Embodying Devotion: Multisensory Encounters with Donatello's *Crucifix* in S. Croce

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The reception of art is often described in ocularcentric terms, but all five senses could engage devotional objects in late medieval and early modern Europe. This article explores this phenomenon by considering a wooden crucifix with movable arms made by Donatello for the Franciscan church of S. Croce in Florence in the early fifteenth century. It makes new suggestions about the work's original location, its possible patrons, and its functions and reception, especially during the rituals associated with Good Friday. It also reflects on the challenges scholars face when taking a multisensory approach to premodern visual and material culture.

INTRODUCTION

ON HOLY SATURDAY in 1293, the Franciscan mystic Angela da Foligno (1248–1309) felt herself being transported into Christ's tomb, where she imagined touching, hearing, and even smelling her dead Savior:

> in a state of ecstasy, she found herself in the sepulcher with Christ. She . . . kissed Christ's breast . . . then she kissed his mouth, from which . . . a delightful fragrance emanated. . . . Afterward, she placed her cheek on Christ's own and he, in turn, placed his hand on her other cheek, pressing her closely to him. . . . [She] heard him telling her: "Before I was laid in the sepulcher, I held you this tightly to me." Even though she understood that it was Christ telling her this, nonetheless she saw him lying there with eyes closed, lips motionless, exactly as

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> he was when he lay dead in the sepulcher. Her joy was immense and indescribable.[1]

Scholars have linked this vision and others like it to Angela seeing from afar depictions of the Crucifixion, Deposition, and Burial of Christ—Taddeo Gaddi (ca. 1290–1366) painted one such image in S. Croce in Florence (fig. 1)—and to watching dramatic reenactments of Christ's Passion at Eastertime.[2] What has not been suggested is that her intensely physical, multisensory experience might not have occurred at a distance, but could have reflected a similarly physical and multisensory encounter with an actual three-dimensional object—namely, one of the life-size wooden crucifixes that were crucial actors or, better, agents in Holy Week rituals in Italy and throughout Europe in the late medieval and early modern period.[3]

The present article will consider whether such large-scale devotional objects may have been engaged not only by vision, as has often been suggested, but by other senses as well, especially that of touch, and on occasion hearing, smell, and even taste.[4] It will focus on one example of this genre, a life-size wooden crucifix made by Donatello (ca. 1386–1466) for the Conventual Franciscan church of S. Croce in Florence in ca. 1406–15, just over a century after Angela's multisensory experience (fig. 2). Thanks to a relatively recent restoration and several even more recent exhibitions, Donatello's *Crucifix* has been the focus of ongoing scholarly interest.[5] Using a range of documentary sources and material evidence, the article will make new suggestions about the original location of this object, its possible patrons, and its period-specific functions and reception.

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[1] Translated in Frugoni, 163n76. All other translations are the author's except where otherwise noted.

[2] See, for instance, Morrison; Lunghi, 2000, 13–38. For Taddeo's fresco, see Long; Dent, 2007.

[3] On art objects as agents, see Gell. In the present article, "crucifix" refers to a cross with a figure of the crucified Christ, whether painted on panel or sculpted. A crucifix with movable eyes was being used during Holy Week by a Folignese confraternity by 1419, though whether such objects existed in Foligno in the late thirteenth century is unclear: Bernardi, 2006, 11–12. In Perugia, Siena, Florence, and other Central Italian towns, sculpted crucifixes were in use by the 1330s, with an example in the town of San Miniato dating to as early as 1270–80: Kopania, 47–48, 84–85.

[4] For recent ocularcentric analyses of crucifixes, see Lipton; Newbigin, 2007.

[5] The older literature on Donatello's *Crucifix* is summarized in Janson, 7–12. For key publications since Janson, see Lisner, 1968; Lisner, 1970, 54–56; Paoletti; Lalli et al.; Stiberc; Caglioti, 2008a and 2008b; Cavazzini; Harris, 2010, 1:97–205; Harris, 2011; Giura; Caglioti, 2015; Caglioti et al., 20–21, 44; Galli.

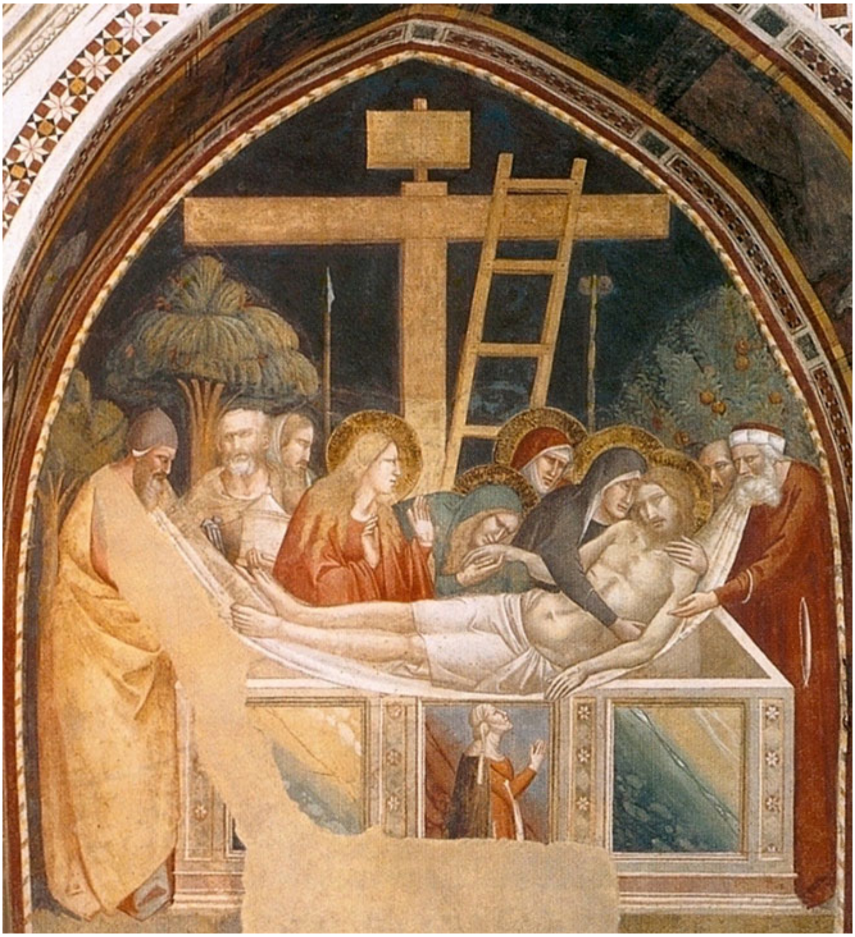

Figure 1. Taddeo Gaddi. *Entombment of Christ*, ca. 1340. Fresco. Chapel of S. Silvestro in S. Croce, Florence. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

At the same time, it will reflect more generally on the challenges faced by scholars trying to move beyond the visual in order to take a more multisensory approach to works that premodern beholders would have encountered not, as is often the case today, in photographic reproductions in print, online, or projected on a screen, but rather in the flesh—and sometimes very close to hand.[6]

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[6] On the impact of reproductive images on the study of Italian Renaissance sculpture, see Johnson.

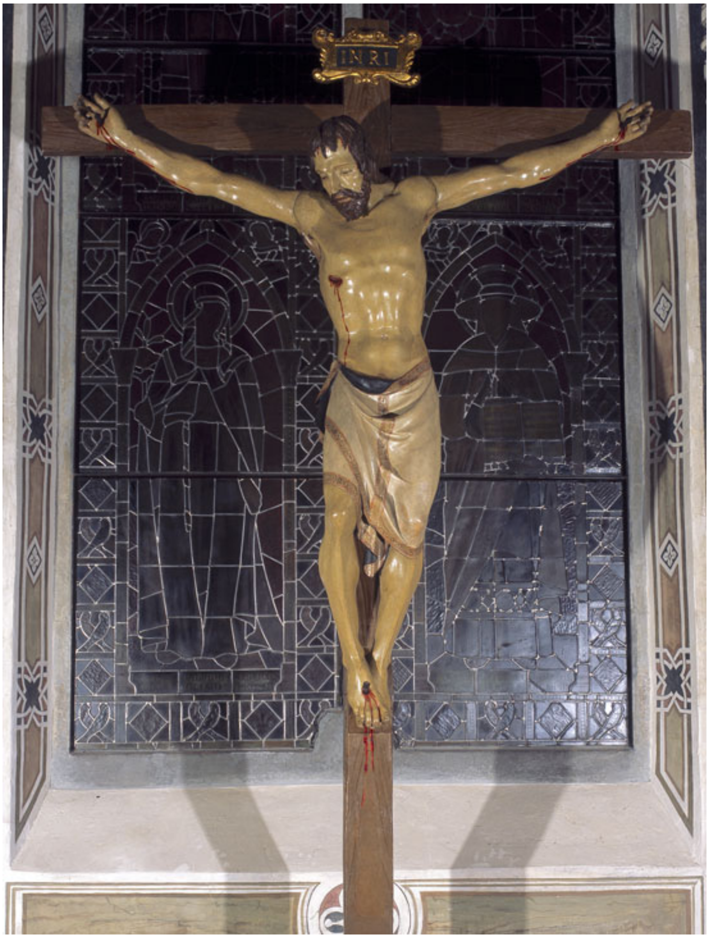

Figure 2. Donatello. *Crucifix*, ca. 1406–15 (restored in 2003–04). Polychromed wood, 173 x 168 cm (crucified Christ) and 482 x 187 cm (cross). Chapel of Bardi di Vernio in S. Croce, Florence. Image courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, and Basilica of S. Croce, Florence, overseen by Direzione Centrale per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto, Dipartimento per le Libertà civili e l'immigrazione, Ministero dell'Interno.

DONATELLO'S ARTICULATED *CRUCIFIX*

Today, Donatello's *Crucifix* is best known not as a devotional object, but as one of the protagonists in a possibly apocryphal contest with a crucifix carved by his friend and artistic rival, Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), for the Dominican church of S. Maria Novella, also in Florence. Although the competition was mentioned for the first time before 1530 by Antonio Billi (after 1480–after 1550), it was only in the first edition of *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (The lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors, and architects, 1550) by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) that the tale took on its most complete form. According to Vasari, when Brunelleschi saw his friend's *Crucifix*, he told Donatello that "he had put on the cross a *contadino* [peasant] and not the body of Christ, which was most delicate in its members and was graced with a beautiful aspect." Donatello retorted: "If it were as easy to make as to criticize, my Christ would seem to you Christ and not a *contadino*: so go get some wood and try to make one yourself." In response, Brunelleschi "arranged to make a Christ of wood with the same measurements." When Donatello encountered the finished figure after returning from a trip to the market, he was so astonished to see its "perfection" that he dropped his shopping, eggs and all. Admitting defeat, Donatello told his friend: "'I'll leave it to you to make the Christs and to me the *contadini*.'"[7]

Many scholars have used Vasari's passage as the basis for analyzing the two crucifixes in formal terms, comparing and contrasting their styles and compositions using an essentially Wölfflinian vocabulary.[8] Taking a sociohistorical approach, Patricia Rubin has looked at the incident in the context of other tales of early modern artistic friendship and rivalry with roots traceable back to classical prototypes.[9] More recently, Jim Harris has explored Vasari's choice of the word *contadino* to describe Donatello's figure, concluding that the physical type and signs of violence on Christ's body should be linked to Florentine concerns about the laboring classes within the city and in the surrounding *contado* (countryside).[10] Focusing on the stylistic nuances of the two crucifixes, or even using a sociohistorical framework to analyze the outward appearance of the two effigies, assumes that Vasari's comparison should, in fact, be understood primarily in visual terms. But it is also productive to consider whether Vasari's implicit criticism of Donatello's *contadino* Christ was not only about what the figure looked like, but also about what it did—or rather, what was done to it. Such an approach moves beyond art history's ocularcentric assumptions—including Michael Baxandall's influential concept of the "period eye"[11]—and instead encourages an exploration of the multisensory period body, which engaged not only the eyes, but also ears, noses, mouths, and, especially, hands.

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[7] "Vita di Donato, scultore fiorentino," in Vasari, 3:204–06 (1550 text). After Billi's pre-1530 text, the *Crucifix* is next mentioned by the Anonimo Magliabechiano, then Giovan Battista Gelli (1498–1563) who, like Vasari, reported that Donatello's Christ "resembled the body of a peasant." Translated in Janson, 7–8. The Anonimo Magliabechiano has been identified as Bernardo Vecchietti (1514–90) and his codex dated ca. 1537–47 by Wierda. Janson dated Gelli's text ca. 1550, but it may have been written in ca. 1551–63: Baldassarri, 304n23.

[8] On the figures' supposedly "Gothic" versus "Renaissance" characteristics, see Janson, 11–12. Such terminology is associated with Heinrich Wölfflin, on which see Summers. For more recent examples of this type of analysis, see Tarr, 116; Cavazzini; Caglioti, 2015, 39–41; Galli.

[9] P. Rubin, 341–47.

[10] Harris, 2010, 1:108–35, 1:165–77; Harris, 2011.

In the case of Donatello's *Crucifix*, an intriguing aspect of its design, with important multisensory implications, is that the figure of Christ is hinged at the shoulders (fig. 3), a feature that would have allowed the effigy's arms to be folded down along its sides.[12] This position was captured in photographs taken during restoration campaigns in 1972–74 and 2003–04, which show the arms folded two-thirds of the way down (fig. 4).[13] According to Peter Stiberc, who led the most recent restoration at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, the figure's arms could originally have been folded down even further, so as to lie directly next to Christ's torso.[14] However, with the exception of an important article published in 1992 by John Paoletti, the wider implications of this kinetic aspect of Donatello's *Crucifix* have been considered only in passing by scholars and restorers alike, who have tended to focus primarily on the visual appearance of the effigy rather than on its multisensory material presence and mobility.[15]

The physical incarnation of Christ's body was, of course, a central concern for premodern devotees.[16] Whether made manifest in the Host or depicted in painted or sculpted form, Christ's corporeal presence, actual as well as represented, was crucial both theologically and for contemporary devotional practices since it allowed the spiritual to be made materially present. Sculpting the crucified Christ in wood in particular had a long history throughout Europe, but it was only from the late thirteenth century onward that movable arms became a feature of some life-size variants, including Donatello's figure in S. Croce.[17]

When the articulated joints of Donatello's Christ have been mentioned, this feature has usually been linked only fairly cursorily to the Europe-wide phenomenon known as the Depositio Crucis (Deposition of Christ), the Good Friday ritual that involved symbolically burying a cross, Host, or figure of

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[11] Baxandall, 1972, 29–108.

[12] First noted by Kauffmann, 19.

[13] Paoletti, 87 (fig. 3); Lalli et al., 16 (fig. 5).

[14] Email communication from Peter Stiberc.

[15] Paoletti.

[16] See, for instance, Steinberg; M. Rubin; Dent, 2005; Harris, 2010, 1:136–71; Wright.

[17] On crucifixes with movable arms, see esp. Taubert and Taubert; Taubert, 38–50; Rampold; Tripps, 1998, 114–58; Lunghi, 2000, 102–08, 121–30, 139–44; T. Jung; Tripps, 2009; Kopania; Powell, 81–101; Bino.

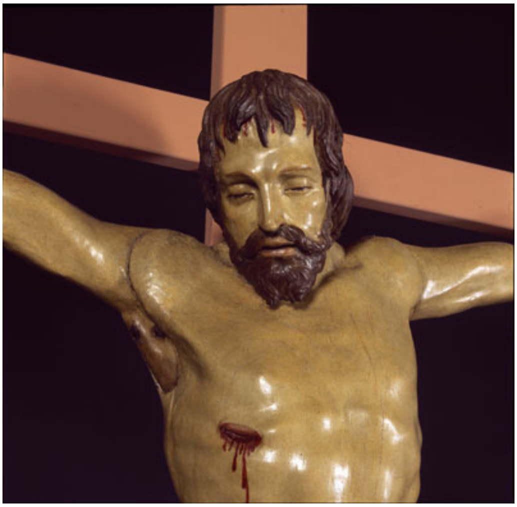

Figure 3. Donatello. Detail of crucified Christ. Image courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, and Basilica of S. Croce, Florence, overseen by Direzione Centrale per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto, Dipartimento per le Libertà civili e l'immigrazione, Ministero dell'Interno.

the crucified Christ (the latter with arms folded down if sculpted and life-size) in a tomblike structure to reenact symbolically Christ's death, descent from the cross, and burial.[18] Like Christ himself, the items placed in the sepulcher on Good Friday would have been resurrected on Easter morning and displayed once again on the altar.[19] The sepulchers into which the items were placed could be permanent structures made of stone or wood. More usually, altar tables or temporary tentlike constructions, like the one seen in an early sixteenth-century German woodcut (fig. 5), took on the role of the tomb.[20] In the print, one sees the moment when actors portraying the women at Christ's tomb discover that the grave is empty, with one member of the group coming out of a tented structure representing Christ's sepulcher erected in the nave of a fairly imposing church. Throughout Europe, documents suggest that the most common type of Holy Week sepulcher was similarly temporary and ephemeral, whether located in a tent or under an altar table.[21]

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[18] The Depositio is discussed at length below.

[19] A Resurrection painting or sculpture was sometimes put on the altar on Easter morning in place of the effigy buried on Good Friday: Kroesen, 168–69; Kopania, 50; Powell, 84–89.

[20] For the woodcut, see Brooks, 65 (fig. 18); Kroesen, 58.

[21] Young, 1:122–48, 1:239–335, 2:507–13; Sheingorn, 23–24, 33–45; Kroesen, 45–116; Plum, 361–66.

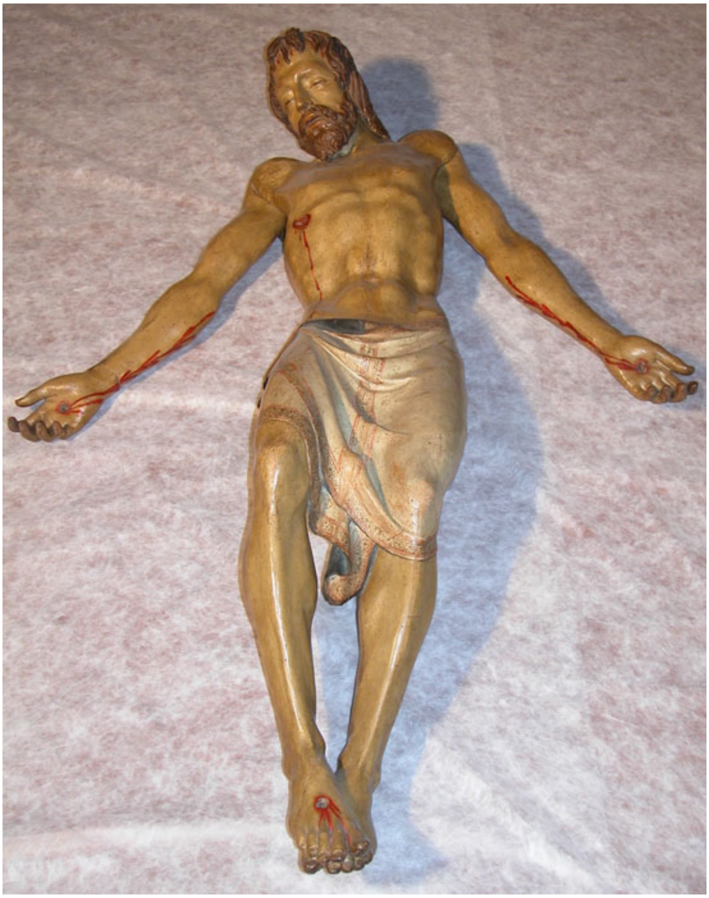

Figure 4. Donatello. Crucified Christ (arms partly folded). Image courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, and Basilica of S. Croce, Florence, overseen by Direzione Centrale per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto, Dipartimento per le Libertà civili e l'immigrazione, Ministero dell'Interno.

Some more elaborate and permanent stone or wood structures survive, especially in England and Germanic regions. The apparent lack of such permanent tombs in Italy has led some scholars to suggest that Good Friday Depositio rituals involving life-size crucifixes must have been less common in the Italian peninsula in the late medieval and early modern period—although there is at least one example of a permanent sepulcher in Italy, a decorated chest used as a tomb for an articulated figure of Christ during Holy Week by a Perugian confraternity from at least 1375 onward.[22] There is no doubt, however, that such

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[22] Rihouet, 299–314.

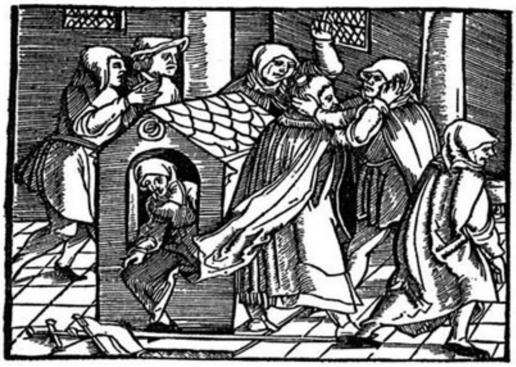

Figure 5. Hermann Bote (presumed compiler). *Quem Quaeritis*. Woodcut. *Dil Ulenspiegel*, pl. 13, 1515 Strasbourg edition. Image from Brooks, fig. 18.

rituals regularly took place in this period in Italy even if ephemeral sepulchers were usually used. In Florence, this is attested to not only by the S. Croce *Crucifix*, but by other articulated effigies dating from the early fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. Florentine examples include a crucifix carved by 1333 for the Baptistery (fig. 6), another from the first decades of the fifteenth century modeled on Donatello's figure and originally in S. Felice in Piazza, and a third dated ca. 1500 in S. Trinità.[23]

Further confirmation that such practices took place in Florence comes from a commission given in 1491 (1490 Florentine calendar) to Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525) to carve a new (though now lost) wooden crucifix for Florence Cathedral with "limbs that appear to move" in order to be "shown to the *populo* [people] every year on Good Friday."[24] Later sixteenth-century sources confirm that Depositio rituals involving "a large crucifix" were still taking place in the middle of the Duomo nearly a century later when the object was used for "the burial [ceremony] in the center of the church" on Good Friday.[25] Similarly, a 1482 inventory of Siena Cathedral lists a "large" wooden crucifix that was "used on Holy Friday."[26] In fact, it is notable that more than half of the 126 examples

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[23] The crucifix in S. Felice is now in the Oratorio di San Sebastiano (a.k.a., dei Bini), Florence, while the crucifix originally in Florence's Baptistery has been attributed to Giovanni di Balduccio, among others. For these and other articulated crucifixes, both extant and lost, from Florence and its environs, see Taubert and Taubert, 80–91; Lisner, 1970, 22–23, 57–58; Becherucci and Brunetti, 231–32; Neri Lusanna; Kalina, 84; Kopania, 38, 88, 262–65, 286; Holmes, 192–94; Bellandi.

[24] Taubert and Taubert, 90–91, 101–02.

[25] Carl, 398 (doc. 3).

[26] Taubert and Taubert, 91.

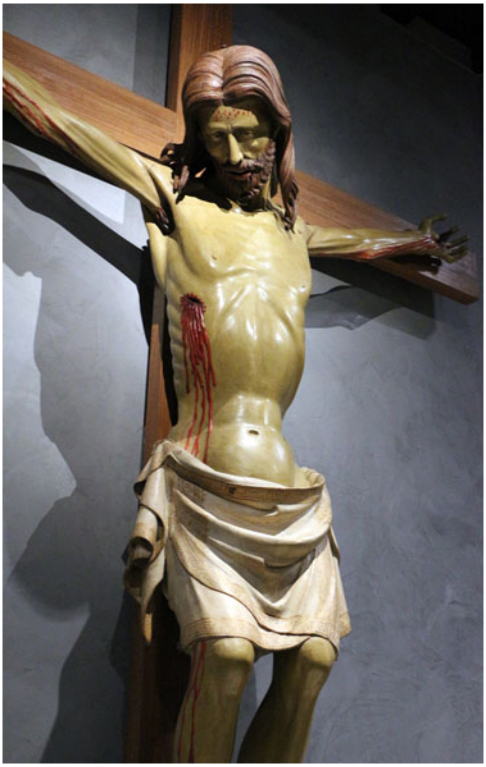

Figure 6. Giovanni Balduccio (attributed). Detail of crucified Christ, before 1333. Polychromed wood, 176 x 190 cm. Opera del Duomo (formerly in the Baptistery), Florence. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons / Sailko.

gathered by Kamil Kopania in an important recent survey of the genre came from Italy, with thirty-one originating in Tuscany, including eighteen from Florence and its immediate environs.[27] All this suggests that Good Friday rituals involving crucifixes with movable limbs were at least as popular in Italy as in Northern Europe.

The documents related to the articulated crucifix in the Florence Duomo are unusual in stating how such an object was to be deployed within public devotional practices. But even this example provides only schematic information about the specific ways in which contemporary beholders engaged such a work. There is even less detailed information about how other articulated crucifixes were used, which poses a serious challenge to scholars interested in exploring the embodied history of such kinetic objects. But by focusing on one example—Donatello's *Crucifix* for S. Croce—and piecing together evidence from a wide range of sources, some specific to this particular object and others applicable to articulated crucifixes more generally, one can begin to appreciate the significance such works must have had for contemporary beholders, who would have encountered them as three-dimensional objects moving through space and over time and who would have engaged them through senses beyond that of vision alone.

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[27] Kopania, 37–38, 260–73, 282–83, 285–87. For examples in Umbria and elsewhere in Italy, see Lunghi, 2000, 102–08, 121–30, 138–44; Rihouet, 299–314.

THE *CRUCIFIX*'S ORIGINAL LOCATION IN S. CROCE

To understand how Donatello's *Crucifix* was originally engaged, one must first determine where it was originally displayed. Both its authorship and presence in S. Croce were first confirmed in a 1510 guide to Florence by Francesco Albertini (1469–after 1510), but exactly where the *Crucifix* was initially installed has either been noted by scholars only in very general terms or misunderstood.[28] This is undoubtedly related to the fact that no documents are known for the work's commission, even though it was the work's patron, rather than its relatively young maker, who was probably better known at the time. The early fifteenth-century documents may have been lost in the 1557 floods that swept through S. Croce's archives, although it is worth noting that no contracts survive for any of Donatello's other works in wood.[29] The *Crucifix* is, however, mentioned repeatedly in the first and second editions of Vasari's *Lives* (1550 and 1568) as being in a specific location that is likely to have been its original one. Of course, Vasari can be a notoriously unreliable source, but in the case of works in S. Croce, his statements should be taken seriously, given that he was in charge of the church's renovation from 1566 until his death nearly a decade later.[30] In fact, as will be discussed below, it was Vasari who moved the *Crucifix* to its current location in the Bardi di Vernio Chapel in the north transept of S. Croce (fig. 7). It is thus not surprising that it is Vasari who provides the most detailed information about its location before this final transfer.

It is also not surprising that the most complete description of the *Crucifix*'s location before the renovation began appears the first time Vasari mentions the object in the 1550 *Lives* in the "Life of Taddeo Gaddi," a fourteenth-century painter whose works in S. Croce include a fresco of Christ's Entombment (fig. 1).

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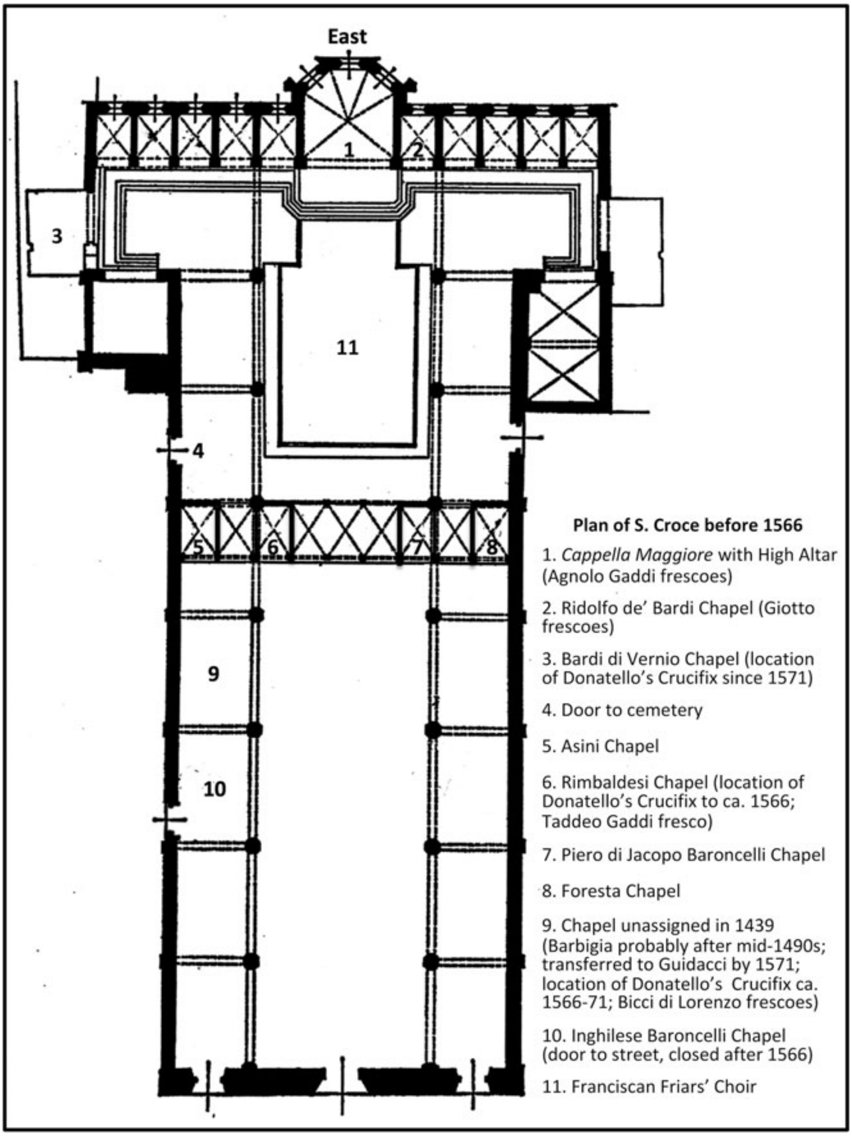
[28] Albertini, 98. All subsequent premodern sources name Donatello as the *Crucifix*'s maker. For recent exceptions, see Harris, 2010, 1:105–06; Galli, 162.

[29] Wilkins, 125. For the floods in S. Croce in 1333 and 1557, see Moisè, 420, 422; Weissman, 230; Wilson, 89; Pilliod, 2001, 133.

[30] Hall, 1979, 16–32.


East
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Plan of S. Croce before 1566
1. *Cappella Maggiore* with High Altar (Agnolo Gaddi frescoes)
2. Ridolfo de' Bardi Chapel (Giotto frescoes)
3. Bardi di Vernio Chapel (location of Donatello's Crucifix since 1571)
4. Door to cemetery
5. Asini Chapel
6. Rimbaldesi Chapel (location of Donatello's Crucifix to ca. 1566; Taddeo Gaddi fresco)
7. Piero di Jacopo Baroncelli Chapel
8. Foresta Chapel
9. Chapel unassigned in 1439 (Barbigia probably after mid-1490s; transferred to Guidacci by 1571; location of Donatello's Crucifix ca. 1566-71; Bicci di Lorenzo frescoes)
10. Inghilese Baroncelli Chapel (door to street, closed after 1566)
11. Franciscan Friars' Choir

Figure 7. Plan of S. Croce, Florence, before removal of the *tramezzo* in 1566. Plan modified with permission from Hall, 1979, fig. 2.

Slightly less information appears the second time the *Crucifix* is discussed in the "Life of Brunelleschi," while by its third appearance in the "Life of Donatello," the details are even briefer, given that readers have already been told twice before where it was located. All three references state that the *Crucifix* was found, as Vasari put it in the "Life of Donatello," "*sotto* [beneath] the *tramezzo* [rood screen], next to a story [painted] by Taddeo Gaddi."[31] The most detailed information is in the "Life" of this latter painter: "And beneath the *tramezzo* that divides the church, on the left hand, above the *Crucifix* of Donato, he painted in fresco a story of Saint Francis, of a miracle that he performed, [in which] a young boy fell from a terrace and died immediately, and Saint Francis appearing in the sky resuscitated him."[32] A panel painted by Taddeo for the sacristy of S. Croce depicts the same Franciscan miracle described in Vasari's text, an event that took place in Rome when a boy from the noble Spini family fell from a great height, but was then miraculously brought back to life by the saint's apparition (fig. 8).[33]

All three artists' lives refer repeatedly to the *tramezzo*, the massive rood screen erected across the fifth bay of S. Croce in the 1330s, which dominated the church's interior at the time Vasari published the first edition of the *Lives* in 1550. (See the modified versions of Marcia Hall's reconstructions of the basilica with the *tramezzo* in place [figs. 7 and 9].[34]) In 1566, as part of Vasari's post-Tridentine renovation of the church, the entire structure was demolished, just two years before the second edition of the *Lives* was published in 1568.[35] Significantly, the location of Donatello's *Crucifix* does not change in the 1568 versions of the *Lives* of Taddeo, Brunelleschi, or Donatello. By this date, Vasari would have been intimately familiar with S. Croce's interior. Given that he made minor editorial changes to all three passages that mention Donatello's *Crucifix* in the second edition of the *Lives*, Vasari would presumably have corrected any errors about the work's original location at the same time.

Despite Vasari's clear and unchanging descriptions, there has been much confusion about the *Crucifix*'s original location due to a misreading of key documents. This has been compounded by a lack of clarity about the *tramezzo*

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[31] Vasari, 3:204 (1550 text). De Marchi, 2011, 57, interprets *sotto* as referring to a chapel further down the nave from the *tramezzo*. But evidence discussed below about S. Croce's geography suggests *sotto* here means "beneath" the actual *tramezzo*.

[32] Vasari, 2:204–05 (1550 text).

[33] Ladis, 124.

[34] For Hall's original plan and elevation, see Hall, 1979, 197 (fig. 2) and 199 (fig. 4). In figure 7, Hall's plan has been renumbered and a doorway added to chapel no. 10, while in figure 9, Donatello's *Crucifix* has been incorporated into the second chapel from the left. Other changes to the elevation are based on De Marchi's research: the central section has been changed from a tripartite to a single opening; gabled roofs above the *tramezzo*'s middle bays have been removed; and the Maestro di Figline's Crucifixion panel is now above the central opening, flanked by two panels (probably a *maestà* and a Franciscan image). De Marchi, 2009, 611–14; De Marchi, 2011, 33–38, 52–53. See also Cooper, 2013, 706–07. On S. Croce's *tramezzo*, see Hall, 1970, 1974, and 1979; Giurescu, 201–13. For recent studies of rood screens in general, see J. Jung, 2013; Hall, 2015.

[35] Hall, 1979, 17–18.

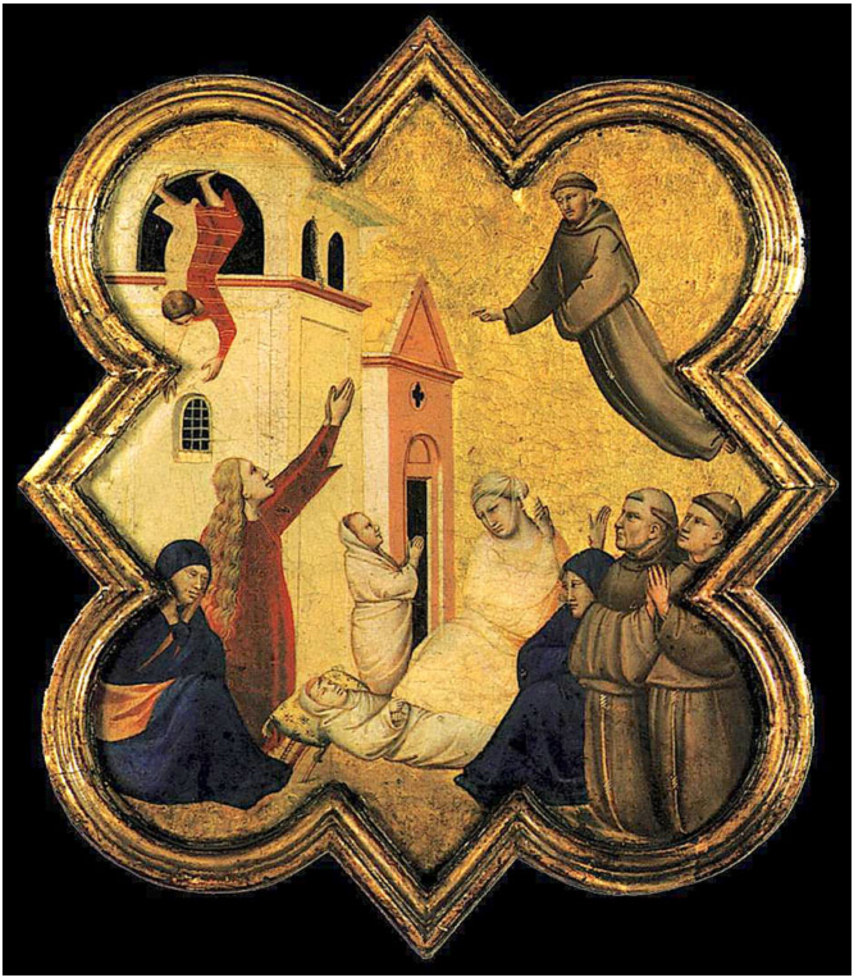

Figure 8. Taddeo Gaddi. *Saint Francis Resuscitates a Boy Who Fell from a Terrace*, ca. 1330–35. Tempera on wood, 48 x 43 cm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

itself, especially for scholars writing before Hall's groundbreaking publications on the structure in the 1970s. For instance, H. W. Janson, in his monograph on Donatello, was unclear about the very existence of the *tramezzo*. This led him to conflate the chapel in the *tramezzo* mentioned by Vasari with a chapel once associated with the Barbigia family in the fourth bay of the north aisle, which, as discussed below, may have served as a temporary location for Donatello's *Crucifix* after the *tramezzo*'s demolition in 1566.[36] Alessandro Conti likewise

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[36] Janson, 9.

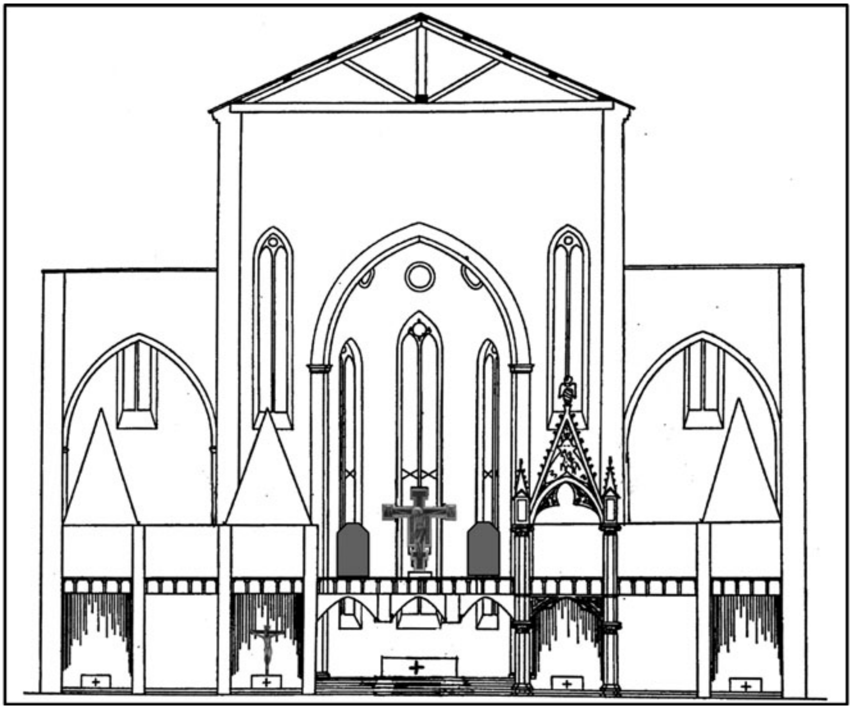

Figure 9. Elevation of S. Croce, Florence, looking east toward the *tramezzo* before it was demolished in 1566, with Donatello's *Crucifix* shown to scale in the Rimbaldesi Chapel (second chapel from the left). Elevation modified with permission from Hall, 1979, fig. 4.

suggested that Donatello's *Crucifix* was originally in the former Barbigia Chapel. He further proposed that the *Crucifix* had been displayed before a frescoed backdrop in this chapel, whose fragments he attributed to Lorenzo di Bicci (ca. 1350–1427) or to his son, Bicci di Lorenzo (1373–1452).[37]

Conti's proposal was revisited by Giovanni Giura in 2011 and has been supported most recently by Francesco Caglioti and Aldo Galli. Giura even created a photo montage showing Donatello's *Crucifix* surrounded by the fresco fragments, now firmly attributed to Bicci di Lorenzo.[38] Following Conti, all three scholars have proposed that Bicci di Lorenzo may have been involved in painting Donatello's effigy.[39] The suggestion that Donatello may have collaborated with painters when working in wood is intriguing and merits further consideration, especially since such collaborations are recorded later in the fifteenth century in the diary of Neri di Bicci (1419–91), son of Bicci di Lorenzo.[40] But a direct link between Donatello's *Crucifix* and the frescoes in the fourth bay of the north aisle seems highly unlikely.

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[37] Conti.

[38] Giura, esp. 78 (fig. 8); Caglioti, 2015, 40–44, esp. 41 (fig. 2); Galli, 162. Giura's photo montage is unclear about the relation of the *Crucifix* and frescoes to the altar below, while the scale of the painted figures of Isaiah and David seems disproportionately large. He also does not make a convincing case for linking Donatello's *Crucifix* to the chapel's possible dedicatee, Beato Gherardo da Villamagna.

There is no doubt about when the *Crucifix* was moved to its present position in the Bardi di Vernio Chapel since Vasari himself refers to the relocation in a letter of December 1571.[41] It is also clear that the *tramezzo* was demolished in 1566. In the approximately five intervening years, it is possible that Donatello's *Crucifix* was temporarily moved from a chapel in the *tramezzo*—specifically, a chapel in the left (north) half of the structure, as suggested by Vasari—into the fourth bay of the north aisle, once the site of the Barbigia Chapel. Such a move would have been a plausible response to Vasari's dismantling of the *tramezzo* since the fourth bay would have been the nearest one on the lay (west) side of the *tramezzo* in the north aisle to have remained unaffected by the demolition work taking place across the fifth bay of the nave.

A 1596 inventory of S. Croce suggests that the fourth bay in the north aisle was associated with the Barbigia before 1566. This text states that Donatello's *Crucifix* had been moved to the north transept from "the chapel of the Barbigia, where today is [found] the chapel of the Guidacci"—the latter chapel documented in the fourth bay of the north aisle in the later sixteenth century.[42] It is likely that the Barbigia's rights to the chapel were reassigned to the Guidacci during Vasari's renovation of S. Croce. This scenario is supported by the fact that the Barbigia, having risen to prominence from *popolano* (common) origins in the 1480s and then moved to the S. Croce quarter by the mid-1490s, may have already been on their way down again by the 1560s. In fact, by 1594, the male line had been extinguished and its palace on Piazza S. Croce transferred to another family.[43] The Barbigia Chapel must have been reallocated to the Guidacci by 1571, if not earlier, since by that date the space was being remodeled for the Guidacci and provided with a new altarpiece completed by Vasari in 1572.[44] Presumably, it was the refurbishment of this chapel that prompted the second relocation of Donatello's

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[39] Giura, 80, 105n45; Caglioti, 2015, 60n4; Galli, 162.

[40] Santi.

[41] Hall, 1979, 145–46, 182–83 (doc. 14).

[42] Hall, 1979, 144–47, esp. 145n12 and 200 (fig. 6).

[43] Giura, 77, 103n27.

[44] Hall, 1979, 144–47.

Crucifix before the end of 1571 to the Bardi di Vernio Chapel. There seems to have been a general clearout of the old Barbigia Chapel in this period, since the 1596 inventory of S. Croce notes that a painting of the Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand had also been moved from this chapel to that of the Bardi di Vernio.[45]

The *Crucifix*'s temporary location in the Barbigia Chapel shortly before it was transferred to the Guidacci seems to have led Francesco Bocchi (1548–1613/15) to assume in his 1591 guide to Florence that a member of the Barbigia family had been the work's original patron.[46] But an inventory of S. Croce compiled in 1439 makes it clear that the Barbigia had not, at that time, been allocated a chapel anywhere within the church.[47] The family therefore are unlikely to have been the patrons in the early fifteenth century of the chapel in the fourth bay of the north aisle (which was in any case unassigned in the 1439 inventory), even though it would eventually become first the Barbigia Chapel (possibly after the family moved to the S. Croce quarter in the 1490s) and then the Guidacci Chapel by 1571. As noted above, the Barbigia were still a humble *popolano* family when Donatello carved the *Crucifix*, which makes their patronage of the work even more unlikely.

Bocchi's mistake has given rise to misunderstandings ever since. For instance, in 1845, Filippo Moisé repeated Bocchi's assertion that the *Crucifix* was made for the Barbigia. He stated first that the family's chapel had been in the north aisle, then later that it had been in the *tramezzo*[48]—a confusion also seen in Janson, as discussed above. Margrit Lisner, Laura Cavazzini, David Wilkins, and Harris have similarly assumed that the *Crucifix*'s patron was a Barbigia despite a lack of supporting documentation, although all but Wilkins correctly note that the work was originally displayed in the *tramezzo*.[49] Most recently, Giura has claimed that the chapel in the north aisle's fourth bay —as noted above, unassigned in 1439, but associated in all sixteenth-century sources with the Barbigia before being transferred to the Guidacci—actually belonged to a branch of the Baroncelli family in the early fifteenth century. Giura then proposes that a member of Inghilese Baroncelli's branch was the patron of both Donatello's *Crucifix* and Bicci di Lorenzo's frescoes. The linguistic and geographic contortions supporting this suggestion are not convincing, not least since the 1439 inventory clearly locates Inghilese's chapel in the third rather than the fourth bay.[50] Whether the Baroncelli may have been the patrons of the chapel in the fourth bay in the early fifteenth century before it was assigned to the Barbigia after 1439 is in any case of tangential interest to the present argument, since other evidence supports Vasari's repeated assertion that Donatello's *Crucifix* was not originally in the north aisle, but rather in a chapel in the *tramezzo*.

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[45] Giura, 76, 103n25.

[46] Bocchi, 159.

[47] Hall, 1979, 145, 153–67 (doc. 1).

[48] Moisè, 177, 187n1.

[49] Lisner, 1968, 115; Lisner, 1970, 54; Cavazzini, 164; Wilkins, 136, 144n47; Harris, 2010, 1:104–05.

As Hall first demonstrated, the *tramezzo* itself was a very imposing structure. Two stories high and half a bay deep, it bisected the interior of S. Croce and housed four chapels on its west front, facing the lay part of the church (figs. 7 and 9). Building on Hall's research, Andrea De Marchi has provided important new information about the *tramezzo*. Two of his key conclusions are, first, that the four *tramezzo* chapels were probably freestanding two-story structures linked by a series of grilles, and, second, that there was most likely a single (rather than a tripartite) central opening leading to the choir[51]—although the view through this opening to the high altar would have been partially blocked by choir stalls and further grillwork. A panel of ca. 1467 by Fra Carnevale (active 1445–84) depicts a fictional rood screen with four chapels facing the laity, which gives a sense of how such a structure looked, even if many details do not conform to the proposed reconstruction of S. Croce's *tramezzo* (fig. 10).[52]

That Donatello's *Crucifix* was in one of the four *tramezzo* chapels is confirmed not only by Vasari, but also by evidence that predates the renovation of S. Croce. As discussed above, Vasari specified that the chapel housing Donatello's *Crucifix* had a fresco of a Franciscan miracle by Taddeo Gaddi and was on the lefthand side of the *tramezzo*. Significantly, it was on the left (north) half of the church that Taddeo seems to have painted most of his frescoes in the basilica.[53] The *Crucifix*'s original location is also referred to twice in a text written in ca. 1537–47 by the so-called Anonimo Magliabechiano, well before Vasari removed the *tramezzo* in 1566. This document states that the *Crucifix* was "in Santa Croce on the side of the cemetery in the middle of the church" and, later, that "almost in the middle [of S. Croce], near the

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[50] In the 1439 inventory, Inghilese's chapel "is *allato alla porta* [next to the door] leading to Via delle Pinzochere," with both the door (later closed by Vasari) and chapel located in the north aisle's third bay in early sources. Hall, 1979, 147, 159 (fig. 2). Giura interprets this instead as referring to a chapel in the next (fourth) bay of the north aisle: Giura, 74–80, 94–95. De Marchi, 2011, 57, supports Giura's suggestion, but Caglioti and Galli are unconvinced: Caglioti, 2015, 60n4; Galli, 162.

[51] De Marchi, 2011, 33–38.

[52] Christiansen, 258–66; Cannon, 40.

[53] De Marchi, 2011, 47.

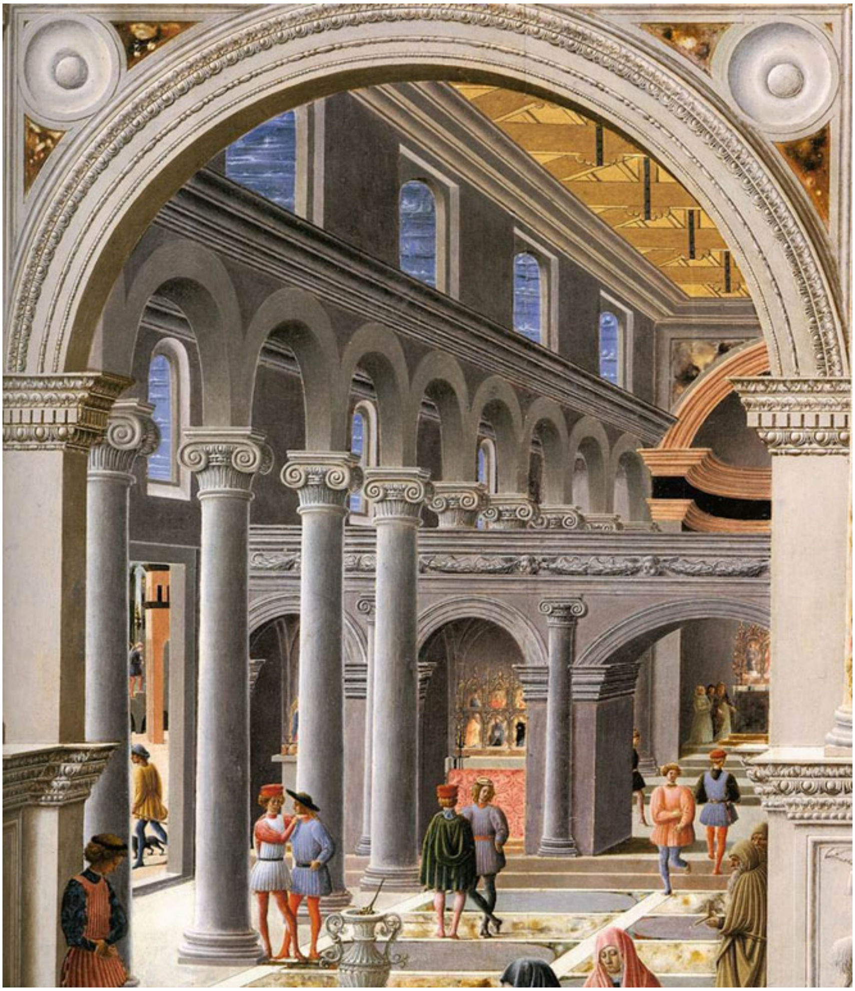

Figure 10. Fra Carnevale (Bartolomeo di Giovanni Corradini). Detail of *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, ca. 1467. Oil and tempera on wood, 146.4 x 96.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

door to the cemetery . . . [was] a crucifix, life-size and in relief, by his [Donatello's] hand."[54] There was, in fact, a cemetery along the north side of S. Croce accessed by a door just beyond the *tramezzo* in the sixth bay. Two other sixteenth-century sources written before the *tramezzo*'s removal—one by Billi, the other by Gelli—likewise locate Donatello's *Crucifix* "in the middle" of the church.[55] More generally, the phrase "in the middle of the church" was used throughout Europe in this period to refer to rood screens and the chapels and objects attached to them.[56]

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[54] Giura, 75. On the Anonimo Magliabechiano, see Wierda.

Hall's reconstruction of the *tramezzo* suggests that the chapels most readily described as being in or near the middle of S. Croce would have been the ones flanking the structure's central opening. De Marchi's research supports such a reading since he has confirmed that the chapels on the far ends of the *tramezzo* (associated with the Asini and Foresta families) were attached to the walls of the basilica, a position difficult to describe as being in the "middle" of the church.[57] The chapel immediately to the right of the *tramezzo*'s central opening, which belonged to Piero Baroncelli, is unlikely to have housed the *Crucifix* because it was dedicated to and contained images of Saint Martin, contradicting sources stating that Donatello's *Crucifix* was below a fresco of a Franciscan miracle.[58] The Piero Baroncelli Chapel also wasn't on the lefthand (north) side, as specified by both Vasari and the Anonimo Magliabechiano. The most likely original location for Donatello's *Crucifix* is therefore the first chapel to the left of the *tramezzo*'s central entrance. Such an arrangement would have recalled so-called altars of the cross in Italy and especially north of the Alps that were likewise located in the center of churches, were often set within or in front of rood screens, and frequently housed sculpted crucifixes associated with Good Friday rituals.[59]

COMMISSIONING THE *CRUCIFIX*

In the earliest version of the 1439 inventory of S. Croce, the chapel immediately to the left of the *tramezzo*'s central entrance is listed as dedicated to Saint Peter and belonging to "Niccolò di Bocchino and descendants, who used to live in [the parish of] Santa Lucia de' Magnioli."[60] This inventory also records the tomb of "Nicholò di Bocchino" in the same chapel.[61] Both entries are undoubtedly references to a member of the Rimbaldesi, a patrician family whose most prominent member in the late medieval period was Niccolò di Bocchino (fl.

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[55] Translated in Janson, 7–8. Billi's text was written before 1530. For the dating of Gelli's text, see note 7.

[56] Oswald; Cooper, 2000, 1:33, 130, 227; Cooper, 2001, 45–46.

[57] De Marchi, 2011, 34–38, esp. 38 (fig. 8). Giura reads "middle" as referring to the north aisle's fourth bay, but this bay would not have appeared centered within the north flank when the *tramezzo* was in place. Giura, 75.

[58] On the Piero Baroncelli chapel, see Hall, 1974.

[59] Brooks, 56; Schlegel, 28; Fisher; J. Jung, 2000, 631–34, 651n22.

[60] Hall, 1979, 158.

[61] Pines, 631 (cat. no. 136).

1346–78). Records show that Niccolò's father served twice in one of the Florentine republic's major offices of state in the 1310s. But it was Niccolò, a banker with strong anti-Guelf sympathies, who became a significant political player in Florence when he served in high office no fewer than twenty times between 1346 and 1378.[62]

By 1352, the Rimbaldesi had moved their base from one location to another in the Oltr'arno district of Florence.[63] This may explain the reference in the 1439 inventory to the family's former home being in the parish of S. Lucia de' Magnoli. The Rimbaldesi's new parish appears to have been S. Maria Sopr'arno, also known as S. Maria dei Bardi due to its connections with the powerful Bardi family. In a painting of the church's facade made in 1869 by Telemaco Signorini (1835–1901), just before it was demolished, one sees on the right side a Bardi family tomb with the arms of the Rimbaldesi carved over the doorway beside it, thereby making visible the parochial connections between the two families.[64]

Like many other patrician families in this period, both the Bardi and Rimbaldesi were members of a more modest parish church close to their palazzo while also patronizing major mendicant churches like S. Croce. In the case of the Bardi, they maintained links to S. Maria Sopr'arno while simultaneously exercising their patronage rights over some of the most prestigious chapels in S. Croce, including the one immediately to the right of the Cappella Maggiore (High Altar Chapel). This chapel, founded by Ridolfo de' Bardi, was dedicated to Saint Francis and frescoed in the 1320s with images of the saint's life by Giotto (1266–1337). Interestingly enough, the Franciscan miracle of the resurrected boy said by Vasari to have been painted by Taddeo above Donatello's *Crucifix* does not appear in the Bardi Chapel fresco cycle, which suggests that its depiction in the *tramezzo* chapel could have served as a kind of iconographic complement to Giotto's earlier series.

Given that the Rimbaldesi were co-parishioners of the Bardi in S. Maria Sopr'arno from at least 1352 onward, it is possible that Niccolò Rimbaldesi sought to obtain patronage rights in S. Croce sometime after this date. It was also in this period that the Rimbaldesi's prestige reached its zenith, which would tally well with a decision to acquire a chapel in S. Croce and commission a

[62] For offices held by the Rimbaldesi, see Herlihy et al. On the family, see also Anuidi, 427; Brucker, 68–69, 177, 191, 198–99, 205, 208, 254n27, 341; Giurescu, 206–07; Porta Casucci, 203n30.

[63] Porta Casucci, 203n30.

[64] The tomb, now in the Bargello Museum, Florence, was made for Andrea de' Bardi in 1342. For Signorini's painting, see https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa_di_Santa_Maria_dei_Bardi.

fresco from Giotto's most successful pupil, Taddeo Gaddi, in the decade and a half before the latter's death in 1366.[65] Perhaps less expected is the Rimbaldesi Chapel's dedication to Saint Peter according to the 1439 inventory. This saint has no obvious connection to the family, although it may be significant that the miracle depicted in Taddeo's fresco was set in Rome, which could be related in a very general way to the Franciscan order's links to the papacy. Given the *tramezzo*'s completion in the 1330s, it is also possible that the chapel had a preexisting dedication to Saint Peter by the time the Rimbaldesi acquired patronage rights after 1352, perhaps as a result of the chapel's original patrons falling on hard times or even dying in the Black Death of 1348. By commissioning a new fresco from Taddeo, Niccolò would have adapted the chapel to his needs by aping both the Franciscan iconography and the Giottesque style of the much grander chapel beside the high altar patronized by his wealthier and more powerful Bardi neighbors. It is even possible that the fresco of a young boy's miraculous resurrection could be related to the death and/or birth of a child from the Rimbaldesi family. For the present argument, what is crucial is that, from an iconographic point of view, no other chapels in or near the *tramezzo* are better candidates for housing Donatello's *Crucifix*.[66]

Whatever precise circumstances may have led Niccolò to commission a Franciscan miracle fresco in the mid-fourteenth century for a family chapel in the *tramezzo* dedicated to Saint Peter, by the 1439 inventory, the Rimbaldesi's brief moment in the political spotlight had come to an end. This was probably hastened by Niccolò's proscription in 1378 for his anti-Guelf tendencies, after which he never again held political office in Florence.[67] In the last known version of the 1439 inventory, it is in fact Niccolò's son, Giovanni, who is listed as the chapel's patron.[68] Unlike his father, Giovanni never held political office, nor did any of his sons or grandsons.

Since the Rimbaldesi appear to have been the patrons of the chapel in which Donatello's *Crucifix* was displayed up to 1566, it is plausible to suggest that it could well have been a member of this family who commissioned the work—and, given a date of ca. 1406–15 for the *Crucifix*, the most likely candidate would be Giovanni, Niccolò's son. However, without further documentation, which may no longer exist due to the floods that swept through S. Croce in the mid-sixteenth century, the suggestion that Donatello's *Crucifix* could have been commissioned by the Rimbaldesi for their *tramezzo* chapel remains speculative.

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[65] This suggests a possible date of ca. 1352–66 for Taddeo's lost *tramezzo* fresco.

[66] This includes a chapel dedicated to Beato Gherardo da Villamagna suggested by Giura, but the argument is not very convincing: Giura, 83–94.

[67] Brucker, 199n22.

[68] Hall, 1979, 159.

In light of the decline in the family's fortunes after Niccolò's proscription in 1378, it is also problematic to assume that Niccolò's son, Giovanni, would have had the social, political, and financial wherewithal to undertake the project in the early fifteenth century.[69] The family could, however, have allowed its chapel to house the *Crucifix* on behalf of another patron altogether. That patron might not have been an individual, but rather a collective entity such as a confraternity, perhaps one with a link to the Rimbaldesi.

CONFRATERNAL CONNECTIONS

Disciplinati or flagellant confraternities were known for their intensely somatic forms of worship, as well as for their close links with mendicant orders. They were also particularly devoted to the Crucifixion. There is a growing literature on the devotional practices of confraternities and the roles their members played, either collectively or individually, as patrons of art and architecture.[70] But apart from brief studies of S. Croce's *laudesi* confraternity, whose members spent their time singing hymns to Mary rather than flagellating themselves, very little research has been carried out on any of the confraternities associated with S. Croce.[71] This is largely due, once again, to the floods that repeatedly swept through the convent, destroying most confraternity archives.

However, at least one and possibly two flagellant confraternities had been established in S. Croce by the time Donatello's *Crucifix* was carved. One was the Compagnia del Gesù, founded in 1332. The other was the Compagnia di S. Francesco del Martello, which claimed to have been established in 1400, although the date may have been symbolic, perhaps intended to suggest a link to the 1399 Bianchi penitential movement, given that its statutes only date to 1427.[72] The surviving documentation for both confraternities in the first half of the fifteenth century is in any case sparse, but it is possible that one of these groups—or individual members, including perhaps a Rimbaldesi—could have commissioned an articulated crucifix in this period.

This suggestion is supported indirectly by a crucifix commissioned by another flagellant confraternity, this one dedicated to Gesù Pellegrini and based in the Dominican church of S. Maria Novella in Florence. According to John Douglas Turner, the confraternity's statutes, written before 1453, refer to commissioning a "large" crucifix that was "like the one of the Company of the *disciplinati* in Santa Croce in Florence."[73] The precise date, design, and even medium of this object, which no longer survives, are unclear. That it could have comprised a sculpted effigy is suggested by the fact that it may have been replaced in 1502 (1501 Florentine calendar) by a still-extant crucifix with movable arms by Baccio da Montelupo.[74] The pre-1453 document clearly implies that one of S. Croce's flagellant confraternities owned a crucifix by the mid-fifteenth century that was well enough known locally to serve as a prototype for other works. This could be a reference to an older, now lost crucifix that was used in the Bianchi penitential processions of 1399.[75] But it is also possible that the pre-1453 document refers to Donatello's *Crucifix*, the most important such object in S. Croce in the first half of the fifteenth century with possible links to a *disciplinati* confraternity. Which of the two such confraternities in S. Croce the pre-1453 document was referring to is unclear, although the name of the group in S. Maria Novella—Compagnia di Gesù Pellegrini—does echo that of the Compagnia del Gesù in S. Croce.

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[69] The Rimbaldesi don't appear in Florence's 1427 *catasto* (tax record) so their wealth in this period is unclear.

[70] Recent publications include Terpstra; Wisch and Ahl; Chen.

[71] On the *laudesi*, see Wilson, 89–91.

[72] On the sometimes tenuous dates of origin of confraternities and associated crucifixes around 1399–1400, see Bornstein, 192–99, esp. 198n33; Holmes, 48–49.

At the same time, a chapel with a Franciscan-themed fresco could have provided a very congenial setting for a crucifix commissioned by the Compagnia di S. Francesco. Located below Taddeo's fresco of a Franciscan resurrection miracle, Donatello's *Crucifix* would have encouraged typological connections between Christ and Saint Francis, as seen in Taddeo's panels for S. Croce's sacristy (fig. 8).[76] Given that the confraternity's oratory, like those of many other confraternities, was underground, in this case beneath a cloister south of the transept, the group would have benefited from being able to display in a chapel in the main body of the church a crucifix intended for public devotional rituals that will be discussed below.[77] If the confraternity really was founded in 1400 as claimed, this could have triggered a commission for a new crucifix relatively soon afterward to help the group make its mark on S. Croce's annual liturgical calendar.

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[73] Turner, 222 (doc. 7c). See also Kopania, 167.

[74] Turner, 66–68, 119–22, 221–22 (doc. 7).

[75] In 1553, Ascanio Condivi (1525–74) mentioned a crucifix in S. Croce associated with the 1399 Bianchi movement, which he conflated with the Black Death of 1348: Holmes, 155–56. Could Condivi have been referring to a crucifix used by the Bianchi-inspired Compagnia di S. Lorenzino formed in 1399 in the quarter (rather than church) of S. Croce? See Weissman, 73–74. There could also be confusion with a crucifix carried in 1399 by the Bianchi from the town of Santa Croce in Valdarno: Morton, 131.

[76] Ladis, 114–26.

[77] On this confraternity and on Florentine confraternities' subterranean oratories in general, see Moisè, 415–31; Hall, 1979, 164; Henderson, 81n34, 454–55; Sebregondi, esp. 19 (fig. 7), 41–42, 61–62.

On the other hand, S. Croce's more well-established flagellant society, the Compagnia del Gesù, was also known as the Compagnia del Gesù e della Croce, which suggests particular devotion to the Crucifixion. This confraternity's oratory—dedicated to the cross—was once again located underground, in this case in the vaults beneath the north transept.[78] Like the Compagnia di S. Francesco, the Compagnia del Gesù would have likewise benefited from having access to a chapel in the nave in order to perform public devotional rituals involving a crucifix. The confraternity's subterranean oratory beneath the north transept could also have been the site for the temporary sepulcher associated with the Depositio rituals, which are described in some sources as involving sepulchers on the north (or sinister) side of churches.[79] In light of this, it may be significant that the confraternity's oratory was located directly beneath the Bardi di Vernio Chapel, to which Donatello's *Crucifix* was moved in 1571 (fig. 7).

It was also in 1571 that a substantial altarpiece depicting the Deposition of Christ by Alessandro Allori (1535–1607) was installed in the Compagnia del Gesù's underground oratory.[80] Allori was himself a member of this confraternity, as was Vasari, which suggests a close familiarity with the needs of the group.[81] The Deposition would, of course, have been a particularly appropriate theme for the custodians of a crucifix originally made to be used in rituals reenacting Christ's Descent from the Cross. Indeed, the altarpiece could have served as a permanent painted substitute for these rituals once Donatello's *Crucifix* had been installed in 1571 in a raised tabernacle in the north transept above the confraternity's oratory, a position from which it was unlikely to have continued to participate actively in the rituals of Good Friday.

Without further documentation, it remains uncertain which of S. Croce's two flagellant confraternities might have been involved in commissioning, using, and then effectively decommissioning Donatello's *Crucifix*. The suggestion that a *disciplinati* confraternity in S. Maria Novella may have used Donatello's *Crucifix* as a model is intriguing. But there is no doubt that a number of other flagellant confraternities in Central Italy definitely did commission their own wooden crucifixes for use on Good Friday, including several with movable limbs. Examples are recorded from the first half of the fourteenth century onward—for instance, Good Friday rituals involving an articulated crucifix were associated with confraternities in 1339 and 1374 in Perugia, 1381 in Assisi, and 1419–1513 in Foligno, while in 1486, an amalgamation of four *disciplinati* groups staged very public performances in Rome on Good Friday involving an articulated crucifix.[82] Confraternal involvement in commissioning and using Donatello's *Crucifix* is thus a real possibility, albeit one that has hitherto not been considered.

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[78] On this confraternity and its oratory, see Moisè, 421–22; Henderson, 455; Hall, 1979, 165–66; Sebregondi, 13–14, 19 (fig. 7).

[79] On subterranean and north-side sepulchers, see Young, 1:137–39, 142–43, 2:509–12; Ousterhout, 317; Sheingorn, 34; Pilliod, 1989, 125–60; Kroesen, 57–58, 61; Ogden, 41.

[80] Pilliod, 1989, 125–60.

[81] Pilliod, 1992, 728; Pilliod, 2001, 98.

THE BIANCHI OF 1399

Donatello's *Crucifix* may be linked not only to one of S. Croce's *disciplinati* confraternities, but also indirectly to the Bianchi penitential movement of 1399, whose adherents witnessed "many fine miracles" performed "by means of their crucifixes."[83] The devotional practices of the Bianchi echo those of the *disciplinati*, especially their penchant for self-flagellation, public processions with crucifixes, and intense devotion to the body of Christ. While the Bianchi were generally welcomed by local authorities as they traveled through Central and Northern Italy dressed in *bianchi* (white) robes in groups numbering in the thousands, some localities, including Florence, Rome, and Venice, did have concerns.[84] In addition to the processions, the popular image cults that sprang up around the Bianchi, which were often centered on miraculous bleeding crucifixes, seem to have caused some worries in Florence and elsewhere.[85] Megan Holmes has suggested that the Florentine Franciscans were particularly wary of such unregulated image cults.[86] It is thus worth noting that it was the minister general of the Franciscan order who reported a charlatan being burned at the stake after modifying a wooden Bianchi crucifix so that fake blood appeared to spurt from its wounds.[87]

Given how well known Bianchi crucifixes must have been in the years immediately following the events of 1399, it is striking that Donatello's *Crucifix* very clearly does not evoke in its design or material qualities the miraculous crucifixes associated with the movement, such as one displayed at the time in the Florentine baptistery (fig. 6), which in September 1399 was reported to have bled, to the great consternation of the citizenry.[88] This crucifix and others linked to the Bianchi movement conform to a readily identifiable—and, by 1399, decidedly old-fashioned—type, the *crucifixo doloroso* (dolorous crucifix), which harked back to late thirteenth-century models such as Giovanni Pisano's processional *Crucifix* in Siena's Opera del Duomo (fig. 11).[89] The type featured painfully emaciated and twisting figures of Christ with schematically rendered torsos, spindly arms and legs, and bodies often covered in bloody flagellation striations. Significantly, this type of crucifix had long-standing associations with the Franciscans' great mendicant rivals, the Dominicans.[90]

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[82] Newbigin, 2000, 174–75; Bernardi, 2006, 8–12; Kopania, 44–50; Cannon, 170. See also Bino, 288.

[83] Translated in Bornstein, 158. On Bianchi crucifixes, see Morton, 181–82, 150–59; Bornstein, 145–61; Holmes, 47–49, 152–56, 174, 192–94.

[84] Bornstein, 162–87; Jansen, 48–54.

[85] Morton, 150–59; Bornstein, 165–67.

[86] Holmes, 90–91.

[87] Morton, 150–54; Holmes, 174.

The contrasts between *crucifixi dolorosi* and Donatello's *Crucifix*, with its solid, anatomically convincing limbs and torso, its uncontorted pose, and its surface polychromy unmarked by signs of flagellation, could have been understood by early fifteenth-century beholders through the prism of the Bianchi movement that had swept through the Italian peninsula just a few years earlier.[91] Unlike the smaller processional crucifixes carried by the Bianchi through city streets and country lanes without close oversight from either civic or religious authorities, Donatello's weighty, life-size *Crucifix* was not made to be moved any great distance. While Donatello's supporting cross and those carried by the Bianchi both focused on the symbolism of wood as a material—a topic that will be further discussed below—they did so in very different ways: Donatello's cross had woody patterns painted on its surface, while the Bianchi favored crosses carved to look as though severed stumps of branches were sprouting from their surfaces, as seen in Pisano's *Crucifix* and examples associated with the Bianchi, as well as in contemporary drawings of the 1399 processions.[92] A number of Bianchi crosses and the effigies hanging on them also had a distinctive *Y*-shape, again like Pisano's *Crucifix*, as opposed to the *T*-shape of Donatello's cross and figure of Christ.

Most importantly, Donatello's *Crucifix* did not simply look different from the Bianchi crucifixes; it was also designed to be engaged in very different ways. Rather than giving rise to popular miracle cults featuring effusive outpourings of blood, Donatello's smooth-skinned and detachable figure of Christ, with arms that could be folded down along its sides, instead facilitated carefully choreographed tactile encounters with an anatomically convincing

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[88] Holmes, 192–94, 323n108. See also Becherucci and Brunetti, 231–32; Neri Lusanna; Kalina, 84; Kopania, 263.

[89] On Pisano's *Crucifix*, see Seidel, 82–87.

[90] On *crucifixi dolorosi*, see De Francovich; Lunghi, 2000, 65–90; Tomasi; Kalina.

[91] Harris has compared *crucifixi dolorosi* to Donatello's *Crucifix* in formal terms, but not in relation to the Bianchi movement: Harris, 2010, 1:155–62.

[92] For such a drawing, see Holmes, 48 (fig. 31).

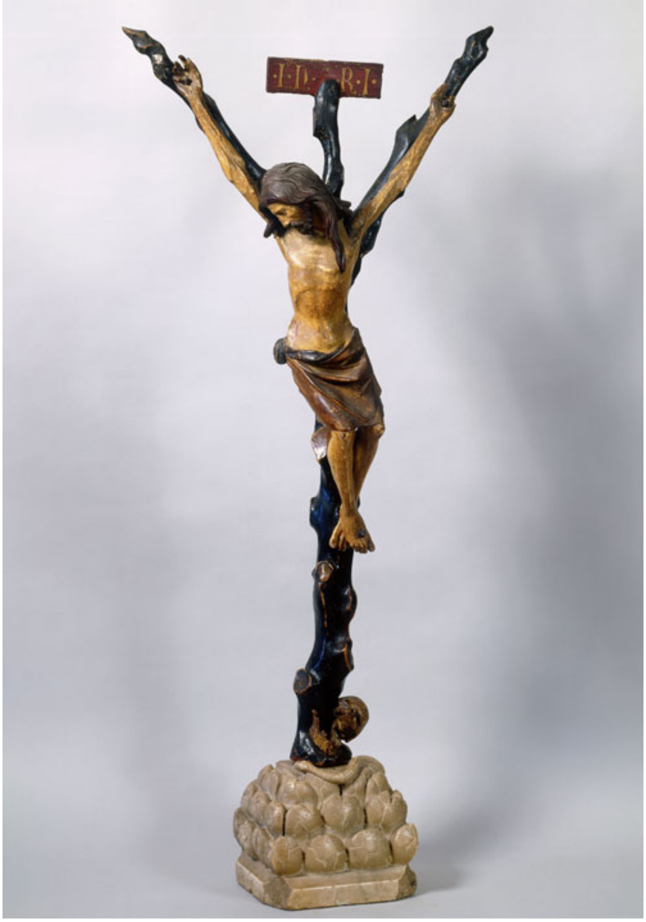

Figure 11. Giovanni Pisano. Processional *Crucifix* and supporting base, late thirteenth century. Polychromed wood with marble base, 71 cm (crucified Christ) and 114 cm (cross and base). Opera del Duomo, Siena. Scala / Art Resource, NY.

body marked not by multiple bloody signs of extreme violence, but instead by the five clearly delineated wounds associated with Saint Francis's stigmata, the focus of authorized Franciscan devotion, as Harris has discussed.[93] The particular qualities of Donatello's effigy and supporting cross were thus designed precisely for the kinds of annually recurring devotional practices associated with Holy Week that would have taken place inside the mother church of the Florentine Franciscans under the watchful eyes of friars who themselves would have actively participated in—indeed, may well have led—such rituals.

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[93] Harris, 2010, 1:184–90.

Such close oversight of a very different type of crucifix would have been in stark contrast to the Bianchi's preference for old-fashioned, anatomically exaggerated, contorted, and often heavily scarred *crucifixi dolorosi* that gave rise to uncontrolled miracle cults in 1399. What precisely the licit devotional practices that took place in S. Croce involving Donatello's *Crucifix* comprised—and for which his design was particularly appropriate—will be discussed in the following section.

MULTISENSORY DEVOTION AND THE RITUALS OF GOOD FRIDAY

The specific qualities of Donatello's *Crucifix* as an object and how it may have been originally displayed are crucial for understanding its role in the rituals associated with Good Friday. A wide range of visual and documentary evidence suggests that smaller-scale crucifixes were usually set on top of altar tables. But given Vasari's assertion that Donatello's *Crucifix* was located beneath Taddeo's fresco, it seems unlikely that the *Crucifix*, with a supporting cross that was at least 2.5 meters tall, would have been placed on an altar table within a chapel that was itself only just over 5 meters high.[94] Nor could it have easily been hung on the chapel's back wall or from its vaults given that the figure alone, carved in dense pearwood, is estimated to weigh 30–36 kilograms[95]—and if one includes the supporting cross, the total weight of the object could easily double. It thus seems plausible that Donatello's *Crucifix* would have originally been displayed upright on the floor of the chapel, probably set into a fixed floor mount capable of supporting its weight.

Such an arrangement would have resembled a scene painted by Sassetta (active 1427–50) of Saint Thomas Aquinas praying before a sculpted crucifix positioned against the back wall of a chapel and set securely in a floor mount recalling Mount Golgotha in miniature (fig. 12). If there was an altar table in front of Donatello's *Crucifix*, then the Cardini Chapel in the Franciscan church of S. Francesco in Pescia (not far from Florence) is particularly relevant (fig. 13). This chapel, completed in the 1450s and associated with Brunelleschi's adopted son, Andrea di Lazzaro Cavalcanti (Il Buggiano) (1412–82), still has a wooden crucifix (albeit without movable arms) displayed between an altar table and a frescoed back wall, mounted once again in a miniature Mount Golgotha set into the floor.[96]

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[94] The height of the cross today is 4.82 m, but 2.245 m of this is a later addition at the base: see Lalli et al., 27. The estimated height of the chapel is based on annotations in Hall, 1974, 333 (fig. 16).

[95] Email communication from Peter Stiberc.

[96] Paoletti, 89; Bulgarelli. Pisano's *Crucifix* (fig. 11) has a similar mount.

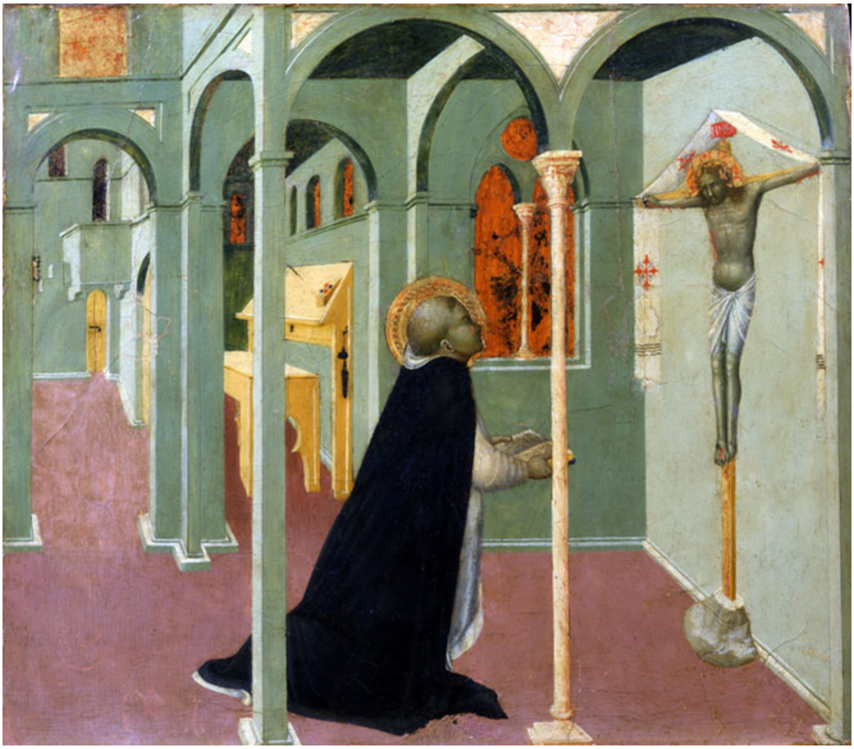

Figure 12. Sassetta. *Saint Thomas Aquinas Kneeling before a Crucifix*, predella from Arte della Lana altarpiece, 1423. Tempera on panel, 25 x 28.8 cm. Pinacoteca Vaticana. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

In light of these examples, one should reconsider depictions of similarly installed crucifixes, such as those painted by Fra Angelico and his workshop in the Dominican convent of S. Marco in Florence just a few decades after Donatello carved his *Crucifix*. In scene after scene, wooden crucifixes are shown securely wedged into mounds at ground level, sometimes with sacred figures grasping the lower part of the cross (fig. 14). William Hood has argued that these figures echo those depicted in Dominican prayer manuals, with both the manuals and the frescoes intended to guide devotees in how to use their bodies to achieve appropriately internalized forms of devotion.[97] Donatello's *Crucifix* suggests that these images may have served not only as visual aids for worshippers' current and future meditations, but also as vivid reminders of past devotional experiences involving their own embodied interactions with actual three-dimensional sculpted objects during Holy Week.

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[97] Hood.

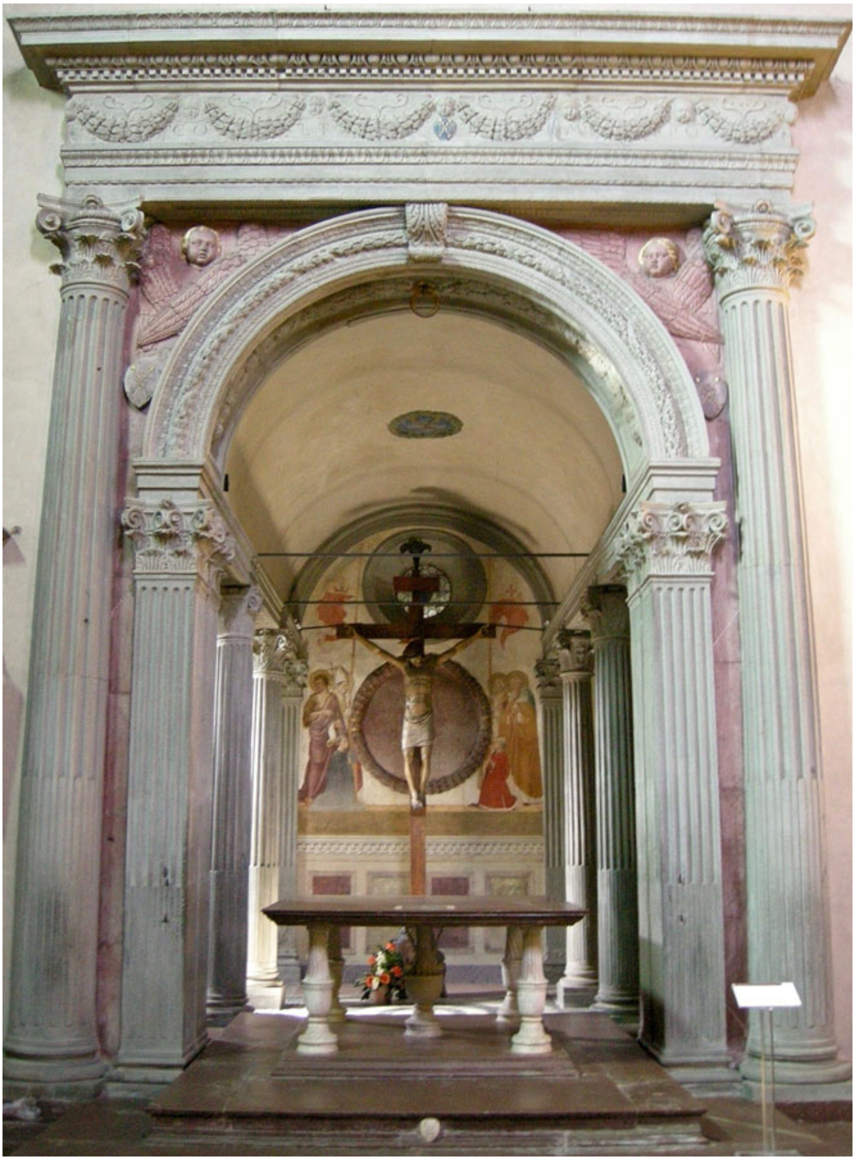

Figure 13. Andrea Cavalcanti (il Buggiano) (design attributed). Cardini Chapel, 1450s. S. Francesco, Pescia. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons / Sailko.

What, exactly, did the somatic devotional practices that took place on Good Friday entail? Scholars agree that life-size Christ figures with movable limbs like Donatello's were used throughout Europe for the ritual known as the Depositio Crucis in which a Host, cross, or effigy of Christ was symbolically buried in a

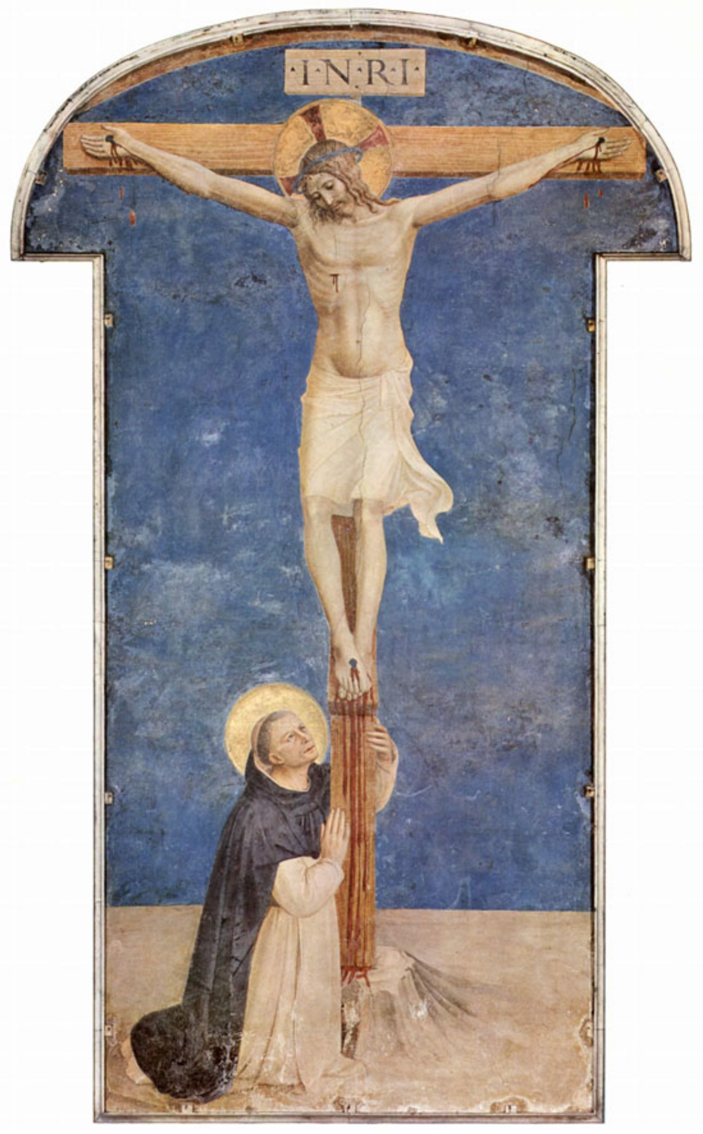

Figure 14. Fra Angelico. *Saint Dominic Embracing the Crucifix*, 1440–41. Fresco, 340 x 206 cm. Convent of S. Marco, Florence. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons / The Yorck Project.

temporary sepulcher. What has not been considered explicitly is that Donatello's *Crucifix* and similar effigies may have also played a key role in the Veneration of the Cross. This ritual, which took place before the Depositio on Good Friday, has been traced back to the fourth century to S. Croce in Jerusalem. The custom transferred to the Roman Church in the late sixth or early seventh century and still takes place today in Roman Catholic Good Friday services. In contrast, it is only from about the ninth century onward that documents mention the Depositio, with a fair amount of local variation due to the fact that this ceremony, unlike the Veneration, was para-liturgical.

A description of exactly what happened on Good Friday in the early fifteenth century at S. Croce during the Veneration and Depositio has not yet come to light. But key components of both rituals are described in sources dating from the tenth through the sixteenth century, including in liturgical texts such as various incarnations of the Roman rite used in all Franciscan churches, descriptions of para-liturgical rituals, processionals from Florence Cathedral and other major churches, and an account of a papal visit to S. Maria Novella on Good Friday in 1419.[98] These sources broadly agree that for the Veneration, a shrouded crucifix was brought to the altar. Slowly, the veil was removed in three steps. Each partial unveiling was followed first by singing, then by collective prostrations. Once the crucifix was fully revealed, it was placed by two deacons on a cushion before the altar. The priest would remove his shoes, kneel, and then kiss the crucifix, with some documents suggesting that it was the lower part of the cross or the feet of the crucified Christ that would be embraced. The pope's 1419 Veneration of the Cross in S. Maria Novella did not involve a detachable effigy with movable arms, but does confirm the key features of the ritual: "the Holy Father went to the high altar of Santa Maria Novella . . . said the office of the Cross, and [then] unveiled it [the crucifix], as is usually done; he placed it at the feet of the altar, and went to sit in his seat, and had his shoes removed and went with great devotion to kiss the Cross and kneeled 3 times."[99] This ritual may be alluded to indirectly in visual sources such as a Crucifixion fresco from the later 1430s by Andrea del Castagno (1423–57) for the hospital of S. Maria Nuova in Florence, in which Mary Magdalen kisses the cross just beneath Jesus's pierced feet (fig. 15).

The Veneration continued with other members of the clergy likewise genuflecting and kissing the crucifix, followed by the laity, as described in sources such as Durandus's (ca. 1230–96) *Pontificale*: "the clergy and the people also adore and kiss the cross."[100] Some documents make it clear that lay women

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[98] For the Florentine processionals, see Ghisi; Corbin, 115–16; Cattin; La Salle, 171–200; Toker, esp. 196–97, 269–70. For the papal visit, see Corazza, 260. The description that follows is compiled from these texts and the following sources on the Depositio and Veneration rituals: Lippe, 1:170–73; Brooks; Young, 1:112–48, 2:507–13; Gschwend; Hardison, 128–38; Taubert and Taubert, 91–121; Parker; Belting, 1981, 234–42; Bernardi, 1991, 89–121; Tripps, 1998, 114–58; Kroesen, 147–65; Ogden, 39–71; A. Thompson, 322–26; T. Jung, 57–68; Plum; Kopania, 120–62; Powell, 45–68; Cannon, 163–73; Tripps, 2016.

[99] Corazza, 260.

[100] Translated in La Salle, 56. See also Plum, 129–31.

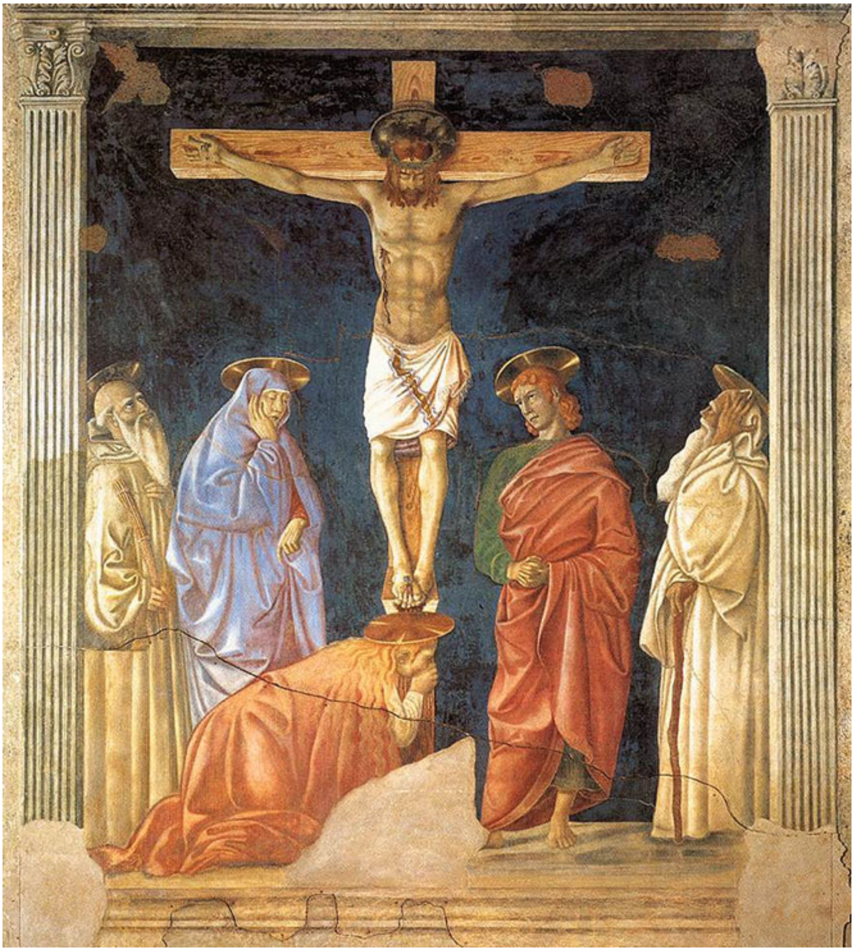

Figure 15. Andrea del Castagno. *Mary Magdalen Kissing the Base of the Crucifix*, late 1430s. Fresco, 335 x 285 cm. Spedale di S. Maria Nuova, Florence. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

as well as men could venerate the crucifix. A few sources suggest that all lay devotees may have performed the ritual outside the confines of the choir using a separate crucifix from the one used by the clergy. For example, in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century in Florence Cathedral, the clergy would "adore and kiss" one cross, while "another cross is placed outside the choir so the people can adore it, and another for the women."[101] Similarly, according to an early thirteenth-century processional from Siena Cathedral that Joanna

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[101] Translated in Toker, 52, 196.

Cannon believes may reflect Dominican practices, the clergy venerated a cross at the high altar, while "separately men and women shall similarly adore other crosses in suitable places."[102] That crucifixes may have been worshipped by the laity outside the choir—possibly with the clergy at the high altar using a separate crucifix—has interesting implications for Donatello's *Crucifix*. One could imagine the latter object being taken out of its floor mount in the Rimbaldesi Chapel, solemnly carried by two deacons through the central entrances to the *tramezzo* and choir to a specially prepared location in front of the high altar, where it was adored by clerics and laity alike (fig. 7). Alternatively, Donatello's *Crucifix* could have been presented to the laity for worship in front of its own chapel or, just a few steps away, by the central entrance of the *tramezzo*, while a separate, presumably smaller, crucifix was adored by the clergy at the high altar. The second scenario would have made handling Donatello's large and weighty *Crucifix* comparatively unproblematic and would have allowed easy access for women who, according to Donal Cooper, may otherwise not have been allowed to circulate beyond S. Croce's *tramezzo* in this period.[103] Venerating the *Crucifix* in this way would have conformed to Depositio rituals documented especially in Northern Europe as taking place on the lay side of a church by an altar of the cross or near the center of a rood screen.[104]

In whichever location Donatello's *Crucifix* may have been adored, only after the Veneration had been concluded would it have been used in the Depositio rituals that followed. Unlike the Veneration, detailed information about the Depositio is harder to come by given its para-liturgical status. However, chants do survive from Florence Cathedral and elsewhere related to this ritual, including the so-called *planctus Mariae* (Marian laments), in which a layperson or cleric took on the role of the Virgin lamenting over the dead Christ.[105] These chants suggest that the procession to the sepulcher and symbolic burial of Christ's effigy during the Depositio rituals may have recalled actual funerary customs from the period.[106] The convincing anatomy of Donatello's weighty, life-sized figure of Christ—especially compared to earlier *crucifixi dolorosi*—would have emphasized the connections between the Depositio and contemporary mourning processions and burial rites.

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[102] Translated in Cannon, 172–73. On women's participation in these rituals and on venerating more than one crucifix, see La Salle, 9–10, 60–62, 236–38; A. Thompson, 324–25; Toker, 52; Cannon, 166–73.

[103] Cooper, 2000, 1:78–79.

[104] Young, 2:510; Taubert and Taubert, 92–93; Fisher, 51.

[105] Tripps, 2016, 16–19, suggests that Marian statues were sometimes used instead of living participants. On the *planctus* and other chants, see also Young, 1:496–513; Ghisi; Corbin, esp. 115–16; Cattin; La Salle, 133–368; Plum, 367–68.

[106] La Salle, 133–368, esp. 171–200.

Although sources confirm that the Depositio took place after the Veneration, they are not always clear about whether this happened before or after Communion. In either scenario, once the Veneration had been completed, the high altar, until then kept dark along with the rest of the church, would have been illuminated by candles and censed in preparation for distributing the Eucharist consecrated on the previous day. In this period, Communion was taken by most of the laity just once per year, with the preferred period being the Triduum from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday.[107] The Eucharist was not always offered at the high altar, but could be distributed from a secondary altar or the center of a rood screen.[108] Whether lay Communion took place in S. Croce at the high altar or on the west side of the *tramezzo*, it was only when the Depositio ritual began that acolytes would have removed the nails piercing the hands and feet of Donatello's effigy. After detaching the figure from its cross, the arms would have been folded to the sides and the figure carried in procession, probably on a bier, with singers chanting laments as if at a real funeral before burying the effigy in a temporary sepulcher. The supporting cross would have been placed back into its floor mount, left bare and empty for all to contemplate in the Rimbaldesi Chapel while awaiting the Christ figure's symbolic resurrection on Easter morning.

This reconstruction of how Donatello's *Crucifix* might have been handled on Good Friday provides a general overview, but only begins to hint at the intensely multisensory experiences contemporary beholders would have had throughout the rituals. Although S. Croce's clergy and friars would have been offered the Eucharist during daily Masses at the high altar, even these privileged men would have only had the opportunity actually to handle a three-dimensional, life-size effigy of Christ during Holy Week. For the laity who may have never entered the choir or taken Communion outside of the Easter Triduum, the act of kissing the *Crucifix* during the Veneration, combined with other experiences involving all five senses during the Depositio, must have been almost overwhelming.

Of all the senses, it was touch that was engaged most explicitly during the Veneration, which, as noted above, was performed in an unlit church interior. Without the benefit of candlelight, nonvisual senses must have played a much greater role than during normal services, when the laity would have focused primarily on seeing the elevated Host. Interestingly enough, in some painted images that may recall the Veneration, figures effectively serving as proxies for actual, living devotees standing before the painting sometimes appear more concerned with embracing, kissing and caressing the base of the cross or Jesus's wounded feet than with looking directly at Christ himself (fig. 15). This intimate annual tactile encounter with a life-size figure of Christ may explain the often harrowing details meticulously depicted on sculpted effigies, details that would only have been clearly visible to and, crucially, potentially palpable by beholders on Good Friday. These could include raised veins built up from gesso and picked out in pale green or purple paint; rough patches of raw flesh and deep bruises; and dried drips of thickly painted blood spurting from deep gashes, oozing from scored skin, and running along limbs, between toes, and through sweat-caked locks, the last sometimes made from wool or real strands of human hair.

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[107] Browe, 71–92; Cooper, 2000, 1:159; Burnett, 80–96.

[108] Jungmann, 506; Hall, 1978, 216; Cooper, 2000, 1:81, 158–59; Fisher, 54; Burnett, 80–96; Cannon, 51.

In the case of Donatello's *Crucifix*, the effigy's polychromed surfaces concentrated less on overwhelming the beholder with a profusion of distressing injuries as seen in *crucifixi dolorosi* and instead focused on clearly delineating Christ's five main wounds by contrasting a flesh-colored base layer of smoothly polished paint with just a few—and, therefore, all the more visually striking—dark crimson-red rivulets of blood running out of the almost surgically precise incision between the ribs and the clean puncture wounds in the hands and feet (figs. 2, 3, and 4). But more than any single tangible detail or particular chromatic contrast, it was the anatomically convincing body itself carved by Donatello—especially convincing in comparison to earlier examples—that devotees would have registered with their hands and lips during the Good Friday rituals. That devotees really did handle such objects is implied by a payment made in 1451 to "refresh," that is, repaint a crucifix used on Good Friday in Treviso.[109] Similar handling may have led to a crucifix on the high altar of a church in rural Umbria being described in the late sixteenth century as having "corroded feet."[110] Although there are no obvious signs of such extreme wear on the painted surfaces of Donatello's effigy, the hinges at the shoulders do show evidence of having been opened and closed on numerous occasions.[111]

Tactile engagements with articulated crucifixes are also suggested in probably the most widely diffused devotional text of the late medieval period, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. The earliest version has most recently been dated to the mid-fourteenth century and seems to have been composed in a Franciscan context.[112] Many scholars have linked the text's highly embodied descriptions of the life of Christ to increasingly empathetic forms of internalized meditation. However, as was the case for painted images of crucifixes set into floor mounts depicted by artists like Fra Angelico (fig. 14), it is possible that the text was also intended to remind readers of past somatic engagements with real effigies of the crucified Christ.

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[109] Translated in Schulz, 319, 331n47.

[110] Lunghi, 2011, 320.

[111] Email communication from Peter Stiberc.

[112] Debates about the dating and authorship of the *Mediations* do not materially affect the arguments presented here, but for a recent summary, see McNamer.

The *Meditations* opens the section on the Deposition by admonishing readers to

> attend diligently and carefully to the manner of the Deposition. Two ladders are placed on opposite sides of the cross. Joseph [of Arimathea] ascends the ladder placed on the right side and tries to extract the nail from His hand. But this is difficult, because the long, heavy nail is fixed firmly into the wood. . . . Nicodemus extracts the other nail from the left hand. . . . [Then he] descends and comes to the nail in the feet. Joseph supported the body of the Lord: happy indeed is this Joseph, who deserves to embrace the body of the Lord! . . . The nail in the feet [having been] pulled out . . . all receive the body of the Lord and place it on the ground . . . [Mary] held His head on her lap . . . and the Magdalen held His feet. . . . [Mary] wiped His face and, kissing His mouth and eyes, wrapped His head in a [cloth]. . . . And then, all adoring Him on bended knees, and kissing His feet, they took Him and carried Him to the tomb. The sepulcher was near the place of the Crucifixion, as far as the length of our church or thereabouts, and they buried Him in it reverently.[113]

The insistently tactile physicality of this scene is remarkable: the weight of the nails and the difficulty of extracting them from Christ's wounds; the heaviness of the descending body; the various witnesses who embrace, cloth, hold, carry, and even kiss the dead Savior. The passage's closing device of relating the sepulcher's location to the length of "our church" also hints at the connections contemporary beholders could have made among descriptions of the Crucifixion in texts like the *Meditations*, painted representations (both historic and ahistoric) of such scenes, and Holy Week rituals involving tactile engagements with actual sculpted objects like Donatello's *Crucifix* in their own churches. Although no known documents confirm where the Depositio sepulcher was located in S. Croce, textual and archaeological evidence from throughout Europe discussed above suggests that this could have been under the high altar or the altar of the Rimbaldesi Chapel, in a tentlike structure in front of the rood screen, or possibly in a subterranean oratory belonging to one of S. Croce's *disciplinati* confraternities. In any of these locations, the *Crucifix* would have encouraged contemporary devotees to think of the sacred geography of S. Croce as a physical representation of the holy sites of Jerusalem, much as the Veneration and subsequent Depositio were temporal representations of the events of Christ's Passion.

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[113] Translated in Ragusa and Green, 341–44.

In a recent study focusing primarily on Northern European paintings of the Deposition, Amy Powell has suggested that sculpted effigies of the crucified Christ with movable arms highlighted the lifelessness of the figure and the fiction that underlies the mimetic claims of art itself by calling "attention to the fact that—as movable as it may be—the image is powerless to move itself."[114] Unlike paintings of the Crucifixion, Deposition, or Burial of Christ, however, sculpted effigies of Christ must have appeared highly mimetic, even simulachral. Like the real dead Christ, who once rigor mortis had set in would have been stiff and only movable by another living being, a carved wooden effigy would have been equally rigid and passive. In this case, the obvious deadness of the object would have made it a more convincing reminder of or even substitute for its historic prototype. The living acolytes who handled effigies of the crucified Christ would have mimicked Joseph and Nicodemus, who had likewise grasped a similarly dead and rigid Christ. Meanwhile, devotees would have engaged with the wood of the cross and the stiff body of Christ himself much as Mary, the Magdalen, and later visionary saints had been described and depicted as doing in texts and images. In meditative writings on the historical Crucifixion, as well as in painted images of holy figures engaging with crucifixes, contemporary devotees would have been reminded of their own previous tactile encounters with actual sculpted crucifixes. Such sensory memories could thus have served as prompts for future internalized forms of meditation, as suggested above.

Although the emphasis thus far has been on devotees' tactile engagements with objects like Donatello's *Crucifix*, it is worth remembering that taste, smell, and hearing were also implicated in Good Friday rituals involving sculpted crucifixes. Throughout the year, sermons would have been heard by the laity congregating in the naves of mendicant churches like S. Croce.[115] Raised pulpits facing into naves were often incorporated into rood screens in mendicant churches in the pre-Tridentine period to enable sermons to be heard clearly by the laity. But in the case of music, the laity in the nave would have probably heard only a dim, possibly indecipherable echo of the chanting experienced at first hand by the clergy in the choir, including those singing in the new polyphonic style.[116] Similarly, one must assume that while a faint smell of incense must have wafted through churches during liturgical services, the intense aroma released when the altar, priest, and Gospel book were censed during the liturgy would only have been fully sensible within the enclosed precincts of the choir.[117]

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[114] Powell, 81.

[115] Meersseman, 2:939–40.

[116] Howard and Moretti; Dean.

[117] On incense, see Dugan, 24–41.

On Good Friday, however, when the laity—or at least lay men—may have been allowed to approach the altar during religious services, they would have been much better positioned to smell the precious incense while partaking of their annual obligatory Communion. At this moment, which would normally occur after the tactile Veneration of the Cross, the smell of incense, the sound of singing, and, most importantly, the taste of the Eucharist itself—described as "so sweet" and "most flavorful" by Angela da Foligno[118]—would have been intensely present in a multisensory combination unavailable at any other time of the year. For the Franciscan friars, these sensations would have been much more familiar thanks to the daily Masses they attended at the high altar, although they too would have only palpably engaged with Donatello's *Crucifix* during the Easter Triduum. Even if the laity at S. Croce did not venerate Donatello's *Crucifix* at the high altar, but instead did so on the lay side of the *tramezzo*, they would still have partaken of their annual Communion afterward and would have witnessed and possibly themselves participated in the Depositio rituals in which Christ's effigy was removed from the cross, placed on a *feretrum* (bier), and then carried in a solemn procession accompanied by mournful chanting to a temporary sepulcher.[119] A fifteenth-century processional from Florence Cathedral records the kinds of laments that might have been sung:

> When he was being carried to the sepulcher,
> she [Mary] followed him,
> crying most bitterly,
> and she was lamenting . . . saying:
> Let me kiss the most holy body of my very sweet son.[120]

The convincing anatomy of Donatello's effigy, especially in comparison to earlier *crucifixi dolorosi*, would have heightened the links between such laments and practices associated with actual funerals.

Contemporary beholders, particularly female devotees, often described the multisensory responses they had to both actual and imagined crucifixes. For instance, Angela da Foligno's multisensory vision cited at the beginning of this article, in which she imagined lying in the sepulcher hearing, smelling, and touching (as well as being touched by) Christ, although clearly influenced by the Crucifixion paintings and Passion reenactments she had witnessed, could also reflect physical encounters with actual crucifixes. Indeed, after touching and smelling the visibly dead, yet still sensually alive, Christ, she heard him say that he had held her tightly just "before I was laid in the sepulcher," a possible conflation of the tactile Veneration of the Cross with the subsequent, equally tactile Depositio. In the case of Saint Alda (ca. 1249–ca. 1309), after meditating on a carved crucifix, she imagined tasting the blood flowing from the figure's side—an image that brings to mind the mouthlike wounds carved into figures like Donatello's Christ.[121] The crucial role played in both somatic and internalized forms of devotion by tangible art objects, whether painted or sculpted, is also suggested by Saint Rose of Viterbo (1233–51), who wished to have "an icon" of Christ so that "by holding your keepsake and image in my bodily arms and in my heart, I may often find comfort in it."[122] Some contemporaries were clearly uneasy about such practices, as seen in the warning issued by an early fourteenth-century sculptor to "venerate Him [Christ in Heaven] and not this wood."[123] But often, the physical allure of tangible objects would have allowed such distinctions to become blurred in the minds—and in the hands, mouths, noses, ears, and eyes—of many devotees.

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[118] Translated in Mazzoni, 61.

[119] On the possible participation of lay men and women, see La Salle, 157–69, 176–77.

[120] Translated in La Salle, 180–83.

THE WOOD OF THE CROSS

Although carved figures of Christ were clearly the focus of somatic devotional practices, the supporting crosses on which such effigies hung also merit attention. This is particularly true in the case of (re)movable figures like the one carved by Donatello. After Donatello's effigy of Christ had been buried in a temporary sepulcher, its supporting cross would have stood alone against the back wall of the Rimbaldesi Chapel until Easter morning, framed only by Taddeo's painted resurrection miracle. An early fourteenth-century panel by a Florentine artist depicting Christ's burial not only suggests how the Depositio might have concluded, but also highlights the material reality and symbolic power of the empty cross itself (fig. 16).[124] This painting depicts the iconography of the four woods—cedar, cypress, palm, and olive, all clearly differentiated by their coloring—which, according to the legend of the true cross, had been used to construct the four sections of the cross: the two main beams, the footrest, and the inscription.[125]

In his influential book on German limewood sculpture, Baxandall demonstrated how the medium of wood could itself serve as a bearer of meaning, as well as how its physical properties influenced both what and how objects were carved.[126] In the case of crucifixes, especially those with movable arms like Donatello's, the choice of wood was undoubtedly due in large part to the fact that the material lent itself to

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[121] Bennett, 7; Frugoni, 137.

[122] Translated in Frugoni, 139.

[123] Translated in Cooper, 2006, 48.

[124] Kanter, 100–05.

[125] Baert, 364–66; Ryan, 278; Harris, 2010, 1:197.

[126] Baxandall, 1980.

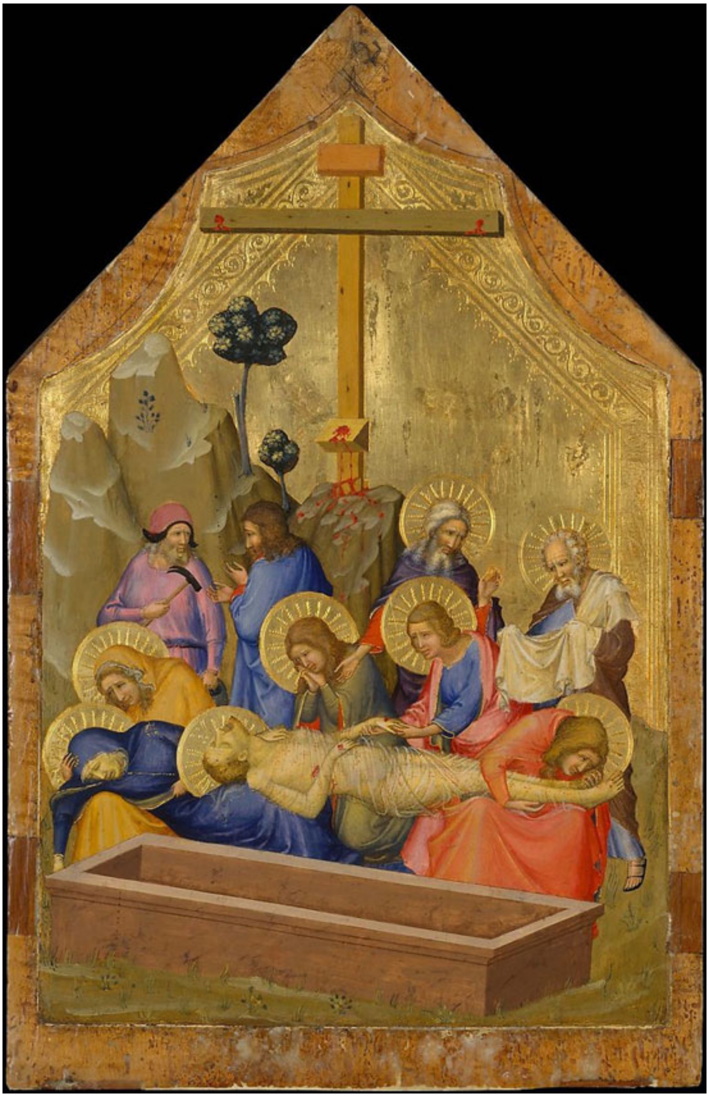

Figure 16. Master of the Codex of Saint George. *Lamentation and Burial of Christ*, ca. 1330–35. Tempera on panel, 39.7 x 27 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Image courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1961.

being carved into life-size figures with extended arms—something much more difficult, as well as prohibitively expensive, to attempt in stone or metal. That these figures could be carried to a high altar or the front of a rood screen to be venerated, detached from their supporting crosses, have their arms lowered, and then be buried in temporary tombs was also only possible due to the physical properties of wood, a comparatively lightweight and not overly brittle material that could be polychromed to increase the sense of corporeal presence and verisimilitude.[127] Documents commissioning a crucifix to be carried in a procession in Florence in 1399 even state that it had to be light in weight.[128] Although this was presumably a much smaller object than Donatello's *Crucifix*, using wood for the latter would have made it much easier to transport even over short distances compared to a similarly sized work in stone or metal.

Equally important was the fact that the cross on which Jesus had died was itself made of wood supposedly derived from the tree of knowledge.[129] Contemporary devotees would have appreciated the significance of carving an effigy of Christ from the same material as the cross on which the real Savior had died. This would have been particularly true for the Franciscan friars of S. Croce for whom the iconography of wood was ever present. Meditation on the wood of Christ's cross was encouraged throughout the order through texts such as Bonaventure's *Lignum Vitae* (ca. 1257–74) or Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Iesus* (1305). In S. Croce, in particular, woody reminders were everywhere, first and foremost in the very name of the church, dedicated to the holy cross and, since the mid-twelfth century, proud custodian of a supposed relic of the true cross.[130] In the refectory, the friars would have been reminded on a daily basis of the arboreal metaphors of writers like Bonaventure thanks to an enormous fresco of the tree of life with a crucified Christ in the center painted by none other than Taddeo Gaddi. Just a decade or so before Donatello carved his *Crucifix*, Taddeo's son, Agnolo, painted episodes from the legend of the true cross in S. Croce's chancel. One of the scenes even shows the queen of Sheba kneeling to worship a wooden beam that would one day become Christ's cross. Such images and iconographies are found far and wide in Franciscan art, perhaps most memorably in Piero della Francesca's slightly later true cross fresco cycle in S. Francesco in Arezzo, where wood is once again repeatedly worshipped and worshipfully depicted (fig. 17).[131]

The importance of wood as a signifier is also evident in Donatello's *Crucifix*. The restoration campaign completed in 2004 sensationally revealed that

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[127] On the wood used for crucifixes, see Neilson, 224–28. The pearwood used for Donatello's figure of Christ is relatively uncommon, though interestingly a crucifix also attributed to him in the Franciscan convent of Bosco ai Frati was carved from the same material. Lalli et al., 37n18; Caglioti, 2008a.

[128] Lisner, 1970, 11.

[129] Ryan, 277–78.

[130] On wood relics, images, objects, and texts associated with S. Croce, see Baert, 350–84; N. Thompson; Harris, 2010, 1:190–99.

[131] On Agnolo's and Piero's frescoes, see Baert, 350–73, 392–400.

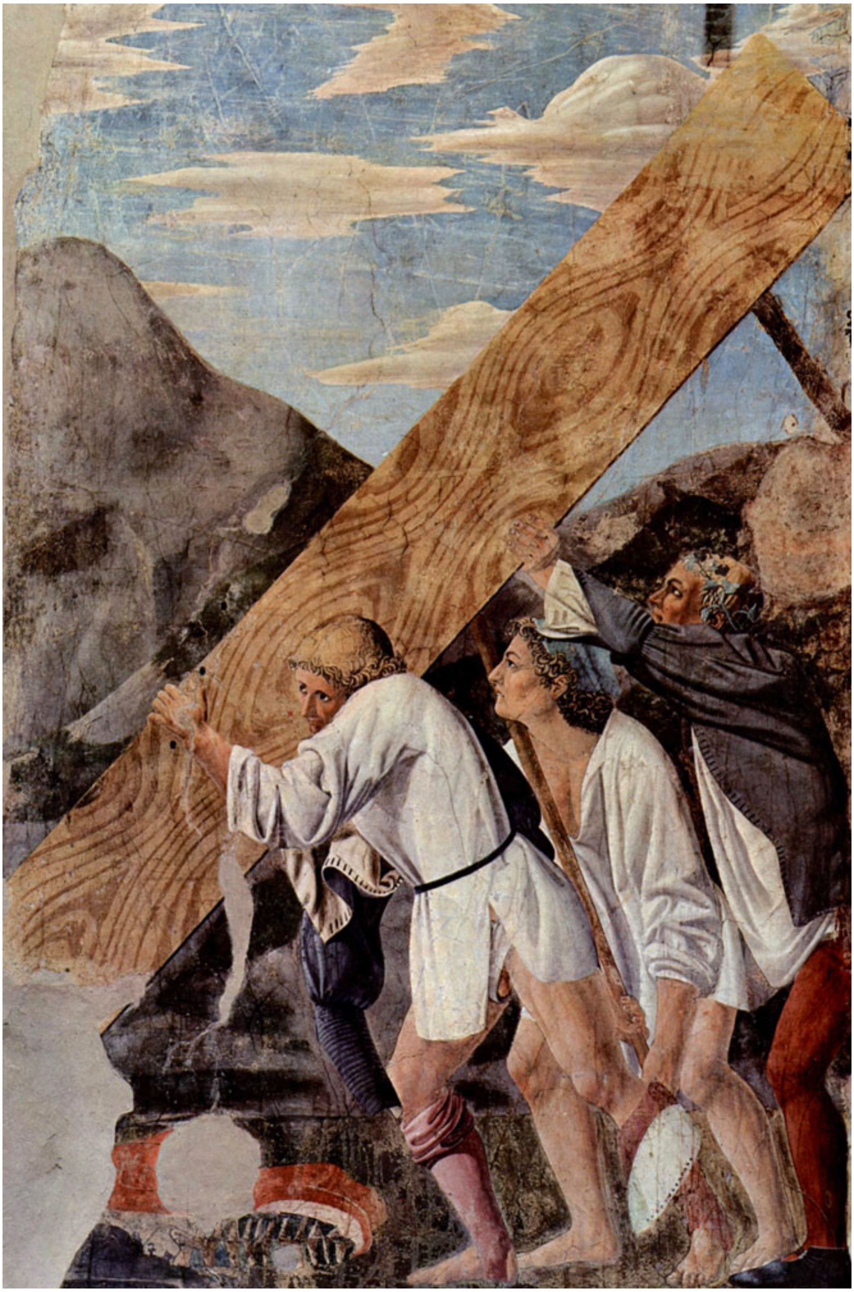

Figure 17. Piero della Francesca. *Burial of Christ's Cross*, 1452–66. Fresco, 356 x 190 cm. S. Francesco, Arezzo. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons / The Yorck Project.

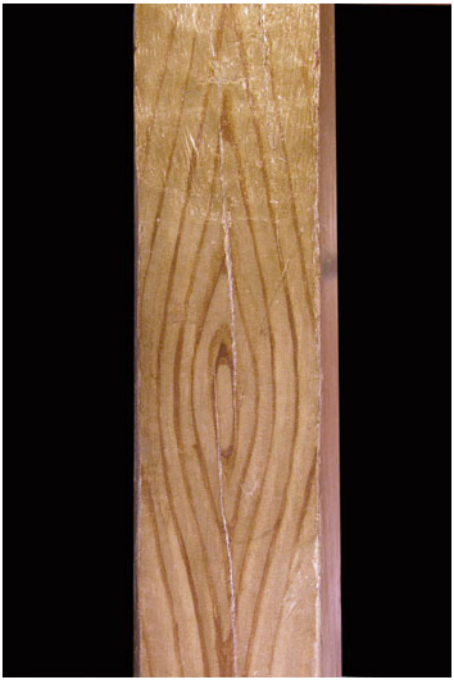

Figure 18. Donatello. Detail of cross. Image courtesy of Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, and Basilica of S. Croce, Florence, overseen by the Direzione Centrale per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto, Dipartimento per le Libertà civili e l'immigrazione, Ministero dell'Interno.

beneath layers of overpaint, the supporting cross itself was originally polychromed with a woody pattern of whorls and tree rings (fig. 18).[132] This unusual feature self-referentially calls attention to the cross's own materiality even if, ironically, it does so by obliterating the wooden support itself beneath a layer of paint. Its highly schematic, almost cartoonlike patterns recall both Agnolo's and Piero's depictions of the wood of the cross and likewise would have been visible from a distance. Such visual strategies are also seen in glazed terra-cotta altarpieces of the Lamentation below an empty cross made in the first half of the sixteenth century by a follower of the della Robbia for S. Francesco in Villafranca in Lunigiana and for the Franciscan sanctuary of La Verna (fig. 19).[133] Here, the cross, which is permanently empty and thus always

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[132] Lalli et al., 27–32; Stiberc, 390; Harris, 2010, 1:103, 190–205.

[133] Gentilini, 337. For the example in Villafranca, see: library.artstor.org/asset/FRICKIG_10310496364.

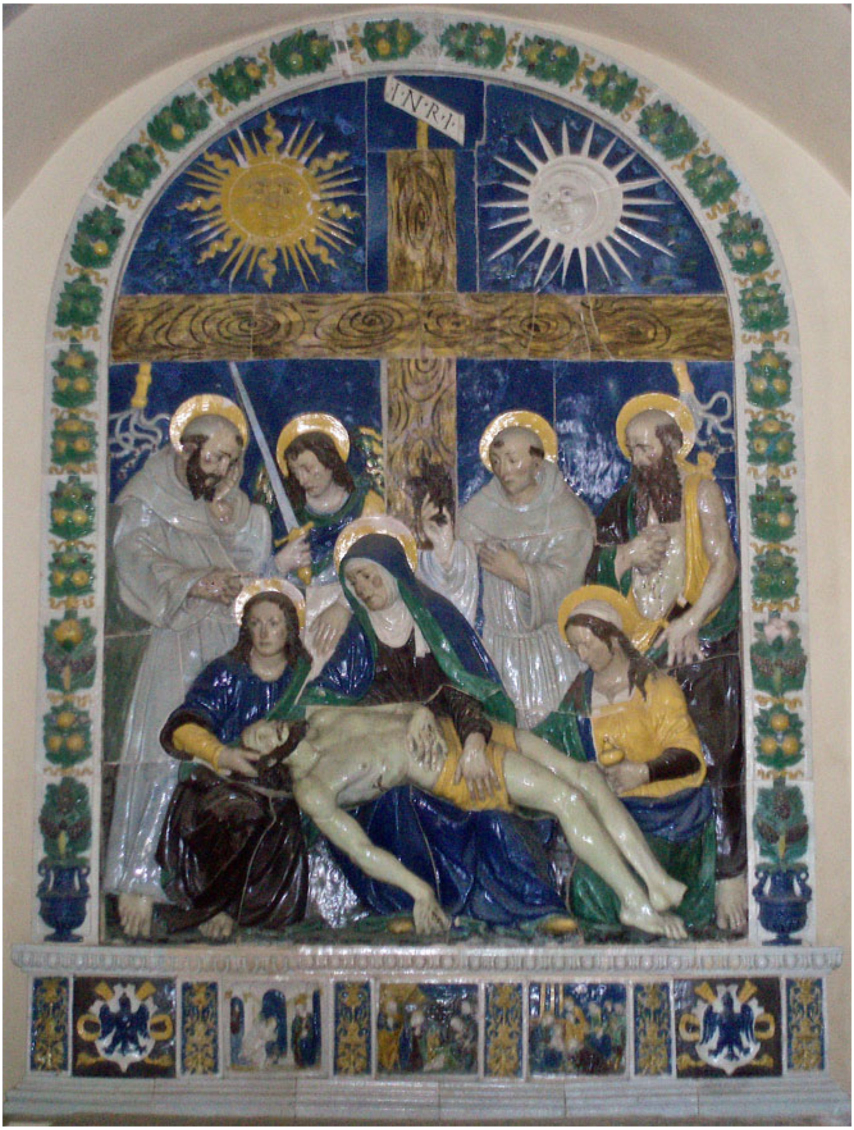

Figure 19. Santi Buglioni (attributed). *Lamentation*, ca. 1532. Glazed terra-cotta. Cappella del Conte di Montedoglio in the Sanctuary of La Verna. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons / Accurimbono.

fully exposed, insistently reminds viewers of the materiality of wood through yet another highly schematic depiction of whorls and tree rings, even though, unlike Donatello's cross, there is now no wood whatsoever beneath the glazed surfaces. As previously noted, Donatello's strategy of painting fictive woody patterns on the cross to highlight the material's symbolic significance is very different from the Bianchi's preference for crosses like Giovanni Pisano's that emphasize woodiness by carving stumps of branches on their surfaces (fig. 11), even if both strategies were ultimately used for the same iconographic end.

CONCLUSION: FROM OBJECT TO IMAGE

The gleaming gilded vessels on the altar and the candles that were symbolically lit after the Veneration, the chalky feel of the cross's painted wooden surface, the smooth polished skin and palpable drops of congealed blood painted on Christ's skin, the sound of the choir's polyphonic singing and of the mourners' laments, the heady scent of incense, and the sweet taste of the Eucharist: these were all experienced by the laity only—or at least most intensely—during the rituals associated with Good Friday. During these almost overwhelming sensory experiences, Donatello's *Crucifix* served as a symbolic marker and the embodied focal point of both spiritual and somatic devotion within a specific early fifteenth-century Florentine and Franciscan context. Unlike the static displays of wooden crucifixes under unwavering artificial light that one sees today in churches and especially in museums and photographic reproductions, late medieval and early modern beholders' engagement with such works encompassed ever-shifting spatial, temporal, and sensory effects. By considering the specific and the general forms of embodied materiality present in articulated crucifixes like Donatello's, one can begin to gain a better understanding of their original multisensory reception, which was not limited to vision alone and which allowed ideas, beliefs, and desires formulated in the mind to be made manifest in material form in multisensory ways.

However, by the mid-nineteenth century, if not earlier, the woody patterns on Donatello's cross had been painted over and the joints of the figure of Christ had been nailed into a permanent arms-open position. More significantly, already by 1566, the *Crucifix* had been removed from the multisensory realm of devotion for which it had been made to that of the ocularcentric regime of art by Vasari himself when he tore down the *tramezzo* that had provided the work with its original physical and devotional context. In the end, Donatello's *contadino* Christ was perhaps for Vasari simply too easy to handle roughly, even if (or perhaps precisely because) other crucifixes by less well-known or even anonymous carvers continued to be actively worshiped well into the sixteenth century.[134] In his *Lives*, Vasari sought retroactively (and anachronistically) to reposition favored earlier artists like Donatello from the realm of the Gothic craftsman to that of the self-consciously modern artist, even if to the *Crucifix*'s original early fifteenth-century beholders, the patron may have been of greater interest than the maker.[135] Vasari could thus presumably not countenance one of his newly anointed heroes trafficking in base, peasantlike materiality, with all the associated devotional practices this entailed. Unlike Brunelleschi's *Crucifix*, which must have seemed more capable of maintaining a decorous distance between image and viewer by remaining firmly fixed to its supporting cross high up on a pier in S. Maria Novella, Donatello's *Crucifix* in S. Croce was an all too evidently palpable object intended to appeal to the hands of beholders as much as to their eyes. The ocularcentric focus of Vasari's new and improved basilica as a whole was made explicit by the Operai of S. Croce when they reported on the removal of the *tramezzo* to Cosimo de' Medici: the church now "would be without a doubt more beautiful and delightful to the eye."[136]

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[134] On the ongoing popularity of crucifixes and other image cults in Florence in the Cinquecento, see Holmes, 47–59.

When Vasari undertook the renovation of S. Croce a decade and a half after publishing the first edition of the *Lives* in 1550, he seems to have seized the opportunity to elevate and reframe Donatello's *Crucifix* from its original early fifteenth-century devotional context in the *tramezzo*, since it was Vasari who designed a new gilded tabernacle for the work in 1571 when it was moved to a raised position in the Bardi di Vernio Chapel.[137] Today, even without Vasari's now lost (re)framing tabernacle, Donatello's *Crucifix* remains far removed from the multisensory realm of somatic devotion in which it once played such an important role—even if, ironically, the *Crucifix* is now visually more accessible than ever before, thanks to tourists armed with smartphones and restorers deploying equipment that can reveal the effigy's very core through X-ray technology.[138] Only by taking the *Crucifix*'s material and multisensory qualities seriously and considering the implications that follow, both physical and metaphysical, can one begin to appreciate how pre-Vasarian beholders would have engaged such an object using all their bodily senses, rather than relying on vision alone.

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[135] Holmes, and Garnett and Rosser, highlight the dangers of assuming a clean break—rather than inevitable entanglement—between what Belting and, more recently, Nagel and Wood have called the era of the sacred image made by craftsmen and that of the aesthetic work of art made by artists. Belting, 1990; Nagel and Wood; Garnett and Rosser, 23–34; Holmes, 160–61.

[136] Hall, 1979, 169.

[137] Hall, 1979, 182–83.

[138] Lalli et al., 22 (figs. 13–15).

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