

Painting on Fabric in Written Sources before the XIIIth Century

RENATA SALVARANI

In written medieval sources, we find numerous descriptions and citations of painted fabrics that bear witness to the frequent use of *telae pictae* in religious liturgy and rituals pertaining to political power.

Velamina, curtains, altar-cloths, precious fabrics delimited and marked off the spaces for religious celebrations, underlining the significance of the moments of greatest ritual importance. Sacred vestments, embroidered hangings and elements of clothing emphasized the gestures and the role of priests. In the same way, cloaks, curtains, illustrated narratives were an unfulfilling part of the celebrations pertaining to imperial power.

These productions had antecedents in the high sacred meaning of the *mandylion* of Edessa that preserved Christ's image when placed on his face during the ascent to Calvary, and in the imperial *vexillum* with the monogram of Christ that Constantine carried during the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

Written medieval sources refer both to these prototypes and to literary narratives connected with them, as well as to episodes and contemporary artefacts that are described in terms of their aspect and use. The ancient sources are confirmed in the few examples of painted fabrics that have survived today, probably those that were most precious or that had the deepest symbolic meaning. The examination of the medieval sources documents the passage from the late antique and medieval *telae pictae* to the use of canvas as we know it in modern and contemporary European art.

Typologies of Painted Canvases in Lombardy in Archival Documents of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

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New archival documents have made it possible to trace a broad, complex scenario in the use of canvas as a support for painting in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Lombardy. In the fourteenth century, painted canvases were used as banners and military flags or as decorations for allegorical carts, as well as altarpieces, as is born out in the case of Giovannino de Grassi, who also used canvas as a support to draw on.

One typology was documented ever since the fourteenth century and widespread for the entire fifteenth century: drapes to protect panels and polyptychs, which could be in the form of curtains that could be moved to the sides of the painting, or of doors with canvas applied to a frame, or of panels with a mechanism for raising and lowering them.

For these artefacts, monochrome was mainly employed, in blue or green, in egg tempera or more frequently glue tempera, generally with the figures of Christ and the Virgin, although also with saints.

For the entire fifteenth century, the confraternities commissioned both processional banners and paintings on canvas for temporary furnishings in chapels and oratories for Holy Week or other liturgical occasions (a probable example proposed here is the *Crucifixion* by Donato de Bardi in Savona). Moreover, paintings on canvas decorated the walls of noble residences as alternatives to more costly tapestries (three significant examples are documented as being executed in Vigevano in 1486) and they were used for ephemeral apparatuses, like the one made for the wedding of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este and the wedding of Anna Sforza and Alfonso d'Este, and for triumphal receptions (like the one set up for the entrance of Massimiliano Sforza in Pavia in 1513).

Portraits were also carried out on fabric support, which was lighter and easier to transport, but canvas was also used for devotional paintings or works for domestic use, in which painting could be combined with precious embroidery.

The Beginnings of Painting on Canvas in Italy through Medieval and Renaissance Sources

PAOLO BENSI

Written sources (manuals and treatises, archival documents) demonstrate that in the Middle Ages in Italy paintings on textile supports were considerably more widespread than has commonly been thought: unfortunately many of them have not survived to our own day because of the intrinsic fragility of the technique employed.

In this contribution, the indications on the materials and processes of painting on canvas present in the main treatises of pictorial techniques from Heraclius to Cennini on down to the *Lives* of Vasari, not to mention archival sources, are taken into consideration. A vast, well-articulated picture emerges of destinations for the use of canvases in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: not only as processional standards, protective curtains for sacred images, ephemerae, but also paintings destined for permanent locations, as decorations for headquarters of confraternities and altarpieces, as has been underlined in several recent studies. The patronage of the Franciscan order must have had an important role in the choice of materials and techniques that were humble, but of great expressive impact.

The data of the sources are here compared with the results of the diagnostic investigations carried out on several exemplars of paintings on canvas that have survived.

Pigments on Canvases Painted in Tempera up to the Renaissance

PIETRO MOIOLI - CLAUDIO SECCARONI

About twenty paintings on canvas — carried out from the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century by authors like Antonio Veneziano, Mantegna, Raphael, Perugino, Francesco Morone, Lotto and Correggio — have been subject to non-destructive fluorescent X analysis (XRF).

These analyses have produced significant statistics on the pigments used and a comparison with palettes usually employed in oil painting. The study has shown that significant differences in the choice of pigments were rare and characteristic of individual artists, although some pigments seem to be more congenial to glue tempera rather than to egg tempera or oil.

The Madonna by Giusto de' Menabuoi for the Cathedral in Padua

ANDREA NANTE

The *Madonna and Child* by Giusto de' Menabuoi, discovered in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Padua in the first decades of the past century and now on exhibit in the Museo Diocesano, was most probably painted for the cathedral to substitute an older image, and so deliberately reproducing its forms.

The archival and literary sources, direct observation of the canvas and the study of the iconography help to reconstruct the history of Giusto's painting, identifying its destination and location over the centuries. Such a reconstruction is not always easy nor altogether conclusive, because in the archival papers, the painting — which according to devout tradition was painted by St. Luke — was not very well distinguished from its prototype nor from a later version located on the altar of the Virgin. It was only in the seventeenth century that two very distinct versions were cited, but at that time the document could refer — besides Giusto's version — to the copy of the Madonna venerated on the altar that was made after it was damaged while being transported, a copy that should correspond to the painting that is on the altar now.

References to Canvases Painted with Tempera in Emilia and Romagna Between the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance

ROSA D'AMICO - CAMILLO TAROZZI

The text is divided into two parts, worked out in close collaboration between the two authors. In the first, Rosa D'Amico adopts an art historical point of view to tackle the vicissitudes

of tempera on canvas in Bologna in the fourteenth century and in the late Gothic period of the fifteenth century, offering a brief panoramic view of the main documented works or survived and describing problems of conservation, mainly with linings and incongruous varnishing.

In the second part, Camillo Tarozzi critically deals with the results of work carried out according to conventional methods and the consequences for the delicate original structure of the tempera. The author then describes several innovative restorations extending research to works in the Renaissance of fifteenth century Bologna.

The Scenes from the Lives of Sts. Joachim and Anna and the Virgin in the Museum of the Cathedral in Monza

CRISTINA QUATTRINI

The Museo del Duomo in Monza houses a fifteenth century painting in tempera on canvas that portrays twenty-four episodes of *Scenes from the Lives of Sts. Joachim and Anna and the Virgin*, taken almost entirely from the *Legenda aurea* of Jacopo da Varazze. The work is contained in a frame painted with *all'antica* motifs. Recent restoration work on the frame has provided an opportunity to reconsider this singular work — whose original function has never been clear — and put forward a stylistic reading.

Datable to the 1470s approximately, the painting seems to lead back to the artisans' milieu of ceiling panel painters. It was possibly destined for use as a visual aid for catechism or for preaching, or a curtain to protect a painted or sculpted sacred image of a subject pertaining to Mary, but shown only on liturgical occasions.

Early Paintings on Canvas: Study and Conservation in Several Experiences at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure

MARCO CIATTI

The exact identification of the artistic technique in which a work was executed in is a fundamental acquisition from a methodological point of view, too. Such identification makes it possible to understand the expressive values and the choice of the most appropriate instruments for conservation and restoration. This problem is especially important in the sector of paintings from the Middle Ages, which because of their rarity, have not been studied at great length up to now.

The present article presents two cases of the conservation and restoration activity of the department that deals with painted furniture at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence: *The Beheading of St. John the Baptist* in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, attributed to Antonio Veneziano; and the *Madonna and Child* by Andrea Mantegna in the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo. The author is mainly concerned with the results of cognitive investigations carried out by the institute, in the first case aimed towards the restoration of the work, and in the second, towards a careful evaluation of the technique and state of conservation.

Examples of *Telae Pictae* Housed in the Pinacoteca at the Castello Sforzesco. The Pala Trivulzio and the Mantegna Project

LAURA BASSO

The Pinacoteca at the Castello Sforzesco houses a group of *telae pictae* carried out for the most part in the Lombard area between 1470 and 1530. The article traces a brief profile of these works, summing up historical-critical aspects and problems in conservation.

Special attention is dedicated to the great tempera by Andrea Mantegna known as the *Pala Trivulzio*, for which the investigative diagnostic activity and preventive conservation started in 2004 are presented. Called the Mantegna Project, in which various multi-disciplinary research institutes are involved, it has the aim of obtaining morphological and physical knowledge on the Mantegna's work of 1497. The project — born of the necessity of monitoring the conditions of the painting when it was moved to Verona for a temporary exhibit (2006) — is to last several years and foresees a complex series of measurements and non-invasive investigations. This will be accompanied by archival research linked to the reconstruction of the work's museum history, which reflects the methodological decisions made by the Milan Pinacoteca in the field of conservation.

The Lent Canvases with *Scenes from the Passion* in Genoa

MARZIA CATALDI GALLO

The Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali has recently acquired a series of Lenten canvases (*Fastentucher*) representing *Scenes from the Passion*, which has become part of the

rich textile collection of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici Storici ed Etnoantropologici in Liguria. The canvases, now on exhibit in the Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra in Genoa, were originally housed in the Abbazia di San Nicolò del Boschetto on the Genoese coast, and critics have always considered them as precious decoration for the Cappella del Sepolcro that was fitted out on Holy Thursday to hold the sacred host.

This series, on linen canvas tinted with indigo and painted with whiting, is a *unicum* on the European scene for the completeness of the cycle and the early dating of the cloth. The main group is comprised of six canvases of considerable dimensions and three smaller ones, and they date back to ca. 1540. Moreover, this group makes it possible to better define the activity of painters like Teramo Piaggio, active in Genoa in the first half of the sixteenth century — years in which many artists of Lombard origin were at work in the city — and to underline the important role of engravings, in particular Dürer's, in the creative process.

Finally, the Lenten drapes in Genoa bear witness to the distant origin of the most well-known fabrics of the modern era: jeans.

The Brera *Crucifixion* by Michele da Verona: Restoration Notes (2003-2005)

MARIOLINA OLIVARI

The *Crucifixion* by Michele da Verona in the Brera is a big canvas signed and dated to 1501. Critics consider it a milestone in the painter's catalogue. The present article reconstructs the history of its conservation for the first time, from when it arrived in the Milanese museum in 1811, until the last restoration.

There were numerous interventions on the canvas before this recent work: at least two in the nineteenth century and three in the twentieth century. The examination of old photographs reveals an important job in the first half of the twentieth century, when a tree that was probably original was 'erased'.

In light of recent analyses, the technique Michele used was oil. The pigments used and the means of execution are traditional. The reflectography has brought the preparatory drawing to light — done in charcoal and reinforced in places with the brush — and the little corrections the painter made while carrying out the work. A few important *pentimenti* were also discovered, like the change in the clothing of the soldier behind the brown horse.