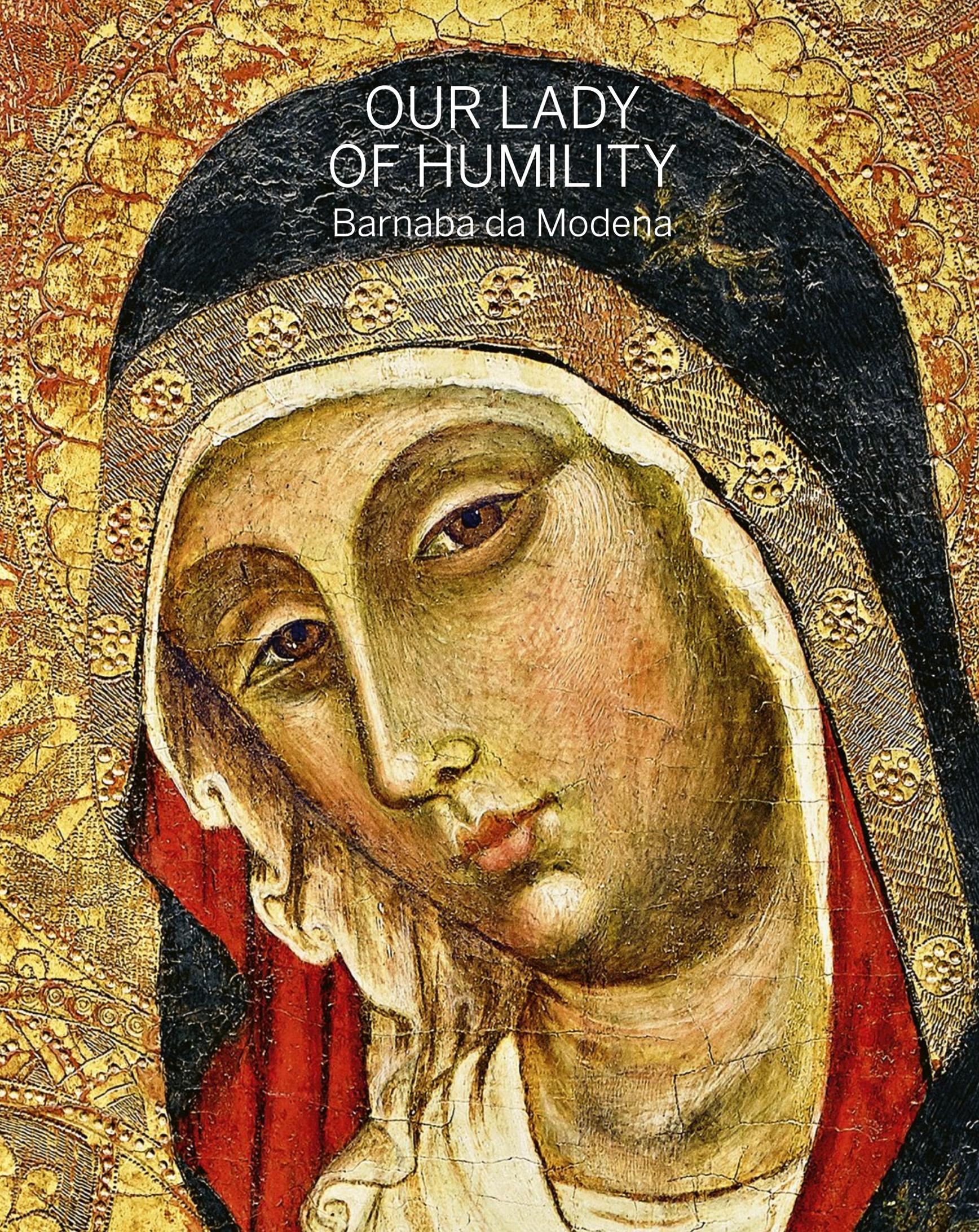


OUR LADY OF HUMILITY

Barnaba da Modena



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Gómez Frechina's research has focused on European painting, covering the period from International Gothic until Late Baroque. He is the author of a number of books: *Los Hernandos*, Arco Libros, Madrid 2010; *Joan de Joanes*, Aneto Publicaciones 2011.

He has worked as joint scientific director and curator alongside Fernando Benito in the following exhibitions: *La clave flamenca en los Primitivos Valencianos*, Valencia 2001; *Pintura Europea del Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia*, Valencia 2002; *La Memoria Recobrada. Pintura valenciana recuperada de los siglos XIV-XVI*, Valencia-Salamanca 2005-2006; *La Col·lecció Orts-Bosch al Museu de Belles Arts de València*, Valencia 2006; *L'impronta Fiorentina e fiamminga a Valencia. Pittura dal XIV al XVI secolo*, Florence 2007 and *La Edad de oro del arte valenciano. Rememoración de un centenario*, Valencia 2009. He was also curator on *Testimonios romanos en colecciones valencianas*, Valencia 2008; *Pasión por el coleccionismo: La colección Delgado*, Valencia 2017 and *Del Pontormo a Murillo. Entre lo sagrado y lo profano*, Mexico 2017.



NICOLÁS CORTÉS
GALLERY

Cover. Detail of Our Lady of Humility. Barnaba da Modena

Front and back endsheets. Detail of Our Lady of Humility. Barnaba da Modena





FOREWORD

BY NICOLÁS CORTÉS AND MARÍA CORTÉS

Unknown to the public and critics, Our Lady of Humility by Barnaba da Modena, a renowned Italian painter active in the prosperous city of Genoa in the second half of the 14th Century, is at the center of this publication.

The only testimony to this excellent painting of the Trecento, which talks about olden pictorial codes focusing on productions of a devotional nature, was a small photograph from the first decade of the 20th Century collected by the scholar González Simancas in his *Catálogo manuscrito de la provincia de Murcia*.

Having reappeared after a century of uncertainty as to its state or whereabouts, we have taken on its restoration and study, offering, as José Gómez points out, new and interesting paths to study and research the painter Barnaba da Modena and his relationship with Spain.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND ARTISTIC NOTE OF BARNABA DEGLI AGOCCHIARI, BETTER KNOWN AS BARNABA DA MODENA

JOSÉ GÓMEZ FRECHINA

Born in Modena, in the region of Emilia-Romagna, circa 1325. Barnaba, son of Ottonello and Francesca Cartari, probably learnt the basics of pictorial art in his home town. The family name, Agocchiari, comes from an ancestor of Lombard origins who worked as a blacksmith.

Essential to the artistic steps of Barnaba da Modena was his relationship with the prosperous and bustling city of Genoa (fig.1), where he took on painter Angelo da Firenze "giorno e notte" (day and night) for three months, to which a document of 13th October 1361 bears witness (the first written reference of the painter from Emilia-Romagna in the land of Liguria). Explicit as it is, however, this note in time probably refers to the requirement of hastily meeting the deadlines agreed for one or various commissions taken on by Barnaba.

We can fathom that the painter "di mutina" (as he signed many of his panel paintings, which clearly points towards his personal pride in his home town) must have already been fully established in Genoa, active in his own workshop, at the start of the sixties of the *Trecento*. The Tuscan painter Angelo da Firenze has been documented in Genoa since 1357 and there is still news about him in the city's archives dated 1387.

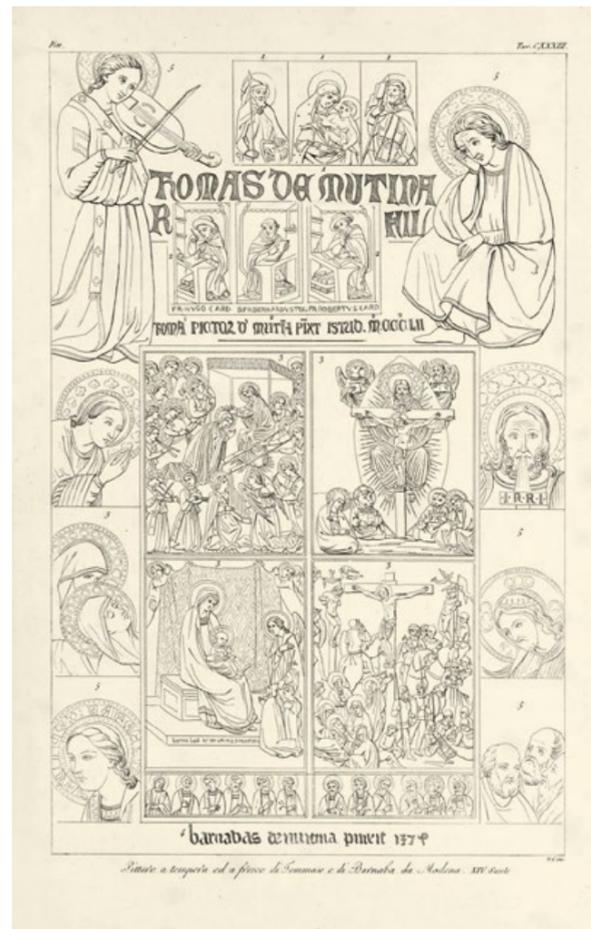


Fig. 3 Seroux d'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'Art par les Monuments, depuis sa décadence au IV siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVI*, Print CXXXIII.

Fig. 4 Barnaba da Modena, *Scenes of the Virgin: The Trinity; The Crucifixion (Detail)*, London, National Gallery.



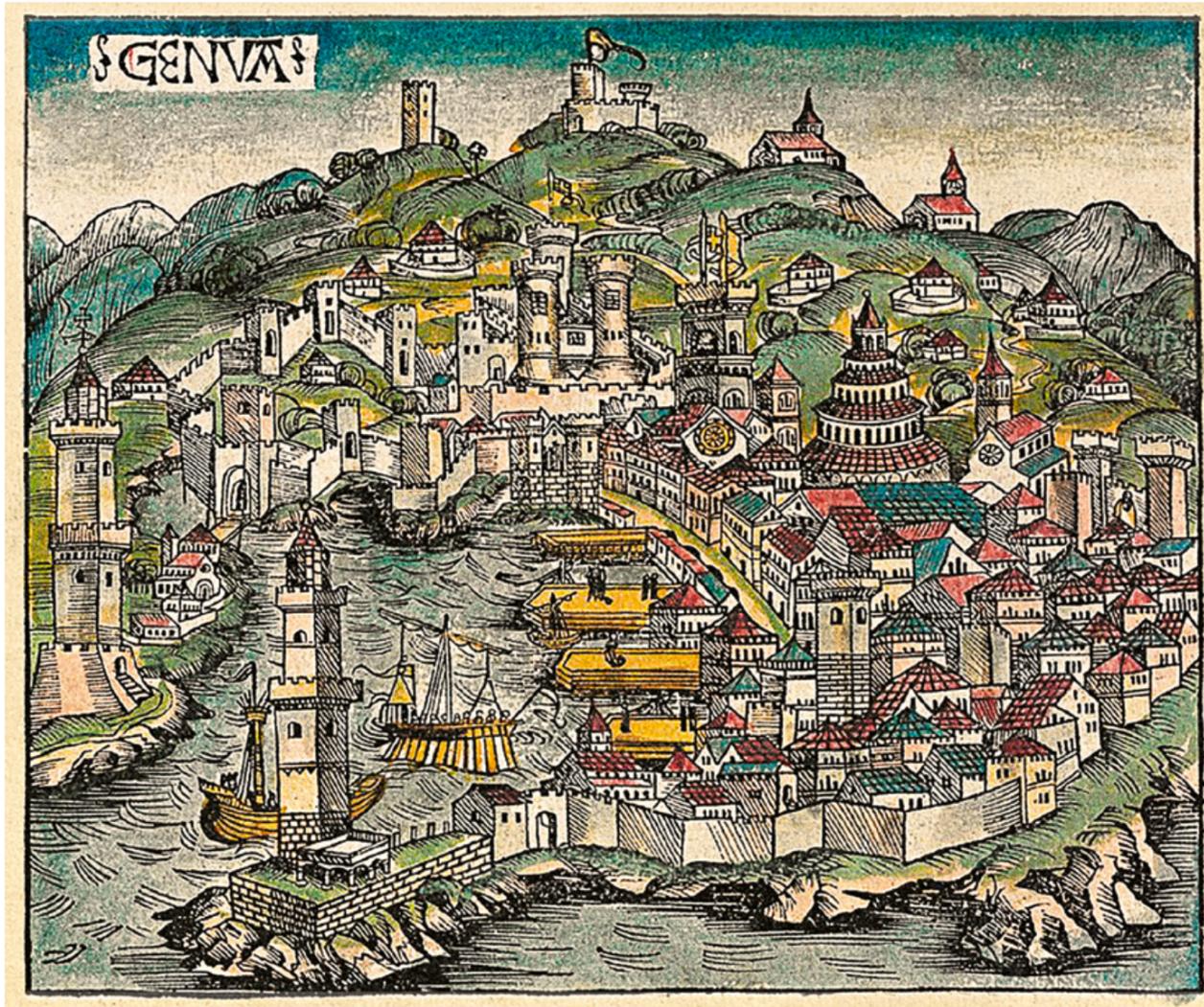


Fig. 1 Hartmann Schedel, *Vista of Genoa*, *Liber chronicarum*.

The artistic culture that Barnaba de Modena found in the capital of Liguria was dominated by several artificers, as shown by documents in the local archives: Giovanni Re da Rapallo (documented between 1348 and 1367), Simonino da Rapallo, whom is known to have trained at the workshop run by Bartolomeo Pellerano da Camogli, Giovanni da Padova, active in Genoa between 1367 and 1397, or Francesco de Oberto, whose style we know of thanks to the signed lunette of *Virgin and Child, Saint Dominic, Saint John the Evangelist and Dominican friars in prayer*, kept in Genoa at the Museo dell'Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti, from the Genoese church of San Domenico. Studying it *in situ* prior to its later wear, the painter and art historian Carlo Giuseppe Ratti (Savona, 1737 – Genoa, 1795) pointed out that the painting was dated in 1368.

The *Our Lady of Humility* signed and dated in 1346 by the Genoese painter Bartolommeo Pellerano da Camogli bound for Sicily (“Nostra Domina de Humilitate/MCCCXXXVI hoc/opus pinsit mag/ister Bartolomeus de/Camulio pintor”) sheds light on a path or trend that would often be followed by Barnaba da Modena at his workshop in Genoa, exporting a large proportion of his pictorial production to other geographic areas.

Bartolommeo, son of Opizzino Pellerano, is documented between 1339 and 1348. We know that he produced an altarpiece for the San Siro church in Genoa and that his *Our Lady of Humility*, the only work guaranteed to be by the painter, could be found at the cloisters of Saint Francis in Palermo. In carrying out this piece, which is currently

held by the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Bartolommeo Pellerano da Camogli took into account the prototype of *Our Lady of Humility* established by the painter Simone Martini (Siena, c.1284 - Avignon, 1344) during his time at the Papal Court of Avignon, found in the fresco on the façade of Notre-Dame-des-Doms, dated 1340-1343.

Another example of the significant activity of the workshop run by Barnaba da Modena in Genoa is also in regard to another Tuscan painter. A document of 18th July 1362 finds the painter Barnaba di Bruno in his workshop. Originally from Siena, he had been working at the workshop of the Genoese painter Giovanni Re only two years earlier. In this document, Barnaba appears as “civis et habitator Januae”. This statement confirms Barnaba’s continuous presence as resident of Genoa some time prior to his first documented appearance in 1361.

A good example of the transcendence of the work commissioned from Barnaba da Modena is the payment received on 26th April 1364 for mural paintings and an altarpiece at the chapel of the Palazzo Ducale of Genoa, which has been lost.

Barnaba da Modena’s initial training in Emilia-Romagna has been linked to the activity and influence of Vitale di Bologna, painter documented between 1330 and 1359, whose pictorial work was characterized by the movement and vitality of his figures and by the use of singular chromatic palettes. Elegant decorum can be added to these seeds that gave rise to Barnaba’s personal and clearly differentiated style. This has been linked to the Byzantine taste and can be seen in many of his works, with a pleasing pattern of gilded lines that highlight volumes and folds in clothing; and, also, to an understanding of Tuscan pictorial codes and their influence, mainly from the artistic centers in Pisa and Siena.

Silenced in ancient sources, we had to wait for the historical recovery of Barnaba da Modena, the painter, through the laborious archival work of scholars in the 18th Century, such as: Giuseppe Vernazza from Piamonte, Baron of Freney (Alba, 1745 – Torino, 1822), librarian at the University of Torino in times of Napoleon, who acted as correspondent for the Jesuit Gerolamo Tirabòschi (Bergamo, 1731 – Modena, 1794) author of *Biblioteca modenese* (1781-1786); Luigi Antonio Lanzi (Montecchio, 1732 – Firenze, 1810), author of *Storia pittorica della Italia* (1795/96); and Father Guglielmo della Valle, editor of the Siena edition of *Le Vite* by Giorgio Vasari (1791-1794), informing them of the signed and dated panel by painter

Barnaba in this home town of Alba, now held at the Chiesa de San Giovanni Battista.

Other early news about Barnaba da Modena that helped to shape his life and artistic expertise was provided by Alessandro Da Morrone (Pisa, 1741-1821) with his research into the works of the painter from Modena in his home town of Pisa (fig.2), informing about his work in *Pisa illustrata nelle arti del disegno* (1787-1793), which included in the first edition in Pisa, two works signed by Barnaba at the Chiesa de San Francesco: *Our Lady of the Milk*, currently at the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, and *Coronation of the Virgin*, formerly kept by the Hurd collection in New York (panel, 86 x 56 cm.): “XXIII. Finalmente additeremo un’antica Immagine della Madonna col divin Figlio in collo dipinta in tavola, e situata entro un’ornato di marmo coll’arme della casa Zucchetti presso la Porta maggiore. L’Artefice che la dipinse si volle lasciare il proprio nome leggondovisi: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit*. XXIV. Chi bramasse di osservare un’altro più operoso lavoro di questo Pittore, esso è in tavola appesa sulla porta che dal corridore mette in Chiesa presso la Sagrestia e che fu già sull’altare detto dell’Incoronata prima che vi si collocasse il quadro del Nasini. Rappresenta l’incoronazione della Madonna, S. Francesco, S. Lodovico, S. Antonio di Padova, ed il B. Gherardo. Le medesime surriferite parole *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit* sono scritte nell’inferior parte di detta tavola a caratteri d’oro. Non può negarsi, che questo Pittore nelle prefate opere sue non mostri sulle orme della Pisana Scuola, una certa buona maniera nelle teste con aprir gli occhi più al naturale che Giotto, e Cimabue non fecero, come ancora nel tingere, e nel piegare i panni, ch’esprimon le cresse con tratti ben sottili cavati dal fondo del quadro tutto d’oro coperto” (Book III, p. 73).

Da Morrone also gives an account of the important *Enthroned Virgin* of the Pisa merchants, held today at the Museo Nazionale de San Matteo in Pisa, in a later edition of *Pisa illustrata nelle arti del disegno* in Livorno of 1812: “Non ometto di far menzione di quella tavola che porta in prima linea le parole BARNABAS DE MUTINA PINXIT CIVES ET MERCATORES PISANI PRO SALUTE TRIB.... Per l’ultimo verso inchino volentieri a credere che una tal pittura esistesse nella antecedente sopra indicata Cappella. Vero è, che fu ritrovata nel convento di S. Giovanni in occasione del suo discioglimento. Essa in primo luogo conferma un Autore di Scuola Pisana, comprova viemaggiormente quanto scrissi di lui alla pag.162, e la notizia allegata dal Koch rende sospetta. Quindi ‘l’dispiacer mi rimembra di non saper più novella dell’altra, ove a caratteri d’oro leggevasi *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit* e dove spiccava il merito nelle

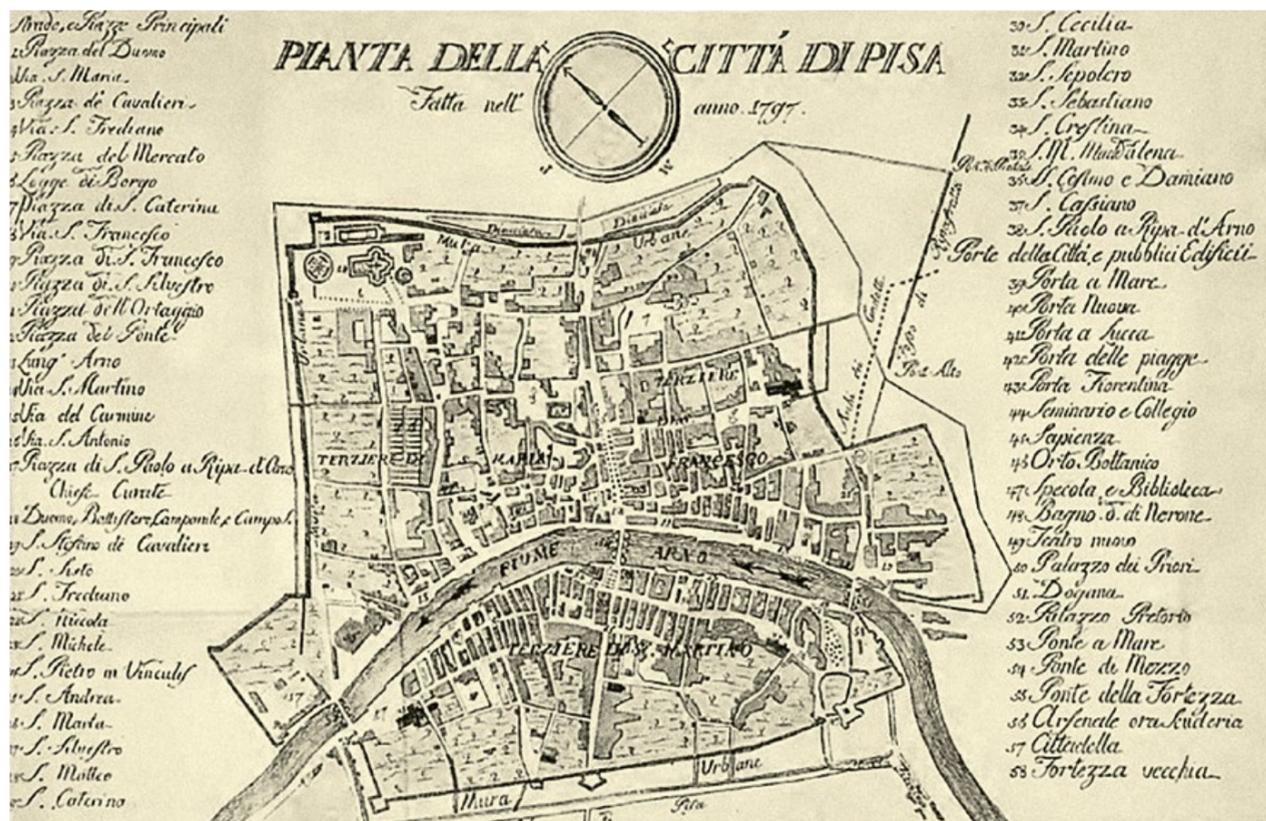


Fig. 2. Alessandro Da Morrone, City map of Pisa (1797). Pisa Illustrata nelle arti del disegno.

teste, nel tingere en el piegare i panni esprimenti le crespe con tratti ben sottili cavati dal fondo del quadro tutto d'oro coperto. Ella era in somma uno dei più belli, e ben conservati monumento del 1290 circa che al certo non isfuggiva al mio pensiero; ma questo protetto non fu da quella combinazione, o vogliam' dir sorte, che agli uomini abbisogna." (Book II, pp. 233-234).

Giuliana Algeri has proposed the following works to accompany this "Madonna dei Mercanti" (panel, 210 x 106 cm): *Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saint John* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Caen (panel, 67.5 x 64 cm) as the piece at the top of the central Marian panel, and other paintings that would flank this enthroned Virgin with angels, with stories from the life of Christ and the Virgin: the *Nativity* at the Pinacoteca Capitolina in Rome, purchased in 1936 from the Sterbini collection (panel, 59 x 46 cm); and *Pentecost* at the National Gallery in London (NG 1437) purchased in 1895 (panel, 54.4 x 50.1 cm). In this set of works, Barnaba does not delve into the ornamentation that appears at the start of the seventies; they are characterized by their studying how to build the volume of figures, influenced by the Tuscan figurative culture.

This important pictorial set painted by Barnaba da Modena circa 1382-1384, following the timeline reasoned by G. Algeri, was made as the altarpiece for the Chiesa di S. Domenico in Pisa, next to the convent complex erected by Chiara Gambacorta, daughter of Pietro Gambacorta, who was *signore* of Pisa between 1369 and 1392.

The *Altarpiece of the Virgin and Child, and the Saints Bartholomew, Andrew, Peter and Augustine*, painted by Barnaba da Modena for the merchant Jacopo Compagni, has been kept at the Chiesa de S. Andrea in Ripoli di Cascina, in the province of Pisa, since the penultimate decade of the *Trecento*.

An important step in our understanding of Barnaba da Modena was taken by the archeologist and historian Jean Baptiste Louis Georges Seroux d'Agincourt (Beauvais, 1730 – Rome, 1814), one of the precursors of medieval art history. He contributed like few others to the appreciation of the Italian primitives, greatly reviled at a time when their art was considered decadent. He spent several decades of his life studying art in Italy, finally publishing his "Histoire de l'Art par les Monuments, depuis sa décadence au IV siècle

jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVI", which appeared in Paris (Trenttel & Wünrtz) in installments between 1810 and 1823. This first illustrated history of art included a text about the painter from Modena and a picture of the painting signed by Barnaba da Modena in 1374 (fig.3), which would later go to the National Gallery in London (fig.4):

"Io aggiungerò, se non per appoggio di una tradizione tanto importante, almeno per onore della scuola di Tommaso de Mutina, vale a dire di Modena, che questo maestro non è il solo, che concorresse allora all'illustrazione di questa città. Io posso citare una produzione di un altro pittore, segnata *Barnaba de Mutina*, 1374. Essa riempie la principal parte della tavola CXXXIII.

Questo quadro passò nelle mie mani circa l'anno 1785. Io non ho saputo donde venisse, ed ignoro dove si trovi al presente. La composizione di ciascuna delle quattro parti, delle quali è formato, presenta bene alcune singolarità, ma vi è pure una ricchezza, che non dispiace, della facilità nel disegno, una disposizione nei panneggiamenti assai felice, ed anche una specie di espressione.

Il colorito applicato sopra un fondo di oro, mi è sembrato di un piacevole effetto, troppo leggero per essere a olio, troppo midolloso non essendo che a tempera. Io non saprei affermare quali sian le materie delle quali si compone, tanto arditamente, quanto lo si è fatto per le due precedenti pitture.

Ciò che mi sembra certo, e tutto ciò, che io mi permetterò di dire tanto su questi quadri, quanto sopra molti altri citati da tutte le parti per lo stesso oggetto, si è, che si fecero circa il tempo, in cui viveva questo Barnaba de Mutina ricerche e tentativi assai moltiplicati, sopra l'adopramento dei colori, e che questi promettevano già all'Arte i vantaggi, di cui essa ben presto godette. Ecco ciò che risulta dai fatti, che hanno raccolti differenti scrittori, e dalle diverse opinioni, che sono state emesse sopra questa questione, e questo è pure quello, che importa di osservare il più in questa parte della Storia dell'Arte" (*Storia dell'Arte dimostrata coi documenti dalla sua decadenza nel IV secolo fino al suo Risorgimento nel XVI di G.B.L.G. Sèroux d'Agincourt tradotta e illustrata da Stefano Ticozzi, Prato Fratelli Giachetti 1826-1829, Book IV, pp.408-410*).

The reasoned catalogue of Barnaba da Modena increased with the precise contributions made by authors such as Adolfo Venturi, Pietro Toesca, Frederick Mason Perkins, Corrado Ricci, Bernard Berenson, Carlo Gamba, Roberto Longhi, Federico Zeri, Pasquale Rotondi, Michel Laclotte,

Alvar González Palacios, Laura Malvano, Giuliana Algeri or Clario Di Fabio, among others.

Some of the works signed by Barnaba da Modena are dated. They are a basic element in objectively and reliably establishing the painter's different creative eras. The unsolvable question regarding the date of *Virgin and Child* signed by Barnaba and kept at the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica in Torino, due to having been partially lost, means that the first known time reference is the *Virgin and Child* panel at the Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie in Frankfurt am Main, signed and dated by the painter from Modena in 1367.

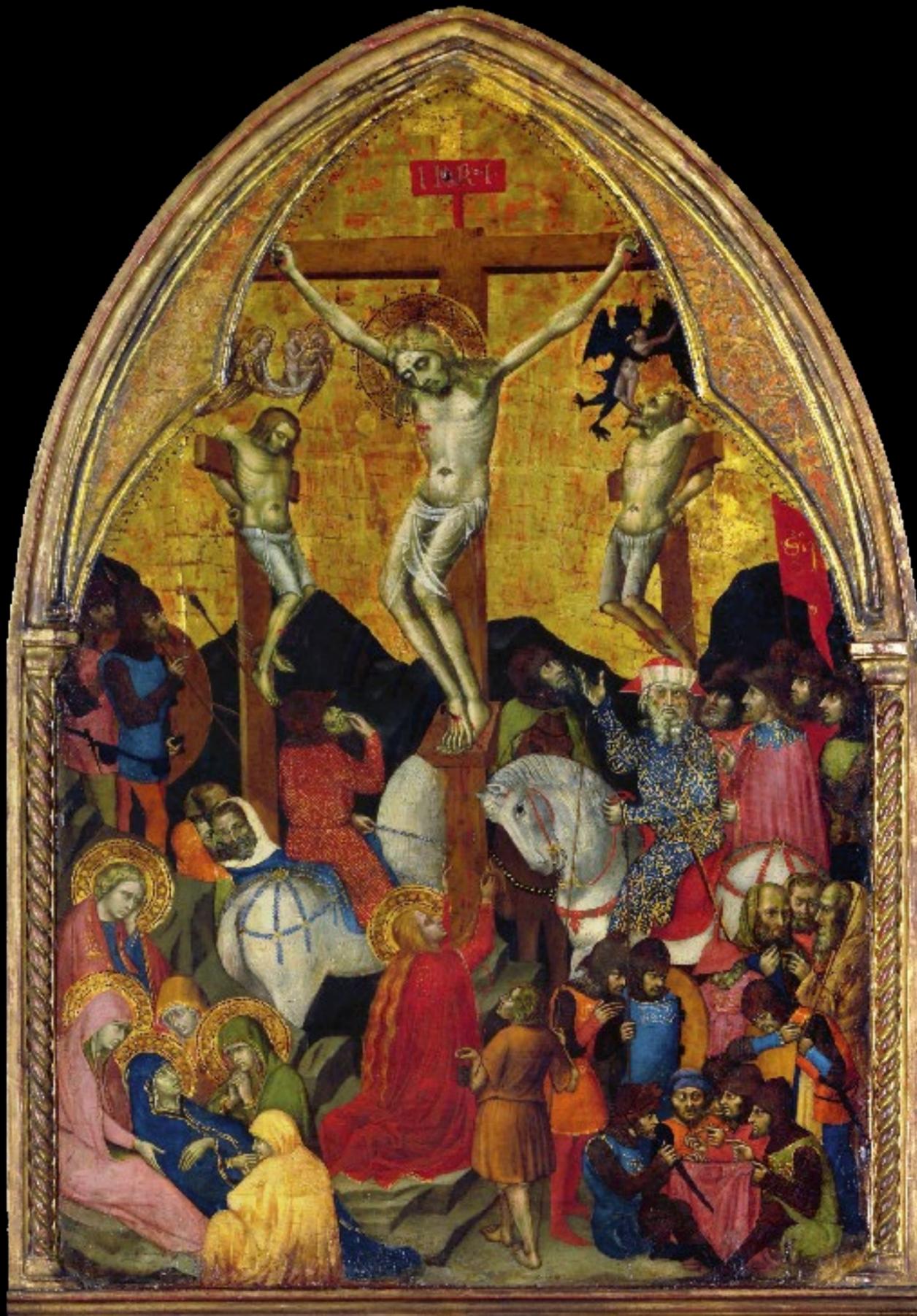
The *Virgin and Child* by Barnaba da Modena that was kept at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin until its destruction in World War II, was dated 1369. A year later, Barnaba signed and dated the *Virgin and Child* from the Chiesa di S. Domenico in Rivoli (Piedmont) which is kept at the Galleria Sabauda in Torino.

Other dates to consider as objective documentation of the works of Barnaba da Modena are: 1374, which appears in the aforementioned panel at the National Gallery in London, representing *The Coronation of the Virgin; the Trinity; the Virgin and Child with Donors* (fig.); *the Crucifixion*; and *the Twelve Apostles*; 1377, *Our Lady of the Milk* at the church of San Giovanni in Alba, originally from the Chiesa di S. Francesco in the same Piedmont town; and, finally, 1386, the *Polyptych of the Virgin and Child, Archangel Michael, Saint Dalmatius, Saint Peter and Saint Paul* at the Chiesa di S. Dalmazio in Lavagnola (Savona).

Another piece of information of great significance, which attests to his skill as a painter of frescos, is that Barnaba was called from Pisa (as documented in 2nd June 1380, when Piero Sampanti, who was working at the *Duomo* in Pisa, sends master Giovanni di Pessino da Lucca to invite the painter from Modena) to complete the cycle of the *Stories of Saint Ranieri* in Pisa's graveyard, which were left unfinished by the Florentine painter Andrea di Bonaiuto at his death in 1378 and which were finally finished by Antonio Veneziano.

The only document regarding Barnaba de Modena's fresco mural painting, corresponding to his last years of activity, is found in a small chapel at the Chiesa di Sant'Agostino in Genoa and is based on the Judgment Day.

We know that Barnaba traveled to his home town in 1380, documented by a house sale deed. The painter from



Modena registers for the last time in Genoa in November 1383. The last time reference regarding Barnaba da Modena is, lacking further contrasted documents, 1386, date of the polyptych in the Chiesa di S. Dalmazio in Lavagnola (Savona).

Approximate dates for the execution of certain paintings can be inferred by identifying certain patrons painted in the works of Barnaba da Modena. For instance, this is the case of *Madonna della Misericordia* (panel, 158 x 112 cm) from the Chiesa di S. Maria dei Servi in Genoa, which was painted on occasion of the plague in 1372, where we find, kneeling before the Virgin, the Dominican Andrea Della Torre, archbishop of Genoa from 1368 until his death in 1377, who was extensively connected to the Avignon Papacy.

The *Polyptych di S. Bartolomeo* from the Chiesa di S. Bartolomeo del Fossato in Genoa, with a great narrative that includes eight scenes from the saint's life, includes Lanfranco Sacco, bishop of Genoa between the end of 1377 and 1382, and the abbot of the Vallombrosa Abbey, kneeling before the feet of St. Bartholomew enthroned. This interesting set, which predates the last era in Barnaba's artistic career, is kept at the Diocesan Museum of Genoa.

Finally, we mention the *Triptych of the Virgin and Child between Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Nicholas*, commissioned by the dux Nicola Guarco and his wife Caterina to Barnaba da Modena in 1383. This small furniture set piece is kept at Museo di S. Agostino in Genoa.

Among the works by Barnaba da Modena created for export, there are two sets that stand out which were addressed to the cathedral of Murcia in Spain: an altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk and an altarpiece of Saint Lucia with scenes from her life. We will later study these altarpieces painted by Barnaba da Modena in Genoa.

Approximately sixty pieces make up the reasoned catalogue of Barnaba da Modena, currently spread across

churches and private and public collections. In addition to the works already mentioned, the following stand out: *Virgin and Child* from the Santuario della Rocchetta a Lerma, kept at the Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista (panel, 80 x 44 cm), the *Virgin and Child, St. John the Baptist and Archangel Michael* at the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon (panel, 98 x 130 cm); the *Crucifixion* (fig.5) at John Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis (panel, 104.7 x 67.3 cm); two companion panels presenting the *Nativity* and the *Escape from Egypt* (Bologna, Collezioni Comunali d'Arte; 38 x 28 cm. each); the *Crucifixion* at the Amedeo Lia Civic Museum (panel, 80 x 35.5 cm); the *Baptism of Christ* at the Musée National des Beaux-Arts in Algiers; *Saint Catherine enthroned* at the Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola (panel, 106 x 72.5 cm), probably the central panel of an altarpiece dedicated to the saint of Alexandria with significant episodes of her life; the *Virgin and Child* at the Musée du Louvre (109 x 72 cm); *Christ Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist* at the Palazzo Ducale di Urbino, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche; *Virgin and Child* that appeared at the Pandolfini Casa d'Aste (17th November 2015, Lot 210; panel 24 x 15.5 cm) from a private collection in Milan; *Virgin and Child with angels* at the cathedral of Ventimiglia (panel, 102 x 85 cm), the central panel of an altarpiece; *Annunciation* at the Lindenau Museum in Altenburg (panel, 37,5 x 70,5 cm); *small altarpiece of the Virgin and Child between St John the Baptist and Saint Catherine with the Annunciation and the Calvary* at the Galleria Estense in Modena (panel, 59 x 30 cm); or the procession standard flag with the *Crucifixion*, on one side, and *Saints Anthony Abbot and Eligius*, on the other, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (fabric, 197 x 128 cm).

The mark left by Barnaba da Modena after decades of intense artistic activity in Genoa is seen in painters like Niccolò da Voltri (documented between 1385 and 1417), as seen in his *Virgin and Child* at the Chiesa di S. Rocco in Genoa, or even Taddeo di Bartolo (Siena, c.1362 – 1422), painter born in Siena who settled in Genoa for a few years.

Fig. 5. Barnaba da Modena, *The Crucifixion*, Indianapolis, John Herron Art Museum.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MARIAN MODELS IN THE PRODUCTION OF BARNABA DA MODENA

Most of the professional standing garnered by Barnaba da Modena is in relation to the creation or personal use, incorporating few changes, of several Marian prototypes that existed in the region of Liguria which would soon be highly sought, not only in Genoa but also in Piedmont, Tuscany and areas of the Iberian Peninsula. These works, where the Virgin and the Child take on a prominent role were, due to their nature and detail, the object of devotion by the faithful who saw them.

The first painting signed and dated by Barnaba, as mentioned earlier, is held at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt (panel 117.8 x 86.2 cm; inv. N.807) and is a representation of *Virgin and Child* over a gilded background with a trilobate arch held by thin columns. It is signed at the base in golden letters: Barnabas de mutina pinxit in Janua MCCCLXVII (fig.6).

Originating from a private collection in Bologna, it was sold by the painter and antique dealer Filippo Benucci to the Städelsches in 1830. It was originally part of a polyptych that must have been taken apart at the end of the 18th Century or start of the 19th Century. The fact that the name of the artist and date remain at the base of the painting undoubtedly helped its survival and preservation to the detriment of the remaining set at a time when the universe of Italian primitive painters was little appreciated.

A Byzantine flair is present in many of Barnaba da Modena's Marian examples. This is also true of this painting in Frankfurt, as seen in the veil and headdress covering the Virgin's head and in the blue cape with several parallel

gilded lines that suggest volumes and folds. Mary is represented at half-length, holding the Divine Child in her right arm.

Barnaba provides the Virgin with sweet features, establishing these particular facial features early on. These features underwent little changes and, considering the amount of replicas and copies, they were widely accepted. The Virgin's effigy shows three quarters of her face, with a large, sharp nose, her eyes drawn and almond-shaped, with large eyebrows, slight chin and a small, slender mouth with full lips. Her face and neck, with a detailed grading of the chiaroscuro is cut by the white veil and blue cape.

The trimming on the Virgin's cape includes golden ornamentation that repeats a similar, stylized geometric motif. Her head tilted slightly forward and turned, showing three quarters of her face, the Virgin gazes towards the viewer. Inside the halo over her head we can read the angelic salutation uttered by Archangel Gabriel to Mary: *AVE GRATIA PLENA DOMINU(S) TE(CUM)*.

The Infant Jesus, wearing a coral necklace (a symbol of the protection against evil) and big eyes also sets his gaze on the viewer. With a studied posture, we see how he takes his right hand to the sole of his left foot and his left arm rests on his knee.

Fig. 6. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut.

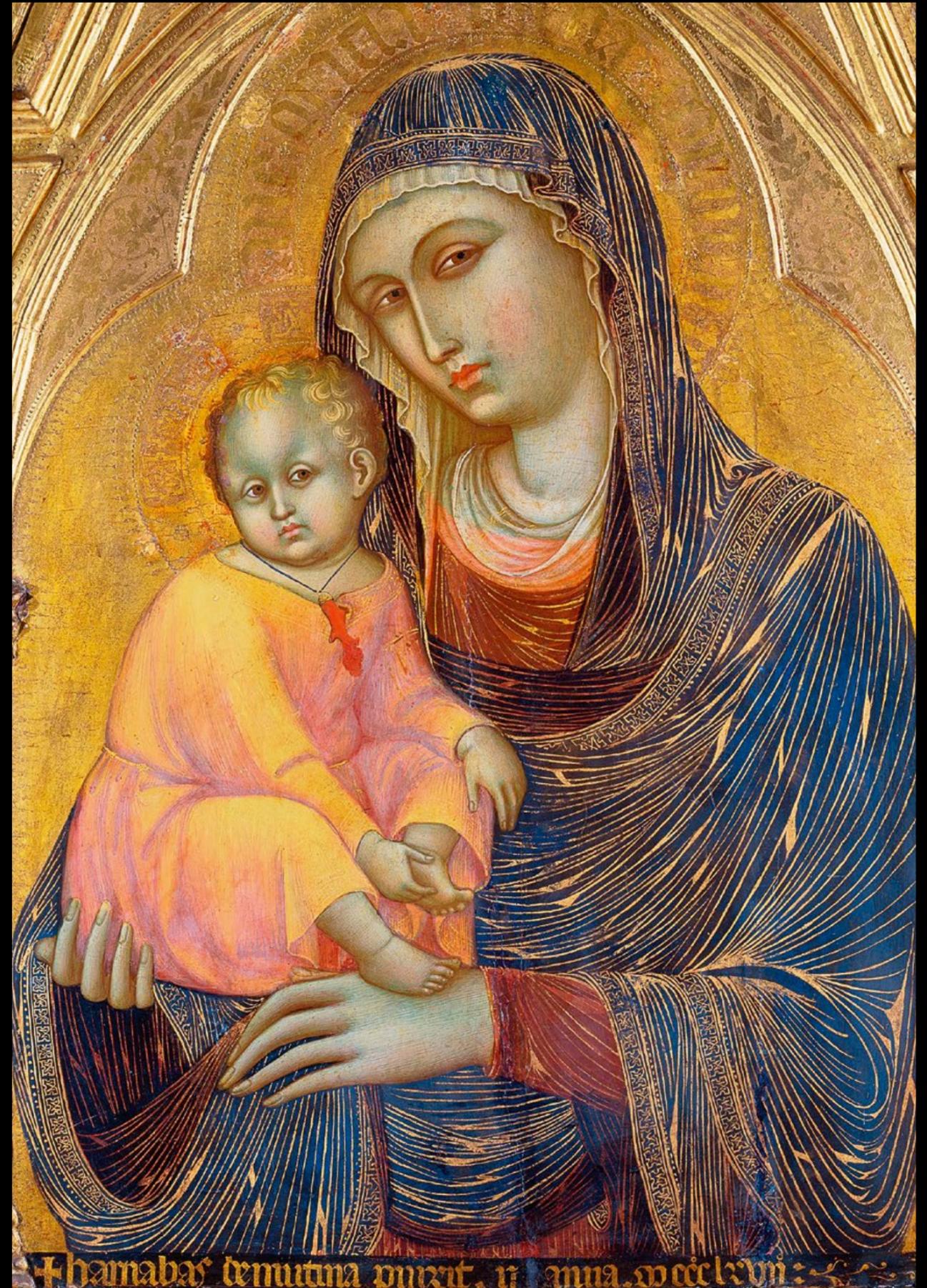




Fig. 7. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Torino, Museo Civico d'Arte Antica e Palazzo Madama.

This Marian prototype with such particular posture by the Infant Jesus was also used by Barnaba da Modena in another painting (fig.7), which is signed and has the remainder of a date, kept at the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica e Palazzo Madama in Torino (panel, 107 x 72.5 cm; inventory 0469/D).

The panel was purchased by the antique dealer Pietro Accorsi and belonged to the collection of Count Emanuele Balbo Bertone di Sambuy, where the scholar Francesco Gamba saw it in 1880. There are a few changes in comparison to the work of the same name in Frankfurt, in how the Virgin's hands are laid out, with her characteristic long fingers, and the way the Infant Jesus crosses his legs, showing the sole of his left foot once again. The date of execution cannot be specified from the fragments of date that have survived.

The creation and later reusing of panels, incorporating slight changes in the way the hands are laid out or determining certain gestures, were a constant in the pictorial practice at the workshop of Barnaba da Modena in these highly-iconic, devotional images.

Proof of this, for instance, is the panel signed by Barnaba but not dated that was formerly in the Crespi-Morbio collection of Milan, where it was made known by G. Gamba in 1924 and which we know would later on go on to the Stramezzi collection in Crema (fig.8). As in others of his paintings there is a line signed with golden letters at the bottom: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit...*

In this case, the novelty lies in the small-scale appearance of a patron. It is a Dominican friar, praying. The Virgin's large halo includes the following words in lower case: *ave gratia plena do(minus)*. The Infant Jesus similarly appears here with legs crossed and holding his left foot. The main difference is in the Infant Jesus' left hand and the elegance of Mary's hand and here distinctive long fingers.

Another example worth mentioning, also similar to previous models and with several changes, is the panel that belonged to the Schiff Giorgini collection in Rome in the 1930's, with persisting Byzantine elements and signed by Barnaba at the bottom (fig.9): *Barnabas de mutina pinxit*. In this piece, the Modena painter continues using the "maniera greca", as in previous examples, with the splendid effect of using gilt over a saturated color in the background, creating areas of brightness over the pictorial surface.

It should be pointed out that there is documentary evidence of a piece, currently lost, executed by Barnaba da Modena in 1370 for the *loggia del mercato di Banchi* in Genoa, an area of great significance given its public visibility, in a space where most of the city's trade activities took place.

Giuliana Algeri has proposed this piece to be a Marian prototype from which the abovementioned examples derive, repeating the same compositional outline with the Infant Jesus holding his bare foot in his right hand but changing the location of his left hand to resting on his chest.

Under this premise, the following examples are mentioned: *Virgin and Child* at the Museo Diocesano in Chiavari, previously at the local church of S. Giovanni Battista; *Virgin and Child* of the Santuario della Costa in Sanremo; two early panels of the painter Nicolò da Voltri at the Chiesa di S. Rocco in Genoa and the Santuario di Nostra Signora di Robreano; and, finally, the *fresco* at the Chiesa di Mondovi Breolungi (Cuneo) attributed to the painter Rufino d'Alessandria.

The Musée du Louvre in Paris purchased a *Virgin and Child* (fig.10) by Barnaba da Modena in 1968 (panel, 109 x 72 cm.; inventory RF 1968-4) from a collection in Nantes. Also present in this work is the brilliant execution offered by the painting at the Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt am Main, as is the gesture of the Infant Jesus with legs crossed and holding his left foot in his right hand. This position offers a glimpse into the symbolism of the cross and the future of the Passion of Christ.

What is original in this case is that the Infant Jesus is being breastfed by his mother. The iconography of *Our Lady of the Milk* will also be used by Barnaba da Modena in more than a few examples, highlighting with it Mary's maternity and her interceding role.

Above the Infant Jesus, who also wears coral around his neck and is dressed with a pink cloak, there is a halo that includes a cross, his gaze towards the viewer. The Virgin is wearing a red cloak, a thin veil and a blue cape with Barnaba's traditional pattern with gilded stripes, which offers a great chromatic effect. The inside of the halo contains the inscription: *AVE GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS TECUM*.

The panel includes trilobate Gothic tracery with fine stamping work, and has lost the two support columns. At the base, over the red fringe, remains of the painter's signature are visible.

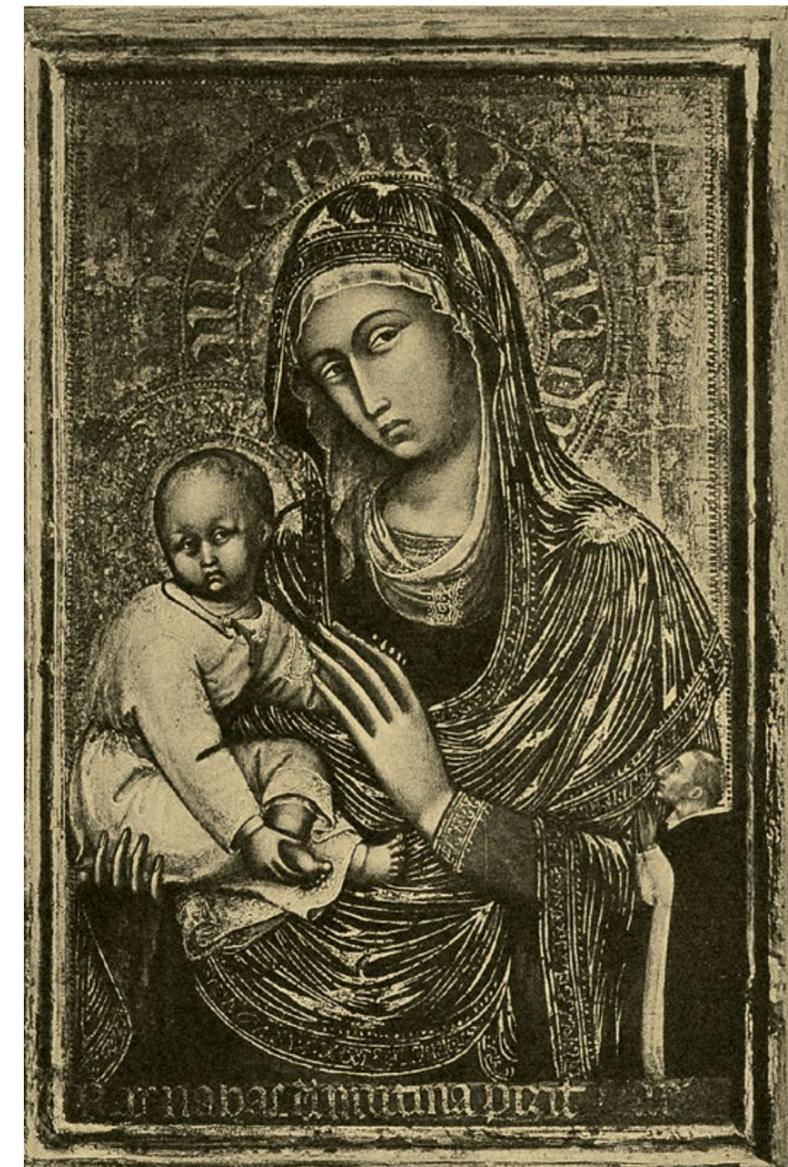


Fig. 8. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Crema, Stramezzi collection.



Fig. 9. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, formerly Schiff Giorgini collection of Rome.

Fig. 10. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Related to the latter painting is the altarpiece by Barnaba da Modena at the Chiesa dei SS. Andrea e Lucia in Ripoli di Cascina (Tuscany), prepared for Jacopo Compagni, a tradesman from Pisa (fig.11). The main panel with Our Lady of the Milk enthroned with angels continues with the slight variations of the *Maria Lactans* model at Musée du Louvre. The central panel is flanked by other panels with the Saints Bartholomew, Andrew, Peter and Augustine, represented fully-bodied with a golden background. Four angels hold a band of honor and Archangel Gabriel and the Announced Virgin appear at the top, each in a tondo.

The Infant Jesus with a halo that includes a cross has the same position as in previous examples, touching his left foot with his right hand. Like in the painting in the Louvre, he wears coral around his neck. However, in this one, his left hand rests on Mary's bosom.

The Virgin's halo has an inscription with the text of Lucas 1: 38: ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI FIAT (MIHI SECVNDVN VERBVM TVVM).

Within the dedication to *Maria Lactans*, another important prototype of the Virgin and Child by Barnaba da Modena can be pointed out, to which the painter turned to on several occasions. We are referring to the model of the *Our Lady of the Milk* originally from the church of San Francesco in Pisa which is currently kept at the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo in Pisa (fig.12).

The spandrels in the Gothic arch, supported by slender columns on a pedestal, include the figures of *Archangel Gabriel*, with a band bearing the inscription *Ave gratia plena*, and the *Announced Virgin*, in tondos, as in the case of the aforementioned Tuscan polyptych found in the Chiesa dei SS. Andrea e Lucia in Ripoli de Cascina. As with that altarpiece, the heads of the four angels take up the space of the different arcs holding an ornate band of honor.

The signature, in golden letters over a red plinth at the base reads: + · BARNABAS · DE · MUTINA · PINXIT · The Virgin is wearing a subtle white veil. In this case, some of her hair is suggested. The divine figures aren't placed over the traditional gilded background with fine burin work but over a red band of honor with golden elements. The decoration with the same stylized floral motive with an oval core, tapered following the band of honor, can be found in other works signed by Barnaba da Modena.

The Infant Jesus with his curly hair squeezes the bosom offered by Mary with both hands. There is another posture





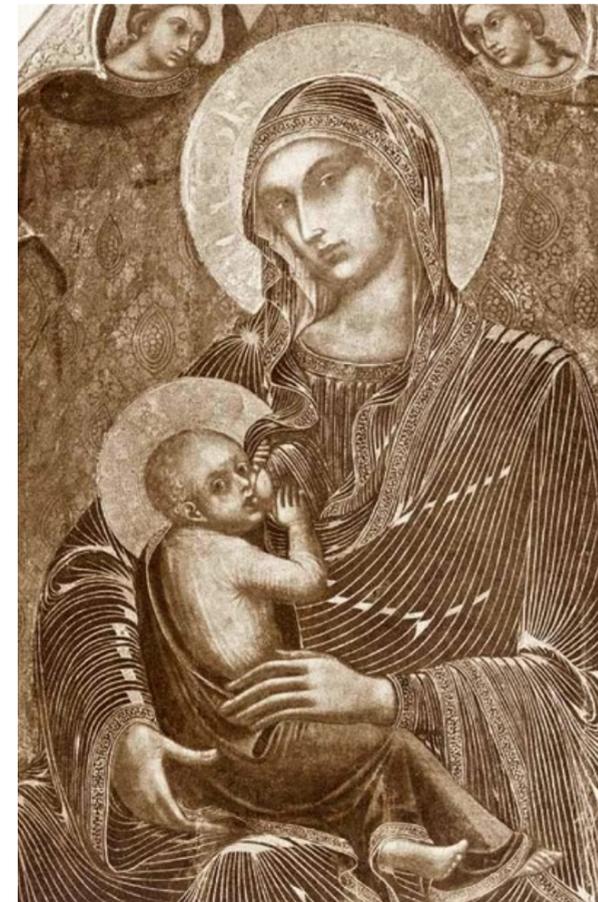


Fig. 12. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of the Milk*, Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo.

Fig. 13. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of the Milk*, Alba (Cuneo), Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista.

Fig. 14. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of the Milk*, Tortona (Piedmont), Chiesa di S. Matteo.

that also defines this prototype; we're referring to the torsion of the left foot crossing below the right knee.

Closely linked to the Pisa example in its formal characteristics is *Our Lady of the Milk* (panel, 141 x 98 cm), formerly from the Chiesa di S. Francesco di Alba (Cuneo) that was transferred to the Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista in this town of the Piedmont at the end of the 19th Century (fig.13).

This painting is signed and dated by Barnaba da Modena in 1377 and follows the painting of the same name found at the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo in Pisa, with few changes. In this case, two angels hold the band of honor surrounding the figures of the Virgin and the Infant Jesus. The panel in the Bergui collection in Alba belongs to the same group of works derived from this prototype.

We find similar features in the *Our Lady of the Milk* with gilded background, found at the Chiesa di S. Matteo in the

Piedmont location of Tortona, apparently originating in a Dominican complex in the town (fig.14). It has a trilobate arch like the *Our Lady of the Milk* in the altarpiece of the Chiesa di S. Dalmazzo in Savona (Liguria), signed and dated in 1386 by Barnaba da Modena (fig.15).

The Virgin represented at half-length, breastfeeding the Infant Jesus on her lap over a gilded background, presides the center of this important altarpiece with full-body figures of Archangel Michael, Saint Dalmatius, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The tilt of the Virgin's head, her hands and the position of the Infant Jesus coincide with the works found in Pisa and Tortona.

Another important Marian prototype by Barnaba da Modena appears closer to the timeline's center, dated in 1370; we're referring to the *Virgin and Child* (panel, 114 x 70 cm) originally at the Chiesa di S. Domenico de Rivoli (Piedmont) and now kept at Galleria Sabauda in Torino (fig.16).

This very elegant and refined painting is signed at the base: *Barnabas de mutina pinxit mcccclxx*. The Infant Jesus with collar around his neck and his usual curls is wearing a cloak and a cape. He is standing on his mother's lap. He carries a parchment in his right hand that bears an inscription taken from the Gospel according to St. Lucas 11: 28. (Quinimmo) beati, qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud.

Another panel signed by Barnaba da Modena, belonging to the Thyssen Bornemisza collection and kept in deposit at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (fig.17), is linked to the dated prototype at the Galleria Sabauda in Torino and is a good example to understand the practice of replicas at the Genoa workshop of Barnaba da Modena. The painting (51.5 x 37.6 cm) was conceived for export and is signed in Genoa: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit in lanua*. In this case, the painter has inverted the board and has introduced some changes. The Infant Jesus no longer holds the cape as in the Torino work; rather, he extends his hand towards his Mother's cape. In this case, he holds in his left hand the same band with the text quoted from the Gospel according to St. Lucas.

Two angels hold the beautiful band of honor, which stands out for its decorative richness. The stylized floral motif is again present, with an oval core, pointy at the top. As with the panel of *Virgin and Child* at Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt am Main, the halos in the sacred figures are superimposed as a result of their heads being so close. The Infant Jesus has a halo that includes a cross, a premonitory symbol of his future Passion and death. The Virgin has the typical angelic salutation inscription: *AVE GRATIA PL(ENA)*.

The same Marian prototype was used by Barnaba da Modena in the first years of the 1380's in his impressive *Madonna dei Mercanti* at the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo in Pisa (fig.18). The Infant Jesus holds an unfolded roll with a text from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 16: 24 *Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me*.

The two angels, kneeling at the feet of the Virgin enthroned, with a band of honor in the background, each hold bands with inscriptions bearing texts from John the Evangelist.

Fig. 15. Barnaba da Modena, *Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk*, Savona (Liguria), Chiesa di S. Dalmazzo.





The angel on the left holds a passage from St. John's Apocalypse 15:3-4 *magna et mirabilia opera tua Domine Deus omnipotens iustae et verae viae tua rex saeculorum quis non timebit Domine et magnificabit nomen tuum quia solus pius quoniam omnes gentes venient et adorabunt in conspectu tuo quoniam iudicia tua manifesta sunt.*

The young angel on the right holds another band with an inscription, bearing another text from the Apocalypse 16:15-16 *Beatus qui vigilat et custodit vestimenta sua ne nudus ambulet et videant turpitudinem eius et congregavit illos in locum qui vocatur hebraice Hermagedon.*

The Infant Jesus dressed in a cloak and cape tilts his head and his feet are arranged in similar fashion to the panel in Galleria Sabauda. The halo with a cross includes an inscription in capital letters from the Gospel according to St. John 8, 12: *EGO SU(M) LUX MUNDI.*

Another of Barnaba's Marian examples of great pictorial quality is the *Virgin and Child* at the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston (panel, 100.3 x 63.4 cm), a gift from Mrs. W. Scott Fitz 15.951 (fig.19). It was attributed to Barnaba da

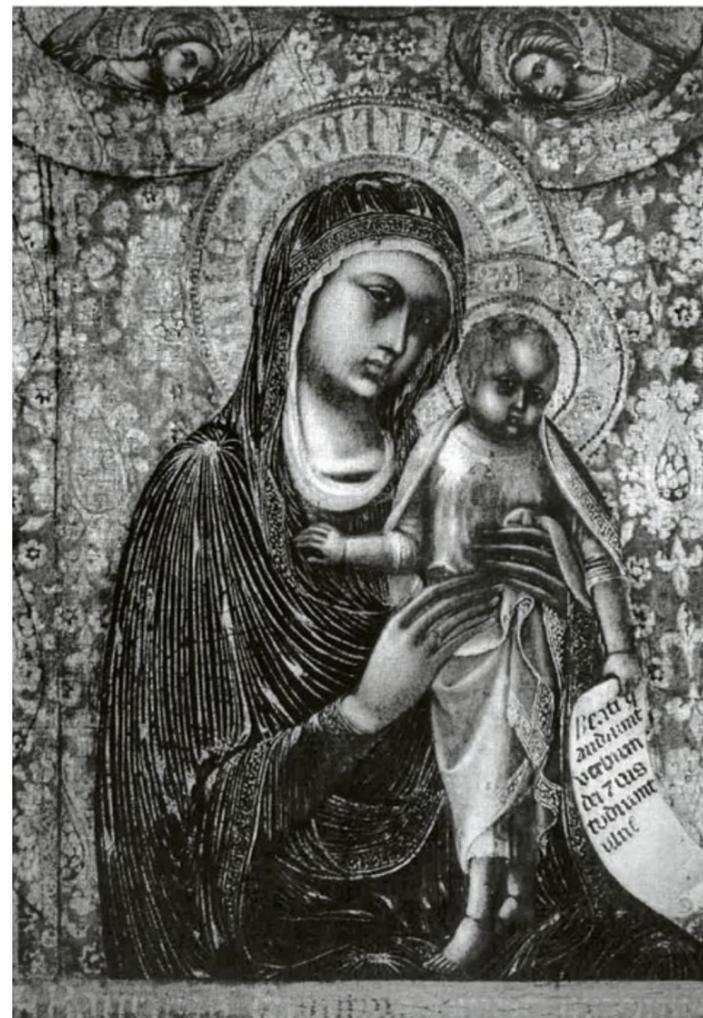


Fig. 16. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Torino, Galleria Sabauda.

Fig. 17. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (on loan from the Thyssen Bornemisza collection).

Fig. 18. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin enthroned Christ child with angels*, Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo.

Modena by Osvald Sirén in 1914 when it belonged to the R. Langton Douglas collection of London. As with other similar paintings, this isn't an individual piece as it was originally part of a polyptych.

The world of affection is more present in this devotional painting, with the Infant Jesus resting his arm on his Mother's shoulder and gazing at her tenderly. With this Boston painting, Barnaba continues with the decorative profusion that is typical of his work circa 1370, as seen in the Infant Jesus' attire and the Virgin's blue cape, made lighter by the abundance and shine of the gilt lines.



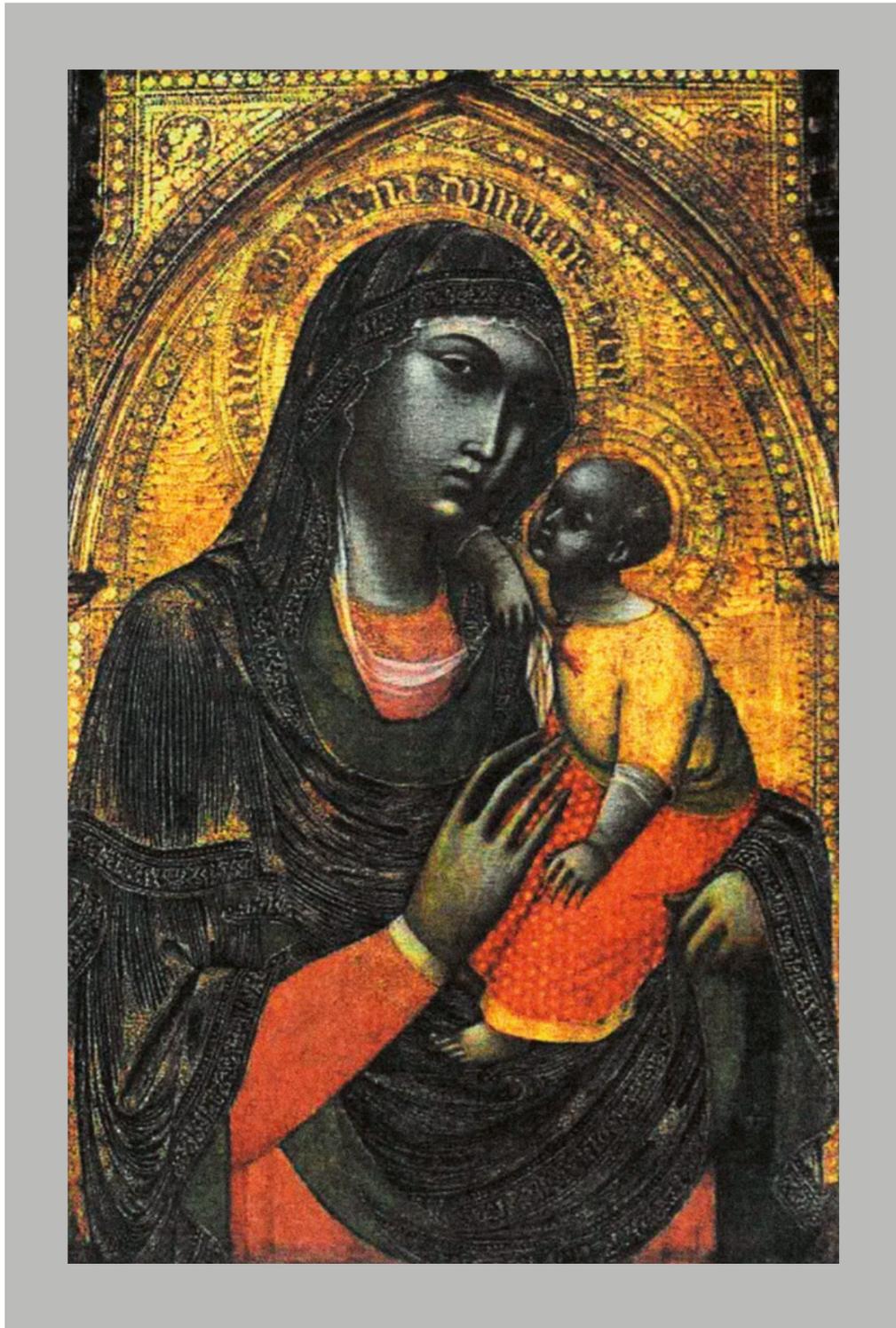


Fig. 19. Barnaba da Modena. *Virgin and Child*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Gift of Mrs W. Scott Fitz 15.951.

Fig. 22. Barnaba da Modena. *Virgin and Child*, Ventimiglia, Episcopal Palace.



A similar impression of beauty and decorative taste could be found in the *Virgin and Child* signed and dated by Barnaba da Modena (table, 106 x 66 cm) in 1369: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit MCCCLXVIII*, which was destroyed in the Museum of Berlin during the Second World War (fig.20).

Once belonging to the Lee collection in Richmond (Surrey), the Courtauld Institute in London keeps in its collection a small painting of *Virgin and Child* on panel (26.5 x 19.1 cm) signed by the painter of Modena: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit*. There is a strong Byzantine character to it and the Infant Jesus holds his Mother's cape in his right hand, holding an unfolded band in his left hand with an inscription from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 5: 3, *Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum* (fig.21).

We end this review of the several copies of the *Virgin with Child* painted by Barnaba da Modena by mentioning the painting from the Cattedrale di S. Maria Assunta in Ventimiglia (Liguria), corresponding to the painter's mature era (fig.22), which is now found at the Episcopal Palace.

The panel, which at some point was altered from its initial measurements, currently measures 102 x 85 cm, presenting a *Virgin and Child* cut over the band of honor held by two young angels. The Infant Jesus holds a band, whose inscription is fuller than on the painting found at the Courtauld Institute, including the passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew 5: 3-5, *Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum. Beati mites quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram. Beati qui lugent quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.*

Fig. 20. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum (Missing). Zeri photo library.

Fig. 21. Barnaba da Modena, *Virgin and Child*, London, Courtauld Institute.



THE ALTAPIECES OF BARNABA DA MODENA IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MURCIA

The two altarpieces found in the cathedral of Murcia that are signed by Barnaba da Modena, one dedicated to Saint Lucia, the other to Our Lady of the Milk, were part of the exhibition curated by Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón at the Museo Nacional del Prado in 1939, titled: *From Barnaba da Modena to Francisco de Goya. Exhibition of paintings from the 14th to the 19th Century recovered by Spain.*

They were shown in Room III and the exhibition catalogue specifies they were part of two different sets:

Altarpiece of St. Lucia
Size: 2.98 x 2.23
Cathedral of Murcia.

The protagonist, sitting; to the sides, eight passages of her legend. At the ends, four martyr saints, and in the central panel, the Calvary with two patron kings.

The central panel signed: Barnaba de Mutina pinxit MCD (?)

Panels from the Altarpiece to the Mother of God
Size: 1.06 x 2.23
Cathedral of Murcia.

In the center panel: Virgin and Child; to the sides: St. Anne, the Annunciation; Judgment Day call and St. Mary Magdalene; St. Nicholas and St. Lucia, St. Clair and St. Anthony Abbot.

Although until now these panels were considered to be part of the altarpiece described above, they are now considered to have been part of a different set, perhaps now incomplete.

*The patron in the St. Lucia panel, has been identified by M. González Simancas as the grandchild of Ferdinand the Saint, Don Juan Manuel, the great prose writer author of *El Conde Lucanor*; and in the St. Clair panel, a queen, which must be his daughter, Doña Juana Manuel, wife of Henry II. Although both altarpieces are posthumous (Don Juan Manuel died before August 1349 and his daughter in 1381), the iconographic interest of this painting is extraordinary as it is based on contemporary information.*

The central panel is signed: Barnaba de (Mutina) a MCC...

The oldest graphic references of these two polyptychs by Barnaba da Modena portray them mounted in one of the chapels of the cloister in the cathedral of Murcia as if they were a single set (fig.23). The understanding and conservation of these two sets, carried out in Genoa and kept since in Murcia, improved their recovery, funded by Fundación Argentaria at the suggestion of Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, who studied and presented them in 1993.

The iconic image of the Virgin breastfeeding the Infant Jesus over a gilded background (fig.25), having a larger size than the other panels, hierarchically presides the altarpiece



Fig. 25. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of the Milk* (Detail), Murcia, cathedral.



Fig. 24. Barnaba da Modena, *Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk*, Murcia, cathedral.



Fig. 27. Barnaba da Modena, *Portrait of Mr. Juan Sánchez Manuel, Count of Carrión (?)* (Detail), Murcia, cathedral, IPCE Photo.

of Our Lady of the Milk (106 x 223 cm; fig.24) at the center. At the bottom of this main panel, the remnants of the signature are present: "Barnabas dena pin..".

At the corners on the top, Saint Ann, in one, and Saint Mary Magdalene, on the other, appear at half length over a gilded background. Like all other saints, their names are inscribed in their halos. Two narrative scenes complete the top part: the Annunciation and Judgment Day.

Two saints over a gilded background occupy the bottom corners: Saint Nicholas of Bari on the left and Saint Anthony Abbot. The central panel is flanked by the half-length figures of Saint Lucia and Saint Clair, with the presence of two patrons.

This polyptych was most probably completed with the regular finishes at the top of each of the five panels, and it probably also included a stand or a *predella*.

This set, signed by Barnaba da Modena, presided the chapel built by the Manuel family in the cloisters of the Santa Iglesia Catedral de Santa María in Murcia. The crowned patron accompanying Saint Clair has been identified as Juana Manuel de Villena (1339 – 1381; fig.26), married in 1350 to Enrique de Trastámara, who in 1369 was crowned Henry II of Castile after the death of his brother Peter I in Montiel.

The fact that Juana Manuel appears with the queen's crown establishes the timeline for the *altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk* to be some time after the spring of 1369. The patron praying next to Saint Lucia was identified by García de Pruneda as the prince and writer Don Juan Manuel (1282 – 1348), author of *El conde Lucanor* among other works. The explanation provided was the idea of extolling the lineage, thus remembering Queen Juana Manuel's father who died in 1348.

This hypothesis was reviewed by Juan Torres-Fontes and Cristina Torres-Fontes Suárez who identify, like González Simancas before them, the patron as Don Juan Sanchez Manuel, Count of Carrión and *Adelantado* (Governor) of the Kingdom of Murcia (fig.27). This noble was the nephew of the prince Don Juan Manuel and cousin of Queen Juana Manuel. It should be considered that it was the Count of Carrión himself, through Genoese merchants active in Murcia, who ordered the altarpiece as a sign of gratitude towards the queen, his cousin, and to flaunt his lineage.

In his *Catálogo manuscrito de la provincia de Murcia*, kept in the library of the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute, the writer and archeologist from Cordoba, Manuel González Simancas (1855 – 1942), who served in the military, carried out the first historiographical appraisal and places both altarpieces in the chapel of Saint Anthony Abbot, reproduced here due to its interest:

"Before this chapel being known as of Saint Anthony Abbot it must have been dedicated to Saint Lucia. I base this hypothesis on the fact that both the main panel of its interesting altarpiece and the small statue that is placed over the keystone at the entrance, on the inside, is a representation of this saint, and both artworks originated in the last years of the 14th Century. The sculpture, modeled in ordinary limestone and painted, just over half a meter tall, rests under a small dossal of decorative lancet arches, over a corbel with an effigy, and both the statue and the ornamental elements follow the art of that century, proving they were cut at the same time as or only slightly later than the chapel".

The altarpiece, a work of great historical and artistic value, seldom mentioned and little known (fot.92-93 and 94), is lacking a predella which probably existed, and is formed by two large panels, one over the other, with the top panel crowned by a tiered canopy that elevates at the center, in line with the shape and distribution of the top compartments, all of them separated by slender pinnacles and finished by sharp and festooned gables. It is divided into five vertical areas, the central of which is wider. Each has molded and gilded separations, a trilobate arch is depicted, the top of which is a lancet, with gilt capitals and columnellas. Within the panels, the scenes are presented with no separation other than detailed horizontal bands, all of them representing affairs related to the Calvary; figures of saints and passages of the history and martyrdom of Saint Lucia, whose sitting effigy occupies the central panel, larger in size, over another slightly smaller where Our Lady of the Milk is painted at half length. The bottom panels include Saint Nicholas and Saint Anthony, at the sides, and again Saint Lucia and Saint Claire are found to the right and left of the Virgin; the first is sheltering an aged person kneeling in prayer, while the second protects a youthful-looking queen, in the same position.

Painted in black with tiny German characters, the painter's signature is found on the bottom molding of the central panel, reading:

+ barnabas de mutina pinxit in Janua



Fig. 26. Barnaba da Modena, *Portrait of Lady Juana Manuel* (Detail), Murcia, cathedral, IPCE Photo.

The fortunate preservation of this signature allows me to specify the time when this invaluable altarpiece was oil painted. This tells us that the work must have been carried out in the last third of the 14th Century, since Barnabas da Modena, renowned artist who painted the cemetery in Pisa, probably died circa 1381, a date which, though not corroborated, is pointed out by Vasari in his interesting work, *Le vite de piu eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architetti* (t.II, p.93).

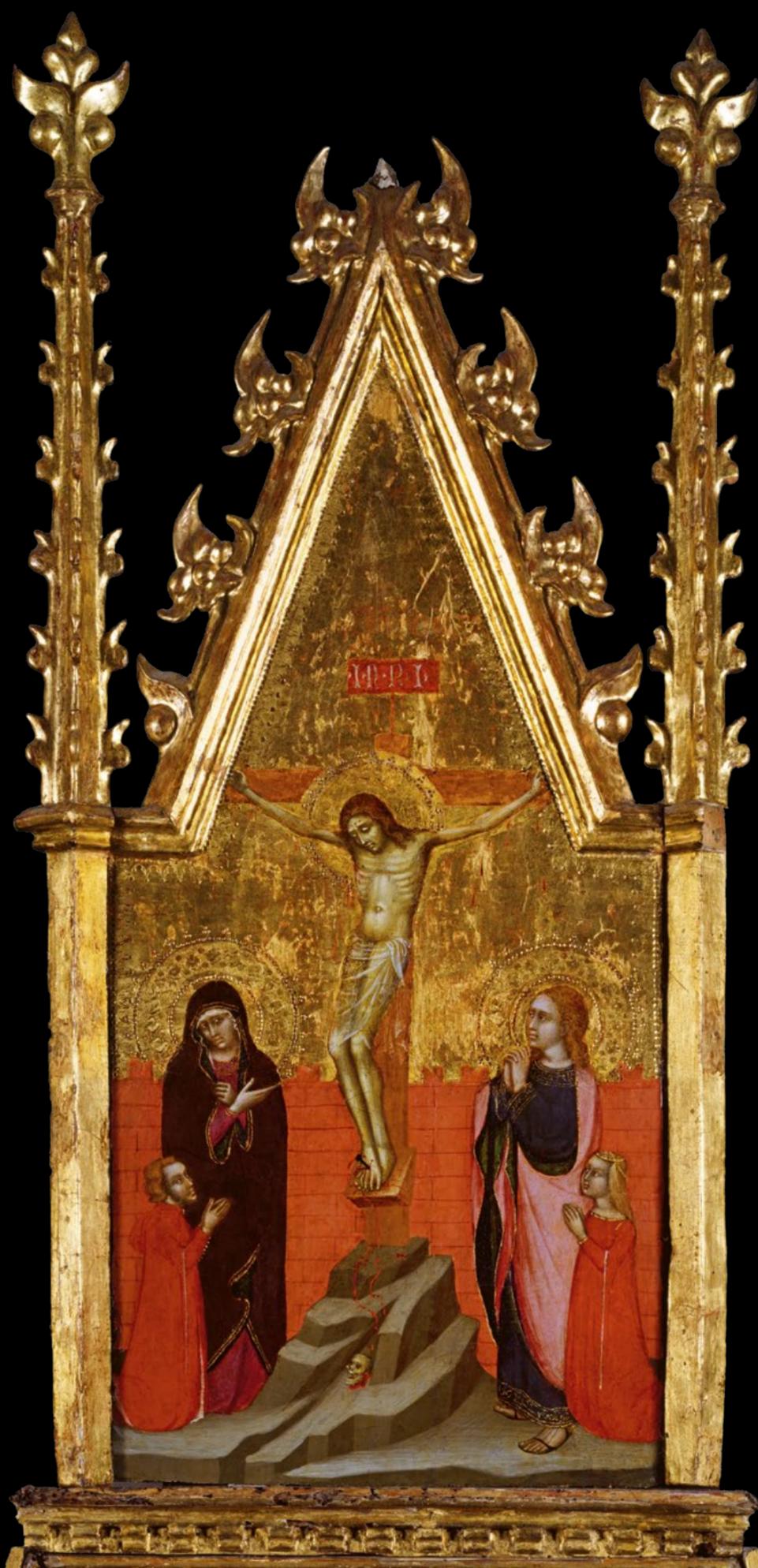
I am unaware of an older example of this kind of tall altarpiece, painted using the same technique, existing in Spain. Those existing are older or are painted with tempera, or were carried out in alabaster, such as the incomplete work at Santa María la Vieja in Cartagena (801) and the prominent work found at the chapel of Los Sastres in the cathedral of Tarragona, which survives intact.

The sole reason for discussion among scholars and archeologists in Murcia was the difficult issue of deciphering the iconographic representations present in the two lower panels, as mentioned, where the figures kneeling in prayer appear: one, female, as mentioned, with a royal symbol; the other, male, with a red knightly cape on his head, covered by abundant and long white hair, with no sign that there was ever a crown. Despite this decisive information and the apparent different ages of the characters, there were people who considered these to be portraits of the Catholic Monarchs (Mur. and Alb., p.413), an incorrect interpretation further corroborated by the artistic style of the work, where both era and social standing of the figures represented coincide with Doña Juana Manuel, widow of Henry II since 1379, and the Adelantado of Murcia, Don Juan Sánchez Manuel, Count of Carrión, so loved and defended by this queen (Casc.VII, 168). The royal shield of Castile and the Manuel family that are sculpted on the corbel in the quarters of the cloisters where this chapel is located, further strengthen this hypothesis.

Despite the inscrutable nature of the paintings and the errors in the drawings, typical of the times when they were carried out, they are not short, however, of other noticeable qualities, mainly in regard to color, easily understood, and the simplicity and naturalness found in its religious expression. The abundant gilt of the embellishments, mainly in the engraved halos and in some decorative borders and highlights, as well as the arrangement of the blue cape covering the head of the Virgin, tight over the forehead as

Fig. 28. Barnaba da Modena, Altarpiece of Saint Lucia, Murcia, cathedral.





used by the Byzantines, are features which, even if I hadn't known the artist signing this, would have guaranteed his Italian origin; unlike the pure lancet style of the architectural features and the frank reproduction of Gothic adornments and German lettering in the engraved brands and halos, which would make us think about the influence of a more westerly school, perhaps acquired by Barnabas in France or who knows if in Spain itself; especially considering that the altarpiece with the mentioned portraits, not formed by adapted pieces, indicates its origin is not at all related to that industrial and ordinary art that, at the time, would be exported from the main artistic centers."

The altarpiece of Saint Lucia (298 x 223 cm; fig.28) presents the saint enthroned in the central panel and is signed at the base: *Barnabas de Mutina pinxit in lanua*. The pinnacle presents the Crucifixion and two patrons, man and woman, dressed in red.

The four panels, subdivided into two areas, narrate passages of the life of Lucia, martyr of Syracuse: Saint Lucia at the tomb of Saint Agatha, Saint Lucia communicates the miracle cure to her mother Eutychia; Saint Lucia distributing her dowry to the poor; Saint Lucia before the governor Paschasius; Saint Lucia pushed by oxen to the brothel; the beheading of Saint Lucia; the arrest of Paschasius and the announcement of the fall of Diocletian; and the last communion of the Saint. Four ornaments with half-length saints occupy the top part of the side panels.

Ever since F.R. Pesenti studied these two altarpieces at the cathedral of Murcia in 1968, a later timeline was established for the *Altarpiece of Saint Lucia*, which Giuliana Algeri moves forward to at least the second half of the ninth decade of the 14th Century. The narrative nature of the scenes and the technical and chromatic differences with the *Saint Enthroned* and the *Crucifixion* made Pesenti think about the possible collaboration of a painter from Siena.

The mystery about the possible patrons, kneeling in the *Crucifixion* scene (fig.29), was solved by Juan Torres-Fontes and Cristina Torres-Fontes Suárez with their reasoned proposal, identifying Fernando Oller, outstanding member of Murcia's urban oligarchy, and his wife, Juana Pérez.

Fig. 29. Barnaba da Modena, *Crucifixion* (Detail), Murcia, cathedral.

Fernando Oller, mayor of the city of Murcia since 1367, purchased a chapel for his family to be buried in the cathedral, placing it under the patronage of Saint Lucia, as proven by a document from the bishop Diego de Comontes.

We also know that, in October 1384, he didn't attend a meeting of the town council as mayor because, as stated: "his eyes are hurting." His eye-related problems may have determined his decision to commission an altarpiece to the Saint from Syracuse, invoked for curing eye-related problems.

Closely linked to the *Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk* in the cathedral of Murcia and its patrons is the panel signed and dated by Barnaba da Modena in 1374 kept at the National Gallery in London (NG2927; 82 x 60.7 cm), which was part of the *Art Treasures* exhibition in Manchester in 1857 (fig.30), then owned by Sir James Parke, Lord Wensleydale (1782-1868). As mentioned earlier, this set appeared in the first illustrated art history published in Paris between 1810 and 1823 by B.L.G. Seroux d'Agincourt due to its singular nature and the fact that it is signed and dated by Barnaba da Modena, a little known painter at the start of the 19th Century.

Now together, this painting is really the sum of the two doors of a triptych whose central panel is unknown. To the left, we find the *Coronation of the Virgin* at the top, and the *Virgin enthroned and Child with Archangel Rafael and two patrons* at the bottom. To the right, there is the *Trinity* at the top and the *Crucifixion* at the bottom. The twelve apostles appear as the *predella*.

Corrado Ricci in 1913 tentatively identified the two patrons as the Doge of Genoa, Domenico Fregoso, and his wife. Franco Pesenti, scholar of Barnaba da Modena's altarpieces in the cathedral of Murcia, pointed out the crown that the female patron is wearing, which makes Ricci's proposal improbable, suggesting more plausibly the patrons were the king and queen of Castile, Henry II of Trastámara and his wife Juana Manuel.

Critics have noticed that the male patron, wearing a pilgrim's habit and protected by Archangel Rafael, patron saint of travelers, is not wearing a crown. There is speculation as to this being a posthumous portrait of the queen's father, the writing prince, Don Juan Manuel, who died in 1348, or else the queen's cousin, Don Juan Sánchez Manuel, Count of Carrión and Governor of Murcia.



Fig. 23. Barnaba da Modena, *Altarpieces of Our Lady of the Milk and Saint Lucia*, Murcia, cathedral.

Fig. 30. Barnaba da Modena, *Scenes of the Virgin; The Trinity; The Crucifixion*, London, National Gallery.



OUR LADY OF HUMILITY

This virtually unknown painting on panel (180 x 95 cm) of *Our Lady of Humility* rigorously continues the personal archetypal styles of renowned painter Barnaba da Modena, who was active in the city of Genoa during the second half of the 14th Century.

It was photographed at the start of the 20th Century by the scholar González Simancas in a hermitage in Yecla, a town in Murcia (fig.32). It now reappears a century later, seeing the public light once again for Gothic painting specialists, after being kept in different private collections.

The Marian denomination used by Barnaba for this painting is *Madonna dell'Umiltà* (Our Lady of Humility), which was used throughout the *Trecento* across the Mediterranean, and which presents Mary sitting on cushions, breastfeeding the Infant Jesus on her lap.

The word humility comes from the Latin *humus*, which, as we know, means earth. At the same time, Barnaba pertinently combines the *Galaktrophousa* typology from the Byzantine tradition, known as *María Lactans* or *Virgo Lactans* in the West. The Virgin nourishes the Divine Child, sitting on her lap, with mother's milk, thus highlighting her maternity and interceding role.

The photographs taken by González Simancas in Yecla are of great interest, allowing us to see the state of this *Our Lady of Humility* at the start of the 20th Century, as well as the comments that Simancas himself collected in his *Catálogo manuscrito de la provincia de Murcia*, kept at the library of the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute, correctly

linking it, as first historiographical reference of this work, to the pictorial universe of Barnaba da Modena:

"As I mentioned earlier (109), there are no remnants of buildings prior to the Saracen domination in the town of Yecla. Those that do remain from that historical period can be found on the Castle's hill and are limited to the foundations and remnants of the walls of the old fortress, built with mortar, and several ruined houses next to the hermitage, almost at the foot of the walls, and also the rubble of others where the remains of glazed pottery is usually found.

The old hermitage, rebuilt in modern days, must have had an interesting altarpiece, perhaps in the form of a triptych, attributed to Barnaba or another Italian painter of the time (14th Century). This is accredited by the panel, 1.75 meters tall and 0.92 meters wide, purchased there in exchange for new ornaments and payment of other works, by the owner and retired member of the armed forces, Mr. Pascual Spuche y Lacy, who now keeps it at home, having saved it from poor restoration works that had already begun. The painting represents Our Lady of the Milk, sitting, full-bodied (fot.284), and judging by the artistic style and technique, this work is virtually identical to the work owned by Mr. Bolarín in Murcia (752), although with richer and more

Fig. 31. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of Humility*, Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery.

Detail. (Pág. 48)

Detail. (Pág. 49)







Fig. 31. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of Humility*, Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery.

beautiful gilt work with little relief in the background, halos and clothing. Only the embodiments, the Virgin's blue cape, the cloth in which the Infant is wrapped and the cushion on which she sits are colored."

This *Our Lady of Humility* by Barnaba da Modena originates in the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación in Yecla on the Castle's hill, dating from the 14th Century. The dedication of the Castle's shrine to Encarnación was kept until 1819, when it was changed to Purísima Concepción. This must be the reason why the inscription at the top of the panel reads TOTA PULCRA ES AMICA MEA (ET MACULA NON EST IN TE), which is a reference to the Song of Songs 4, 7.

The Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute keeps photographs of this *Our Lady of Humility* from around 1940, when it was owned by J. A. Weissberger (Moreno

Archive 20960-B (fig.33), 07330_B, 20968_B and 20972_B (fig.34)).

Francisco Javier Delicado Martínez includes in his study - "La devoción popular en Yecla (De creencias, fiestas y ritos)" *Revista de Estudios Yeclanos. Yakka*, no.7, 1996, pp.83-128-, several written testimonies about the painting located in the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación, which was thought lost until it was mentioned by González Simancas.

Cosme Gil Pérez de Ortega, from Yecla, thus mentions in chapter 2 of a manuscript from 1777: "In this giant or hill, at the top of which lies the ruins of the castle built without difficulty by Gentiles, the highest construction rebuilt by the Romans, fought over by the Saracens who dominated with their waning moons, and recovered by the Catholics who have ravaged the pride of its buildings.



Fig. 32. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of Humility*, IPCE Photo (ca.1905).

Fig. 35. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of the Milk*, Genoa, Chiesa di S. Donato.

There is still a turret or small tower today in its right ear, with four crenelations on the four sides that serve to conjure the tempests and bless the fields. The Stations of the Cross pass alongside it. On its right shoulder, the old Parish of Nuestra Señora del Populo, named Encarnación, where for time immemorial the prodigious and admirable image of our Patron Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, named Purísima Concepción, has been worshipped: there she has a neat but small chamber"; and in chapter 22, Pérez de Ortega points out:

"Although there is currently no other religious pilgrimage than that of the glorious St. Mark the Evangelist (because the pilgrimage of maidens to the Kingdom of Valencia to Our Lady of the Incarnation venerated at the castle expired)", in "Historical fragments of the town of Yecla", *Revista de Estudios Yeclanos. Yakka*, no.4 (1992-1993), pp. 109-115.w

The geographer Bernardo Espinalt y García offers another testimony of the Marian image presiding the altar in his work *Atlante Español* when he writes about the town of Yecla: "The very Noble, very Loyal and very Faithful town of Yecla is located at thirty-eight degrees, thirty-three minutes latitude, and fifteen degrees, and fifty-three minutes longitude, on the side of a mountain range, vulgarly known as Castle Hill. A spring water canal runs through the settlement, born quarter league away from the Town, fertilizing vegetable gardens, vineyard and olive groves, which supply the population: it has two thousand neighbors and a single Parish, named after Our Lady's Assumption. That which once existed at the Castle, is today a congregation of hermits to Our Lady of Conception: its foundation is unknown, it was a Parish before the Moors' invasion and is believed, through tradition, that Jesus Christ was venerated there by Mozarab Christians during the settlement of Muslims in



Fig. 34. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of Humility* (Detail), IPCE Photo, Moreno Archive 20972_B.



Fig. 33. Barnaba da Modena, *Our Lady of Humility*, IPCE Photo, Moreno Archive 20960_B.



Fig. 36. Anonymous, *Our Lady of the Milk*, formerly Apolinar Sánchez Collection.

Spain, as accredited by the Gothic lettering on its walls, engraved and embellished in 1740. The Image of Jesus Laying is venerated there. The Virgin of Incarnation, present at the main Altar, is in every way similar to Santa María del Popolo in Rome, whose painting, attributed to Saint Lucas, convinces in its antiquity." (*Atlante Español, o Descripción General de todo el reino de España. Reyno de Murcia*, Madrid 1778, pp. 158-159).

Pascual Giménez Rubio, a historian from Yecla, also praises it in his third chapter "About the Sanctuary in the Castle" in his *Memoria de apuntes para la historia de Yecla*, Impr. Juan Azorín 1865: "There was in its altar a beautiful image painted on wood title THE INCARNATION, which gave its name to the temple, to which the skilled hand of the devout monk Lucas gave celestial nuance, as enthusiastically expressed by our erudite compatriot mentioned earlier. It is a true portrait, he said, as painted by the sacred

epithalamium: *nigra sum sed formosa* of Ethiopian color and, as is said, in every way similar to Nuestra Señora del Pópulo in Rome. It can still be seen today, although very deteriorated (In Note 2: This image that, given its age and tradition, is a precious and invaluable gem is still placed in a corner of the sanctuary's vestry as insignificant. It was apparently removed from the main altar in 1819, when improvements to it and its surroundings were started"); Giménez Rubio also informs us about certain aspects regarding its devotion: "In olden times, the affection for and worshipping of this image, given its celebrity, was such that processions of maidens in caravans from the Kingdom of Valencia singing harmonious verses and sweet hymns would arrive, in praise, to take their vows and comply with the innocent offerings regarding their life. It is known, according to what we've seen in several manuscripts, that such pilgrimage took place annually much after Spain was restored." (pp. 74-75 and 77).



Fig. 38. *Our Lady of Humility* (Detail of the tunic), Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery.

Fig. 39. *Our Lady of Humility* (Detail of the gilt), Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery.

Fig. 37. *Our Lady of Humility* (Detail of the cloak), gilded motif, Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery..

Fig. 40. *Our Lady of Humility* (Detail of the gilt), Madrid, Nicolás Cortés Gallery.

This *Our Lady of Humility* studied now, after a timely restoration, at times follows the model of the *Our Lady of the Milk* by Barnaba da Modena found in the altarpiece of the cathedral of Murcia, where, as pointed out earlier, Mary appears at half length breastfeeding the Divine Child (fig.25).

Very similar in composition is the *Our Lady of the Milk* (panel, 126 x 73 cm) by Barnaba da Modena found at the Chiesa dei SS. Cosma e Damiano in Genoa (fig.35), now deposited at the Genoese Chiesa di S. Donato. As mentioned with specific examples in the previous section, dedicated to the importance of Marian models in the production of the painter from Modena, we find here another thriving and accurate prototype of the *Virgin and Child* by Barnaba.

Given its characteristics and its flat top, this painting at the Chiesa di S. Donato would have originally been the central panel of a polyptych. The spiral columns hold a lancet arch which is trilobate on the inside. The Virgin, with a red tunic, white veil and blue cape with gilded trimming and stylized motifs slightly bows her head, with the words of angelic salutations found above the halo.

There are slight changes to the Virgin's hands compared to the work in the cathedral of Murcia and *Our Lady of Humility*. Here we see how the ring and middle fingers on her right hand come closer and touch; and how the index finger on her left hand stands out since all other fingers are folded to hold the cape.

The Divine Child, holding his mother's breast, also directs his gaze to the viewer. He also crosses his left leg below his right leg, showing the bare sole of his foot. He is covered with an open cape, practically showing his torso down to his belly button.

This same model of *Our Lady of the Milk*, with the Marian representation at half-length, was pointed out by the scholar González Simancas in a panel that belonged to the Bolarín collection at the start of the 20th Century, which is not contemporary to the panel here mentioned or to the one in the cathedral of Murcia.

This easel painting (fig.36), its whereabouts unknown though it is known to have later belonged to the Apolinar





Sánchez collection in Madrid, is a late 15th Century or early 16th Century copy painted in oil, as shown by the hands and faces over gilded background, which show the work undertaken by the gilders. Christ's monogram (IHS XPS) appears inside the Divine Child's halo. There is an inscription in parchment at the bottom: *Nigra sum sed Formosa, filiae Jerusalem*, from the Song of Songs (1:5), and the cape's trimming reads *Magnificat anima mea Dominum* (Lucas 1: 46-55).

A detailed study of the painting of *Our Lady of Humility* makes it possible to suggest, with a degree of certainty based on certain objective proof, that this work was painted by Barnaba da Modena on Spanish land. Supporting this working hypothesis, which opens new and interesting perspectives on our knowledge of Barnaba's artistic career, are the pinewood support (common in altarpiece sets in the Spanish region of Levante), the typical Spanish structure of the altarpiece with a vertical in-between strip, known as *entrecalle*, and a suitable space for a canopy with Gothic tracery at the top that would stand on the capital of spiral columns, together with the burin gilt work with (interlaced) stylized geometric elements of Arab roots.

It could be thought that the painter accompanied Genoese merchants during the delivery of one of the two important altarpieces for the cathedral of Murcia, and that in the lands of Murcia he painted this magnificent painting that repeats the theme of the Virgin breastfeeding the Infant Jesus, which is the most recurring topic in his production, for which he was valued and recognized the most.

Based on the style and close relationship with the altarpiece of *Our Lady of the Milk* in the chapel of the Manuel family, it may be considered that Barnaba traveled with the altarpiece itself from Genoa to Murcia on a date circa 1370 and, once there, he would have produced this *Our Lady of Humility* without us knowing the conditions of such commission.

It would seem logical to think that this canopied panel was the main center panel of an altarpiece that included more elements. The two vertical mullions or strips, or *entrecalles*, flanking the painting are separated by a few centimeters from the panel that received on either side the paintings from the side panels, which only had a vertical mullion on one of their sides.

The physiognomic features of the Virgin, her head covered with a veil and cape, are typical of the *Madonnas* by Barnaba da Modena, with a long nose, eyebrows and a small mouth with full lips, as well as a small, illuminated



Fig. 41. Jaume Serra, *Our Lady of Toted*, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.

Fig. 43. Llorenç Saragossà, *Our Lady of the Milk*, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Fig. 45. Llorenç Saragossà, *Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk, Saint Claire and Saint Anthony*, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Fig. 44. Llorenç Saragossà,
Our Lady of the Milk,
Valencia, Museo catedralicio.



chin (fig.31). We see three quarters of her face with the customary tilt of the head and her gaze fixed on the viewer. The custom blend of pigments known as *verdaccio*, used as the foundation, and subtle rosy touches on the cheeks are visible.

The Virgin's blue cape doesn't include the common pattern of gilded lines common in Barnaba da Modena's Byzantine tastes; it includes a gold star on the left shoulder and a golden decoration with a small bird standing on a plant stem, holding a leaf in his beak, repeated regularly across its surface (fig.37). The gilded trimming of the cape stands out. Created using a burin, it includes a circular motif that is repeated, with seven impressions. Also outstanding, the flesh-colored lining helps provide a greater impression of volume thanks to the chromatic contrast.

As with other examples of Our Lady of Humility found on Spanish land, the Mother of God is wearing a gilded tunic created using a burin. It presents decorations that are tiered in strips, following the squares formed by the mesh of stylized *quatrefoil* and little turtledove-looking birds with spread wings, their profile created with small taps of the burin, with mirrored and axial symmetry (fig.38). When it coincides with the small bird, it also includes a circle with seven impressions made with a graver. Far from looking like a flat surface, the cape takes on the appearance of a fabric with incisions and curves of painted pleats, helped by the white lining and the shoes that appear at the bottom.

The Virgin is sitting on two profusely-decorated cushions, the bottom one in carmine and the top one in a gamut of greens. The floor is formed by a pattern of black vanishing double lines, occasionally creating parallelograms with flesh-colored or auburn lines on the inside.

The Virgin's large halo, 46 cm in diameter, is worth mentioning. It includes the inscription: *ave maria gratia plena dominus*.

The Infant Jesus with his curly hair hold his Mother's bosom with both hands, his head turned directing his gaze to the viewer (fig.31). A white cloth covers his nakedness, leaving his feet uncovered.

The halos of the divine figures are superimposed, since the diameter of the Virgin's halo has grown, alongside an external strip with flowers stylized according to the space dedicated to the inscription with the angelic salutation. The Infant Jesus has a halo with a cross that has the letters alpha and omega intertwined and a string around the circumference with identical and continuous graver marks, each forming the impression of three circles. The following internal layer of the halo depicts the succession of a strip that is folded regularly and then pulled out, showing triangular forms that are uniformly alternated to offer the inside and outside of the strip, with traces of a graver.

Two seven-centimeter vertical strips created using a burin form the left and right borders of the space with gilded background. They cross another horizontal strip that closes the space at the top, forming two squares with a

Fig. 42. Llorenç Saragossà,
Our Lady of the Milk,
Barcelona, Godia collection.



The iconography of Our Lady of Humility was especially developed in the Kingdom of Aragon, with a great influence from Italian painting. We should first of all mention the *Virgin of Tobed* at Museo Nacional del Prado (fig.41), donated by the family Várez Fisa in 2013 (panel, 161.4 x 117.8 cm; inv.P.8117). Attributed to Jaume Serra (documented from 1358 to 1390), this painting formed the central panel of a larger altarpiece at the church of Santa María de Tobed (Zaragoza) which depended on the priory of the Holy Sepulcher in Calatayud.

At the Virgin's feet, flanked by four angels, are the patrons, King Henry II of Castile (1333-1379), his wife Queen Juana Manuel (1339-1381) and two sons.

Following a similar outline, there are a few examples attributed to the Master of Villahermosa, so named by Saralegui in 1935 based on a few altarpieces found in the location of Villahermosa del Río in Castellón, and which critics identify with either Llorenç Saragossà or Francesc Serra II, both active in Barcelona and Valencia.

representation of roses with polished gilt outlines that bear small burin marks with incisions that are only a few millimeters wide (fig.39).

Both seven-centimeter strips are decorated with two stylized oak tree leaves that fold through the inside of four rings. At the centre, there are two flattened and interlaced rings through which the leaves' stems also fold, forming a figure with Arab roots (fig.40). The same circular motif with seven graver marks on the inside is also combined here, as in other gilded parts.

The incorporation of this *Our Lady of Humility* to the reasoned works by Barnaba da Modena as a piece crafted on Spanish land opens new paths to study his creative eras and gives rise to new questions regarding patronage and a timeline that is yet to be settled. The hypothesis of Barnaba da Modena possibly staying in Spain, as pointed out by A. De Bosque in 1965 –*Artistes italiens en Espagne du XIV siècle aux Rois Catholiques*- becomes increasingly plausible with this painting of *Our Lady of Humility* in Yecla.

In this context, the following stand out: *Our Lady of the Milk*, originally from the hermitage of Saint Catherine in Torroella de Montgrí, in Girona (fig.42), from the Godia collection in Barcelona (panel, 218 x 125 cm); *Our Lady of Humility* from the parish church of Natividad de Nuestra Señora in Villahermosa del Río, in the province of Castellón; *Our Lady of the Milk* found in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (196.7 x 148.4 cm) originally from the cathedral of Albarracín and then purchased by the Plandiura collection in 1932 (fig.43); *Our Lady of Humility* from Peneda Castle (fig. 44) currently at the Cathedral Museum of Valencia (panel, 192 x 108 cm); *Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Milk, Saint Claire and Saint Anthony* (207 x 187.5 cm) at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, originally from the population of Chelva, in Valencia, and purchased by the Muntadas collection (fig.45); *Our Lady of the Milk* in the former Muñoz Ramonet collection or *Our Lady of the Milk* disappeared from the parish of Salvador in Valencia.

ORIGIN OF OUR LADY OF HUMILITY

• Hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación in Yecla (Murcia); D. Pascual Spuche de Lacy collection; José Arnaldo Weissberger Kahn collection (Brno 1878 – Zurich 1954); Madrid, private collection..

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