

Andrea di Bartolo

Sieneese, active from 1389 - died 1428

BIOGRAPHY

Sieneese painter and miniaturist, active in various towns in central and northern Italy, Andrea was the son of Bartolo di Fredi and father of Giorgio and Sano, also painters. His artistic career no doubt began in his father's shop; his hand can in fact be recognized in some important commissions executed by Bartolo in the 1380s, in particular the polyptychs of Montalcino and the frescoes in the Augustinian church in the same town.[1] He participated, alongside his father and Luca di Tommè, in the realization of the now lost altarpiece for the chapel of the shoemakers' guild in Siena Cathedral.[2] In 1394, by then an independent artist, Andrea began a period of activity in the Veneto, as attested by the altarpiece of five blessed nuns of the Dominican order (Museo Vetrario, Murano), a painted crucifix in the monastery of Santa Maria at Zadar in Croatia, and some frescoes in the church of San Francesco at Treviso.[3] The altarpiece of the Annunciation and saints signed by Andrea di Bartolo, now in the Museo d'Arte Sacra at Buonconvento, probably bore the date 1397. Painted after his return to Tuscany, it testifies to his gradual abandonment of some of the harshness of his father's manner, employing figures compact in profile and devoid of linear complexities, but enlivened by a brilliant palette.

A desire to espouse the figurative ideals of late-Gothic art is ever more clearly expressed in Andrea's works from the early years of the fifteenth century onwards. He thus elongated the proportions of his figures and enlivened their movements with more expansive gestures and more agitated drapery. Moreover, the example of the works of Taddeo di Bartolo, who had returned to Siena after a long absence c. 1400, led him to seek a more naturalistic rendering of skin, hair, fabrics, and surface textures in general. In other respects, however, he remained essentially faithful to the figurative formulae of his father's art. The panels of a disassembled polyptych, the larger part of which still remains in the cathedral of Tuscania (Viterbo), and the four lateral panels of a polyptych, dated 1413, in the Franciscan church of the Osservanza in Siena, illustrate well this phase in Andrea's art. The polyptych in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena (no. 220), the *Assumption of the Virgin* in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, and the polyptych divided between the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan and the Galleria Nazionale in Urbino probably document the development of his art in the following years.

Andrea di Bartolo is also known to have worked as a painter of miniatures during the last years of the fourteenth century. His most significant contributions to the genre include his participation in the decoration of the choir-books of the Eremo di Lecceto (now in part in the Biblioteca degli Intronati in Siena) and those—particularly fine in quality—commissioned by King Henry IV of England for the Franciscan Custodianship of the Holy Land in Jerusalem (now in the Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in that city). A second period of activity in the Veneto in the last years of Andrea’s life has also been inferred.[4]

[1] Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: Ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, 1994), 453–467, 469–476, 485–488, 500–501. Some of the panels of the triptych from the church of San Francesco, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena until 1997, were later reunited with the remainder of the altarpiece in the Museo Civico at Montalcino. See Alessandro Bagnoli, *Museo civico e diocesano d’arte sacra di Montalcino* (Siena, 1997), 24.

[2] The painting, commissioned in 1389, was completed in 1391; see Monica Butzek, “Chronologie,” in *Die Kirchen von Siena*, vol. 3, *Der Dom S. Maria Assunta*, bk. 1, *Architektur*, pt. 1, ed. Walter Haas and Dethard von Winterfeld (Munich, 2006), 96, 97 n. 1267, 100, 101 n. 1324.

[3] Gaudenz Freuler, “Andrea di Bartolo, Fra Tommaso d’Antonio Cafarini, and Sienese Dominicans in Venice,” *The Art Bulletin* 69 (1987): 570–586.

[4] Gaudenz Freuler, “Presenze artistiche toscane a Venezia alla fine del Trecento: Lo scriptorium dei camaldolesi e dei domenicani,” in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento*, ed. Mauro Lucco, 2 vols. (Milan, 1992), 2:498.

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