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Table of Contents

Fabio Tononi

Festschrift in Honour of Jaynie Anderson

pp. 1-34

Paola Colleoni

Building a Local Church with Global Networks: James Goold in Colonial Victoria pp. 35-65

Giles Fielke

Empathy, Through the Mud: The Traditions of Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind in Australia

pp. 66-78

Hugh Hudson

'Si Fortuna Perit': Drawing as Artistic and Moral Instruction in Paolo Uccello's Workshop

pp. 79-102

Angelo Lo Conte

Marketing the Landscape: Additions to the Catalogue of Carlo Antonio Procaccini pp. 103-127

Luke Morgan

Stupore: The Early Modern Automaton Between Art and Nature

pp. 128-143

'Si Fortuna Perit': Drawing as Artistic and Moral Instruction in Paolo Uccello's Workshop

Hugh Hudson

Abstract

This article presents a study of two sheets of animal drawings housed in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, which came from a now dispersed Florentine Renaissance modelbook. The Nationalmuseum attributes its drawings to Paolo Uccello (c. 1397-1475) and his workshop, but without specifying which drawings are by Uccello, who the other drawings might be by, or when the drawings were made. Comparative stylistic evidence from infrared imaging of Uccello's Saint George and the Dragon in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and related stylistic evidence, supports the attribution of the two finest drawings on the Stockholm sheets to Uccello and their dating to the 1430s or early 1440s. More than a century ago, Osvald Sirén identified one of the other animal drawings on the Stockholm sheets as close in form to an animal in a painting by Pesellino (c. 1422–1457). A further three correspondences between compositions in the modelbook and animals in Pesellino's paintings are identified here. A fifth comparison shows a similarity in the style of execution. These correspondences beg the question of whether a young Pesellino could have executed some of the drawings in the modelbook besides those by Uccello. A lack of documentary evidence for Pesellino's training and the compromised condition of some of the modelbook drawings means answering the question turns around how much weight should be given to this limited stylistic evidence. Nevertheless, new light is shed on the Stockholm drawings' iconography. One drawing is accompanied by a cropped inscription in Latin, which is reconstructed here for the first time, and indicates the drawing was understood to convey a moral significance. This calls attention to the moral aspects of the training a Renaissance artist could receive when drawing in a modelbook, and how such training could inform the iconography of their work later in life.

Keywords

Modelbook, workshop, iconography, Uccello, Pesellino

Two sheets of animal drawings in the collection of the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, are important examples of early Renaissance Florentine modelbook practice, distinguished by their spirited style for a genre that tends towards the formulaic (Figs 1–2). They are also important because of the popularity of their images in mid-fifteenth century Florentine workshops, as attested by examples in other drawings, as well as paintings and a sculpture,

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by various artists, discussed below. That the Stockholm sheets belonged to a modelbook that was likely an important exemplar in the transmission of these images is suggested by stylistic evidence for the relatively early date of the Stockholm drawings and for the prominence of their chief artist. The Nationalmuseum currently attributes the drawings to Paolo Uccello (c. 1397–1475) and his workshop,¹ although Uccello's authorship of any of the drawings has been doubted by some scholars and rejected by others.

This article presents three new proposals concerning the Stockholm drawings. First, infrared imaging of Uccello's *Saint George and the Dragon* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, provides clearer stylistic evidence than has been previously published supporting the attribution to Uccello of the two finest drawings on the Stockholm sheets and for their dating to the 1430s or early 1440s. Second, an old attribution by Osvald Sirén of the Stockholm drawings to a 'Compagno di Pesellino' (Companion of Pesellino), a putative workshop assistant of Francesco di Stefano, called Pesellino (c. 1420–1457), provides a point of departure for investigating the use of modelbook drawings in Pesellino's paintings. In light of subsequent opinion identifying the 'Compagno di Pesellino' as Pesellino himself, the question of whether Pesellino might have executed any of the Stockholm drawings, alongside those by Uccello, is examined. Third, a cropped Latin inscription accompanying one of the Stockholm drawings, reconstructed here, shows that the drawing was understood to convey a moral significance, and the iconography of other drawings from the modelbook can be interpreted in moral terms as well.

The Provenance of the Stockholm Drawings

The two Stockholm sheets of drawing are catalogued as inv. nos NMH 45a/1863 (recto) and NMH 45b/1863 (verso), and NMH 46a/1863 (recto) and NMH 46b/1863 (verso). Their paper supports are prepared with a pale red ground on all four sides and bear seventeen drawings in ink and wash, most depicting a single animal, a few showing a pair of animals, and one shows a boy riding an animal. Some animals are identified or their features discussed in old inscriptions written in various hands on the sheets, and the sheets have old foliation, as well as the modern collector's mark of the former Kungliga Museet in Stockholm—the initials KM in a circle (Lugt 1638). The sheets are set side by side into a folio-size, double-sided paper mount decorated with architectural framing motifs drawn in pen and ink, such that the recto and verso of each sheet of drawings is visible. The

For their generous assistance in various aspects of the long development of this research, I thank Jaynie Anderson, Nathaniel Silver, Rachel Billinge, Imogen Tedbury, Lorenza Melli, Cameron Hurst, and Martin Olin.

¹ For links to all the works attributed to Uccello, some with the assistance of his workshop, that are housed in the Nationalmuseum collection, see Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 'Work', https://collection.nationalmuseum, see / e M P / e M u s e u m P l u s ? service=ExternalInterface&siteId=1&module=artist&objectId=10335&viewType=detailView&lang=sv>[accessed 14 April 2024].

inscription 'Paolo Uccello Pittore Fiorento' is written in a banderole on one side of the mount and 'PAOLO VCCIELLO PIT: FIORENT:' is on the other side. The style of the drawing on the mount is that of the so-called 'chief framer,' identified by the art historian Andrew Morrogh as the most prolific artist of decorated mounts made for drawings owned by the Florentine art collector Niccolò Gaddi (1537–1591), concerning whom more is said below.² An inscription on the mount reads 'Vieux maitres de Florence. Cabinet Crozat' on the left and 'De Recueil de Vasari' on the right.

On the basis of similarities in subject matter, style, technique, and format, the two Stockholm sheets have been identified as coming from the same modelbook as a sheet of drawings in the Albertina in Vienna, which is catalogued as inv. no. 27. This has two pairs of animals and two single animals on one side and four birds' heads and a mounted rider on the other side, and the collector's mark of Jean-Paul Mariette (1694–1774)—an M in a circle (Lugt 2097). Wohl recorded an inscription on the reverse of the mount, which was copied from a discarded mount of Mariette's: 'Paolo Uccello ... n.n. 1389. Fuit Vasari nunc Mariette.'3 A sheet of drawings in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, catalogued as inv. no. 1745, has also been identified as coming from the modelbook, and contains animal studies on one side and two men with lances and two birds' heads on the other. Since none of the foliation on the four sheets is certainly original, their original order is not known, assuming they were bound together. For convenience, these four sheets are referred to in this article as the 'Uccello workshop modelbook.'

A provenance for the two Stockholm sheets, all the way from Giorgio Vasari in Florence to the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, was proposed by Per Bjurström, who was the Nationalmuseum's Curator of Prints and Drawings from the 1950s, and its Director in the 1980s. This provenance relies in part on old assumptions and at times vague historical evidence. Nevertheless, it may be helpful for the reader to rehearse it as follows. In the second edition of his *Le vite de più eccellenti pittori* [...] (*The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters* [...]), Giorgio Vasari claimed to have in his *Libro de' disegni* (Book of Drawings) 'beautiful and marvellous' drawings by Uccello, including a preparatory drawing of a foreshortened bull for a painting in the Palazzo de' Medici, as well as other 'figures, perspectives, birds, and animals' and a *mazzocchio* (ring-shaped, geometric headdress). Only a very small number of drawings in collections around the world have mounts decorated with designs that are clearly in Vasari's own hand.

² Andrew Morrogh, 'Niccolò Gaddi and Giorgio Vasari,' video recording of a presentation from the symposium *A Demand for Drawings: Five Centuries of Collecting*, co-presented by the Center for the History of Collecting at The Frick Collection, New York, and The Drawing Institute at The Morgan Library, New York, 4–5 March 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj6YY1w-Quw [accessed 31 May 2024].

³ Hellmut Wohl, 'The Eye of Vasari', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 30 (1986), 537–68 (p. 567).

⁴ Giorgio Vasari, Le vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori scritte da m. Giorgio Vasari pittore et architetto aretino, di nome dal medesimo riviste et ampliate con i ritratti loro et con l'aggiunta delle Vite de' vivi, & de' morti dall'anno 1550 insino al 1567, 3 vols (Florence: Appreso i Giunti, 1568), I, 270–71 and 273.

Shortly after Vasari's death, the *Libro* was offered by the sons of Vasari's sister, Maddalena, to Francesco I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1541–1587), after he requested it.⁵ Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie dei professori del disegno (Notices of the Professors of Design, from Cimabue to Now)* recorded that books of drawings that had belonged to Vasari were sold by members of the Gaddi family, having been inherited from a family member who was a favourite of the Duke.⁶ This was evidently a reference to Niccolò Gaddi, a courtier of the Duke, and a leading art collector. Lending support to Baldinucci's account is a letter of January 1637, from a Papal agent in London to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, mentioning Lord Arundel's purchase of unspecified drawings from a certain 'Gaddi.'⁷ Niccolò Gaddi's ownership of a collection of drawings is further supported by the presence of his motto 'TAN CHE GIE VIVA' on banderoles and falcon emblem on mounts for Florentine Renaissance drawings now in the British Museum, London, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

In the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, part of the Vasari-Gaddi collection of drawings was brought to France. According to Pierre-Jean Mariette, a certain Abbé Quesnel sold such drawings to Pierre Crozat (1665–1740),8 who in turn sold some to the Swedish ambassador at the court of the French King Louis XV, Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770), in 1741. These drawings were acquired in 1750 by Adolph Frederick, who became King of Sweden in the following year. The drawings entered the Kungliga Biblioteket, and were transferred to the Kungliga Museet in 1863, which became the Nationalmuseum in 1866.9

Vasari's single-volume *Libro* must have been disbound by the time its drawings were owned by the Gaddi, since Baldinucci stated that the drawings from Vasari's collection that the Gaddi sold were in five volumes. Neither Vasari nor the Gaddi applied collectors' marks to individual drawings they owned, and it is not known if the Gaddi removed drawings from Vasari's collection or added drawings from other sources before selling their collection to Arundel, and the same uncertainty pertains to later owners. All of this is to say that the early history of the two Stockholm sheets is uncertain, apart from the stylistic evidence of the drawings indicating their fifteenth-century Florentine origin, and the

⁵ Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, Restauro e conservazione delle opere d'arte su carta (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1981), p. 162.

⁶ Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 7 vols (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1974–1975), III, pp. 448–49.

⁷ Denys Sutton, 'Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel and Surrey, as a Collector of Drawings-II', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 89, no. 527 (1947), 32–34 and 37, p. 33 note 50, citing a letter published in 'Hervey, p. 398.'

⁸ Anatole de Montaiglon (ed.), Archives de l'art français, 6 vols (Paris: J.-B. Dumolin, 1851–1860), IV, 1855–1856, p. 340 note 4, citing 'Mariette, Abecedario, II, 46.'

⁹ Stockholm [Per Bjurström], Renässansteckningar från Florens ur Giorgio Vasaris Samling, catalogue for an exhibition held at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 23 March–10 June 2001 (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2001), unpaginated, no. 1069.

stylistic evidence of the drawing on their mount suggesting they belonged to the Gaddi family, and an inscription on the mount stating they were later owned by Crozat.¹⁰

Further complicating matters, the attributions written on some of the mounts for drawings associated with Vasari's collection cannot be taken as authoritative, not least for those early Renaissance artists who had long been dead when Vasari could have acquired their works. Some such attributions are now plainly untenable. For example, three figure studies of young men in the Nationalmuseum are in a mount bearing an inscription attributing them to Uccello (inv. no. NMH 47a-c/1863), but they are in a more anatomically realistic style—even if they still look a little unnatural—characteristic of the generation of artists following Uccello. Keith Christiansen has convincingly attributed one of these drawings to the Marchigian painter Bartolomeo Corradini, called Fra Carnevale (born by 1416, documented as a pupil of Filippo Lippi in Florence in 1445, and died in 1484).¹¹

If Vasari's expertise as a connoisseur of early Renaissance drawings was not infallible—or at least the inscriptions on mounts of drawings associated with his collection¹²—his anecdote that numerous paintings of animals were to be found in Uccello's house based on whatever drawings the artist could acquire could possibly reflect a story shared with him by one of Uccello's descendants.¹³ In the early nineteenth century, a footnote to an edition of Baldinucci's *Notizie* reported the discovery of a 1480 tax return of Uccello's son Donato, and an undated testament of Donato's daughter Caterina, which identified her as the wife of Pera di Bartolommeo Baldovinetti.¹⁴ Later in the century, Gaetano Milanesi found that Caterina's son and heir was one Donato di Pera di Bartolommeo Baldovinetti.¹⁵ Recently, Rita Romanelli compiled a genealogy of the Baldovinetti family in the early modern period, based on family archives, and found that Donato married in 1550, and had a son, Niccolò, in the same year. He was Uccello's great-great-grandson.¹⁶ Thus, Uccello's descendants were living in Florence when Vasari was writing his *Vite* and assembling his collection of drawings.

¹⁰ Uncertainty about the provenances of many individual drawings traditionally associated with the Vasari-Gaddi collection was a principal subject of a recent exhibition of the drawings. See *Giorgio Vasari, The Book of Drawings: The Fate of a Mythical Collection*, ed. by Carina Fryklund and Louis Frank, catalogue for an exhibition held at the Musée du Louvre, Paris, 31 March–18 July 2022, and Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 6 October 2022–8 January 2023, (Paris: Lienart Éditions, 2022).

¹¹ Keith Christiansen, 'A Drawing for Fra Carnevale', Master Drawings, 31 (1993), 363-67.

¹² For a discussion of Vasari's attributions of drawings in his collection, see Wohl, pp. 537–68.

¹³ Vasari, Le vite, I, p. 270.

¹⁴ Filippo Baldinucci, Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua, opera di Filippo Baldinucci fiorentino, Accademico della Crusca, con note ed aggiunte, 14 vols (Milan: Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani, 1808–1812), V, p. 200, note 1.

¹⁵ Giorgio Vasari, Le opere di Giorgio Vasari, 9 vols, ed. by Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: Sansoni, 1981, original edition 1878–1885), II, p. 219.

¹⁶ Rita Romanelli, *Inventario dell' Archivio Baldovinetti Tolomei* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2000), Albero No. 2.

The Attribution of the Drawings Boy Riding a Camel and Basilisk Spitting Venom

The two Stockholm sheets from the Uccello workshop modelbook have unfortunately come down to us in stained, faded, abraded, and torn condition, affecting some drawings more than others. Naturally, this complicates an assessment of the quality and attribution of the drawings, and has likely contributed to their mixed critical fortunes in modern times. John Pope-Hennessy's 1950 monograph on Uccello was conservative in its attributions, and stated cautiously that the Stockholm sheets 'may reflect a lost class of drawing by Uccello.'¹⁷ Nevertheless, the leading scholars of Florentine early Renaissance drawing, Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, retained the attribution of the drawings to Uccello,¹⁸ as did Licia Ragghianti Collobi,¹⁹ while Francis Ames-Lewis expressed uncertainty.²⁰ In his 2001 exhibition catalogue of drawings associated with Vasari's collection, Per Bjurström attributed the two sheets to Uccello and his workshop, but without specifying which drawings are by the master.²¹

Of the drawings on the two Stockholm sheets, the charming Boy Riding a Camel and subtle Basilisk Spitting Venom are the most elaborate and refined in execution, and despite small areas of damage, they are relatively well preserved. Therefore, they provide a useful starting point for a discussion of the attribution of the drawings on the two sheets. Their highly finished style stands in contrast to the three drawings now generally attributed to Uccello, all housed in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe of the Uffizi in Florence, and which have been thoroughly studied by Lorenza Melli.²² However, as Christiansen observed of two of Uccello's drawings in the Uffizi—the Study for the Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood (inv. no. 31F) and the Mounted Knight (inv. no. 14502F)—these can be considered 'working' drawings, with a different function from the modelbook drawings. The two such working drawings referred to by Christiansen were modified by the artist in the course of their execution, while the third sheet in the Uffizi that is now generally attributed to Uccello, the Angel with a Sword; A Cup (inv. no. 1302F), includes a design that was pricked for transfer. There is no clear indication in the Boy Riding a Camel and Basilisk Spitting Venom of modification, or pricking or indentation or incising along their contours so that their designs could be transferred to another support at the same scale, and there is no squaring up on the sheets for them to be reproduced on a larger scale, as is the case with the Study for the Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood. The highly finished execution of the Boy

¹⁷ John Pope-Hennessy, The Complete Work of Paolo Uccello (London: Phaidon Press, 1950), p. 168.

¹⁸ Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300–1450*, Teil I. *Süd und Mittelitalien*, 2. Band, Katalog 168–635, 4 vols (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1968). II, pp. 388–91.

¹⁹ Licia Ragghianti Collobi, *Il libro de' disegni del Vasari*, 2 vols (Florence: Vallechi Editore, 1974), I, p. 46 and II, p. 39.

²⁰ Francis Ames-Lewis, 'Modelbook Drawings and the Florentine Quattrocento Artist', *Art History*, 10, no. 1 (1987), 1–9, pp. 2–3.

²¹ Stockholm [Per Bjurström], unpaginated—no. 1069.

²² Lorenza Melli, 'Nuove indagini sui disegni di Paolo Uccello agli Uffizi: Disegno sottostante, tecnica, funzione', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistoriscen Institutes in Florenz*, 42, no. 1 (1998), 1–39.

Riding a Camel and Basilisk Spitting Venom suggests, rather, that they might have served as models of drawing technique for the one or more assistants who also worked on the modelbook, rather than as preparation for a specific painting.

Christiansen has been one of the few scholars to cite stylistic similarities between the drawings on the two Stockholm sheets and a painting by Uccello or an artist from his circle, when he compared the animals in the drawings and the lion, deer, and hound in the *Adoration of the Child* painting in the Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. At the time Christiansen wrote, there was no consensus concerning Uccello's authorship of the *Adoration*, but it has since come to be generally accepted, with a dating to the late 1430s or early 1440s. This author has noted similarities between the boy on the camel and the Christ Child in the *Adoration* (Figs 3–4), but also between the draughtsmanship in the camel's hair and the execution of the dragon's hairy body in Uccello's painting *Saint George and the Dragon* in Melbourne. The Melbourne *Saint George* is datable to the late 1420s or early 1430s.²³

A fresh look at infrared imaging of the Melbourne painting, made in 2004 for this author's doctoral studies at The University of Melbourne by the National Gallery of Victoria Conservation Department, reveals distinct similarities between the execution of details of the painting and the drawing in the *Boy Riding a Camel* and *Basilisk Spitting Venom*. The infrared imaging renders the abraded and discoloured glazes in the upper paint layers of the *Saint George* more transparent, showing clearly the underlying black brushstrokes in the dragon's hair. On the dragon's body in the painting there are long strands of hair in 's-shaped' waves, in alternating light and dark bands, which are very similar to the long strands of hair hanging from the bottom of the camel's neck in the drawing (Figs 5–6). Another similarity between the painting and drawing can be observed in the row with pairs of 'c-shaped' curves of short hair along the dragon's proper right arm and the row of short hair along the edge of the camel's neck (Figs 7–8). A point of comparison can also be cited between the dragon's wings in the painting, where a row of short hairs stands out along the edges of the webbing, and the similarly-placed row of short hairs in the wing of the basilisk (Figs 9–10).

For these reasons, the fine and spirited drawings of the *Boy Riding a Camel* and the *Basilisk Spitting Venom* in the Stockholm sheets can be attributed to Uccello and dated to the 1430s or early 1440s. A significant difference between these two drawings and the others from the same modelbook is that the modelling of light and shade is largely achieved through brushed washes, while pen and ink hatching is more extensive in the other drawings. Since the other drawings are less elaborate and more laboured in execution, they can be attributed to one or more of Uccello's workshop assistants. Although, potentially, if modelbook drawings became the property of a workshop assistant as a record of their training, they could have continued adding drawings after leaving their master's workshop.

²³ Hugh Hudson, *Paolo Uccello: Artist of the Florentine Renaissance Republic* (Saarbrücken: V.D.M. Verlag, 2008), pp. 323–24.

Pesellino and Modelbook Drawings

Osvald Sirén (1879–1966) was the J.A. Berg Professor of the History and Theory of Art at the University of Stockholm from 1908 to 1923, and Keeper of Painting and Sculpture at the Nationalmuseum from 1928. He seems to have been the only scholar to associate the drawings on the two Stockholm sheets with an artist other than Uccello, when his 1917 catalogue of the fifteenth-century Italian drawings in the Nationalmuseum included the sheets, as well as others in the collection, under the heading 'School of Pesellino.' In support of this classification, Sirén compared the drawing of a 'leopard' on one of the Stockholm sheets with a 'leopard' in Pesellino's Triumph of David painting then in the collection of Lady Wantage at Lockinge, and now in the National Gallery, London. He was presumably referring to the drawing of a spotted big cat with a short tail at the top right of the sheet inv. no. NMH 46a/1863, which looks like a lynx and is accompanied by an inscription identifying it as a lynx, and the similar animal in the right foreground of the Triumph of David, but which Pesellino gave a long tail, like a leopard, probably to make it look more impressive (Figs 11-12).²⁴ Sirén viewed the Stockholm drawings as not of sufficient quality to be by Pesellino himself, attributing them to a workshop assistant of Pesellino instead. However, he may not have considered that they could belong to Pesellino's juvenilia, since he dated the drawings to c. 1450–1460, close in date to the Triumph of David, and in the last decade in which Pesellino was alive. For his putative workshop assistant of Pesellino, Sirén used the title 'Compagno di Pesellino' that was devised for an anonymous artist in Pesellino's circle in a 1901 article by Mary Logan, the art historian and wife of Bernard Berenson.²⁵ However, the title 'Compagno di Pesellino' fell out of use in the literature after a few decades, as the works supposedly attributable to this artist generally came to be accepted as Pesellino's own.²⁶

Perhaps because Sirén's publication was in Swedish, it has received little attention in the literature. Yet, in addition to the example given by Sirén, four more correspondences between drawings in the Uccello workshop modelbook and details of Pesellino's paintings can be cited. The second example is the pair of dogs at the top of sheet inv. no. NMH 45b/1863 and the pair of dogs in front of the Triumph of Love in Pesellino's *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death* painting, datable to the second half of the 1440s in this author's opinion, and now housed in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (Figs 13–14). The dogs in the drawing are amongst the most faded in the Uccello workshop modelbook, but close examination reveals most of the contours clearly. The two dogs are depicted in profile, one behind the other, with the head of the rear dog pointing upward and the head

²⁴ Osvald Sirén, *Italienska handteckningar: från 1400- och 1500-talen i Nationalmuseum: Catalogue Raisonné* (Stockholm: Bröderna Lagerströms Förlag, 1917), pp. 7–8.

²⁵ Mary Logan, 'Compagno di Pesellino et quelques peintures de l'école [Part 1]', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 26 (1901), pp. 34–48.

²⁶ For the early critical fortune of the 'Compagno di Pesellino' and arguments against the proposed attributions to this putative artist, see Philip Hendy, 'Pesellino', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 53, no. 305 (1928), pp. 67–74.

of the front dog pointing down. Both dogs have collars, but only the rear collar is attached to a chain. The motif appears in a slightly different form in the mid-to-late fifteenth-century Florentine Rothschild modelbook, with the head of the rear dog facing backwards and without a chain (inv. no. 756 DR, Musée du Louvre, Paris). Pesellino's painted version is a simplified version of the Stockholm version, lacking the collars and chain. However, the pair of dogs motif appears with the collars and chain in the foreground of Zanobi Strozzi's *The Procession of the Magi* (Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg; Fig. 23). This painting seemingly comes from a dispersed *predella* dating from the mid-1440s that includes the *King Melchior Sailing to the Holy Land* (Clark Art Institute, Williamstown), variously attributed to Pesellino alone or Pesellino and Strozzi together, and presumably a third, untraced, panel. Perhaps Pesellino shared modelbook drawings with Strozzi during their collaboration.

Another correspondence between a drawing in the Uccello workshop modelbook and a detail in a Pesellino painting is the *Castoro* on the sheet inv. no. NMH 45a/1863, which has a similar body to the single 'dog' in front of the Triumph of Chastity in Pesellino's *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death* (Figs 15–16). Pesellino may have baulked at including the *Castoro*'s unusual, forked horns and forked tail in his painting, which few viewers without knowledge of the modelbook tradition would likely recognize. The fourth, and clearest, correspondence is between the *Basilisk Spitting Venom* on the sheet inv. no. NMH 46a/1863 and the ornament of a basilisk spitting venom that decorates Hannibal's helmet in an illumination by Pesellino in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. Pesellino painted his basilisk with a longer tail, which curls around the brim of the helmet, and gave it legs and different feet, in a copy of *De Bellum Poenicum* that was made for Pope Nicolas V around the last years of the 1440s (Figs 17–18).

These four correspondences are not so precise that one may conclude that Pesellino took the compositions for his paintings directly from the Uccello workshop modelbook, rather than any other similar modelbook that might have circulated between Florentine workshops at the time. However, there is a fifth correspondence, between the draughtsmanship in the head of the unicorn on the sheet inv. no. NMH 45b/1863 and the style of the painting of the head of the unicorn on the right in the Triumph of Chastity in Pesellino's *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death.* This is to say that the style of drawing in a unicorn head in the Uccello workshop modelbook is close to Pesellino's manner of painting a unicorn head (Figs 19–20).

There is no catalogue raisonné of Pesellino's works and only one surviving documented commission, which dates from the end of his life. The question of from whom he received his training and the chronology of his early works is yet to be discussed systematically in the literature. The 2024 exhibition *Pesellino: A Renaissance Master Revealed* at the National Gallery, London, demonstrated, nonetheless, that he enjoyed considerable success in the fifteen or so years of his career. He worked alongside some of the most

distinguished painters of his time, including Filippo Lippi, and his paintings were acquired by leading collectors, such as the Medici family.

As Nathaniel Silver pointed out in his catalogue essay for the exhibition, Pesellino is given the title 'painter' in a legal document of 1442, and so he had presumably completed his training in his early twenties.²⁷ His grandfather, Giuliano d'Arrigo, called Pesello (c. 1367–1446), was also an artist, one whose practice encompassed such ephemeral works as painted banners. He had a workshop on the Corso degli Adimari in Florence, which Pesellino inherited. It is usually assumed Pesellino trained with his grandfather. However, there is no surviving work certainly by Pesello, and so any stylistic influence he had on his grandson is moot. The obvious influence of Guido di Pietro, called Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455), in the Triumph of Eternity in Pesellino's *Triumphs of Fame, Time, and Eternity* could indicate that Pesellino also trained with Fra Angelico, from whom he might have learnt the technique for painting illuminations, and through whose networks Pesellino might have met his sometime collaborator, Zanobi Strozzi. Based on stylistic influences and age, masters from whom Pesellino could also have received training include Lorenzo Ghiberti (c. 1378–1455), Giovanni di Ser Giovanni, called Lo Scheggia (1406–1486), Domenico Veneziano (c. 1410–1461), or Uccello.

Pesellino had reason to be aware of Uccello's work from a young age, since Uccello's 1436 Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood in the Duomo of Florence replaced a painting of the same subject by his grandfather, Pesello, and Agnolo Gaddi (c.1350–1396). Uccello's influence in Pesellino's Boston Triumphs has been observed by one author,²⁸ and Pesellino's Story of David and Goliath and Triumph of David in London obviously paraphrase the depiction of certain riders and horses in Uccello's Battle paintings now in the National Gallery, London, Musée du Louvre, Paris, and Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

The 1492 inventory of the Palazzo de' Medici on Via Larga in Florence records Uccello's three *Battle* paintings with the single title *Rout of San Romano*, displayed with a *Battle between Dragons and Lions*, and a *Story of Paris* by Uccello in the 'chamera grande terrena detta la chamera di Lorenzo' (large, ground-floor room, called Lorenzo's room), alongside a *Hunt* by Pesellino. The six paintings were all large, measuring three-and-a-half *braccia* high, and were framed together.²⁹ Vasari praised Uccello's depiction of a serpent in the *Battle between Dragons and Lions* for its vigorous movement and ferocity, squirting venom from its mouth and eyes.³⁰ This indicates the serpent was a basilisk, and so the *Basilisk*

²⁷ Nathaniel Silver, 'A Master Painter Overlooked', in *Pesellino: A Renaissance Master Revealed*, Laura Llewellyn, with contributions by Jill Dunkerton, and Nathaniel Silver, catalogue for an exhibition held at the National Gallery, London, 7 December–10 March 2024 (London: National Gallery Global and distributed by Yale University Press, 2023), 9–24 (p. 12).

²⁸ [William Rankin and Frank Jewett Mather Jr.] 'Cassone-Fronts in American Collections-II. Pesellino's Six Triumphs of Petrarch', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 10, no. 43, (1906), 67–68, p. 68.

²⁹ Richard Stapleford trans. and ed., *Lorenzo de' Mecici at Home: The Inventory of the Palazzo Medici in 1492* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), p. 71.

³⁰ Vasari, *Le vite*, I, p. 270.

Spitting Venom in the Uccello workshop modelbook could conceivably be connected to a commission from the Medici. Nevertheless, technical evidence for the Rout of San Romano paintings indicates they originally had arch-shaped tops,³¹ and so the display together of the five paintings attributed to Uccello and the one attributed to Pesellino does not necessarily indicate a collaboration between Uccello and Pesellino in the making of these works.³²

Slender though the evidence might be, the presence in the Stockholm sheets of two drawings that can reasonably be attributed to Uccello and one drawing that looks like it might be by Pesellino constitutes the only material evidence, rather than circumstantial evidence, so far advanced for a collaboration between Pesellino and any of the masters he could have trained with in the late 1430s or early 1440s, before embarking on his independent career.

The Workshop Milieu and Iconography of the Stockholm Drawings

As Francis Ames-Lewis demonstrated in his study of the modelbook produced in the 1460s in the workshop of Benozzo Gozzoli (c. 1420–1497), part of which is now housed in the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, the copying of modelbook drawings served as training for assistants in Tuscan early Renaissance workshops. The Latin epigraph on the cover of the Rotterdam modelbook, 'PICTORIS ATQVE POETIS SEMPER FVIT ET EQVA POTESTAS,' derives from Horace and proclaims the equal status of the visual arts and poetry. The inscription shows that drawing instruction in an early Renaissance workshop could be framed within the tradition of a classical education.

Evidence presented here for the first time demonstrates the transmission of at least one composition between the Gozzoli and Uccello workshops, although in which direction is unclear. A drawing of a standing cleric in the Rotterdam modelbook was apparently copied from the figure on the right of Gozzoli's pen and ink drawing *Saint Jerome and an Acolyte Depart Rome* (inv. no. 1358 F, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Uffizi, Florence), which is probably a study for Gozzoli's 1452 mural painting *Saint Jerome and an Acolyte Depart Rome* in

³¹ The modification to the upper part of Uccello's *Battle* painting in the Galleria degli Uffizi was first recorded in Umberto Baldini, 'Restauri di dipinti fiorentini in occasione della Mostra di quattro maestri del Rinascimento', *Bolletino d'Arte*, 39 (1954), 221–240. For a more recent discussion in relation to the *Battle* in the National Gallery, London, see Ashok Roy and Dillian Gordon, 'Uccello's *Battle of San Romano'*, *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 32 (2001), pp. 4–17. Francesco Caglioti published the earliest documents for the provenance of the three *Battle* paintings, by 1479, when they were in the possession of Lionardo Bartolini in 'Nouveautés sur la Bataille de San Romano de Paolo Uccello', Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France, 51 (2001), pp. 37–54. This does not necessarily settle the question of the paintings' patronage.

³² For a recent discussion of Pesellino's patronage by the Medici, see Laura Llewellyn, 'Pesellino and the Medici Palace. The *Stories of David* Panels: A Reappraisal', in *Pesellino: A Renaissance Master Revealed*, ed. by Laura Llewellyn, Jill Dunkerton, and Nathaniel Silver, catalogue for an exhibition held at the National Gallery, London, 7 December–10 March 2024 (London: National Gallery Global and distributed by Yale University Press), pp. 25–32.

the Cappella di San Girolamo of the Ex-Chiesa di San Francesco (now Museo Comunale di San Francesco, Montefalco). A figure of a standing cleric with similar drapery, identifiable as a cardinal by his hat, appears in an indented or incised design on Uccello's sheet of drawings best known for the drawing *Mounted Knight* (inv. no. 14502F, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Uffizi, Florence). Though invisible to the naked eye, the indented or incised design has been reconstructed in a meticulous technical examination by Lorenza Melli.³³

It is argued above that the Uccello workshop modelbook dates to the 1430s or early 1440s, while the Gozzoli workshop modelbook has been dated to the 1460s. That the two modelbooks were, nevertheless, produced in a similar workshop milieu is suggested by their comparable drawings of Bactrian camels and their Latin inscriptions. The Latin inscription at the top of the Stockholm sheet inv. no. NMH 45b/1863 suggests that the training of a workshop assistant could have a moral dimension, in addition to an aesthetic one. The inscription is directly above the drawing of two dogs, but was cropped when the edge of the sheet was trimmed. The inscription seems to be in a mid-fifteenth-century hand, possibly that of the artist responsible for the drawing. A similar style of writing, with slightly uneven Roman capitals and *puncti*, is found in the Latin titles above the personifications of the arts in the *Seven Liberal Arts* painting attributed to Pesellino and an assistant in the Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama. In this author's opinion, this painting is datable to the early 1440s.

The text on the Stockholm sheet can be reconstructed as 'SI FORTUNA PERIT' (Fig. 13). The phrase is found in the anonymous medieval saying 'Tempore felici, multi numerantur amici; si fortuna perit, nullus amicus erit' (In prosperity we can discover many friends! But if fortune fails, not one is to be found). The sentiment derives from Ovid's verse in *Tristia* (Sadness), Book I, 9, 5-6: 'Donec eris felix, multos numerabis amicos. Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris' (As long as you are lucky, you will have many friends; if cloudy times appear, you will be alone). The Florentine Renaissance merchant, Giovanni di Paolo Morelli, cited a version of the medieval text when writing about the importance of a good education. Significantly, Morelli believed the saying came from Aesop, underscoring the moral function that animal allegories could play in Florentine Renaissance education.³⁴

The motif of a pair of dogs in the Stockholm sheet (inv. no. NMH 45b/1863) was employed in various examples of Renaissance sculpture, painting, and printmaking, as a symbol or allegory of relationships, whether alluding to love or the fragility of human relationships. In the Jacob and Esau panel of Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence) a pair of dogs is seen in profile, the rear one with its head

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³³ Melli, pp. 18–20.

³⁴ Giovanni di Paolo Morelli (Memoirs, c. 1393–1411), in Vittore Branca (ed.), *Merchant Writers: Florentine Memoirs from the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, trans. by Murtha Baca (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 98–253, p. 161.

up and a summary indication of tethering (a thin chain or leash would be extraordinarily difficult to model in raised relief in a bronze sculpture), situated prominently in the middle foreground (Fig. 21). They are similar in arrangement to the dogs in the Stockholm drawing, but with more slender proportions. In Ghiberti's composition, the dogs would allude to the story of the estranged Biblical brothers and their eventual reconciliation. Another positive use of the pair of dogs motif appears in Pesellino's *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death* painting, where the dogs accompany the Triumph of Love procession. Whether the dogs in Zanobi Strozzi's *Procession of the Magi* could allude to some personal quality of the Magi, such as loyalty or devotion, is open to question.

A more cautionary use of the pair of dogs motif appears in the late-fifteenth-century, northern European drypoint print A Falconer and His Companion, by the so-called Housebook Master (Fig. 22). In this image, the dogs, with the front one tethered, amplify the iconography of the intimate, young men whose fine clothes and enthusiasm for hunting probably alludes to a luxurious or indulgent lifestyle unlikely to provide the basis for an enduring relationship.³⁵ This use of the motif is close to the 'fair-weather friend' meaning of the 'SI FORTUNA PERIT' inscription on the Stockholm sheet.

The subject of another of the Stockholm drawings clearly has a moral significance. The drawing of a horned animal under the inscription 'CASTORO' illustrates the medieval belief that the beaver ('castor' in Latin) would castrate itself rather than be caught by hunters wanting to use its testicles to make medicine (Fig. 15). The horns and tail of the *castoro* in the drawing, with their distinctive forked ends, rarely, if ever, appear in Florentine Renaissance art, apart from the Stockholm sheet (inv. no. NMH 45a/1863) and another sheet with three modelbook drawings by a different hand in the collection of the Nationalmuseum (inv. no. NMH 45d/1863). So the choice to include the *castoro* in modelbooks more likely depends on its moral significance than its suitability for use in paintings.

Similarly, the motif of a unicorn subduing a deer (Fig. 2) is little-known in Florentine Renaissance painting, if at all, but appears on one of the two Stockholm sheets (inv. no. NMH 46b/1863), a drawing by an anonymous artist on another sheet in the Nationalmuseum (inv. no. NMH 45d/1863), a sheet from a modelbook in the Uffizi, Florence (inv. no. 14504 F r.), and in the Rothschild modelbook in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (inv. no. 758 DR). The motif could be interpreted as an allegory of the victory of chastity over amorousness. There is no need to labour the point that other drawings in the Uccello workshop modelbook convey moral meanings, including the monkey looking in a mirror on the Vienna sheet of the modelbook, which surely alludes to foolish vanity.

³⁵ Housebook Master, A Falconer and His Companion, c. 1483–1487, drypoint on paper, 12.4 × 0.72 cm, inv. no. RP-P-OB-934, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. On this image, see Diane Wolfthal, 'Picturing Same-Sex Desire: The Falconer and His Lover in Images by Petrus Christus and the Housebook Master', in *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality, and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*, ed. by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 17–46.

The Boy Riding a Camel drawing seems more joyful than moralizing. Baldinucci reported that Uccello painted a camel in one corner of the underside of the Volta de' Peruzzi (Arch of the Peruzzi), an arch spanning a road in the district of Florence once inhabited by various households of the Peruzzi clan. The camel symbolized air in a representation of the four elements, because the camel could live on air alone, as it were, for long periods. The Volta de' Peruzzi still stands, although its paintings have not survived. However, Baldinucci reported that the camel was resting on the ground rather than standing, unlike the camel in the Stockholm drawing,³⁶ and the date of Uccello's lost painting is unknown. However, Robert Mode plausibly suggested Uccello painted a camel in a vault, also as a symbol of the element of air, while working alongside Masolino on the lost Famous Men and Women cycle painted for Cardinal Giordano Orsini (c. 1360-1438) in Rome, by 1432. A manuscript copy of the mural paintings shows that the camel representing air was sitting on the ground and was a dromedary (with one hump, not a Bactrian camel with two humps), and in the other three corners earth was represented by a mole, water by a fish, and fire by a salamander.³⁷ The Uccello workshop modelbook has no dromedary, or mole, fish, or salamander, and no discernable allusion to the four elements. Was the subject of a Boy Riding a Camel devised by Uccello to humour a young assistant while they drew in the modelbook? Such a light-hearted camaraderie between an early Renaissance master and their assistant is seen in Antonio Filarete's depiction of one of his assistants riding a Bactrian camel in a procession of Filarete and his atelier, heading out to celebrate the completion of their bronze doors for Old Saint Peter's in Rome.³⁸

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³⁶ Baldinucci, 1974–1975 edition, I, pp. 450–51.

³⁷ Robert L. Mode, 'Masolino, Uccello and the Orsini "Uomini Famosi", *The Burlington Magazine*, 114 (1972), 368–75 and 377–78, p. 374.

³⁸ Robert Glass, 'Filarete's Hilaritas: Claiming Authorship and Status on the Doors of St. Peter's', *Art Bulletin*, 94 (2012), pp. 548–71.

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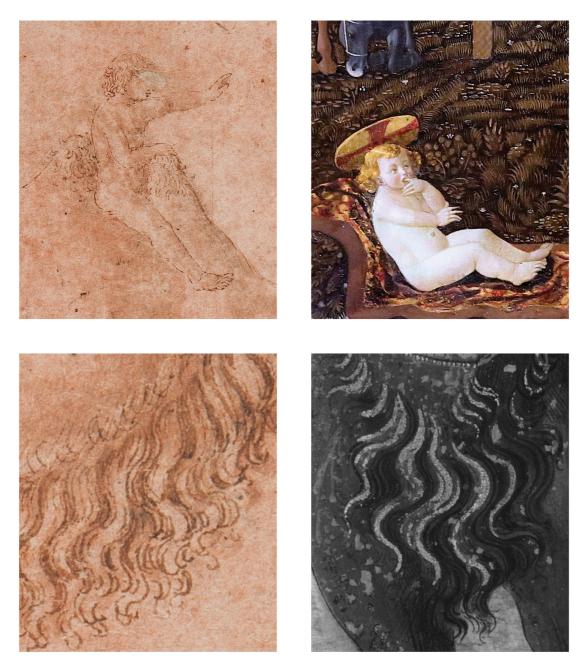
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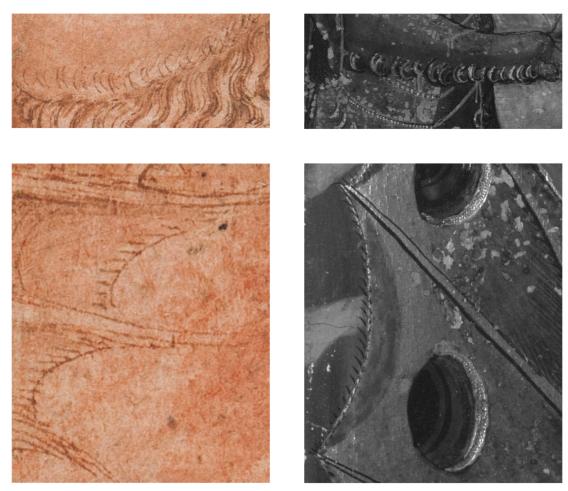
Fig. 1. One side of a sheet from the Uccello workshop modelbook, with the drawings *Boy Riding a Camel* by Uccello and *Castoro* by an assistant, 1430s or early 1440s, ink and wash on prepared paper, 25.8 x 17.5 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, inv. no. NMH 45a/1863, image from the Nationalmuseum.



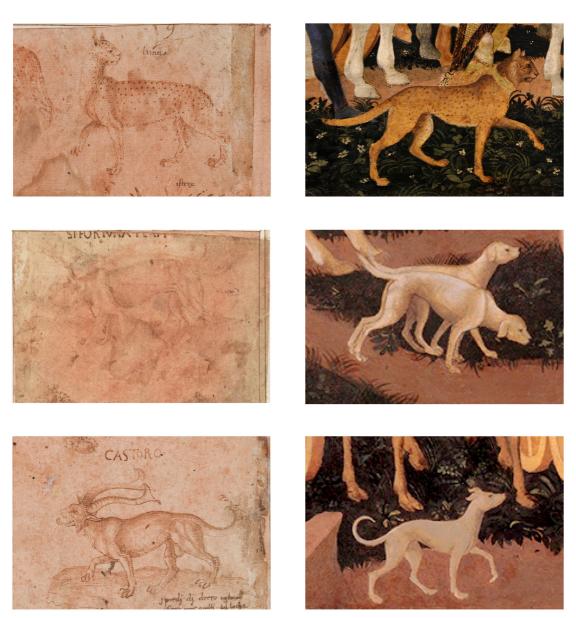
Fig. 2. One side of a sheet from the Uccello workshop modelbook, with the drawings *Unicorn Subduing a Deer* by an assistant of Uccello and *Basilisk Spitting Venom* by Uccello, 1430s or early 1440s, ink and wash on prepared paper, 25.1 x 17.6 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, inv. no. NMH 46b/1863, image from the Nationalmuseum.



Figs 3–6. Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 1 (top left); Uccello, *Adoration of the Child with Saints Jerome, Margaret, and Eustace*, detail of the Christ Child, late 1430s or early 1440s, tempera and oil on panel, 111.0 x 48.5 cm (overall), Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, image from Jean Louis Mazières via Flickr (top right); Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 1 (bottom left); Uccello, *Saint George and the Dragon*, infrared image of a detail of the long hair hanging from the dragon's torso, late 1420s or early 1430s, tempera and oil on panel, 62.2 x 38.8 cm (overall), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, image from the National Gallery of Victoria (bottom right).



Figs 7–10. Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 1 (top left); Uccello, *Saint George and the Dragon*, infrared image of a detail of the row of short hairs along the dragon's arm, late 1420s or early 1430s, tempera and oil on panel, 62.2 x 38.8 cm (overall), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, image from the National Gallery of Victoria (top right); Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 2 (bottom left); Uccello, *Saint George and the Dragon*, infrared image of a detail of the row of short hairs along the webbing of the dragon's wing, late 1420s or early 1430s, tempera and oil on panel, 62.2 x 38.8 cm (overall), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, image from the National Gallery of Victoria (bottom right).



Figs 11–16. Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of the *Lynx* drawing by an assistant of Uccello, 1430s or early 1440s, ink and wash on prepared paper, 25.1 x 17.6 cm (overall), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, inv. no. NMH 45a/1863, image from the Nationalmuseum (top left); Pesellino, *Triumph of David*, detail of a lynx-like cat with a long tail, mid-1450s, tempera and gold on wood, 43.3 × 177 cm, 1450s, National Gallery, London, image from Sailko via Wikimedia Commons; Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of a pair of dogs by an assistant of Uccello and a cropped Latin inscription, 1430s or early 1440s, ink and wash on prepared paper, 25.1 x 17.6 cm (overall), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, inv. no. NMH 45b/1863, image from the Nationalmuseum (middle left); Pesellino, *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death*, detail of a pair of dogs, mid-1440s, tempera and gold on panel, 45.4 x 157.4 cm (overall), Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, image from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (middle right); Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 1 (bottom left); Pesellino, *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death*, detail of a dog, mid-1440s, tempera and gold on panel, 45.4 x 157.4 cm (overall), Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, image from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (bottom right).



Figs 17–20. Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of Fig. 2 (top left); Pesellino, *Hannibal Kartaginensis*, detail of the basilisk spitting venom ornament on the helmet, from *De Bellum Poenicum*, late 1440s, dimensions, ink, tempera (?), and gold on vellum, The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, image from the State Hermitage Museum (top right); Uccello workshop modelbook, detail of the head of the *Unicorn* drawing by an assistant of Uccello (Pesellino?), 1430s or early 1440s, ink and wash on prepared paper, 25.1 x 17.6 cm (overall), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, inv. no. NMH 45b/1863, image from the Nationalmuseum (bottom left); Pesellino, *Triumphs of Love, Chastity, and Death*, detail of two unicorns' heads, mid-1440s, tempera and gold on panel, 45.4 x 157.4 cm (overall), Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, image from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (bottom right).







Figs 21-23. Lorenzo Ghiberti, Gates of Paradise, detail of the pair of dogs in the Jacob and Esau panel, 1425-1452, bronze and gold leaf, 520.0 x 310.0 cm (overall), Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, image from Yair Haklai via Wikimedia Commons (top left); Housebook Master, A Falconer and His Companion, c. 1483-1487, drypoint on paper, 12.4×0.72 cm, inv. no. RP-P-OB-934, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, image from the Rijksmuseum via Wikimedia Commons (top right); Zanobi Strozzi, The Procession of the Magi, detail of the dogs accompanying the Magi, mid-1440s, tempera and gold on panel, $66.2~\text{cm} \times 71.0~\text{cm}$ (overall), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg, image from Morio60 via Wikimedia Commons (bottom left).