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FRATERNITIES, GUILDS, SOCIAL WELFARE, AND ART IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

FRANCESCO SALVESTRINI*

Since the post-World War II period, many Italian and foreign scholars have devoted themselves to the history of social welfare and hospitals in Medieval and Renaissance Florence¹. Their work has been facilitated by the wealth of documents concerning the charitable organizations. This, in turn, has made it possible to shed light on how those institutions were organized as well as their assets, on the social groups they assisted (with specific emphasis on abandoned children), on the role of lay protectors and patrons, and on the religious involved in charitable work, on the architecture of the buildings and the artistic heritage.

Many hospitals had ties with lay fraternities, that are also the subject of studies. The fraternities were collective organizations established by decree of the diocesan Ordinary. They promoted a pious life based on good works and all forms of charity worthy of salvation. Their members combined care for the poor, the sick, orphans, single women or travellers, with prayer, and maintained close connections with the Mendicant friars who, since the thirteenth century, were often their leaders.²

* Francesco Salvestrini (Florència, 1965), és professor titular d'Història Medieval a la Universitat de Firenze. Entre les seves obres destaquen: *Santa Maria di Vallombrosa. Patrimonio e vita economica di un grande monastero medievale* (Florència, 1998); *Libera città su fiume regale. Firenze e l'Arno dall'Antichità al Quattrocento* (Florència, 2005); *Disciplina caritatis. Il monachesimo vallombrosano tra medioevo e prima età moderna* (Roma, 2008); *I Vallombrosani in Liguria. Storia di una presenza monastica fra XII e XVII secolo* (Roma, 2010).

1. Used abbreviations: AD, Accademia del Disegno, prima Compagnia dei Pittori; ASF, Archivio di Stato di Firenze; BNCF, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.

2. See: Gennaro M. MONTI, *Le Confraternite Medievali dell'Alta e Media Italia*, La Nuova Italia, Venice, 1927; Giancarlo ANGELOZZI, *Le confraternite laicali. Un'esperienza cristiana tra medioevo e età moderna*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1978, p. 16-30; Roberto RUSCONI, "Confraternite, compagnie e devozioni", *Storia d'Italia, Annali 9. La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Giorgio CHITTOLENI, Giovanni MICCOLI (eds.), Einaudi, Turin, 1986, p. 471-480. For some Tuscan examples, see: James R. BANKER, *Death in the Community. Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1988; Antonella MORIANI, "Assistenza e beneficenza ad Arezzo nel XIV secolo: la Fraternita di Santa Maria della Misericordia", *La società del bisogno. Povertà e assistenza nella Toscana medievale*, Giuliano PINTO (ed.), Salimbeni, Florence, 1989, p. 20-26; Anna BENVENUTI, "Ad procuracionem caritatis et amoris et concordiae ad invicem". La Fraternita dei Laici di Arezzo tra sistema di solidarietà e solidarietà di sistema", *Annali Aretini*, I (Arezzo, 1993), p. 79-104. For an overview of mainly Italian studies, see: Lorenza PAMATO, "Le confraternite medievali. Studi e tendenze storiografiche", *Il buon fedele. Le confraternite tra medioevo e prima età moderna*, Maurizio ZANGARINI (ed.), Cierre Edizioni, Sommaccampagna, 1998, p. 9-51; among the many studies by mostly English scholars since 1960: Christopher F. BLACK, "The Development of Confraternity Studies over the past



Among the main studies dedicated to Florentine charitable organizations, we can mention Giuliano Pinto's research on the Ospedale di San Gallo, Lucia Sandri's work on the famous Ospedale degli Innocenti that cared for abandoned children, the book by the Japanese scholar Tomoko Takahashi, also on the topic of abandoned children, and the one by Lucarella, De Benedictis and Artusi on the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, one of the city's main welfare foundations.³ As to the lay fraternities, the contributions by Massimo Papi, Ronald Weissman, John Henderson, Nerida Newbigin, Christopher Black, Ludovica Sebegondi as well as many others are still of fundamental importance.⁴

Given this wealth of studies that have often become key references and the bases for comparisons for research on other Italian and European cities, at this point all we can say is that we recommend further work on the institutions that have received less attention up to now. This would further our knowledge about a major Medieval city, filled with foreigners and visitors, as well as large segments of the population that were reduced to poverty and therefore in need of material and spiritual support.

Thirty Years", *The Politics of Ritual Kinship. Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Nicholas TERPSTRA (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2000, p. 9-29; Marina GAZZINI, *Confraternite e società cittadina nel Medioevo italiano*, Clueb, Bologna, 2006.

3. Giuliano PINTO, *La Toscana nel tardo Medioevo. Ambiente, economia rurale, società*, Sansoni, Florence, 1982, p. 247-329; Giuliano PINTO, *Storia della solidarietà a Firenze*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Florence, 1985; Agostino LUCARELLA, *Storia dell'Arcispedale di S. Maria Nuova di Firenze*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986; Daniela LOMBARDI, *Poverta maschile, poverta femminile. L'ospedale dei Mendicanti nella Firenze dei Medici*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1988; Philip GAVITT, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence. The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1990; Lucia SANDRI (ed.), *Gli Innocenti e Firenze nei secoli. Un ospedale, un archivio, una città*, Studio per Edizioni Scelte, Florence, 1996; Allen J. GRIECO, Lucia SANDRI (eds.), *Ospedali e città. L'Italia del Centro-Nord, XIII-XVI secolo*, Le Lettere, Florence, 1997; Francesca CARRARA, Ludovica SEBREGONDI, Ulisse TRAMONTI, *Gli istituti di beneficenza a Firenze. Storia e architettura*, Alinea, Florence, 1999; Tomoko TAKAHASHI, *The Renaissance of Foundlings. The Orphanage, City and Countrysides in Tuscany of the Fifteenth Century*, Nagoya University Press, Nagoya, 2000; Luciano ARTUSI, Antonio PATRUNO, *Gli Antichi Ospedali di Firenze*, Semper, Florence, 2000; *L'Ospedale e la Città. Dalla fondazione di Santa Maria Nuova al sistema ospedaliero del 2000*, Polistampa, Florence, 2000; Cristina DE BENEDECTIS (ed.), *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Polistampa, Florence, 2002; Silvio BERTI, *La lebbra a Firenze. I luoghi e i personaggi*, Polistampa, Florence, 2005; Lucia SANDRI, "Childhood in Florence in the 1400's and 1500's. An excursion through the 'Spedale' in the Renaissance of Children. The Hospital of the Innocents and the Taking In of Children in the 1400's and 1500's", *Quaderni del Mudi*, 1 (Florence, 2007), p. 6-25; Mirella BRANCA, Cristina DE BENEDECTIS, Esther DIANA, Mara MINIATI, Brunella TEODORI (eds.), *Il tesoro liturgico dell'ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze*, Polistampa, Florence, 2009.

4. Massimo D. PAPI, "Confraternite ed Ordini Mendicanti a Firenze. Aspetti di una ricerca quantitativa", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age-Temps Modernes*, 98/2 (Rome, 1977), p. 723-732; Ronald F.E. WEISSMAN, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, Academic Press, New York-London, 1982; Luciano ORIOLI, *Le confraternite medievali e il problema della povertà. Lo statuto della Compagnia di Santa Maria Vergine e di San Zenobio di Firenze nel secolo XIV*, Editoria di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1984; Christopher F. BLACK, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1989; Nerida NEWBIGIN, "'Cene' and 'Cenacoli' in the Ascension and Pentecost Companies of Fifteenth-Century Florence", *Crossing the Boundaries. Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Konrad EISENBICHLER (ed.), Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 90-107; Ludovica SEBREGONDI, *La Compagnia e l'Oratorio di San Niccolò del Ceppo*, Salimbeni, Florence, 1985; Ludovica SEBREGONDI, *Tre confraternite fiorentine. Santa Maria della Pietà, detta 'Buca' di San Girolamo, San Filippo Benizi, San Francesco Poverino*, Salimbeni, Florence, 1991; John HENDERSON, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994; Konrad EISENBICHLER, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1998.

Here, however, I would like to deal with another aspect of this broad subject. I shall try to combine the topic of social welfare and confraternities with the topic of work, bearing in mind some of the peculiarities that characterized the social, religious and cultural organizations of Tuscany's most important city. Florence is famous throughout the world for its artistic and architectural heritage. By the fourteenth century working in the applied arts was considered an established occupation or profession. The key questions this paper will address are: Was there a connection between the artists (painters, sculptors, architects) –who were all craftsmen more or less organized in the city's guilds– and the social welfare system? Are there documented forms of mutual aid and confraternal associations for the professional-occupational groups which, for various reasons, were identified with the production of art in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Florence? This question is very closely linked to others, i.e.: Were the artists aware that they comprised a specific class of workers? Did that awareness extend to the point of creating bodies conceived to protect and further the interests of their specific group? And lastly, what was the relationship between those organizations and manifestations of urban religious associationism?

I found several answers through a preliminary study, but as always, they are not definitive or univocal. However, the complexities of the Florentine cultural, social and occupational structure presented interesting topics for further investigation, and here I shall discuss one specific example, that is the *Compagnia di San Luca*. Also known as the 'fraternity of artists', it was founded during the first half of the fourteenth century and, in the modern age would develop into the prestigious *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno*, the association that comprised many of the most eminent artists of the Florentine Renaissance.⁵ In order to clarify the concepts we will be talking about, we have to say a word or two about 'language issues'. In Medieval Italy, the craft associations, or guilds, were called *arti* (plural of *arte*). But, *arte* is also the word used for the visual arts. Here we shall be discussing the professional associations of members of the *arti* – craft guilds. So we have to make a clear distinction between *arte* in the sense of the guild and *arte*, the group of disciplines that depict reality. For greater clarity we shall use the Italian word *arte* (plural *arti*) in reference to the professional associations whose activities fell within the realm of producing art.

In Medieval Florence, the association of those who produced art was the *Compagnia del Glorioso Messer Santo Luca Evangelista*. To explain the history of this fraternity, we have to start from its name. Luke, the author of the eponymous Gospel, was clearly identified as a physician by Paul of Tarsus⁶ as well as in the in the so-called *Anti-Marcionite Prologue* (second century) and the *Canon Muratori* of the Bible. A Byzantine tradition dating from the period of the first iconoclastic controversy said that the Evangelist was

5. In this regard, see also: Francesco SALVESTRINI, "Associazionismo e devozione nella Compagnia di San Luca (1340 ca.-1563)", *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno. Studi, fonti e interpretazioni di 450 anni di Storia*, Bert W. MEIJER, Luigi ZANGHERI (eds.), Olschki, Florence, 2015, vol. 1, p. 3-17.

6. *Colosenses*, 4, 14.



also a painter, and attributed the first portrait of the Virgin Mary to his hand. This legend may have been based on the fact that the Gospel of Luke was considered the most detailed of the four and able to fill the gaps in the other synoptic Gospels concerning the early years of Jesus' life and the role His mother played. There is also a similarly accurate description in the Acts of the Apostles, also written by Luke.⁷ Furthermore his presumed work as a physician implied knowledge of physiology, botany and natural sciences that were all compatible with the ability to prepare, mix and apply pigments.⁸

In many of the Italian communes, especially in the thirteenth century, painters considered Luke as their patron, and confraternities named for him were founded in Perugia (1286) and Venice (1290). In Florence, the saint's cult began gaining strength around the first twenty years of the fourteenth century, when the icon of the Madonna of Impruneta, housed in a famous Marian sanctuary just outside the city, was attributed to his hand. The Florentine Compagnia di San Luca was established according to the model of the above lay confraternities that brought together the faithful for religious devotions and to promote mutual aid. However, the association was not created –as was the usual practice– with the support of an existing ecclesiastical organization: it sprang from the bosom of a craft guild.⁹

As several studies by Antonio Ivan Pini, Donata Degrassi and Franco Franceschi have shown, in Late-Medieval Italy, the craft guilds did not have only financial and professional aims. Their role, at least in the beginning, was to promote solidarity and mutual assistance among their members and to support religious celebrations.¹⁰ However, as noted by some scholars, it was precisely during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that this role began to diminish, and although it was never formally abolished, the change did work to the advantage of the truly institutional activities. Mutual aid and

7. Clemens M. HENZE, *Lukas, der Muttergottesmaler. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis des christlichen Orients*, Bibliotheca Alfonsiana, Leuven, 1948; Hans BELTING, *Il culto delle immagini. Storia dell'icona dall'età imperale al tardo Medioevo*, Carocci, Rome, 2001, p. 76; Bruno MAGGIONI, "Luca evangelista", *Il grande libro dei Santi. Dizionario enciclopedico*, Claudio LEONARDI, Andrea RICCARDI, Gabriella ZARRI (eds.), San Paolo, Rome, 1998, vol. 2, p. 1225; Michele BACCI, "San Luca: il pittore dei pittori", *Artifex bonus-Il mondo dell'artista medievale*, Enrico CASTELNUOVO (ed.), Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2004, p. 3-11.

8. See: Catherine KING, "National Gallery 3902 and the Theme of Luke the Evangelist as artist and physician", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 48/2 (Bielefeld, 1985), p. 249-255, especially p. 251-252; Hans BELTING, *Il culto delle immagini...*, p. 83-84; Michele BACCI, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa, 1998, p. 92-93; Francesco SALVESTRINI, "Associazionismo...", vol. 1, p. 3.

9. There are similar examples in: Jennifer FISK RONDEAU, "Homosexuality and civic (dis)order in Late Medieval Italian confraternities", *The Politics of Ritual Kinship. Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, Nicholas TERPSTRA (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2000, p. 45-46.

10. Andrea CORSINI, "L'assistenza ospitaliera e le antiche Corporazioni d'arti e mestieri", *Atti del V Congresso Nazionale di Medicina del Lavoro*, Martini, Prato-Florence, 1922, p. 131-143; Antonio I. PINI, *Città, comuni e corporazioni nel medioevo italiano*, Clueb, Bologna, 1986, p. 158-159 and 264; Claudio BERNARDI, "I paratici in processione", *Le Corporazioni milanesi e Sant'Ambrogio nel Medioevo*, Annamaria AMBROSIONI (ed.), Pizzi, Milan-Bergamo, 1997, p. 53-56; Donata DEGRASSI, *Leconomia artigiana nell'Italia medievale*, Carocci, Rome, 1998, p. 143-148; Franco FRANCESCHI, "Ritualità e devozione nel mondo delle arti (secoli XIV-XV). Prime considerazioni", *Annali Aretini*, 13 (Arezzo, 2005), p. 79-91.

the religious guidance for the lay members became the confraternities' prerogatives.¹¹ On the other hand, it was a fact that for those workers who could not count on guilds, material and spiritual aid was guaranteed by the lay organizations as –just to give one example– in the case of the glassmakers in the rural community of Gambassi in Valdelsa (Central Tuscany), whose organizational structure and religious character contributed to the birth of the first Gesuati brotherhood established by Giovanni Colombini of Siena.¹²

Giorgio Vasari was the first to speak of the history of the Compagnia di San Luca. In his *Life of the Painter Jacopo Di Casentino* (1568, Giuntina edition) he wrote:

In the year 1350, there was founded the Company and Confraternity of Painters; for the masters who were then living, both those of the old Greek manner and those of the new manner of Cimabue, being a great number, and reflecting that the arts of design had had their new birth in Tuscany nay rather, in Florence itself created the said Company under the name and protection of S. Luke the Evangelist, both in order to render praise and thanks to God in its oratory, and also to come together sometimes and to give succour, in spiritual matters as well as in temporal, to anyone who on occasion might have need of it; which custom is also in use among many Guilds in Florence, but was much more so in ancient times.¹³

Vasari, who wrote biographies at a time when artists had acquired considerable professional and cultural self-perception, had trouble distinguishing the difference between a lay fraternity and a guild (*arte*), confusing the two terms and relating the company of Saint Luke to the latter. Actually, ever since the beginning, the “painters” (*dipintori*) were a branch of the guild of Physicians and Apothecaries (*Medici e Speziali*), that was founded during the second half of the thirteenth century and around 1300 was joined by the mercers (*Merciai*). The Physicians and Apothecaries association was one of the major guilds that had been part of the ‘mother-guild’ of cloth importers and finishers, known as the *Mercatanti* or *Calimala*.¹⁴ This merger was motivated by the fact that painters worked with the same type of raw materials, that is grinding and preparing pigments.



11. Roberto GRECI, “Economia, religiosità, politica. Le solidarietà delle corporazioni medievali nell’Italia del Nord”, *Cofradías, gremios, solidaridades en la Europa Medieval*, Gobierno de Navarra, Estella, 1993, p. 82-87; Donata DEGRASSI, *L’economia artigiana...*, p. 145; Christopher F. BLACK, “The Development...”, p. 25; and Franco FRANCESCHI, “Ritualità...”, p. 80-82 are less likely to accept this kind of evolution.

12. See: Oretta MUZZI, “La condizione sociale ed economica dei vetrai nel tardo medioevo: l’esempio dei ‘bicchierai’ di Gambassi”, *Archeologia e storia della produzione del vetro preindustriale*, Marja MENDERA (ed.), All’Insegna del Giglio, Florence, 1991, p. 159-160; Isabella GAGLIARDI, Francesco SALVESTRINI, “L’insediamento dei Gesuati a Pistoia tra Medioevo e prima età moderna”, *Gli Ordini Mendicanti a Pistoia (secc. XIII-XV)*, Renzo NELLI (ed.), Società Pistoiese di Storia Patria, Pistoia, 2001, p. 181-182. See also: Charles M. DE LA RONCIÈRE, “La place des confréries dans l’encadrement religieux du contado florentin: l’exemple de la Val d’Elsa”, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 85/1 (Rome, 1973), p. 31-77.

13. The English translation of Vasari is from Giorgio VASARI, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1568), Gaston de C. DE VERE (ed.), Warner, London, 1912-1914, with some modifications and corrections by the author of the present paper.

14. See: Katharine PARK, *Doctors and Medicine in Early Renaissance Florence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985, p. 15-17.

Similarly, sculptors belonged to the guild of Master Stonemasons and Woodcarvers (*Maestri di Pietra e Legname*).¹⁵

In 1315, the guild of Physicians issued some *provisiones, statuta et ordinamenta* concerning dealers of metals, glues, white lead and dyes (*azzurrunum, cinabrum et alios colores*), who comprised a *membrum*, or group, within the association and which, to a certain extent, was the precursor to the *Compagnia dei pittori* that would be established a few decades later.¹⁶

From the moment that the Compagnia di San Luca was founded with clearly stated goals of providing mutual aid –in the broad sense– and religious support, and since, as we shall see, the members were not only painters (*dipintori*), but also others who belonged to the *arte* of Physicians and Apothecaries as well as some who did not belong to the guild itself,¹⁷ setting aside formal statements of principle, the thought occurs that the fraternity was not really established to create a “conceptual” distinction between the painters and other members (as we have been led to believe by Vasari). Rather, it was prompted by the no less important need to promote a cult, that of Luke, the doctor and painter,¹⁸ and at the same time support solidarity and mutual aid both among those

15. Some of them joined the Compagnia di San Paolo. See: Rufus G. MATHER, “Documents Mostly New Relating to Florentine Painters and Sculptors of the Fifteenth Century”, *The Art Bulletin*, 30/1 (New York, 1948), p. 20. See also the 18th-century manuscript: Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia dell'Accademia del Disegno della Città di Firenze dalla sua fondazione fino all'anno 1739*, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, published as: Girolamo TICCIATI, “Storia della Accademia del Disegno”, *Spigolatura michelangeloese*, ed. Pietro FANFANI, Bracali, Pistoia, 1876, p. 207; Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori a Firenze nell'arte dei Medici Speciali e Merciai”, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 78/2 (Florence, 1920), p. 8-9, 16 and 35-36; Giorgio PIRANESI, *Memoria per la rivendicazione dei diritti spettanti alla R. Accademia delle Arti del Disegno di Firenze*, Memori, Florence, 1926, p. 5; Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe alle accademie. Realtà sociale e teorie artistiche a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1980, p. 18; Luigi ZANGHERI, “L'Accademia del Disegno e la sua museologia”, *Giorgio Vasari e la nascita del museo*, Maia WELLINGTON GAHTAN (ed.), Edifir, Florence, 2012, p. 150; Enrico SARTONI, “La ‘Compagnia del Glorioso messer Santo Luca Evangelista’ dal Trecento al 1563”, *Da Michelangelo alla Contemporaneità. Storia di un primato mondiale. 450 anni dell'Accademia delle Arti del Disegno*, ENRICO SARTONI (ed.), Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, Florence, 2014, p. 22. On the guild organization, see: Saverio LA SORSA, *L'arte dei Medici, Speciali e Merciai a Firenze e negli altri Comuni italiani*, Conte, Molfetta, 1907, p. III-IV. What could have prompted the painters and other artisans to establish a fraternity since they were already part of one of the city's main guilds is a question asked by nearly everyone who has studied institution's history, and they have offered more or less plausible, and sometimes even highly imaginative answers; see, for example: Dario LUPI, *La Compagnia di San Luca. Discorso tenuto nel giorno 17 ottobre 1926 inaugurandosi la nuova sede della R. Accademia delle Arti del Disegno di Firenze*, Memori, Florence, 1926, p. 3-5.

16. This document was incorrectly called “Statuto dei pittori” by Ciasca, who republished it in partial form in Raffaele CIASCA (ed.), *Statuti dell'arte dei Medici e Speciali*, Vallecchi, Florence, 1922, p. 77-84. The first edition is in: Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 19 and 44-50.

17. See: Giorgio PIRANESI, *Memoria...*, p. 4; Camillo I. CAVALLUCCI, *Notizie storiche intorno alla R. Accademia delle Arti del Disegno in Firenze*, Tipografia del Vocabolario, Florence, 1873, p. 8. On the social structure of the confraternities, see: Ronald F.E. WEISSMAN, “Cults and Contexts: In Search of the Renaissance Confraternity”, *Crossing the Boundaries. Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Konrad EISENBICHLER (ed.), Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 209.

18. On the factors that led to the guilds' choice of their patrons and on Orsanmichele, the temple of the Florentine guilds, see: Anna BENVENUTI, “Tra i santi delle corporazioni: San Pietro e i Beccai”, *Il restauro della statua di San Pietro Patrono dell'Arte dei Beccai*, Anna Maria GIUSTI, Luciano BELLOSI, Anna BENVENUTI (eds.), Parenti, Florence, 1993, p. 41-75; Anna BENVENUTI, “Il sovramondo delle arti fiorentine. Tra i santi delle corporazioni”, *Arti fiorentine. La grande storia dell'artigianato. I. Il Medioevo*, Giunti, Florence, 1998, p. 103-127; Franco FRANCESCHI, “Ritualità...”, p. 88-89.

who practised his presumed profession as well as others tied to him through personal bonds or family and patronage connections.¹⁹

In any event, the earliest regulations of the Compagnia which still survive today, written in Italian *volgare* in 1386 (18 October, the feast of Saint Luke),²⁰ then amended in 1395, and reedited around the 1440s by “twenty-five wise and reasonable men of the guild of painters of that company”, first referred to “those of the guild of painters of Florence”, that gathered in devotion to the Evangelist, *a sua laude et a sua reverentia*, to pray for the salvation of the members’ souls.²¹

In addition to generating confusion concerning the nature of the association, Vasari also created uncertainties regarding the chronology of its foundation. Indeed, if in the Life of Jacopo di Casentino he said that the association was established in 1350, in the Life of Fra Giovanni Agnolo Montorsoli he wrote that it “was created in the time of Giotto”.²²

The fourteenth-century regulations stated that the confraternity was “founded and started in the year of Our Lord [lacuna] XXXVIII on the 17th day of October, the eve [of the feast] of our glorious ad(vocate) Saint Luke the Evangelist”. When he published the document, Gaye offered a plausible transcription “(MCCC)XXXVIII”,²³ in an attempt to complete what a suspicious ink stain rendered –still renders– completely indecipherable. Balducci spoke of 1349, as did Ticiati some years later.²⁴ This may have been an incorrect reading of the date in the regulations. However, it is more likely that the tradition is based on the fact that the earliest mention of *pintori* in one of the *Medici e*

19. It is important to bear in mind the weight of family ties in the makeup of the guilds. See: Donata DEGRASSI, *L'economia artigiana...*, p. 43-48 and 138-139. A highly theoretical matrix is suggested by the unsuccessful attempt, in 1378, to add the word *dipintori* to the guild's title. See: Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 62-63.

20. The no-longer visible seal on the document had the winged ox, the symbol of Saint Luke, that was the association's emblem until 1571 or 1594 (ASF, AD, I, ff. 1r-2v). On the change of insignias see: Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 272-274; Zygmunt WĄŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia medicea del disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento. Idea e istituzione*, Olschki, Florence, 1987, vol. 1, p. 169. On the use of the Italian *volgare* in the city's regulations see: Francesco SALVESTRINI, Lorenzo TANZINI, “La lingua della legge. I volgarizzamenti di statuti nell'Italia del Basso Medioevo”, *Comunicare nel medioevo. La conoscenza e l'uso delle lingue nei secoli XII-XV*, Isa LORI SANFILIPPO, Giuliano PINTO (eds.), Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, Rome, 2015, p. 250-301.

21. ASF, AD, I, f. 1r and 2r. The text was first published by: Filippo BALDINUCCI, *Notizie dei Professori del Disegno da Cimabue in qua*, Battelli, Florence, 1845, vol. 1, p. 239-244; then by: Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 197-203; Giovanni GAYE, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, Bottega d'Erasmus, Turin, 1968, vol. 2, p. 32-36 (with the bishop's approval dated 1404); Luigi MANZONI, *Statuti e matricole dell'arte dei Pittori delle città di Firenze, Perugia, Siena nei testi originali del secolo XIV*, Loescher, Rome, 1904, p. 117-120; Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 51-54; Ted REYNOLDS, *The Accademia del Disegno in Florence. Its formation and early years*, Columbia University, PhD dissertation, New York, 1974, p. 213-218; Zygmunt WĄŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 417-420. See: also Luigi BIAGI, *L'Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze*, Le Monnier, Florence, 1941, p. 7. On the lay fraternities' statutes and their publication see: Andrea ZORZI, “Le fonti normative a Firenze nel tardo Medioevo. Un bilancio delle edizioni e degli studi”, *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina editi a cura di Romolo Caggese*, Giuliano PINTO, Francesco SALVESTRINI, Andrea ZORZI (eds.), Olschki, Florence, 1999, vol. 1, p. XCII-XCIV; Francesco SALVESTRINI, “Erudizione storica e tradizioni normative. La stampa degli Statuti medievali toscani tra età moderna e contemporanea”, *Studi in onore di Sergio Gensini*, Franco CIAPPI, Oretta MUZZI (eds.), Polistampa, Florence, 2013, p. 237-278.

22. See: Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 165.

23. Giovanni GAYE, *Carteggio inedito...*, vol. 2, p. 32; Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 198 on the other hand, suggested: “[...] XXXVLIHJ”; Zygmunt WĄŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 418: “[MCCC]XXXVIII”.

24. Filippo BALDINUCCI, *Notizie...*, vol. 1, p. 237-239; Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 193-197.



Speziali guild's rules is contained in the statute dating from that year.²⁵ The brief historical digression on the origins of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, written as an introduction to its earlier *Capitoli et Ordini* when it was founded in 1563, confirmed that the Compagnia, which was considered its direct precursor, was established in 1339.²⁶ Finally, we find the date 18 October 1300 in one of the Accademia documents (*Debitori, Creditori e Ricordi* for the years 1472-1520, also called the *Libro Rosso*, or "Red Book").²⁷ However, that date seems quite vague and symbolic, thus perhaps only referring to the fact that the fraternity originated in the fourteenth century.²⁸ Although the oldest existing version of the rules is a 1386 copy, the names of the councillors include Bernardo Daddi, who passed away in 1348, and Jacopo di Casentino, who probably died the following year. This allows us to assume that the original was written when the confraternity was founded and that is around the third decade of the fourteenth century.

The Compagnia's regulations open with the invocation of God the Father and the Virgin Mary, followed by the protectors of Florence: Saints John the Baptist, Zenobius and Reparata, and then Luke the Evangelist, "father and source and basis of this company and fraternity". This hierarchical sequence suggests that the reference to Saint Luke was fundamental, but not quite as important as the references to city's protectors. The primary obligations of the members did not include professional duties, but only –and not very strict– reminders to pray and lead a proper religious life, such as reciting the *Lord's Prayer* (every day or "when you will remember") and the *Hail Mary*, as well as confession at least once a year.²⁹ The rules concerning the painters' craft and disputes that could arise among the members continued to be governed by the statutes of the guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, as can be seen in the 1349 text as well as in amendments dating to 1355, 1356, 1406, 1470 and 1506.³⁰ These articles contain some

25. Carlo FIORILLI, "I dipintori...", p. 19-20 and 55-59; Carlo FIORILLI, *Statuti dell'arte dei Medici e Speziali...*, p. 143 (1349, rub. XXXV); Zygmunt WĄZBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 413.

26. BNCF, II.I.399, f. 1r-8r. The passage was published in: Carlo FIORILLI, "I dipintori...", p. 71-74; Zygmunt WĄZBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 423-426, with the incorrect date of 1239; and in: Luigi ZANGHERI, Francesco ADORNO (eds.), *Gli statuti dell'Accademia del Disegno*, Olschki, Florence, 1998, p. 3-6.

27. ASF, AD, 2, f. 1r not numbered. See: "Indice dei Registri e Filze attenenti alla cessata Accademia del Disegno, che si consegnano dal R. Istituto di Belle Arti al R. Archivio di Stato in Firenze", *Atti del Collegio dei Professori della R. Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, Anno 1891*, Civelli, Florence, 1892, p. 67; Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 206-207; Piero PACINI, *Le sedi dell'Accademia del Disegno al "Cestello" e alla "Crocetta"*, Olschki, Florence, 2001, p. 5, 63 and 87.

28. Zygmunt WĄZBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 417-418; Anna PADOA RIZZO, "Santa Maria Nuova e Sant'Egidio: due chiese per un Ospedale e gli 'ornamenti' dei loro altari maggiori", *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDICTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 127 and 140; Giovanni LEONCINI, "L'Arcispedale di Santa Maria Nuova e la sua storia architettonica", *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDICTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 110, suggests 1328 as a possible date.

29. Camillo I. CAVALLUCCI, *Notizie...*, p. 7, had already noted that *i Capitoli della Compagnia [...] si aggirano soltanto sulle pratiche religiose [...] nè in essi si parla mai di dover confabulare sulle cose dell'arte* ("the Chapters of the Company [...] only concern religious matters [...] they never mention the need to discuss the craft").

30. *A che sieno tenuti e dipintori; Delle questioni che vengono per la dipintura de' dipintori; Della stima delle dipinture, e contro il brigare per togliere lavori ad altri pittori; Del non dipingere immagini sacre dove si fanno brutture. Statuti dell'arte dei Medici e Speziali*, Camera di Commercio e Industria di Firenze, Florence, 1922, 1349, rub. LXXVIII,



interesting points. First of all, they make it relatively clear that, in the context of the guild (*arte*) painters of images were still ranked with those whom we would call house-painters or decorators today.³¹ Then, there was the matter of those who practiced “the craft of painting and drawing” and usurped the clients of others. They also state that the creation of sacred images was contingent upon the authorization from the consuls of the guild, who had to guarantee that the images were duly respected.³² It is also quite clear that the guild documents only began to consider painters specifically from the 1340s on, that is after the founding of the Compagnia di San Luca. In fact, they are first mentioned among the guild members with a specific designation (*pictores*) only starting in 1343, as shown in a list of members for the years 1320-1345.³³ Therefore, it would seem that the powerful association of Physicians and Apothecaries was only willing to grant more specific space –and mention– to these workers after an independent initiative led to the establishment of their religious brotherhood.

On the other hand, it is likely that the dedication of the Compagnia to the saint acquired a meaning that also pointed towards an agreement with the heads of the *arte*, since Luke, physician and painter, could stand alongside of all the protectors –God, the Virgin, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Barnabas, Zenobius, Anne and Reparata– whom the guild already considered, or would do so later, the supreme advocates of the professions it embraced.³⁴

Vasari’s uncertainties (Life of Jacopo di Casentino) are also evident in his descriptions of how the confraternity was organized. He speaks of six captains (a reference to the consuls of the guild), whereas the fourteenth-century regulations stated that the Compagnia was governed by four captains elected by the members; then the captains appointed four councillors – one each, and two treasurers. Although the captains and treasurers had to be practitioners of the arts of drawing, this obligation did not extend to the councillors. However, when the regulations were drafted, even the names of the councillors were associated with the title *dipintore*. As to the treasurers, the regulations clearly stated that they had to answer to the new captains who were elected from time to time.



LXXX, p. 191-192; 1355, rub. III, p. 247; 1356, rub. VIII, p. 253; Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 31, 55-59 and 67-71; the reforms of 1470 and 1506 are in Zygmunt WAŻBIŃSKI, *L’Accademia...*, vol. 2, p. 415-417). See also: Giovanni GAYE, *Carteggio inedito...*, vol. 2, p. 39-43.

31. Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 8.

32. As revealed by the attention to the quality of painted horse armour and covers, and the ban on making images of *nostro Signore o di nostra Donna o di alcuno santo o santa in alcuno luogo [...] ove sia usitato pisciare o fare altra bruttura* (“Our Lord or Our Lady or of any saint in any place [...] where [people] urinate or perform other unseemly acts”). Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 23 and 33-34.

33. Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 8.

34. See: *Statuti dell’arte dei Medici e Speciali...*, p. 93. See also: Zygmunt WAŻBIŃSKI, *L’Accademia...*, vol. 1, p. 129-140; Jennifer FISK RONDEAU, “Homosexuality...”, p. 34-35; Ellen SCHIFERL, “Italian Confraternity Art Contracts: Group Consciousness and Corporate Patronage, 1400-1525”, *Crossing the Boundaries. Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, Konrad EISENBICHLER (ed.), Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, 1991, p. 123-125.

The captains held office for six months, with elections in April and October, and no one could be re-elected for two consecutive terms.³⁵ This system, borrowed from the communal government, was based mainly on the rules of the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, whose earliest statue was dated 1314.³⁶ New members could join the Compagnia on the first Sunday of each month; registration was open to both men and women (even though there are no women's names on the lists of members). Men paid dues of three *soldi*, and the women two.³⁷ In this regard, Vasari wrote (Life of Jacopo di Casentino):

The said Company being created in this way, at the request of the captains and of the others Jacopo di Casentino painted the panel of their chapel, making therein a S. Luke who is portraying Our Lady in a picture, and on one side of the predella the men of the Company, and on the other all the women, kneeling;

an iconographic theme –Saint Luke painting the Virgin's portrait– that would be highly popular in Renaissance painting.³⁸

The fraternity's organizational structure changed over the years. As the 1395 amendments to regulations show, the captains, along with twenty-four wise men, decreed that a ceremony was to be celebrated on 12 July, honouring Mary Magdalen, with masses for all the dead, especially the souls of the Compagnia's members in Purgatory.³⁹ This was decided to emphasize the bond with the doctrines on Purgatory that were being disseminated at the time by the Mendicant Orders, which still had considerable influence in the confraternal milieu.⁴⁰ In 1406, the guild consuls, who had clearly accepted and embraced the fraternity, ("considering that for some time how, to honour and venerate [...] the Blessed Evangelist Luke, for the school of painters of the city of Florence, a

35. See: Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 163. On the organizational structure of the Florentine fraternities, see: John HENDERSON, *Piety...*, p. 65-71.

36. Ferdinando GABOTTO, "Statuti dell'arte dei medici, speciali e merciai (1313-1316)", *Magistri salernitani nondum editi*, Piero GIACOSA (ed.), Bocca, Turin, 1901, p. 620-683; Saverio LA SORSA, *L'arte...*, p. XVIII-XXVII, 1-62; *Statuti dell'arte dei Medici e Speciali...*, p. 7-74. See also: Carlo FIORILLI, "I dipintori...", p. 10-11 and 42-44.

37. Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 164; Enrico SARTONI, "La 'Compagnia...'", p. 23. On the role of women in the confraternal organizations see: Giancarlo ANGELOZZI, *Le confraternite...*, p. 52-53; and the studies mentioned in: Christopher F. BLACK, "The Development...", p. 15.

38. See: Pietro CANNATA, "Luca, evangelista, iconografia", *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma, 1967, vol. 8, col. 201-222; Dorothee KLEIN, *St. Lukas als Maler der Maria. Ikonographie der Lukas-Madonna*, Grote, Berlin, 1933; Gisela KRAUT, *Lukas malt die Madonna. Zeugnisse zum künstlerischen Selbstverständnis in der Malerei*, Werner, Worms, 1986; Zygmunt WĄŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 1, p. 130; Clifton OLDS, "Jan Gossaert's 'St. Luke Painting the Virgin': A Renaissance Artist's Cultural Literacy", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 24/1 (Illinois, 1990), p. 89-96. The painting Vasari mentions should be attributed to Niccolò Gerini and not to Jacopo di Casentino; see: Anna PADOA RIZZO, "Santa Maria...", p. 127 and 128.

39. ASF, AD, I, f. 2r-2v.

40. See: Pierantonio PIATTI, *Miserere turbae tam miserae. Purgatorio e mitopoiesi mendicante: agostiniani e carmelitani, garanti del suffragio*, in *Escatologia, Aldilà, Purgatorio, Culto dei morti. L'esperienza di San Nicola da Tolentino. Contesto culturale, evoluzione teologica, testimonianze agiografiche e prassi pastorale*, Biblioteca Egidiana, Tolentino, 2006, p. 185-195.

company and congregation had been established and ordered”), required that all the members of the guild participate in the meetings of the *societas* of the painters.⁴¹ This leads us to believe that, by then, the guild organization had chosen the Compagnia di San Luca as the member, or arm, to be in charge of religious celebrations. Many years later, in 1560, the grand duke granted the painters the privilege of having one of their lieutenants join three councillors in a magistracy that could judge civil suits involving the persons who, at that time, were still registered members of the respective guilds.⁴²

The fraternity of Florentine painters was not unique. Between the Middle Ages and the modern era similar associations were established in Prague (1348), Siena (1356), Antwerp (1382), Bruges (1453), Rome (1477), Amsterdam (1579) and other cities in the Netherlands.⁴³

As we have mentioned, many Florentine artists belonged to the Compagnia di San Luca. They were painters and, as Balducci was the first to point out, wood and metal “masters” as well as other craftsmen.⁴⁴ The membership can be gleaned from the regulations copied in 1386 (the names of the captains, councillors and treasurers) and from the list of members attached to that document. The list was started when the regulations were drafted and was kept up to date until the early years of sixteenth century. The year the members joined the organization was entered, albeit not always correctly, next to their names.⁴⁵ For a later period, further information about the members’ identities can be found in the lists of debtors and creditors and, in particular, in the *Libro Rosso* for the years 1472-1520.⁴⁶ In some cases, the fourteenth to sixteenth century lists of members

41. Carlo FIORILLI, “I dipintori...”, p. 63-65; *Statuti dell’arte dei Medici e Speciali*..., p. 392-394 (1406, rub. I). See also: Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe*..., p. 164.

42. Girolamo TICCIAI, *Notizia*..., p. 234-235; Luigi BIAGI, *L’Accademia*..., p. 10.

43. John M. MONTIAS, “The guild of St. Luke in 17th-century Delft and the economic status of artists and artisans”, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 9/2 (Utrecht, 1977), p. 93-105; Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe*..., p. 183-185; Michele BACCI, *Il pennello*..., p. 322; Maarten PRAK, “Guilds and the Development of the art market during the Dutch Golden Age”, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 30/3-4 (Utrecht, 2003), p. 241-242; Wayne FRANITS, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting. Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2004; Clare FORD-WILLE, “Antwerp, guild of S. Luke”, *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, Hugh BRIGSTOCKE (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662037.001.0001/acref-9780198662037-e-79?rsk=4pmQ3N&result=69>>. Read: 5 May 2016; Peter STABEL, “Organisation corporative et production d’oeuvres d’art à Bruges à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début des Temps modernes”, *Le Moyen Âge. Revue d’histoire et de philologie*, 113/1 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2007), p. 91-134.

44. In 1427, the Florentine Cadastre listed twenty-three workshops of painters (*dipintori*) in the city.

45. Some members’ names remained on the lists even after they had died. See: ASF, AD, I, ff. 3r-19r. and ASF, AD, 3. The list was partially published for the first time by the canon Domenico Moreni in “Illustrazione storico critica di una rarissima medaglia rappresentante Bindo Altoviti opera di Michelangelo Buonarroti”, his transcription was used by: Giovanni GAYE, *Carteggio inedito*..., vol. 2, p. 36-38. The complete list is in: Giovanni MASSELLI, “Ascritti della Compagnia dei Pittori Fiorentini sotto il titolo di s. Luca”, *Memorie originali italiane risguardanti le belle arti*, Michelangelo GUALANDI (ed.), Sassi, Bologna, 1845, vol. 6, p. 176-190. There is a different listing in: Luigi MANZONI, *Statuti*..., p. 123-131 (on the features of the list, see: Luigi MANZONI, *Statuti*..., p. 134 and 136). On the importance of the lists of members as well as the prudence with which they should be studied, see: Lorenza PAMATO, “Le confraternite...”, p. 26-27.

46. ASF, AD, 2. A late nineteenth-century handwritten summary of the names on this list is in: ASF, Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, *Acquisti e doni*, I. On the membership of the Compagnia from 1535 to 1556, see the list in: Camillo I. CAVALLUCCI, *Notizie*..., p. 15-18. For other documentary information: Rufus G. MATHER, “Documents...”, p. 20-65.



included the occupation of each brother. Among various trades we find: gold-beaters and goldsmiths, miniaturists, carvers, cloth weavers, saddlers, girdle makers, woodworkers, tailors, silk weavers, smiths, barbers, apothecaries, wine-sellers, bakers, notaries, more than one “painter of serge cloths” (*dipintore di sargie*), one “cheese seller” (*formagliaio*), one crier, one “trumpeter” (*trombadore*); as well as a priest from the Church of Santa Caterina, a certain Agnolo di Lapo “who makes glass” (*che fa e’ vetri*) (1350), Andrea di Domenico ‘trunk maker’ (*forçerinaio*) (1371), and some foreign craftsmen such as the German Angiolino di Niccolò (1374).⁴⁷

The names of famous painters include: Iacopo di Casentino, Alesso Baldovinetti, Bernardo Daddi, Buffalmacco (Bonamico di Martino Cristofani), Taddeo Gaddi, Gherardo di Jacopo Starna (called Starnina), Cenni di Francesco, Pagolo di Dino (Paolo Uccello), Benozzo Gozzoli, Neri di Bicci di Lorenzo, Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci; *Michelagnolo di Lodovico Buonaruoti ischultore*; and those who joined in the sixteenth century: Niccolò di Raffaello sculptor *alias Tribolo*, Andrea del Sarto, Iacopo di Bartolomeo Pontormo, Giovannangelo Montorsoli, Agnolo Bronzino. The councillors from the period of the earliest regulations included Segna da Rignano and, as mentioned above, Bernardo Daddi and Jacopo di Casentino.

In the account books covering the years from 1472 to 1520, the members who had outstanding debts included: Anton Francesco di Giovanni called Scheggia, Andrea Verrocchio, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea di Marco della Robbia, Neri di Bicci di Lorenzo, Piero del Massaio, Antonio di Iacopo called Pollaiuolo, Alessandro di Mariano called Botticello, Domenico di Michelino, Domenico di Tommaso called Ghirlandaio, Filippo di frate Filippo (Filippino) Lippi of Prato, Pietro di Cristofano called Perugino, Iacopo di Benintendi called Ceraiolo, Luca di Simone della Robbia, Leonardo da Vinci (1472), Vittorio di Lorenzo di Cione Ghiberti carver, Cosimo di Lorenzo Rosselli and other members of his family, Lorenzo di Andrea di Credi, Raffaello di Bartolommeo del Garbo.

As mentioned in the guild’s statutes, in the 1386 regulations of the Compagnia, in the statute of the Accademia drafted in 1563, and by Vasari (Life of Jacopo di Casentino), the Compagnia was originally headquartered in the main chapel of the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova. According to some authors it was a church inside the hospital,⁴⁸ that was remodelled somewhat after 1328-1330, and where the Saint Luke altarpiece by Niccolò Gerini was placed in 1388. The chapel was dedicated to the Evangelist in the 1395 amendment to the confraternity’s regulations.⁴⁹ Folco di Ricovero Portinari’s family was most likely involved in selecting the location. Folco was the father of Dante’s Beatrice, a member of the first Florentine Priory of Guilds (1285 and 1287), and founder (1288)

47. On foreign members of the “new” Accademia, see: Bert W. MEIJER, “I primi accademici ‘forestieri d’ogni nazione’”, *Atti della Accademia delle arti del disegno, 2009-2011*, Olschki, Florence, 2012, p. 113-134.

48. Laura CIUCCETTI, “Lo Spedale di Santa Maria Nuova e la sua evoluzione attraverso settecento anni di storia”, *Il patrimonio artistico dell’ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDETTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 24-25; Piero PACINI, *Le sedi...*, p. 5; Giovanni LEONCINI, “L’Arcispedale...”, p. 110; Anna PADOA RIZZO, “Santa Maria...”, p. 127.

49. Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 281-282.

of Santa Maria Nuova.⁵⁰ His descendants were patrons of the hospital, and along with caring for the sick and helping the needy they pursued a form of social 'self-promotion' that materialized to a great extent in commissioning works of art. Therefore, I believe it likely that it was the Portinari who invited the members of the company to meet in the hospital church just as Vasari had written in his *Life of Jacopo di Casentino*.⁵¹

The ties between the Compagnia and the Portinari must have become particularly intense during the first half of the fifteenth century, when part of the family went through a period of relative economical and financial crises, with the failure of some banks and the removal of its most prominent members from the city's public life.⁵² The branch most severely stricken by the financial problems was headed by Folco di Adovardo's, to which Tommaso Portinari belonged, and ended up by being very dependent on the Medici's favour. It was Lorenzo the Magnificent who implemented the process of gradually removing him from government positions and from the hospital's administration.⁵³ Even though Tommaso clashed with Lorenzo over his management of the Bruges branch of the Medici bank, he wanted to return to Florence from a position of strength, and to assert his rights over Santa Maria Nuova, that were not acknowledged because he came from an illegitimate branch of the family. Notwithstanding this situation, he always claimed, and maintained, the right to authorize and commission works of art for the hospital. This privilege did help his image locally –for example in 1483, when the Portinari Triptych, which includes his portrait, arrived in the city. Hugo van der Goes, who created the painting for the church of Sant'Egidio (which was connected to the hospital), probably began working on it in 1478.⁵⁴

Thus, the Compagnia offered an indirect but important outlet for the philanthropic activities of the Portinari family that exerted significant influence on the fraternity and encouraged its move to a more appropriate setting within the hospital (1503).⁵⁵

50. See: Arnaldo D'ADDARIO, "Portinari, Folco", *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, Umberto BOSCO (ed.), Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome, 1973, vol. 4, p. 608-609; Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 13-15; Eleonora PLEBANI, "I Portinari e i Medici: linee di sviluppo di un rapporto di affari", *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDICTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 119.

51. Anna PADOA RIZZO, "Santa Maria...", p. 128-129.

52. See: Antonio COCCHI, *Relazione dello Spedale di Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze*, Maria MANNELLI GOGGIOLI (ed.), Le Lettere, Florence, 2000, p. 123-124; Guido PAMPALONI (ed.), *Il palazzo Portinari-Salviati oggi proprietà della Banca Toscana*, Le Monnier, Florence, 1960, p. 11-26; Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 17-18 and 21; Eleonora PLEBANI, "I Portinari...", p. 120-123. See also: Angela RENZI, "Interventi architettonici del primo Quattrocento nello Spedale di Santa Maria Nuova", *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDICTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 63-77; Giovanni LEONCINI, "L'Arcispedale...", p. 111-112 and 114; Maria MAUGERI, "Un'apertura per lo studio della scultura funeraria di Santa Maria Nuova", *Il patrimonio artistico dell'ospedale Santa Maria Nuova di Firenze. Episodi di committenza*, Cristina DE BENEDICTIS (ed.), Polistampa, Florence, 2002, p. 191.

53. Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 16-17, 19 and 22.

54. Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 23; Eleonora PLEBANI, "I Portinari...", p. 121-122; Anna PADOA RIZZO, "Santa Maria...", p. 137-139.

55. See: Giorgio PIRANESI, *Memoria...*, p. 4; Piero PACINI, *Le sedi...*, p. 6 and 87-88; Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 24-25.



The ties between the Compagnia and the Church of Santa Maria Nuova remained very close even after the members began meeting elsewhere. In fact, one section of the regulations written for the nascent Accademia (1563) suggested that the members process to the hospital chapel on the saint's feast day.⁵⁶ The artists' presence on the hospital premises fostered contacts with the physicians. It also created opportunities for the artists to attend dissections, as we know from Leonardo da Vinci's famous works, and it played a fundamental role in the establishment of artistic culture in Humanistic and Renaissance Florence.⁵⁷

The brotherhood of Saint Luke went into decline during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and this led to its gradual transformation into the Accademia. The birth of the Accademia was the result of a unique convergence of some of the period's most illustrious artists and the Medici's desire to 'protect' the association from the influence of other Florentine families. In addition to the legacy of the original Compagnia di San Luca, the organization that was formed during the early 1560s, accepted the artists – albeit informally- who had worked in Lorenzo the Magnificent's Garden of San Marco as well as the those who had joined the Florentine philosophical and literary academy that was founded in 1540 as the Accademia degli Umidi.⁵⁸ The new organization, in which all of the earlier associations converged, was no longer a professional or craft association established for essentially devotional purposes. Rather, it was a meeting point for important artists, who were now considered intellectuals and devoted to the arts of drawing (painters, sculptors, architects).⁵⁹ The conceptual transition from the Compagnia to the Accademia is clear from Vasari's words. In his *Life of Montorsoli* he tells how, after having interred the mortal remains of Pontormo in the new chapel of Saint Luke in the Servite Church of the Santissima Annunziata (where the members of the Compagnia had been gathering for Divine Office since 1560),

The Company then dispersing, the first meeting was ordained for the next Sunday, when, besides settling the constitution of the Company, they were to make a selection of the best and create an Academy, with the assistance of which those without knowledge might learn, and those with knowledge, spurred by honourable and praiseworthy emulation, might proceed to make greater proficience.⁶⁰

56. Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 283-284; Piero PACINI, *Le sedi...*, p. 5-6; Anna PADOA RIZZO, "Santa Maria...", p. 127. On the celebrations of the feast of Saint Luke, see: Zygmunt WĄŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 1, p. 292-298.

57. Laura CIUCCETTI, "Lo Spedale...", p. 24-26.

58. On this aspect, see: Mary A. JACK, "The *Accademia del Disegno* in Late Renaissance Florence", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 7/2 (Kirksville, 1976), p. 5-7; Cristina ACIDINI LUCHINAT, "La 'santa antichità', la scuola, il giardino", *Per bellezza, per studio, per piacere*. *Lorenzo il Magnifico e gli spazi dell'arte*, Franco BORSI (ed.), Giunti, Florence, 1991, p. 158-159; Luigi ZANGHERI, "L'Accademia...", p. 147-148; Francesco SALVESTRINI, "Associazionismo...", p. 15-16.

59. As Vasari explains further on in the *Life of Montorsoli*, to be equated with the university of Pisa and the Florentine academy. Aside from obvious ideological positions, see: Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 93-94, 103, 108, 111-113 and 165-167; and mainly: Mary A. JACK, "The *Accademia...*", p. 9, 11; Karen E. BARZMAN, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State. The Discipline of Disegno*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2000, p. 23-32.

60. See: ENRICO SARTONI, "Effetto Michelangelo: trionfi e celebrazioni di una canonizzazione laica", *Intorno a Michelangelo: eredità e iconografia di un mito*, Alessandra BARONI, Enrico SARTORI (eds.), Fratemità dei Laici, Arezzo, 2014, p. 8-9.

Naturally, the new organization maintained more than a few of the previous association's characteristics and regulations that are evident in the 1563 statutes. First of all, there were the members' obligations to provide mutual aid, and their religious and sacramental duties. However, the cultural and educational aims Vasari mentioned quickly came to dominate, so that by 1562 the association was also open to artists from outside Florence; while the regulations drafted the following year limited membership in the new academy to sculptors and painters, that is those who even though they were also architects, were identified as theoreticians.⁶¹ All institutional ties with the past were broken in 1571, when the Accademia was raised to the rank of lesser magistrature, paving the way for the definitive break with the *arte* of Physicians and Apothecaries that was sanctioned in 1585.⁶²

And so, the Compagnia di San Luca ceased to exist during the reign of Cosimo I. It was replaced by an academy that was no longer tied to concepts of confraternal aid, the civic religion or the guild matrix disciplining work. The artists, who were now clearly distinguished from the artisans, also became courtiers in the service of the prince. Their association, that embodied the new era, began invoking the muses as inspiration and adopted three, exquisitely and classically-inspired wreaths as its emblem. Now it was scholarship, as in Vasari's painting of the Santissima Annunziata (*Saint Luke Painting the Virgin*), that replaced the early devotion to the Evangelist painter and the quest for protection in the shadow of his paintbrush.⁶³



61. Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 267-271; Mary A. JACK, "The Accademia...", p. 4, 12 and 16; Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 168-175; Anthony HUGHES, "An Academy for Doing'. I: The 'Accademia del Disegno', the Guilds and the Principate in Sixteenth-Century Florence", *The Oxford Art Journal*, 9/1 (Oxford, 1986), p. 3-4 and 7; Zygmunt WAŻBIŃSKI, *L'Accademia...*, vol. 1, p. 46-50 and 53-74. In this regard, see the scholarly and moralistic comments in: *Lettera di messer Bartolommeo Ammannati scultore, e architetto fiorentino, scritta agli Accademici del Disegno l'anno MDLXXXII*, Sermartelli, Florence, 1582, especially p. 9-10, filled with Counter-Reformation prudery.

62. As sanctioned by the statute drafted that year. *Gli statuti dell'Accademia del Disegno...*, p. 34-35. See also: Girolamo TICCIATI, *Notizia...*, p. 234-241; Mary A. JACK, "The Accademia...", p. 10-11, 17-18; Anthony HUGHES, "An Academy for Doing'...", p. 8-9; and the extreme positions of: Carlo FIORILLI, "I dipintori...", p. 40-42; Sergio ROSSI, *Dalle botteghe...*, p. 180-181.

63. In the 1563 statute, Saint Luke is evoked as the profession's patron, but he is equated with the Four Crowned Saints, the supreme protectors of sculptors and architects, who were already included in the new association's statutes, *Gli statuti dell'Accademia del Disegno...*, p. 8.