

T O M A S S O



Francesco de' Franceschi (active 1443 – 1468)

10. Saint Peter Enthroned

Venice, mid-15th century
Tempera on panel
124.5 cm (49 in.) high

Sitting on a throne seemingly carved in delicate Verona marble, Saint Peter, richly dressed in papal regalia, raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing and holds in his left hand the Keys to the gates of Heaven. Candid white gloves and precious rings cover his hands, whilst a gold embroidered mantum held together by a jewelled morse cloaks his shoulder. The luminous white of the saint's cassock beautifully contrasts with the elaborate brocade of the mantle and its bright crimson reverse. Careful attention is paid to drawing the folds of the robes around the figure's body, conveying at once a sense of anatomical modelling and one of highly pictorial patterning. This is repeated in the saint's facial features, drawn with both realism and symmetry, as particularly evident in the curls of his beard.

Both the iconography and the stylistic qualities of the present panel point with certainty in the direction of Francesco de' Franceschi, a Venetian master active in the middle of the fifteenth century. A follower of the more pronouncedly Gothic painter Michele Giambono, Francesco was also clearly influenced by the early Renaissance sensibility of Antonio Vivarini, responding to the latter's search for naturalistic detail and softer colouring and contouring of the figures.

Notably, de Franceschi's most prominent work is a polyptych featuring St Peter enthroned in its central panel (1447, now Padua, Museo Civico, see Berenson, op. cit., p. 79, pl. 48 & 50-52), a composition closely related to the present one. Represented in the same stance and with analogous facial features, the saint in the Padua panel is also dressed in similar robes, draped around his body in much the same way as in the present image. Further confirmation of de Franceschi's authorship of the present panel is offered by Berenson, who recorded in 1957 a "Peter Enthroned" by the master formerly in the Harry Fuld collection.

Literature:

B. Berenson, *Italian pictures of the Renaissance*, London, 1957, vol. I, p. 79