El retrato del Renacimiento

EDICIÓN A CARGO DE Miguel Falomir

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Icons and Early Modern Portraits

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HISTORY

Many Byzantine icons were exported to Europe in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and almost all of them were received and venerated in the West as hoary antiquities. Several were ascribed to Saint Luke; some were thought to date from the time of Constantine or Theodosius (fourth century); at the latest, it seems, they were assigned to the time of Justinian and Gregory the Great, the sixth century. In fact, most of these were Palaiologan productions of the thirteenth century and later; that is, they were made not long before they landed in Europe. Scholarly research has revealed a great deal about how this late medieval influx of Byzantine artefacts altered the course of Western art — how it provided a matrix, for example, for the art of Duccio and Giotto, the founders of Western painting, and also, in more general terms, what role it played in the development of private devotional images, in the rise of altarpiece painting, and in the improbable emergence of panel painting as a major artistic category in the early modern period.

It is now becoming clear that the importation of icons also had a powerful effect on the rise of modern portraiture. This relationship has been difficult to perceive until recently because it troubles traditional distinctions that have structured thinking in the field, distinctions such as 'medieval' versus 'modern', 'sacred' versus 'secular' and 'popular' versus 'elite'. What could these cult objects have had to do with the most modern and secular of artistic categories? The answer is, a good deal. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries icons were understood, first of all, as portraits of ancient people and second, as valuable antiquities themselves. They were precious visual testimonials of highly venerable personages, eagerly collected by the foremost art patrons and antiquarians of the time. They were primary guides as to what portraiture could be.

The collectors and propagators of the icons were, regularly, humanist scholars, prelates, and princes. One can speak of a veritable icon vogue among the connoisseurs, an enthusiasm linked to the presumed antiquity of these Greek paintings. Hard textual evidence documenting period views concerning the historicity of icons is rare, but occasional clear indications emerge. For example, in a letter of about 1470 describing the collection of Pietro Barbo (Pope Paul II, r. 1464–71), which contained many Roman antiquities, Cardinal Jacopo Ammanati noted 'images of saints of ancient workmanship brought from Greece, which they call icons'. 'The phrase of ancient workmanship [opus antiquum] is the one typically used when describing antiquities. In 1475 Pope Sixtus IV gave to Philippe de Croÿ, count of Chimay, a micromosaic icon of Christ Pantocrator from the fourteenth century [Fig. 16]. It soon acquired fame in Chimay as an acrisiopseion, or image made without the intervention of the human hand — an automatic antiquity, as it were. Sixtus's contemporary Lorenzo de' Medici, a major poet and art collector, and the de facto ruler of Florence, was also a collector of icons, and acquired some of those that had belonged to Barbo. He seems to have had a special preference for mosaic icons: he owned eleven Greek icons and all of them were in mosaic.¹ The one surviving icon that can be traced without doubt back to Lorenzo's collection is a micromosaic of Christ Pantocrator, now in the Museo del Bargello in Florence, which is dated to the twelfth century [Fig. 17]. This may have been one of the icons he inherited from Barbo's collection — one of the 'images of ancient workmanship brought from Greece' seen there by Ammanati.

The evidence suggests that the collecting of Greek icons was an integrated feature of the antiquarian culture of fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy. As Roman statues were dug up from the ground and ancient texts were discovered in European and Greek monasteries, 'ancient' Greek paintings began to arrive in substantial numbers from the East, especially after the fall of Constantinople of 1453, and achieved similar fame and status. Icons mingled with antiquities in period collections, and came up in the discussions of antiquarians. For example, in the third dialogue of Book 2 of the Portuguese art theorist Francisco de Holanda's Da Pintura Antiga of 1538, Michelangelo (here appearing as one of the dialogue's interlocutors) invokes the example of Alexander, who allowed only Apelles to make his portrait, in the context of a discussion of the special authority granted to venerable portraits of the 'serene face' of Christ, such as that in the Lateran Sancta Sanctorum.²

The connection between icons and early modern portraits is easier to grasp if one sets aside the prevailing notion of 'the icon' as an inviolable category of religious art. In this period they were seen primarily as examples of ancient portraiture, visual records of the earliest and most important figures of Christian history. Their sacred power derived from the fact that they were considered authentic likenesses of sacred people.

One of the primary elements that distinguished these archaic icon portraits in Western eyes was the bust-length format. In sculpture, the bust portrait was known in various forms of ancient Roman art, such as profile portraits on coins, in reliefs, in imagines dipintae, in which the head and/or bust are seen in a circular frame, and in three-dimensional busts in marble and bronze. In painting, however, the bust portrait was known mainly through Christian icons. Around 1211 Gervasius of Tilbury made special note of the fact that the image of the Veronica kept in St Peter's was an 'image from the breast upwards'.³ In his widely-read Manual on Divine Offices of 1286, the Bishop of Mende, William Durandus, explicitly associated the format with Greek painting, and found a moral explanation for it: 'The Greeks employ painted representations, painting ... only from the navel upwards, so that all occasion for vain thoughts be removed.'³ The bust format was such a powerful advertisement of Eastern, and ancient, origins that early Western imitations of Greek icons using the bust format were themselves regularly accorded a comparable authority, and even mistaken outright as Greek.

The comments of Gervasius and Durandus reveal that the bust-length format was a formal element that
attracted attention and even demanded explanation: the icons appeared to them primarily as cut-off figures, fragments of a witnessed whole. Although often described as rigid and hieratic by modern commentators, in the eyes of fifteenth century Europeans the icons delivered an intimate, zoom effect, which Western painters attempted to develop in their copies and adaptations. It is often observed that religious pictures in this period assumed the qualities of portraiture, but in fact it is likely that the development went largely in the other direction. The half-length and bust formats for portraits, no longer in profile but frontal or three-quarter view, flourished in European art from about the 1450s, and especially after mid-century — that is, in the same years that saw an intensification in the importation of icons in the wake of the Ferrara-Ferrara Council of 1438-9 and especially the fall of Constantinople in 1453. As describers like del peleo in si and neologisms such as demy-image and mezzafigura came into use in fifteenth century inventories to describe Eastern icons, portraiture came into being as a genre. The icons were primary models for the painters of portraits to follow. It is no surprise that the artists most interested in the Eastern icons — the Limbourg, Robert Campin, Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Jacquem Bellini, Antonio Pisanello, Giovanni Bellini, Antonello da Messina — were the ones that contributed most significantly to the early history of modern portraiture. In both their icono-based religious pictures and in their portraits, these artists elaborated formal devices such as parapets or windows in an effort to articulate and rationalise the half-length format of icons. 

Given the almost complete non-survival of Greco-Roman painting, icons were taken as primary examples — perhaps the primary examples — of ancient portraiture, especially since, as we have seen, they were themselves often ‘backdated’ to ancient times. The field of sculpture provides a strong parallel to this phenomenon. The antique sculpted bust portrait persisted throughout the Middle Ages primarily in the form of the reliquary bust. Like icons, reliquary busts also lived an unstable temporal life: the presence of the saint’s relic inside them forced an association with the time of the saint, usually a fairly remote antiquity; very few people in the fifteenth century would have asked over-precise questions about when the sculptural ‘shell’ was produced. Irving Lavin noted that whereas ancient Roman busts are generally rounded at the bottom and hollowed out at the back, reliquary busts are usually cut straight across the chest and are modelled fully in the round. The ancient bust is presented as a complete and artificial whole, whereas the reliquary bust — like the bust-length icon portrait — is conceived as a fragment, a part of a human being. The fragment conception recapitulates the semiotic claims of the relic itself, which is also a part of a whole, a remnant of a living body that carries something of the force of the living person. The fragment conception was taken over in the early Renaissance portrait bust, which is generally shown cleanly cut off at the bottom. 

In both painting and sculpture, therefore, the bust motif carried powerful implications of authenticity and testimony. Offering a fragment of a witnessed whole, the bust seemed, to fifteenth century viewers, to insist on the idea of a captured likeness. In the post-antique West, painted portraits of living people had appeared as attendant, marginal figures of larger scenes, with a few notable exceptions in the category of ruler portraits. To make a living individual the focus of his or her own panel was a momentous act of excision. In a profound sense, bust portraits are synecdochic in structure: they cut off the person from their environment, they make a given moment in the life stand for the life, and they make an external physical description stand for the person. The earliest modern ventures in the genre reiterate that structure insistently in their format. Icons as they were perceived in the West offered an important model for the idea of excising people in this way. 

The best evidence of this threaded relationship is the development of the devotional diptych in northern Europe. Here, portraits of contemporaries were set into structural relation with religious images; most often images of the Virgin that were based on or derived from Greek prototypes. The diptych was itself an adaptation of a Byzantine format, and indeed some of the most venerated imported images were double panels showing two sacred figures set in relation to one another — such as the famous, now-lost Byzantine diptych in Avignon, showing Christ and the Virgin, which left a powerful impression on Jan van Eyck and Pisanello, among others. As it was adapted in the West in the fifteenth century, the diptych observed a decorous separation between the secular and the sacred personages; on the other hand, it also provided a medium through which they could interact. Philippe de Croÿ, the man who received as a gift from Pope Sixtus IV the Byzantine Christ micromosaic discussed earlier, also commissioned a diptych from Rogier van der Weyden that shows him on one side and the Virgin on the other (now usually identified with the painting in the Huntington Library) [p. 18 and 19]. The Virgin and Child are in a different realm, as indicated among other things by the gold ground, an archaism used here perhaps to suggest that Rogier is here ‘reporting’ a venerable image. 

And yet in other ways the two halves of the diptych are not so far apart. Technical analysis has revealed that originally the background of de Croÿ’s portrait was not originally dark; it was made up of a thin green glaze over a silver ground, which has darkened and been overpainted. The combination of gold for the sacred figure and silver for the secular one is not in the end very different from what we see in the Christ icon [p. 16] owned by de Croÿ, where the mosaic shimmers with gold, but the framing — added by de Croÿ and associated with him — shines decorously and deferentially in silver. The diptych thus observes the difference in status between the two figures, and yet at the same time it provides a medium that is common to both. On the one hand, de Croÿ is shown praying not merely before the Virgin but before an icon of the Virgin. On the other hand, he has ascended to a privileged plane of communication precisely because he inhabits a parallel image. The portrait format here is undergoing dramatic changes on both sides. The icon is being modernised and the secular person is being elevated precisely by acceding to the realm of the portrait, which for centuries had been reserved for royalty and religious figures. The diptych reveals the portrait format in a historical moment of extreme flexibility. The boundaries of the portrait are being extended, but these developments are nonetheless still extensions of the basic function of portraiture, which is to communicate the likeness of a person across time and space.
For this reason, a recently produced icon could still claim the status of ancient testimony. The accuracy of icons as records and likenesses of long-dead saints was sometimes attested through visions. In the legendary vision of Constantine, for example, the sick emperor was visited by two figures identifying themselves as Peter and Paul, who informed him that he would be cured if he called Pope Sylvester to him. Sylvester came bearing two icons of the saints in which Constantine recognised the likenesses of the figures seen in the vision, a confirmation that thereafter encouraged the emperor to allow himself to be baptised. These two icons still exist in the Vatican Museum, and are now almost illegible due to repeated over-paintings in earlier centuries and ill-considered restorations in later centuries [figs. 20 and 21]. These icons were recognised as authentic portraits of the apostles by none other than Lorenzo Valla, an uncompromising critic of false legends and superstitions surrounding images and relics. In the mid-19th century exposing the inauthenticity of the so-called Donation of Constantine, he endorsed these images as valid ‘portraits of the apostles’ even as he acknowledged that the actual panel on which they were painted was not the original one given by Sylvester to Constantine. Even Valla, therefore, subscribed to the icon theory that guaranteed the accurate transmission of visual information across a replication chain: the likenesses could be authentic even if the material vehicle was a substitute. Against this background it becomes easier to see why icons were so often given the status of antiques.

INTERACTIONS

We have reviewed some historical and theoretical conditions for the affiliation between icons and the development of early modern portraiture. But it would be wrong to identify icons and portraits too strongly. They are deeply related, and yet modern portraiture introduced important new features, in part out of its very dialogue with the icons. Early modern portraits ‘reframed’ the earlier icon tradition, in a sense turning it into a tradition, and in the process contributed to the establishment of a new, secular role for pictures. In closing, I propose to discuss in some depth two complex cases, which bring to light two major processes in the relation between icons and early modern portraiture. The process of embedding, which was a form of reframing, and the process of sublimation, which was a form of secularisation.

EMBEDDING: BOTTICELLI’S GOLDEN PORTRAIT

The gold-ground roundel visible in the Portrait of a Young Man holding a Medallion of about 1486 by Botticelli is an actual piece of fourteenth century painting that has been inserted into a cavity in the panel [fig. 15]. This conjunction has bothered some art historians, as it clashes with prevailing conceptions of Renaissance art: why would the great Renaissance artist enshrine a fairly ordinary piece of gold-ground painting and place it in the hands of a sophisticated youth who evidently prizes it? Roberto Longhi called this conjunction ‘un anastomotico nonsense’, and scholars concurring with his view have suggested that the insertion of the roundel is a much later (nineteenth or twentieth century) intervention, filling the cavity that originally held another object altogether. Perhaps due to this distortion, the painting is now in private hands rather than in a major museum. But there is no obvious reason to doubt the originality of what we see here; technical examination has not revealed anything particularly ‘wrong’ with the surface. Apart from the technical evidence, the context developed in this essay makes the conjunction much less ‘nonsensical’.

The portrait can be compared to the famous portrait by Botticelli of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de’ Medici in the Uffizi (probably 1470), where once again a real object — a gilt plaster cast of a medal of Cosimo de’ Medici — has been inserted into a cavity in the painting [fig. 22]. These are clearly two very different cases: Cosimo de’ Medici had died only a decade or so earlier. But it may be worth considering whether in this period the categories of the medall and the icon were not as far apart as they are in the eyes of modern art history. Both were formats with powerful antique resonances that granted special authority to portraits.

The icon inserted into Botticelli’s panel is not Byzantine, and has been attributed to the fourteenth century Siene painter Bartolomeo Bulgari [fig. 23]. This is important information, especially given that interest in early Tuscan painting had begun to develop in the late fifteenth century. And yet it is also important not to overstate how significant this information was to Botticelli, to his sitter, or to the presumed viewers of this portrait. It may be that late fifteenth century viewers looked through those details of production, seeing the image as a token of a venerable type. As we have seen above, icons, even ones produced in Italy on the basis of Greek models, were regularly backdated to ancient times. Especially when embedded into a modern portrait, this panel is above all an image of a venerable and ancient saint, an image that speaks the language of antiquity. The saint’s beard, cloak and the arcane hand gesture appear as neither the invention of a modern artist nor the fruit of antiquarian research, but instead as the attributes of the saint himself, reliably transmitted.

The pattern of the punch holes in the icon held by Botticelli’s youth extend vertically off the top and bottom edges, indicating that it was not originally round; instead, it was given a roundel format at the time that it was inserted into the Renaissance painting. The roundel format at this scale is well known in Byzantine art but rare in Italian art, and in general is a form associated with antiquity. When the embedded panel was turned into a tondo, its similarity to objects like this was enhanced. Thus the reshaping and reframing that the panel went through in being inserted into this portrait had the effect of strengthening its antique associations.

In its new form and surroundings the object is presented in a new capacity: no longer an integral part of a larger structure but standing on its own as a symbol.
of a larger whole. The circularity of its moulded frame articulates the new closure that attends the conceptual shift from functional image to collectible. The roundel is delicately propped by the youth directly on the parapet, another framing device, itself invented by Western painters in their adaptations of the half-length format of Byzantine icons. The figure of the saint is cut off at the same point as that of the youth, suggesting a profound relationship of succession between youthful portrait and venerable icon. Like the saint in the roundel, the figure of the youth is also starkly isolated. The alternating strips of dark and light that make up the embrasure around him insistently reiterate the work of framing that went into his portrait.

The youth props the roundel on the parapet and tilts it slightly up; we see the bottom of the icon’s frame and appreciate its objecthood and portability. This is an object that needs to be held and presented, an object whose real frame is now the hands of its owner, and the polite conversation that begins when it is picked up and held for someone to admire. It is turned towards the light, upper left, which dramatically picks out all of these framing elements—the repeated ribs of the moulding and the youth’s delicate fingers, which are carefully kept just clear of the relic’s surface. The giant youth manipulates the now imprisoned diminutive saint and yet in a subtler way the icon fundamentally conditions our relation to the portrait of the youth.

Bottecelli’s portrait stages the transformation of an excerpt into a self-sufficient ‘work’, the process of framing and reframing that goes into making a work of art, and in this sense it tells its own prehistory. But it also marks the differences, the gap between the image of the venerable saint and this attentive but somewhat arch youth, who turns to the viewer and offers the old image for inspection and admiration. We are pulled between the two figures and our relation to one shape the approach to the other. The saint’s image becomes, in the hands of the collector, a model of the religious image, now understood quasi-anthropologically as a separate class of images, associated with a religious history and a set of religious institutions. But it also becomes the model for the modern portrait, and in a broader sense of the work of art. The religious image comes into being in the hands of art, and through that restaging it becomes a model for art.

**Sublimation and Secularisation: Leonardo’s Mona Lisa**

In these same years Leonardo wrote a striking ethnographic account of the sort of activity that surrounded famous miracle-working images such as the famous Saint Luke icon in Santa Maria Maggiore [fig. 24].

Do we not see paintings that represent sacred deities always covered with cloths of the greatest value? And before they are unveiled, great ecclesiastical solemnities are first celebrated with various chants and the sounding of instruments, and at the unveiling multitude of people immediately throw themselves on the ground, worshipping and praying to the one who is figured in it, for the restoration of their lost health or for their eternal salvation, just as though the living deity were truly present there in the flesh.  

This passage has the basic elements of a good anthropological description: the ritual procedure is described, the motivations and expectations of the actors are accounted for, and a hypothesis is proposed concerning the efficacy of the image, its ability to do what it does. Compare this description of the efficacious cult image with another of Leonardo’s accounts, this time of one of his own paintings:

Once, Leonardo writes, I happened to make a painting that represented a sacred figure that was bought by someone who fell in love with it. He wanted to remove the attributes of the saint [lit. deity] so he would be able to kiss it without misgivings. But in the end his conscience rose above his sighs and his last, and he was forced to remove it from his house.  

The erotically wayward religious image prompts the intervention of what might be called a critical conscience (consicencia), and as Leonardo tells us this critical intervention can take two forms. Either the painting has to be removed or it has to be desacralised by physically overpainting or removing its religious attributes. This appears to be an act of reverse sublimation, a demotion of the religious image into an object of secular erotic love. But in fact Leonardo diagrams the sublimation process itself. The libidinal energies invested in the religious image are to be extracted as if through a process of refinement and purification, and then put into a dedicated place called art. The story suggests that this is not a singular occurrence. Leonardo presents this as an example of what excellent painting, his above all, can do to a viewer. The implication is that modern painting is destined to trouble decorum, and thus to raise the question of the functions, categories, and settings of art.

In Leonardo’s story the troubling painting is taken away. But he also clearly envisions the other possibility, that one could erase the image’s religious attributes. What, one might ask, would one be left with after the attributes are erased: a painting of a woman, but surely not a portrait of any one woman. The cancelling is not quite what the reformers were calling for—the removal of the disfigurations and accretions of later centuries and the restoration of the original arcaic Christian image. Instead, here the stripping leads to something beyond or beneath the Christian image altogether.

The pairing of the two accounts brings out the curious family resemblance between the Santa Maria Maggiore icon and the so-called Mona Lisa [fig. 25]. On a simple formal level, the similarities are striking, beginning with the three-quarter length format and the presentation of the figures. It should be noted that the formulating of this icon is in fact quite unusual—as was the Mona Lisa among portraits of its time. The similarities extend even to details such as the placement of the hands, and even facial features the long nose, the round and well defined chin, the corners of the mouth tucked under the flesh of the cheek. These similarities in the features are brought together by a more general similarity in expression. Both figures are involved in reflection, their psychic reserve suggesting a mystery as yet unrevealed. The icon alludes to theological mysteries and it is carefully revealed within a sanctified ministration of religious power, as Leonardo observed in the passage quoted above. In Leonardo’s portrait we are dealing not with the powers of a specific religious personage but with something less determinate. The unveiling is no longer part of the external protocols of ritual, but has been internalised in the painting technique itself, in the slow unfolding of Leonardo’s _dismanuete_, which claims to offer an infinitely gradual path from the known to the unknown.  

The comparison brings into view important features of Leonardo’s painting. Most scholars agree that the work originated in a fairly standard portrait commission of 1503 (although some doubt it), but no one can reasonably claim that in its present state this strange figure represents an individual. Leonardo was evidently capable of painting particular individuals, as his other portraits attest, but here the reference to a specific person is missing. In fact the painting was never given to its putative client: Leonardo kept it with him, and perhaps worked on it, for the rest of his life, taking it with him to France. It became more than a commissioned portrait, something more abstract, something closer to a demonstration of his art, a visual manifesto of the arguments in defence of painting that one finds in his writings—the same writings that include the passages quoted above. Given this development, it is no surprise that the painting should enter into contention with the icon, and attempt to internalise something of its formality and its stature. This is something other than the usual work of adapting and re-proposing a prototypical image. The icon is now framed off as a category, a prevalent model of the image—that is, it is understood quasi-anthropologically, as it is in Leonardo’s written description of the image cult quoted earlier.

To ask after the archaic origins of the icon is already to ask what lies beneath those foundations, beneath icon painting itself. Leonardo’s portrait—that is no longer a portrait is thus something stranger than a return to the archaic image. It is closer to Leonardo’s description quoted above—a sacred image that has had its sacred attributes removed. The logic of archaism here is not a formal one but a structural one, and so it does not stop at the image of the Virgin. Instead, it engages in a quasi-anthropological excavation. A female principle is abstracted from the Virgin cult and set before a cosmic landscape. This is one way of understanding the strange combination of hyper-realisation and abstractness, almost blankness, in the painting. The concentration of pictorial effects—the extraordinary density and continuity of the pictorial elaboration—it is a colossal effort to stabilise what is left after moving to this register below established iconography. The painting labours to transform the fact of unsettled identity into something like an artistic principle.

This helps explain why the painting produced such a luxurious progeny of copies, and especially variations. In a cartoon in the Louvre based on the _Mona Lisa_ and exactly to scale, the figure is now made to hold a branch of laurel. The painting also inspired a number of variations in which the figure is rendered nude. And of course also Virgin figures in response, by Raphael. No other portrait of the period provoked this kind of reception. And this is not, in my view, simply due to the fame of the artist, but is in response to this painting’s peculiar under-determination.
Leonardo was not the only one to place his art into contention with the sacred image in these years. Albrecht Dürer's *Self Portrait* of 1500 also hovers between portrait and icon, but in a more explicit and polarised way (Fig. 26). The forced marriage of self-portrait and Christ portrait is left clearly visible in the painting. It is clearly no longer a Christian image, and yet it is as obviously a very estranged self-portrait, an image of the self pulled into the magnetic field of the icon. The two gestures are very different.

Dürer presents an image that is both icon and portrait; Leonardo's is neither icon nor portrait. And yet both works, highly self-conscious artistic manifestos, work within the space opened up between icon and portrait.

From the vantage point of Leonardo's ethnographic description, or of Dürer's meta-painting, the icon is already a suspended category, already a artefact. To treat it as a model of the image is already to frame it in anthropological terms, to see it as but one instance of a deeper portraiture function, one that long precedes Christian art: the substitution of the image for the body, recognised as the basic and perhaps original act of image-making. New claims for art — even if they involve something that goes beyond mimetic doubling, and especially if they do — start here. The crucial point is that Dürer and Leonardo do not simply continue the work of culture by offering new portraits, new essays in effigy-making. Instead, they destabilise the subject of portraiture, leaving the figurations in a suspended, indeterminate state, as if between codes. They stand in an oblique relation to their image traditions, and so prompt reflection on the portrait as a category and on art-making in general.

11 See, further, the excellent commentary on this passage by Suther 1999, pp. 17–26.
12 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part II–II, Question 94, Articles 1–2. Alberti's formulation was to have a long afterlife. See, for example, Bordo 1992, pp. 38–61; and for a discussion of the issue of the *ultra divina*, non-allenato che si dica di la anima, perche la pittura ne reeprima gli assetti come fassino presenti, on gli echi morti en nosa offrada como vie...! Belting 1992, p. 2.
16 Völ 1992, pp. 144–2: "among sacred objects is shown the panel portrait of Peter and Paul, which, after Constantine had been spoken to in his sleep, Severus produced in confirmation of the vision. I do not say this because I deny that they are portraits of the apostles... but because that panel was not produced for Constantine by Sylvestre. Latin: *inter religios demonstratum in tabella effigies Petri et Pauli, quum Sylvestre Constantinum ab eodem apostolus in somnia advenisse in confirman.ationem visionis, exhibuit.* Non hoc dico qua negem effigies illas esse apostolam... sed qua tabella illa a Sylvestro non fuerit exhibita Constantino."
18 The conservation documentation at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, where the painting has been in loan since June 2000, review reveals a re-arrangement of the image to the edge of the panel by the original painter. No history of removals and replacements. The delicate paint of highlights on the frame immediately surrounding the roundel is intact, save for one area of damage, lower left, which extends across both surface of the wooden panel, framed paint, and the icon, and thus certainly damaged after the icon was inserted. My thanks to David Bull, Larry Kantor, Nicholas Penny and Carl Strehlke for sharing their views on the matter.
19 See Buzenoglou et al. 1995, pp. 29–57, 69–79, which shows that the cavity in the panel was slightly too large for the plaster cast medal, and that this might have something to do with the cracking of the plaster itself as well as with the evident signs of repair. In comparison, the insertion of the panel into the Solow portrait (Fig. 17) evidently went more smoothly. It is possible to suggest, on the basis of the Uffizi portrait, that the Solow portrait once held a medal, but this possibility is excluded by the presence of the fictive tondo frame, as medals were never framed in this way. Tondo paintings, of course, frequently were.
20 For example, Piero de Medici is known to have bought out a painting he believed to be by Cimabue, the double-sided panel of the Passion of John and Mary and the Lamentation now in the Fogh Museum and attributed to the Master of the Prato Pieta, see Belli 1992, pp. 49–52. It bears a re-arrangement of the image to the edge of the panel by the original painter. No history of removals and replacements. The delicate paint of highlights on the frame immediately surrounding the roundel is intact, save for one area of damage, lower left, which extends across both surface of the wooden panel, framed paint, and the icon, and thus certainly damaged after the icon was inserted. My thanks to David Bull, Larry Kantor, Nicholas Penny and Carl Strehlke for sharing their views on the matter.
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FIG. 15 Sandro Botticelli
Portrait of a Young Man holding a Medallion, c. 1485, New York, Solow Collection
FIG. 16 Christ Pantocrator, beginning of the fourteenth century, Chimay, Belgium, Church of Saint Peter and Paul

FIG. 17 Christ Pantocrator, twelfth century, Florence, Bargello Museum
FIG. 18 Rogier van der Weyden, *The Virgin and Child*, c. 1460, San Marino, Huntington Library Art Collections

FIG. 19 Rogier van der Weyden, *Philippe de Creij*, c.1460, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten
FIG. 20 and 21 Icons with the images of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Vatican City, Vatican Museum
FIG. 22 Sandro Botticelli, Portrait of a Man with a medal of Cosimo de Medici, c. 1470-1480, Florence, Uffizi Gallery
FIG. 23 Sandro Botticelli, detail of Portrait of a Young Man holding a Medallion, c. 1485, New York, Solow Collection
FIG. 24 Virgin with Child called “Protectress of the Roman People,” 6th century. Rome, Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, altar of the Paolina Chapel