, for the Lombardi-Baldi Collection.