DONATELLO AND THE TWO MADONNAS

A Short History of the Berlin Museums' Sculpture Collection

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There are many ways to tell the story of the Sculpture Collection of the Berlin State Museums. One could list a series of outstanding works from Italy and Germany alone: from Presbyter Martinus' *Madonna and Child* (1199) to Antonio Canova's *Dancing Girl with Cymbals* (1812) in the first case, from Tilman Riemenschneider's *Four Evangelists* (1490-92) to Andreas Schlüter's *Apollo and Daphne* (1712) in the second. The disadvantage of such an enumeration is that it would neglect less important single works, which sometimes take on their full meaning as part of a whole – such as the collection of Italian small bronzes and plaquettes, or even the Museum of Byzantine Art, which has always been attached to the Sculpture Collection, and always somehow separate from it. One could also choose a topographical bias, focusing on the movements of the collection on Museum Island in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, which were followed by the great separation between East and West during the Cold War and, subsequently, by the phase of the Reunification. In fact, each work, each room, even each failed acquisition tells a different story; but going through all these stories would inevitably be tiring for the most willing reader. We must therefore be selective and thus unfortunately omit.

Fig. 1. *Donatello, Madonna and Child, called the Pazzi Madonna, c. 1422, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (exhibited at the Bode Museum).*

I have chosen to tell this story through two works from the Sculpture Collection. Only two works, moreover recognizably similar square marble reliefs representing the Virgin and Child, both dated from the 1420s and linked to one of the greatest sculptors of the Renaissance, the Florentine Donatello (ca. 1386-1466). The parallels stop there: the first work, named the *Pazzi Madonna* (fig. 1), is unanimously considered a masterpiece of the artist. It even appears on the cover of the Italian version of the collection guidebook, published in 2011 (fig. 12). The second relief, known as the *Orlandini Madonna* (fig. 2), has long been considered a work from the

Fig. 2. *Michelozzo, Madonna and Child, called the Orlandini Madonna, c. 1426-28, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (exhibited at the Bode Museum; pre-war photograph).*

school of Donatello and is not even included in the collection guidebook, which lists a good 243 items. So why talk about it here? Because the story of the fate of the *Orlandini Madonna*, especially in comparison with that of her *quasi alter ego*, the '*Pazzi'*, is a perfect illustration of the whole history of the Berlin Sculpture Collection. At least it is what I would like to demonstrate in this paper.

Successive Acquisitions

In 1830, the Royal Museums of Berlin opened their doors in a large, Greek-inspired building designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Sculpture was given pride of place – even if *Renaissance* sculpture was of little importance. Indeed, the era glorified Antique statuary and Italian Renaissance painting, in a *paragone* inherited from the Italian taste of the 18th century and made relevant for the whole of Europe by the *nec plus ultra* museum of the time, Napoleon's Louvre, with its works obtained in part during recent military campaigns. In Berlin, the Renaissance sculptures gallery was only an appendix to the painting rooms, mostly notable for the works from the Bartholdi collection, acquired in Rome in 1828. Without being in any way comparable to the capital acquisitions of paintings from the Solly or Giustiniani collections, the Renaissance sculpture collection could already comprise some remarkable works by Andrea della Robbia or Francesco da Sangallo. But no Donatello at all.

The situation changed, at least apparently, at the beginning of the 1840s. The director of the Paintings Collection, Gustav Waagen, made a trip to Italy to expand a Sculpture Collection that was already perceived as inferior to the ensemble of paintings. Once again, grouped purchases were the order of the day: in Venice, Waagen got his hands on the fabulous Pajaro collection, giving Berlin an almost complete overview of Venetian Renaissance sculpture, from Tullio Lombardo to Alessandro Vittoria. In Florence, Waagen strived to complete the collection; even if his taste went more towards

the smooth style of the Della Robbia works, he felt the obligation to buy a work by Donatello, whose merits had been praised by Giorgio Vasari in the 16th century more than those of any other artist of his time. A marble relief with the *Madonna and Child* entered the Sculpture Collection (fig. 2): Berlin had its Donatello.

The above-mentioned *Madonna* came from the Counts Orlandini, an old Florentine family not known for having been Donatello's patrons as were, first and foremost, the Medici. But the Orlandini had inherited some Medici possessions, and their palace was where a close Medici friend, antipope John XXIII, had sojourned at the beginning of the 15th century. In the 1420s, Donatello was responsible, together with Michelozzo, for the tomb of John XXIII (fig. 3). This is certainly no proof that the newly acquired *Madonna* is by Donatello, but still: from a formal point of view, the attribution was not totally out of place if one compared the Berlin *Madonna* with the one crowning the tomb, while the pilasters surrounding the Virtues in the lower register are also comparable to the carved niche of the '*Orlandini'*. The new acquisition also showed a mastery of the flat relief, a characteristic of Donatello's art, previously praised by Vasari. Although Waagen never called himself a great connoisseur of Renaissance sculpture, his exceptional eye for painting (he was one of Vermeer's discoverers) could not be discounted in the acquisition of this sculptural work.

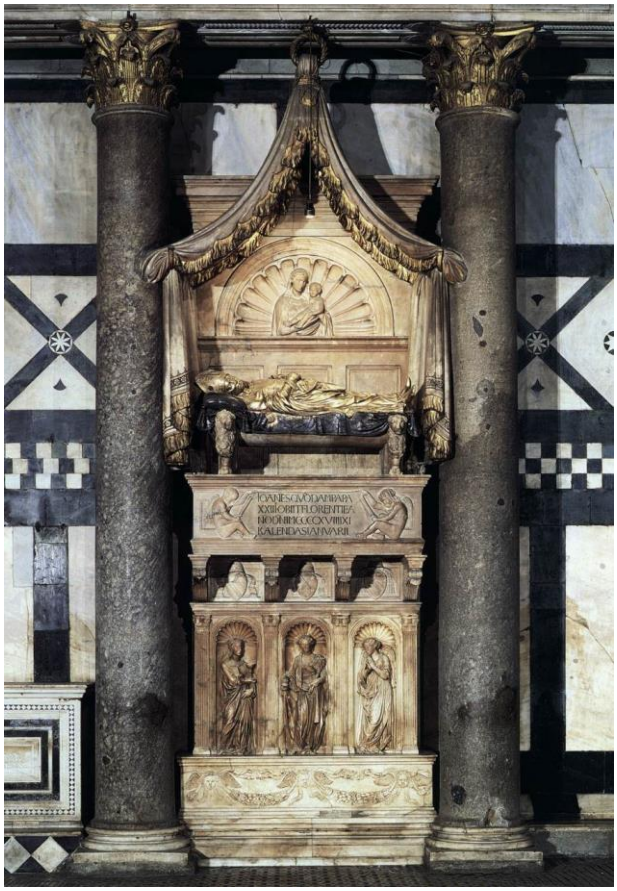

Fig. 3. *Donatello and Michelozzo, Funerary Monument to Antipope John XIII, c. 1422-28, Florence, Baptistery.*

Four decades later, the first scholarly discussion of the *Orlandini Madonna* in no way contradicted Waagen's judgement: the year was 1884, and the newly appointed director of the sculpture department of the Royal Museums of Berlin dedicated an article to his collection, that he had already helped to expand significantly for more than a decade. His name was Wilhelm Bode. Since Waagen's era, times had radically changed: the wars against Austria and then France had allowed Prussia to annex other Germanic states and to found the German Empire in 1871. The museum of its new capital, Berlin, was still felt as far too provincial compared to those in other German cities such as Dresden or Munich, not to mention other European metropoles such as Vienna, Paris or London. A significant number of works had to be acquired to show the new prestige of imperial Germany. Bode, who came in office one year after German unification, was the right man, in the right place, at the right time. In 1878, he had acquired in Florence a magnificent bronze

Fig. 4. *Donatello, St John the Baptist, c. 1425-30, Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Transferred after WWII. Until 1945-46: Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Skulpturensammlung (view in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. c. 1910).*

sculpture representing *St John the Baptist* (fig. 4), which he attributed to Donatello for the first time in the cited article of 1884. Even if he judged the *Orlandini Madonna* not fully worthy of the master, he considered it to have been carved in the workshop, under Donatello's direct supervision.

Two years later, Bode changed his mind about the quality of the *Orlandini Madonna*. The reason for this change of opinion is simple: the art historian had just bought a work which he did not hesitate to describe as a "pendant" of the '*Orlandini'* (fig. 1). It is, at first glance, a very similar *Madonna and Child*, except that – for Bode – the quality was incomparably superior. One only had to compare them, he argued, to realize "how rounded the figure here is [i.e. in the recent acquisition], how convincing the foreshortenings, how finely the flesh is suggested, especially in Mary's right hand, how loosely her wavy hair is treated." Everything for Bode suggested an attribution to Donatello at the beginning of the 1420s, which gave the relief a capital importance: this was one of the first examples of a work using linear perspective, a device invented around 1415 by Filippo Brunelleschi that would revolutionize the history of art but that was, at the time, completely ignored by painters.

For Bode, the recently acquired *Madonna* already had a code name, privately given during the feverish weeks leading to its acquisition: as it belonged to Count Lamponi Leopardi, Bode and his Florentine merchant Stefano Bardini called the relief the 'Lamponi marble'. But who would accept as a new Donatello a relief whose name would translate as the '*Raspberry Madonna"*? The alleged provenance of the relief from the Pazzi Palace in Florence would subsequently be highlighted, and the work was soon named the *Pazzi Madonna* – without it being clear whether or not it was commissioned by a member of the Pazzi family. The two *Madonnas* were by then in Berlin; their joint history can begin.

At the 'Kaiser Friedrich'

To my knowledge, there are no existing photographs of the two *Madonnas* in the rooms of Schinkel's Museum, known as the Altes Museum ("Old Museum") since the middle of the 19th century. Due to Bode's numerous acquisitions – not only in sculpture, but also in painting and plaster casts – there was not enough exhibition space for him in a building he never liked very much. From the 1880s, he had wished to erect a "Renaissance Museum", which only came into being two decades later under the name of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum (after Emperor Frederick III, father of the last

Fig. 5. *Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, c. 1917-20.*

German Emperor, Wilhelm II). The 'Kaiser Friedrich' opened in 1904, exhibiting the '*Pazzi*' and the '*Orlandini*' side by side, first in a room dedicated to Florentine Early Renaissance sculpture, then in a presentation with a few important paintings added (fig. 5). Let's take a closer look at the latter hanging, which dates from the late 1910s: the *Pazzi Madonna* may be at the same height as the *Orlandini Madonna*, but it is closer to the window, thus receiving more light (the museum was designed without electric lighting, which was not Bode's most strategic decision, at least concerning the reduced opening hours in winter…). In the center of the wall is a bust of *St John the Baptist* that Bode also considered a Donatello (it would be attributed to Desiderio da Settignano in the 1930s); on the sides were two other associated with Desiderio (the one on the right is the famous *Marietta Strozzi*,

acquired by Waagen in Florence; the other one is by Gregorio di Lorenzo). Above this main row of objects are other items considered to be of slightly lesser historical importance, while below are three fragments of a predella painted by Masaccio for a polyptych intended for the Church of the Carmelites in Pisa. On the floor, a wedding chest or *cassone* provides a visual structure for the whole.

One single wall thus illustrates Bode's principles of installation, whose cardinal points are symmetry, historical order, and dialogue between painting and sculpture. Our two *Madonnas* are indeed not just symmetrical; their confrontation allows the eye to educate itself, distinguishing the superior quality of one relief (the '*Pazzi'*) over the other (the '*Orlandini'*). One could directly verify the judgement written by Bode at the time of the acquisition of the '*Pazzi'*. The presence of Donatello's followers, starting with Desiderio, makes manifest the sculptor's seminal role in Quattrocento art. This is underscored by Masaccio's predella panels, as the painter was the first to adapt in painting the linear perspective invented by Brunelleschi and developed by Donatello.

After half a century at the service of the Berlin Museums, Bode took a half-step back in 1920, resigning as Director General but remaining director of the Paintings Collection; he died in 1929, aged 83, his funeral taking place in the central hall of his beloved Kaiser Friedrich Museum, as a final proof of his lifelong attachment to the institution. His successors, however, felt relieved of a burden. Bode reigned for too many years; now that he was no longer there, it was time to experiment in the museum. This started with a new installation, which showed fewer works and separated painting from sculpture. The *Pazzi Madonna* and the *Orlandini Madonna* moved from the upper floor to the main floor, in a much larger room allowing a great distance between them (figs. 6a and 6b). A direct visual comparison was no longer possible; the reliefs had become two individual elements intended for art lovers and no longer for apprentice connoisseurs.

Fig. 6a. *Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, 1933 (the Pazzi Madonna is visible immediately on the left entrance to the second room).*

Fig. 6b. *Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, 1933 (in the same room where the 'Pazzi' was hung, the 'Orlandini' is to be found left to the portal)*

The re-installation was completed in 1933, the same year that museum curator Frida Schottmüller, who had spent her entire career in Bode's shadow, published a new catalogue of Italian sculptures, in which she was able to free herself from her imposing mentor. The *Pazzi Madonna* was still by Donatello, but the *Orlandini Madonna* was given to a Pisan follower of the master, Andrea Guardi – in open polemic with the reconstruction of Guardi's career proposed by another art historian, Paul Schubring. This attribution would be sporadically followed until the beginning of the 21st century; when Schottmüller's catalogue was published, however, Ulrich Middeldorf remarked that the quality of the work was far too great to be by Guardi (a fully understandable opinion, which would be later confirmed in the 2015 monograph on Guardi, published by Gabriele Donati). At the time of the publication of Schottmüller's catalogue, specialists' quarrels were not a priority: the Nazis had taken power. Soon it would be war, which would lead to the long separation of the two *Madonnas*.

Hot War, Cold War

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. World War II had begun in Europe. After more than half a century spent in the rooms of the Altes Museum and then at the 'Kaiser Friedrich', the '*Pazzi'* and *Orlandini Madonna* were put into crates. Their destiny first remained linked, from the basements of Museum Island to the control tower of an anti-aircraft bunker, built in 1941 in the park of Friedrichshain. The choice was supposedly a safe one, as the bunker could protect the works from the intensifying Anglo-American bombing raids, which were methodically reducing whole sectors of the German capital to rubble. On March 6, 1945, the plans suddenly changed: Adolf Hitler gave the order to evacuate out of Berlin a large part of the collections of the Berlin Museums. It is difficult to understand this strategy: was it a deliberate attempt to offer German works to the Western Allies? This gesture indeed sealed the fate of Berlin's collections for half a century: the evacuated works would spend the Cold War in the Western bloc. Those left behind in the Friedrichshain bunker would suffer a hellish fate.

Along with a number of masterpieces from the Berlin Museums, the *Pazzi Madonna* safely arrived in the Kaiserode salt mine near Merkers in Thuringia. On April 4, 1945, the mine fell into the hands of U.S. General Patton's Third Army. The recovered works were sent further west, as the Merkers area was promised to the Soviets. The '*Pazzi'* reached the Central Collecting Point in Wiesbaden, where it would spend more than a decade. In the mid-1950s, the principle of returning the works to Berlin was established. With the Kaiser Friedrich Museum located in the Eastern sector, the site of the Western museums would be the Dahlem complex, in the American sector, where

architect Bruno Paul had erected the first museum building for the Asian collections in 1914 at the instigation of Bode himself. In the 1960s, the *Pazzi Madonna* was once again in the limelight (fig. 7).

Fig. 7. *Sculpture Collection in Dahlem (West Berlin), c. 1964 (The Pazzi Madonna is at the far center).*

The recovered glory of the '*Pazzi'* is marked by two important publications in the field of Renaissance sculpture: the two-volume monograph devoted to Donatello by Horst Janson in 1957, and the survey of the history of Italian Renaissance sculpture by John Pope-Hennessy. Both books have not yet been replaced as of today, more than half a century after their publication. In his monograph, Janson almost systematically excluded works attributed to Donatello without reliable documentation – starting with the bronze *St John the Baptist* purchased by Bode in 1878 (fig. 4). The *Pazzi Madonna* was, however, one of the few *Madonnas* to be considered genuine. As for Pope-Hennessy's publication, one need only look at the cover of the fourth edition of the book, published posthumously in 1996: the *Pazzi Madonna* sums up the whole Italian sculpture of the Quattrocento (fig. 8).

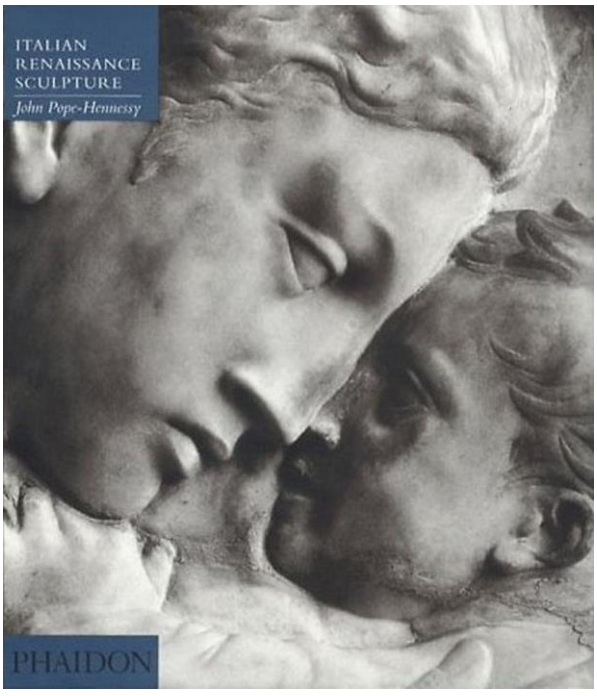

Fig. 8. *Cover of: John Pope-Hennessy, An Introduction to Italian Sculpture. Volume II. Italian Renaissance Sculpture, London, Phaidon, 4th edition, 1996.*

But let us return to Berlin, in the last days of the war. The *Pazzi Madonna* left for Merkers; the *Orlandini Madonna* remained in the Friedrichshain bunker – it was probably judged redundant with the '*Pazzi'*, although the rationale for choosing some works over others for such an evacuation defies too systematic a logic. In May 1945, as Berlin fell into Soviet hands, two fires of unexplained origin ravaged the control tower of the Friedrichshain bunker and the works contained therein. Was this an

accident or a deliberate act, and, in the any case, who set the fire? Opposing theories have circulated, none of which can be proven. As many other works of art, the *Orlandini Madonna* was severely damaged. Here it is described in July 1946: "half-length figure of the Virgin and Child by Donatello. Broken into many pieces. The marble is burned at the surface. The right elbow of the Virgin is covered with soot." A slightly later photograph documents this tragic state (fig. 9).

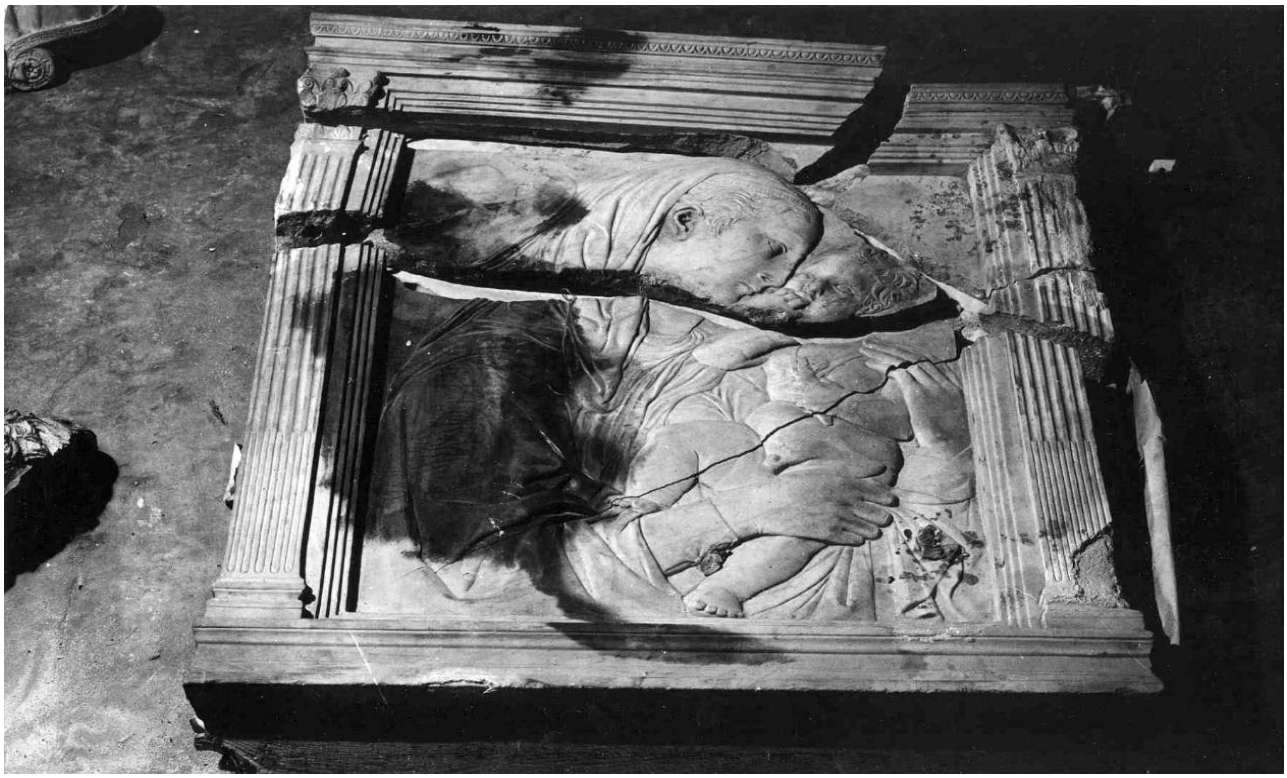

Fig. 9. *Michelozzo, Orlandini Madonna (as in fig. 2), photograph taken in Leningrad in the mid-1950s.*

Hardly anyone will be able to read the above description until the mid-1990s: it was part of a secret note from the Red Army, which accompanied the transfer to the Soviet Union of cultural property seized on German territory. The practice was understood at the time as a fair reparation for the enormous destruction unleashed by the Nazis on Russia – and besides, so went the logic, the Americans did not act differently when they tried to appropriate the 200 best paintings from Berlin stored in Wiesbaden, which were transferred to Washington in late 1945. Works of art in good condition found by the Soviet army thus immediately reached Moscow or Leningrad; as for those in the bunker, the ashes had to cool down so that the surviving fragments could be excavated and shipped east. This was the case for the *Orlandini Madonna*. Officially, the work was missing.

In the 1950s, the situation changed radically: East Germany was a "sister republic" of the USSR, while the new nemesis of the Soviets, the United States, was supporting the transfer of the works in West Germany to Berlin Dahlem. The decision was taken in Moscow to return the treasures seized in 1945: Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* reached Dresden again, while the monumental frieze of the Pergamon Altar came back to Museum Island. For the works which had burned in the bunker,

extensive restoration was necessary: the fragments of the *Orlandini Madonna* were reassembled and fixed over a modern marble plaque. In 1958, the *Madonna* was exhibited in the museum where it had spent so many years in the company of the '*Pazzi'*, but the times had definitely changed, as had the very name of the museum – "Kaiser Friedrich" was far too imperialistic in a communist state, so the building was rebaptized as the Bode Museum in 1956.

Before the war, the *Orlandini Madonna* had suffered from the comparison with the '*Pazzi'*, but at least it was frequently spoken of – which was less and less the case in East Berlin. Not that the Bode Museum was inaccessible, but the damaged relief had become difficult to appreciate. In 1984, however, an East German art historian, Hannelore Sachs, reproduced the '*Pazzi'* and the '*Orlandini'* once again side by side in a book, both under the name of Donatello. This attempt to enhance the value of the East German collections did not convince anyone, and the name most frequently attached to the latter relief remained that of Andrea Guardi, given by Frida Schottmüller in 1933.

Fig. 10. *Attributed to Desiderio da Settignano, Bust of St John the Baptist, c. 1450-55, formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum, lost since 1945.*

This half-forgotten position, however, was less radical than the leaden shroud on the works that did not return from the USSR in 1958. This was the case of Donatello's bronze *St John the Baptist* (fig. 4), barely mentioned in the literature, but also of many objects on the very wall of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum where our two *Madonnas* were hung – notably the *Bust of St John the Baptist* which stood in the center as a masterpiece by Donatello (fig. 10). The attribution to Desiderio da Settignano, even if it was the most convincing one, could never reach a global consensus among art historians. Who would blame them for refraining from judging a missing work?

Reunification

The Fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 is a key date in the history of Germany and Europe. It had likewise a direct impact on the history of the Berlin Museums. Less than three years later, the collections from East and West were formally brought together again, after four decades of parallel lives. The former Kaiser Friedrich Museum, now Bode Museum, was completely renovated to accommodate the Sculpture Collection once again; the paintings, however, would go to the Kulturforum, initiating a historical separation that can be considered regrettable in many respects. In 2006, the Bode Museum reopened its doors, in a display directly inherited from the criteria of West Berlin, with white walls and far fewer works than in Bode's era – except in a study gallery where many works damaged by the fires of 1945 were displayed. Despite its damaged condition, the *Orlandini Madonna* was not in this study gallery, but placed again not far from the '*Pazzi'*, although at a different height (fig. 11). The darkened '*Orlandini'* clearly suffered from the renewed comparison. The guidebook of the collection marked this discrepancy: the '*Pazzi'* made the cover (fig. 12), while there was no room for the '*Orlandini'*, labeled in the galleries as by the school of Donatello.

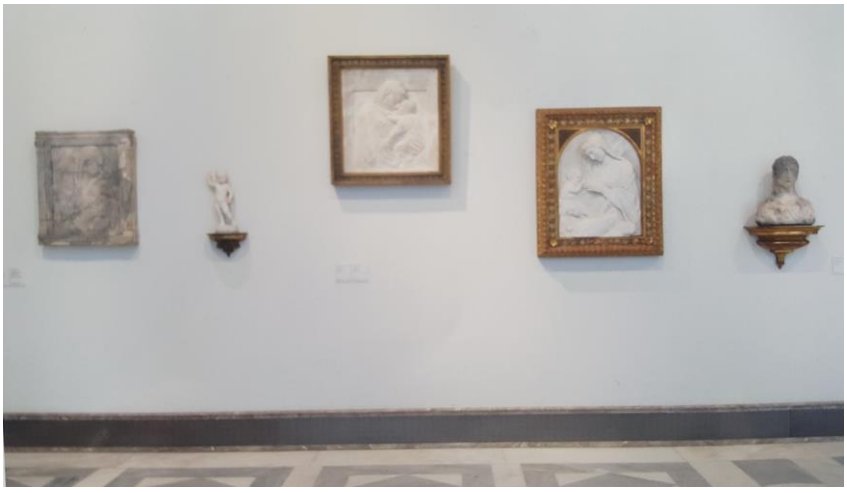

Fig. 11. *Bode Museum, Berlin, 2006.*

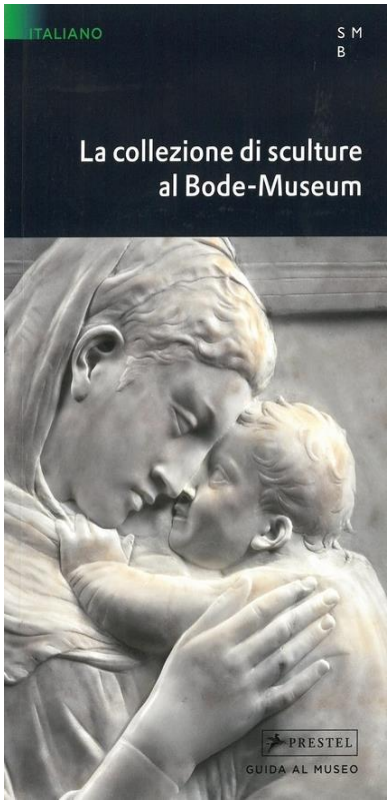

Fig. 12. *Cover of: La collezione di sculture al Bode-Museum, Munich, Prestel, 2011.*

In 2013, I began working at the Bode Museum on a catalogue of the works of Donatello and his school contained in the Berlin collections. The *Pazzi Madonna* was of course a central work to be studied (along with a bronze *Spiritello* coming from the baptismal font of the Siena Cathedral, another brilliant acquisition of Bode). The *Orlandini Madonna* was also present in my catalogue; hadn't it been acquired as a Donatello? My research was considered a sufficient argument for restoring the relief, even if, I must confess, I did not at first have a very high opinion of it. It was no longer hung close to the '*Pazzi'* at the time, and

way too high for my taste. The even higher display of the *Pazzi Madonna*, in order to respect the presumed original position of the relief, was also questionable for me; as we have seen, not much is known of the original provenance of the work, and having it too far from the viewers' eyes meant blurring the most poignant part of the object: the overlapping faces of the Mother and her Child. After all, it is this detail which was chosen as the cover of various books (fig. 8 and 12), not so much the perspective scheme, however important it may have been historically.

Seen up close in the restoration workshop, the '*Orlandini'* was quite different from its appearance in the museum rooms: the overall, imperfect anatomy of the Virgin gave way to surprising details – such as the stunning position of her right hand (fig. 13), with its folded fingers that were almost sinking into the marble, or the care taken to represent every finger of the other hand in very flat relief (fig. 14). To stay on the same motif, I was dumbfounded by how the Child was bringing

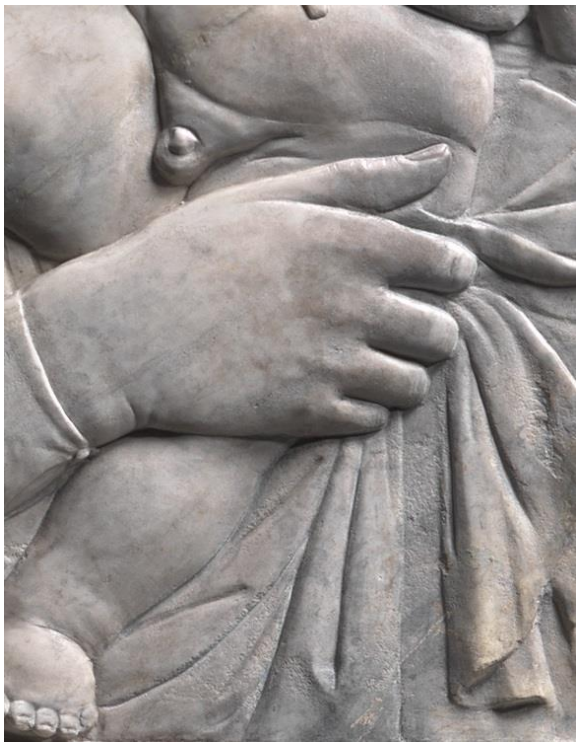

Fig. 13. *Michelozzo, Orlandini Madonna (as in fig. 2), detail.*

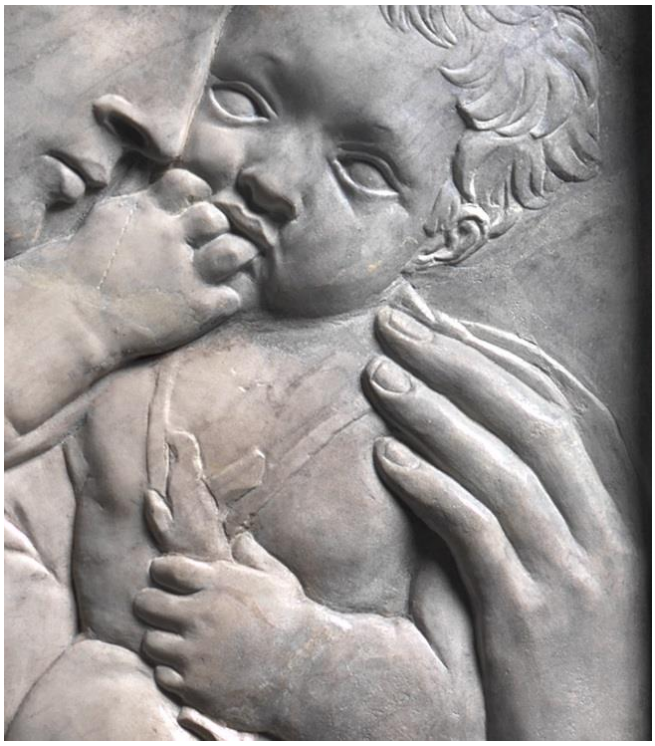

Fig. 14. *Michelozzo, Orlandini Madonna (as in fig. 2), detail.*

one hand to his mouth, as if to signify that his incoming teeth were hurting him. I was not the only one to have been struck by the *Madonna*; for Bodo Buczynski, then head of the restoration workshop, the '*Orlandini'* was even better carved than the '*Pazzi'*! This was certainly a provocative judgement, but one that had to be taken into consideration, coming from a restorer who had been working for almost four decades at the Berlin Sculpture Collection, and who had restored the *Pazzi Madonna* twice.

One day, an attribution crystallized. A comparison, rather, with the figures of the tomb of Rinaldo Brancaccio, made between 1426 and 1428 by Donatello and Michelozzo for the Neapolitan Church of Sant'Angelo a Nilo (fig. 15). The similarities were overwhelming: the absent gaze of one angel (figs. 16-17), the geometric diadem worn by the Virgin that comes back in one of the caryatids

Fig. 15. *Donatello and Michelozzo, Funerary Monument to Cardinal Rinaldo Brancaccio, 1426-28, Naples, Sant'Angelo a Nilo.*

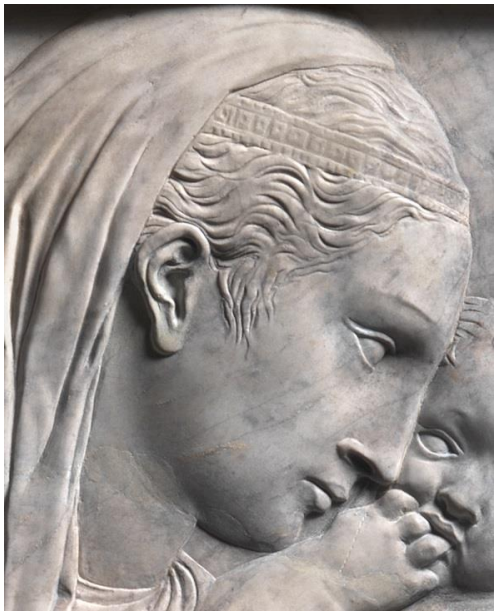

Fig. 16. *Michelozzo, Orlandini Madonna (as in fig. 2), detail.*

Fig. 17. *Michelozzo, Funerary Monument to Cardinal Rinaldo Brancaccio (as in fig. 13), detail.*

Fig. 18. *Michelozzo, Funerary Monument to Cardinal Rinaldo Brancaccio (as in fig. 13), detail.*

(fig. 18), not to forget the draperies inspired by classical antiquity. Such comparisons indicated that the author of these figures was most certainly the same one who made the *Orlandini Madonna*. For several decades now, critics have agreed to attribute these parts to Michelozzo and not to Donatello (even if other collaborators also worked on this monument). Michelozzo must therefore have been the author of the '*Orlandini'*, which is also coherent with his later work as a sculptor. The *Madonna* had to be dated to the second half of the 1420s, so its carved frame with pilasters was to be understood as an early example of this typology in Florence, in direct parallel with the renewal of Antiquity conceived by Filippo Brunelleschi. Two decades later, Michelozzo would become a renowned architect, his project for the Medici Palace in Florence being preferred to the one submitted by Brunelleschi.

Fig. 19. *Bode Museum, Berlin, 2020 (behind the wall where stands the Pazzi Madonna alone, one sees some fragments of Masaccio's Pisa Polyptych; the 'Orlandini' is on the right wall).*

After having been appointed Curator of Early Italian Painting and Sculpture for the Berlin Museums in 2016, I was able to propose the following year a reorganization of two large rooms of the Bode Museum – dedicating the largest one to Florentine Quattrocento sculpture and the other one to Donatello. My main idea was to return to Bode's principles, notably with a fuller display, a symmetrical disposition and an insistence on historical relationships. The *Pazzi Madonna* was hung at the center of the Donatello room (fig. 19), on a special wall highlighting its nature as a masterpiece (and hopefully

Fig. 20. *Michelozzo, Orlandini Madonna (as in fig. 2), present state.*

easily to Naples by sea. Michelozzo was with him: his *Orlandini Madonna* may even have been sculpted at that moment, while he took direct inspiration from his two great contemporaries. The motif of the Child touching his teeth probably comes directly from Masaccio's *Pisa Polyptych* (fig. 21).

not too high for any visitor). The restored *Orlandini Madonna* (fig. 20) was not far away, on the wall to the right, completing a central triptych formed by two other autograph *Madonnas* by Donatello. Predella and pilasters elements from Masaccio's *Pisa Polyptych* were also present, as they were in Bode's times, in order to show the influence that Donatello had on the painter. The only documentary evidence of the direct relationship between both artists comes indeed from Pisa and not Florence: in 1426, Masaccio was working on his polyptych and needed money, which Donatello gave him right away. Donatello was then staying in Pisa to complete the tomb of Rinaldo Brancaccio, in order to send it more

Fig. 21. *Masaccio, Virgin and Child, 1426, London, National Gallery.*

Fig. 22. *Bode Museum, Berlin, 2020.*
(on the left wall, plaster casts of works now in Moscow and, above, photographs of works lost since 1945).

The relationship between the two Berlin *Madonnas* documents an important chapter of the early history of Florentine Renaissance art. It also delineates the singular history of the Berlin Sculpture Collection. I am however conscious that, despite all my efforts, the two objects leave too many aspects of this rich history in shadow. In the very room where they are displayed, one can experience that the story is more complex in front of plaster casts of two of Donatello's works – once in Berlin and long thought to have disappeared in 1945 (fig. 22) – but which, in fact, resurfaced in 2015 in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow, one being the previously-mentioned bronze representing *St John the Baptist* (fig. 4). Above the cast of this work, a life-size photograph of another *Baptist* recalls the bust that was once at the center of the wall between the '*Orlandini'* and the '*Pazzi'*, but whose fragile nature in stucco, alas, did not allow it to survive, even as damaged fragments (fig. 10).

But let us conclude with a final example from the very same wall of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum (fig. 5): a small marble relief showing the *Baptism of Christ* (fig. 23), which was exhibited on the upper left side with a 16th century Venetian frame, even if Bode had acquired it as being Florentine and from the middle of the preceding century. In 1926, a decade after the acquisition, the aged Bode pronounced it a work by Donatello – an opinion which was almost completely neglected in the literature. In 1945, the relief was evacuated from Berlin and followed the same path as

Fig. 23. *Attributed to Donatello, Baptism of Christ, 1430s, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst*
(exhibited at the Bode Museum).

the *Pazzi Madonna*, from Merkers to Wiesbaden and then to Berlin Dahlem. The frame had been judged not important enough to be evacuated: it remained for decades on the Museum Island, fortunately not even reaching the ill-fated bunker. When the *Baptism* came back to the Bode Museum after the Reunification, no one remembered this fragmented history anymore. It is only in 2016 that the relief and its frame were reconnected. The next time I try to encapsulate the history of the Berlin Sculpture Collection, I will perhaps begin with this work and not say anything else about Donatello, as I firmly believe – like Bode – that this is a work by him.

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