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Early Renaissance triptych is reunited in New York

New-York Historical Society

by Pac Pobric | 01 December 15

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Taddeo Gaddi, Madonna and Child Enthroned with Ten Saints: Maestà with the inner shutters (sportelli) from a triptych: Annunciation and Nativity; Crucifixion (around 1330–34)

A Renaissance triptych by the Florentine painter and Giotto pupil Taddeo Gaddi (around 1290–1366) has been reunited for an exhibition opening at the New-York Historical Society this month. The central panel of the work, which depicts the Madonna and Child enthroned with saints, was painted in around 1330 to 1334 and has been in the Historical Society’s collection since 1867. But the location of the sportelli (side shutters) has long been a mystery. “We don’t

know when they were separated,” says Roberta Olson, a curator at the Historical Society and the show’s organiser. “It could have been a century after they were painted, for all we know.”

But Olson, who tracked down the side panels through auction records to the private Alana Collection, which has lent them for the show, says that recent conservation work on the central panel confirms the relationship between the three parts.

One of the most telling clues is Gaddi’s signature rosette-shaped punch mark, which is found in each of the three parts. Gaddi later abandoned this signature form and it is found in only one other work from the period.

The triptych, which was probably made for a domestic chapel, was designed to be portable. “You could close the shutters and take it with you,” Olson says. “Technologically, this was a major step in the development of devotional family chapels.”

Originally, the work would have been set in a frame that has since been lost. A digital reconstruction of that frame will accompany the show and provide a sense of how the piece may have once looked.

In addition, a group of Renaissance pictures including the Triumph of Julius Caesar (around 1445-65) by Giovanni di Ser Giovanni and a version of the Crucifixion (around 1315) by a follower of Duccio will be on view. These works, like the central panel of Gaddi’s triptych, come from the collection of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, which he bequeathed to the Historical Society in 1867.

The show is supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation.

• *Maestà: Gaddi’s Triptych Reunited, New-York Historical Society, 11 December-20 March 2016*