

 *Italian Renaissance Frames*

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



## *Italian Renaissance Frames*

☞ *Italian*



# *Renaissance Frames*

TIMOTHY J. NEWBERY • GEORGE BISACCA • LAURENCE B. KANTER

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

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To John M. Brealey  
and Paul Levi

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Cassette frame, Lombardy, late 16th century (cat. no. 48, detail)

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## FOREWORD

In his celebrated treatise on painting, *Della pittura*, published in 1436, the Italian humanist and theoretician Leon Battista Alberti described the pictorial field as “an open window through which I see what I want to paint.” Alberti’s conception of a painting as a window presumed the existence of some element, painted or carved, that delineated its edges, distinguishing the image from the physical world around it. In the case of Renaissance altarpieces, private devotional panels, portraits, and sculpted reliefs, this function was served by the frame.

Frames did not owe their invention to the Renaissance. Panel paintings of the trecento were framed with simple moldings, and Italian Gothic polyptychs were housed in elaborate constructions consisting of columns, pinnacles, finials, and other motifs borrowed from contemporary architectural vocabulary. What sets these late medieval precursors apart from their Renaissance progeny is the fact that they were, as a rule, either carved from the same piece of wood as the panels themselves or else applied to them, and thus were integral to rather than distinct from the paintings they framed. It was the great innovation of Renaissance artists to conceive of the frame as a fully independent entity.

The exhibition “Italian Renaissance Frames” features over eighty-five frames dating for the most part from the early fourteenth through the early seventeenth century. A number of these display paintings, reliefs, mirrors, and plaquettes, but most are exhibited empty in order to highlight the extraordinary range of design and remarkable craftsmanship that characterize Renaissance frames. The objects catalogued here are drawn entirely from the holdings of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is home to one of the largest and most important collections of Renaissance frames (and indeed, of frames from all periods) in the world. The majority of these frames came to the Museum through two important gifts—those of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in 1962 and of the Robert Lehman Foundation in 1975. Both Samuel Kress and Robert Lehman were exceptional among collectors of their day in their assiduous pursuit of early frames, Kress seeking contemporary frames for his Italian Renaissance paintings, and Lehman keenly interested in frames as objects of beauty and artistic merit in their own right. The Kress and Lehman frames joined a number of notable examples acquired earlier by the Museum, among them two frames formerly in the collection of the architect Stanford White.

For conceiving and organizing the exhibition, we are indebted to Laurence B. Kanter, Curator of the Robert Lehman Collection, who has been aided by Timothy J. Newbery, an expert in the study of European frames, and George Bisacca, Conservator in the Metropolitan Museum’s Department



of Paintings Conservation. This catalogue is the felicitous product of their combined endeavors.

That a single institution should have the resources to mount an encyclopedic overview of the history of Italian Renaissance frames is remarkable indeed, particularly when one considers that these are now much rarer than paintings, sculpture, drawings, or any other category of object from the period. The Metropolitan Museum of Art takes pride in mounting the first exhibition ever to be dedicated exclusively to the Italian Renaissance frame, and in publishing this contribution to a field of study as yet largely unexplored.

Philippe de Montebello  
*Director*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors owe a debt of gratitude to the many people who have, directly or indirectly, contributed to the realization of this project. Special mention may be made here of William Adair, Marco Grassi, Robert M. Kulicke, Robin Lehman, Paul Mitchell, Mario Modestini, Derek Moore, Sharon Norkin, Marilyn Perry, George Szabo, Monica Valentini-Salvi, Jennifer Wall, and Milton Warshaw.

The frames and framed works of art catalogued in this volume were drawn from three different parts of the Metropolitan Museum's holdings: the Department of European Paintings, the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, and the Robert Lehman Collection. Neither the exhibition nor the catalogue would have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the Museum's Operations Departments, especially the Design Department and the Photograph Studio, and of the Editorial Department. The authors are grateful to all those who have helped them in the process of selecting, preparing, displaying, and publishing the exhibits, especially Bruce Campbell, Keith Christiansen, Jeffrey L. Daly, Monique van Dorp, James David Draper, Jillian Ehninger, Dorothy Kellett, Johannes Knoops, Mary Laing, James Parker, Laurent Sozzani, Linda Sylling, Mahrukh Tarapor, Claire Vincent, and Antoine Wilmering. Special acknowledgment is due to Linda Wolk-Simon of the Robert Lehman Collection; but for her the idea of the exhibition would likely not have been conceived, and without her aid the catalogue could not have been brought to completion.

Finally, the authors would like to express their indebtedness to two men who have inspired, encouraged, and guided their work for many years: John M. Brealey, Sherman Fairchild Chairman of Paintings Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum, and Paul Levi, whose commitment to the appreciation of frames as works of art provided a philosophical basis for this catalogue, and whose generosity in sharing his knowledge and experience largely determined its content. This publication and the exhibition it accompanies are dedicated to them.

T. J. N.  
G. B.  
L. B. K.



# INTRODUCTION

*George Bisacca*

*Laurence B. Kanter*

It is widely recognized that the development of frame design is inextricably tied to that of architecture. The suggestion has even been made that it is more closely related to architecture than it is to painting. To a large extent this is true. Frames, whether intended for use on paintings, reliefs, or mirrors, were invariably designed as parts of an architectural interior and were frequently meant to harmonize with door and window surrounds. Their color, shape, and ornament were generally determined as much by their settings as by what they contained. Not only did frame design evolve with architectural taste, but frames were also often changed as interior decor was updated in order to conform to the demands of an altered context. No matter whether an eighteenth-century “Salvator Rosa” frame is appropriate to a cinquecento *Crucifixion*, or whether a Velázquez portrait is flattered by an English Rococo frame: pictures have always been required to live unobtrusively among furnishings of a period not their own, and frames have always been the vehicle enabling them to do so.

In studying the history of frame design, however, it is not enough to chronicle changes of taste in interior decoration—domestic, civic, or ecclesiastic—or the developing vocabulary of architectural ornament. Understanding the materials and techniques used in the fabrication of frames is equally important to their proper classification and dating. Shapes and ornamental motifs are easily imitated and transmitted—more or less quickly—from place to place, but workshop habits of construction and carving are usually hidden beneath decorated surfaces and are often unique to a particular period or region. Such conventions of workshop practice did as much to determine the characteristics of a local frame style as did the more obvious influences of an indigenous school of architecture.

Nowhere is this more true than in Italy during the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a period notable for a bewildering variety of frame styles compared to the formal standardization prevalent at almost any other time or place. But despite the richness of their decoration and their seemingly limitless range of types, Italian Renaissance frames are characterized by a simple economy and efficiency in structural and ornamental organization, determined above all else by the intrinsic properties of the materials of which they were made and the tools by which they were fashioned. Decorative motifs derived from the vocabulary of Gothic or classical architecture, for example, were frequently selected not only for their suitability in a given context but also for their facility of execution, often resulting from a sequence of positive and negative shapes created by the cuts of a single tool. It is appropriate, therefore, to begin a historical survey of Italian





Fig. 1. Master of the Magdalen (Florentine, active 1265–95), *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, ca. 1265–70. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.8)

Renaissance frames with a consideration of some of the technical problems encountered by craftsmen of the period, and a brief account of procedures adopted to confront them.

In the tradition of Byzantine icons, the earliest Italian panel paintings were carved with their frames from single pieces of wood. The picture plane was recessed in the center of the panel, leaving the original thickness of the wood as a flat band—with a beveled inner edge—around the perimeter. This construction served various practical purposes. A mahlstick could be laid across the outer lip of the panel on which the painter could rest his hand while working without touching the surface of the picture. When the painting was finished, the raised outer lip continued to protect it. In the case of a triptych (fig. 1), a common form in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the outer wings were often designed to fold over the center panel, the lip of which prevented the painted surfaces from touching each other. A single strip of wood, or cap, added across the top of the central panel protected the wings when they were closed.

The top edge of the raised lip was, typically, painted red, isolating the central painted image from its surroundings. Its beveled inner edge, the sight edge, was gilt and often decorated with punch marks or incised lines. In the present example (fig. 2), as in most thirteenth-century panel paintings, the beveled edge was treated as part of the picture surface, with the figures and the architecture painted up onto it. The red building behind the Virgin in the Annunciation scene is organized in such a way that its cornice fills the bevel, actually protruding as a cornice would, and its pediment is painted flat on the “frame.” The same is true of the blue cornice on the left side behind the angel Gabriel, but here the bevel also becomes a wonderful tiled roof. The cap above the central panel, which carries an inscription



Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1: the Virgin Annunciate

(now illegible), functions in much the same manner as the pediment in later tabernacle frames, endowing the picture with a certain architectural monumentality.

Recessing the picture plane was a relatively difficult operation, given the tools available at the time. As picture sizes increased, the amount of wood to be removed also increased, and the operation became progressively less practicable and more costly. At the same time, minor improvements in saws and planes made it easier to fashion molding strips with mitered corners that could be applied to the panel, achieving much the same result as before but in a more efficient manner. Such is the case in a painting by an unknown Florentine artist about 1290 (fig. 3); the moldings were first nailed and glued to the panel and then covered, along with the entire flat surface to be painted and gilt, by a gesso-soaked linen. This procedure



Fig. 3. Unknown Florentine Painter, *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1290. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.21)

provided a more uniform base for the successive coats of gesso and isolated the decorated surfaces of the panel and its frame from movements in the wood. The wood grain runs vertically, which means that the upper and lower molding strips are fastened across the grain, providing the structure with some additional rigidity.

The top edge of this frame has a second bevel, mirroring the bevel on the sight edge. To construct this, the artist (or his carpenter) contrived the ingenious solution of using two identical moldings, one applied to the surface of the panel and the other inverted and applied to the outer edge (fig. 4), thereby creating one of the earliest examples of a compound frame molding. Both bevels were originally painted red, while between them the raised flat surface of the frame, sometimes called the plate or frieze, was decorated with a series of bosses fashioned from thickened, molded gesso and then gilt. These decorative elements, imitating goldsmiths' work, were probably intended to evoke the precious and semiprecious stones often encrusting Byzantine and medieval altar frontals and manuscript bindings (fig. 5). Not infrequently, actual stones or glass insets were used in place of their gesso imitations, as in the elaborate, later examples by Paolo di Giovanni Fei included in this catalogue (nos. 2, 3). In the second of these, the artist employed *verre-églomisé* insets showing busts of saints, translating to a precious medium and an intimate scale the painted borders of earlier frescoes and monumental altarpieces such as Simone Martini's *Maestà* of 1315 in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, or Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna* of 1285 in the Uffizi, Florence (fig. 6).

Altarpieces the size of those in figures 3 and 6 could not be constructed from a single plank of wood, but required several boards glued together and then nailed and glued to the framing elements. The frame in such structures served the double purpose of decoration and support, the sections of it running across the grain of the main panels serving also as battens to prevent the picture surface from warping. The *Rucellai Madonna*, for example, which is over 14½ feet (4.5 m.) in height, is composed of five boards glued together and bound in plane by the frame. The construction of the frame, the complex profiles and decoration of which are certainly the most sophisticated to have been designed up to that date, is basically a more elaborate version of the one shown in figure 4, consisting of four rather than two moldings, but it is proportionately more rigid, to the point where the frame is the carrier of the entire structure. While this frame effectively prevents warpage, it does not allow enough flexibility in the panels to accommodate expansion and contraction with seasonal changes in humidity. Because of the excessive rigidity of its frame, the *Rucellai Madonna* has split along the joints between its component boards, leaving wide gaps across the picture plane which have been repeatedly filled. Cumulative shrinkage due to drying in low humidity and compression set in high humidity has resulted in a loss of surface area across the width of the picture amounting to about 1⅞ inches (over 4 cm.).

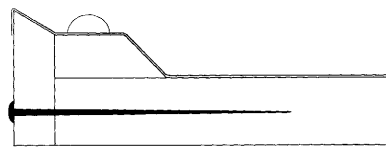


Fig. 4. Profile of the engaged panel painting in fig. 3, showing two running moldings fastened to the panel (drawing: Johannes Knoops)

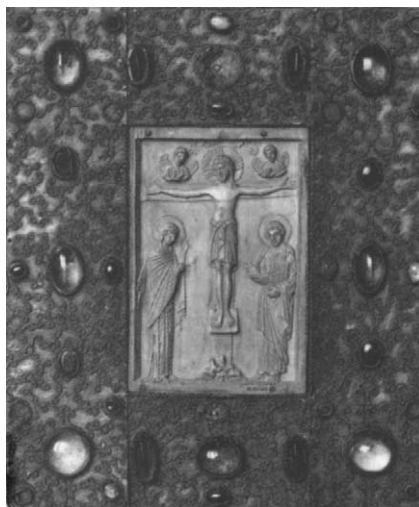


Fig. 5. Book cover: *The Crucifixion*, Spanish, 11th century. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.134)

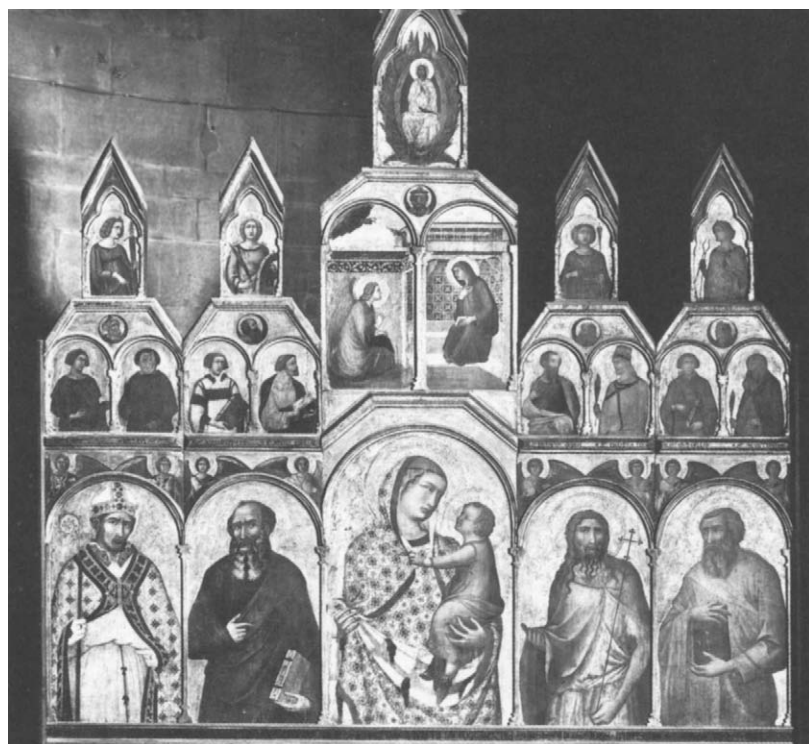
Once the structural problem was understood, a solution could be sought that would allow for wood movement without aesthetically compromising the design of either picture or frame. In simple, single-panel structures, use was made of thinner cross-grain framing elements which could flex with the warpage of a thick panel, as in a later example by the Marchigian artist Pietro di Domenico da Montepulciano (cat. no. 61). In larger, complex structures, such as Pietro Lorenzetti's polyptych of 1320 in Arezzo (fig. 7), which were usually designed in imitation of Gothic church facades, each of the vertical divisions of the picture field was constructed as a separate structural unit. Altarpieces of the Madonna and Child with Saints—the most frequently encountered kind of painted altarpiece in the fourteenth century—were typically composed of a sequence of lateral panels, each containing the image of one saint, joined to each other and to the larger central panel of the Madonna and Child not with glue along the edges but by means of tapering dowels. These dowels kept the painted surfaces aligned in plane while allowing for the expansion and contraction of each panel independently. The panels were usually connected from behind by heavy cross-pieces, which were generally nailed from the front of the panels before the gesso was applied. The crosspieces were rarely glued, and the few nails in each panel left enough flexibility to accommodate some expansion and contraction. The open joint between panels was often covered with a colonnette or pilaster, which served the double purpose of masking the discontinuity of the picture surface and completing the overall architectural illusion of the frame.

Fig. 6. Duccio di Buoninsegna (Sienese, ca. 1255–1319), *Rucellai Madonna*, 1285. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

Fig. 7. Pietro Lorenzetti (Sienese, ca. 1306–1348), *Madonna and Child, and Saints*, 1320. Arezzo, Pieve di Santa Maria (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)



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Fig. 8. Unknown Florentine Painter, *The Coronation of the Virgin, and Saints*, 1394. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Lehman, 1950 (50.229.2)

Countless variations on this basic structural form developed over the course of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The number of independent sections in an altarpiece was usually not a matter of liturgical prescription but depended on the weight and overall size of the altarpiece, and, most important, on the proximity of its fabrication site to its ultimate destination. A large altarpiece commissioned from and painted by an artist at his studio in another city required a number of component parts that could be disassembled to facilitate transportation. Reassembled, such multipartite structures retained a greater tolerance for movement of the wood. Conversely, smaller local commissions, such as the polyptych painted by an unknown Florentine artist for the Brunelleschi family in 1394 (fig. 8), were less likely to be constructed in component pieces capable of being dismantled. Here the three large vertical units were glued together and given a continuous gesso preparation and gilt surface. Predictably, the small but inflexible structure produced splits—five of them—in the main picture field.

The principal panels of this altarpiece act as an armature to which all the subsidiary elements are attached (fig. 9), including the predella. In the

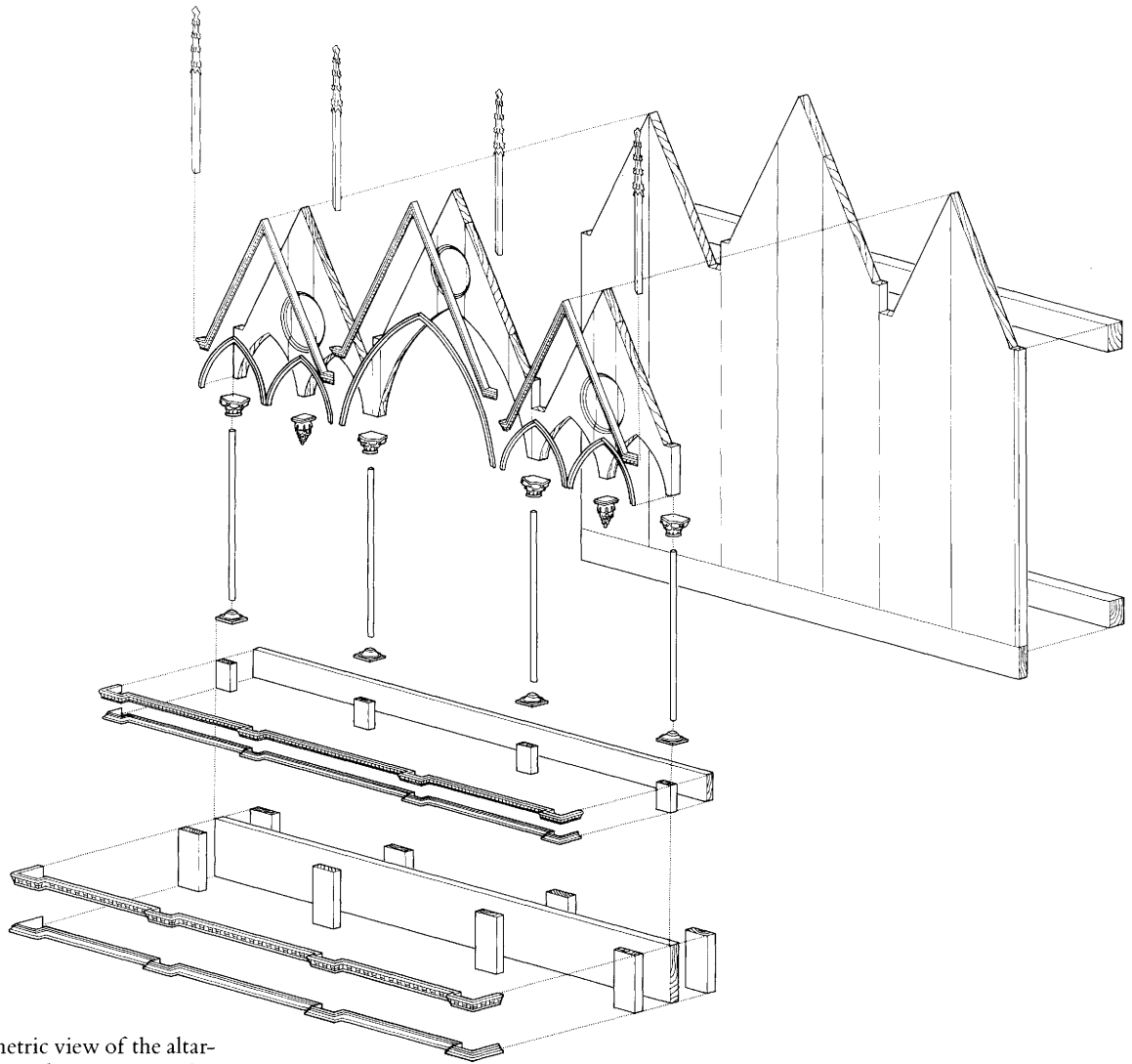


Fig. 9. Exploded isometric view of the altar-piece in fig. 8 (drawing: Johannes Knoops)

latter respect, it is atypical. The predella of a large altar-piece was generally painted on a single horizontal board extending the entire length of the structure, as in this case, but the standard arrangement was to build it into the front of a separate boxlike construction on top of which the main panels of the altar-piece rested.

As with many contemporary polyptychs, the upper portions of the Brunelleschi altar-piece were completed by cusped arches and spandrels made from boards nailed and glued to the main panels in the same direction of the wood grain. Three roundels were recessed approximately halfway into the thickness of these boards. The edges were trimmed with mitered moldings, corbels applied beneath the minor arches, and finials added between the pinnacles. The entire surface was then gessoed, and the pastiglia decoration of the spandrels and predella was laid in before gilding and punching. Only then were the figures painted and additional punching, as for instance within areas of sgraffito decoration, executed. Finally, the gilt colonnettes were set in place.

Similar techniques continued to be the norm for frame construction

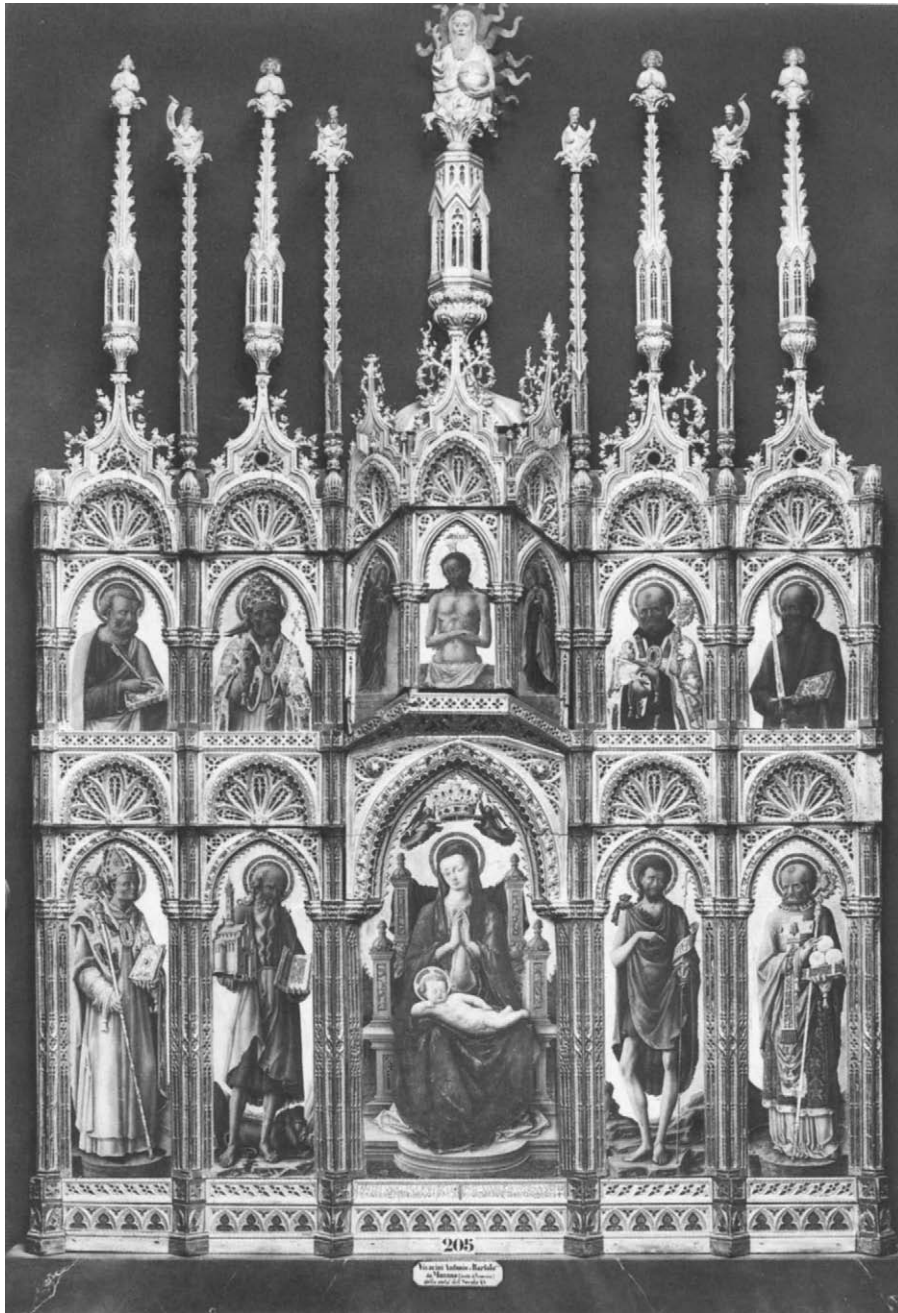


Fig. 10. Antonio Vivarini (Venetian, active by 1441–d. 1476/84) and Bartolomeo Vivarini (Venetian, active 1450–99), *Madonna and Child, and Saints*, 1450. Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

and design in Tuscany until nearly the middle of the fifteenth century. Decorative exuberance was generally confined to the ancillary parts of an altarpiece, such as pinnacles or finials, or limited to a richer pastiglia pattern in the spandrels, spiral instead of straight colonnettes, flowing instead of stylized acanthus crockets, or, in many cases, freestanding pierced cusping lining the inner molding of an arch (see cat. no. 5). But while Tuscan Gothic frames on the whole remained rather austere, as did Tuscan Gothic architecture, North Italian designers and carvers embraced the flamboyance of German and French architectural taste more wholeheartedly. Venetian art-



Fig. 11. Antonio Vivarini, *Saint Peter Martyr Healing the Leg of a Young Man*, ca. 1450–60. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1937 (37.163.4)

ists and frame carvers were particularly sensitive to the florid Gothic style of local architecture and to the exoticism of Islamic design, familiar to them through the city's flourishing trade with the Near East.

Venetian altarpieces of the mid-fifteenth century—for example, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini's polyptych now in Bologna (fig. 10)—are characterized by a profusion of freestanding, finely carved tracery elements, which rely for the effectiveness of their design on the play of light across their surfaces contrasted to the shadows behind them. In Tuscany, a panel already complete with its engaged frame was generally supplied to a painter for gessoing and gilding. In Venice, on the other hand, the continuous panel of the picture plane was gessoed to the edge before the framing elements were applied. Sometimes the area outside the picture field would be prepared with azurite to offset the gilt tracery to be set above it; sometimes the gesso was simply burnished and left white as an effective background for the perforated spaces of the frame (see also cat. no. 4). This technique is clearly visible in an unframed fragment of an altarpiece by Antonio Vivarini showing a miracle of Saint Peter Martyr (fig. 11). The unpainted areas in the upper corners have the same gesso preparation as the rest of the panel and are incised with lines corresponding to the layout of the roof boards in the painting, indicating that the entire panel was prepared and painted before being inserted into its framing structure.

The practice of preparing a painted panel and its carved frame separately was also known in Tuscany by the end of the first quarter of the fifteenth century, but it arose there in response to very different structural needs: the growing popularity through the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries of monumental altarpieces with larger picture surfaces uninterrupted by architectural framing elements. In order for a continuous picture surface of any considerable size not to split over time, as has been said, the panel must be free to expand and contract with fluctuations in humidity and cannot be rigidly fixed across its grain by engaged framing elements. The painted panel could be strengthened and supported from behind by the more flexible system of nailed battens and buttressed piers, and cross-grain framing elements could be constructed in short sections individually supported on the planks of the painted panel, as in Lorenzo Monaco's great *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece of 1414. In 1423, Gentile da Fabriano, who practiced extensively in Venice in his early career, introduced a fully independent, self-supporting frame into which was inserted the main painted panel of his altarpiece of the *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 12)—a first, decisive step toward the modern notion of the frame built to contain a work of art, not as an indivisible part of a work of art.

The architectural vocabulary of the frame on Gentile's *Adoration of the Magi* remains essentially Gothic, and is in fact more closely allied to Venetian than to prevailing Florentine taste. The renewed interest in classical architecture in Florence in the early fifteenth century, first realized in ecclesiastical building by Filippo Brunelleschi in such early projects as the Spedale



degli Innocenti (1419–26) and the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo (1420–29), was not long in being translated to frames for paintings and reliefs. Brunelleschi is generally credited with providing Masaccio with designs for the painted architectural surround of the *Trinity* fresco in Santa Maria Novella (1427), and it is likely that he was responsible for the classical ornament on Luca della Robbia's marble Cantoria for the Duomo (1431). Donatello and Michelozzo, who both enjoyed close relationships with Brunelleschi, collaborated on one of the earliest surviving frames to employ classical architectural motifs (though with a decidedly unorthodox result): the niche of the Parte Guelfa on Orsanmichele (1425). It may also have been Brunelleschi who inspired the design of Fra Angelico's altarpiece of the Annunciation in Cortona (ca. 1432). A rectangular panel set into a Corinthian tabernacle frame (fig. 13), the Cortona *Annunciation* is the earliest surviving example of a long line of such altarpieces to be produced in Florence throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century.

These examples directly inspired the earliest generation of classical tabernacle frames for private devotional images that began to supplant their Gothic predecessors in the second third of the fifteenth century. Some of these domestic tabernacle frames may reflect designs by Brunelleschi himself: one such example contains a stucco relief, datable to the early 1430s, by Brunelleschi's adopted son, Buggiano (fig. 14).<sup>1</sup> Though crude in its execution, this frame represents a significant stylistic innovation that is especially striking when contrasted with two almost contemporary frames of the same format: one in the conservative Gothic taste of the early part of

Fig. 12. Gentile da Fabriano (Umbrian, active by 1408–d. 1427), *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1423. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

Fig. 13. Fra Angelico (Florentine, 1387–1455), *The Annunciation*, 1433–34. Cortona, Museo Diocesano (photo: Scala/Art Resource)

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Fig. 14. Andrea di Lazzaro Cavalcanti, called Buggiano (Florentine, 1412–1462), *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1430. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum (photo: Fine Arts Museums)



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Fig. 15. Unknown Florentine Sculptor, *Madonna and Child*; in the lunette, *Angels in Adoration* by Giovanni di Francesco Toscani (Florentine, active 1420?–d. 1430), ca. 1425–30. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.22.4)

the century (cat. no. 5), and the other probably designed by Brunelleschi's contemporary and rival Lorenzo Ghiberti (fig. 15).

The participation of major architects and sculptors in the design and fabrication of frames was a matter of course in Tuscany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Vecchietta, for example, has reasonably been credited with the frame design for one of his bronze reliefs, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and a tabernacle frame designed and painted by Francesco di Giorgio around 1470 has recently been discovered (fig. 16). Giuliano da San Gallo is known to have made several frames, including one for an altarpiece of the Madonna and Child with Two Saints (1485) for the Bardi chapel in Santo Spirito; for this he received about the same sum as Botticelli was paid for painting the picture. Giuliano da San Gallo is also likely to have designed the frame for Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds*

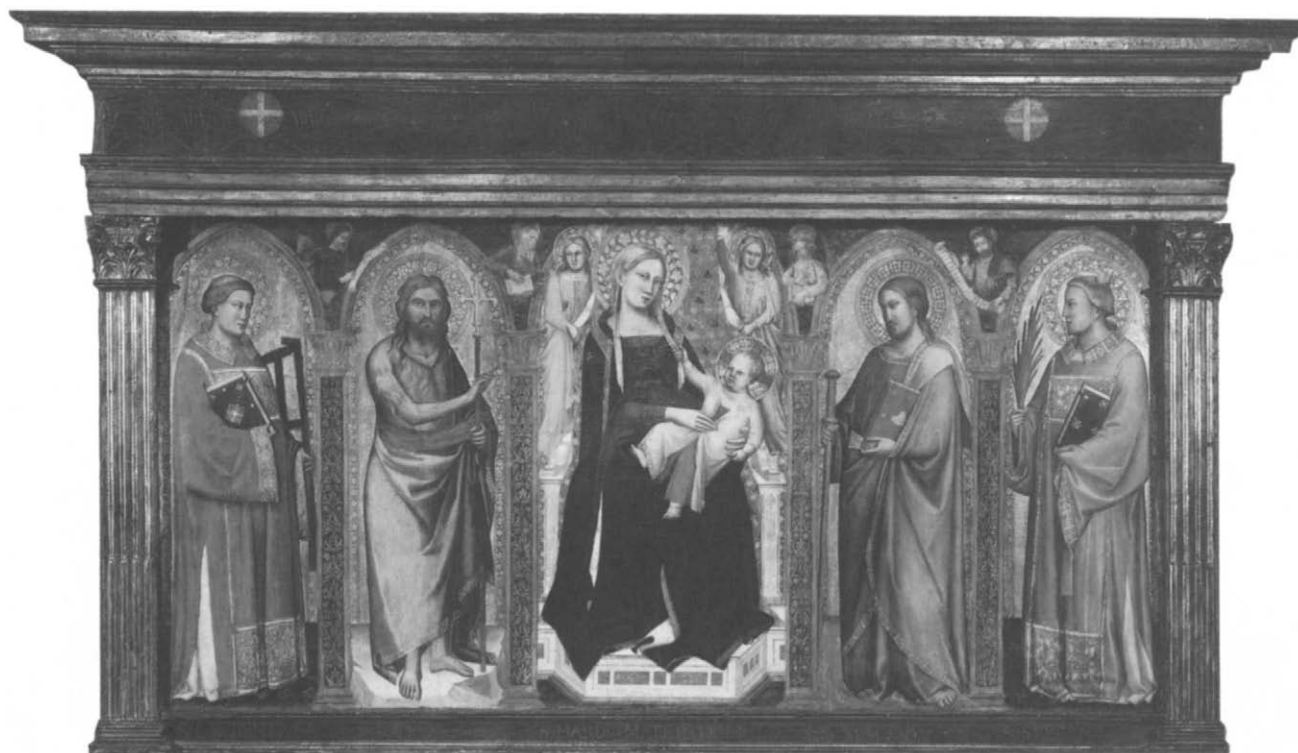
(1485) in the Sassetti chapel of Santa Trinita, where he was responsible for the marble niches and the tombs of Francesco Sassetti and Nera Corsi. The high altarpiece of the Santissima Annunziata was designed and made by Baccio d’Agnolo in 1500 to be painted by Filippino Lippi (after whose death it was finished by Perugino in 1506). Baccio d’Agnolo was paid 250 gold scudi for his work, Filippino 200 for his. Another 200 scudi were paid for the gilding.<sup>2</sup>

On September 1, 1455, the painter Neri di Bicci cited in his *Ricordanze* a contract with Giuliano da Majano to build an altarpiece which was to be “quadra, al’antica . . . chon predella da pie, cholonne a canale da lato e architrave, freg[i]o, chornic[i]one e foglia di sopra” (square, in the classical style . . . with a predella at the base, fluted columns on the sides, and an architrave, frieze, and cornice with leaves above). Two days later, on September 3, the panel itself, which Neri referred to as “il quadro,” meaning “the square,” a term still used in Italian to signify a painting regardless of shape, had already been delivered to him for painting while Giuliano continued building the frame.<sup>3</sup> In the same year Antonio Manetti, Brunelleschi’s disciple, made a panel and tabernacle frame “in the classical style” for Pesellino.<sup>4</sup> The new, classical style became so quickly preferred that many earlier polyptychs were forcibly modernized. Neri di Bicci described a panel belonging to a client which he said had “tre cholmi apuntati”—three pointed arches. He arranged to have Giuliano da Majano cut it down and make the necessary additions to turn it into a rectangle suitable for a classical taberna-



Fig. 16. Francesco di Giorgio (Sienese, 1439–1501/2), tabernacle frame; in the lunette, *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, ca. 1470. London, private collection

Fig. 17. Taddeo Gaddi (Florentine, active by 1334–d. 1366), *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints*, ca. 1340. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1910 (10.97)



cle frame.<sup>5</sup> Lorenzo Monaco's altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi, painted in 1422 for Sant'Egidio, was considered outdated shortly after it was completed and was enlarged to a more classical format with additions painted by Cosimo Rosselli. Similarly, Fra Angelico's early altarpiece in San Domenico in Fiesole was enlarged and repainted in 1501 by Lorenzo di Credi to fit into a classical frame.

The modernization of Gothic polyptychs was a common practice in fifteenth-century Florence. In the Metropolitan Museum's collection is an altarpiece by Taddeo Gaddi probably painted in the 1340s (fig. 17). A century and a half later it was updated to conform to prevailing fashion. Its original framing elements were removed, the arched top of the taller central panel was cut off at the height of the lateral panels, and new spandrels were inserted between the arches to fill the panel out to a rectangular shape. An artist from the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio was engaged to paint busts of the four Evangelists to fill the new spandrels and pilasters—with classical anthemion decoration and fashionable, modified Corinthian capitals—to cover the newly exposed seams between the five original panels. The entire structure was then inserted into a tabernacle frame with fluted and reeded Corinthian pilasters and a heavy entablature, all in the latest taste. Altarpieces by the most revered masters in the most important places were not exempt from such treatment, as is clear from the identical operation performed on the altarpiece of the Coronation of the Virgin painted by Giotto and his workshop for the Baroncelli chapel in Santa Croce (fig. 18).

Fig. 18. Giotto (Florentine, 1266 or 1276–1337) and workshop, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, ca. 1335. Florence, Santa Croce, Baroncelli Chapel (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

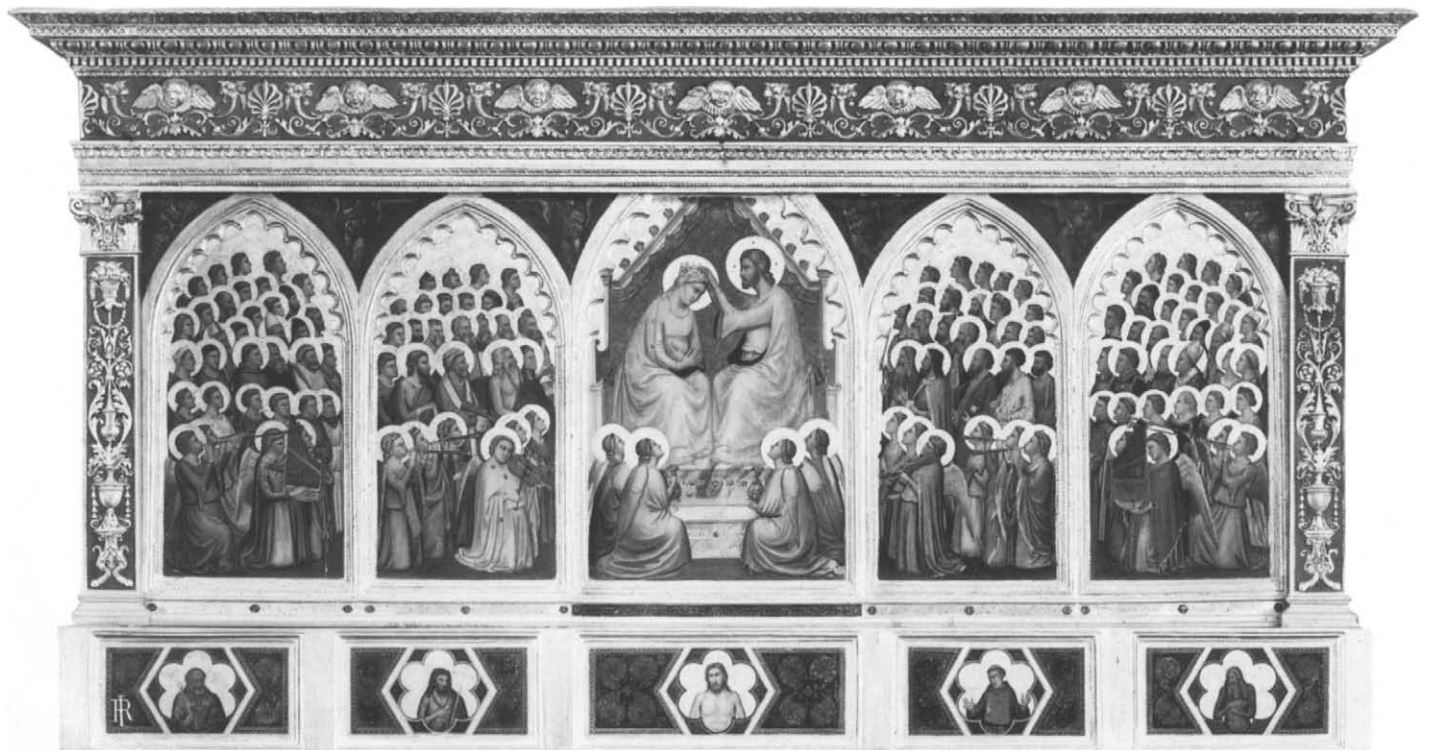




Fig. 19. Unknown Central Italian Painter, *cassone* panel: *Scenes from the Life of King Nebuchadnezzar*, early 16th century. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of James L. Loeb, 1908 (08.133)

As might be expected, the design of altarpiece frames continued to develop in tandem with changes of taste in ecclesiastical architecture. Outside the strict liturgical context of the Church, however, painting and frame styles could evolve along more diversified lines. The tabernacle or aedicula frame, which is derived in form from the architectural treatment of wall niches and window surrounds, is often encountered in the context of religious images for private devotion, such as paintings or reliefs of the Madonna and Child or the Nativity, for which there seems to have been an inexhaustible market in the fifteenth century, especially in Florence. For secular subject matter, portraiture, for example, or, from the second half of the fifteenth century, allegorical painting based on literary sources such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or Poliziano's *Stanze*, frames that made no overt liturgical reference were preferred. For such purposes the *cassetta* (meaning "small box"), or entablature, frame became the dominant form throughout the Italian peninsula.

The *cassetta* frame is essentially an extended entablature wrapped around all four sides of an image, rather than resting only across the top of column supports.<sup>6</sup> It derives in appearance from a number of sources, including the engaged moldings often found on devotional paintings in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (cf. cat. nos. 1a–c, 61), and from the ornamented borders of painted *cassoni* (fig. 19) or wainscoting panels, but its structure evolved from a simplification of the tabernacle frame. Over the course of the fifteenth century, the sight molding on tabernacle frames often became wider and more prominent, while architectural elements such as columns were occasionally suppressed (cat. no. 11). In some examples, especially frequent in Venice, architraves and pilaster capitals and bases were omitted, leaving an entablature frieze and pilaster panels with continuous decoration on all four sides of the frame (fig. 20). These early examples generally retained cornices, and sometimes pediments and antependia (cat. no. 14), but eventually even these elements disappeared and what remained was a new and versatile format.



Fig. 20. Tabernacle frame, Venetian, late 15th century. Samuel H. Kress Collection

The cassetta consists of a flat back frame constructed with lap joints, on top of which two mitered moldings are applied. The interior molding is applied to the face of the back frame and almost always projects slightly toward the inside, creating a rabbeted sight edge. The exterior molding can either be applied in the same way to the face of the back frame, or it can be applied to the back edge with a rabbet. This method of construction is strong and practical: the lap joint of the back frame not only makes the corner more rigid, it also disguises the eventual cracking due to wood shrinkage (fig. 21). The cassetta is easy to fabricate, and although composed only of three simple elements, allows for an astonishing number of variants. The inner and outer moldings can be wider or narrower, higher or lower, carved or uncarved, colored or gilt. The frieze can be flat or curved, carved or embossed with pastiglia; it can be gilt and decorated with punching, glazing, or sgraffito, or painted, or left as natural wood. Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the profiles and decorative motifs employed on cassetta frames often developed distinct regional tendencies, allowing many of them to be recognizable as characteristically Tuscan, Venetian, Bolognese, or Neapolitan.

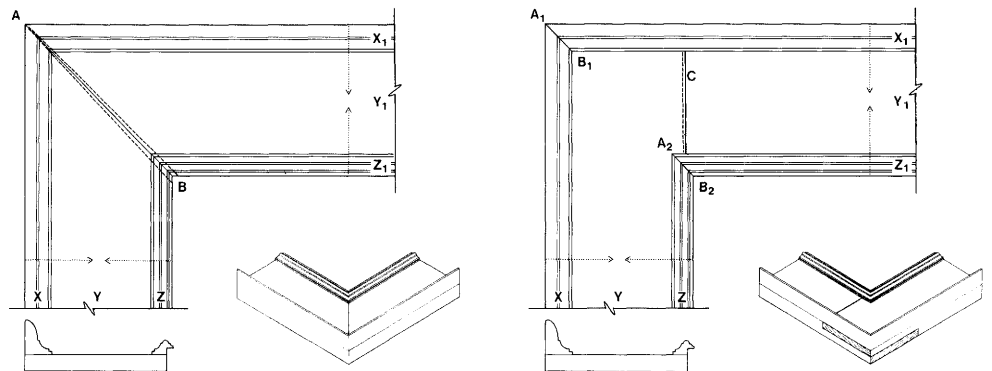
A fundamental distinction between the cassetta and the tabernacle frame is that the former has the same profile on all four sides. One type of frame which blurs the distinction between the two can be called, for lack of a better name, the gallery frame. As in cassetta frames, the principal reference of gallery frames is to the pictures or objects they enclose and the secular interior to which they belong. Common from the sixteenth century to modern times, these frames may derive their often exuberant ornament from classical architecture, from the natural world, or from fantasy. They may be architectonic and bilaterally symmetrical but lack the structural members that would classify them as tabernacle frames, or they may be symmetrical across the horizontal as well as the vertical axis and share construction techniques with cassetta frames, differing from them only in profile. In the period of the Italian Renaissance, the most successful and widely diffused type of gallery frame is that which has come to be known as the Sansovino frame.

Fig. 21. Miter and lap joints (drawings: Johannes Knoops)

The 45-degree mitered angle becomes more acute as the wood shrinks in the direction of the arrows. The amount that the joint opens at point B is directly proportional to the length of AB.

With the lap joint, the amount of opening at points B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> is negligible because A<sub>1</sub>B<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>2</sub> are much shorter segments. Nor is the effect compounded by the cumulative shrinkage of Y and Y<sub>1</sub> as with the miter joint, but only by the shrinkage of Y. The section of X<sub>1</sub> between points A<sub>1</sub> and C is glued across the grain of Y, and this inhibits the shrinkage of Y; X<sub>1</sub> and Z<sub>1</sub> also inhibit some movement of Y along joint C. The visual effect of the opening at joint C is minimized because the shrinkage runs parallel to the joint line.

In cassetta constructions the visible joint—as at C—is most often oriented vertically, regardless of whether the frame is a vertical or a horizontal rectangle.





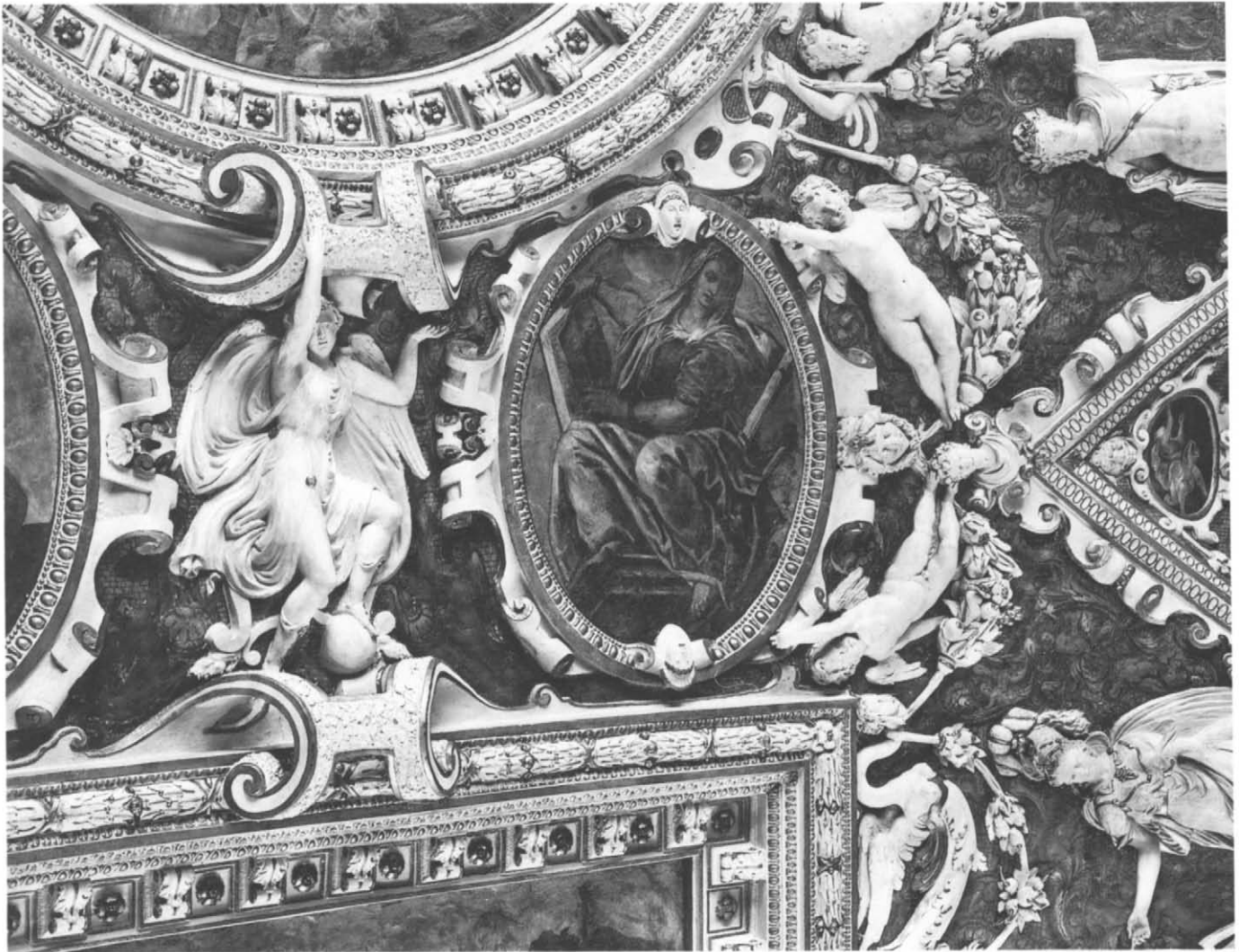


Fig. 22. Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Venetian, 1525–1608), ceiling of the Sala delle Quattro Porte (detail). Venice, Palazzo Ducale (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

Especially popular in Venice and on the Venetian mainland, the Sansovino frame is named—or more properly, misnamed—after the Florentine sculptor and architect Jacopo Sansovino, who was resident in Venice from 1527 until his death in 1570. The Sansovino frame has little in common with the architectural principles of its namesake, however, being essentially a translation to a portable format of the decorative motifs made popular by Italian (primarily Tuscan and Emilian) stuccoists in France at the court of Fontainebleau and, in its most characteristic Venetian form, by the carved or stucco framework for ceiling and wall panels preeminently associated with the workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (fig. 22), Sansovino's most talented disciple. The distinctive characteristic of Sansovino frames is a profusion of overlapping and intertwining scrolls and volutes, often rusticated, sometimes pierced and freestanding, sometimes contained within the squared silhouette of a colored back frame, occasionally enlivened with birds, rows of pearls, festoons, cartouches, clasps, cherub heads, or escarpa. So successful was the type that its popularity survived through most of the



seventeenth century, when increasingly simplified versions of the basic design, in a wide range of materials (fig. 23), could be found throughout the Veneto and in provincial centers all around the Adriatic coast.

As the Sansovino frame has come to symbolize Venetian style, so an earlier type, the circular frame, or tondo, is invariably associated with Tuscany,<sup>7</sup> though it was common in Umbria and Rome as well. The tondo, like the tabernacle frame, is characterized not by its profile but by its shape, and it presents several peculiarities of design and construction not encountered in other types of frame. In itself the tondo has no axial orientation, leaving the designer free to define a top and bottom by means of applied decoration (cat. nos. 55, 59), to employ continuous, static decoration (cat. nos. 52, 58), or to impart a sense of rotary movement through decoration (cat. no. 56). If the frame is too large to be carved or molded in a single piece, the designer may choose to mask the joins between component members (cat. nos. 52, 55), as cassetta frames most often do, or to incorporate them as a feature of the decoration (cat. no. 56), as is usually the case with tabernacle frames.

The popularity of the tondo form is less easy to explain than it is to chronicle. Whether it derived from the painted *deschi da parto* traditionally presented to new mothers on the birth of a child (fig. 24);<sup>8</sup> whether it developed from circular spandrel, pinnacle, or predella decoration sometimes included in altarpieces (fig. 25); or whether it was translated from painted or sculpted oculi on architectural elevations (fig. 26), by the last third of the fifteenth century the tondo was ubiquitous in domestic and civic (rarely ecclesiastic) commissions. It was generally employed for religious narratives, for Madonna and Child or Holy Family compositions, and for heraldic



Fig. 23. Unknown Venetian Sculptor, Sansovino frame: *The Lion of Saint Mark*, Istrian stone, ca. 1600. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.9)



Fig. 24. Giovanni di Ser Giovanni di Simone Guidi, called Lo Scheggia (Florentine, 1407–1486), birth tray of Lorenzo de' Medici, obverse: *The Triumph of Fame*, 1449. The New-York Historical Society, The Bryan Collection, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art

devices—a market virtually monopolized by the della Robbia family workshop in Florence (cat. nos. 56, 57). As the sixteenth century progressed, portraits in tondo form became more common, undoubtedly an extension of the popularity of the shape for mirrors (cat. nos. 53, 54).

Renaissance craftsmen were, of course, extremely sensitive to the properties of different kinds of wood in relation to different structural and ornamental uses. Inexpensive woods of lesser quality, such as poplar, spruce, and pine, were generally reserved for the secondary parts of frames: back frames were likely to be made of spruce or pine in the Veneto, of poplar in Tuscany.<sup>9</sup> Because of its even structure, poplar was also used for the carving of simple profile moldings. Basswood (linden), which is similar to poplar in grain but more even and compact, was better suited to fine detail and complex carving. All these woods were employed in frames that were intended to be gilt, or on areas of a frame not clearly visible. Walnut, a rarer and more expensive wood, was used for frames which were to be left ungilt or parcel-gilt (*luminolegno*). The rich color of walnut was highly prized—other woods were frequently stained to imitate it—and its dense structure was excellent for carving fine details. Fruit woods such as pear or plum were sometimes substituted for walnut, either because their particular color and texture were preferred or simply because they were more readily available. By the middle of the sixteenth century, ebony was in use for some fine profiles, often in conjunction with semiprecious stones or ivory inlay. Oak is very rarely encountered in Italian frames. Chestnut and elm are more common, usually in a structural and not a decorative capacity.



Fig. 25. Sano di Pietro (Sienese, 1406–1481), *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1450. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.T.40)

When a frame was to be gilded, its surface would be covered with gesso and bole; for that reason, its carved ornament would rarely be highly finished in detail. As the liquid gesso was brushed on, it tended to settle thickly in concavities and to adhere in a thinner coat over the higher parts of the relief, which had to be worked with correspondingly greater care. Richly carved frames often have a layer of yellow bole over the entire gessoed surface and a layer of red bole applied only on the higher relief. Red bole allows for better burnishing than yellow, and it was therefore used in the most visually prominent parts of the frame, even though splits in the gold leaf are more visible against a red ground and require more painstaking repair with additional scraps of leaf. Undercutting and deep concavities are difficult to gild evenly, and splits in the leaf are more likely to occur in such areas; but splits in gilding against a yellow ground and within shadowed areas are hardly visible and can usually remain unattended. The upper back edge of a frame was frequently left ungilt, as yellow bole—a cheap and reasonably close approximation of real gold.

Throughout history, frames have been judged less in relation to the works of art they contain than to the time and place in which they are found. Though circular paintings and reliefs continued to be made in the seventeenth century and later, the tondo frame is primarily a Renaissance form, and so too is the tabernacle. With the advent of the Baroque and the later triumph of Rococo, Neoclassic, and Romantic taste, such characteristically Renaissance types of frame as these were supplanted, and often physically replaced, by gallery frames in the latest style, enriched with the most fashionable ornament. Gallery frames were easier to harmonize with the lavish interiors of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, interiors that were frequently filled with works of art of disparate periods and styles all of which required to be framed alike. The uniform gallery frame enabled an owner to place a personal stamp on his collection, a stamp which identified not only ownership but also status, and gallery frames were for this reason frequently changed, sometimes every generation, lest they betray neglect of fashionable taste or a falling-off of the family fortunes.



Fig. 26. Filippo Brunelleschi (Florentine, 1377–1446), Pazzi Chapel; glazed terracotta tondi by Donatello (Florentine, ca. 1386–1466) and by Luca della Robbia (Florentine, 1399/1400–1482), ca. 1442–52. Florence, Santa Croce (photo: Alinari/ Art Resource)

As a result, it is hardly surprising that Renaissance frames are far rarer than other works of art from the same period, for their survival is purely a matter of historical accident. Not until the last part of the nineteenth century were they prized in their own right and actively collected. When historicity developed into an acceptable notion among architects and interior decorators, artifacts such as Renaissance furniture and frames became highly marketable, as did fraudulent and modern Renaissance-style objects. It is salutary to observe that in the nineteenth century higher prices were frequently paid for *cassoni* than for panel paintings, and that dealers therefore scoured the Italian countryside in search of any salvageable remnants of Renaissance domestic furnishings. Many prominent modern collections contain numerous pastiches of Renaissance frames, either assembled from

fragments of unrelated objects of the period (see, for example, cat. no. 36, ill. 1) or restored past acceptable limits of authenticity (cat. no. 81). There are also outright forgeries (cat. nos. 82–84), many of them executed with a craftsmanship comparable to anything of which the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were capable.

The study of picture frames in general, and of Renaissance frames in particular, is a discipline in its infancy. Very few frames can be independently documented to a time or a place, and fewer still to a particular artist or artisan. Only a small number of surviving frames remain together with the object they originally contained, and of these only a fraction are still visible in their original context. Paradoxically, the modern resurgence of interest in Renaissance frames is helping to confuse as much as to clarify our understanding of them. As curators, collectors, and dealers seek to place their paintings and sculptures in “period frames” (a decidedly anachronistic effort), important details of the original format and use of such frames are frequently altered or lost. Four out of five of the frames included in this catalogue, for example, have long been separated from the objects they were designed to house, and all of them have been removed from the sites they were intended to embellish. The information available about most of them is scanty. The identifications of only a few are reasonably secure, and of many are pure guesswork. It is safe to say that a listing of any selection of paintings or sculptures from the same period would inevitably be more detailed and more reliable in its conclusions. This catalogue, therefore, makes no claim to be definitive. Rather, it is offered as an introduction to a collection—one of the richest in the world—that is too little known, and to a subject that is too often neglected.

#### NOTES

1. On Buggiano see Ursula Schlegel, “Vier Madonnenreliefs des Andrea di Lazzaro Cavalcanti genannt Buggiano,” *Berliner Museen* 12, 1962, pp. 4–9; Franco Borsi, “Andrea di Lazzaro Cavalcanti: L’erede non naturale,” in Franco Borsi et al., *Brunelleschiani*, Fonti e documenti per la storia dell’architettura 7, Rome, 1979, pp. 25–33; and Gabriele Morolli, “Brunelleschi e l’arredo umanistico di Santa Maria del Fiore,” in *Filippo Brunelleschi, la sua opera e il suo tempo*, Florence, 1980, II, pp. 603–623.
2. Claus Grimm, *The Book of Picture Frames*, trans. Nancy M. Gordon and Walter L. Strauss, New York, 1981, p. 19.
3. Neri di Bicci, *Le ricordanze (10 marzo 1453–24 aprile 1475)*, ed. Bruno Santi, Pisa, 1976, entry 64, p. 33.
4. Peleo Bacci, “La *Trinità* di Pesellino nella National Gallery di Londra,” *Rivista d’arte* 2, 1904, p. 163.
5. Cited in Creighton Gilbert, “Peintres et menuisiers au début de la Renaissance en Italie,” *Revue de l’art* 37, 1977, p. 13.
6. On the cassetta frame see Paul Mitchell, “Italian Picture Frames, 1500–1825: A Brief Survey,” *Furniture History: The Journal of the Furniture History Society* 20, 1984, pp. 21–23.
7. On Florentine tondo frames see Alessandro Cecchi, “Les Cadres ronds de la Renaissance florentine,” *Revue de l’art* 76, 1987, pp. 21–24.
8. On *deschi da parto* see John Pope-Hennessy and Keith Christiansen, “Secular Painting in 15th-Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels, and Portraits,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 38:1, 1980, pp. 6–11.
9. On regional variations in types of wood employed in frame manufacture see Mitchell, “Italian Picture Frames,” p. 20.

# CATALOGUE

TIMOTHY J. NEWBERY

LAURENCE B. KANTER

## NOTE

Overall dimensions are given first, followed by the dimensions of the frame opening. Height precedes width. A single dimension denotes diameter.

The profile drawings are oriented with the sight edge to the right and are reproduced on a scale of 1:2 unless otherwise stated. The presence of original nails is not indicated. Types of wood and materials other than wood are represented according to the following key:



Walnut



Deal



Poplar



Pear



Pine



Ebony



Spruce



Unknown Woods and  
Nonwood Materials

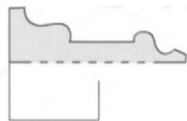
## I. Pre-Renaissance Frames

### I

#### SIENA, 1325–35

Three carved and gilt engaged cassetta-type frames. Each frame has been cut off its panel, trimmed at the miters, inverted, and replaced. The friezes are decorated with punched disks, leaves on stems, and quatrefoils glazed alternately red and blue.

a.  $26\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{7}{8}$ ;  $22\frac{3}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
 $67.3 \times 47.9$ ;  $56.2 \times 36.8$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.13)



b.  $26\frac{1}{2} \times 19$ ;  $22\frac{1}{2} \times 15$  in.  
 $67.3 \times 48.3$ ;  $57.2 \times 38.1$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.12)

c.  $26\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{3}{4}$ ;  $22\frac{3}{8} \times 14\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
 $66.7 \times 47.6$ ;  $56.8 \times 37.8$  cm.  
 Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.23)

The opening of catalogue number 1a has been reduced by the addition of a new, wider sight molding; the yellow on the back edge is original. In catalogue number 1b the surface is extremely well preserved, with the exception of the top and sight edges, which have been repaired, regessoed, and regilt.

These three panels originally formed part of an altarpiece painted by Simone Martini (ca. 1284–1344) between 1324 and 1336.<sup>1</sup> The altarpiece comprised five known panels with the *Madonna and Child* (cat. no. 1b) in the center, flanked on the left by *Saint Ansanus* (cat. no. 1a) and *Saint Peter* (private collection), and on the right by *Saint Andrew* (cat. no. 1c) and *Saint Luke* (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum). The frame on the *Saint Luke* is still partially engaged, while the frames on the other four panels have all been excised, repaired, and replaced upside down. Saint Andrew's incised halo, cropped at the top of the panel, is continued on the inner molding of the



a

frame, now at the bottom. Exposed worm channeling on the bottom—originally the top—edges indicates that the altarpiece was once completed by a superstructure, probably of triangular pinnacles. The frames may have been inverted to render this worm channeling less conspicuous.

The form of the altarpiece was highly unusual in having a center panel the same size as the lateral panels and all five panels independently enframed, in the manner of private devotional im-

ages (see cat. nos. 2–4). Possibly the structure was meant to be portable, with folding panels, but evidence of hinges having been removed—two of the panels have plugged holes on the back edge—is inconclusive.

1. John Pope-Hennessy, *The Robert Lehman Collection: I. Italian Paintings*, New York, 1987, pp. 18–23.



b



c



## SIENA, ca. 1380–90

A carved and gilt engaged cassetta-type frame, with pastiglia leaf-and-vine decoration in the frieze arranged symmetrically from the center of each side. The corners and side centers are marked by pastiglia quatrefoils, and centered between each pair of quatrefoils is a colored-glass inset—blue in the top frieze, red at the sides and bottom. Within the outer frame is a carved and gilt arch supported on pastiglia Solomonian columns. The arch is lined with pastiglia trefoil cusps, and its spandrels are filled with pastiglia and punched decoration outlining two octofoils.



2:5

$34\frac{3}{8} \times 23\frac{3}{8}$ ;  $26\frac{7}{8} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$  in.

87.3 × 59.4; 68.3 × 41.6 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.23)

This is an unusually elaborate and well preserved example of engaged moldings on independent devotional panels, a form common in Italy throughout the Late Gothic period (see cat. nos. 3, 4). The painting, in this case the *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with Saints, Angels, and Eve* by Paolo di Giovanni Fei (ca. 1345–1411), is contained within a pastiglia arch lining the outer frame; ancillary images (here the Annunciation) are occasionally included in the spandrels of the arch. Two holes drilled in the back edge at the top of the frame once held a cord for hanging.

The back of this panel is carved with an engaged molding mirroring that on the front, which divides the surface into four distinct picture fields (the horizontal molding at the center has been removed). These fields must once have been painted, but they are now coated with a thick layer of wax that renders any images they may have contained completely illegible. Double-sided frames such as this are exceedingly rare; usually the reverse of the panel is treated as an abstract decorated surface, often painted with fictive porphyry or marble inlays.



## SIENA, ca. 1390

A carved and gilt engaged cassetta-type frame, with pastiglia leaf-and-vine decoration in the frieze. Ten *verre-églomisé* roundels are set into the frieze at regular intervals, marking the corners and the top and bottom centers, with two each on the long sides. These roundels depict the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate at the top left and right respectively, and busts of saints below; the roundels at the top and bottom centers are blank. A colored-glass or semiprecious-stone inset is centered between each pair of roundels. Within the outer frame is a carved

and gilt arch supported on punched Solomonian columns. The arch, which extends nearly to the center of the long sides, is lined with ten simple cusps, each of which is filled with pastiglia decoration and a glass inset. The spandrels of the arch are similarly filled with pastiglia and punched decoration enclosing glass insets and outlining two hexafoils.

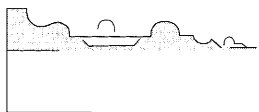




Paolo di Giovanni Fei (Sienese, ca. 1345–1411), *The Assumption of the Virgin*, ca. 1400. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (photo: National Gallery)

the arch is lined with simple, not trefoil cusps; and the columns are reduced to punched decoration, with pastiglia reserved for the bases and capitals.

The artist, again Paolo di Giovanni Fei, has accentuated the three-dimensionality of this frame by lining the picture field with a punched border that continues behind the cusping of the arch. The punched halos of the Virgin and the Child overlap this border, and the Virgin's halo is in turn overlapped by the cusped arch, creating a sense of spatial recession in the otherwise visually flat gold ground. In the earlier frame (cat. no. 2), the figures of two saints at the left and the winged angels at the top are overlapped by the pastiglia column and cusping respectively, but there is no punched border to denote any further recession of the gold ground. A similar, though simplified, frame on Paolo di Giovanni Fei's slightly later *Assumption* (ill.) in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., includes the more traditional, spatially less suggestive device of a punched border that follows the cusping of the arch.

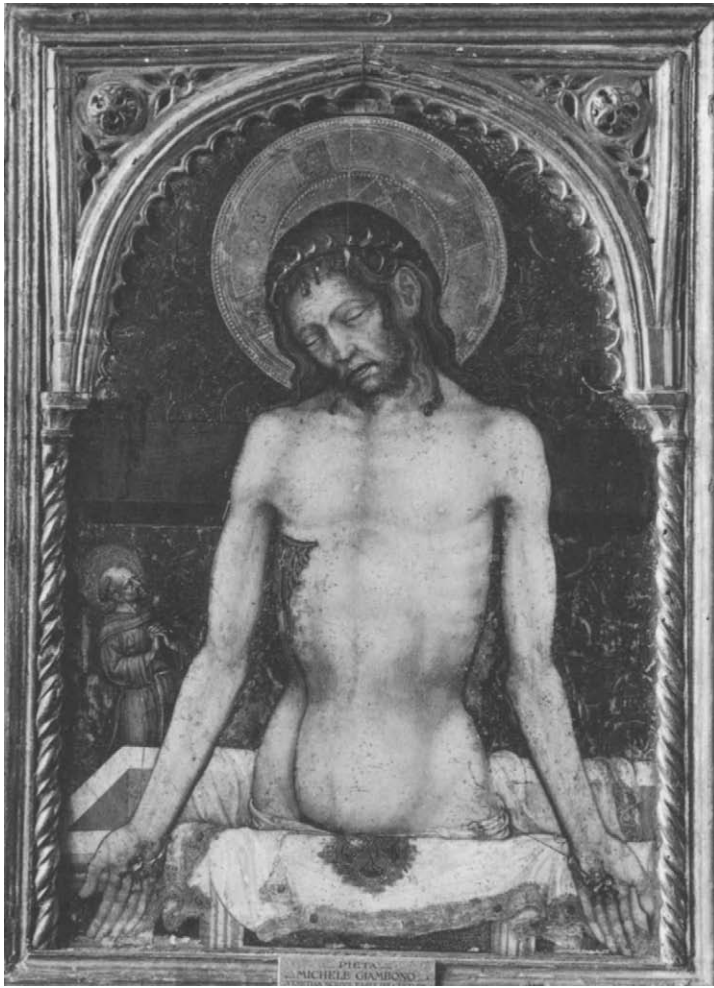


2:5

$34\frac{1}{4} \times 23\frac{3}{4}$ ;  $26\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
 $87 \times 59.1$ ;  $67.9 \times 40$  cm.

Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941  
 (41.190.13)

More elaborate than the preceding frame (cat. no. 2), this was produced by the same shop at no more than a few years' distance in time. The frieze is divided into a greater number of subcenters and decorated with figured *verre-églomisé* medallions as well as glass insets; the glass insets are carried over into the spandrels and cusp decoration of the inner arch. The spandrel medallions of this *Madonna and Child* are left blank;



#### 4

VENICE, ca. 1420–30

A carved and gilt engaged tabernacle frame. Inside a simple molding is a lancet arch lined with small cusps and supported on Solomonian half-columns without bases. The spandrels are carved with pierced foliate ornament, including two imitation metalwork bosses.

21 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ ; 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
54.9 × 39.4; 47 × 31.1 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.180)

Warpage and shrinkage of the wood have resulted in the spandrels cracking and shifting slightly; the right capital and a section of the arch above it are modern replacements.

The panel, showing Christ as the Man of Sorrows with Saint Francis, was painted by Michele Giambono (ac-

tive 1420–62) and was evidently intended for private devotional use. Though the shape and decoration of the arched inner frame might suggest a fragment from one of the upper tiers of a large polyptych, the work within its outer frame is complete in its present state.

The technique of applying pierced framework decoration to the burnished gesso ground of a painted panel is not uncommon among early North Italian workshops, where engaged frames were frequently applied after completion of the work of art. In Central Italy, an engaged frame was invariably constructed before the panel was prepared for the painter.

#### 5

FLORENCE, ca. 1430

A carved and gilt engaged tabernacle frame. Paired Solomonian columns engaged to piers support an interrupted ogival arched pediment decorated with pastiglia cauliculi. The pediment cornice is ornamented with acanthus crockets, its archivolt with pierced trilobe cusps. The predella is filled by seven pierced quatrefoils enclosing paintings of seraphim and cherubim, now much degraded.

44 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 32 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
113.3 × 56.5; 83.2 × 47.6 cm.  
Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.16)

The piers, pediment cornice, and crockets have been regilt. The pastiglia and carved decoration is, on the other hand, exceptionally well preserved.

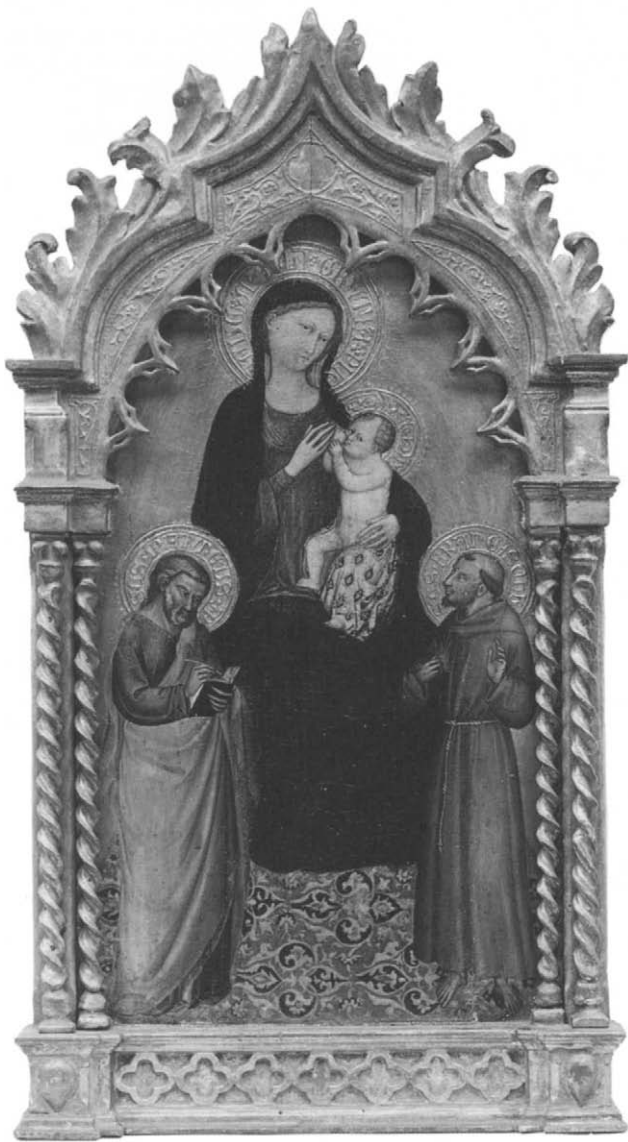
Engaged to the *Madonna and Child with Saints Matthew and Francis* by Bicci di Lorenzo (1373–1452), this frame is a typical though late example of the type of Gothic tabernacle common in Florence from the late fourteenth century. Its freestanding, pierced cusp decoration and naturalistic acanthus crockets disposed in overlapping ranges distinguish it from contemporary Siense Gothic frames, where cusping, when present, is executed in pastiglia directly on the surface of the panel and crockets are smaller, more stylized, and less densely arranged.

#### 6

FLORENCE or VENETO, ca. 1430–40

A pigmented terracotta tabernacle frame, modeled in one with a relief of the Virgin and Child ascribed to Michele da Firenze (documented in 1436 and 1441). The Virgin stands in a shell niche flanked by piers with clustered fluted Corinthian half-columns. A winged putto stands atop the impostas at either side, draping a cloth of honor across the niche behind the Virgin. A cherub head is centered in the tympanum of the arch, which is filled with cauliculi on either side. The cornice is decorated with a palmette at the apex and foliate crockets at the sides and subcenters.

52 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 24 $\frac{3}{8}$ ; 37 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
133.4 × 62.5; 94.6 × 44.5 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1916 (16.154.9)



This relief is one of a group of pigmented terracottas generally associated with the artist known as Michele da Firenze, who was active in Florence, Emilia, and the Veneto in the second quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Its framing elements are particularly close to those of a relief of the Virgin and Child with Six Angels in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>2</sup> The London relief, however, is of a conspicuously sharper quality and greater refinement of modeling than the present example. Such variations in quality throughout the group suggest the pro-

duction not of a single artist but of a relatively large and well organized workshop.

Related stylistically to Michele's work in the Pellegrini Chapel in Sant'Anastasia at Verona, documented to 1436, the New York and London reliefs show pronounced North Italian features, especially in the decoration of their frames, which reflects the influence of North Italian architecture. The figure style in both reliefs is strongly Ghibertesque, however, and the London example has a nineteenth-century Florentine provenance. It is unclear, therefore, whether

these reliefs represent a Florentine or a Venetian stage of Michele's career.

1. Giuseppe Fiocco, "Michele da Firenze," *Dedalo* 12, 1932, pp. 542-562.
2. John Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, I, London, 1964, no. 57, pp. 66-68.



## II. Tabernacle Frames



7 

FLORENCE, ca. 1450–60

A carved arched tabernacle frame with traces of gilding and blue pigmentation. The arch, surmounted by palmettes at the apex and sides and by acanthus leaves at the subcenters, is carried on acanthus consoles supported by pilasters decorated with candelabra in low relief. The underside of the arch is coffered; the archivolt, the sight molding, and the base molding are ornamented with a leaf-and-dart pattern.

45 × 31½; 31¼ × 19 in.  
114.3 × 80; 79.1 × 48.3 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.287.15)

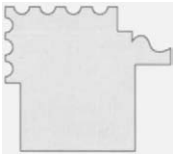
Extensive worm damage, together with what appears to be burn and cleaning damage, has removed most of the surface and broken many of the edges of this elegantly proportioned and finely

carved frame. The lower frieze has been completely obliterated and the pilaster base moldings have been lost. The back plate has been cut out at the window opening, suggesting that the frame once contained a stucco relief, probably of the Virgin and Child.

8 

TUSCANY, ca. 1460–80

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame with fluted and reeded pilasters, composite capitals, an inscribed entablature and base, and a lunette painted with the Dove of the Holy Spirit. The lunette is surmounted by rosettes and palmettes at the top and sides; the base is supported on a heavy antependium of two cornucopia flanking a shield and ribbons hung from a small center console.



29 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 16; 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 8 in.  
75.6 × 40.6; 26 × 20.3 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.70.34)

The surface of this frame has been regessoed and regilt. The inscriptions, repainted, presumably repeat the original lettering on the entablature—*GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO* (Glory to God in the highest)—and base—*AVE REGINA CELORUM* (Hail, Queen of the Heavens). The heavy proportions and structure of the frame, carved from a single plank of poplar, suggest that it may have housed a sculpted relief of considerable weight. If the inscriptions can be relied on, this must have represented the Virgin and Christ in some pairing—such as the Virgin and Child, the Nativity, or the Coronation of the Virgin. The coat of arms in the antependium, which may not be original, has not been identified.



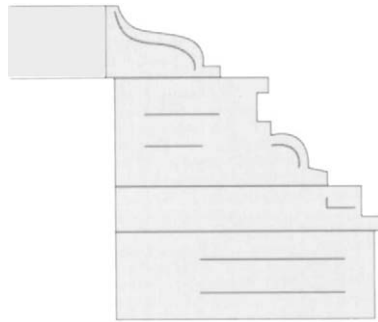
## SIENA, ca. 1490

A carved, gilt, and polychrome arched tabernacle frame. Candelabrum-style columns carved in deep relief support acanthus consoles carrying the arch, which is carved with lotus leaf, rope, and dentil moldings. The arch is surmounted by a carved ripple molding linking silhouetted palmettes at the apex and subcenters and rosettes at the sides. An antependium of rosettes and guilloche-filled volutes, with pendant acorns at the center and sides, encloses a winged cherub head. The predella is inscribed: · PROPIVS · NOS · RESPICE · SEMPER · (Look after us, ever at our side).

46 × 29; 27 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 18 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.

116.8 × 73.7; 70.2 × 46.4 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.54)



2:5



Francesco di Giorgio (Siense, 1439–1501/2), *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1470–75. Formerly Berlin, private collection, present whereabouts unknown (photo: after Helbing, 1936)

This well-known frame appears to have been made for the panel that it now surrounds—the *Madonna and Child* of about 1465 by Benvenuto di Giovanni (1436–ca. 1518)—though it is not engaged and is probably slightly later in date than the painting.<sup>1</sup> The rebate has been adapted slightly to accommodate the warpage of the panel, but gesso and pigmentation along the inner edge of the frame seem once to have been continuous with the narrow painted surround of the panel's gilt outer molding.

The circumstances under which Benvenuto di Giovanni's painting might have been reframed a generation after completion are impossible to determine, though a change in ownership frequently occasioned the reframing of a work of art. The panel reputedly once bore on its reverse the arms of Pope Pius II Piccolomini (d. 1465), all traces of which have been lost. Bare wood below the cherub head in the antependium of the frame may once have been covered by a shield bearing the coat of arms of a subsequent owner. The unusual inclusion of carved acorns in the antependium may also be a heraldic device. Burnished into the back of the frame is the coat of arms of more recent owners, the Griffoli of Siena.

It is perhaps worth noting that while the form of this frame suggests a date in the 1490s, earlier Siense frames of similar construction and ornament are not unknown. Comparable moldings, consoles, and candelabra-decorated pilasters, for example, occur on a frame engaged to an unpublished cartapasta relief by Francesco di Giorgio (ill.), which probably dates from between 1470 and 1475.<sup>2</sup>

1. For the painting see John Pope-Hennessy, *The Robert Lehman Collection: I. Italian Paintings*, New York, 1987, pp. 162–163; and Laurence B. Kanter in *Painting in Renaissance Siena, 1420–1500*, exh. cat., New York, 1988, pp. 300–302. The frame is reproduced in M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pl. 25.

2. *Kunstbesitz eines Berliner Sammlers*, Hugo Helbing, Frankfurt am Main, June 23, 1936, lot 68, pl. 32, as circle of Bertoldo.







## LOMBARDY, 1492–1503

A gilt silver and enamel tabernacle frame comprising paneled pilasters decorated with relief candelabra terminating in bucranium capitals; an arched entablature with a double guilloche frieze; a console and socle antefix surmounted by a figurine of the Risen Christ; a predella of symmetrical anthemion between three enamel roundels of cherub heads; a guilloche base molding; and a bead-and-reel sight molding. The outer edge of the arch supports a pierced band of paired griffins symmetrically arranged on either side of the antefix, with palmette subcenters and pendant bunches of fruit at the level of the capitals.

7 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 5; 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 3 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.

19.4 × 12.7; 12.1 × 8.3 cm.

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.860)

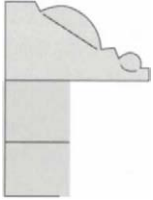


The frame encloses a silver and enamel relief of the Flagellation, the whole being designed for use as a pax. This extraordinary, jewel-like object was made, as the enameled inscription and coat of arms on the relief testify, for Giovanni Borgia (1446–1503), bishop of Monreale, sometime after 1492 when he was created cardinal by his uncle, Pope Alexander VI Borgia. The relief shows the influence of the Paduan sculptor Andrea Riccio (1470/75–1532), both in its general figure style and in the peculiar device that divides the background of the composition: two half-arches springing from a central pillar topped by a capital with three abaci. The frame, on the other hand, is typically Lombard in its unrestrained decorative enthusiasm, a florid, almost Gothic construction compiled from unrelated classical motifs. Specifically, it can be related to a silver processional cross in the church of the Incoronata at Lodi, documented as the work of the Milanese goldsmith Bartolomeo Rocchi and his brothers in 1512.<sup>1</sup>

1. Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, *La corte di Lodovico il Moro: III. Gli artisti lombardi*, 1917, pp. 297–300, pls. x, xi.

## FLORENCE, ca. 1480–1500

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame comprising rosette and pearl moldings surmounted by a bead-and-reel and lotus-leaf cornice. Above the cornice is a painted lunette representing the Trinity flanked by angels and cherubim, surrounded by pearl and rosette moldings with silhouetted rosettes and palmettes at the apex and sides. The base is carved with a lotus-leaf molding.



26¼ × 14¾; 13½ × 10¼ in.

67.9 × 37.5; 34.3 × 26 cm.

Gift of Daniel Wildenstein, 1989 (1989.132)

The surface color of this small, elegant tabernacle has been altered by washing and waxing, but the frame is otherwise extremely well preserved.

It has been proposed, almost certainly correctly, that the frame was carved in the workshop of Giuliano da Majano (1432–1490),<sup>1</sup> and it should be noted that nearly identical moldings are to be found around marble and terracotta reliefs by Giuliano's brother and frequent collaborator, Benedetto da Majano (1442–1497). One such frame, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,<sup>2</sup> is completed by an antependium of volutes and acanthus leaves with a shield bearing a coat of arms. A large tondo frame with similar carved decoration, now in the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, surrounds a painted *Nativity* by Bartolomeo di Giovanni (documented 1483–97), which is apparently original to it. The scene in the lunette of the present frame was also painted by Bartolomeo di Giovanni, who may have enjoyed a regular working relationship with Giuliano da Majano.

1. Keith Christiansen in "Recent Acquisitions: A Selection, 1988–1989," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 47:2, 1989, p. 36.

2. M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pl. 78.







12 

TUSCANY, ca. 1480–1500

A carved, gilt, and polychrome tabernacle frame with simplified Corinthian pilasters; a triangular, dentilated pediment; and an antependium of volutes and a ribboned cartouche inscribed VICIT / TERRA / CELVM (Earth conquered Heaven). The predella, pilasters, entablature frieze, and pediment are painted with grotesques highlighted with mordant gilding.

59½ × 36; 27⅞ × 21⅝ in.  
151.1 × 91.4; 68.9 × 54.9 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.287.17)

Darkening pigments and flaking have obscured the legibility of the decoration on this frame. Evidence of a now-missing back plate suggests that it may have originally housed a stucco relief.

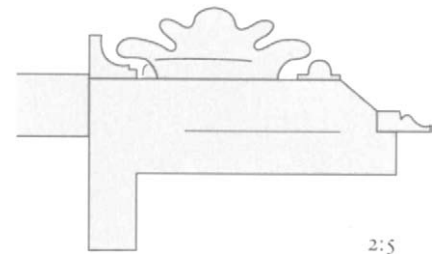
Both this frame and catalogue number 7 formerly belonged to the architect Stanford White (1853–1906), a pioneer of the Renaissance Revival in America and himself a gifted designer of frames.



13 

VENETO, ca. 1480–1520

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta-type frame with antefix and lateral volute extensions and an additional sloping sight molding with punched palm-scale decoration. The corners and centers are filled with applied, turned, and gilt paterae with two layers of petals; the subcenters are marked by paterae with a single layer of petals between projecting acanthus leaves. The base of the frame is a dentil molding, and the antefix, in the form of an inverted antependium, is carved with volutes, rosettes, and an acanthus-and-vine rinceau. The lateral volute extensions are filled with a carved and gilt ivy-and-vine decoration against a blue ground.



38 × 30½; 16 × 14⅝ in.  
96.5 × 77.5; 40.6 × 37.1 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2117)

## VENICE, ca. 1500–20

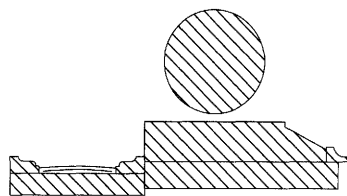
This much damaged and heavily restored frame is important for the boldness of its decoration, which imitates carved marble architectural ornament, and for the rarity of its type. It can be loosely related to a frame in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris,<sup>1</sup> which is, however, far less sculptural in its ornament.

1. M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pl. 52a.

A gilt and polychrome tabernacle frame, carved in pine, with detached fluted-and-reeded Ionic columns. The plinths are decorated with pastiglia cherub heads; heads cast from the same mold but cropped at the wings decorate the imposts. The entablature and predella friezes are filled with pastiglia anthemion decoration; the outer edge panels are decorated with foliate candelabra in pastiglia; the surface behind the columns is blank; and the sloping sight edge is decorated with alternating fields of sgraffito and punched and glazed ornament.

52 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 55 $\frac{5}{8}$ ; 34 × 34 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
134.3 × 141.3; 86.4 × 86.7 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.21)

This extremely well preserved frame was designed to contain a panel painting intended as a small altarpiece. It is a slightly later reflection of the architectural design and ornament popularized around 1480 in Venice by the sculptor and architect Pietro Lombardo (ca. 1435–ca. 1515). The punched and glazed sloping sight edge and the overall patterning of the frame surface with pastiglia ornament are typical of Venetian frames of the period (see cat. nos. 15–18).

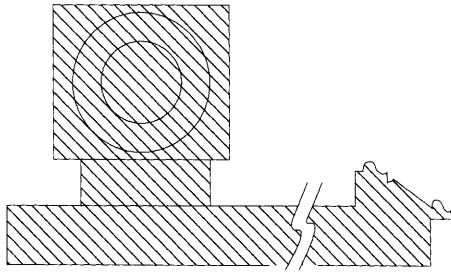


1:4



## VENETO, early 16th century

A carved pine and gilt tabernacle frame with an arched opening and with pastiglia and polychrome decoration. The detached candelabrum-style columns, with spiraling flutes, lotus leaves, and palm scales, rest on consoles with punched scale decoration and support impostes decorated with a punched lozenge pattern. The outer edges are decorated with punched Solomonian columns, the upper and lower friezes with pastiglia cauliculi and rosettes, and the spandrels of the arch with pastiglia palmettes and rosettes. The cornice is a gilt dentil molding against a blue ground, and the sloping sight edge is decorated with dragon's-blood sgraffito cauliculi.



21 × 18; 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
53.3 × 45.7; 30.2 × 25.7 cm.  
Gift of James McBey, 1952 (52.220)

The rebate of the frame has been opened slightly at the base. Apart from local regilding along the edges and on the projecting fronts of the columns, the surface is well preserved.

This, like catalogue numbers 16 and 17, is a good example of a type of tabernacle frame for private devotional images that was widely used in Venice and the Veneto in the first third of the sixteenth century; examples with a rectangular opening are also common. The survival into the sixteenth century of an essentially quattrocento form derived from the sculpted frames of Pietro Lombardo is paralleled in Venice in the architecture of Antonio Abbondio, called Scarpagnino (ca. 1481–1549). The upper story of Scarpagnino's facade for the Scuola di San Rocco (begun 1536) employs many of the design elements used in these frames.

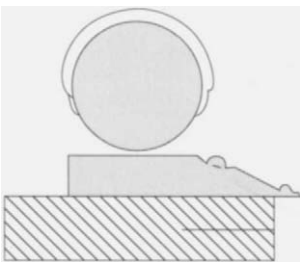




**16** 

VENETO, early 16th century

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame similar to catalogue number 15, with an arched opening and undecorated consoles, impost, and sloping sight edges. The pastiglia frieze in the entablature consists of cauliculi and rosettes springing from a central urn.



25 × 20¼; 15 × 12¼ in.  
63.5 × 51.4; 38.1 × 31.1 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2112)

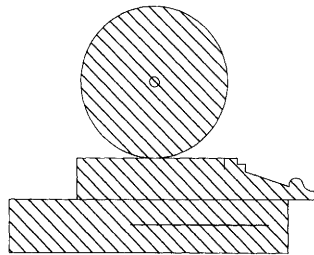
The cornice, impost, spandrels, and sight edge have been regilt. A crossbar on the reverse is pierced with two holes for a hanging cord.



**17** 

VENETO, early 16th century

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame similar to catalogue numbers 15 and 16, with an arched opening, vine-leaf-and-tendrill pastiglia ornament on the columns, carved acanthus consoles, molded lion masks on the impost, double dentil moldings in the cornice, punched Solomonic columns on the outer edges, and an undecorated sloping sight edge. The pastiglia frieze in the entablature, with cauliculi and rosettes springing from a central urn, which resembles that of catalogue number 16, is here repeated in the predella.



29½ × 23½; 19⅜ × 15½ in.  
74.9 × 59.7; 49.2 × 39.4 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2116)

The gilt surface of this frame has been repaired locally and is obscured by a darkened size toning. A crossbar on the reverse is pierced with two holes for a hanging cord.



18 

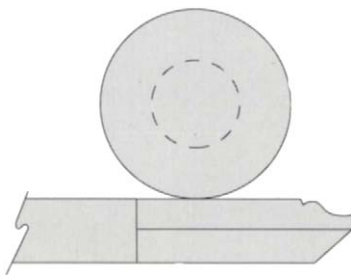
VENETO, ca. 1520–30

A carved and gilt tabernacle mirror frame with pastiglia and polychrome decoration. Detached candelabrum-style columns support impostes punched with a scale pattern and a dentilated cornice with blue recesses. The base of the frame is supported on consoles above a relief panel in the form of an antependium, which is carved with acanthus leaves around a shield bearing an imperfectly legible coat of arms (or, a lion rampant gules). The top and sides of the frame are similarly extended with relief panels of summary griffins, acanthus, and vine leaves against a punched ground. The entablature and predella friezes are filled with pressed pastiglia ornament.

31 × 28½; 10⅞ × 10 in.

78.7 × 72.4; 25.8 × 25.4 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2104)



Structurally similar to catalogue numbers 15–17, this mirror frame is essentially a tabernacle with decorative relief panels added on all four sides. The present mirror is a modern replacement; the original glass was held in place behind the chamfered rebate by a now-missing back board. Plugged holes in

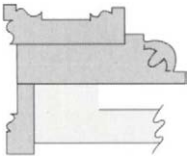
the base molding evidently once held hooks for hanging combs and brushes.<sup>1</sup> Similar mirror frames are recorded in the collections of Antonio Marcato, Venice,<sup>2</sup> Ugo Bardini, Florence,<sup>3</sup> and elsewhere. The type must once have been a common one, though surviving examples are relatively rare.

1. Gustav Ludwig, "Restello, Spiegel und Toilettenutensilien in Venedig zur Zeit der Renaissance," in *Italienische Forschungen*, I, 1906, p. 185.
2. M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pl. 55b.
3. Giuseppe Morazzoni, *Le cornici veneziane*, Milan, n.d., pl. 33c.



## FLORENCE, ca. 1530–50

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt tabernacle frame. Blank-paneled pilasters and modified Corinthian capitals support a heavy entablature with bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and lotus-leaf moldings and a blank frieze. The elaborate pediment is carved with a pair of fluted griffins facing out and a flaming brazier against a punched ground; the antependium is carved with a second pair of fluted griffins, this one facing in toward a ribboned shield, now blank, which surmounts a cartouche with an imperfectly legible inscription: NON · FORMA · SED · VER/[ITAS · MIR]ANDA · EST (Not Beauty but Truth is to be admired). The sight molding of the frame is a drilled guilloche.



29¼ × 14½; 11 × 8 in.

75.6 × 36.8; 27.9 × 20.3 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1638)

The surface of this exceptionally fine frame has suffered from having been overgessoed and then stripped at some point in the past; most of the original gilding has thus been removed, leaving inappropriate and disfiguring traces of gesso in the recesses of the carving and in exposed wormholes. The extremely delicate carving has survived nearly intact, however, and is especially remarkable in the fine-grained fluting of the griffins' bodies, in the undercutting of their wings and tails, and in the volutes of the Corinthian capitals, all of which recall the carving of the benches and reading desks in the Laurentian Library in Florence (ca. 1550).

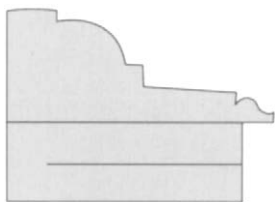
The admonition inscribed on the antependium cartouche of this frame reflects its original function: it was intended for a mirror. A slot filled in with new wood, extending the full height of the window on its right side, once accommodated a sliding shutter, a common feature of sixteenth-century Tuscan mirror frames (see cat. nos. 26, 35).



20 

ITALY, mid-16th century

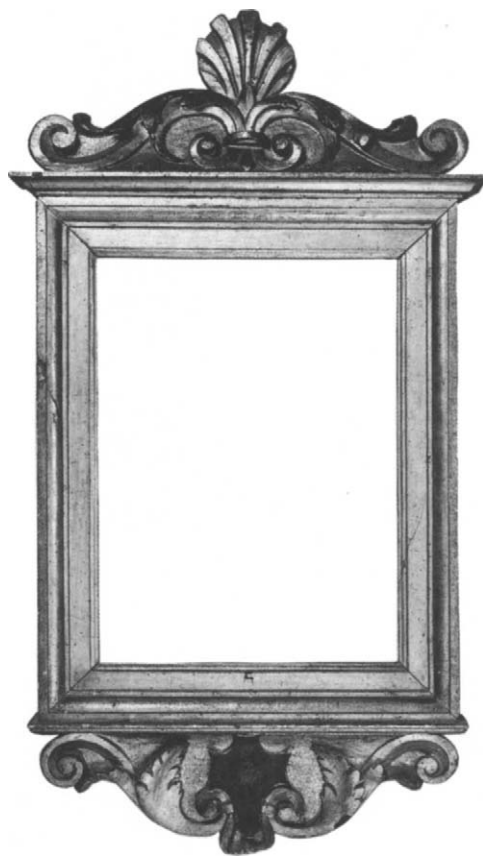
A carved and gilt tabernacle frame with a plain inner molding and a pediment and antependium of cauliculi. The pediment is surmounted by a shell antefix, and the antependium displays a now-blank shield.



45 × 24; 21 × 15 in.  
114.3 × 61.2; 53.3 × 38.1 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.60)

This is essentially a cassetta-type frame with tabernacle extensions (see also cat. no. 13). Neither its profile nor its ornament can be firmly related to a known center of production.



21 

ROME or FLORENCE(?),

ca. 1530–50

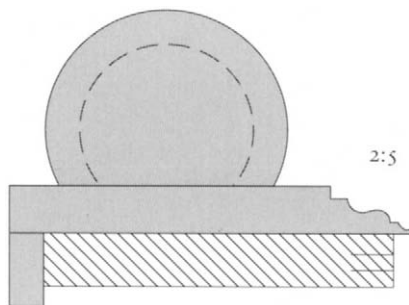
A carved walnut and parcel-gilt tabernacle frame, with three-quarter round Doric columns, an entablature and pediment, and a predella. The metopes, predella, and plinths were originally decorated with colored-glass insets, lost (or removed) and replaced at an early date with silver and gilt embossed leather overlays.

47 × 34; 21½ × 17¼ in.

119.4 × 86.4; 54.6 × 43.8 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.99)

The Vitruvian purity of this Doric tabernacle and the deep carving of its unadorned moldings—notable especially in the stepped moldings of its pediment and sight edge—impart a monumentality to its design. Though a taste for parcel-gilt walnut frames is generally associated with Florence in the sixteenth century, the archaeological simplicity of this example suggests a Roman milieu influenced by Raphael's architectural studies and by the publication, in 1536, of Giovanni Battista Caporali's translation of Vitruvius's *De architectura*.



TUSCANY or EMILIA(?),  
ca. 1530–50

A carved, gilt, and polychrome tabernacle frame with fluted Tuscan half-columns supporting a Doric entablature and a triangular pediment. The plinths and metopes are painted in *faux-marbre*, the predella with a floral rinceau, and the tympanum with a cherub head.

87 × 62; 52½ × 35⅝ in.

221 × 157.5; 133.4 × 89.9 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.110)

Both the construction and decorative vocabulary of this frame are unusual. Ostensibly of the Doric order, its fluted columns and tall, narrow proportions are more appropriate to an Ionic or Corinthian tabernacle. The capitals and columns are mismatched, the capitals being the truncated tops of columns from a different complex. The window has no rebate, and a pair of blue boards, truncated at the level of the abaci, extend beyond the columns at either side as if simulating the front face of two piers to which the frame might have been engaged. The pediment is disproportionately large for the entablature, overhanging it excessively on the front and sides and dominating the structure of the frame as a whole.

A possible explanation for these peculiarities is that the frame was designed as part of the articulation of a wall surface, surrounding a niche, a fresco, or some object attached directly to the wall. In such a case, the entablature of the frame was probably aligned with a string course or cornice, accounting for the truncation of the lateral extensions (where they would have butted against the wall molding) and also perhaps for the excessive width and depth of the pediment, which could have appeared to rest on top of the wall molding. The triglyphs of the entablature are supported on guttae and the cornices of the pediment on corbels, with a pair of corbels aligned directly above each triglyph. These architecturally superfluous elements might have been intended to reinforce the visual impression that the pediment of the frame, rather than being supported on its lintel, was anchored directly to the wall.

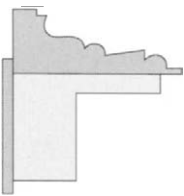




23 

FLORENCE, ca. 1540

A carved walnut tabernacle frame comprising a plain stepped molding and an undecorated cornice that is supported on volutes carved in profile.



38½ × 38¼; 30¼ × 24¾ in.  
97.8 × 97.2; 76.8 × 62.9 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.90)

An extremely elegant and simplified reflection of Michelangelo's Florentine architecture, such as the designs for the windows in the Reading Room and the upper zone of the vestibule in the Laurentian Library.<sup>1</sup> A related frame was recorded in the collection of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin,<sup>2</sup> and another is in the Samuel H. Kress Collection (ill.).

1. See Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi, eds., *Michelangelo architetto*, Turin, 1964, figs. 291, 341, 343.
2. Frida Schottmüller, *I mobili e l'abitazione del rinascimento in Italia*, Paris, 1921, fig. 495.



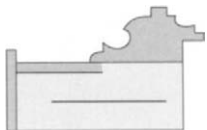
Tabernacle frame, Florence, ca. 1540.  
Samuel H. Kress Collection



24 

FLORENCE, ca. 1550–70

A carved poplar tabernacle frame with walnut veneer, comprising a reverse sight molding and an extended corner frieze, a simple cornice, and side and base volute extensions.



28 × 21½; 20½ × 15¼ in.

71.1 × 54.6; 52.1 × 38.7 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.54)

This frame was inspired, like catalogue number 23, by Michelangelesque architectural vocabulary, though in a more superficial, decorative sense. The lateral volutes no longer appear to support the weight of the frame, while the strong entablature and cornice of number 23 have been suppressed in favor of an undecorated cassetta-type surround with extended corners. The elegant reverse profile of the sight molding is related to the profiles of turned walnut paterae of the period in Florence.



## ROME(?), mid-16th century

A bronze tabernacle frame cast in one with a relief of the Pietà. A broken arched pediment is supported on herms and separated from an inner molding by framed ovals. At the top is a second broken arched pediment with a shell at the apex, enclosing a half-length figure of God the Father blessing. At the base of the frame is a cameo inset of Saint Peter and an inscription: · SOCIETAS · S · PETRI · (Society of Saint Peter).

6½ × 4⅜; 3¼ × 2½ in.  
16.5 × 11.1; 8.3 × 6.4 cm.

Bequest of Henry Victor Burgy, 1901  
(01.23.151)

One of several known replicas of this composition with an engaged frame,<sup>1</sup> the present example is unique in having a cameo inset and an inscription across the bottom (referring to the confraternity that commissioned it); there is usually a cherub head in the lower moldings. With or without the cameo inset, the relief cast together with its frame was meant for use as a pax. Separate castings of the central relief as a plaque are also known, and one of these has been set into a frame like that of catalogue number 49.<sup>2</sup> The composi-

tion of this *Pietà* is based on a drawing by Michelangelo made for presentation to Vittoria Colonna, and the design of the frame derives from Michelangelo's later Roman works, especially the Porta Pia and the facade of the Palazzo dei Conservatori.

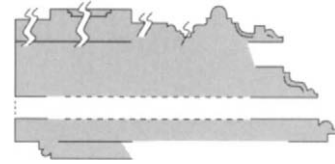
1. An extensive list of replicas and variants is published in William D. Wixom, *Renaissance Bronzes from Ohio Collections*, exh. cat., Cleveland, 1975, no. 140.
2. The Art Museum, Princeton University, no. 52-91; Charles de Tolnay, "Michelangelo's Pietà Composition for Vittoria Colonna," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 12, 1953, pp. 44-62.

26 

## FLORENCE, mid-16th century

A carved walnut tabernacle mirror frame with an oval window and three levels of sight moldings: back-to-back fluted and reeded knulls on the first level; bead-and-reel and lotus leaf behind the first shutter slide; and lotus leaf behind the second shutter slide. Tapering pilasters with composite

capitals are decorated with overlapping disks; the cornice, with a wave pattern in shallow relief, is surmounted by a blank shield cartouche and volutes; and the spandrels are filled with acanthus leaf-and-berry decoration. Shutter handles at the sides are each carved with a shell between scrolled volutes.



16¼ × 15⅞; 7⅜ × 5⅞ in.  
41.3 × 38.4; 18.7 × 14.9 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2090)

All traces of the original surface of this frame, which may have been parcel-gilt, have been lost. The gesso filling the carved recesses on the front is a later addition. The reverse has been painted yellow, a strip of wood added across the bottom, and an iron hook applied at the top. The three finials that once adorned the top, at the center and corners, are now missing.

Florentine mirrors in the sixteenth century commonly employed a sliding shutter to cover the glass when not in use (see cat. nos. 19, 35). This mirror is remarkable in having two shutters and, in consequence, three sight moldings. The first molding framed the shutter covering the glass. The glass, within the second sight molding, was itself mounted in a slide that could be pulled out to reveal an image of some kind—perhaps a portrait—framed in the third sight molding. The carving of the third molding is exceptionally delicate and its rebate extremely shallow, suggesting that it may have contained a painting on copper.

The present shutters in the frame are later replacements. Originally, both slides operated from the right side; the second slot on that side has been filled with new wood. A slot has been routed in the left side to accommodate the second slide, and the shell and volute extension there, created solely to balance the handle at the right side, has been disengaged for use as a handle. The second handle on the right was undoubtedly





set directly behind the first and probably operated as a finger pull.

The design of this frame, both in its architectural structure and in its decoration, can be related to the studio of Giorgio Vasari (see also cat. no. 35), evoking the architectural frontispieces in *Le vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architetti* (1550) and the carved wall moldings in the Studiolo of Francesco I de' Medici (1570–72).



Mirror (cat. no. 26) with shutter open

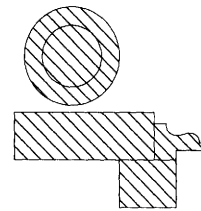




27 

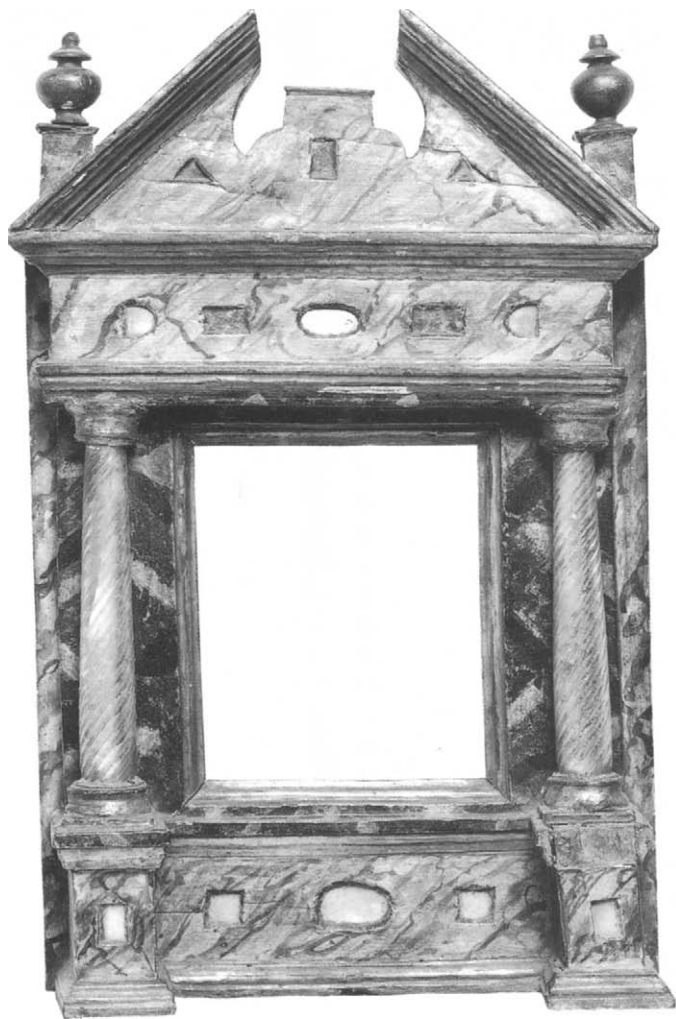
FRANCE or ITALY,  
mid-16th century

A carved and parcel-gilt tabernacle frame with a broken pediment supporting turned finials; polished marble inlays in the pediment, entablature, predella, and antependium surrounded by imitation egg-and-dart moldings painted in brown and mordant gilt; and Solomonic columns of blue glass with cores of silvered paper and turned and gilt bases and capitals. The sight molding is gilt and hazzled.



20½ × 11; 6⅞ × 5¼ in.  
52.1 × 27.9; 17.5 × 13.3 cm.  
The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of  
Michael Friedsam, 1931 (32.174)

Generally associated with the French court at Fontainebleau, particularly with miniature portraits by Corneille de Lyon (active 1534–74) and François Clouet (before 1522–1572), tabernacles of this sort, with their sumptuous inlays and colorful surfaces, derive from Italian prototypes (see cat. no. 28) and were frequently made in Italy. The use of pine for the structure of the present example suggests a possible North Italian origin.



a



b

## 28

### NORTH ITALY (PIED-MONT?), mid-16th century

**a.** A carved and polychrome tabernacle frame with a broken pediment and turned finials, mother-of-pearl inlays in the entablature and predella, and Solomonian glass columns. The surface of the frame is painted in *faux-marbre*, the column bases and capitals are gilt, and the sight edge is silver gilt.

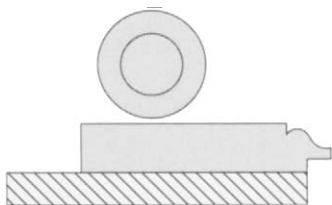
19 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
49.2 × 31.1; 16.5 × 13.3 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2341)

**b.** A pair to number 28a, with polished marble columns instead of glass and with marble as well as mother-of-pearl inlays.

18 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ ; 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 5 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.  
47 × 30.2; 17.5 × 13.7 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2316)

The center finial at the top and the upper molding on the right-hand plinth of catalogue number 28a have been lost. In catalogue number 28b, all three finials on the pediment and the upper molding on the left-hand plinth are missing.

Despite minor differences in their proportions and decoration, these two frames, provincial variants of the type represented by catalogue number 27, were undoubtedly conceived and executed as a pair.





## 29

ROME, ca. 1550–70

A gilt bronze tabernacle frame with tapering pilasters supporting Ionic caryatids on triglyphs and guttae, a convex entablature frieze, and a triangular pediment. The tympanum shows the Dove of the Holy Spirit against a punched ground. The panels of the pilasters are also punched.

5½ × 4; 3⅜ × 2½ in.  
14 × 10.2; 8.6 × 6.4 cm.

The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931 (32.100.168)

Designed by the sculptor and architect Guglielmo della Porta (before 1506–1577), this frame is cast in one with a relief of Christ Appearing to the Apostles, the whole intended for use as a

pax. Similar frame designs can be identified among the pages of della Porta's Düsseldorf sketchbook (ill.),<sup>1</sup> associated with the series of fourteen Passion reliefs designed by the artist around 1550–55. Though the reliefs themselves were never executed, the drawings for them were reused in various contexts throughout the latter part of della Porta's career.<sup>2</sup>

1. Werner Gramberg, *Die Düsseldorfer Skizzenbücher des Guglielmo della Porta*, Berlin, 1964, II, nos. 148, 149.

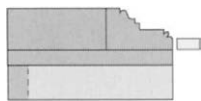
2. Carolyn Valone, "Paul IV, Guglielmo della Porta and the Rebuilding of San Silvestro al Quirinale," *Master Drawings* 15, 1977, pp. 243–255.



Guglielmo della Porta (Milanese, before 1506–1577), study for a framed relief of the Entry into Jerusalem, ca. 1550–55. Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum (photo: after Gramberg, 1964)

## LOMBARDY (?), ca. 1550–80

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt tabernacle mirror frame. The stepped sight molding has extended corners, with a rosette insert in each; lateral panels are carved with winged herms and festoons. The cornice is supported on two consoles with silhouette echoes at the sides; the consoles are separated by an applied cauliculus ornament. The long sides of the frame are extended by volutes and festoons at the bottom and acanthus bosses at the top. Cauliculi flanking a central sheaf form the antependium.



19 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
49.8 × 36.2; 31.1 × 18.4 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2096)

The volute-and-festoon extension on the lower right side is missing, and the rosette in the lower left corner of the sight molding is a replacement. The silvered mirror, possibly original, has been cracked by the warpage of the back plate.



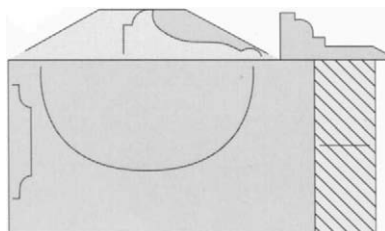


31 

LOMBARDY, ca. 1580–1600

An elaborate carved, gilt, and polychrome tabernacle frame comprising a stepped sight molding flanked by piers supporting a carved entablature and a broken arched pediment, the whole resting on oversized volute consoles and, at the center of the base, a cherub-head corbel. The piers contain shell niches with projecting socles that support figures of Saint Peter (left) and Saint Paul (right). A cherub head swagged with garlands appears above each niche, and a larger cherub head fills the tympanum. The faces of the cherubs and one of Saint Peter's keys are silver gilt, while the heads and books of the saints

are polychrome. The frame is decorated along its outer edges with carved paterae on the piers and silver-gilt cherub heads on the volutes.



24 × 17¼; 11¼ × 6¾ in.

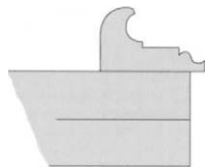
61.2 × 43.8; 29.8 × 17.1 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2106)

The heavily nailed construction and deep rebate of this exceptional frame suggest that it may have contained a carved marble relief. A Lombard origin is implied by its weighty, tightly coiled volutes and by the profile of its sight molding.

## LOMBARDY(?), ca. 1640

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame with a rusticated and scrolled broken arched pediment and a blank entablature supported on rusticated volutes. Extended corners at the bottom are filled with overlapping disks and separated by a pair of rusticated volutes.



2:5

32 × 23¼; 19½ × 15⅞ in.

81.3 × 60.3; 49.5 × 38.4 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2221)

This frame is unusual in that all of its ornament is carved directly into the back frame, to which the raised sight molding is attached. The socle in the center of the pediment must once have supported an attachment, possibly a shield with a coat of arms.







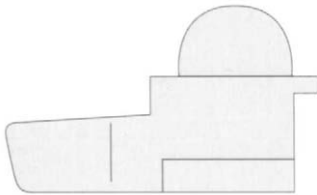
a



33 

ROME(?), early 17th century

A pair of miniature gilt and polychrome tabernacle frames, each carved from a single piece of poplar with butted insertions at the top and bottom of the sight edge. The broken arched pediment and the entablature are supported on three-quarter round Doric columns painted in *faux-marbre*; a volute antefix supports a heraldic device of three *monti*. Silhouetted cauliculi, bosses, and volutes extend the sides of each frame. The panels of the predella, plinths, imposts, and entablature frieze are decorated with blue sgraffito ornament, and the entablature cartouche is glazed in dragon's blood with a flame emblem.



a.  $17 \times 13\frac{7}{8}; 8 \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
 $43.2 \times 35.2; 20.3 \times 16.5$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2091)

b.  $17 \times 14; 7\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
 $43.2 \times 35.6; 19.7 \times 16.5$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2092)

Of the two frames, catalogue number 33a is in slightly better condition, with fewer putty repairs and less regilding in the base and lateral extensions.

The three *monti* atop the antefix were originally completed by an attachment, possibly a star, and may have referred to the arms of the Albani of Urbino.

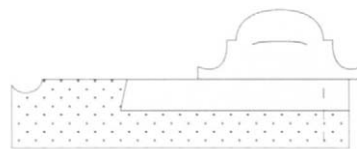


34 

BOLOGNA, ca. 1630–40

A carved and gilt tabernacle frame comprising a reverse profile with a laurel-leaf sight molding and an extended corner frieze punched and burnished with continuous cauliculus decoration; an egg-and-dart and dentil cornice; reduced silhouette consoles beneath the upper extended corners; and an antependium with center and corner cauliculi.

Though the overall form of this frame refers back to earlier Florentine designs (see cat. no. 24), the combination of punched decoration and reverse sight molding, as well as the swollen carving of the floral antependium and consoles, is characteristic of early seventeenth-century Bolognese frames.



$33\frac{3}{8} \times 27; 20\frac{3}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
 $84.1 \times 68.6; 51.8 \times 36.2$  cm.  
 Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
 (62.273.68)

b

### III. Gallery Frames

35 

FLORENCE, ca. 1530–50

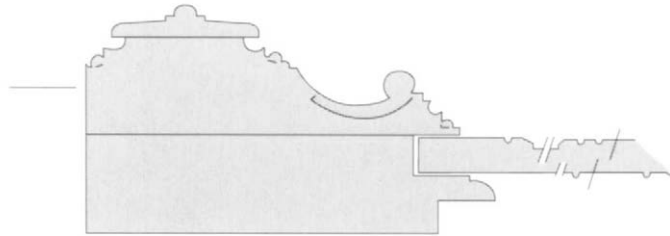
A carved walnut mirror frame with a lotus-leaf sight molding; a cavetto carved with straight scrolls and coffers with patera; back-to-back straight flutes on the top edge; a lotus-leaf back edge; and volute, festoon, and grotesque extensions at the top, bottom, and lower sides. The shutter, with an oval center, has a shallow carved sight molding of a key pattern with inset bosses at the quarters and in the spandrels.

36¼ × 29; 21⅞ × 17¼ in.

92.1 × 73.7; 54.3 × 45.1 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2373)

The sliding shutter appears to be original, though the painting of the Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist that it now displays is a mid-nineteenth-century addition. No trace of an earlier image survives beneath the modern painted surface, but its appearance can perhaps be reconstructed by comparison to a related mirror frame in the Casa Vasari, Arezzo,<sup>1</sup> which shows a figure of Prudence(?) in the oval center of its shutter. The eight circular bosses on the shutter are also modern, proba-



bly replacing lost mother-of-pearl, marble, or colored-glass insets. The entire frame, which has been stripped, is likely to have been parcel-gilt. It has lost its shutter handle and respond at the centers of the two long sides, and probably a pair of volutes at the top of these sides corresponding to those still engaged below.

This frame is related by its decorative motifs and by the quality and complexity of its carving to a small group of distinguished picture frames produced in mid-sixteenth-century Florence, of which the two best known are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford,<sup>2</sup> and the collection of Sir Harold Acton, Florence.<sup>3</sup>

The New York mirror frame is likely to be slightly earlier than either of these examples. The decoration of its cavetto, carved with straight scrolls and coffers, derives from the monumental gilt frame on the Capponi altarpiece of Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557) in Santa Felicità, Florence (ca. 1526–28).

1. Alessandro del Vita, "Uno specchio vasariano," *Dedalo* 10, 1929–30, pp. 142–149; and Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, *Mostra del cinquecento toscano*, exh. cat., 1940, pl. 43.
2. Christopher Lloyd, *A Catalogue of the Earlier Italian Paintings in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford, 1977, p. 41, pl. 30; and Claus Grimm, *Alte Bilderrahmen: Epochen—Typen—Material*, Munich, 1978, p. 71.
3. Palazzo Strozzi, *Mostra del cinquecento toscano*, pl. 41.





1. Cassetta frame (cat. no. 36) with the coat of arms of Pope Gregory XIII

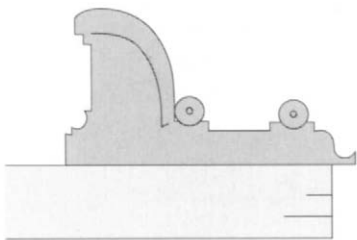


2. Cabinet with the coat of arms of Pope Gregory XIII. The cabinet formerly Florence, Bardini Collection, present whereabouts unknown (photo: after Christie's, 1902)

### 36

FLORENCE, ca. 1540–50

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt cassetta frame with turned bead-and-reel and pearl moldings in the channels; a deep, straight-fluted ovolo; extended corners; and silhouetted volute and palmette extensions at the bottom and sides.



2:5

63 × 58 $\frac{7}{8}$ ; 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
160 × 149.5; 130.2 × 106 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.70.38)

When this frame was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum,<sup>1</sup> it had been supplied with a crest of two angels supporting the arms of Pope Gregory XIII Buoncompagni between heavy scrolled volutes (ill. 1). This crest, which has now been removed, was added to the frame by the Florentine dealer Stefano Bardini sometime after 1902, when he had used it instead, equally incorrectly, as the pediment of a cabinet (ill. 2).<sup>2</sup> Such a practice was once common among dealers and restorers of Renaissance furniture and frames, and many notable objects in public and private collections today are in effect pastiches, not in the sense of being

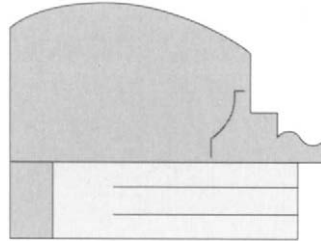
imitations but of being composite constructions pieced together from fragments of unrelated works of art.

1. *De Luxe Illustrated Catalogue of the Beautiful Treasures and Antiquities...belonging to...Stefano Bardini...*, American Art Association, New York, 1918, lot 608.
2. *Catalogue des objets d'art antiques, du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance provenant de la collection Bardini de Florence*, Christie's, London, 1902, lot 582, pl. 61.

TUSCANY (FLORENCE?),  
late 16th century

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt Sansovino-style frame with a blank sight molding and flat, square blocks at the corners. The sides are carved in relief with center clasps between symmetrical, stepped volutes that change direction at slightly under their midpoint from the clasps, silhouetted against a flat background with gilt highlighting.

31 × 26½; 24 × 19¾ in.  
78.7 × 67.3; 61.2 × 49.8 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation,  
1962 (62.273.83)



The walnut and parcel-gilt decoration of this frame recalls an earlier Florentine style, while the elongated volutes with their sharp, angular changes of direction, inspired perhaps by the architectural ornament favored by Bernardo Buontalenti (1531–1608), foreshadow the more elaborate Palatine frames of the seventeenth century.





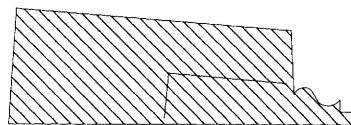


38

TUSCANY (FLORENCE?),  
mid-16th century

A carved and gilt Sansovino-style frame with green and dragon's-blood glazed decoration. The top and base are carved with symmetrical volutes and counterflow sub-center volutes, with a cherub head (top) and a grotesque mask (base) at the center. The sides are carved with winged female grotesques in profile, each supporting a container of fruit; the scrolled extremities of the grotesques rest on silhouetted masks and bases.

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>; 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
59.4 × 72.4; 39.4 × 54.3 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975  
(1975.1.2152)



This remarkable frame is unusual not only for its eccentric, finely carved ornament, imitating painted grotesque decoration, but also for its horizontal format and its sloping profile, reminiscent more of bronze casting than of wood-carving techniques. It is difficult to imagine what sort of object or image

it contained, or the context for which it was designed. The base ornament does not extend beyond the profile of the back frame and the bottom edge of the frame is very worn, suggesting that the frame was meant to stand on a horizontal surface. A peg hole in the head of the cherub at the top implies a missing horizontal extension, perhaps heraldic.

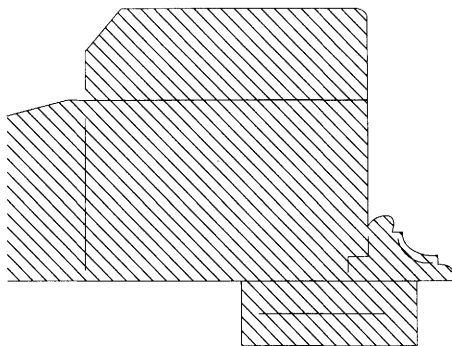
## VENICE, ca. 1580–90

An elaborate carved and gilt Sansovino frame with a pegged crossing back frame; a leaf-and-dart sight molding; well-developed centered and elongated scrolls symmetrical along the vertical axis; and volute corbels at the lower corners. A cherub head swagged with a veil appears at the center top and bottom and slightly above center on the sides. The scrolls at the top, bottom, and upper corners are swagged with festoons and culots, and two birds perch within the silhouette of the scrolls at the lower corners.

42 × 37½; 27 × 24½ in.

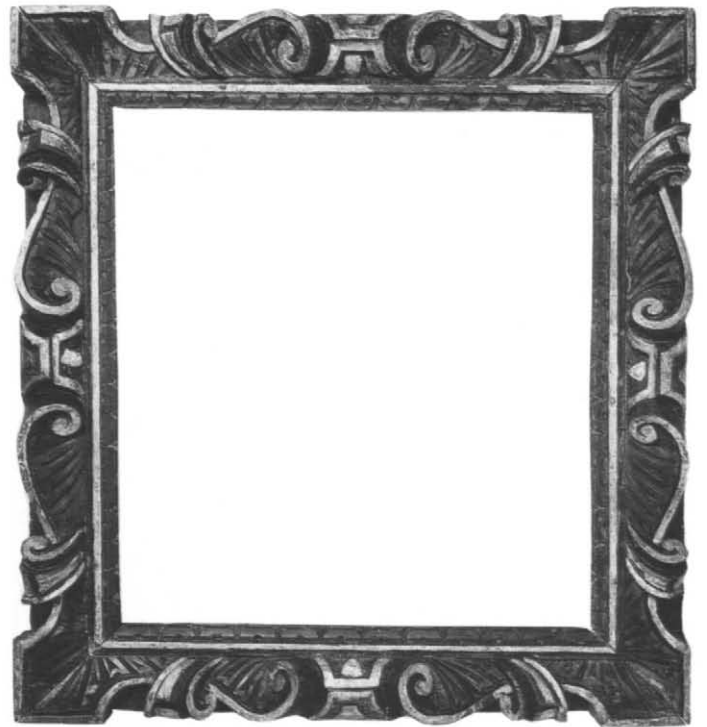
106.7 × 95.3; 68.6 × 62.2 cm.

Gift of Harry Payne Bingham, Jr., 1958  
(58.192)



An excellent example of the more elaborate type of Sansovino frame with complicated pierced carving. The twisting and interlacing of the scrolls recall the architectural decoration in stucco which became a specialty of the workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (1525–1608) in Venice, while the carving of the cherub heads resembles contemporary bronzes attributed either to Vittoria or to Niccolò Roccatagliata (active 1593–1636).





#### 40-45

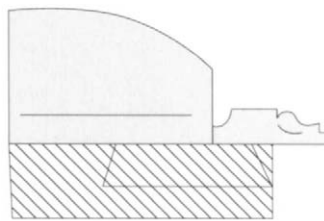
VENETO, mid-16th to mid-17th century

A group of six carved Sansovino frames with squared back-frame silhouettes and symmetrical centered volutes tapering to squared corners. All but number 45 have counterflow volute subcenters.

#### 40 ☞

VENICE, mid- to late 16th century

A parcel-gilt and polychrome example with a lotus-leaf sight molding, center clasps, fluted rustication infill, and alternating brown and gilt highlights with gesso and bole reserves in the channels.



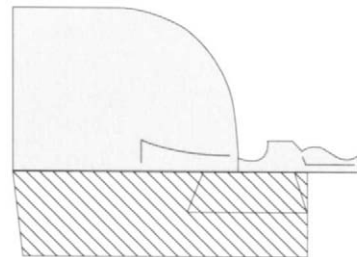
27½ × 24¼; 20½ × 17⅞ in.  
69.9 × 61.6; 52.1 × 44.8 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.77)

The lower sight molding has been lost.

#### 41 ☞

VENETO, late 16th to early 17th century

A parcel-gilt and polychrome example with a lotus-leaf sight molding, center clasps, and radiating fluted rustication infill.



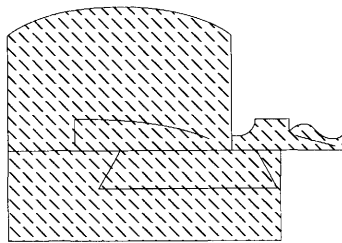
27¾ × 25; 20 × 17⅞ in.  
70.5 × 63.5; 50.8 × 44.1 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.1.5)

Later regessoing and regilding over a red bole have been stripped to reveal the original brown and gilt surface over an orange-brown bole and gray gesso.

**42** 

VENETO, late 16th to early 17th century

A parcel-gilt and polychrome example with a lotus-leaf sight molding, patera centers, and fanned rustication infill.



40 × 35½; 32 × 27½ in.  
101.6 × 90.2; 81.3 × 69.9 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.16)

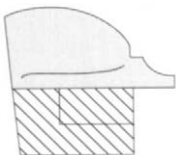
Tintoretto's *Portrait of a Man in Armor* of about 1560, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, is displayed in a nearly identical frame.



**43** 

VENETO, early 17th century

A gilt and polychrome example with a plain sight molding, center clasps, and green reserves on the back frame.



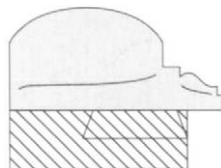
20 × 17⅞; 16⅞ × 14 in.  
50.8 × 44.8; 41.6 × 35.6 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2322)

**44** 

VENETO, early 17th century

A gilt example with a lotus-leaf sight molding, center clasps, and shallow rustication infill.



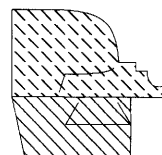
24¾ × 21½; 20 × 17 in.  
62.9 × 54.6; 50.8 × 43.2 cm.

Bequest of Woodman Thompson, 1955  
(55.225)

**45** 

VENETO, mid- to late 17th century

A gilt and polychrome example with scroll centers, shallow rustication infill, and no counterflow volutes at the subcenters.



16¾ × 15½; 13¼ × 12 in.  
42.5 × 39.4; 33.7 × 30.5 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2374)

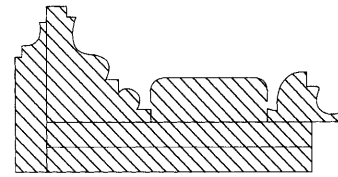




47 

VENETO or LOMBARDY(?),  
early 17th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with extended corners; a Sansovino-style outer frame of interlaced scrolls and volutes, cherub heads swagged with veils at the lateral centers; and palmettes at the corners and top and bottom subcenters. The frame is ornamented at the top center with a large polychrome cherub head surmounted by scrolls, acanthus, and a patera. A smaller cherub head at the center of the base surmounts a blank cartouche. The frieze of the inner frame is decorated with carved and sgraffito cauliculi.



44 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 33; 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
113.7 × 83.8; 59.7 × 47 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2162)

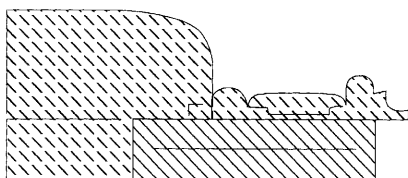
This was probably designed as a mirror frame. The cartouche at the base, now blank, must once have been painted with a coat of arms. Except for the removal of these arms and for slight wear on the strongly projecting cherub heads, the gilt and polychrome surface of the frame is remarkably well preserved.

A closely related frame, probably carved in the same workshop, is in the Samuel H. Kress Collection (ill.).

46 

VENICE, ca. 1600

A carved and gilt cassetta-type frame with a pierced Sansovino-style outer frame of interlacing scrolls, festoons, escarpa, and birds, with a cherub head at the bottom center and a blank cartouche at the top. The frieze of the inner frame is carved with acanthus-leaf corners and with different cauliculi on each of the four sides centered respectively on (clockwise from the left) an acanthus, a patera, a lotus, and a lily, highlighted against a blue background.



25 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ ; 10 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
64.8 × 49.5; 26.4 × 19.7 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2321)

The cartouche at the top has been broken, regessoed, regilt, and reattached to the frame. A similar though more aggressively carved frame, also surmounted by an oversized cartouche, is recorded in the collection of M. Guggenheim.<sup>1</sup>

1. M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pl. 98.



Cassetta frame, Veneto or Lombardy, early 17th century. Samuel H. Kress Collection



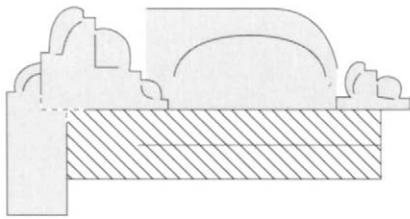






## LOMBARDY, late 16th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with extended corners; egg-and-dart and lotus-leaf sight moldings; bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and fluted top moldings; and a lotus-leaf back edge. The frieze is decorated with carved culots, bows, and escarpa against a sgraffito ground, and the corners are filled with masks and volutes. The frame is enclosed in volute extensions with bosses and swags of fruit; a cherub head at the center of the base; two winged, diadem-crowned female busts in profile at the sides; and two winged, similarly crowned female grotesques supporting a cartouche with a coat of arms at the top center.



44½ × 34; 23⅞ × 17¼ in.  
113 × 86.4; 58.7 × 43.8 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2124)

This was probably intended as a mirror frame. The coat of arms at the top is only partially legible and has not been identified. The entire frame has been lacquered.

The technique of highlighting carved ornament against a sgraffito ground is Spanish in origin.

49 NORTH ITALY (?),  
late 16th century

A gilt bronze Sansovino-style frame of rusticated knulling and pearls with extensions that comprise a cherub head, a cartouche, festoons, and rusticated volutes at the top; scrolling volutes, culots, and center clasps at the sides; and scrolling volutes and a cherub head at the base.

7 × 4⅞; 5 × 3¼ in.  
17.8 × 12.4; 12.7 × 8.3 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1338)

The frame, cast without a rebate, contains a plaquette of the Virgin and Child with the young Baptist by an unknown, mid-sixteenth-century Venetian(?) artist.<sup>1</sup>



The plaquette is cast with a recessed surround to fit within the frame and is secured in place by two turns.

Although frame and plaquette may well have been paired from the beginning, the former was designed as an independent unit, intended for interchangeable use with other plaquettes of the same size. At least three replicas containing different plaquettes are known. One, a silver-gilt example in the Art Museum, Princeton University, encloses a Michelangelesque *Pietà* related to catalogue number 25.<sup>2</sup> Like the present example, it is cast slightly out of square. Two others each enclose a late sixteenth-century North Italian plaquette of the Coronation of the Virgin.<sup>3</sup> One of the two (present whereabouts unknown) is gilt and cast square, with pierced volutes at the sides and bottom and with much sharper detail than in the other examples.

This frame is usually considered North Italian, specifically Venetian or Genoese, yet certain details of its decoration can be related to Central Italian examples

of about 1550–60. The rusticated scroll volutes, for example, recall Michelangelo's designs for the Porta Pia in Rome.<sup>4</sup> They reappear, together with other elements occurring in this frame, such as the center clasps and cartouches, in a drawing for a frame attributed to Bartolomeo Ammanati (1511–1592), in the Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence.<sup>5</sup>

1. Emile Molinier, *Les Bronzes de la Renaissance: Les Plaquettes*, Paris, 1886, no. 431. For a discussion of the attribution of this plaquette and a list of its known variants see William D. Wixom, *Renaissance Bronzes from Ohio Collections*, exh. cat., Cleveland, 1975, no. 103.
2. Charles de Tolnay, "Michelangelo's *Pietà* Composition for Vittoria Colonna," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 12, 1953, pp. 44–62, fig. 17.
3. *Catalogue des objets d'art antiques, du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance provenant de la collection Bardini de Florence*, Christie's, London, 1902, lot 266, pl. 10; and Davide Banzato and Franca Pellegrini, *Bronzi e placchette dei Musei Civici di Padova*, 1989, no. 56, pp. 80–81.
4. See Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi, eds., *Michelangiolo architetto*, Turin, 1964, fig. 783.
5. Reproduced in Paul Mitchell, "Italian Picture Frames, 1500–1825: A Brief Survey," *Furniture History: The Journal of the Furniture History Society* 20, 1984, pl. 14a.

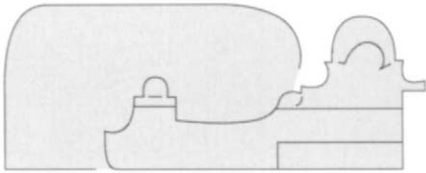




50 

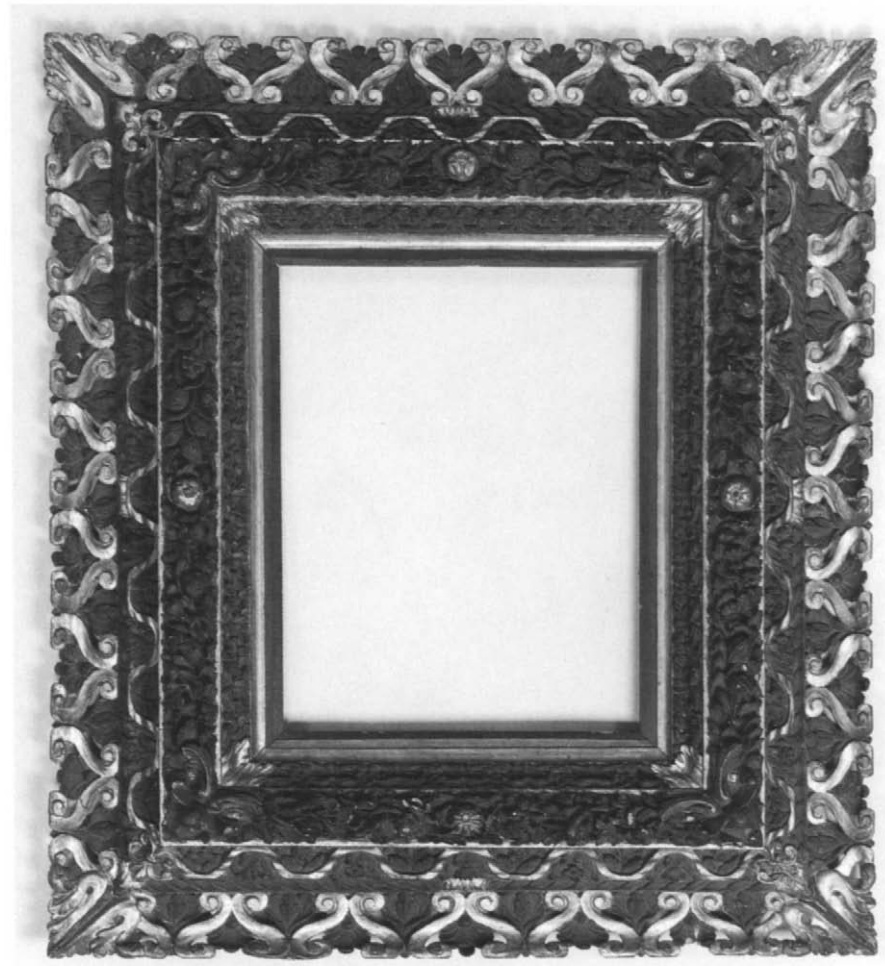
NORTH ITALY, early 17th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome reverse frame with a strong sight molding of raking flutes with reeds and a simplified lotus leaf; an outer molding of pearls; and scroll extensions that appear threaded through the frieze and around the pearl molding.



37¼ × 31⅞; 25¾ × 19½ in.  
94.6 × 79.1; 65.4 × 49.5 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2173)

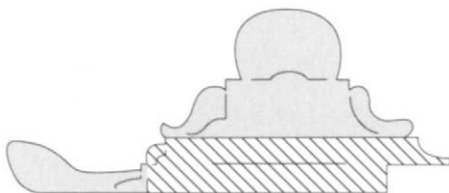
The frieze of this beautifully designed frame is painted brown in imitation of polished walnut. The scroll extensions meet to form a summary lily at each corner; that at the lower left is broken.



51 

VENICE, ca. 1610–20

A deeply carved, parcel-gilt, and polychrome astragal and reverse frame with a plain sight molding; a cavetto of interwoven scrolls and acanthus with gilt acanthus-leaf corners; a raised wreath top molding of fruit (the center fruit on each side is gilt) and leaves, with parcel-gilt auricular grotesques at the corners (ill.); a molding of leaves, fleurets, and gilt ribbon with a gilt lily at each corner; a rope molding with gilt leaves at the centers and corners; and a pierced outer molding of leaves and palmettes alternating with gilt scrolls, with parcel-gilt acanthus corners.



42½ × 37½; 22⅞ × 17⅞ in.  
108 × 95.3; 58.1 × 44.8 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2175)

The virtuoso carving and opulent design of this extraordinary frame are slightly compromised by its heavy proportions and by its present darkened surface.



Grotesque mask (cat. no. 51, detail)

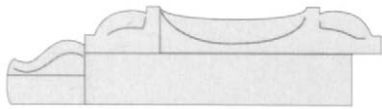


## IV. Tondi

52 

FLORENCE, ca. 1480–1500

A carved and gilt tondo frame decorated in the frieze with an anthemion of alternating lily and palm fronds bound with a continuous ribbon against a blue ground. The ribbon is glazed in dragon's blood with a repeated motto: *MIHI SATIS* (It suffices me). The frieze is bordered by egg-and-dart moldings on the sight and outer edges, with an acanthus-leaf molding on the back edge.



47½; 31¼ in.  
120.7; 80.6 cm.

Bequest of Georgiana L. McClellan, 1952  
(53.228)

This distinguished frame once contained a painting of the Annunciation by the Master of the Apollo and Daphne Legend<sup>1</sup> and may have been original to it. The artist, active in Florence in the last decades of the fifteenth century, was strongly influenced by Bartolomeo di Giovanni (see cat. no. 11), and like him may have enjoyed a working relationship with the woodcarvers in the workshop of Giuliano da Majano. The ornament on the frame is typical of Florentine architectural decoration of the late fifteenth century. Its repeated inscription, *MIHI SATIS*, is probably a motto of the original owner.

1. Everett Fahy, *Some Followers of Domenico Ghirlandajo*, New York, 1976, pp. 11–20.



53 

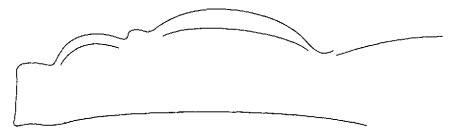
TUSCANY, ca. 1480

A gilt and polychrome stucco mirror frame in tondo form within an extended surround. The convex mirror is enclosed by a wreath of fruit and leaves with a palm-scale back edge. Rising from the wreath is a palmette above pendant acanthus leaves; below are two winged putti with painted coral necklaces, supporting a shield with a coat of arms (gules, a bend sable charged with three mullets of six) with acanthus leaves at the bottom.

21¼ × 14; 5¼ in. diam.

54 × 35.6; 13.3 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2158)



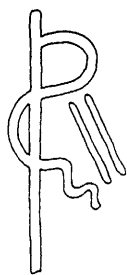
The mirror is original and the gilding and pigmentation on the frame are well preserved, except along and below a crack through the bottom of the shield level with the hands of the putti: the bottom acanthus leaves have been regilt, and the blue ground dividing them from



## SIENA(?), ca. 1490–1500

the shield and from the right-hand putto has been renewed. A cord for hanging has been cast into the stucco behind the palmette at the top. There is a monogram (ill.), presumably the maker's mark, on the back, where it was traced in the wet stucco.

Neither the coat of arms on the shield nor the monogram on the reverse has been identified, though the style of the relief, especially of the two putti, can be associated with the workshop of the Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Majano (1442–1497). Mirrors like this one were produced in Florence and Siena—Benedetto was active at intervals throughout his career in both cities—during the second half of the fifteenth century, making it difficult to determine which center of production was the source of the present example.



Monogram on the back of catalogue number 53 (drawing: Johannes Knoops)

A carved and gilt mirror frame in tondo form with an extended surround. The convex mirror is enclosed by a wreath of fruit and leaves with a rope molding on the sight edge and palm scales on the back edge, encircled by volutes, griffins, and harpies. At the top is a container of fruit on a leafy stem; at the bottom is a shield with a coat of arms (azure, two chevrons or with three fleurs-de-lys of the same).



1:4

24¼ × 13¾; 6 in. diam.  
61.6 × 35.2; 15.2 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2101)

The frame is carved from a single piece of poplar; its present convex mirror is not original. The coat of arms is that of the Cinuzzi of Siena, and the frame is almost certainly Siennese. Though detail in the wood carving has necessarily been blunted by the gesso covering and gilding, the figure style of the harpies and griffins is sufficiently legible to bear comparison with stone carving from the workshop of Giovanni di Stefano (1443–1504).<sup>1</sup> Closely related frames, undoubtedly carved in the same workshop as variants on a single design, are recorded in the Palazzo Van Axel, Venice,<sup>2</sup> and the Salvadori collection, Florence. The Salvadori frame has been

attributed to Antonio Barili (1453–1516) and related to the carving of a celebrated chest in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.<sup>3</sup> Later, more elaborate variants of the frame are in the Museo Bardini, Florence, the collection of the Princes of Liechtenstein,<sup>4</sup> and the Samuel H. Kress Collection; a similarity between the carving of the Kress frame and that of the stalls in the Residenza of the Palazzo Communale, Pistoia, datable to about 1535, has been noted.<sup>5</sup>

1. For Giovanni di Stefano see Carlo del Bravo, *Scultura senese del quattrocento*, Florence, 1970, pp. 90ff. Giovanni di Stefano is associated with work on the Cinuzzi chapel in San Francesco, Siena, in a document of 1502; see Enzo Carli and Ubaldi Morandi, "Un documento per il Sodoma," *Bulletino senese di Storia Patria* 84–85, 1977–78, pp. 212–223.
2. Giuseppe Morazzini, *Le cornici veneziane*, Milan, n.d., pl. 38.
3. Luigi Dami, "Cornici da specchio del cinquecento," *Dedalo* 1, 1920, pp. 625–627. For the Siena chest see Giulio Ferrari, *Il legno e la mobilia nell'arte italiana: La grande scultura e la mobilia della casa...*, Milan, n.d., II, pl. XLVII.
4. M. Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane dalla metà del secolo XV allo scorcio del XVI*, Milan, 1897, pls. 55a, 60.
5. Ulrich Middeldorf, *Sculptures from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools, XIV–XIX Century*, London, 1976, p. 37, fig. 65. This frame, presented by the Kress Foundation in 1978 to the Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas, is reproduced in Guggenheim, *Le cornici italiane*, pl. 48, in its unrestored state. For the Residenza of the Palazzo Communale in Pistoia see Ferrari, *Il legno*, II, pls. LXXIII–LXXVII.







## 55

TUSCANY, ca. 1510

A carved and gilt tondo frame comprising a wreath of fruit, pine cones, and leaves flanked by lotus-leaf moldings on the sight and outer edges and palm scales on the back edge.



1:4

42½; 29¼ in.  
108; 74.3 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.100)

The frame has been regessoed and regilt, blunting the details of its carved surface.

Though painted tondi are traditionally assumed to have been an exclusively Florentine phenomenon, they were also popular in Siena from about 1505 until nearly the end of the sixteenth century. Sienese tondo frames are almost invariably carved in the form of symmetrical wreaths, springing from a clasp or ribbon at the bottom and meeting in a rose at the top, with a palm-scale back edge, as in this example (see also cat. nos. 53, 54). The same form, however, is occasionally found among Florentine tondi, making it impossible to assign a frame categorically to one center or the other.



## 56

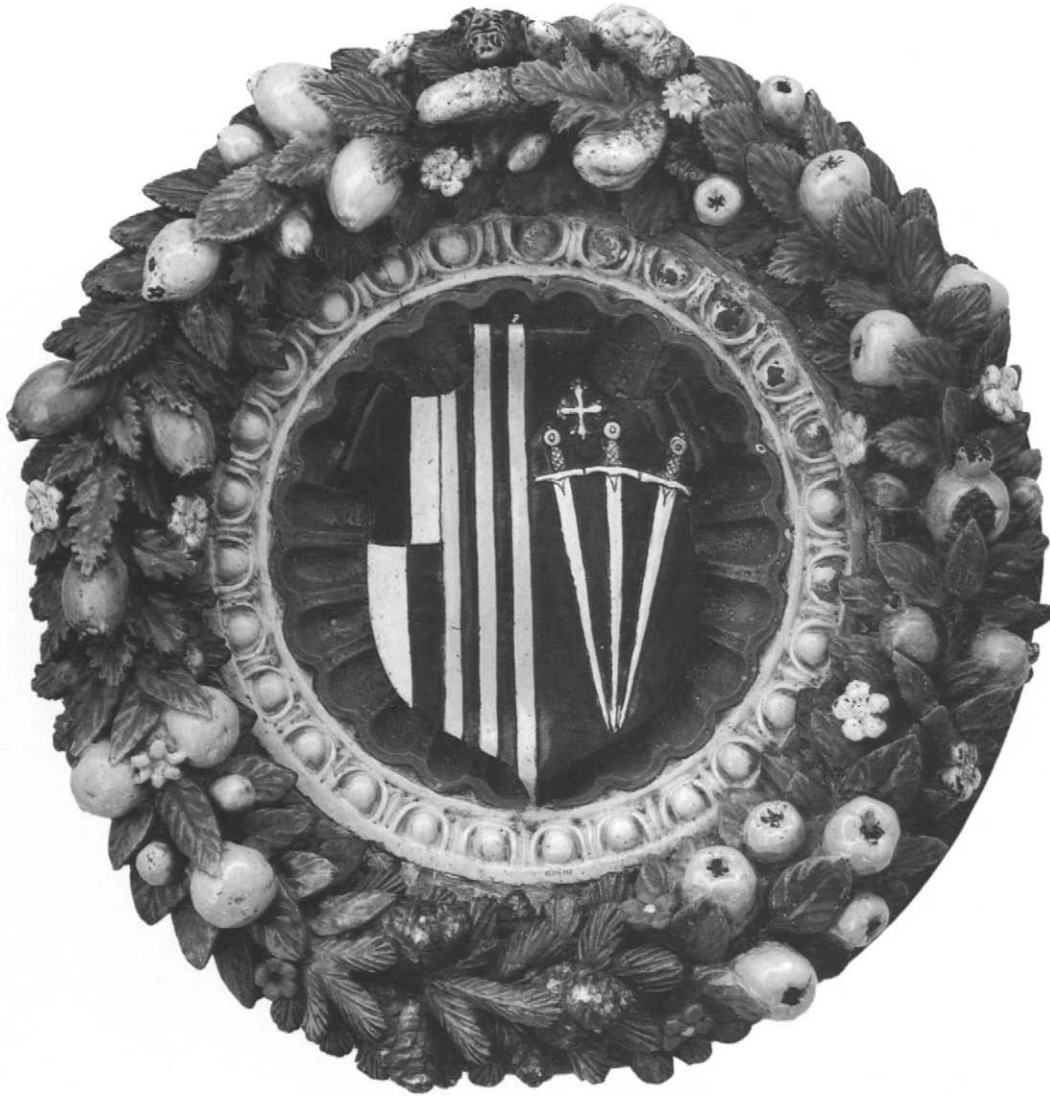
FLORENCE, ca. 1490

A tin-glazed terracotta tondo frame comprising a clockwise wreath of fruit, pine cones, and leaves bound with ribbons, encircling an egg-and-dart sight molding.

23¼; 13¼ in.  
59.1; 33.7 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2039)

This frame, probably modeled and glazed in the workshop of Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525), surrounds a blue disk charged with an emblem (a gridiron gules from which spring two ears of wheat in saltire or a cross bottonny,





57 §

FLORENCE, ca. 1510

A tin-glazed terracotta tondo frame comprising a counterclockwise wreath of fruit, flowers, and leaves with a frog at the apex, encircling an egg-and-dart sight molding.

23; 11¼ in.

58.4; 28.6 cm.

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.743)

This is a notable example of the type of frame associated with the workshop production of Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529/30) in the early years of the sixteenth century. It surrounds a scalloped disk with a shield charged with the coat of arms of Gaetani (per pale, dexter, quarterly gules and argent, sinister, paly gules and or) impaling

Minerbetti (gules, three swords in pale fanwise argent, in chief a crosslet of the same). A slightly earlier tondo with the same arms on a more simplified shield, also from Giovanni della Robbia's workshop, is in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.<sup>1</sup> In that frame the wreath, oriented clockwise, is divided into quadrants by crossed ribbons establishing a top, a bottom, and side centers. In the present frame the wreath is continuous, with only the highly naturalistic frog perched among the leaves denoting an axial orientation.

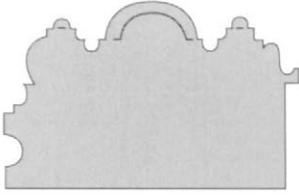
1. No. 43; reproduced in Allan Marquand, *Robbia Heraldry*, Princeton, 1919, no. 232, fig. 172.

fitted, argent), which has been identified as that of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence.<sup>1</sup> The wreath is divided into six sections by its ribbon bindings, the one at the upper right being largely hidden by overlapping leaves.

1. Allan Marquand, *Robbia Heraldry*, Princeton, 1919, no. 96, fig. 85.

## FLORENCE, ca. 1520–40

A carved walnut tondo frame with a plain sight molding and a patera wreath ovolo between pearl and bead-and-reel moldings.



16 $\frac{3}{8}$ ; 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.

41.6; 24.8 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2203)

This finely carved frame, lathe-turned from a single piece of wood, was probably once parcel-gilt; its present surface is a later, much-worn oil gilding. The frame is exceptionally deep (2 in.; 5 cm.) in proportion to its diameter and may have been intended for a marble relief. Lathe-turned moldings fill the back edge of the frame to its full depth.

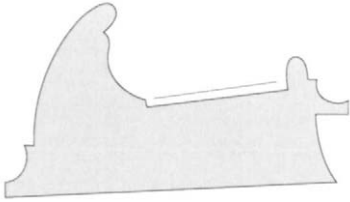
The ornament is a late version of that on frames associated with Giuliano da Majano's workshop (see cat. no. 11). Its carving is finer and more precise than on earlier examples, and the moldings are punctuated by cavettos, scotias, and fillets, which alter their proportions and spacing in relation to the overall profile of the frame.



59 

LOMBARDY(?), early 17th century

A carved and gilt tondo frame, turned from a single piece of poplar, with punch work and brushed pastiglia anthemion ornament at the quarters in the frieze.



22; 14½ in.  
55.9; 36.8 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.42)

In this frame the frieze slopes back away from the sight molding, and the back edge is “stretched” as a subtle counterbalance. The same effect, though less pronounced, occurs in the following example (cat. no. 60).



60 

ROME(?), mid-17th century

A carved and gilt tondo frame, turned from a single piece of poplar, with an undecorated frieze.



15; 10 in.  
38.1; 25.4 cm.  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.10)





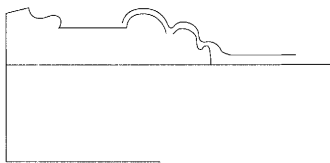


## V. Cassetta Frames

### 61

MARCHES, 1420

A carved, gilt, and polychrome engaged cassetta-type frame, with blue sgraffito decoration of a continuous flower-and-tendrill festoon in the frieze along the top and sides, and along the bottom a sgraffito inscription: PETRUS · DOMINICI · DEMONTE · PULITIANO · PINSIT · M · CCCC · XX (Pietro di Domenico da Montepulciano painted [this] 1420).



34 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 30 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 22 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
87.9 × 66.7; 77.8 × 56.5 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.201)

The linen ground stretched beneath the gesso preparation on this panel, *Madonna and Child with Angels*, extends over the sight edge of the frame up to the frieze, disproportionately enlarging the profile of the sight molding in relation to that of the outer molding. The linen has assured the preservation of the frame, preventing it from detaching as the panel beneath it warped. The outer molding, unprotected by the linen, has been chipped and fractured and is now almost completely lost, having been repaired and regilt in modern times.

Signed and dated by the panel painter, Pietro di Domenico da Montepulciano, an artist active in the Marches in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, this frame is one of the most beautiful surviving examples of early sgraffito decoration. The winding flower-and-tendrill design is meant to recall the border decoration of illuminated manuscript pages, and also to echo patterns and motifs incorporated by the artist within the painting itself.



### 62

SIENA, ca. 1460–70

A carved and gilt engaged cassetta-type frame with an arched top, the frieze decorated with a punched design of alternating lozenges and quatrefoils.

29 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 24 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 15 $\frac{5}{8}$  in.  
74 × 51.4; 61.9 × 39.7 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.42)

The frame is carved in five sections and applied to a panel by Sano di Pietro (1406–1481), *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome, Bernardino, John the Baptist, and Anthony of Padua, and Two Angels*. A highly successful and prolific artist, Sano is representative of the most conservative trends in Siennese art, and many of the compositions and techniques employed in his workshop relate

directly to local trecento models. The present frame, for example, is essentially identical to the type used by Simone Martini over a century earlier (cf. cat. no. 1), except that it is not pigmented with overglazes. In keeping with the taste of his times, Sano tended to use his punches as independent decorative motifs, stringing them in continuous bands around halos and the margins of his panels, where earlier artists like Simone preferred to cluster punch marks into larger decorative patterns. It is worth noting that the punch tools used to decorate the present frame were also employed on the halos of the saints and angels in the panel to which it is engaged.

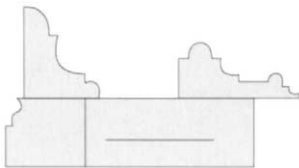




63 

VENICE, ca. 1500

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame, the corners and centers of the frieze incised, punched, and glazed red with blue sgraffito leaf-and-tendrils panels between.



19 × 16; 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
48.3 × 40.6; 36.5 × 28.6 cm.

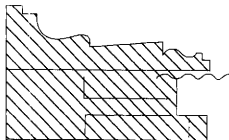
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2107)

This beautifully preserved frame, its glazed surface virtually unimpaired, is unusual in having originally been engaged to a painting on canvas. Its back frame was used as a stretcher; the top moldings were then nailed in place and gilt. Fragments of the original canvas remain in the join all along the rebate, which was later opened out to receive a different picture. A single hole with the remains of a hanging cord is pierced through the back edge at the top.

64 

VENETO, early 16th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame, with continuous cauliculi decoration in sgraffito in the frieze.



$23\frac{3}{8} \times 19\frac{5}{8}$ ;  $17 \times 13\frac{1}{4}$  in.

$59.4 \times 49.8$ ;  $43.2 \times 33.7$  cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2318)

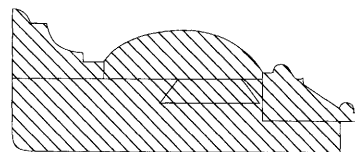
A later variant of catalogue number 61, with more complicated sight and outer moldings nailed to the back frame, and a simple yet refined sgraffito decoration in the frieze. Frames of this type, not intended to be engaged to a painted panel, seem to have been produced in some numbers in more or less standard sizes.



65 

VENETO, mid-16th century

A gilt and polychrome cassetta frame with a convex frieze, which is decorated at the corners and at the center of each side with sgraffito anthemion decoration.



$26\frac{7}{8} \times 23\frac{1}{2}$ ;  $19\frac{1}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  in.

$68.3 \times 59.7$ ;  $48.6 \times 40$  cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2102)

The flattened curve of the frieze and the elegance of its sgraffito decoration against a soft gray-blue ground recall the innovations in architectural design brought to Venice by Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570) in 1527. Frames of a similar profile, more commonly with pastiglia

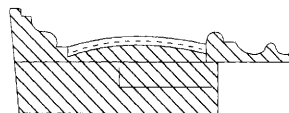


**66** 

**VENETO, mid-16th century**

decoration (see cat. nos. 66–68), became one of the most prevalent types throughout the Veneto in the second half of the sixteenth century. The sloping sight molding on this example is a peculiarity of Venetian design, and can be compared to earlier tabernacle frames from the region (cat. nos. 13–18).

A gilt and polychrome cassetta frame with a convex frieze decorated with pastiglia sprigs of oak leaves and acorns.



14¾ × 13½; 8½ × 7¼ in.  
37.5 × 34.3; 21.6 × 18.4 cm.  
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2098)

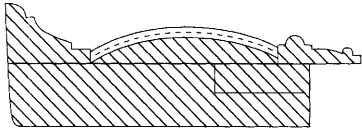
The sight molding is a modern replacement, and the polychromy and glazing of the frieze have degraded.

The beautifully detailed pastiglia frieze was pressed in sections from a mold approximately 5 inches (12.7 cm.) long.

67 

VENETO, mid-16th century

A gilt and polychrome cassetta frame with a convex frieze, which is decorated in pastiglia with a double guilloche interrupted at the corners by an acanthus leaf.

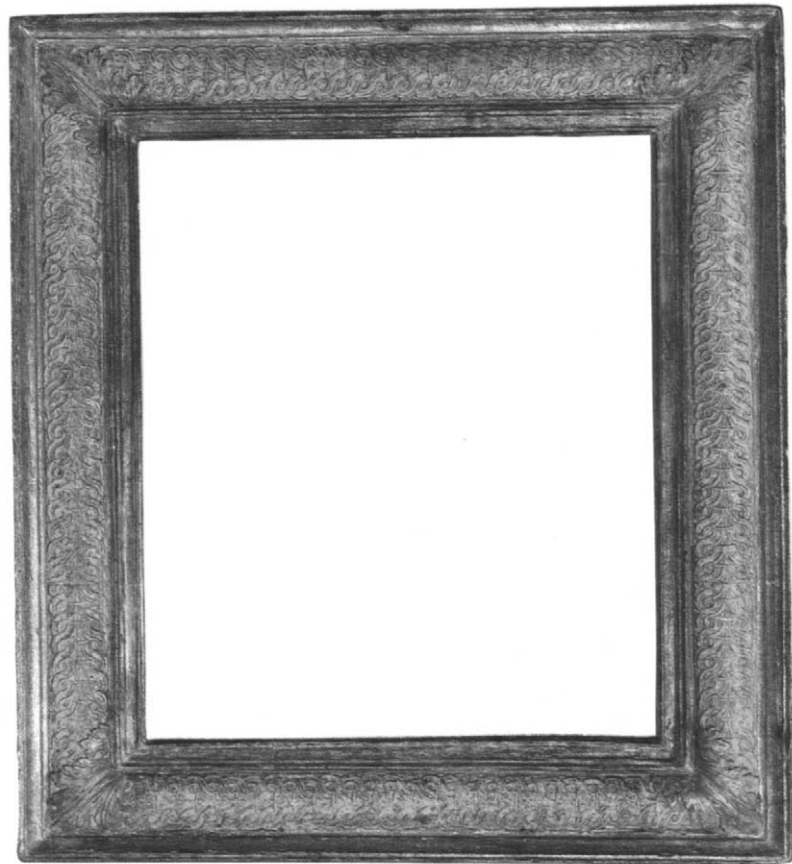


27¼ × 23⅞; 19 × 15¾ in.  
69.2 × 60.6; 48.3 × 40 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2103)

The sight molding has been regilt.

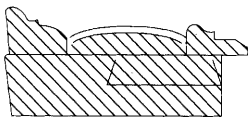
Possibly inspired by the carved marble frame designed by Jacopo Sansovino for Titian's *Annunciation* (1559–66) in San Salvatore, Venice, this type of cassetta frame, with a double guilloche decoration on a convex frieze, became extremely popular in the Veneto in the second half of the sixteenth century. The guilloche, however, is usually modified to run continuously around the frieze, rather than being masked at the corners as in the present example.



68 

VENETO, early 16th century

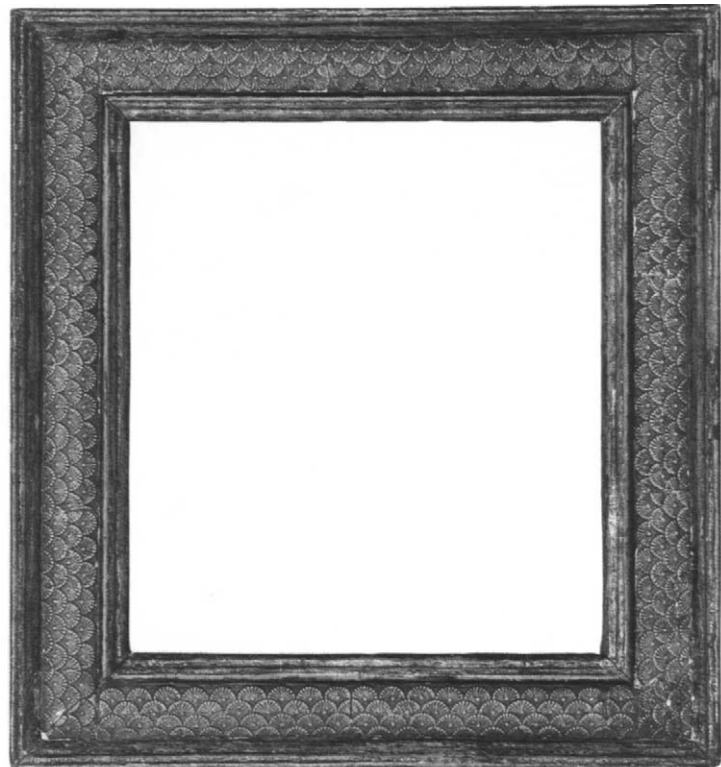
A gilt and polychrome cassetta frame with a convex frieze decorated in pastiglia with an allover pattern of palm scales.



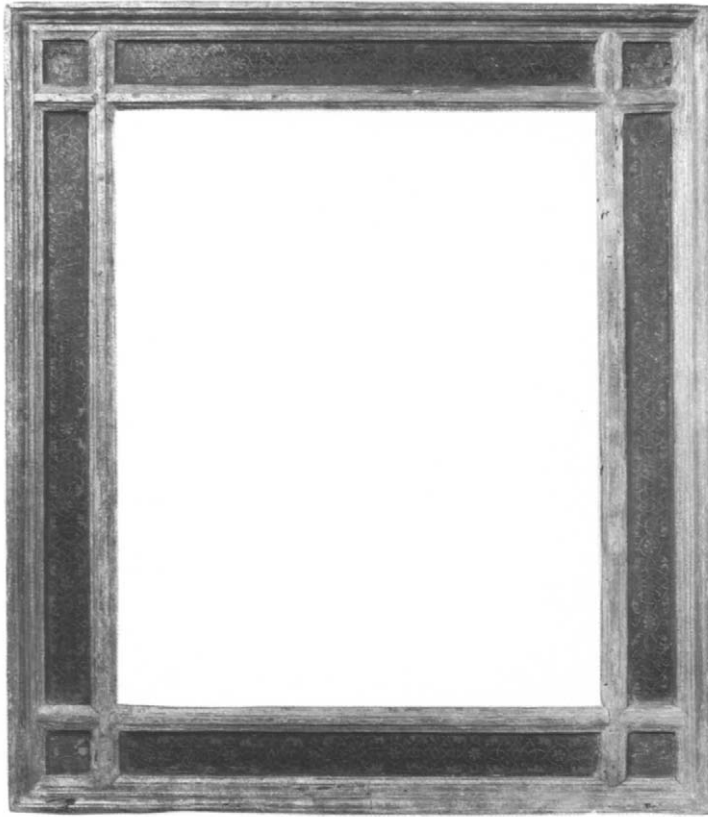
17⅞ × 16¼; 12½ × 10¾ in.  
45.4 × 41.3; 31.8 × 27.3 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1629)

The pastiglia decoration, now cracked along the mitering at the corners, was pressed from a mold approximately 5¾ inches (14.6 cm.) long and laid in the frieze in three strips on the long sides, two on the short.



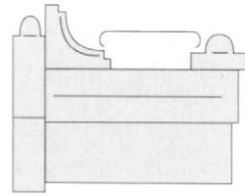




70 

TUSCANY, mid-16th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with a pearl molding on the sight edge, a rusticated top edge, and a bead-and-reel back edge. The frieze is decorated with mordant-gilt cauliculi against a maroon ground, with carved paterae applied to the corners.



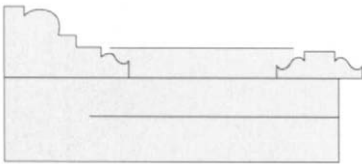
$23\frac{1}{8} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ ;  $17\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
 $58.7 \times 45.1$ ;  $45.1 \times 31.8$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2082)

Two of the paterae have been repaired and one is a modern replacement.

69 

TUSCANY, early 16th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with coffered corners and a mordant-gilt arabesque decoration of knots, rosettes, and acanthus leaves in the frieze.

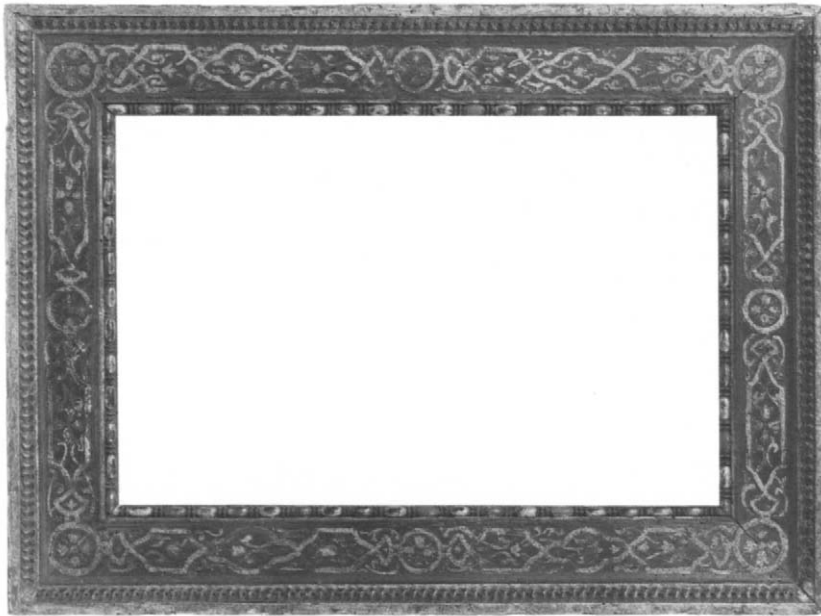


$29\frac{1}{4} \times 24\frac{3}{8}$ ;  $21\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$  in.  
 $74.3 \times 62.5$ ;  $54.6 \times 42.9$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.I.2121)

Carved or turned paterae once glued onto the corners are now missing, and the blue of the frieze has decayed to black.

Cassetta frames of this type, with jointed coffer moldings isolating the corners, are traditionally identified as Si-  
 enese. While examples demonstrably  
 Si-  
 enese are known, there is no evidence  
 that the form was not widespread  
 throughout Central Italy.

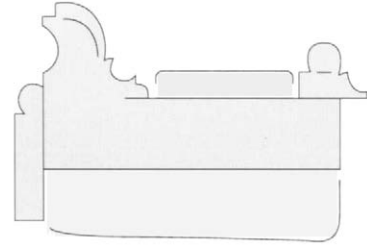




72 

TUSCANY, early to mid-16th century

A carved and gilt cassetta frame with a bead-and-reel sight molding, carved center and corner cauliculi decoration in the frieze, and a fluted knull-and-dart top edge.



27 × 21¾; 19 × 13⅞ in.

68.6 × 55.2; 48.3 × 35.2 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2120)

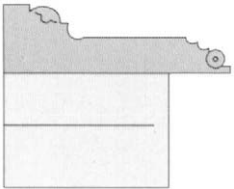
The reserve of the frieze is an unglit bole of a deep brown color meant to imitate walnut.

Frames of this type (see also cat. no. 73) continued to be popular in Tuscany well into the seventeenth century.

71 

FLORENCE, ca. 1540–50

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt cassetta frame with a bead-and-reel sight edge, mordant-gilt arabesque decoration in the frieze, and a guilloche molding on the outer edge.



13⅜ × 18¼; 8½ × 13⅜ in.

34 × 46.4; 21.6 × 34 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1632)

The bead-and-reel molding is lathe-turned and fitted into a scotia at the sight edge, and the centers of the guilloche are drilled. The unusually fine carving and parcel gilding are somewhat compromised by the coarse mordant decoration of the frieze, which may be later in date. The corner and center circles in the frieze are incised.



## FLORENCE, early 17th century

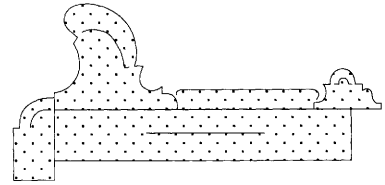
A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with a ribbon-and-stick sight molding, carved center and corner cauliculi in the frieze, an alternating scroll and acanthus top molding, and a lotus-leaf back edge.

67 × 55; 51 × 39 in.

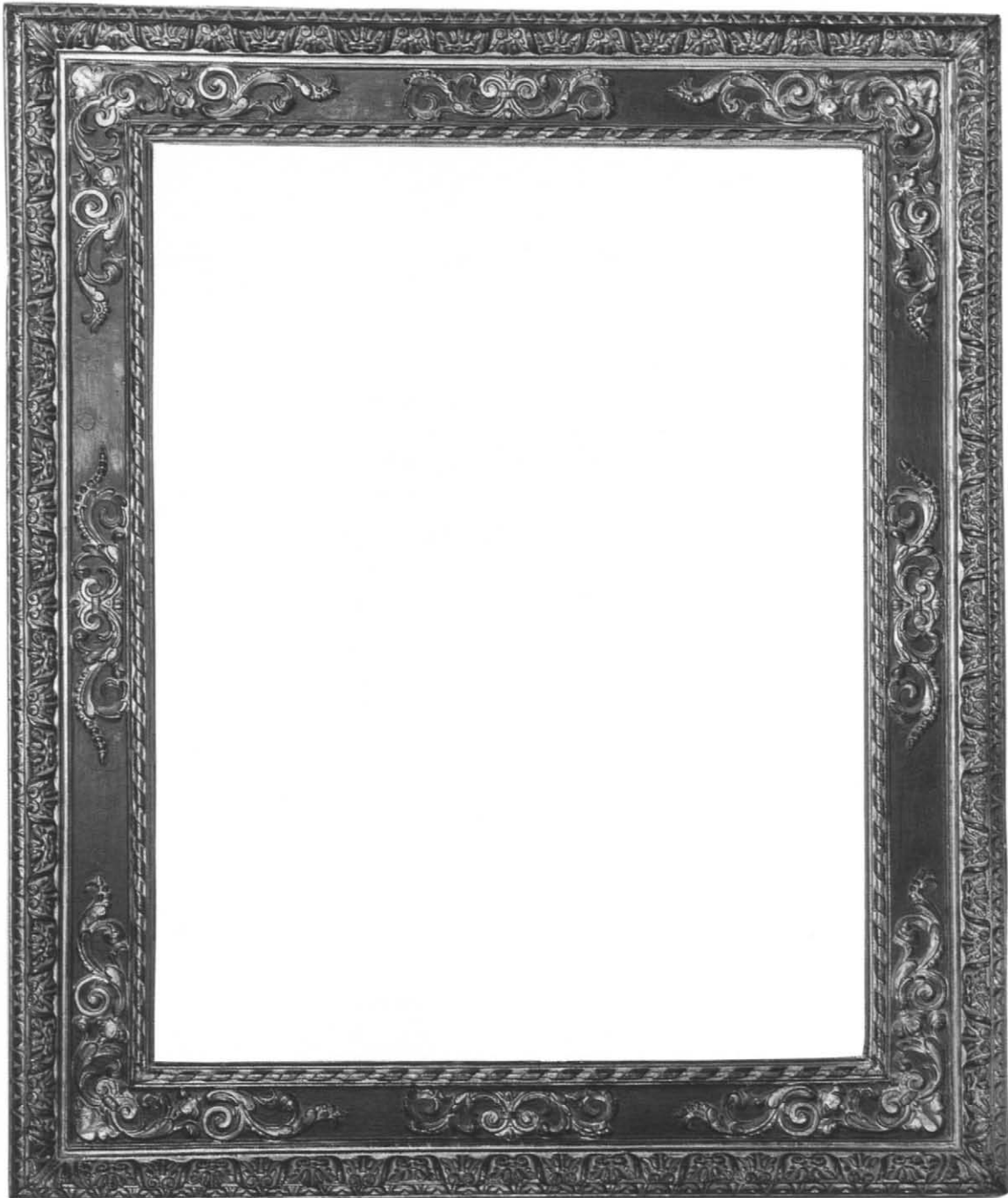
170.2 × 139.7; 129.5 × 99.1 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2113)

The cavetto on the back edge at the top is painted red (the other sides are gilt). This, together with the strong red color in the frieze, suggests that the frame was intended to be hung high, well above eye level.



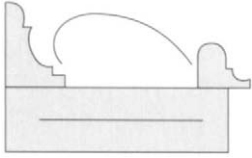
1:4



74 

VENETO, late 16th century

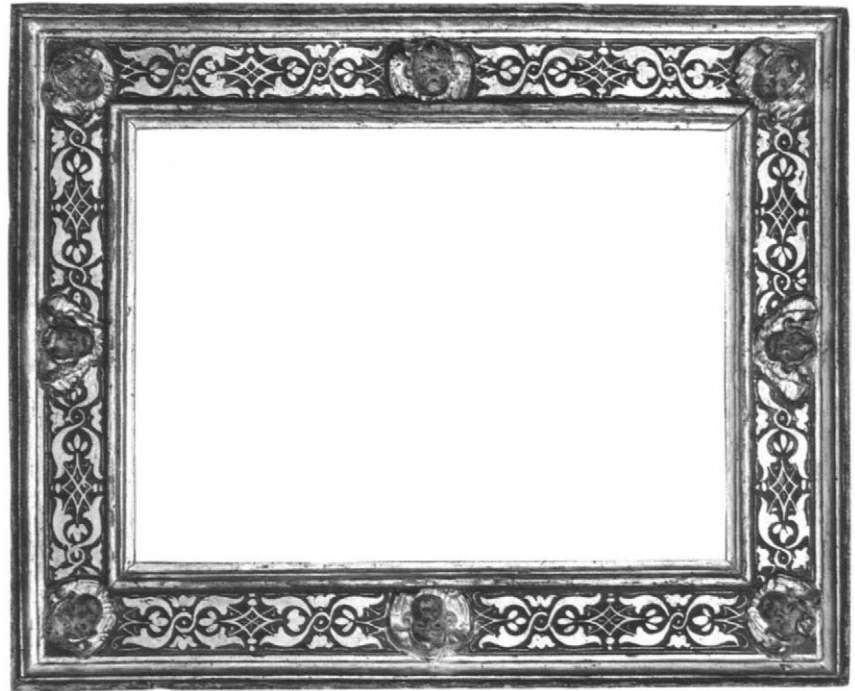
A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with cherub heads applied at the centers and corners of the frieze, between sgraffito arabesque decoration against a blue ground.



2:5

18 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ ; 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 16 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
46.7 × 58.1; 29.5 × 41.6 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.123.1)

Extensions or attachments have been removed from the top center, the bottom, and the lower half of the lateral sides of the frame, suggesting that this may have been part of a larger complex, for example, an overdoor or the cimasa of an altarpiece.



75 

NAPLES(?), late 16th century

A carved, gilt, and polychrome cassetta frame with sgraffito decoration in the frieze consisting of cauliculi between lilies at the corners and top and bottom centers.

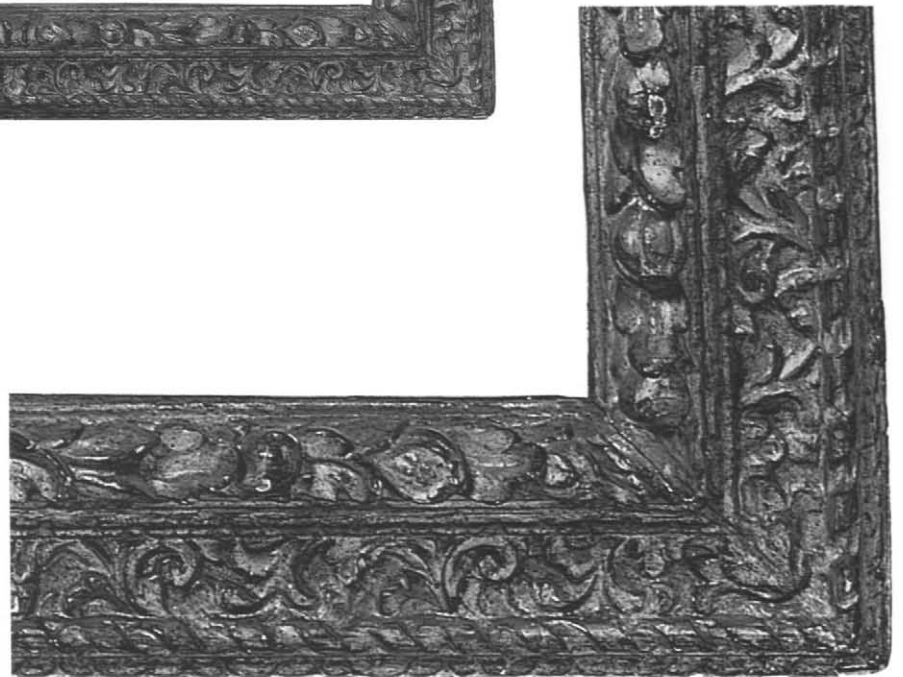


2:5

42 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 33 $\frac{1}{4}$ ; 34 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 25 $\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
108 × 84.5; 87.6 × 65.7 cm.  
Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.122)

The black ground of the frieze and the alternating black and gold of the outer molding suggest a South Italian origin for this frame.





76 

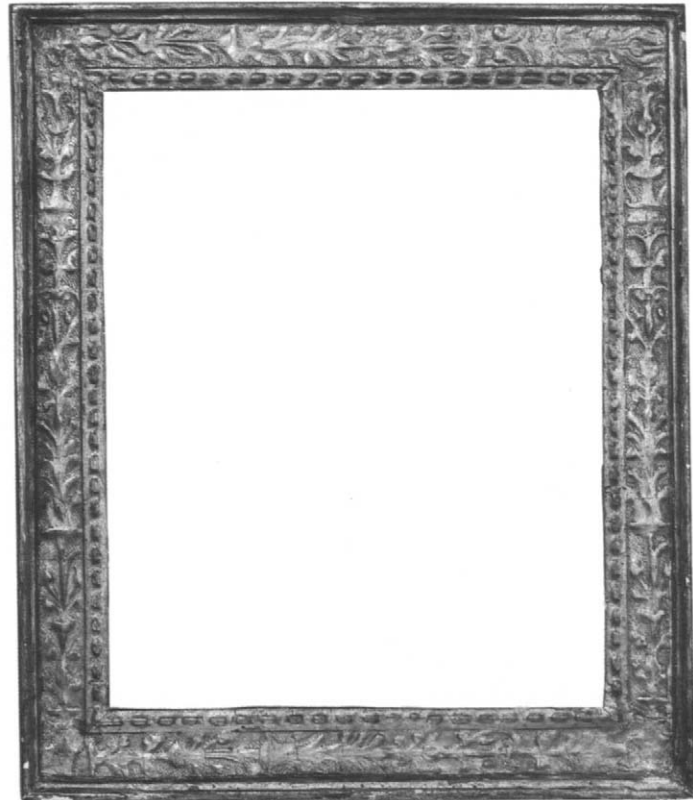
VENETO, late 16th century

A carved and gilt reverse cassetta frame with a composite sight molding of deeply carved leaves and fruit with center clasps and bead-and-reel and lotus-leaf profiles; a frieze of carved cauliculi arranged symmetrically from the centers and corners against a punched ground; and a back edge of ribbon-and-stick and lotus-leaf moldings.

58 × 45¾; 46⅞ × 34¼ in.

147.3 × 116.2; 119.1 × 87 cm.

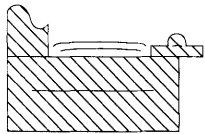
Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929,  
H. O. Havemeyer Collection (29.100.17)



77 

VENETO, late 16th century

A carved and gilt cassetta frame with an extended-pearl sight edge and pressed pastiglia candelabra in the frieze.



19⅞ × 16⅞; 14⅞ × 11⅞ in.

49.2 × 41; 37.8 × 29.5 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2320)

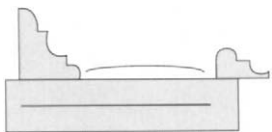
The top edge has been regessoed and regilt. The remains of wax seals used to secure the frame's original contents in place are found on the back on all four sides.



78 

VENETO, early 17th century

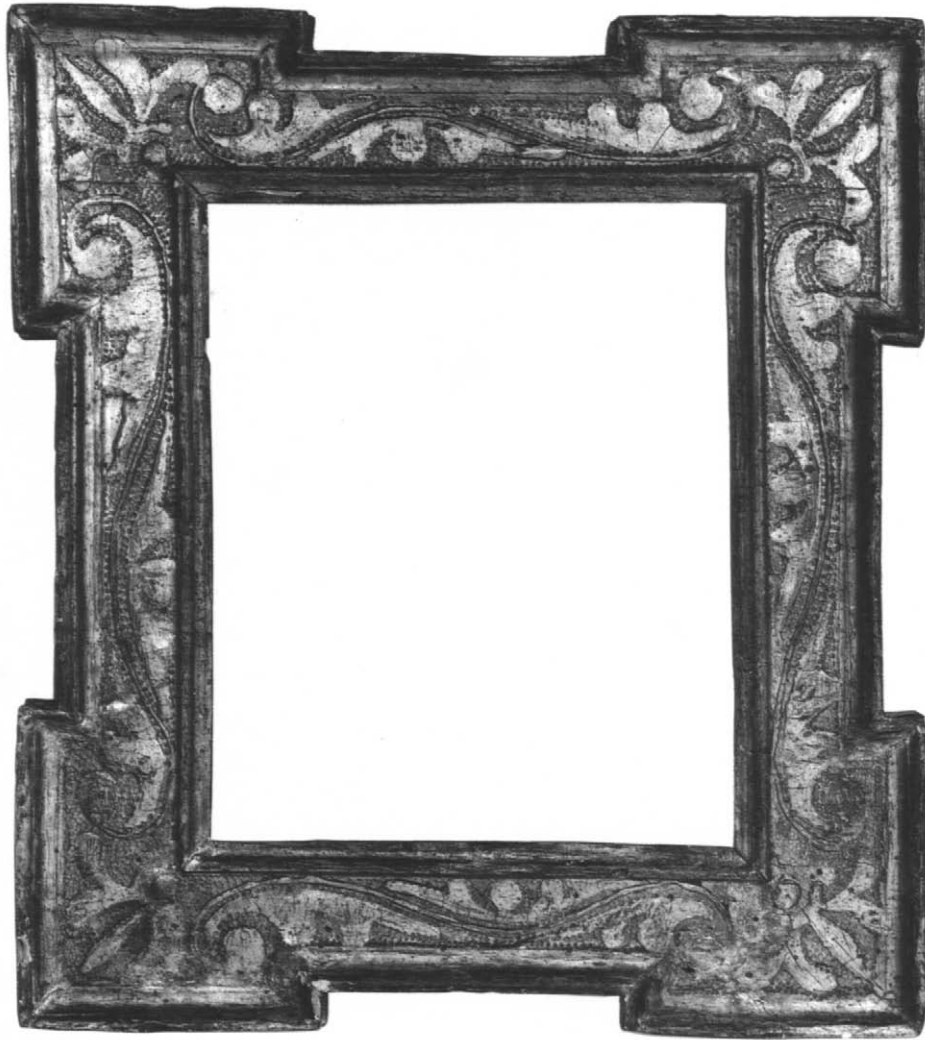
A carved and gilt cassetta frame with brushed pastiglia decoration in the frieze of tendrils and stylized leaves with cauliculi corners.



24⅞ × 20¼; 18¾ × 14½ in.

61.3 × 51.4; 47.6 × 36.8 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2122)



**79** 

VENETO, early 17th century

A carved and gilt cassetta frame with extended corners and brushed pastiglia decoration in the frieze of summary palmettes, tendrils, and stylized leaves against a punched ground.



13¼ × 12; 8½ × 6¼ in.  
34.9 × 30.5; 21.9 × 17.1 cm.

Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1962  
(62.273.8)

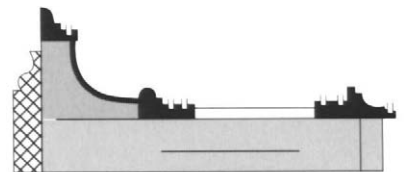
**80** 

ROME(?), ca. 1600

A cassetta frame with crystal and lapis-lazuli inset panels in the frieze, divided by ebony moldings with niello inlay.

13⅝ × 11⅞; 7⅞ × 6¼ in.  
34.6 × 30.2; 20 × 15.9 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2292)



The sight and top moldings, as well as the strip moldings within the frieze, are ebony with niello inlays. The cavetto of the top molding is walnut with an ebony veneer, and the back-edge molding is ebonized fruitwood, probably pear. The crystal panels are backed with silver. Several of the niello-inlaid ebony strips are broken or missing.

3:4



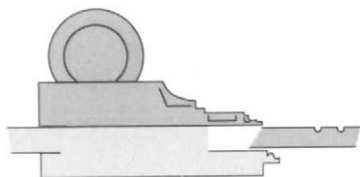


## VI. Renaissance-Style Frames

### 81

TUSCANY, probably early  
16th century

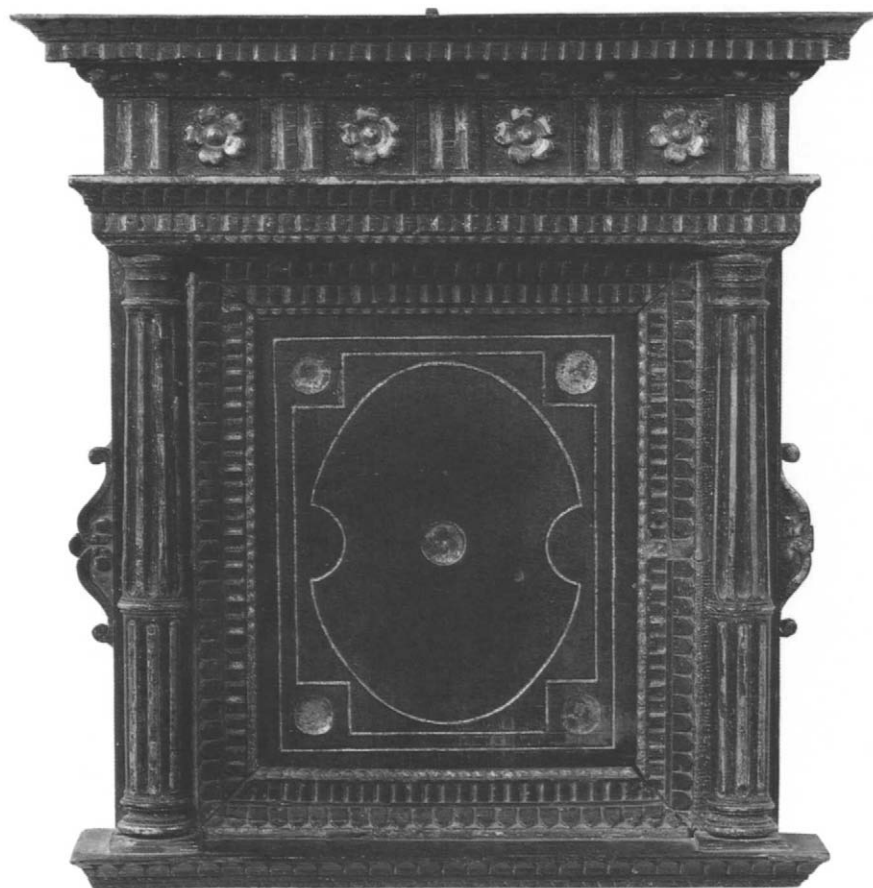
A carved walnut and parcel-gilt tabernacle mirror frame. Engaged fluted-and-reeded columns with Doric capitals support an entablature with a triglyph frieze, the metopes filled with paterae.



14¼ × 13⅜; 7⅞ × 6¼ in.  
36.2 × 34; 18.1 × 15.9 cm.

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.1636)

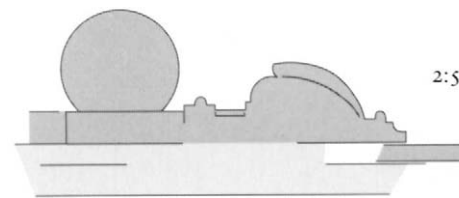
The frame appears to be a “reconstruction” of a sixteenth-century mirror, with additions and alterations built onto an older structure. The back frame shows evidence of having been truncated at the bottom, possibly by as much as 3 inches (7.6 cm.). The bottom molding of the frame, from which an antependium has been removed, was attached to it in modern times and may have come from another structure altogether. The columns appear to be modern replacements, and the piers behind them bear marks of having been machine-planed.



### 82

ITALY, probably early 20th century

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt tabernacle mirror frame with fluted-and-reeded Tuscan columns supporting a Doric entablature; lateral volute extensions; a pediment of cauliculus-tailed griffins supporting a cartouche and patera; and an antependium of griffins flanking a cartouche painted with a lion's head. The sight edge of the frame is a succession of pearl, raking knull, biglyph, and pearl moldings.



37½ × 20⅝; 10½ × 8 in.  
95.3 × 52.4; 26.7 × 20.3 cm.  
Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941  
(41.190.291)

Related in type to a number of purportedly mid-sixteenth-century Florentine mirrors,<sup>1</sup> this frame was manifestly carved in modern times. The back frame, which has been stained to simulate age patination, retains planer and band-saw cuts on its surface. Quarter-inch spacers separate the cornice and base from the entablature frieze and window respectively, which is inconsistent with sixteenth-century practice. The biglyph frieze around the window was machine-planed, and its outer pearl molding implausibly continues behind the column plinths. The schematic carving of the griffins and the ornamental stylization of their wings and tails and of the pediment cartouche suggest a date for this frame within the first two decades of the twentieth century.

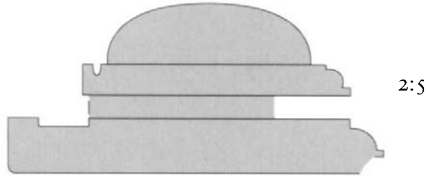
1. Cf. Luigi Dami, “Cornici da specchio del cinquecento,” *Dedalo* 1, 1920, pp. 625–642; esp. the frame illustrated on p. 633.





## ITALY, probably late 19th century

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt Mannerist-style mirror frame, with a fluted lambrequin cornice supported on seraph-head corbels; a broken arched pediment with seraph-head extensions in profile and an antefix formed of a grotesque mask with a flaming head-dress; an antependium of grotesques in profile supporting a shield with a coat of arms; and lateral scroll and volute extensions.



$32\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{3}{8}$ ;  $10\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
 $82.6 \times 49.8$ ;  $26.4 \times 19.7$  cm.  
 Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941  
 (41.190.198)

An exceptionally fine and beautifully designed imitation of sixteenth-century Florentine mirrors of a type usually attributed to Giorgio Vasari,<sup>1</sup> this frame is an example of Italian wood carving of the Art Nouveau or Liberty period at its best. Certain design incongruities, such as the exaggerated seraph-head corbels or the incomplete framing of the lower cartouche, and peculiarities of construction identify it as a modern, not a Renaissance, work. The face plate has been joined to the back frame by dowels through the front rather than the back; the pediment volutes are carved from laminated boards rather than from a single block; the structure of the back frame is implausibly related to the face

plate, while false joins in the face plate relate neither to the structure of the back frame nor to technical problems in ornament carving; and finally, though there is a channel in the right side of the frame to accommodate a sliding shutter, the lateral volutes are carved in such a way as to block the passage of any shutter through that slot.

It is possible that a mirror formerly in the Salvadori collection, Florence,<sup>2</sup> corresponding closely to this one in details of structure and ornament, may have been carved in the same shop.

1. Alessandro del Vita, "Uno specchio vasariano," *Dedalo* 10, 1929–30, pp. 142–149.
2. Luigi Dami, "Cornici da specchio del cinquecento," *Dedalo* 1, 1920, p. 639.



## ITALY, probably early 20th century

A carved walnut and parcel-gilt cassetta frame with a simple canopy cornice and knulled base; a fluted and reeded knull-and-dart top molding; and a bead-and-reel sight molding.

$15\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{8}$ ;  $7\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
 $40.3 \times 34.6$ ;  $19.7 \times 19.1$  cm.  
 Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2118)

A more careless and less imaginative forgery than either of catalogue numbers 82 and 83. The exposed worm tunneling on the surface of this frame is characteristic of objects carved out of already infested wood—a practice unthinkable in the Renaissance but common among modern carvers of fraudulent furniture and wood sculpture, anxious to establish the purported age of their products. The designer of this frame has also misunderstood the nature of early cassetta frames, incorporating two friezes divided by a top molding the profile of which derives from eighteenth-century Neoclassical frames.





# GLOSSARY

## ***Basic Terms***

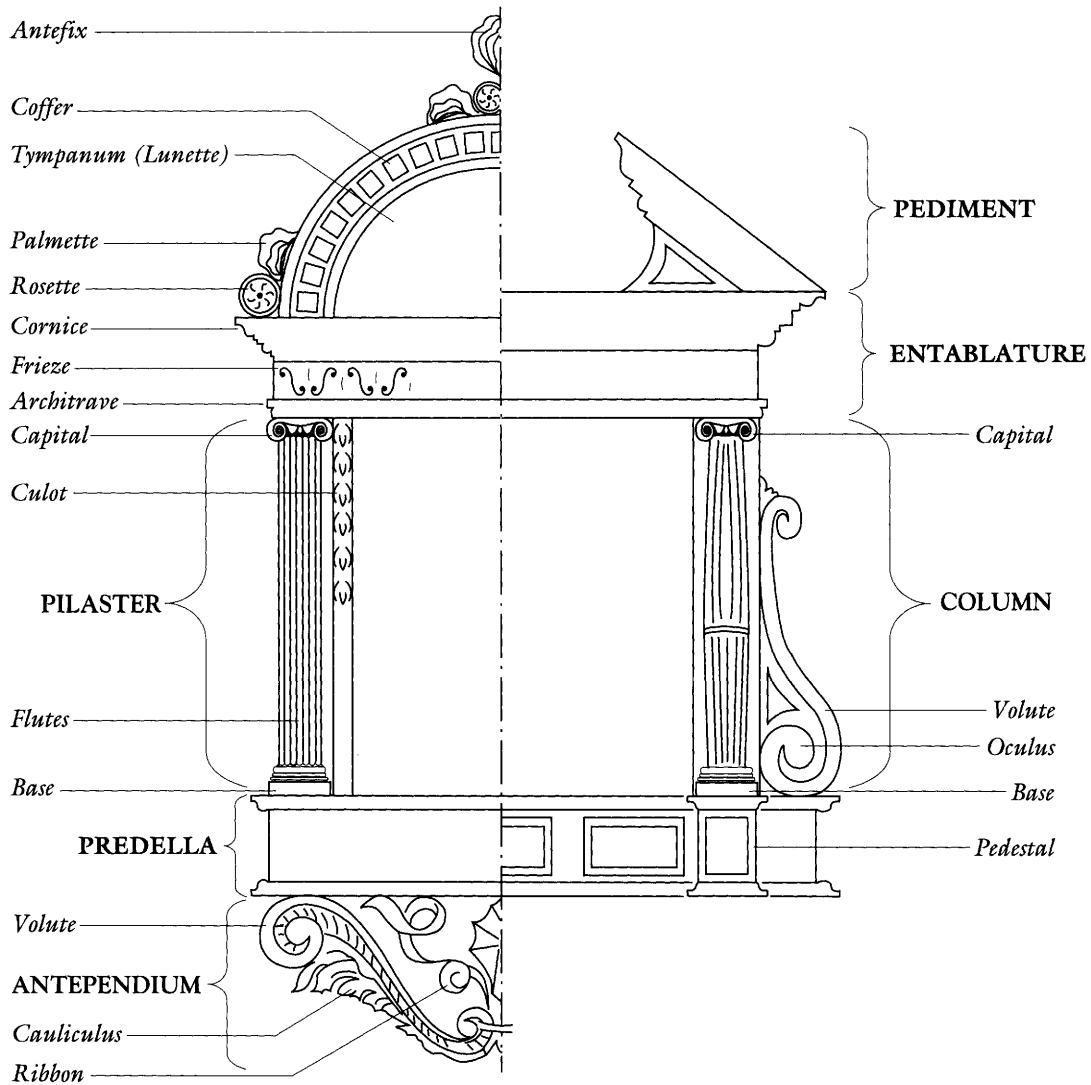
Back edge	Molding farthest from the framed object.
Rebate	Recess beneath the sight edge of a frame intended to receive the framed object. Also called a rabbet.
Sight edge	Molding nearest to the framed object.
Top edge	Molding nearest to the viewer, projecting farthest from the back frame.

## ***Frame Types***

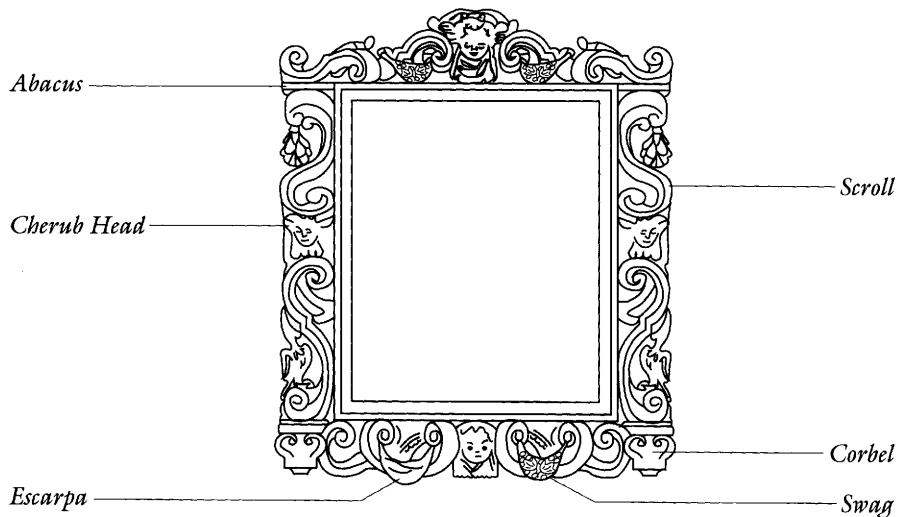
Cassetta	A frame comprising a simple, lap-jointed back frame and entablature-derived moldings.
Reverse	Frame with its highest molding on the sight edge.
Sansovino	Late sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century Mannerist-style frame, most common in the Veneto, characterized by interlaced volutes and scrolls, often rusticated.
Tabernacle	A frame characterized by architectonic structural and decorative members, most often based on classical aedicular precedents. The name is derived from a liturgical furnishing, which over the course of the fifteenth century assumed the form of this type of frame.
Tondo	A frame with circular sight and back edges.

## ***Moldings***

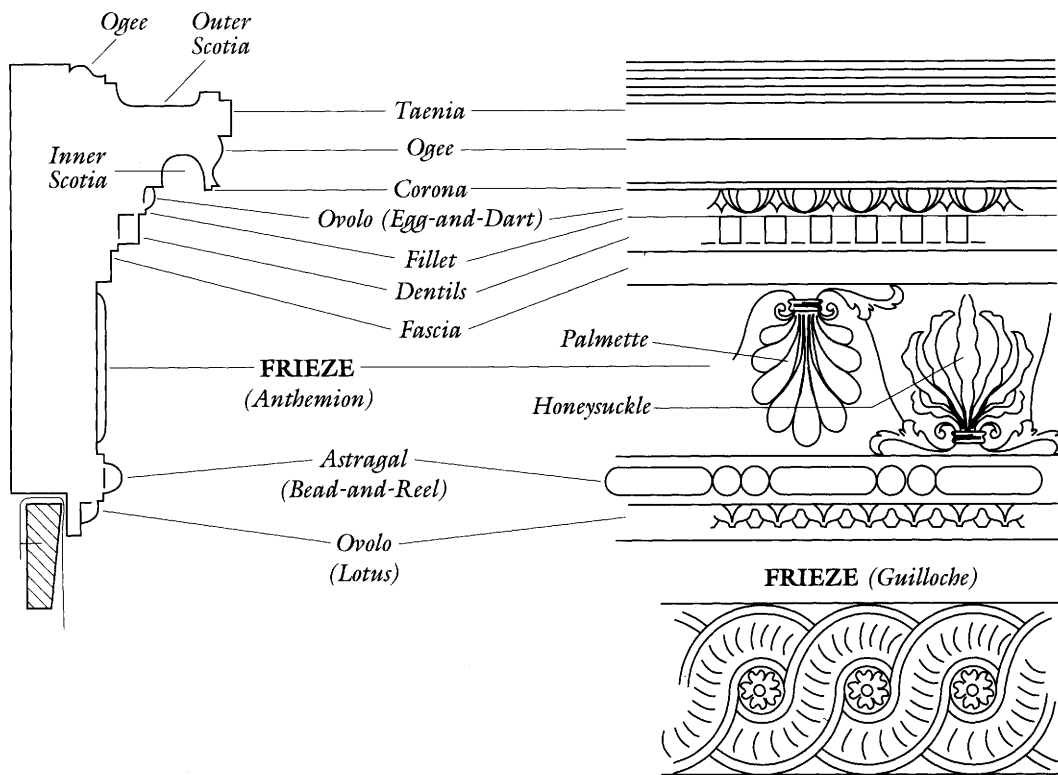
Arris	Sharp edge of molding.
Astragal	Two-thirds-circle convexity.
Cassetta	Molding derived from entablature, with the sight- and back-edge moldings separated by a frieze.
Cavetto	Quarter-circle concavity.
Corona	Overhanging molding at the top of a cornice.
Cyma recta	Classical entablature concavity continuing into convexity, often ornamented with honeysuckle, palmette, or acanthus.
Cyma reversa	Classical entablature convexity running into concavity, often ornamented with lotus.
Dowel	Applied round molding.
Fascia	Broad, shallow step derived from classical architrave.
Fillet	Classically derived small step between larger moldings.
Frieze	A flat area between raised moldings, often decorated. Also called a plate.
Ogee	Molding with S-shaped profile.
Ovolo	Quarter-circle convexity.
Reverse	Molding with its highest part nearest to the framed object.
Scotia	Half-circle concavity.
Taenia	Flat, raised molding.
Torus	Half-circle convexity.



**TABERNACLE FRAME**



**SANSOVINO FRAME**



## CASSETTA FRAME

### Ornament

Abacus	Square slab placed on top of a capital.
Acanthus	Stylized form with stem and subdivisions based on the leaf of the acanthus plant.
Antefix	Decorative addition above a pediment, usually of palmette and rosette.
Antependium	A shaped lower extension to a tabernacle frame, usually ornamented with a helix, volute, cauliculus, and other elements, usually symmetrical across the vertical axis. The term is derived from that of a cloth hanging in front of an altar.
Anthemion	Band of seminaturalistic ornament consisting usually of alternating palmettes and honeysuckle linked by helixes and cauliculi.
Architrave	Group of raised moldings on the lower side of an entablature.
Archivolt	Arched architrave.
Atlantes	Male figures or half-figures supporting an entablature in place of columns (cf. Caryatid).
Base	Horizontal moldings beneath a column, engaged column, or pilaster.
Bead-and-reel	An astragal which has been worked into a pattern of alternating pearls and extended pearls.
Bole	A soft, oily clay used as an adhesive for gold leaf.
Bucranium	Ornament in the form of an ox skull, usually in low or half relief.
Cabling	Flutes with convex fillings in the lower third of their concavities.
Cameo	Small oval decoration derived from carved classical gemstones, which may be part of a frieze or predella.



Capital	Crowning ornament of a column, engaged column, or pilaster. There are five orders: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, Composite.
Cartapesta	Pastiglia made with paper pressed from a mold ( <i>papier-mâché</i> ).
Caryatid	Female figure or half-figure supporting an entablature in place of a column ( <i>cf.</i> Atlantes).
Cauliculus	A sheath of acanthus or lotus around the taenia of a volute.
Chamfer	Beveled edge.
Cimasa	Central pinnacle of a polyptych.
Clasp	Straplike ornament that encircles a molding, usually applied to the center or corner of a seventeenth-century frame.
Coffer	Derived from a sunken panel in a ceiling or soffit, it consists of a rosette surrounded by four lengths of taenia molding.
Column	Freestanding circular supporting shaft, usually completed at top and bottom with a capital and base respectively.
Console	Bracket in the shape of an S-scroll, with one end broader than the other.
Corbel	A support projecting from a vertical surface.
Cornice	Group of raised moldings on the upper side of an entablature.
Culot	Small cluster of leaves, usually around a stem.
Dentil	Regularly spaced row of small blocks forming part of a cornice or carved molding.
Dragon's blood	A dark red vegetable glaze.
Echinus	Derived from an ovolo molding below the abacus, a band ornamented with egg-and-dart or flutes interwoven with volutes, as in a Sansovino frame.
Egg-and-dart	An ovolo carved with sheathed ovoids alternating with pointed forms, possibly derived from a schematized lotus leaf.
Entablature	Horizontal area supported by columns and consisting of architrave, frieze, and cornice.
Escarpa	Ornament in the form of a swag of fabric; common in Sansovino frames.
Exedra	A niche enclosed by an aedicula.
Festoon	Decorative chain or garland of foliage, flowers, and/or fruit.
Finial	Turned antefix.
Flutes	Vertical concave channels cut into shafts of columns; regularly spaced scotias often alternating with darts and sometimes cabled or reeded.
Gesso	Compound of chalk or plaster and glue used to prepare a surface for painting or gilding.
Grotesque	Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic ornament derived from the painted decoration of Nero's Golden House.
Guilloche	Ornament derived from interwoven strands.
Gutta	Block-shaped ornament supporting the triglyphs of a Doric frieze.
Hazzling	Zigzag chasing in gesso.
Helix	Small spiral volute.
Herm	Pilaster surmounted by a head or bust.
Impost	A block placed above an abacus, from which an archivolt springs.
Intarsia	Inlaid wood or marquetry.
Knulling	An astragal worked into a pattern of enlarged pearls.
Lambrequin	Lotus-shaped lappets, imitating textile fringes, often with tassels.
Lotus	Stylized leaf derived from the lotus plant.

Luminolegno	A technique of highlighting ornament with selective gilding against a dark ground, usually walnut.
Lunette	Semicircular or segmental area within an arched pediment.
Luster	Glaze applied over paint or gold or silver leaf.
Marbling	Decorative paint imitating marble ( <i>faux-marbre</i> ).
Meander	Pattern composed chiefly of lines winding in and out with rectangular turnings.
Metope	Blank or decorated space between the triglyphs of a Doric frieze.
Niello	Metal inlay.
Oculus	Circular center of an ornament, whether concave or convex.
Palmette	Shallow symmetrical cluster of stylized leaves based on palm fronds.
Parcel-gilt	Derived from partly gilt silver plate, used generally for gilt highlights against a plain ground (see also Luminolegno).
Pastiglia	Applied ornament of gesso, either pressed from a mold or freely brushed.
Patera	Radially symmetrical floral ornament with petals surrounding a central boss.
Patina	Naturally or artificially discolored surface, related to aged or treated bronze.
Pedestal	Substructure supporting a column, usually standing forward of the horizontal moldings and predella/antependium which form the base of a tabernacle frame or altarpiece (see also Plinth, Socle).
Pediment	The form, usually triangular, carried above the entablature of a classical temple; as the top element of a tabernacle frame, it may also be semicircular or broken.
Pier	A freestanding column with a square section.
Pilaster	An engaged pier or half-pier.
Plinth	See Pedestal.
Predella	Part of the base of an altarpiece or tabernacle frame which may be divided into panels decorated with paintings or reliefs; the area between the pedestals of a tabernacle.
Ribbon-and-stick	Twisted flute around a narrow dowel.
Rinceau	See Cauliculus.
Rope	Dowel carved in a twisted form, resembling rope.
Rosette	Stylized floral ornament based on the lotus blossom.
Rustication	Surface decoration derived from masonry with beveled joints.
Scroll	A volute which curls out of plane, suggesting a partially unfurled paper scroll.
Sgraffito	Decoration incised through color to reveal gold underneath.
Socle	Small pedestal, sometimes in the form of a bracket.
Solomonic column	Twisted column, based on one or other of the marble columns given to Emperor Constantine and believed to have come from the Temple of Solomon.
Spandrel	Area between an archivolt or shaped opening and its rectangular surround.
Swag	Festoon or cloth fastened at both ends and hanging down in the middle.
Tympanum	Surface enclosed within the upper and lower cornices of a pediment.
Volute	Large terminating taenia spiraling around an oculus.

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