

Benozzo Gozzoli, c. 1421-1497
The Feast of Herod and the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist

**KRESS CATALOGUE NUMBER**

K1648

IDENTIFIER

2171

ARTIST

Gozzoli, Benozzo, c. 1421-1497

NATIONALITY

Italian

DATE

1461-1462

MEDIUM

tempera on poplar panel

TYPE OF OBJECT

Painting

DIMENSIONS

23.8 x 34.5 cm (9 3/8 x 13 9/16 in)

LOCATION

National Gallery of Art, Washington, District of Columbia

PROVENANCE

Part of the predella of the altarpiece commissioned 23 October 1461 for the altar of the Compagnia della Purificazione della Vergine (also called of San Marco or of San Zanobi) [Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin] in the confraternity's meeting place near the church of San Marco, Florence; [1] transferred 1 May 1506 to the newly built Oratory of the confraternity across the street flanking San Marco,[2] and in 1570, possibly divided from the altarpiece, to the confraternity's new seat in Via San Gallo. [3] by 1757 the altarpiece, possibly no longer complete with predella, was in the refectory of the Ospedale dei Pellegrini (or del Melani) in Via San Gallo, where it remained until 1785. [4] marchese Alfonso Tacoli Canacci [1724-1801], Florence, by 1796; by inheritance to his nephew, Pietro Tacoli [1773-1847], Modena. [5] Count Vittorio Cini [1885-1977], Venice, in the 1940s. [6] (Wildenstein & Co., Inc., New York); sold June 1949 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York; [7] gift 1952 to NGA. [1] This was a confraternity of young men between the ages of 13 and 21 years, already in existence in 1299 according to Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine*, 10 vols., Florence, 1757: 5:329-331. According to its statutes, it was founded in 1427 and since the mid-1430s met in a space belonging to the Convent of San Marco (see Diane Cole Ahl, "In corpo di Compagnia." *Art and Devotion in the Compagnia della Purificazione e di San Zanobi of Florence*, in *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl, Cambridge, 2000). Along with prayers and communal singing, the association also organized the performance of mystery plays (see Neride Newbigin, "The Word Made Flesh. The *Rappresentazioni* of Mysteries and Miracles in Fifteenth Century Florence," *Christianity and Renaissance*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson, Syracuse, 1990: 262-263). For the meeting place of the Company, see Ann Matchette, "The Compagnia della Purificazione e di San Zanobi in Florence. A Reconstruction of Its Residence at San Marco," in *Confraternities...*, ed. Wisch and Cole Ahl, Cambridge, 2000. The contract

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between the Compagnia and the painter, published by Leopoldo Tanfani Centofanti (*Notizie di artisti tratte dai documenti pisani*, Pisa, 1897: 83-86) and Orrado Ricci ("Benozzo Gozzoli e la pala della Compagnia della Purificazione," *RivA* 2 [1904]: 9-12), relates that the company "si rauna nella città di Firenze disopra alla chiesa di sancto Marcho aspreso all'orto di detta chiesa" ("meets in the city of Florence above the church of San Marco near the garden of said church"). This does not mean that the confraternity "had its meeting place above the church," as has been suggested (Fern Rusk Shapley, "A Predella Panel by Benozzo Gozzoli," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 39 (February 1952): 78; in fact, as a reliable eighteenth-century source makes clear, the *compagnia* met in "a room on the ground floor in the second cloister of San Marco, beside the garden" (see Serafino Maria Loddi, *Notizia de soggetti e cose più memorabili del Convento di S. Marco di Firenze*, Ms dated 1736, in the Archives of the Dominican Order at Santa Sabina in Rome; Serena Padovani consulted for Dr. Miklós Boskovits the copy in the archives of San Marco in Florence, fol. 32). [2] See Richa 1757: 5:332. An inventory dated 1518 in the Archivio di Stato, Florence ("Corporazioni religiose soppresse. Compagnia di Santa Maria della Purificazione e di San Zanobi", P.XXX, no. 8, fol. 260v) describes "Vna tauola bella jnsuldetto altare dipintouj vna Vergine choruno banbino jnchollo Et sej santj Ealtre djpinture choruna bella chornicie..." ("a beautiful panel on the above-mentioned altar, painted on it a Virgin holding the Child and six saints and other paintings with a fine frame"), published in Herbert P. Horne, "Part of a Predella Painting by Benozzo Gozzoli," *The Burlington Magazine* 7 (1905): 383. On the date on which the painting was moved from the *compagnia* to the "luogo dove sta il Casino de'Medici" ("place where the Casino de'Medici is located"), see Loddi 1736, fols. 32-33. Giorgio Vasari, who mentions the altarpiece, must also have seen it there (*Opere*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols., Florence, 1878-1885: 3:46), although he does not indicate the location or mention the predella. [3] In 1570 "per dar luogo alla fabbrica del sopra mentovato Casino, ella fu trasferita in via San Gallo, ove di presente si trova" ("to make room for the construction of the above-mentioned Casino, it [that is, the confraternity] was transferred to via San Gallo, where it is presently located"); see Loddi 1736, fol. 33. [4] An Ospizio dei Pellegrini was founded in 1685 by Domenico di Santi Melani (and thus also called Ospedale del Melani) next to the Oratorio della Compagnia della Purificazione and placed under the charge of this latter; see Richa 1757: 5:335. Richa mentions the altarpiece, but not the predella, which may already have been separated from the main panel by that date. The Ospedale and *compagnia* were suppressed in 1784 and its property sold, after having been inventoried in August 1785 (see Annalisa Innocenti, "Dispersione degli oggetti d'arte durante la soppressionoe leopoldina," *RivA* 44 (1992): 351-385). It seems practically certain that the "cinque quadretti traversi larghi soldi 12 di braccia alti 8 soldi" described in the inventory of 1785 are the five panels of the already dismembered predella (the measure of one *soldo di braccia* is equivalent to about 3 cm). Another of the stories on the predella, *The Fall of Simon Magus* from the life of Saint Peter, now in the British Royal Collection, was acquired in Italy sometime between 1791 and 1798. [5] The printed *Catalogue raisonné, ou description exacte de plusieurs excellens tableaux...dans un recueil appartenant à monsieur le marquis Alphonse Tacoli Canacci à Florence*, Parma, 1796, includes, apart from NGA 1952.2.3, the *Presentation* now in Philadelphia, whereas the manuscript version of 1789 now in the Real Biblioteca, Madrid (MSII/574, no. 86) omits them and lists instead (as nos. 87, 88 and 100) the predella panels today in Berlin and Milan and the main altarpiece itself, which probably were already sold by 1796. On the *marchand-amateur* Tacoli Canacci, see Alessandra Talignani "La Collezione dei dipinti toscani del Marchese Alfonso Tacoli Canacci," in *Parma nell'Arte* [1986]: 31-42. After Tacoli Canacci's death in 1801, his collection was inherited by nephew, Pietro Tacoli, and dispersed. [6] Vittorio Cini in 1942 bought several fifteenth century Florentine paintings in Modena (see Federico Zeri's introduction to *Dipinti ferraresi dalla Collezione Vittorio Cini*, Vicenza, 1990: xi-xiii). It is probable that this panel comes from the same source. [7] The Wildenstein invoice to the Kress Foundation for 16 items, including the Gozzoli painting, is dated 23 June 1949 (copy in NGA curatorial files).

ACCESSION NUMBER

1952.2.3

KRESS NUMBER

1648

LEGACY NGA NUMBER

1086

1 ACQUISITION

Wildenstein and Company, June 23, 1949

1 DISTRIBUTION

Gift to National Gallery of Art, February 21, 1952

EXTERNAL LINKS

Related Collection Record

<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41582.html>

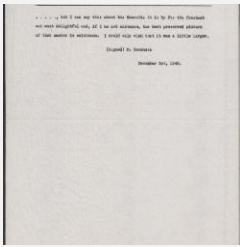
Related National Gallery of Art Library Image Collections Record

https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1p5jvkq/alma9934443804896

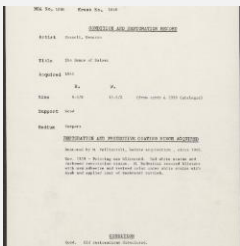
Related National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalog

https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1cl1g8d/alma992014793504896

7 ARCHIVAL ITEMS



K1648 - Expert opinion by Berenson, 1946



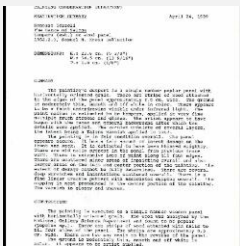
K1648 - Condition and restoration record, circa 1950s-1960s



K1648 - Work summary log, 1967

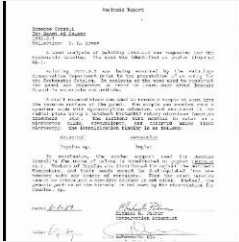


K1648 - Work summary log, 1971

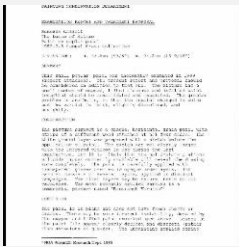


K1648 - Examination summary, 1989

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K1648 - Scientific analysis report, 1989



K1648 - Examination summary and treatment proposal, 2001

RECORD LINK

<https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/2171>