#Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (ca. 1340 – 1416)#

##Painter##

Niccolò di Pietro Gerini is not a household name today. His conservative style extended the innovations of [Giotto](insert link) and the traditions of [Bernardo Daddi](insert link), but a full century after the advent of this new style of painting reached the vantage point of Florentine viewers. However, at the height of his career at the turn of the fifteenth century, few painters in Tuscany enjoyed the kind of popularity that he did among patrons and audiences alike.

We know nothing of his origins, his training, or his demeanor, but the archives do tell us that both his father and his son were also painters. It stands to reason that the family members worked together as a team for over one hundred years.

For his part, Niccolò matriculated into the [Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries](insert link) in 1368 at a time when he was involved in collaboration with [Jacopo di Cione](insert link) to paint now-lost frescoes in the vaults of the residence hall of the Florentine [Guild of Lawyers, Judges, and Notaries](insert link). He may also have assisted on two additional works completed by Jacopo – the two \*Coronations of the Virgin\* for [S. Pier Maggiore](insert link) and the [Florentine Mint](insert link), respectively – but the “Niccolaio” listed in documents related to these commissions may instead refer to the painter Niccolò di Tommaso. He painted a large dossal of the \*Entombment of Christ\* currently in the oratory of [S. Carlino](insert link), just across the street from the more famous guild church of [Orsanmichele](insert link). He teamed with [Ambrogio di Baldese](insert link) in 1386 to paint the fresco of the [\*Abandonment and Restitution of Children\*](insert link) on the façade of the [Bigallo](insert link), and two years later completed a beautiful triptych of the [\*Baptism of Christ\*](insert link) for an altar in the dormitory of the Camaldolese monastery of [S. Maria degli Angeli](insert link). Soon thereafter he went to the nearby town of Prato to paint frescoes in the Palazzo Datini and the church of S. Francesco, and then worked in Pisa at the church of S. Francesco before returning to Florence to paint the [frescoes in the Sacristy](insert link) of [S. Croce](insert link).

Two haunting paintings of the [\*Man of Sorrows\*](insert link) – one for the Flagellant Confraternity of [Gesù Pellegrino](insert link) that operated out of [S. Maria Novella](insert link) and the [\*other for an unknown setting\*](insert link) – remind us of the severity of devotional practices during the decades following the [Black Death of 1348](insert link) and its periodic reappearances. A number of other paintings have been attributed to his hand, like two street tabernacles that still stand on the [Via dei Malcontenti](insert link) and the [Via delle Bella Donne](insert link), but this is speculative. However, documents from Orsanmichele confirm that in 1409 Niccolò di Pietro Gerini painted in fresco the [effigies](insert link) of a number of guild patron saints that still adorn the columns inside the former grain repository today.

Gerini’s approach to painting clearly demonstrates an affinity for the rather hard and massive forms popularized by [Andrea Orcagna di Cione](insert link) and his brother, [Nardo di Cione](insert link), both of whom followed closely the traditions formulated by their probable master, [Bernardo Daddi](insert link). Gerini’s lively compositions often revolved around narrative themes, sometimes invented from whole cloth by the artist: the \*Abandonment and Restitution of Children\* on the Bigallo and the \*Man of Sorrows\* in S. Maria Novella include references to contemporary people and practices that the artist either witnessed for himself or imagined in the design phase of the process. His color palette, filled with rich blues, greens, and vermilions, creates decorative patterns of unusual complexity and aesthetic brilliance. But his adherence to traditional representations of space, generic renderings of anatomical forms, and time-tested religious iconography make his impact on contemporaries and later generations minimal at best. Indeed, the advent of [Lorenzo Monaco](insert link) in the early fifteenth century and the arrival on the scene of [Masaccio](insert link) in 1422 swayed other Florentine painters away from Niccolò’s precedents, even though both Lorenzo and (to a lesser degree) Masaccio owed Gerini some important artistic debts. But for an important chunk of time between about 1380 and about 1405, Niccolò di Pietro Gerini was a leading artist in a city filled with capable competitors.

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