The Dominicans and Franciscans and the influence on early renaissance art

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AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON
EARLY RENAISSANCE ART

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The late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were a time for growth in experimentation and adventure in Italian art and architecture. The forms evolved to meet the changing needs of the multiformulated society amidst an economic as well as social revolution. Nowhere was this change more pronounced than in the religious art of the time related to the expansion of the Dominican and Franciscan orders. Ironically out of these mendicant societies a new wealth formed which found itself expressed in G-d's glory, growing civic pride, and a new sense or desire for unity. This accumulation of wealth further led to the creation of secular architecture that has no parallel elsewhere in Europe (White, 19). Just as these buildings provide the essential physical environment and role of establishing new vocabulary and form for the masses, so the artists through these works and the paintings inside them serve as visible preachers to all who enter through the majestic doors. The Franciscan churches of Assisi and Santa Croce and the Dominican church of Santa Maria Nouvella serve as prime examples of mendicant churches and the effects characterized by the emergence of their individual artistic personalities and religious programs which eventually shaped the realities and imagery in the late
thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. No phenomenon of life in the towns "was more expressive of its democratic and lay tendencies, and none impinged more directly upon the art of painting", than the churches and religious orders which supported them (Meiss, 60).

The arts flowered at this point as at few other moments in history. Painters and sculptors were in the process of developing a more naturalistic style endowing their subjects with a more emotional and intellectual awareness and enlargening both the realm of human values as well as making the relationship between humans as important as their relationship with G-d. This was the world in which Giotto, Cimabue, Masaccio, and Ghirlandaio emerged and introduced new ideas bringing art to a new level in its development. A revolution in painting was taking place, and it found its expression in the churches and cathedrals of Italy. More importantly, the influence of the mendicant orders, which were in the process of expanding, provided the artists with a unique opportunity as well as a chance for innovation (White, 143). These new concepts which caused a surge in popularity in religion, along with the long standing desire to use increasing wealth to decorate bare walls manifested itself in producing vast numbers of buildings and then using the insides to emphasize Christ and G-d through appreciation.

The artists were affected by new changes in social and economic outlook. For the first time, change and development were positively regarded as the static medieval community
hesitantly began to evolve into what became known as the Renaissance. A new vocabulary of form and new techniques became available for these Italian artists which led the way for their notable achievements.

The world of the Renaissance, after St. Francis and St. Dominic, was a time of general prosperity and political stability in an Italy controlled by the wealthy families. Politically there were huge gaps between the large oligarchial republics like Florence and Venice and the smaller communes and principalities in between them. Societies were organized around the guilds upon which citizenship based its membership. Then there was the church.

In the thirteenth century, the Church went through an important development on its institutional side concerning religious principle and practice of representation. Representatives began to appear in the great Councils; even the provincial synods ceased to contain only abbots and bishops. Representation was even taken a step further at this time as lay people began to penetrate the Orders of Friars, namely the Dominicans and Franciscan Order. The Dominicans offer the most complete model of this phenomenon (Barker, 7).

St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order, was remembered as more of a statesman than a saint. He was born to a noble family in Castille, was well educated, and entered the church at an early age. St. Dominic, while preaching in his early years, gave up the usual traveling around in the impressive style expected of the church dignitaries, and imitated the style
of the original apostles in an attempt to bring the heretics back to the true faith. Indirectly thus began the Order of Friars Preachers. Soon after he went to Tuscany where he established a religious community of diocesan preachers and continued teaching (Payne, 13). In 1215 he went Rome and was granted a papal sanction for his new Order of Preachers. Within the next few years they adopted an oath of poverty and became a mendicant brotherhood which spread all over Europe, preaching wherever they went and to whomever would listen.

The Dominicans were not so much a 'religious' Order, but rather a species of clerks called canons regular after the model Premontre. Their statutes were modeled after those of the Praemonstratensians as they excelled in the governing of their order by general chapters and visitations. The Dominicans, unlike their originators, are universal friars belonging not only to their own house but to the whole Order. They could preach and cure souls wherever they went (Barker, 11). The Dominicans were also the first Order to abandon manual work, leaving them free to study and preach. Their organization was representative democracy with no authority from above. Another characteristic in Dominican governing is that the constitutions of the Order are clear-cut and precise in legal terms (Barker, 17, 18).

One of the over-riding aims of the Dominicans was to be useful to the soul of others. They did not believe in the traditional pessimism about people's motivation. Assuming people were generous, they provided few safeguards against weakness in human will. Along these same lines, St. Dominic went far
in the amount of trust he put in his followers. The basis he used for the security of the wandering, unprotected friars was in the Providence of G-d, and in his prayers for them. St. Dominic's constitutions are only human law and thus breaking them does not constitute sin (Payne, 21-22). For many of these reasons it is maintained "that every act of obedience must always be a free, deliberate, rational act, and that no superior can ever claim authority over his subjects' consciences" (Payne, 23). Too much pressure on his followers would reduce the generosity with which they served G-d. Therefore following ones conscience rather than the commands of a superior was less of a sin. Even though this was true, an oath of obedience had to be promised to both G-d and the Master of the Order as an expression of the generosity of giving oneself to following the tasks of G-d (Payne, 23,24).

There was one observance that the Dominican preacher had to pursue in his life that was put above all else: studying. Obviously in the preaching profession one should not only know about what s/he is talking about, but the preacher was even more concerned with giving his/her best. The preachers soon became teachers and students themselves and were heavily involved in the academic world. These friars did not simply pursue their own intellectual interests, they wrote volumes for the good of the community based on the demands and needs of their students (Payne, 25). St. Thomas wrote his authoritative Summa Theologia to help beginning theology students for example. All across Western Europe Dominicans were making a difference in the
academic as well as artistic world never to be forgotten by later generations.

During the Middle Ages, the lives of the high ranking church officials were comparable to those of the aristocracy (Gage, 35). St. Francis saw this in his youth and through his experiences, rejected it for the mendicant ways he is now known for. His actual decision to consecrate himself happened one day when he met a poor soldier to whom, out of compassion, he gave his rich clothes. That night he had a vision where Christ appeared pointing to a beautiful building which was to belong to the Saint and his soldiers. St. Francis took this to mean he should continue his life as a soldier until one day in church he heard Christ tell him to go out into the world and repair his holy houses. He was full of mission and secretly sold some of his father's silks to pay for this rebuilding project. His father took him to court where after considerable debate he stripped himself of all clothes and money, forever renouncing his life of wealth. He was finally free, in every essence of the word.

Gathering and begging for the necessary materials, he set about repairing the church of St. Damian and other churches himself. He had transformed himself from a hermit to a missionary; he no longer shunned people, but went out in search of them. Common to his themes were penitence and the forgiveness of sins. As his audiences grew, he did not ask them to follow his example, but soon he had many companions. Thus he was inspired to formulate the simple rules of his order: chastity,
humility, obedience, and absolute poverty (Ferguson, 71).

St. Francis first had difficulty obtaining approval for his Order in Rome because his rules were thought too severe for human strength. Yet it is said the Pope had a vision of St. Francis holding up the a toppling Lateran church so after that holy experience, permission was granted.

The members of the Franciscan Order were called 'Frati Minori' or the lesser brothers. They were not concerned so much with the organization of the Order as was St. Dominic, and thus the democratic element wasn't as prevalent. Also whereas St. Dominic deliberately tried not to impose his views on his followers, consequently not leaving them any written Rule or corpus of writings to guide and inspire them, St. Francis left much instruction behind. Their humility gained immense popularity, and were soon to be seen everywhere. The Franciscans practiced the apostolic virtues and through them tried to bring people back to that morality, banishing greed, anger, and sensuality from their hearts making way for unselfishness, peace, and love (Salvatorelli, 211).

Though no one wrote down any of his sermons, St. Francis himself preserved a record of their substance. He preached the ordinary themes of the Christian Bible and the Gospels. Since he went back to these original sources, they gave him an advantage over the professional preachers who had much in the way of scholastic artificialities. This effectiveness was emphasized by his spontaneous and simple style. He was unfamiliar with theology, his preaching was moral and applied
the morality from the Gospels to his own time. Common to his themes were penitence and forgiveness. Penitence meant repentance for sin and by forgiveness, St. Francis's aim was reconciliation with G-d which came also by mutual forgiveness of offences between Christian brothers. "G-d give you peace" was what he said before every sermon as it was the meaning behind his mission (Salvatorelli, 97-100).

St. Francis and the Franciscans sought neither power nor money, the two driving forces in society, regarding them both as worthless. Yet he asked no one to follow his example, just to listen to his ideas. He sought no authority over anyone and believed men should serve each other as brothers (Salvatorelli, 121). Yet all who joined him gave up everything and everyone to do so.

St. Francis laid down his Rule for those who came after him based on three passages from the Gospels: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give it to the poor"; "Ye shall take nothing for the journey"; and "Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor script for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes no yet staves." The prescribed habit was a simple tunic, a girdle, and drawers. No daily occupation was required and begging was an option. No one was to accept money or charity for their work; no one was to own property and not even a monastary was to be built for them to live in rather they were assumed to go from house to house begging. No resistance was to be used when someone tried to take what they were using or if they tried to hurt
them. Everyone was expected to be Catholic and live in accordance with the Catholic faith and discipline with reverence to the priests and the Pope. Thus the Rule was drawn up, a way of life rather than a monastic organization. Nothing that wasn't already practiced was instituted (Salvatorelli, 127,128).

During the early Renaissance continuing from the Middle Ages, two factors dominated religious life: the extreme with which religion permeated everyday occurrences, and an inclination to use images to embody thought. Christ and salvation were focal points for everything, there was not an object or action that escaped religious interpretation. Part of this tendency was due to the naive spirit that wanted to give a concrete shape to every idea. These images quickly solidified into rigid symbols some of which hardened into a mere external shell. Qualities can be lost as people can begin to associate with the image rather than the idea behind it (Huizinga, 151,152). That is why when looking at the symbols that emerged in association with St. Francis and St. Dominic, one knows the context out of which they came and the reasons why they came to be.

Images and symbols have been known to occupy an exceedingly influential position between language, which is used to convey meaning, and nature, to which meaning is given. In art, they serve as representational features which can be broken down on various levels. It is important though to realize that different situations and thus different derived meanings occur in various time periods and contexts in history (Gombrich, 1-22).
One must know the symbols are hidden for those who know how to look but at the same time understand there is always a danger of over analyzing them.

In Christian art images used for St. Francis and St. Dominic had a powerful influence not only on the artists and patrons, but the masses they were made for as well. Images came in all different forms, of which animals were one of the most predominant. St. Francis, in one of his more famous parables in the *Golden Legend* is seen preaching to the birds. They symbolize the 'winged soul' and suggests the 'spiritual' as opposed to the 'material' hence are significantly G-dly creatures for him to preach to (Ferguson, 2). The wolf is another animal which is sometimes portrayed as an attribute of St. Francis. It is based on a famous story of the wolf of Gubbio which was being hunted by the people there after doing great damage. St. Francis, after encountering the wolf, addressed it as 'Brother Wolf' and protected it as a fellow creature who knew no better and decided to reform it. The dog, usually a symbol of watchfulness and fidelity, is attributed to St. Dominic when seen with a flaming torch in its mouth. Before he was born, his mother had a dream where she gave birth to a dog with a flame in it's mouth. The word Dominican (Domini canes) can be translated as 'dogs of the Lord' because their anti-heretical activities, beliefs, and spreading the word of the gospel. Black and white dogs may also symbolize the order who wore black and white habits (Ferguson, 4).

Images of the two Saints can also be found in many different
aspects of nature and the human body. The Lily, a symbol of purity and chastity, is attributed to several of the Saints, among them Sts. Francis and Dominic (Ferguson, 17). Being a penitent Saint, the skull is often attributed to St. Francis, symbolizing the useless vanity of earthly things (Ferguson, 28). Signifying divine guidance or favor, a star on the forehead of St. Dominic is seen as one of his attributes in remembrance of the one said to have appeared there when he was baptized (Ferguson, 24, 69). Much like St. Dominic's star are St. Francis's stigmata, which means marks usually of disgrace or infamy, said to have been supernaturally impressed upon certain people of high religious character representing the wounds Christ suffered on the Cross (Ferguson, 28).

Many of the images attributed to St. Dominic became known through different stories and saints. St. Dominic's special attribute is the rosary, because he was the one who originated its devotion (Ferguson, 69). Often he is shown holding a book because on one of his missions among the Albigensians a bonfire was made of heretical books and when the book of St. Dominic was cast in, it sprang out uncharred (Vasari, 106). A loaf of bread refers to an event where he was about to eat a meal with the Friars of St. Sixtus in Rome. When told there was nothing to eat, he told them to sit and he ordered the food bell to be rung. When all the monks were seated and had said their prayers, two angels appeared and handed each of them a loaf of bread.

The functions of images in art mean little unless they
are placed in areas where the great masses of people will see them. The Dominican church of Santa Maria Nouvella and its Franciscan counterparts of Assisi and Santa Croce were the most important bases in Florence of the two mendicant Orders. Subsequently these are the great interiors for the monumental artwork based on St. Dominic and St. Francis.

The Franciscan church at Assisi [Fig. 1] was founded in 1228, the year after St. Francis's canonization and two years after his death. It's a rather simple plan of a double church with emphasis placed on the upper half architecturally and symbolically. The form is an unadorned Latin Cross with a aisleless nave which is important to its function of being a

1. Assisi, S. Francesco, founded 1228, consecrated 1253
preacher's church where a single unified space leaves nothing to interrupt the congregation's view or break the flow of the architecture towards the altar (White, 23). The whole effect of the vertical accelerations leaves the viewer with a sense of airiness, balance; it is the wall in its simplest form which leaves enough sufficient light for the fresco painter [Fig. 2].

2. Assisi, S. Francesco, interior of upper church

Most of the church at Assisi, besides the Legend cycle which was done by Giotto, was attributed to the painter Cenni
de Pepi, known as Cimabue. He deals mostly with the life of St. Francis taking stylistic sources from Byzantine art and his intimate knowledge of Rome. These influence him in his vivid portrayal of anatomy and tension of pose (White, 182). The choir and transepts have a decorative scheme in specifically a Franciscan plan. Cimabue's frescoes in the choir are coherent continuations, unbroken and all embracing. St. Francis's stress of the Passion and his followers desire to stress the parallel between his own life and that of Christ's is evident in the frescoes in the nave of the lower church. His mystical tendencies seem to be underlined and emphasized in the apparitions of Christ from the New Testament and in the Angels of the Old Testament. The frescoes in the choir show his love for the Virgin Mary interceding for mankind, St. Peter and St. Paul, the leaders of Christ's earthly armies in the struggle for salvation, and Christ's crucifixion of which there are two huge frescoes each with St. Francis prostrate at the foot of the cross (White, 186).

The frescoes and stained-glass windows in the church when looked at together coherently and concisely entail the four main sections of the Bible: the Old Testament, New Testament, Acts, and the Apocalypse. The series from the Old Testament runs in two rows along the right upper wall from the Creation to the Story of Joseph. Opposite on the left wall are scenes from the New Testament ranging from the Annunciation to the Resurrection as well as the Ascension and Pentecost scenes over the entrance wall in lunettes.
Cimabue adds meaning to his imaginative frescoes, becoming an expansion which also stresses the already symbolic architectural shell. In the vaults, the ribs are emphasized with brightly colored patterning and wide strips of foliate design. This accentuates not only their structural, linking, and supporting functions of the real architecture, but binds them to the creative surface as well. This is particularly clear in the left transept of the church where on the wall are three angels, wings spread, standing in the shadows of the six openings of the canopy in front [Fig. 3]. Above the six arches of the canopy is a painted series of six busts of angels in a painted colonnade. The line between real and painted space is hard to distinguish achieving the desired effect of suggesting

3. Cimabue: Angels, c.1280
the actual presence of the angels.

Cimabue's formal discipline in his narrative cycle calling for careful symmetry across the wide architectural spaces is an entirely new concept in the history of Italian art. A sense of order and unity without a feeling of rigidity makes one think that he must have seen the whole of the choir and transepts as a single space with a single decorative design. The culmination of Cimabue's work lies in his twin frescoes of the Crucifixion [Fig. 4]. In the left transept, is a miniature of the whole with its symmetrical design spilling out emotion.

The swaying S-curve of the crucified figure with its sweeping draperies, the violent gestures of the crowd below, and the threshing circle of tormented angels complete the picture of an art both grave and passionate, human and transcendent. It is art as boldly experimental as it is severely disciplined.

In this painting, Cimabue has begun the search for new realms of realism and illusion (White, 190).

4. Cimabue: Crucifixion, c.1280
Assisi, S. Francesco, upper church, south transept
The Legend of St. Francis painted on the lower walls just below Cimabue's frescoes in the nave is an important event in European art. The messages of St. Francis were taught in parables and images that all could understand. Giotto successfully transformed these into pictural forms. They achieved a balance between realistic and abstract, between divinity and humanity. The scenes moved away from symbolism so that those entering the church would be able to relate their humanity and everyday occurrences, with the lives of the Saints. To Giotto, the Saints were people, not spirits from heaven, who felt all the emotions that humans felt on earth. Thus he opened a new pathway for himself because he now only had to reproduce what he knew and saw everyday, not the allegories from the Scriptures. Yet he knew how far he could take this new innovation and dared not weaken his emphasis on the stories he was trying to portray, the meaning in the lives of his subjects were his emphasis.

The Legend of St. Francis in the Upper church of Assisi, was painted over a considerable time period by at least three different masters, including Giotto, each with their own style. One plan definitely covered the whole framework, though probably not the individual scenes (Tintori & Meiss, 50). It is generally agreed that in the course of the twenty-eight scene cycle, Giotto's gradual emergence as an artist can be seen. Thus his evolution coinciding with the life of the Saint (Tintori & Meiss, 43).

The scenes themselves, although exhibiting some stylistic
changes, are contained in a remarkably unified framework in the form of simulated drapery which extends over the entire wall from floor to the catwalk above. Other details in the overall plan manifest a similar adherence in some of the more obvious architectural forms. For example above the painted cornice there is molding that contains a series of four-pointed stars. Where the molding is not carves, it is painted to simulate stone. Light and shade also prove to be a unifying factor as there is perfect correspondence on the two walls, creating a remarkable symmetry (Tintori & Meiss, 48-50).

The walls on which the series is painted is divided into bays, the details on which recede in parallel towards the center thus making it a central focal point. A new naturalism is used which enlivens the strict spacial unity in the nave (White, 208).

The story of the Saint's life starts on the right, circles the nave and ends on the left hand side of the same first bay. The V-shaped Umbrian hills first draw the viewers attention in the second scene of the narrative St. Francis giving away his Cloak [Fig. 5] as they force one to focus on the halo of the young saint standing in the center. The rocky hillside echoes the folds of the cloak. The landscape in the background as well as the balance of the figures of the poor nobleman and the horse in the foreground all seem to converge upon St. Francis rotating the picture around him. St. Francis as the axis of the painting is no accident as it recurs throughout the cycle (White, 208).
5. Giotto (?): St. Francis giving away his Cloak, mid 1290s
Assisi, S. Francesco, upper church

The scene of St. Francis Preaching to the Birds is one of the most popular episodes in the Franciscan story because it leaves the faithful with the longest-lasting and happy memory. It is one of the only two scenes without any architecture in its landscape. The motion is a soft and downward-floating as the saint leans forward to bless the birds gathered on the ground in front of him. The thick trunk on the bottom of the
tree provides a final stopping point for the painting as well as bringing the viewers attention down to the birds who all seem to be listening to the preaching saint [Fig. 6].

6. Giotto (?): St. Francis Preaching to the Birds, 1290 Assisi, S. Francesco, upper church

S. Maria Nouvella, the Dominican church in Florence [Fig. 7] founded in 1246, is the earliest surviving example of a church made to fit mendicant needs. The vaulted aisles, short-headed
crucifix plan, and unprecedented airiness and spatial unity, give a feeling of lightness and free movement. Combined with the lack of sharply pointed forms, the cool green-gray ribs and arches inside, this freedom creates a flowing stillness which is broken only by the ten niches holding saints and angels. There is also a sense of abstract patterning which draws one's attention upwards towards another heavenly world (White, 27-28).

Santa Maria Nouvella itself was seen as the heart for the refinement of life. A school and a hospital were connected with it. The wealthy along with the guilds built their own chapels to beautify the church as well as for the glory of G-d and the benefit of their souls. Embellishing the church was a continuous project believing in the Renaissance and its achievements rather than the recent past.

Domenico Ghirlandaio, who is attributed to most of the work in the church, was unable to determine much of the scope of what was to be painted in S. Maria Nouvella. His instructions, given by the patron Giovanni Tornabuoni, told exactly what to paint, where to paint it, and in many cases what colors should be used (Chambers, 172-175). Much of the subject matter had to do with the Virgin Mary and other important Saints such as St. John. Ironically in the first Dominican church ever built, there was only one mention of the figure of St. Dominic (Chambers, 174). Therefore in this case, though we see the artist as a visible preacher for the masses, it actually the patron telling him what to, in effect, 'say'.
Yet Ghirlandaio was only one of the many famous artists to paint frescoes and panels in the church. The quantity of architectural additions and enrichments in furnishings that came to S. Maria Novella during the Renaissance was quite huge.
most of this was given away in the sixteenth century (Wackernagel, 39). The works of Fra Angelico and Masaccio were among those to have graced the halls of S. Maria Nouvella.

Fra Angelico's Annunciation panels were placed on either side of the organs on the choir, an exquisite painting of a wood carved Easter candle, and frescoes depicting many of the Dominican saints in the left aisle, which have all since disappeared. Only the four small reliquaries he decorated along with his assistants have survived.

Masaccio's Trinity fresco [Fig. 8] is one of the only important paintings from the Trecento which can still be found in the church today. This painting on the left aisle wall is noted as one of his most bewildering works. It sits up above a fresco of a prone skeleton above whose tomb is marked 'Once I was that which you are and what I am you will also be'. Above the skeleton are six figures arranged in two intersecting triangles. There are the two unidentified kneeling donors in the bottom corners, the crucified Christ, whose head serves as the top of their triangle, Mary and St. John the Evangelist who are standing on either side of Christ and G-d, the Father, who serves as the point to their triangle. There is also a dove around G-d the Father's neck which serves the purpose of completing the Trinity. The effect of the two triangles is that along with the quote, a sort of riddle is formed, the answer to which lies where both triangles connect which would be salvation by faith in Christ.

The scene itself is framed by fictive architecture whose
Masaccio: Trinity, Florence, S. Maria Nouvella

perspective points to and encloses Christ's head in a halo further showing the viewer the answer to the riddle. Christ also serves as the light source. Two fluted columns topped with Corinthian capitals hold the entablature which marks the
top of the painting. The room behind the scene is covered by a barrel vault and the size of the would-be room looks rather large and deep giving the negative space which allows the viewer to concentrate on the figures, especially that of Christ. The donors stand outside the room, while the rest of the party is inside. The bones of the skeleton remind onlookers of their mortality. This painting seems to ask many questions and there is no other like it known in Florence (Cole, 179).

Like its rival church S. Maria Nouvella, the Franciscan church S. Croce typifies the mendicant construction system. Just as S. Maria Nouvella church expanded along with the Dominican Order, so did the story of S. Croce grow around an existing church. Here though, the small house was set up by St. Francis himself in 1211 and was first built up around 1225. The outside shell of the church was actually planned as early as 1285 and was designed by Arnolfo Di Cambio (White, 30).

S. Croce is one of the largest and most luxurious mendicant churches in Italy. This embellishment seems ironic for an Order which was founded based on poverty and caused much violent opposition, typical of the dualism present not only in the Franciscan Order, but Florentine society during the birth of capitalism. S. Croce was also the church favored by the great banking families: the Bardi, Alberti, Peruzzi, and Baroncelli (White, 30).

The plan is similar to S. Maria Nouvella but with ten chapels flanking the choir and a five sided apse. A major structural difference and important architectural structure
is the open-trussed wooden roof that runs, unbroken, down the 
nave of the church [Fig. 9]. The nave itself is still wide 
and this is stressed by repeated transverse bars of the roof; 
the effect with the shadows that collect on the upper parts 
of the walls creates a long unbroken space lightened by an even 
greater height. Weightlessness is almost achieved by a 
combination of the thinness of the nave supports, the slender 
widows and flat and narrow pilasters, despite the possible 
heaviness of the upper part of the church in its lack of windows. 
Moving up the nave towards the front of the church, diagonals 
begin to open up in the wide openings of the high arches. A 
visual unity is established with the transepts and lateral spaces 
no longer seem cut off. The overall suggestion is a cubic sort 
of volume without actually shutting the lid (White, 30-32).
The church is clear-cut and intelligible based on the sensitive detail of the design. The dominant features are the lines and planes. Besides a few simple rings on the octagonal columns, there are no rounded edges or columns in the entire building. Everywhere the cube and rectangle verticals and horizontals give a clear and sharp definition of the space.

Immediately before the friar's choir is a two-story vaulted tramezzo, much like that in S. Maria Nouvella. This is in the last two bays of the nave and divides the church into three distinct areas meant for the priests, the friars and male faithful, and then the laity (White, 33).

As one of the great painters of the Italian Renaissance, Giotto's culminating achievement lies in the adjoining chapels of the Bardi and Perruzi families in S. Croce. The other two chapels were the Guigni, dedicated to the Apostles, and that of the Tosinghi an Spinelli families, which was sanctified to the Assumption of Our Lady. In the monastery which served as the 'university' for the Franciscan Order, Giotto was commissioned by two of the wealthiest banking families in Florence. The compositions enliven and support the architecture of the church as the columns and the niches of the saints were painted to elaborate the real architectural forms (White, 334-335).

In the Bardi Chapel, six scenes from St. Francis's life alternate from wall to wall. The framework is largely planar and rigid in form. The lunettes that top off the scenes on both sides, Renunciation and Approval of the Rule, give Giotto
a chance to combine the architectural mass of the half-circle with centralized figure designs that fill the forward planes. As can be seen in *The Apparition at Arles* and *Trial by Fire* all the frescoes in the Bardi chapel stress the planar limitation of the clear architectural space, the concentration on the central figure, and the overall design in the background that seems to fuse the figures and the architecture together for a single, dramatic moment. The planes are crisp, yet do not always look like they can house all the figures they are meant to frame.

In *Apparition at Arles*, [Fig. 10] the three arches take the attention away from the sides of the fresco as St. Anthony forms a simple vertical on the left hand side, linking him to the arch he is leaning on while the horizontal cornice gives a direction to his steadfast gaze. St. Francis, standing in the middle arch with his stigmatized hands raised in an arch imitate the curve above his head as a crucifix is painted on the wall behind him. The crowd below listening intently to him seem content and attentive concentrating on what he has to say (White, 335-336).

Opposite this piece is a work of Giotto's genius, *Trial by Fire* [Fig. 11]. There is this narrative in Assisi as well, but here the Sultan is placed high up at the center of the shallow courtyard with St. Francis on the right, facing the fire as well as the Sultan himself. Giotto places the muslims on the left to give the effect of the formal idea of judgment, as he means for one's eyes to go back and forth deciding which
side of the scale will tilt. The Saint is depicted as stepping forward as the muslims back away (White, 336-337).

10. Giotto: Apparition at Arles, c.1315-20 (?) Florence, S. Croce, Bardi Chapel

11. Giotto: Trial by Fire, c.1325-20 (?) Florence, S. Croce, Bardi Chapel
The Peruzzi chapel's format is basically the same as the Bardi with the six opposing scenes, this time half devoted to the life of St. John the Baptist and the other side to St. John the Evangelist. The main difference is now that the construction of the buildings in the frescoes are now oblique. These buildings and walls which are seen from many different angles, are cut by the frame of the picture itself. The formerly single isolated block is broken and the architecture can take on new complexities and directions (White, 337).

On the bottom of the left wall is the Dance of Soloman [Fig. 12] devoted to three scenes from the life of John the Baptist. The continuous narrative causes the figures to be unusually small, but they flow together in a rhythmic pattern along with the surrounding architecture. The sweeping draperies unites the two representations of Soloman on the right hand side as well as unite them with the musician's tunic. The only aspect that sets this painting off balance is the loss of the body from the decapitated head of St. John (White, 337).

In The Raising of Drusiana [Fig. 13] a fortressed city towering above the bold figures in the foreground replaces the usual single massive buildings typical in Giotto's other works. The city stretches across the scene and in the center, where the dramatic return from death is occurring, so the central reaches of the wall connect. The frame also suggests that the background continues well out of view, not stopping just after the edge of the painting. Thus Giotto has finally arrived at the spatial continuity he was searching for, not only in the
presentation of the buildings, but the crowds gathered in the foreground no longer suggest blocks of people, but rather individuals with their own form and volume (White, 339).

12. Giotto: Dance of Salome, mid 1320's Florence, S. Croce, Peruzzi Chapel

13. Giotto: Raising of Drusiana, mid 1320's Florence, S. Croce, Peruzzi Chapel
Art and architecture in the early Renaissance in Italy was used for mainly religious purposes. What one sees today as a 'work of art' was viewed then as a sacred or even devotional image. These buildings and frescoes seemed to have had increasing importance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries during the founding of the religious fraternities such as the Dominicans and Franciscans. Some of the uses for these religious pieces of artwork were didactic. They taught the illiterate who could not read by letting them read the walls of the great churches. Other purposes were to glorify either people, events, or as in this case, the saints. Whatever the reason, in the early Renaissance forms grew to meet the changing needs of society.

The development of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders came from society's need to return to the basics and learn to live with peace and brotherly love. St. Dominic, in his optimistic rigidly governed, preaching and teaching Order and St. Francis with his strict codes and devout poverty started new trends in religion still present today. The art then evolved around these trends causing their popularity to expand to even greater distances and heights. Ironically, these new societies which based themselves on poverty brought about new wealth which could be seen in the churches, monasteries, and monumental paintings built up around them. The churches of Assisi, S. Maria Nouvella, and S. Croce are the three prime examples of this occurrence in Italy. Their graceful, weightless naves along with their awesome ability to inspire the words of the Gospels
and Bible that Sts. Dominic and Francis sought to preach into the minds and hearts of all who entered will never be forgotten. Society was ripe for change and the challenge was successfully met by the two saints; the art that sprung up only solidified their ideas keeping them constant and unchanging for the future to look back on and learn from, since that was their purpose in the first place.
End Notes


It told the whole detailed story of St. Francis's life and his relationship to different animals which wasn't necessarily needed.


Helpful in comparing the Dominican convocation to the Franciscans, basically about the Dominican organization and the second half tells about the Dominicans in England.


A well written, concise book on the Renaissance in Italy, though not too much about art or the mendicant Orders.


An overall view of the arts in Renaissance Italy, the problems, the atmosphere, and society on the whole.


A book of documents between different patrons and artists both civic and religious.


A great book on the artist Masaccio himself, but in terms of the arts at the time or other artists, that was all looked at in comparison to him.

This was a legend written in the mid thirteenth century about the different saints and their lives, most stories were just stories and told by word of mouth.


This was a very helpful book in giving all symbols and their meanings in Christian art which was good in understanding them as well as the context they came out of.


It was a good source for explaining meanings behind imagery, just not so much the images themselves.


A wonderful book on life and ideas about thought and art in France and the Netherlands during the early Renaissance.


A helpful book in understanding some of the mentality that went on during this time period, but not too helpful with the Dominicans and Franciscans.


It was a collection of many essays and thoughts on St. Dominic and his Order since he wrote down nothing in his lifetime, lots were opinionated though and had to be sorted through.


Told the story of St. Francis's life in great detail which was good but had to be picked through a lot.

Tintori, Leonetto, and Meiss, Millard. The Painting of the Life

Has possibilities of being useful but too much concentration on which parts of every paintings were painted first and the order within.


About commissions, patrons, the artists market during the Renaissance.


A lifesaving book all about the art, architecture and insightful ideas behind it all.