

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



St. John the Evangelist

Piero della Francesca (Italian, ca. 1415–1492)

Date 1454–69

Medium Tempera on panel

Dimensions 52 3/4 x 24 1/2 in. (134 x 62.2 cm)

Credit Line Purchased by The Frick Collection, 1936

Accession Number 1936.1.138

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 30, Gold-Grounds Room

Commentary In 1454 Angelo di Giovanni di Simone d'Angelo ordered from Piero a polyptych for the high altar of S. Agostino in Borgo Sansepolcro. The commission specified that this work, undertaken to fulfill the wish of Angelo's late brother Simone and the latter's wife Giovanna for the spiritual benefit of the donors and their forebears, was to consist of several panels with "images, figures, pictures, and ornaments." The central portion of the altarpiece is lost, but four lateral panels with standing saints, St. Michael the Archangel (National Gallery, London), St. Augustine (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon), St. Nicholas of Tolentino (Museo Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan), and the present panel have survived. Although the venerable figure in the Frick painting was given no identifying attributes, he is presumed to represent St. John the Evangelist, patron of the donors' father and of Simone's wife. Evidence from a payment made to Piero in 1469 suggests that the altarpiece was finished late that year, fifteen years after the original contract. The lengthy delay resulted no doubt from Piero's many other commitments during this period, when he traveled to towns all across Central Italy and contracted obligations to patrons more important and more exigent than the family of Angelo di Giovanni and the Augustinian monks of his own small town, Borgo Sansepolcro. But it is obvious as well from the character of his art that Piero was not a quick or facile painter. His deep interest in the theoretical study of perspective and geometry and his pondered, contemplative approach to his paintings are

apparent in all his work, including the panels of the S. Agostino altarpiece. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Sant'Agostino (now Santa Chiara), Borgo San Sepolcro, 1469–1554; probably Sant'Agostino (before 1555, Pieve di Santa Maria), Borgo San Sepolcro, 1555; Bernardino Ducci, Borgo San Sepolcro, 1624; Luca and Francesco Ducci, Borgo San Sepolcro, 1680; Dukes of Cardona or Counts Folch of Cardona, eighteenth century; Molly von Miller zu Aicholz (d. 1887), Vienna; August von Miller zu Aicholz (d. 1899), Vienna; by descent to his brother Baron Eugen Ritter von Miller zu Aicholz (d. 1919), Palast Aicholz, Vienna; by descent to his son Arthur von Miller zu Aicholz, country house near Salzburg, 1935; possibly with Frederick Mont, Vienna, 1935; Knoedler and Co., New York 1935–36; acquired by The Frick Collection, New York, 1936. Source: *Piero della Francesca in America: From Sansepolcro to the East Coast*. New York: The Frick Collection, 2013.