Does The Treatment of Religious Iconography Correlate with The Location of Art

By: Becky Brock

Date April 12, 2018
Imagery and visual depictions were used as catechetical means to transmit faith. Common practice was to use paintings, decorative pieces and sculpture as tools to teach and inspire Christianity in people. Artworks decorated public and private areas in churches and monasteries, which raises an interesting question:

» Do Religious Narratives in Artwork Change if displayed in public vs. private locations?
Fifteenth Century Florentine Master Artists

**Fra Angelico**
- Born in 1395 and died in 1455
- Dominican Order Monk
- Trained as an illuminator
- Excelled at painting frescoes
- Resided at the Convent of Fiesole & the Priory of San Marco

**Domenico Ghirlandaio**
- Born in 1448 and died in 1494
- Apprentice for his father as a goldsmith and later as a painter and mosaic artist
- Excelled at fresco cycles
- Painted numerous artworks for Florentine Churches

**Lorenzo Ghiberti**
- Born in 1378 and died in 1455
- Lived in Florence, trained as a goldsmith and sculptor
- Ghiberti created the *Gates of Paradise* for the Baptistery of St John
- Considered the top metal sculptor of the Early Renaissance
Fra Angelico - San Marco Altarpiece (main panel)

Also known as: *Madonna and Saints*

Completed between 1438 to 1443

In addition to the main panel there were 9 accompanying panels

The San Marco Altarpiece is known as one of the best early Renaissance paintings for its employment of metaphor and perspective, and the intertwining of Dominican religious themes.
Fra Angelico – The Annunciation

Located in the Priory of San Marco, Florence

Created for the cleric’s dormitory in the east corridor of San Marco

Completed circa 1450

Considered to have “achieved the heights of singular elegance” in how it handles space and lighting (Hood 262)
Fra Angelico – *Madonna and Child with Eight Saints*

Located in the Priory of San Marco, Florence

Completed circa 1450

Also known as the Madonna of the Shadows

Provide visual symmetry for small groups of Monks to follow the ancient apostles in their worship Mary and Christ
Fra Angelico – *Mocking of Christ*

Located in the Priory of San Marco, Florence

Completed circa 1440

Painted in the private space of a monk’s cell

Intended to enable the praying monk to envision the scene
Located at the Baptistery of St John, Florence

23 year old Ghiberti won the commission to create the north entrance doors of the Baptistery

The gilded bronze doors consist of 28 panels, with 20 panels depicting the life of Christ

These doors were the most significant art pieces of the fifteenth century
Lorenzo Ghiberti – Saint John the Baptist

Located in one of 14 niches of the Orsanmichele in Florence

Created circa 1412

The first of several commissioned statues

A masterpiece of exceptional detail

The first bronze statue of its size to be cast in a single piece and the largest statue ever cast in Florence at this point in history
Domenico Ghirlandaio – Saint Jerome In His Study

Originally Located in the Church of Ognissanti, Florence

This fresco was one of two paintings to decorate the choir

Completed circa 1480
Domenico Ghirlandaio - Sistine Chapel, Rome
Location, Location, Location

The visual language and treatment of religious content in fifteenth century artworks were highly correlated to their placement in Florentine Monasteries and Cathedrals.