THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE
ON MASOLINO DA PANICALE

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for the Degree Master of Arts

by
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INTRODUCTION

Masolino da Panicale (c. 1383-1447) was a Florentine painter whose artistic style combines characteristics of the International Style and of the new "Renaissance" style which appears in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The purpose of this thesis is to consider the influence of the International Style on the art of Masolino. The International Style is, for the purposes of this study, designated as that artistic movement which emerged as the dominant style in painting and sculpture in northern Europe during the second half of the fourteenth century. Its influence appears in Italy about 1400. By the term "Renaissance" we mean that more progressive movement in art which appears particularly in Florence during the first quarter of the fifteenth century with innovations in the use of perspective, in the plastic modeling of figures, and in the study of motifs from classical antiquity.

Part I of this essay consists of a survey of the documentary evidence which relates Masolino to the art of the International Style and to artists who represented the International Style in Italy. However, the documentary evidence, so far published, is meager. It is thus necessary to depend primarily on stylistic evidence to distinguish Masolino's relationship to the International Style. Part II is a discussion of the historical development and of the general characteristics of the International Style as it appears in northern Europe and in Italy. This discussion in Part II provides a background for the examination of the characteristics of the International Style in Masolino's work.
For this examination, eleven paintings from Masolino's total existing oeuvre have been chosen. This selection includes both panel paintings and frescoes, since the artist worked in both media, and it includes both "early" and late works. Part III is devoted to an analysis of these selected paintings.

A summation of the influence of the International Style on the art of Masolino is made at the conclusion of the thesis. The research conducted in connection with this study revealed facets of the artist's life and work which justify further investigation. Questions which suggest some areas for further study are posed in the conclusion.
PART I

THE EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING OF MASOLINO AS RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

The study of the available information about the early life and training of Masolino indicates little definite evidence concerning the influence of the International Style on his painting.

Masolino was born, about 1383 in Umbria at Panicale, which is a few miles west of Perugia. This suggests that he was exposed to fourteenth century art in the neighboring towns of Orvieto, Perugia and Assisi. He may have seen contemporary Italian International Style work in these cities and also in Fabriano, the birthplace of Gentile da Fabriano (c.1360-1426), one of the most famous artists of the International Style in Italy.

Paintings that Masolino might have seen in Orvieto include Gentile da Fabriano's Madonna and Child, a fresco in the Cathedral of Orvieto which is dated 1425. The figures on this fresco, with their ornate and calligraphic drapery, are typical of the International Style in Italy. During the fourteenth century, Orvieto was greatly influenced by the art of Simone Martini (1255?-1344) who painted there about 1320. A Siennese goldsmith, Ugolino di M. Veri, also executed the reliquary for the relics of the miracle of Bolsena, now in the Cathedral of Orvieto. This Siennese influence affected many artists in Orvieto and many of the paintings preserved in the city display Siennese characteristics which Masolino might have seen and studied.
The importance to this study of Siennese painting is its influence from French Gothic art during the fourteenth century. The paintings of Duccio (c.1260-1319) and Simone Martini are filled with fourteenth century Gothic motifs such as elongated figures, bright colors, and flat curvilinear drapery. The Siennese artist Duccio was probably introduced to the French Gothic style through his friend Giovanni Pisano (c.1250-after 1314), a sculptor whose art was influenced by the French Gothic style of the fourteenth century. Another great Siennese artist of the fourteenth century was Simone Martini whose work shows many characteristics of the French Gothic style. Simone Martini worked at the French court of Robert of Anjou in Naples and also at Avignon where he came in contact with the French Gothic style. His art, like Duccio's was strongly influenced by the French Gothic tradition.

If Masolino saw any of the work of fourteenth Siennese artists near his native town, he would have been introduced to many of the French Gothic characteristics that the International Style was to display in Italy later in the century.

The art of the first half of the fourteenth century in Perugia was influenced by the Siennese artists, Nefo da Siena (c.1250-after 1314) and Pietro Lorenzetti (d.7?=1348). During the last half of the century, the influence of Simone Martini was prevalent in this Umbrian town.

In Assisi, Masolino may have seen paintings by Pietro Lorenzetti such as the Last Supper, a fresco in the left transept of the Lower Church of San Francesco (c.1330). Even though some of Pietro's paintings in Assisi is similar to the style of the Florentine painter, Giotto, this Siennese artist remains close to the artistic tradition of his native city.
That is, he places emphasis on details and ornamental compositions. Simone Martini also painted a fresco series in St. Martin's Chapel in the Lower Church of San Francesco in c.1322. These frescoes were painted after Simone returned from the French Court at Naples and they are filled with such Gothic characteristics as curvilinear drapery and ornate surfaces. The Angevin court in Naples commissioned Simone to execute these frescoes depicting the life of the French saint, St. Martin.

Gentile da Fabriano, who was born in Fabriano about 1370, was known to have been in his native city again in 1420. His work was conceivably known to Masolino either by the close proximity of the cities of Fabriano and Panicale or because at a later date, the two artist were working in Florence. In the year 1423 in Florence, Gentile executed his Adoration of the Magi and Masolino was admitted to a guild as a painter.

Information on Masolino's early life indicates that he was a very good goldsmith. If this is true, it is reasonable to assume that when Masolino turned to painting, his style would show traces of goldsmith training through an interest in ornate surfaces and fine linear compositions. One can observe both of these characteristics in some of the paintings by the artist.

It is likely that the International Style had one of its origins in the shops of goldsmiths in Paris and Prague. According to Krautheimer:

The calligraphic and lyrical elements featured in the seventies began to spread outside the shops of goldsmiths and enlumineurs and beyond their original domain, the realm of supernatural figures. Perhaps as early as the eighties, and certainly by the nineties, these decorative elements had invaded the entire realm of art.
According to Vasari, Masolino:

...devoted himself to painting at the age of 19, and practiced it ever-after-wards, learning the art of coloring from Gherardo Starnina.  

If it can be assumed from Vasari that Starnina (c.1345-c.1408), a follower of Agnolo Gaddi, was the master of Masolino, then there is more evidence for the influence of the International Style of Masolino. Starnina was exiled from Florence during the Ciompi revolts and spent nine years in Spain where he was employed by the reigning monarch, John of Castille. He introduced many northern and especially Spanish elements into Florentine painting upon his return in c.1403. If Masolino worked with this artist, he could very well have been exposed to the northern elements that Starnina's art possessed.

According to Pudelko, Starnina's art is closer to the Gothic than to the new Renaissance tendencies:

Starnina's constructive spirit struggled for a Gothic unity of space and body, although the systematically severe line drawing of this Gothic classicist was really opposed to the new tendencies.

In a painting by Starnina entitled the Lives of the Hermits, (Florence, Uffizi) are seen stylistic characteristics which the artist may have assimilated during his travels in Spain and France:

The figures in the foreground and background appear to be of the same size, and an equal measure rules over the whole surface. This principle of making an illusion of space harmonize with a two dimensional surface by means of a linear system is seen in the North.

If Masolino worked with Starnina, he could very well have been introduced to some of the International Gothic characteristics of northern art of the late fourteenth century.
Masolino was admitted in January, 1423, to the guild of doctors and apothecaries (Medici e spezali) of Florence, a guild which received many painters. In 1423 Masolino was approximately forty years of age. There are no known works of art by him prior to this date.

In Florence, Masolino may have been a pupil of Lorenzo Ghiberti (c.1378-1455). Vasari states that:

Masolino da Panicale of Val d'Elsa, who was a disciple of Lorenzo di Bartaluccio Ghiberti, was a very good goldsmith in his youth, and the best finisher that Lorenzo had in the labour of the doors...\(^{10}\)

Krautheimer, when speaking about Ghiberti's workshop, says that:

Maso di Cristofano, a member of the shop prior to 1407, is perhaps identifiable as Masolino.\(^{11}\)

If these two statements are true, one would have to assume that Masolino came to Florence before 1423, although there is no documental evidence that he did. If Masolino did work with the sculptor Ghiberti, he could have acquired characteristics of the International Style, because, as Krautheimer points out,

Ghiberti's workshop was the outpost for a new movement which had introduced to his native city concepts springing from French art.\(^{12}\)

By this "new movement", Krautheimer means the International Style. The analysis in Part III of this thesis will suggest certain similarities between the works of Ghiberti and Masolino.

Van Marle makes another suggestion as to whom the master of Masolino might be. This author believes that Lorenzo Monaco (c.1370-?1425), the Florentine painter most representative of the International Style, might have been Masolino's master.\(^{13}\) Comparisons are also made between the paintings of Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino in Part III of the thesis.
Another phase of Masolino's life that suggests exposure to the International Style is his trip to Hungary in the years 1426-1428. During this time, Masolino was employed by Fillippo Scolari, Obergespann of Temeswar, commonly called Pippo Spano. This exiled Italian served the King of Hungary, Sigismond, as a condottiere and financier. He obtained artists from Italy to decorate the churches he had built. Masolino was one of the artists who principally carried out this commission in Stuhlweissenburg. Unfortunately, no works by the artist remain from his trip to Hungary, nor is there any information about his work there. One can only surmise that Masolino was exposed to trends of northern art during his travels and that he may have gone to Hungary from Florence by way of Venice, which was a city where work by International Style artists could be seen.

Masolino's two trips to Castiglione d'Olona in c.1425 to paint the Collegiata frescoes and, in 1435 to paint frescoes in the baptistry may have exposed him to the International Style. The town of Castiglione d'Olona is located almost directly north of Milan, a center of the International Gothic Style in Italy.

Masolino was an artist who was sensitive to outside influences. Perhaps the art in the cities to which he traveled and the people for whom he worked influenced his painting style. According to the author Jacques Mesnil,

Chez Masolino...on devine l'homme sensible aux influences extérieures et attentif à ce qui se fait autour de lui, qui s'assimile rapidement les inventions des autres, mais garde dans l'imitation une apparence de spontaneité et de fraîcheur.
The information about the early life and training of Masolino is very limited. If more valid information were available about his life and career, a study could perhaps be made concerning the influence of the International Style on his painting in connection with the artists with whom he worked, the particular works of art that he saw and the characteristics of the art in the cities to which he traveled and those in which he lived.

This study of the influence of the International Style on the art of Masolino will concentrate on stylistic evidence. An attempt to find stylistic evidence will be made through an examination of selected paintings by Masolino and a comparison of these paintings with other works by typical representatives of the International Style in northern Europe and in Italy.
1. Van Marle, Raimond. The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting, Vol. VIII, fig. 33.


12. Ibid., p. 76.


PART II

THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

It is appropriate to examine the characteristics of the International Style before discussing the works of Masolino selected for this study. This will be accomplished by looking at some examples of the style in northern Europe, by tracing the trend to Italy and by considering some of the works of Masolino's contemporaries who are identified with the International Style in Florence.

The International Style originated in the courts of Paris and Prague about 1380-1390. It conceivably had some of its beginnings in the shops of goldsmiths where small objects were made. It soon spread to the realm of painting where decorative and calligraphic elements are seen. The reason for the designation "International" is explained in the following:

The style around 1400...though formulated on French soil, had come into being by the interpenetration and ultimate fusion of the Gallic as represented by the French, the Latin as represented by the Italians, and the Anglo-Germanic as chiefly represented by the Flemings; and when it spread to Germany, to Austria, to Spain, to England, to Flanders and even back to Italy...it did so, as it were, by way of multilateral repatriation."2

About 1400, there was a kind of fusion on French soil of dominant aspects of fourteenth century Italian, French and Flemish art. In Italy, the fourteenth century witnessed the gothicizing of painting through the use of French motifs by the sculptor Giovanni Pisano, and through the
influence of the French court at Naples. As noted previously, Simone Martini especially shows Gothic elements in his painting because he worked both at Naples and Avignon. Gold backgrounds, flat figures and draperies with curvilinear rhythms characterize his paintings and reflect his affinity to the French manner. Along with this gothicism in fourteenth century Italy came a new interest in man and his environment. This new interest becomes important during the fifteenth century Renaissance. Giotto, Duccio and the Lorenzetti brothers all explore various aspects of man and his surroundings so that a kind of Gothic humanism evolves in fourteenth century Italy. These characteristics in Italy are combined with more Gothic influence from France where decorative and courtly figures along with flat designs, sweeping draperies, and S-shape poses were typical of the art of the fourteenth century. These Italian and French elements were then fused with an interest in the details of nature, in realism, in genre characteristics and in natural appearances typical of Netherlandish art at this time. All three of these trends, Italian, French, and Netherlandish combine at the beginning of the fifteenth century to create the style termed International. Perhaps one of the reasons that these trends could combine to create a particular style is that many artists were traveling throughout Europe and exchanging ideas. Likewise, sketchbooks and finished works of art were frequently exchanged among the courts of the continent.

A typical example of the International Style from the Parisian area in manuscript illumination can be seen on the right page of the "Brussels Hours", (Ms.11061 fols.11) which represents a Madonna and Child. This page and the one beside it (Ms.11060 fols.10v) together
depict The Duc de Berry Presented to the Madonna by St. John the Baptist and St. Andrew (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale).\textsuperscript{3} The highly ornate background and the floral margins of the manuscript page are both typical of the International Style as are the voluminous draperies of the two figures and the fluttering scroll upon which the infant writes. The over-all decorative quality of the work is typical of this style.

As noted above, the International Style is seen most readily at first in small objects; the gilded wooden figures carved by Jacques de Barze for the Broederlam Altar of the Adoration of the Maqi dating prior to 1391 (Dijon: Museum)\textsuperscript{4}, show International Gothic traits. Especially do the figures Mary and Joseph reflect this style with their curvilinear drapery and elongated bodies.

The Coronation of the Virgin in the Hours of the Marechal de Boucicaut (fol. 95v. Paris: Jacquemart-André Museum)\textsuperscript{5}, is an example of the International Style in the north. This depiction by the Boucicaut Master, dating between 1393 and 1415, shows a very decorative background with medallions, varied materials in the canopy, and angels with fluttering scrolls set against a patterned back-drop and bordered by a complicated curvilinear floral design. The figures, placed quite flatly against the background, are light in weight and linear in design. Their draperies, trimmed in gold, have many sinuous folds which give them a Gothic appearance.

It is the work of the Limbourg Brothers which provides the most typical examples of the art of the International Style. Working for the Duc de Berry about 1411, these artists were aware of all major art trends of their time, due to their cosmopolitan background. Born in the
Netherlands, educated in Paris, they had served the Duke of Burgundy before coming to the court of the Duc de Berry. Their art reflects their varied background, for in it one can see Italian characteristics as well as the characteristics of the art of northern courts. In *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* calendar illustration of April (fol.4v. Chantilly: Condé Museum), one can see highly stylized fashion plate figures with thin bodies and highly ornate costumes. Alongside the fairy-tale like world are seen touches of naturalism. This can be seen in the way the same manuscript depicts the castle of Dourdan, one of the residences of the Duc de Berry. These naturalistic touches seen along with the highly ornate treatment of the figures will be noticed in the work by Masolino that is discussed in Part III.

The January scene in the same calendar series by the Limbourg Brothers shows the extremely glittering surfaces that will be noticed in the painting by the Italian artists Gentile da Fabrino and Pisanello (c.1395-1455?), both of whom will influence the work of Masolino. A further example of the International Style in the work of the Limbourg Brothers is seen in the Meeting of the Three Magi at the Crossroads near Bethlehem from the *Très Riches Heures*. Elegantly clad and accompanied by a splendid retinue and exotic animals, the three magi meet near a typically Gothic monument. Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* (Florence Uffizi) as an example of the International Style in Italy is very similar to this painting.

The sophistication and embellishment found in this style are explained by Panofsky:

...unusual extravagances in manner and fashion tend to occur whenever the ruling class of an aging society
begins to feel the competition of younger forces rising against it.\textsuperscript{10}

At the same time,

...it was only natural that the new mannerisms and luxuries of the old nobility were imitated precisely by those whom they were meant to exclude. The \textit{nouveau riche}...tried to get even with the noble and often outdid him in courtly extravagance.\textsuperscript{11}

The International Style spread to Italy shortly before 1400\textsuperscript{12} primarily by the exchange of artists and their sketchbooks. Also, close ties between the courts of Italy, France, and Bohemia helped its dissemination. Citing the influence of this style on the cities of northern Italy, Mensil says:

\begin{quote}
Situées au pied des Alpes, en communication constante avec les contrées au dela des monts, elles recevaient directement les influences septentrionales, et l'art qui s'y développpa a la fin du XIV siècle ressemble singulièrement à l'art français de la même époque.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

In contrast to northern Europe, the International Style in Italy was closer to the fourteenth century painting of Simone Martini, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, and Taddeo Gaddi (c.1300-c.1366). The International Style artists in Italy frequently combined the gothicism seen in the work of Simone Martini with the naturalism of the Giottesque tradition and the interest in nature seen in the work of the Lorenzetti Brothers. The result was specifically Italian and contrasted to the northern International Style, which was closer to the French Gothic. The Italian tradition of naturalism kept the International Style in Italy in a state of equilibrium between Gothic influences on the one hand and naturalistic influences on the other.

The International Style affected the cities of northern Italy before it reached Florence. As early as 1390, the Visconti family in
Milan were inviting French artists to construct the Milan Cathedral. Gian Galeazzo Visconti invited Jacques Coëne, a native of Bruges, to Milan between the years 1390-1420 to help design the Cathedral which was to be Milan's version of the French Gothic.

One of the most famous contributors to the design of the Milan Cathedral was Giovannino de' Grassi (d. 1398), a versatile man who was an architect, sculptor, painter and illuminator. Typical of his International Gothic work is an illustration of the Magnificat of c. 1385 from the Book of Hours of Gian Galeazzo Visconti (Milan: Library of Duke Visconti di Modrone)\(^\text{14}\) where the theme is treated decoratively and where certain drôleries are intermingled with the sacred story. Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello later were to look to Giovannino's work and to the Lombardy School in general.

Another important artist working in Milan was Michelino Molinari da Besozzo (1st mentioned in 1388; d. after 1422). His illumination depicting the Heavenly Reward Bestowed on Gian Galeazzo Visconti from the Funeral Eulogy of Gian Galeazzo of c. 1403 (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale)\(^\text{15}\) shows the elongated figures and decorative backgrounds so characteristic of the International Gothic Style.

The city of Verona was also a center for the International Style as the author Sindona states:

Chez le peintre de Véronne en effect convergent rapidement, en une pure synthèse de la pensée, trois aspects différents de la culture artistique du XVème siècle: le gothique flamboyant, l'art du Nord, de la Bohême, mais surtout de la France, et enfin, les premières formes de l'humanisme de la Renaissance.\(^\text{16}\)
In Verona, the International Style found its most typical representative in the art of Stefano da Zevio (c. 1375-1451). In his *Madonna and Child in the Rose Garden* (Verona: Museo di Castelvecchio), the International Gothic style is clearly evident. The draperies are ornate, floral, and animal motifs are abundant, and the overall design is elaborately patterned.

In Bologna, the fresco of Giovanni da Modena (act. 1st half of 15th century) entitled *The Journey of the Magi* of c. 1420 (Bologna: Church of San Petronio) shows many of the International Gothic traits that will be noticed later in Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* of 1423 with its fairy-tale presentation.

In Venice, the International Style is best represented in the sculpture of Jacobello (d. c. 1490) and Pierpaolo dalle Masenge (d. 1403). In the Cathedral of St. Mark's is an Iconostasis separating the choir from the nave of the church which dates c. 1394. A detail of the figure of *St. Mark* shows Gothic tendencies with swirling drapes pulled to one side and a quasi-hip-shot pose.

According to Krautheimer, the International Style reached Florence about 1405. At first it exerted most influence on the work of goldsmiths and sculptors:

The angels on the archivolt of the Porta della Mandorla (of the cathedral), carved between 1406-1409 by Antonio di Banco, his son Nanni and Niccolo Lamberti, richly display the new vocabulary. Nanni's *Isaiah*, designed in 1408 for one of the Cathedral buttresses, fuses the taut forms of the late Trecento with a head *all'antica* and the familiar soft draperies of the new vogue. At least two of the four seated Evangelists designed for the facade of the Cathedral show an almost complete assimilation of formulas from the new trend, soft draperies, rich ornamental hangings of folds; the *St. Mark* by Niccolo Lamberti, begun in 1409, and the *St.
Mathew\textsuperscript{24} by Bernardo Ciuffagni, commissioned in 1410.\textsuperscript{25}

The sculptor Ghiberti (c.1378-1455) is one of the chief exponents in Florence of the International Style.

At the opening of the century he had absorbed the rudiments of calligraphic design through the influence of the French goldsmiths, and these early seeds grew organically in his work...\textsuperscript{26}

Ghiberti was influenced by the International Style from c.1405 to c.1413 and these characteristics can be seen in his figure of St. John the Baptist\textsuperscript{27} executed for Or San Michel (Florence) in 1412-1413. The gothicism of the north is especially apparent in the sinuous and swirling drapery which is decorated with a border that was originally garnished with gold.

As noted in Part I, Vasari believed that Masolino worked for Ghiberti during the time that the sculptor was most influenced by the International Style.

In painting, the work of Lorenzo Monaco (1390-1426) best illustrates the International Style in Florence. Especially after 1405 does the work of Lorenzo Monaco reflect the new vogue. In the panel painting depicting the Agony in the Garden, (Paris: Louvre Museum)\textsuperscript{28} of 1408, one can see that the panel is shaped like a Gothic pointed arch and the figures, which are placed in this narrow space, are very attenuated and crowded. The "cheese-cut"\textsuperscript{29} rocky mountains and the lack of spatial depth is also typical of the International Gothic tradition.

That the fourteenth century Gothic art of Simone Martini had considerable influence on the early fifteenth century International Style is observed by comparing Simone's Annunciation (Florence: Uffizi)\textsuperscript{30} with Lorenzo Monaco's Annunciation and Saints (Florence, Accademia).\textsuperscript{31}
The angels in both panels are almost identical and the other figures are also very similar with their light weight stances and their sinuous drapery. Another painting by Lorenzo Monaco that displays characteristics of the International Style is the Coronation of the Virgin (Florence: Uffizi)32. The Gothic framework, gold background, courtly figures and over all appearance of this painting relates the artist closely to the International Gothic tradition.

Gentile da Fabriano was perhaps the most fashionable painter in Florence after he completed his Strozzi altarpiece depicting the Adoration of the Magi in 1423. His only rival was his pupil, Pisanello, whose art, like Gentile's, was very typical of the International Gothic. In Pisanello's fresco of the Legend of St. George (Verona: Castelvecchio Museum)33 as well as in Gentile's Adoration of the Magi, the surfaces are extremely ornamental, the costumes are exotic and the figures aristocratic. In many respects, these two pictures are similar to the paintings of the Limbourg Brothers. It has been suggested that these International Gothic artists from the north were actually in Florence about 1413.34

The mobility of Gentile seems typical of the artists of his day. He was active in Fabriano, Venice, Brescia, Florence, Siena, Orvieto, and Rome. Various northern cities affected Pisanello's work also and this is seen by comparing Giovannino de' Grassi's Birds in his Sketch Book (Bergamo: Municipal Library)35 with Pisanello's numerous drawings of birds and animals.36

In the 1430's, the International Gothic style in Florence affected the art of Fra Angelico (1387-1455) who, while aware of the new Renaissance trends, frequently remained close to the International Style.
In Fra Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin* of c.1430-1440 (Paris: Louvre), one finds many similarities with Lorenzo Monaco's *Coronation of the Virgin*. The same all-over glitter is seen as is a various display of rich materials in draperies and on the throne. The compositions are crowded, many of the figures have blond hair, and space is not investigated. The discussion of this artist shows that the characteristics of the International Style lingered until the middle of the fifteenth century.

The study of examples of the International Style in northern Europe and the discussion of examples of this style in Italy has provided a conception of the specific characteristics of this style. The objective for this portion of the thesis has been to provide a concept of the International Style that can be related to the period and locale of Masolino and his work. This concept becomes the basis for analysis of specific paintings by the artist.


6. Ibid., fig. 91.

7. Ibid., fig. 88.

8. Ibid., fig. 84


11. Ibid., p. 68.


18. Ibid., p. 191.


20. Ibid., plate 65.


22. Ibid., fig. 31.

24. Ibid., fig. 37.


26. Ibid., p. 82.

27. Ibid., plate 4.

28. Ibid., fig. 27.


32. Ibid., fig. 109.


PART III

SELECTED PAINTINGS BY MASOLINO

Before examining the works of Masolino for International Style characteristics, it is appropriate to note that an established chronology of his works is lacking. Different authors give different dates for specific works of this artist. In light of this variable, the dates for Masolino's paintings are not taken with finality. In this study, emphasis is given to the stylistic characteristics of each painting in order to distinguish Masolino's relationship to the International Style. Each painting analyzed is given an approximate date(s) and at the beginning of each painting discussed, a reference is cited indicating the author who attributes the date to the painting. No endeavor is made to correlate these dates with style.

It seems that Masolino's work shows characteristics of the International Style throughout his career. At the same time, his paintings continuously display elements of the Giottesque tradition and the influences of his progressive pupil Masaccio. At times, International Style and fifteenth century Renaissance elements appear in the same painting. It is therefore difficult to say if Masolino was painting in the International Style tradition during a particular phase of his career.

This difficulty is partially due to the fact that we know nothing about his works prior to 1423, at which time he was forty years of age. Furthermore, Masolino's work does not appear to progress smoothly from an early to a mature to a late style. The reason for this may be the fact
that the dating of most of his works is undocumented and thus his style assimilates into it various other styles. Masolino seems to be a sensitive painter who is easily influenced by the various styles being practiced around him. Thus it is not surprising to find combined alternate characteristics in his work: those of the International Style flourishing in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century and those of the progressive art of Masaccio.

In the following pages, eleven painters have been chose by the writer from the majority of Masolino's work. The paintings selected were the writer's choices of those which best cover the many periods of Masolino's career and which maintain the influence of the International Style even though influenced by the progressive trends in Florence. The paintings are arranged in approximate chronological order.

To the extent applicable for each painting, analysis is made of the composition, volume, space, line, texture, and color. Comparison is then made with the characteristics of the International Style as established in Part II of the thesis.

_Madonna and Child (Plate I)_
Munich, Pinakothek
Panel painting: 36 5/8" × 22"
c.1420

The madonna and child are placed underneath a Gothic pointed arch and are encompassed by a pyramidal arrangement of celestial figures. On either side of the madonna are a pair of adoring angels kneeling on their own cloud puffs, and above the Virgin's head is a figure of God the Father sending forth the Holy Dove. The madonna is seated on a
tasseled cushion and she looks at her child while He lies on His mother's lap and looks out at the spectator.

The composition of this panel is a symmetrical one and is quite uncomplicated. The placement of the angels and of God the Father forms a triangle as does the Virgin's figure. The upward movement of the composition seen in the sweeping angel wings, the upreaching arms of the Christ Child, and the triangular shapes are counterbalanced by movements that bring one's eye downward, such as the gesture of God the Father's arm, the flight of the Holy Dove, and the glance of the Virgin Mother. The effect of this is a rather rigid composition with each area being carefully balanced by another.

This symmetrical composition is also quite flat. Against the gold background, the madonna's face and upper torso look as though they are cut out and pasted on the panel. Even though one pair of angels seems to be in front of the other, they are still relatively flat against the gold background. The madonna's left knee projects from its drapery, yet it does not seem to be divorced from the painted surface. Because the artist has not used light and shadow to create volume, the effect of the panel is quite flat and abstract.

The cushion upon which the Virgin is seated is tilted upward rather than shown in perspective. There is a feeling of space in front of the madonna but it is limited and it does not continue completely around her figure. Little attempt is made by Masolino to develop perspective in the figure; the artist is more interested in a surface presentation of the subject matter.
Masolino conceives these two figures in terms of line. In the gold trim of the Virgin's mantle, the undulating lines lead one's eyes around the madonna's face and down to the hem of her mantle and across the width of the panel in a soft, flowing manner. The lower part of the madonna's mantle is filled with soft folds which zig-zag back and forth from her lap to her hem. Numerous vertical folds which contrast to these horizontal ones cover her left leg. A very rhythmical pattern is established by this abundant use of folds on the madonna's mantle. Even though they do give the feeling of shallow recession, they still are primarily conceived in terms of line.

The outline of the madonna's upper body and head is very precise and it enables her to stand out boldly against the neutral background. Her facial features are defined by line with the acuiline nose and slightly up-turned eyes. These facial features will be noticed in other works by Masolino because he is not interested in broad, generalized planes, but rather in a more linear conception of the face.

The distortions used in the figures of the madonna and child contribute to the overall design of the panel. For example, the Virgin appears so large that if she stood up, she would project out of the panel. Even though the Child is realistically depicted as a plump, active baby, he seems almost too large for his Mother's lap which appears enormous when compared to her upper torso.

From the above analysis, a comparison of this painting to one by Lorenzo Monaco is justified. The author Van Marle believes that the Munich Madonna and Child is very similar to Lorenzo's Madonna and Child.
Both paintings depict a seated Virgin holding a lively child and both include adoring angels on either side. Large figure, elongated limbs, embellished trims and gold backgrounds are seen in both panels.

The Munich Madonna and Child has in it many characteristics of the International Style as outlined in Part II of this thesis. That is, the composition is a balanced one, the rendering of volume is not as important as the flat pattern of the surface, and the figures are conceived in terms of line and are sometimes distorted for the overall visual effect.

Madonna and Child (Plate II)
Bremen, Kunsthalle
Panel painting: 38" x 19½"
1423 (inscription on the bottom reads, "O Quanta Misericordia e in dio Ao 1423.")

The Madonna is depicted in a long mantle seated on a cushion with her right knee resting on the ground and her left knee upright. Her head leans to her right and gently touches the face of the Christ child who looks out at the spectator. The madonna and child are seated in front of a gold backdrop which fills the upper half of the picture. On the lower half of the panel is depicted a carpet upon which the cushion rests. Quatrefoil scallops like those seen frequently in Gothic art, outline the pointed arch above the heads of the figures. In the gold framework above this pointed arch is a depiction of the head of Christ.

The composition in this panel painting is not complex and the figures of the mother and child take up most of the pictorial space. The composition is symmetrical in that the madonna is seated directly in
the center of the painting. The child, even though He is off to one side, extends His left arm and left leg toward the left in order not to unbalance the composition. The fact that His body pulls toward the right while his arm and left foot extend to the left helps to keep the composition symmetrical.

As in the Munich Madonna, this mother and child are quite flat on the picture plane. Even though the active movement of the child pulls Him away from the panel's surface, the over all effect of the figure group is flat. There is not a clear rendering of volume in the body of the Madonna and because of this, the figure remains flattened against the background. Especially does Her left knee appear to lack thickness or solidity. The absence of light and shadow upon this knee cause it to possess little volumetric form.

There is no space between the cushion and the background; thus making the Madonna appear even more flat. The green carpet does not recede into the painting; rather it also appears flat and undifferentiated. The cushion is placed about half way up the picture and this gives the effect of a slight recession into the scene. Especially would this be true if one were standing below the panel looking up at it. The element of space is not as important to the artist as is the rendering of a pleasing visual effect by line and color.

The use of line by the artist is seen especially in the treatment of the drapery of the Madonna. The outline of the figure group is very distinct against the background, emphasizing the linear effect of the work rather than the plastic effect. The line that follows along the gold trim of the Virgin's mantle from her head to below her waist softly
undulates in a curvilinear manner. This same distinct and flowing line is repeated on the hem of the mantle.

Very few folds are seen in the lower part of the mantle, which tend to flatten out the whole area. The folds that are present are large ones and do not particularly create a recession on the surface. According to the author Lindberg, this lower part of the Virgin's mantle conformation:

...comes direct from Lorenzo's (Monaco) fertile figural imagination and originates from the Siennese art, especially Simone Martini.4

The folds seen in a figure by Simone Martini are different from those seen in a figure by Lorenzo Monaco because the former artist uses a broader, S-shaped line while Lorenzo frequently uses a narrower zig-zag line. The facial features of the Madonna are also rendered in terms of line rather than by modeling with light and shadow. Her almond-shaped eyes, aquiline nose, and small pursed mouth are rendered in a curvilinear manner. The expression on her face which results from this curvilinear treatment is a calm and placid one.

In order to obtain a pleasing visual effect, Masolino has distorted certain parts of the Virgin's body. For example, the right arm of the Madonna is abnormally long and her fingers appear very elongated also. Masolino's conception of the figure is also contrived in order to achieve this pleasing visual effect. There is no attempt on the part of the artist to depict her tactile weight on the cushion. The fact that the Madonna is not sitting convincingly on the cushion makes her almost appear to be standing. The position of her left knee however, proves that she is seated.
The use of textures by Masolino is seen in the tiny star shaped designs on the cushion. These are reminiscent of the many embroidery imitations on the fabrics of Gentile da Fabriano's figures, even though Masolino uses them more conservatively than does Gentile. An incrusted appearance on the haloes of both the mother and child also adds to the textural quality of the painting.

The author Mesnil has characterized the Bremen Madonna and Child and related these characteristics to the paintings of the other International Style artists working in Florence at the beginning of the Quattrocento:

...Chez Masolino (il y a) une grâce naturelle, une recherche des lignes eurythmiques, un amour des couleurs précieuses et finement nuancées qui l'apparente à Lorenzo Monaco, à Gentile da Fabriano et en général à tous les représentants de ce style, en vogue au commencement du XV siècle...5

Mesnil continues to discuss the artistic milieu of Masolino when he was painting the Bremen Madonna and Child by stating that:

...la tendance que représentait Masolino allait être renforcée momentanément à Florence par la venue d'un maître éminent: l'année même où Masolino peignait la Madone du Musée Brême, Gentile da Fabriano, qui s'était fixé à Florence des l'année précédent, achevait sa célèbre Adoration des Mages conservée aujourd'hui au Musée des Uffizi.6

From the above analysis of the Bremen Madonna and Child, one could perhaps characterize the painting as being decorative because of the artist's interest in creating a pleasing visual effect through the use of line, textures, figure distortion, and flattened shapes. The use of texture, gold background, elongated limbs, and sinuous drapery curves causes the entire composition to appear elegant also.

The terms decorative and elegant are frequently attached to works by artists of the International Style. If the connotation of these
words is that which is stated above, then it seems as though this panel can be related to the International Style tradition. The interest in a symmetrical, uncomplicated composition, flattened linear figures, textures, and figure distortion for a pleasing visual effect relate Masolino's painting to the International Style as does his almost complete lack of interest in an investigation of space.

The Annunciation (Plate III)
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (Mellon Coll.)
Panel painting: 4'10½" x 3'9½"
after 1423

The annunciation to Mary takes place within the Virgin's chamber which is quite ornate. The cornices are a bright vermillion red, the inlaid cassette ceiling is sky blue, the curtains in the next room are silver white and the pilasters on the wall and the ceiling decorations are predominately grey, green and red. The Virgin is seated on a large chair and she looks toward Gabriel who interrupts her reading with the news of the coming of the Christ child.

The composition of the Annunciation is rigidly divided in half by the center column, with the Virgin placed on one side and the angel on the other. The front wall of the indoor room is removed and two of the columns are cut off in order for the observer to view the scene.

This same method of removing the front wall is employed by the fourteenth century Parisian artist, Jean Pucelle in his Annunciation from the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux dated 1325-1328 (Paris: Rothschild Collection). An Annunciation by the Master of the Boucicaut Hours (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale) also shows the front wall removed, the
truncated columns and the three rounded foreground arches. The Boucicaut Hours, dated c.1393-1415, provides a typical representative of the International Style in Paris at the turn of the century.

Masolino is not interested in rendering volume in this panel; rather he adheres to a rather flat conception of the figures. Richard Offner observes that a figure by Masolino "...is always a single plane, bent inward at the edges beyond which it never passes. It turns with difficulty and the imagination is never forced to an acceptance of its volume."

The artist's treatment of line is especially interesting on the drapery of the Virgin. The line that defines the gold trim on the Virgin's mantle is very complicated as it interlaces and curves on the front of this mantle. The curvilinear effect of this interlacing line creates an interesting pattern on the surface of the painting.

Masolino conceives of his figure of the Virgin as a design within herself. As in his earlier depictions of the madonna, he uses certain distortions to create this design. The Virgin in the Annunciation is a large figure and would project out of the panel if she rose. She receives the news the angel brings with modesty as shown by the retreating gesture of her elongated hand. Both the angel and Mary appear to be falling forward toward the center of the composition which seems to enhance the "light weight" feeling of the two figures.

The wine red robe of the angel with the large gold flowers on it gives the appearance of the texture of brocade. Perhaps Masolino was influenced by his trip to Hungary when he painted such an elaborate dress but, according to Lindberg, "...the taste of the time explains the
large flowers on Gabriel's robe, certainly it was not necessary to go to Hungary to be able to paint suchlike. The taste of the time of which Lindberg speaks is the love of courtly figures and rich materials which in part characterizes the International Style.

The star-studded vault and the position of the angel's arms seen in this panel by Masolino is compared by the author Van Marle to the painting of Fra Angelico, an International Style artist. In the Annunciation by Fra Angelico (Tuscany, Montecarlo), one can see both of these artistic motifs.

Also, the ornamental effect of the star-studded ceiling is reminiscent of a work by Master Francke, a representative of the International Style in Germany. In his Adoration of the Magi of 1424 (Hamburg: Kunsthalle) is a star filled sky that gives the same decorative effect to the work that we see in Masolino's Annunciation.

Bernard Berenson relates Masolino's Washington Annunciation to painting around 1400 in this manner:

The decorative effect is so strong and so enchanting that, like the rest of Masolino's art, it scarcely finds precedents in Florence or even Italy. The suavity, the grace, the splendor, although paralleled in Gentile and Sassetta, would seem inspired rather by the ecstatic mood of a Parisian painting toward 1400, with its figures of angelic candor and skies of heavenly radiance, than by Tuscan models.

The Temptation of Adam and Eve (Plate IV)
Florence, Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine
Fresco: m. 2,08 x 0,88 (approx. 6'10" x 2'11")
c.1423-1426

The two figures of Adam and Eve stand beside the tree where the serpent is found. Eve has her left arm around the tree trunk and she
poses her right arm in readiness to eat the forbidden fruit. Adam is
turned slightly toward Eve and he gently gestures to her with his left
arm. Nothing else is seen in the picture except the branches of the
tree which fill the top area.

The composition of this fresco in the Brancacci Chapel is not an
ornate one as are so many of the panel paintings by the artist. The
small miniaturist's like details that Masolino usually placed in his
panel paintings are not possible with the fresco technique which requires
a fast application of pigments.

The composition is interesting, however, for its handling of light.
Rather than modeling the figures with gradation of light and dark like
his more progressive pupil Masaccio, Masolino adheres to a more conserva-
tive tradition in that he distributes the light evenly over the entire
composition without spotlighting any distinct part.

Masolino is not interested in the rendering of the volume of the
figures of Adam and Eve. The figures are composed on the picture plane
rather than emerging from a deep background. The bodies are not pre-
sented in a correct anatomical manner. Eve's figure is distorted and no
emphasis is placed on modeling her body.

Adam and Eve appear very light in weight and are not solidly planted
on the ground. They are quite elongated and their stylized gestures and
straight backs emphasize this slender appearance. Eve's right arm is
rather awkwardly drawn and her feet appear almost undefined. Adam also
is in an artificial pose as he awkwardly holds out his long arm and
gestures to Eve.
Another feature in the Temptation is the complete lack of any psychological interpretation of the event. This of course is even more evident because of the presence of Masaccio’s Expulsion of Adam and Eve in the same chapel, but this lack of emotional content is noticeable in all of Masolino’s work. The event of the temptation is an emotional one, but Masolino treats it impassively. He does not imbue either of his figures with a psychological reaction to what is taking place.

The colors of the composition are the typical high-toned and delicate ones of Masolino. Jacques Mesnil has described Masolino’s actual palette in the following manner:

Le coloïs finement nuancé, les tons blonds et roses des chairs...(il y a) une prédilection marquée pour les teintes intermediarres, les roses, les mauves, les violaceés...

In the Brancacci Temptation, the predominate colors are blond as seen in the hair of Adam, Eve and the serpent, and flesh tones and pastel green on the tree leaves.

The Temptation of Adam and Eve appears especially close to the International Style tradition when compared to Masaccio’s Expulsion of Adam and Eve. Masolino’s pupil imbues his figures with emotional reactions to the event taking place while, as has been pointed out, Masolino is not interested in the psychological effect of the scene. Most of the artists who represent the International Style were not interested in the psychological aspects of an event. This kind of investigation was important, however, to many artists of the fifteenth century Renaissance. Masolino was closer to the International Style tradition because of his straight presentation of the subject matter and his lack of interest in the figures’ emotions.
A comparison can be made between Masolino's treatment of Adam and Eve with the Adam and Eve figures in the Fall of Man and Expulsion from Paradise from the Très Riches Heures (Chantilly: Musée Condé). A similarity is seen in the awkward gestures, stubby legs, rather expressionless faces and the self-conscious yet theatrical poses.

The analysis of the Brancacci Adam and Eve has revealed that the artist is primarily interested in distributing light evenly and in rendering emotionless, flat and "light weight" figures. These characteristics closely relate him to the International Style.

St. Peter Raising Tabitha and Healing a Cripple (Plate V)
Florence, Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine
Fresco: m. 2.55 x 5.98 (approx. 8'3" x 19'7")
c.1424-142820

This fresco depicts St. Peter healing a crippled man on the left and St. Peter resurrecting the woman Tabitha from the dead on the right. In between the two scenes are seen two strollers who appear to have nothing to do with the two miracles. In the background of this fresco is depicted a typical Florentine Street scene with various genre figures placed in it.

The over all scheme of this composition has a triptych arrangement, which reminds one of the tradition of panel painting in the fourteenth century. However, the most important event in the scene does not occur in the center. Originally perhaps a pilaster was in the middle separating the two scenes and, when this was removed, the two elegantly clad strollers were added as connecting links. The two scenes that occur simultaneously are connected by the architectural background and not by any specific
action. The composition could be divided into three distinct paintings. Richard Offner says of this fresco that it is:

...discursive, lyrical, dramatic and literary. The narrative unfolds itself progressively like a pictograph. The composition is in each case a series rather than a synthesis: the principle of unity does not proceed from within the visible elements but lies in the flux and variety of circumstances.21

The composition itself is not congruous, not only because the three scenes are not unified, but also because the figures are not visually connected to the architectural background. The three scenes seem to take place in the foreground and there is little to lead one's eye to the street scene behind. Thus there does not seem to be an architectonically related unity between the figures and the architecture.

As in the previous paintings by Masolino which have been discussed, there is in this fresco little interest in the rendering of volume. This is especially seen when looking at the two elegantly clad figures who stroll in the center of the scene. The figures are rather boneless and flat; the one on the left especially seems pasted to the wall surface, for his cape has no folds in it at all. The draperies

...far from having the supreme functional value that his more illustrious pupil gave them, are still involved in the calligraphic meshes of his Giottesque predecessors. Masolino was a master of a transitional character—closer to Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello.22

The treatment of space in this Brancacci chapel fresco is very effective. All of the buildings including the portico on the left, the loggia on the right and the Renaissance palaces in the background are arranged in correct linear perspective. The point of sight is located opposite the palace in the middle background, a little to the right of the right stroller's head. One author notes that this arrangement of
the point of sight is not that of a typically Renaissance painter:

...the point of view, that is to say, the point of convergence of the lines of the perspective, is a neutral spot, where nothing is taking place, whereas, according to a Renaissance artist, this point would coincide with the centre of dramatic interest of the composition.23

The author Krautheimer notices the incongruence of the various buildings one to another:

...the portico under which Tabitha lies is constructed on a scale different from the houses in the background; its height would correspond to only one-half the height of the ground floor of the tall house in the center axis of the plaza.24

The interest Masolino has in rendering textures can be seen when looking at the two center figures. There is an attempt on the part of the artist to depict the quality of the brocaded material on the man on the left and the velvet-like material and patterned turban on the man on the right. The costumes of these two men contrast greatly with the plain garb of the other figures in the painting.

The other figures of special interest is the turbaned man standing in the loggia beside Tabitha.

In the turban man, we find the same small stars strewn over the coat as in the right youth on the hat. Once again a feature indicating a love of decoration in the artist.25

This fresco of St. Peter Raising Tabitha and Healing a Lamb Man has been characterized by Kenneth Clark in the following manner:

We recognize an artist in the tradition of late Gothic narrative painting, rather boneless, lacking vitality, and given to plausible generalizations. Like many painters with the gift of easy invention, he is deficient in a sense of truth, and inhabits a world of conventional saints in ideal draperies and conventional dandies in the fashion plate clothes of the time.26

A comparison of the fancy drapery and aristocratic bearing of
The Two Strollers can be made with a painting by the Limbourgs. The elaborately dressed men and women in their April scene of Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry (Chantilly, Musée Condé) of c.1416 resemble Masolino's figures in their elegant poses which show off their "fashion plate" clothes, in their fancy head dresses and in their patterned draperies. The Limbourgs' figures are more elongated and wasp-like than are those by Masolino. The bulkiness there is in Masolino's figures probably comes from his close contact with the monumental art of Masaccio.

The draperies of these two figures in the Brancacci fresco can also be related to Gentile da Fabriano's figures of the three magi in the Adoration of the Magi of 1423. The young king in Gentile's painting is especially similar to the youth on the left in Masolino's fresco. The same solidly colored leggings and the patterning of the costume is similar in both figures, even though Gentile's is more ornate because his figure is a king. Turbaned men like the two youths and the man in the loggia beside Tabitha in Masolino's fresco can be seen in the Adoration of the Magi in the background figures.

Two other figures in the Brancacci fresco are worth noting for the purposes of this comparison. The treatment of the figure to the right of St. Peter is typical of Masolino. His blond hair and facial features are like many of the figures we have discussed so far. His drapery rests immobile and does not reveal the bodily structure underneath. As mentioned previously, Masolino seems much more interested in the outward, visual effect of his figures than in their anatomical structure or their psychological reactions.
The treatment of the figures of the two strollers in the center of the fresco are, as has been mentioned, close to the International Style tradition because of their linear treatment. They appear wealthier than the other figures in the frescoes who are treated more broadly. When speaking of the International Style figures in general, Panofsky points out that

...figures of nobles tended to be more linear in design and more severely restricted to the profile and front view—in other words more stylized than the more broadly and freely treated people in less exalted position.28

The Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore (Plate VI)
Naples, Museo Nazionale
Panel painting: 57 3/5" x 30"
c.1425-1426

Since the two pairs of saints flanking the Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore are thought to be by Masaccio,30 we shall concentrate on the central panel of this composition.

The legend of the founding of Santa Maria Maggiore dates from the fourth century A.D. It is told that in the night of the fourth of August, 352 A.D., the Virgin appeared to Pope Liberio and the patriarch Giovanni in their dreams, conducted them to the site, miraculously covered with snow, and ordered them to build a church in Her honor. In this picture, the Pope traces in the snow the area to be covered by the new church. Above this scene is depicted the figures of Christ and the Virgin in a circular mandorla.

The overall composition of the panel is not unified because of its strict division into two separate scenes. The Virgin and Christ within their mandorla are completely divorced from the separate scene below.
The strict horizontal cloud beneath the pair accentuates this division. The most noticeable discrepancy in the composition is in the relationship between the figures and the architecture. The architecture is much too small for the large figures, as their heads almost come to the top of the arches of the loggia.

One author explained the difficulty Masolino had in rendering this composition in terms of a correct perspective in the following manner:

The difficulty was to bring this ground plan (of the church) forward in the picture and in correct relationship to the milieu. It was also necessary to give the illusion of a very large ground plan. As a result of this, the artist has given it a very short perspective and of course has inserted this in the general perspective of the picture. In this way its depth is, in a high degree, decided by the ground plan's perspective. The artist has made a great mistake here, and not suited the perspective of the crowd in accordance with that of the ground plan of the buildings, whose purely linear perspective is fixed by means of the point of sight, which is situated by the arm of the old man in the background of the picture. The artist, however, has allowed the one perspective to break against the other.31

It is evident when looking at the figures of the Virgin and Christ in the mandorla, that Masolino was not interested in rendering volume. These two figures appear pasted against the gold background.

Masolino made an attempt at creating a convincing space in the lower scene:

Two strongly vertical figures occupy either end of the foreground picture stage. Between them a wedge shaped crowd leads into depth, the recession built up in many layers and supported by a scant scenic and architectural setting....Every detail is clear, atmospheric effects are disregarded, depth remains finite.32

The artist's use of color contributes somewhat to the spatial quality of the painting. Notice the figure at the end of the far
foreshortened transept:

His bright yellow tights stand out in sudden contrast to the midnight ultramarine of his scalloped jerkin, and are the brightest note in a color scheme of pinks and softened reds and greyish browns. Colouristically, therefore, it does nothing to increase the depth. What does happen is that it attracts the eye, and holds it at the furtherest point of the dramatically receding ground plane...33

When characterizing this panel by Masolino, one could say that even though it is an experiment in perspective and foreshortening, the falling snow covering the surface and the small clouds unrealistically placed in the sky make it appear quite decorative.

The composition in Masolino's painting is similar to the composition of The Apparition of the Virgin to St. Anthony and St. George (London, National Gallery)34 by the International Style artist Pisanello. Both compositions are divided in half with a circular scene above and a rectangular scene below.

The postures of certain figures in Masolino's painting remind one of the affected positions of many of the Limbourg Brothers' figures in the Très Riches Heures manuscript illuminations. For example, the sixth figure from the right in the Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore assumes a somewhat dramatic pose with his hand held out from his body, his weight shifted to his right foot and his head turned to the left. His costume appears rich, even though it is not patterned. The male figure standing at the end of the farthest transept also assumes a somewhat elegant pose. He appears like a courtly gentleman with his fashionable dress and theatrical gesture. Both of these aristocratic figures can be compared to any of the numerous male figures in the January scene of Les Très Riches Heures du Duc du Berry (Chantilly, Musée. Condé) of c.1413-1416. In the manuscript
illumination, the figures are perhaps more decorative than those by Masolino with their ornate robes, but the same elegant poses, elongated figures and fashionable dress can be seen in both.

Panofsky's observation concerning the treatment of genre figures in the International Style seems to hold true in the crowd scene of this painting by Masolino. As stated earlier, Panofsky believes that the figures of peasants are treated more broadly and freely than are the figures of nobles who, as we have seen, appear very thin and elongated.\footnote{36} In the Limbourgs' illumination of February\footnote{37} for example, the peasants are more broadly treated in a Giottesque manner than are the elegant court ladies in the April scene. When one looks at the crowd behind the three magi in Gentile's Adoration of the Magi, some of the figures appear more Giottesque and less feminine than the younger king in the foreground. Masolino's men also tend to appear feminine in their courtliness. The less noble persons, such as the man in the background of the Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore looking up at the falling snow, are treated more freely. This particular man in Masolino's fresco can be compared to the figure behind the white horse, looking skyward in Gentile's panel painting.

**Assumption of the Virgin (Plate VII)**
Naples, Capodimonte Museum
Panel painting: 55 7/8" x 30"
c.1428\footnote{38}

This painting depicts the seated Virgin in a mandorla with seraphim and cherubim. Around this mandorla is a host of angels who are represented
with the symbols of the different hierarchies. Above the madonna's head
is a figure of Christ who stretches out His arms to receive the Virgin.

The composition of the Assumption of the Virgin is carefully balanced
with each angel being paired off with another and with the figure of God
being matched by the larger angels at the bottom of the panel. The figure
of the Virgin dominates the panel, and her calmness is contrasted with
the fluttering movement of the angel host. There is no attempt on the
part of the artist to explore perspective except as seen in the slightly
foreshortened figure of God the Father. One author describes the composi-
tion of the panel in the following manner:

The gradual diminution of the angels, accompanied by a lightening
of the color as the eye moves up the panel, appears to be dictated
by a desire to fill the lower surface of the picture satisfac-
torily without making the mandorla seem too heavy rather than
by any wish to create a deep recession of the figures. The in-
ward movement of the lower figures is balanced by the slight
projection of the foreshortened body of the Christ at the
mandorla's apex. Despite this gentle inwards and outwards
movement, that encloses the heavier figure of the Virgin,
like the first, slight curling of a leaf, the design is as
a whole, a brilliant surface decoration.39

Since the background in the Assumption of the Virgin is limited,
Masolino has concentrated primarily on the figures. The figure of the
madonna is placed in a frontal position and even though she is the
largest figure, she seems to blend in with the pattern formed by the
abstracted seraphim and cherubim. Her body is quite massive and it
contrasts greatly with the petite bodies of the angels at her side.
Her drapery falls in the typical Masolino manner of letting the folds
flow down her arms which are held out from the sides of her body. The
fold that is laid across her knees hides any suggestion of anatomy
underneath. The fluttering drapery of the angels and of God the Father
contrasts with the rather quiet drapery of the madonna.
Masolino conceives of the angels and the stylized seraphim and cherubim in terms of line. The rendering of the volumes of these figures is not important to the artist, nor does the effect of the space created by the figures interest him. One author has characterized the style of Masolino's art in the following manner:

The art of Masolino inherited from the Trecento is linear in character, an art of drawing, in which the line, its curving and combination with other lines into conformation, plays the most important role, dominating what is represented, the figure or landscape. This linear painting is in principle lacking in deep effect, is ornamental and abstract; decoration not description is its object.\(^40\)

This characterization of Masolino's art applies to the Assumption of the Virgin.

The composition of the Assumption of the Virgin can be compared to the composition of a detail from The Last Judgment by Fra Angelico (Florence, San Marco Museum)\(^41\) of c. 1430 where Christ is depicted in a mandorla surrounded by seraphim, cherubim and angels. Both artists present a flat and decorative composition with the seraphim and cherubim closest to the main central figure being almost completely abstract. Fra Angelico and Masolino were both working in the International Gothic tradition in Florence during the twenties and these two panels provide illustrations of the decorativeness and stylization that they took over from this tradition.

Masolino's angel host flutters into the scene in a manner similar to an angel by Simone Martini. They remain light in weight and lively in Masolino's work. The scrolls carried by two of the angels in the Assumption of the Virgin add to the curvilinear quality of the design. These sinuous scrolls are frequently seen in the hands of figures
of Gothic sculpture. A curving scroll is also seen in Ghiberti's
International Style figure of St. John the Baptist (c. 1412-1413) on
Or San Michele (Florence).

St. Peter and St. Paul (Plate VIII)
Philadelphia; Johnson Collection
Panel painting: 43 3/4" x 21 1/3"
c.142843

St. Liberius as Pope and St. Matthias (Plate VIII)
London: National Gallery
Panel painting: 43 3/4" x 21 1/3"
c.142844

According to Kenneth Clark, these two panel paintings flanked the
panel of the Assumption of the Virgin (Naples, Capodimonte Museum),
(Plate VII) and all were originally painted for the Church of Santa
Maria Maggiore in Rome.

St. Peter and St. Paul flank the left side of the Assumption of the
Virgin. St. Peter stands facing the spectator and holds a key as the
symbol of his sainthood. St. Paul is depicted in profile and holds a
long sword which is symbolic of his role as defender of the faith.

St. Liberius as Pope and St. Matthias flank the right side of the
Assumption of the Virgin. St. Liberius holds no identifying emblem, but
since he takes part in the Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore, it is assumed
that this is a depiction of him. His cape appears to have been embroidered
with silver. St. Matthias, whose body was one of the principle relics
of Santa Maria Maggiore, holds an axe as his emblem.

John White notes the relationship of these two pairs of saints with
the composition of the Assumption in the following statement:

The same restricted interest in pictorial depth is to be
seen in the two pairs of saints which flank The Assumption. In each case the outer figure faces inwards in pure profile, his companion being shown full-face. The soft, and only slightly plastic forms do nothing to increase the gentle spatial quality of this heraldic disposition.46

The draperies of St. Peter and St. Paul fall very smoothly, with few folds to create any kind of recession or to catch shadows. Along the borders of their mantles is a gold trim which adds embellishment to the otherwise rather plain costumes. Both figures appear quite square and immobile under their drapery. The drapery of St. Liberius is ornamented on the border and one can perceive the light transparent quality of his undergarment. As in so many of his figures, Masolino is interested here in conceiving in terms of line. The rendering of volume is not important nor is the conception of space. Masolino, for example, does not use the three quarter view in two of the saints depicted here. He is not interested in the depth effects that come with this kind of view.

Kenneth Clark characterizes the faces of the two saints in profile (St. Peter and St. Matthias) with their

...almond eyes with strongly marked whites (and their) small turned-down mouths...; the whole face is modeled on the same principle, which is in fact the formula of Gothic painting slightly modified in favour of naturalism. The actual handling is also in the smooth technique of International gothic, the flesh tones soft and pink, and the details picked out with a miniaturist's delicacy, each hair rendered by a fine drawn stroke.47

Later in his article, Clark calls attention to the treatment of the hair in the figure of St. Matthias whose curls he says are rendered with "elegant conventional calligraphy."48

When comparing these four saints to typical examples from the International Style, one may look to Bohemian International Gothic
art around 1400. About this time, Czech painting, like that in France and later in Italy, "reverted to the traditional poetic idealism, and with it, to linear plastic abstraction of form." Like the rest of northern Europe, the reason for this change in style can partially be explained by the atmosphere of the court:

The fragility, elegance, grace of movement and delicate mimicry of figures which we meet with in sculpture, in panel painting, in book illumination with the mural painting of this period corresponds to the refined character of the court culture of the reign of Wenceslas, into which the strengthened influence of French art had again penetrated.  

When comparing St. Liberius and St. Matthias by Masolino with St. Andrew, bishop-saint and donor on the Dubeček Panel which dates before 1400, (Prague, National Gallery), one can observe some of the same International Gothic traits on both. The master of the Czech panel is closer to the Gothic style than is Masolino, but Masolino was sensitive to Masaccio's influences at this time as well as to the influences of the Italian International Style. In the St. Andrew panel, the figures are light in weight and rather stiff and formal in pose. St. Liberius and St. Matthias are more solidly placed, but they too appear rather stiff and formal. Similarities in both works can be noted in the treatment of the drapery which is full of rhythmic curves and ornamentation. The same calligraphic handling of the hair in St. Matthias' beard is seen in the beard of St. Andrew.

Even though Masolino was probably not influenced directly by International Gothic painting in Bohemia, he may have made contact with it during his trip to Hungary in 1427. However, the most valid explanation for similarities between the Italian and Czech artist is the international
flavor of the style around 1400 itself. Masolino’s saints can be compared to the work of a Bohemian artist because of the similar characteristics one can observe in two different schools of painting at this time.

Madonna of Humility (Plate IX)  
Florence, Contini-Bonacossi Collection  
Panel painting: 1.10 x 0.60 (approx. 3'7" x 1'11")  
c.1430-1432

The madonna is seated on a cushion holding her child. She wears a blue mantle that is not trimmed in gold. Her large hand practically covers her child and it is very difficult to tell how she is seated on the ground. A gold background is behind the figures.

The composition of the Madonna of Humility, like so many of Masolino's paintings analyzed for this study, is a simple one. The artist is interested in the rendition of the figure in terms of line rather than in volumes. Little attempt is made to create a feeling of space in front or in back of the madonna; the delineation of the figure demands all the artist's attention. Distortions in the bodies of the madonna and child are made in order to enhance the linear design of the ensemble. The analysis of this panel painting can be brief, because so many of its characteristics have already been discussed as typical of Masolino. The main purpose for including this panel is to compare it with another Madonna of Humility (Verona, Musée de Castelvecchio) by Pisanello.

Pisanello's composition is much more embellished than that by Masolino. Pisanello's love of nature, evidenced in his depiction of a garden scene, is characteristic of the International Style, although one does not find it in this work by Masolino.
In the treatment of the madonna's figure, Masolino comes close to the International Style and to the madonna by Pisanello. Both madonnas are seated on a cushion which has only its left corners exposed. The madonnas appear very large even in their seated positions and their bodies seem elongated under the heavy drapery. The drapery in both examples is very sharply outlined as it falls in a rhythmical manner on the ground. More folds and recessions are noticeable in Masolino's drapery, but as a whole the drapery treatment in both are similar. Neither figure is very much revealed under the drapery; rather it is very difficult to decide in both cases how the madonna is seated. Both madonnas have very elongated hands and fingers, which add to the aristocratic and elegant quality of their figures.

The face of Masolino's madonna has the same almond shaped eyes, long nose and small pursed mouth that one notices in so many of his figures. Similar facial features can be seen on the face of Pisanello's Virgin.

The Christ Child is treated differently in the two paintings. Pisanello's baby seems much more modeled and active than does Masolino's child, who is as slender and elongated as his mother. Both children have blond hair and even the madonna by Pisanello has an uncovered head of blond hair.

Even though the panel by Pisanello is more decorative and glittering with the flora and fauna, the madonna's ermine lined mantle, her jeweled halo and her patterned gold tunic, the figure treatment by both artists is very similar.
The Virgin Annunciate (Plate X)
The Archangel Gabriel (Plate XI)
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art
(Kress Collection)
Panel paintings: 30" x 22 5/8" each
c.143254

The Virgin and Gabriel are depicted on two separate panels. The following discussion of the two panels will consider them one composition representing the Annunciation to the Virgin.

The Virgin is seated with her hands crossed in front of her, listening to the angel's message. On her lap is a book which shows the prophetic verse of Isaiah VII, 14-15, "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a child..." On the other panel the angel is seen in profile as he beckons towards the Virgin to deliver his message. There is no architectural background, as there was in the Annunciation in the Mellon Collection (Plate III). A suggestion is given here of a tiled floor upon which the angel stands and a varied colored wall is behind him. Behind the Virgin is an ornate tapestry and a suggestion of a pillar on which it hangs.

Both the Virgin and the angel are composed on the surface of their panels. The Virgin is placed in the center of the scene and Gabriel is placed left of the center. This does not unbalance the panel, because Gabriel's body leans slightly to the right.

Especially in the figure of Gabriel does the artist show his lack of interest in volumetric form. The patterned drapery also helps to create the flat effect of the angel against the backdrop.

In the drapery of the Virgin, one can see Masolino's interest in elaborating a linear design. The line that follows the gold trim winds in a sinuous manner down below the Virgin's waist where it then curves
and folds in a more complicated way. The outline of the angel's figure is very precise; he seems like a cardboard cut-out against the background.

The distortions used by Masolino in the treatment of the figures help to create a more rhythmical design. The Virgin is not seated realistically and the book on her lap appears to be falling as she leans forward to hear the angel's message. Her hands and fingers are distorted also to achieve the elongated and attenuated effect the artist desired.

With regard to their interest in line and rich textures, as seen in the angel's robe and in the tapestry, these panels can be characterized in the same terms that one characterizes a work by the Limbourg Brothers or Gentile da Fabriano. Masolino joins these artists in an interest in and a display of luxurious materials, linear compositions and flattened, "aristocratic" figures.

Valentinier has pointed out a resemblance between these two panels and the painting of Fra Angelico, which he believes influenced Masolino. In Fra Angelico's _Annunciation to the Virgin_ (Madrid, Prado), one can see the same piece of patterned tapestry hung behind the Virgin, the same sliding book, similar hand positions of the Virgin, the same profile of Gabriel's face, and the same love of ornate surfaces. Masolino, however, eliminates architectural background and concentrates on linear figures and elegant gestures. All of these characteristics can be termed International Gothic as can Masolino's use here of a sinuous line of the draperies, a sharp outline defining the shapes, and of courtly, blond-haired figures.
The Banquet of Herod and Salome Presenting the Head of John the Baptist to Herodias (Plate XII)
Castiglione d'Olona; Baptistry
Fresco: m. 4.73 x 3.80 (approx. 15'4" x 13'6")
c.1435

This fresco depicts three different scenes. The first one, the entombment of St. John, takes place in the center background in the mountains. The second one, the banquet of Herod, is in the foreground on the left. Salome is seen at the banquet demanding St. John's head on a charger. The third scene appears in the right foreground where Salome presents the head of St. John the Baptist to her mother Herodias.

These three scenes are not unified by compositional means; each one could be considered as a separate painting in itself. As in the Brancacci chapel fresco of St. Peter Raising Tabitha and Healing a Cripple (Plate V), three elegant young men stand in the center and show of their elaborate costumes. They, however, do not serve as a connecting link between the two foreground scenes. As in the Brancacci fresco, Masolino does not achieve a Renaissance unity of figures. The artist includes actors in the scenes who appear to have relatively nothing to do with the subject matter and who, if removed, would not impair the composition. In most Renaissance compositions, the program is planned so carefully that if one figure is removed, the entire composition is impaired. The additive type of composition, used by Masolino and common to late Gothic artists, is noticed most frequently in manuscript illuminations and panel paintings. According to Mesnil, Masolino

...n'a pas le tempérament d'un fresquiste, sa conception n'est pas puissant et large, son faire n'est ni rapide ni résolu.58
As in the treatment of many of his other figures, Masolino is not interested in this fresco in rendering the volumetric forms of the figures. The flat quality of the figures is especially seen in the figure of Herodias whose body is not plastically conceived or revealing of her body structure underneath. The same flatness and lack of solidity is seen in the center male figure in profile behind Salome. His form is flattened out against the background.

Masolino conceives of his figures in terms of line. That is, he is not interested in plastically conceived figures. The figure of Herodias especially appears linear as do the figures of the onlookers behind Salome. The use of a sinuous line is seen when one closely examines the beard on the second man from the right seated at the banquet table.

Masolino's use of textures can be seen in the figure of Herodias. She is seated in a profile position so that her regal headdress and costume may be shown to their best advantage. Herodias' costume is elaborately patterned, even though it is difficult to see because the fresco in this area is badly damaged. Perhaps these embroideries were once in relief like the embossed surfaces of so many of the panel paintings during the Gothic era. According to one author, in the paintings at Castiglione d'Olona,

...there are traces in certain female dresses of profuse embroideries executed in relief with a mixture of wax and other substances covered up with subsequent painting.59

Textural embellishments are also seen in the three men standing behind Salome. The gentleman closest to the observer wears a very fashionable
cloak with fur trim. His companions are equally dressed because the
second one wears an all over patterned bodice on top of his short tunic.

Kenneth Clark has attempted to characterize the style of Masolino
in Castiglione d'Olona frescoes:

...at Castiglione d'Olona, Masolino is freer to be his
true self. His work is frankly International Gothic in
the Gentile-Pisanello tradition.60

A comparison can be made between the figure of Herodias and
Pisanello's princess in the **Legend of St. George** (Verona, Castelvecchio
Museum) of c.1433. Herodias' ovoid head with its arched forehead and
elongated neck is very similar to the princess' head and facial features.
The profile view is used in both examples as is the elaborate headdress
and richly patterned drapery. Both figures have tranquil expressions on
their faces, even, as in the case of Herodias, in the presence of
a gruesome event.

The mountainous landscape background on this Castiglione d'Olona
Fresco can be compared to landscapes of other **International Style** artists.
According to Julia Cartwright, "the mountain landscape strongly re-
sembles Ghiberti's reliefs".62 Similarities between the landscapes
of Masolino and Ghiberti can be seen when one compares the Castiglione
fresco with the panel of **Abraham** on the Gates of Paradise by Ghiberti.
The same "cheese-cut" rocky hillside is seen in both works. If, as
Vasari claims, Masolino was "Ghiberti's best assistant in chasing the
doors",65 then these similarities in style are explainable.

The stylized landscapes of Lorenzo Monaco could also be compared
to this Castiglione landscape. For example, note the similarity between
the stylized rocky mountains in Lorenzo's **Agony in the Garden**
(Florence: Accademia) and the mountains in Masolino's fresco.

In the treatment of the figures, one can also compare Masolino to other International Style artists. Julia Cartwright points out that the drapery of the figure of Salome is related to the draperies of Ghiberti in

...the small folds and flowing scroll work... Jacques Mesnil also agrees that Masolino's fluent draperies here recall Ghiberti. One can see the same small folds in a detail of the Joshua panel on the Gates of Paradise.

The figure of the man in profile behind Salome can be related to other examples of the International Style. He is holding a crop in his hand as a symbol of wealth and nobility and he seems to be out of a Biblical context and in a secular role like the completely secular scenes in the calendar series of Les Très Riches Heures.


3. Ibid., pp. 258 and 260.


6. Ibid., p. 43.


9. Ibid., fig. 74.


18. Ibid., p. 61.

19. Panofsky, Erwin. *Early Netherlandish Painting*, II, fig. 82.


22. Berenson, Bernard. *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, p. 82.


30. Ibid., p. 344.


34. Sindona, Enio. *Pisanello*, plate 146.


37. Panofsky, Erwin. *Early Netherlandish Painting*, II, fig. 89.


44. Ibid., p. 347.

45. Ibid., p. 339.


48. Ibid., p. 343.


50. Ibid., p. 29.

51. Ibid., plate 137.


67. Cartwright, Julia. The Painters of Florence, p. 82.


5. 6. 7. Front of altarpiece, by Masolino and Masaccio, formerly in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

Plate VIII

Plate VI (top center)

Plate VII (lower center)
CONCLUSION

This has been a study of the influence of the International Style on a selected group of paintings by Masolino da Panicale.

Part I of the thesis was devoted to the life and training of Masolino as related to the International Style. In this section, it was pointed out that since documentary evidence was so meager concerning the life of Masolino, it would be necessary to concentrate on stylistic evidence.

Part II discussed the International Style as an artistic movement during the second half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. The characteristics mentioned in this section as typical of the International Style were later looked for in the selected paintings by Masolino.

Part III contained the analysis of eleven selected paintings by Masolino. Paintings were chosen which appeared to best associate the artist's work with those characteristics identified with the International Style. By means of analysis, using the artistic elements of composition, volume, space, line, color and texture, each painting was identified as showing the influence of the International Style on the artist.

As pointed out in the introduction, Masolino's artistic style combines characteristics of the International Style and the Renaissance Style. In some of the paintings discussed in this thesis, both of these influences were apparent. The influence of the International Style, however, was emphasized in these analyses and that influence can be summed up in the following way.
In terms of the artistic elements used in the analyses, one could say generally that Masolino is interested in relatively uncomplicated compositions, pastel, high-toned colors and painting techniques that suggest the quality of textures of materials. He is not interested in the rendering of volume or in the investigation of space and perspective. Because Masolino makes frequent use of these characteristics of the International Style, one can say that he was definitely influenced by this style.

In the paintings chosen for this thesis, the influence of the International Style was readily apparent. Especially in the treatment of single figures was the influence of this style quickly noticed. In Masolino's more complicated compositions, such as the fresco cycle at San Clemente, Rome, it is more difficult to see the characteristics of this style. The San Clemente fresco cycle was his last work and he had probably received influences in Florence from more progressive artists like Domenico Veneziano (c.1400-1461), Paolo Uccello (1397-1475), and Piero della Francesca (c.1415-1492).

Even though Masolino was simultaneously influenced by the progressive Renaissance trends in Florence, the influence of the International Style is seen in all of the paintings selected for this thesis. The degree of this influence is extensive because almost all of the artistic elements that compose these paintings are the same as those of the International Style. Since the eleven paintings chosen for this thesis attempted to be representative of the artist's oeuvre, one can say that the influence of the International Style on all the painting of Masolino is also extensive.
From this study, further research appears desirable. This research may provide answers to such questions as the following:

1. Were there any works by Masolino executed before 1423?
2. Can his painting be dated correctly and arranged chronologically?
3. How strong was the influence of his native Umbrian painting upon him?
4. Did the painting around the city of Milan affect his style when he traveled twice to Castiglione d'Olona?
5. What was the style of his painting in Hungary?
6. What influences did he assimilate on his trip to Hungary?
7. What was the extent of the influence of Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, Lorenzo Monaco, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and Masaccio upon his art?
8. What were the differences between the International Style in northern Europe and in Italy?
9. Exactly how did the International Style come to Italy and how did it spread south into Tuscany?

If some of these questions were answered, the art of Masolino would be better understood and the influence of the International Style upon his work more clearly discerned.
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