

INFILTRATING ARTIFACTS

‘ORIENTALIZATIONS’ AND TEXTILE AESTHETICS IN FLORENCE AND TUSCANY,

1175–1450

Working Paper: Do Not Quote Without Permission

Vera-Simone Schulz, M.A.

vera-simone.schulz@khi.fi.it

I. Introduction

*Through studying [Oriental carpets], we realize the significance of carpets for Occidental art besides Oriental silk weavings; not only for the arts and crafts, but even for the high arts. [...] Within a few decades, a previously art- and colorless mode of painting developed into the greatest coloristic school of art. Anyone who is familiar with fifteenth-century carpets will recognize how principally the Venetian masters of this period demonstrate the same sense of color in choice and combination.*¹

This famous statement by Wilhelm von Bode exemplifies the crucial role that scholars around 1900 ascribed to ‘Oriental’ artifacts as aesthetic inspiration for European artists. To put it pointedly, one could say that for Bode, the masterpieces by Titian and Giorgione would not have been possible without the impact and the artistic reception of colorful Anatolian carpets by these and other Italian painters.

The geographical focus of this dissertation project is not Venice, nor is it Sicily – a second location on the Italian peninsula whose connections with the Islamic world have been studied to a great extent.² Instead, the project draws new attention to the artistic reception of

¹ Wilhelm von Bode, *Vorderasiatische Knüpfteppiche aus älterer Zeit*, Leipzig 1902, pp. 3–4.

² Cf. e.g. *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, exhibition catalogue (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC), ed. by Stefano Carboni, New Haven 2006; Sylvia Auld, *Renaissance Venice, Islam and Mahmud the Kurd: A metalworking enigma*, London 2004; Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East: The impact of the Islamic world on Venetian architecture 1100-1500*, New Haven 2000; Gerhard Wolf, “Alexandria aus Athen zurückerobern? Perspektiven einer mediterranen Kunstgeschichte mit einem Seitenblick auf das mittelalterliche Sizilien“, in: *Lateinisch-griechisch-arabische Begegnungen. Kulturelle Diversität im Mittelmeerraum des*

Islamic artifacts in different media in Tuscany between the second half of the twelfth and the mid-fifteenth century, for the most part in the major cities Pisa, Lucca, Siena and – primarily – Florence. Due to active and far reaching trade connections as well as diplomatic, missionary and cultural contacts with regions in the Mediterranean and beyond, a high number and variety of commodities, among them predominantly textiles, reached Tuscany, which was characterized by particularly dynamic and multilayered artistic interactions with these goods. As trade items, gifts, or loot, objects stimulated local craft production; were displayed on façades and in interiors; were ‘imitated’ and evocated in architecture, sculpture, objects of material culture, and painting; and were represented in pictorial space.

By putting new emphasis on the major cities Pisa, Lucca, Siena and Florence, their multifaceted connections and interactions, also with smaller towns and villages near the Tyrrhenian coast, the area under consideration in this dissertation is rather based upon the geographical situation of the modern region Toscana, in spite of Tuscany’s varying ancient roots – Tuscia, the March of Tuscia (*Marca di Tuscia*) or Margraviate of Tuscany (*Margraviato di Toscana*), to name but the major geographical and political determinations from the Longobard period onwards. Choosing Florence as the main protagonist in this project might also seem somewhat anachronistic given the fact that its predominant role in the region dates only to the fourteenth century (with its conquest or acquisition of Pistoia (1329), Prato (1351), San Gimignano (1354) and Volterra (1361) etc.), its role as the capital of Tuscany even to the sixteenth century. One could legitimately argue that, before 1300, Pisa as a port city and Lucca as the chief center for the production of silk on the Italian peninsula played much more significant roles in the region. The scope of this dissertation, however, is a different one: On the one hand, this project does not aim to cover all responses towards Islamic artifacts in the area of Tuscany, be it within its modern or its various medieval borders, but investigates and is based on a number of selected case studies in this region. On the other hand, this project seeks to analyze the artistic reception of imported goods in Florence *before* and *while* the city on the Arno River turned into the dominant force in Tuscany, – when Florentines still travelled as ‘Pisans’ to the Middle East, because only the latter had been awarded with lucrative trade benefits,³ or when the Florentine wool and silk

Spätmittelalters, ed. by Margit Mersch and Ulrike Ritzerfeld, Berlin 2009, pp. 39–62; William Tronzo, *The cultures of his kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, Princeton 1997.

³ Cf. David Abulafia, “A Tyrrhenian triangle: Tuscany, Sicily, Tunis, 1277-1300”, in: *Studi di storia economica toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento in memoria di Federico Melis*, ed. by Cinzio Violante, Pisa 1987, pp. 53–75.

production still had to compete with and drew inspiration (and skilled workmen) from Lucca with its prominence in the textile sector.⁴

The dissertation project hence sheds new light on the migration of objects from al-Andalus, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia Minor to Tuscany between 1175 and 1450, and, through selected case studies, brings Florence to the forefront as an important example in the debates concerning the artistic impact of cross-cultural interaction before the mid-fifteenth century, enriched by comparisons with other cities in Tuscany as well as other regions both on the Italian peninsula (e.g. Campania, Venice), in the Mediterranean world (e.g. Egypt, the Crusader States, Cyprus) and beyond (e.g. Iran, Central Asia). With this focus, the dissertation deviates from recent studies of ‘Orientalisms’ in Tuscany, which either highlight the cross-cultural role of the medieval port city Pisa with an emphasis on the sea and Pisa’s maritime connections while often neglecting Pisa’s relationships with locations in the hinterland, or which analyze ‘global Florence’ rather in the context of the Council of Florence (1439) and the collection practices of the Medici family, i.e. from the mid-fifteenth century onwards.⁵ This study, however, does draw upon earlier art-historical endeavors such as Gustave Soulier’s *Les influences orientales dans la peinture toscane* (1924) (which in spite of its title is also concerned with detail analyses of a variety of media ranging from architecture and sculpture to painting and other objects of material culture).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, medieval studies were characterized by an increased interest in the mobility of artistic modes of expression, forms, styles, and the role of ornament on a global scale, attention to arts and crafts, and to the relationship between European art and non-European, particularly Asian and Islamic artifacts. By drawing new attention to Florence and Tuscany before 1450, the project also aims to reassess some of these earlier art-historical studies of cross-cultural translation processes by such scholars as Wilhelm von Bode, Gustave Soulier and Ivan V. Puzino’s *La Chine, l’Italie et les débuts de la Renaissance (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)* (1935), or Rafique Jairazbhoy’s *Oriental influences in*

⁴ Paolo Pelù, *Aspetti della fabbrica della seta in Lucca, ‘200-‘500*, Lucca 1997; Luca Molà, *La comunità dei Lucchesi a Venezia: Immigrazione e industria della seta nel tardo Medioevo: Memoria presentata nell’adunanza ordinaria del 27 novembre 1993*, Venice 1994.

⁵ *Pisa e il Mediterraneo: Uomini, merci, idee dagli Etruschi ai Medici*, ed. by Marco Tangheroni, Geneva 2003; *Il mare, la terra, il ferro. Ricerche su Pisa medievale (secoli VII-XIII)*, ed. by Graziella Berti, Catia Renzi Rizzo and Marco Tangheroni, Ospedaletto (Pisa) 2004; Francesca Fiorani, *The marvel of maps: Art, cartography and politics in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven 2005; Hannah Baader, “Universen der Kunst, künstliche Paradiese der Universalität. Florenz, seine Sammlungen und Global Art History I“, in: *kritische berichte* 40.2, 2012, pp. 48–59.

Western art (1965). The dissertation hence takes into account and critically reflects on both earlier discourses and recent approaches in Mediterranean and transcultural studies regarding artistic practices in the pre-modern period such as the notion of a *lingua franca* in the Mediterranean during the later Crusades; Oleg Grabar's concept of a common court culture in the medieval Mediterranean and its relation to the visual culture of cities in Tuscany; and latest approaches concerning the study of objects, thing-theory, materiality, and Mediterranean, transcultural, and 'global art histories'.⁶

In short: The dissertation investigates how objects that were introduced from abroad, particularly textiles, invoked a variety of responses in different media, and it examines the intricate relationship between imported and locally fabricated artifacts as well as their 'imitations', evocations and representations in architecture, sculpture and painting. It will further our understanding of the various economic, diplomatic, religious, intellectual and artistic networks in which Florence and Tuscany were involved in the Late Middle Ages, and it will show how imported objects shaped and became an intrinsic part of Florence's and the region's complex visual and material culture.

II. Beyond *mimesis*, beyond *paragone*: Artistic receptions of Islamic artifacts in Florence and Tuscany from the twelfth to the mid-fifteenth century

The pavement of the baptistry in Florence, San Giovanni, contains a conspicuous area: a structure of interconnected roundels, each of them comprising two birds facing one another across the form of a stylized tree (fig. 1).⁷ Through its ornamentation, this part of the pavement dating to 1207 evokes a precious textile, the filigree work of delicate lace and the

⁶ Oleg Grabar, "The shared culture of objects", in: *Byzantine court culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. by Henry Maguire, Washington D.C. 1997, pp. 115–129; Avinoam Shalem, *Islam christianized: Islamic portable objects in medieval church treasuries of the Latin West*, Frankfurt am Main 1998; Wolf 2009 (see note 2); Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi scroll: Geometry and ornament in Islamic architecture. Topkapi Palace Museum Library MS H. 1956*, Santa Monica, Calif., 1995; Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of translation: Material culture and medieval "Hindu-Muslim" encounter*, Princeton 2009; *The power of things and the flow of cultural transformations: Art and culture between Europe and Asia*, ed. by Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch and Anja Eisenbeiß, Berlin 2010; *Islamic artefacts in the Mediterranean world: Trade, gift exchange and artistic transfer*, ed. by Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf, Venice 2010; Finbarr Barry Flood, David Joselit, Alexander Nagel, Alessandra Russo, Eugene Wang, Christopher Wood and Mimi Yiengpruksawan, "Roundtable: The global before globalization", in: *October* 133, 2010, pp. 3–19; *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable archaeology and the poetics of influence*, ed. by Alina Payne, Leiden 2014.

⁷ Annamaria Giusti, "Il pavimento del Battistero", in: *Il Battistero di San Giovanni a Firenze*, ed. by Antonio Paolucci, Modena 1994, pp. 373–393.

repetitive pattern of silk weavings, comparable to the fabrics which were imported from various regions in the Mediterranean to Tuscany at that time, but also to the ones that were produced – though still in a less qualitative manner – in nearby Lucca. Furthermore, this pavement section can be referred to earlier evocations of textiles in the medium of stone, also in Tuscany such as on the pulpit in San Gennaro in Capannori near Lucca from 1162 (fig 2). While the latter induces textile hangings with filled roundels used to decorate an ambo, ‘frozen’ into, ‘merged’ with the stone, the former arouses an expensive floor covering, a type of textile actually too expensive to be spread out on a pavement.

This dissertation explores the different and manifold artistic approaches towards traded objects: their evocations in other media, the transmission of patterns and ornament such as on the pavement in San Giovanni and the pulpit in San Gennaro, but also the actual and corporeal use of imported goods themselves, for instance, in the case of the so-called *bacini*, i.e. ceramic plates from al-Andalus and regions in North Africa which were integrated into the façades of Tuscan churches (fig. 3).⁸ These experimental and creative approaches towards artifacts make clear that their study cannot be restricted to single categories of media or materials. On the contrary, the artworks themselves show how deeply various media and materials are interconnected and entwined as far as reactions to goods from abroad are concerned.

A crucial part in the dissertation is focused on the various artistic practices involved in the reception of luxury fabrics, not only in architecture, sculpture and objects of material culture, but also in painting. There were in fact hardly any other items which intrigued painters as much as imported and locally produced fabrics; particularly Trecento painting could be referred to as painting textiles. Cathleen Hoeniger has convincingly shown how Simone Martini even changed his painting technique in order to depict *nasīj*, a type of cloth brought into world-wide circulation by the Mongols, most prominently perhaps in the gown of the archangel Gabriel in the annunciation scene, once in the Duomo in Siena and today preserved in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence (fig. 4, 5).⁹ The white fabric is decorated with a thick pattern of small and densely placed foliage and flowers which are woven with

⁸ Karen Rose Mathews, “Other peoples’ dishes: Islamic *bacini* on eleventh-century churches in Pisa”, in: *Gesta*, 53.1, 2014, pp. 5–23.

⁹ Cathleen S. Hoeniger, “Cloth of gold and silver: Simone Martini’s technique for representing luxury textiles”, in: *Gesta*, 30, 1991, pp. 154–162. See also Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Bern 1967; Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, princes, and painters: Silk fabrics in Italian and Northern paintings, 1300-1500*, New Haven 2008.

gold threads. The rich cloth glimmers, an effect which Simone tried to achieve in his representations of this lampas silk by using the *sgraffito* technique, that is by first applying gold, then paint and, in a third step, scraping off the paint again according to the design of the pattern, before granulating the parts of gold. With gold and paint applied in layers, Simone attempted to render the effect of a woven lampas cloth in the medium of painting.

Painters creatively responded to textiles regarding their technique, materiality, and patterns, and they inventively integrated them into the visual syntax of their paintings. Furthermore, Simone Martini's approach addresses a significant resemblance between late medieval panel painting and textiles regarding their materiality: Fabrics often consisted of a combination of colourfully dyed silk with gold and silver threads, while Trecento painters themselves worked with pigments and gold leaf. Precisely in the representation of textiles, the two materials came together, were set against each other or were complicatedly entwined.

The objective of this dissertation is hence twofold: On the one hand, this project seeks to investigate the specific artistic practices regarding the different responses towards artifacts through in-depth analyses of singular and related artworks. It sheds new light, for instance, on the first incorporations of Oriental carpets into fourteenth-century Italian panel painting, when carpets presented a challenge for painters to explore the boundaries of the use of perspective, color, and the representation of different materials such as in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Piccola Maestà* (fig. 6). On the other hand, this dissertation strives to contextualize and to broaden the perspective regarding the imported goods and their artistic receptions in Tuscany, on the Italian peninsula, but also in their Mediterranean and trans-Mediterranean networks, beyond temporary, geographical and disciplinary boundaries, if required.

The reference frameworks of the artworks can certainly vary. The textile evocations with roundels, that incorporate one or two animals in each medallion (fig. 1, 2), for example, raise the topic of the far-reaching trade in fabrics, which – through imitations and adaptations – resulted in a dissemination of their patterns over long distances and hence often inhibits to track down their specific provenance, but rather fosters various 'origin stories' of these goods. The roundels with one or two animals derive from motifs that were used in the Sasanian and Sogdian periods in Central Asia and Iran respectively, before they became one of the most successful and most widely copied or adapted type of textile ornament: They were taken up all over the Mediterranean in the following centuries, e.g. in Byzantium, Syria, Sicily, on the

Iberian and also on the Italian peninsula.¹⁰ Simone Martini's representation of *nasīj*, in contrast, can be identified as a specific type of cloth produced in Central Asia and Iran in the thirteenth and fourteenth century which was introduced to Tuscany during the same period and which is, for instance, preserved in the dalmatic of Pope Benedict XI (fig. 4, 5).¹¹ Another case of the reception of a textile in the medium of painting, Gherardo Starnina's triptych with the enthroned Madonna and Child surrounded by angels and saints opens up not only to the mobility of artifacts in the Mediterranean, but also to the mobility of artists and artisans, in this case of a Florentine painter (fig. 7). Starnina travelled to the Iberian peninsula around 1380, where he worked in Valencia for Juan I of Castile, and he painted this triptych only after his return to Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹² The painting bears an intriguing detail: The ornament on the Virgin's silken dress (fig. 8) seems to echo the pattern on a mantle which served to cover and clothe a statue of the Virgin near Valencia (fig. 9, 10). Is it possible that Starnina actually aimed at representing, at 'portraying' this particular coat of the Virgin?¹³ In this case, the triptych would not only raise the topics of textile relics, of wrapping, dressing and undressing statues,¹⁴ of the complex triangle between textiles, sculpture and pictorial space, or of the (artistic) connections between Tuscany and the Iberian peninsula around 1400. It would further raise the issue of late Mediterranean networks: The mantle is of Mamluk provenance,¹⁵ it was hence brought from Egypt to the Iberian peninsula – whether as a gift or as an object of trade, is not clear –, where it was used in a sacred Christian space to dress the statue of the Virgin and where it might have also been seen by a Florentine artist who chose its pattern in a perfectly recognizable way for a gown to envelop the body of none other than the Virgin in one of his paintings once he had newly arrived in

¹⁰ David Jacoby, "Silk economics and cross-cultural artistic interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim world, and the Christian West", in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58, 2004, pp. 197–240.

¹¹ M. Ludovica Rosati, "Nasicii, baldacchini e camocati: Il viaggio della seta da Oriente a Occidente", in: *Sulla via della seta. Antichi sentieri tra Oriente e Occidente*, exhibition catalogue (Rom, Palazzo delle Esposizioni), ed. by Mark A. Norell, Denise Party Leidy and The American Museum of Natural History, Turin 2012, pp. 233–270, here p. 243 and fig. 4.

¹² Annamaria Bernacchioni, "Riflessioni e proposte sulla committenza di Gherardo Starnina pittore del guelfismo fiorentino", in: *Nuovi studi sulla pittura tardogotica. Intorno a Lorenzo Monaco*, ed. by Daniela Parenti and Angelo Tartuferi, Livorno 2007, pp. 44–55: 46–47; Matilde Miquel Juan, "Starnina e altri pittori toscani nella Valencia medievale", in: *ibid.*, pp. 32–43.

¹³ For questions regarding practices of 'portraying' Islamic artifacts see also Avinoam Shalem, "The portraiture of objects: A note on representations of Islamic objects in European painting of the 14th-16th centuries", in: *Europa e Islam tra i secoli XIV e XVI*, ed. by Michele Bernardini and Clara Borrelli, 2 vols., vol. I, Naples 2002, pp. 497–521.

¹⁴ See in this context Viktor Michael Schmidt, "Curtains, revelation, and pictorial reality in late medieval and Renaissance Italy", in: *Weaving, veiling, and dressing: Textile and their metaphors in the late Middle Ages*, ed. by Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert, Turnhout 2007, pp. 191–214.

¹⁵ Anne E. Wardwell, "Flight of the phoenix: Crosscurrents in late thirteenth- to fourteenth-century silk patterns and motifs", in: *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 74.1, 1987, pp. 2–35: 22. See also Louise W. Mackie, "Toward an understanding of Mamluk silks: National and international considerations", in: *Muqarnas*, 2, 1984, pp. 127–146.

Florence. Or, was it a Mamluk fabric imported to Tuscany which inspired Starnina after his return?

Owing to their light weight, easy portability and high value, textiles rank in fact among the most mobile artifacts in the pre-modern world. In Tuscany, precious silk weavings, linens, and carpets were imported on a grand scale and they played a particularly significant role in the region's visual and material culture. From early on, Tuscany had been a center of local textile production, first wool, then silk, and weavers creatively responded to luxury fabrics from abroad regarding their materiality, technique, color schemes, and patterns, even including Arabic and pseudo-Arabic inscriptions, which are frequently found on Islamic textiles, into their compositions (fig. 11).¹⁶ Furthermore, sculptors, painters and other artisans were inspired both by traded textiles and by their local 'copies' and transformations. A fact which raises the question which goods were actually considered 'imported' ones, when the provenances of artifacts were of importance or when they were in fact indeterminable or blurred.

Furthermore, in the analyses of artistic reactions towards Islamic artifacts in various media and their interrelations, this dissertation seeks to explore concepts beyond *mimesis* and *paragone*, i.e. beyond imitation and the competition of different media. Given the extraordinary prominence of textiles in Tuscany in the period under consideration, the aim of this project is also to test whether a conceptual framework that has proven fruitful in the sub-discipline of Islamic art could be transferred to a non-Islamic region, and to consider it in relation to other methodological approaches. In 1988, drawing on Oleg Grabar, Lisa Golombek coined the concept of 'textile aesthetics' for the (trans-)Mediterranean Islamic world.¹⁷ According to Golombek, Islamic societies distinguish themselves by the crucial function and high value of textiles in various aspects of life, a dominant role which at times even led to 'an aesthetic judgment through textiles' when artifacts were described and estimated with explicit reference and in comparison to cloth. Considering the close diplomatic and mercantile connections with the Islamic world, the great number of imported fabrics and the significant role of the local textile production in Tuscany, this dissertation investigates whether Golombek's concept might be applied to late medieval Tuscany as well. In this regard, the project negotiates this notion for instance with Michael Baxandall's concept of a

¹⁶ Wardwell 1987 (see note 15), p. 27.

¹⁷ Lisa Golombek, "The draped universe of Islam", in: *Late antique and medieval art of the Mediterranean world*, ed. by Eva R. Hoffman, Oxford 2007, pp. 97–114.

‘period eye’, definable as the habits of seeing of a particular people in a particular time and its relationship to social practices.¹⁸

III. Conclusion

*What city is richer...? What city, without a port, imports or exports more goods? Where is the commerce greater...? Where are men more illustrious...? Where Dante, where Petrarch, where Boccaccio?*¹⁹

Coluccio Salutati (†1406) laid particular emphasis on the specific geographical location of the city when he praised Florence with these lines. Florence, a city “without a port”, wrote Salutati, could nevertheless successfully compete with all other cities on the Italian peninsula, even with the major port cities Genoa and Venice, regarding the import of goods.

Though the situation which Salutati described was about to change. In 1422, after the conquest of Pisa in 1406 and the acquisition of Livorno and Portopisano from the Genoese in 1421, Florence was no longer lacking direct access to the sea and it was ambitious and confident enough to attempt to become a sea-power itself.²⁰ The administrative function of the sea consuls (*consoli del mare*) of the city of Florence was created and the first official embassy left under the command of Felice Brancacci and Carlo Federighi in 1423. Their destination was al-Qāhira, Cairo, the capital of the Mamluk Empire. In this time of a renewed and enforced attention to Syria and Egypt and flourishing trade connections with the Mamluk Empire, also Mamluk artifacts gained more prominence in the visual culture of Florence, where they left manifold traces: Most outstandingly perhaps in works such as Masaccio’s San Giovenale triptych, where the halo of the Virgin is inspired from bronze plates of Mamluk provenance (fig. 12, 13).²¹ The pseudo-lettering on the haloes is in fact highly comparable to

¹⁸ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style*, Oxford 1988. See also Karen-edis Barzman, “Islamic North Africa in Trecento Italy. Costume in the Assisi and Bardi chapel frescoes of Francis in Egypt”, in: *Power, gender, and ritual in Europe and the Americas. Essays in memory of Richard C. Trexler*, ed. by Peter Arnade and Michael Rocke, Toronto 2008, pp. 29–51.

¹⁹ “Invectiva in Antonium Luschum vicentium”, in: *Prosatori latini del quattrocento*, ed. by Eugenio Garin, Milan 1951, p. 34.

²⁰ Cf. Michael Edward Mallett and Luca degli Albizzi: *The Florentine galleys in the fifteenth century*, Clarendon P. 1967.

²¹ Rosamond E. Mack, *From bazaar to piazza: Islamic trade and Italian art, 1300–1600*, Berkeley 2001, pp. 65–66; Alexander Nagel, “Twenty-five notes on pseudoscript in Italian art”, in: *RES* 59/60, 2011, pp. 229–248, esp. 230.

the Arabic calligraphy on the metal plates, also given its disposition around the circumference of the form which is interrupted by ornamental rosettes or roundels at regular intervals, in the case of the San Giovenale triptych by lotus blossoms, a Chinese ornament, very fashionable in the Mamluk Empire and also in Mamluk metalwork at that time.²²

This dissertation traces artistic responses to Islamic artifacts in Florence and Tuscany in the centuries before and shortly after the city on the Arno River gained direct access to the sea. It hence reassesses Florence, which, in the art-historical literature, is usually discussed in its ‘global’ dynamics only from the Council of 1439 onwards, and, through case studies, highlights the various complex and multilayered relations to regions in the Middle East and Central Asia, North Africa and the Iberian peninsula long before Pisanello’s famous studies of the Arabic inscriptions during emperor John Palaiologos’ visit to Florence in 1439 (fig. 14).

The project hence aims to give new insights about the reception of Islamic artifacts, concentrating on the narratives, origin stories, and myths that are connected with these items, on artistic approaches to their materiality, technique, and patterns, on issues of transmediality and transmateriality, on image-object-relations, and on issues of transculturality in pre-modern Tuscany, particularly Florence. It will provide a new perspective on the multilayered economic, diplomatic, religious, intellectual and artistic interactions of Tuscany with regions in the Mediterranean and beyond, and it will hence contribute to the study of dynamic translation processes in the Late Middle Ages.

²² Vera-Simone Schulz, “Masaccios San Giovenale-Triptychon und die künstlerische Rezeption arabischer Schrift in Florenz”, in: *Florenz!*, exhibition catalogue (Bonn, Bundeskunsthalle, 2013-2014), ed. by Silvestra Bietoletti and Jutta Frings, Munich 2013, p. 200.

IV. Appendix

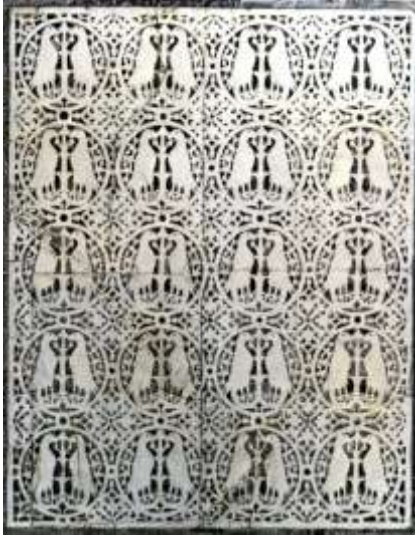


Fig. 1 Pavement of the Baptistry San Giovanni in Florence, 1207



Fig. 2 Pulpit in San Gennaro, Capannori (Lucca), 1162



Fig. 3 *Bacini* at the façade of San Piero a Grado, Pisa



Fig. 4, 5

Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, Annunciation (detail), 1333, Florence Galleria degli Uffizi and fabric of the paraments of Pope Benedict XI, 1303, Central Asia, Perugia, San Domenico and Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC



Fig. 6

Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Piccola Maestà*, 1335-45, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena

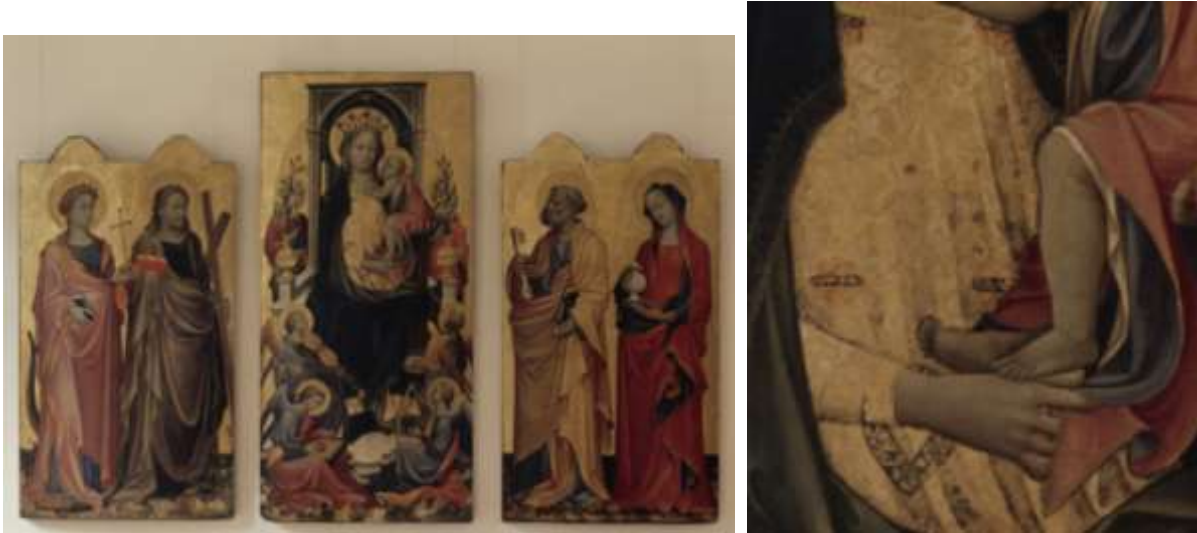


Fig. 7, 8 Gherardo Starnina, Triptych with the enthroned Madonna and Child and detail of the Virgin's dress, first half of the 15th century, Martin von Wagner-Museum, Würzburg



Fig. 9, 10 Mantle for the statue of the Virgin and detail; Mamluk period; 1422-1438 (?); 70.5cm x 111.15cm; lampas weave, silk and gold thread, The Cleveland Museum of Art



Fig. 11
Lampas silk, Italy, 14th century, textile from the back of a chasuble (detail), The Cleveland Museum of Art



Fig. 12 Masaccio, San Giovenale triptych (detail), 1422, Cascia di Reggello



Fig. 13 Brass plate, Mamluk period, Egypt or Syria, 14th century, V&A, London



Fig. 14 Pisanello, Sketches of the John VIII Palaiologos and a Mamluk-inspired inscription during the emperor's visit of the Council of Florence in 1439, pen and dark brown ink on paper, Musée du Louvre, Paris