CONDITIONS OF TRADE AND THEIR ROLE IN PAINTING XV CENTURY ITALY

Abstract. This article explores the complex dynamics between clients and painters in fifteenth-century Italy, emphasizing how clients exerted significant influence on the artistic content and execution of works. This study uses a variety of research methods such as Documentary Analysis, Case Studies, and Comparative Analysis.

A review of documented cases reveals the client's direct influence on the choice of subject matter, artistic elements, and execution of the commissioned work. Furthermore, it challenges traditional distinctions between “public” and “private” arts commissions and emphasizes their often public role in public spaces. In this historical context, artists were typically employed and controlled by individual clients and bound by formal contracts that set out obligations, payment terms, and quality standards.

A recurring theme in discussions of art during this period is the delicate balance between the quality of materials and the skill of the artist. Clients can use resources strategically and prefer intricate details over flashy materials, a preference that is often documented in the contract. The economic value of artistic skill was widely recognized, and remuneration was adjusted to the artist's expertise, as reflected in the discussion of goldsmiths' reward in Archbishop St. Antoninus's Summa Theologica.

Unlike today's art market, artists in the 15th century operated within the framework of structured patronage. Their work is based on formal agreements, with clients playing a vital role in shaping the artistic creation. This historical context highlights the differences between contemporary art practice and that of the 15th century, differences rooted in different economic and social structures. Finally,
this article provides a comprehensive examination of the complex relationship between client and painter and provides valuable insights into the historical landscape of artistic patronage in fifteenth-century Italy.

**Keywords:** art patronage; public and private art; case studies; commercial relationship; artistic production; artistic elements; contractual agreements.

Чурга Юлія Богданівна аспірантка Кафедри Історії мистецтв Історичного факультету, Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9411-9771

**УМОВИ ТОРГІВЛІ ТА ЇХ РОЛЬ В ЖИВОПИСІ ІТАЛІЇ XV СТ.**

**Анотація.** Ця стаття створена з метою дослідження складної динаміки між замовниками та художниками протягом п’ятнадцятого століття в Італії, проливаючи світло на те, як замовники мали значний вплив на мистецький зміст та виконання робіт. Дослідження використовує кілька методів дослідження, таких як: документальний аналіз, метод тематичних досліджень, порівняльний аналіз.

Дослідження задокументованих випадків виявляє прямий вплив замовників на вибір тематики, художніх елементів та виконання замовлених робіт. Крім того, він ставить під сумнів традиційне розрізнення між публічними та приватними мистецькими замовленнями, наголошуючи на їхній часто публічній ролі в громадських місцях. У цьому історичному контексті митці, як правило, перебували під управлінням замовників, які регулювали відповідною угодами, в яких були визначені зобов’язання, умови оплати та стандарти якості.

Темою, що постійно повторюється в дискусіях про мистецтво того періоду, є тонкий баланс між якістю матеріалів і майстерністю художника. Клієнти могли розподіляти кошти стратегічно, віддаючи перевагу складним деталям над розкішними матеріалами, і ця перевага часто була задокументована в контрактах. Економічна цінність художньої майстерності була загальнозвестною, оплата регулювалася відповідно до досвіду художника, що перегукувалося з дискусіями про оплату золотих майстрів у Summa Theologica архієпископа Св. Антонія.

На відміну від сьогоднішнього мистецького ринку, художники п’ятнадцятого століття діяли в рамках структурованого патронажу. Їхня робота керувалася офіційними угодами, а клієнти відігравали ключову роль у формуванні художньої продукції. Цей історичний контекст підкреслює розбіжність між сучасними мистецькими практиками та практиками п’ятнадцятого століття, що кореняться в різних економічних і суспільних
statement of the problem. This article examines the complex relationship between clients and painters in the fifteenth century, focusing on how clients exerted influence over the content and execution of artworks. We looked at specific cases, such as the work of the famous Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai, who commissioned works ranging from glorifying God and the city to commemorating himself. The study explores the blurred lines between "public" and "private" art commissions, the formalization of contractual agreements, and the recurring theme of balance between material quality and artistic skill in Quattrocento patronage systems.

Introduction. XV-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship. On one side, a painter made the picture, or at least supervised its making. On the other side there was somebody else who asked him to make it, provided funds for him to make a work and, after he had made it, reckoned on using it in some way or other. The client paid for the work, and this could affect the character of the paintings.

The relationship between the painter and client was among other things a commercial relationship, and some of the economic practices of the period are quite concretely embodied in the paintings. Money is significant in the history of art. It acts on painting not only in the matter of a client being willing to spend money on a painting, - but also in the details of how he hands it over. Fifteenth-century differential payments of masters and journeymen are both deeply involved in the style, of the paintings as we see them now: paintings are fossils of economic life.

Furthermore, pictures were designed for the client's use. It is not very profitable to speculate about individual clients' motives in commissioning pictures: each man's motives are mixed and the mixture is a little different in each case.

Research methods. Documentary Analysis: (1) this article uses the method of document analysis to examine specific cases of art patronage in the 15th century. It looks at historical documents, contracts, and correspondence between client and artist to understand the dynamics of their relationship, the nature of the commission, and the expectations of both parties. This approach allows for a detailed study of the historical context of art production.

Case Studies: (2) this article uses case studies of famous patrons and artists such as Giovanni Rucellai and Filippo Lippi to illustrate the impact of clients on the creation of artworks. By analyzing these specific examples, this article provides
insights into client motivations, communication between client and artist, and how commissions are executed. Case studies are concrete evidence that supports the broader historical analysis.

Comparative analysis: (3) this article uses comparative analysis to highlight the differences between fifteenth-century art patronage and contemporary art practice. It contrasts the structured and contractual nature of the patron-artist relationship in the 15th century with the more independent and market-oriented approach of today's art world. This comparative perspective helps highlight the uniqueness of historical patronage systems and their impact on artistic production during this period.

Together, these methods contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the historical context of artistic patronage in the fifteenth century and its impact on the creation of artistic works.

Results and discussion. In this article, we will carry out an overview of specific documented cases of the direct influence of customers on the order of work, the nature of the picture, and the presence of certain elements in the work. One active employer of painters, the Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai noted he had in his house works by Domenico Veneziano, Filippo Lippi, Verrocchio, Pollaiuolo, Andrea del Castagno, and Paolo Uccello. Rucellai suggests his motives: these things give him: “the greatest contentment and the greatest pleasure because they serve the glory of God, the honor of the city, and the commemoration of myself.” [1] In fact, the client need not analyze his own motives much because he generally worked through institutional forms-the altarpiece, the frescoed family chapel, the Madonna in the bedroom, and the cultured wall furniture in the study – which rationalized his motives for, usually in quite flattering ways.

In 1457 Filippo Lippi painted a triptych for Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici; it was intended as a gift to King Alfonso V of Naples. Filippo Lippi worked in Florence, Giovanni was sometimes out of the city and Filippo tried to keep in touch by letter in order to discuss the client’s wishes: “I have done what you told me on the painting, and applied myself scrupulously to each thing. The figure of St Michael is now so near finishing throat since his armor is to be of silver and gold. I have been to see Bartolomeo Martelli, he said he will speak with Francesco about the gold and what you want and that should be exactly as you wish.” [2]

A distinction between 'public' and 'private' does not fit the functions of fifteenth-century painting very well. Private men's commissions often had very public role, often in public places; an altarpiece or a fresco cycle in the side chapel of a church is not private in any useful sense. The painter was typically employed and controlled by an individual or small group. There is a class of formal documents recording these relationships like written agreements about the main obligations of each party. There are no completely typical contracts because there was no fixed
form, even within one town. One agreement less untypical than many was between the Florentine painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and the Prior of the Spedale degli Innocenti at Florence; (1) it is the contract for the Adoration of the Magi (1488) [3]; (2) it specifies what the painter is to paint, how and when the client is to pay, and when the painter is to deliver; (3) it insists on the painter using good quality colors, especially gold, and ultramarine; (4) there should be a discussion between the two parties (about any deviation from the painting).

The payment was usually in the form of one inclusive sum paid, but sometimes the painter's expenses were distinguished from his labor. A client might provide the pigments and pay the painter for his time and skill: when Filippino Lippi painted the Life of St. Thomas, Cardinal Caraffa gave him 2,000 ducats for his personal part and paid for his assistants and the ultramarine separately [4].

If the painter and client could not agree on the final sum, professional painters could act as arbitrators, but usually, matters did not come to this point. Of course, not all artists worked within institutions of this kind; in particular, some artists worked for patrons who paid them a salary. Lodovico Gonzaga's offer to Montegna in April 1458: “I intend to give you fifteen ducats 'monthly as salary, to provide lodgings where you can live comfortably with your family, to give you enough grain each year to cover generously the feeding of six mouths, and also the firewood you need for your own use...” [5]. It was the commercial practice expounded in the contracts, and seen at its clearest in Florence, that set the tone of Quattrocento patronage. The dichotomy between the quality of material and quality of skill was the most recurring motif in everybody's discussion of painting and sculpture, and this is true whether the discussion is ascetic, depicting public enjoyment of works of art, or affirmative, as in texts of art theory.

There were various ways for the client to switch his funds to the 'brush'. For example, he could specify landscapes behind the figures in his picture instead of gilding. A contract might even itemize what the client had in mind for his landscapes. When Ghirlandaio contracted in 1485 to paint frescoes for Giovanni Tornabuoni in the choir of S. Maria Novella, at Florence he agreed to include: “figures, buildings, castles, cities, mountains, hills, plains, rocks, costumes, animals, birds, and beasts of every kind.” [6] Such a demand takes a lot of time if not skill.

By the middle of the century, the expensiveness of pictorial skill was very well known. When St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, discussed in his Summa Theologica the art of goldsmiths and their proper payment he used the painters as an example of payment relative to individual skill [7]: the goldsmith who endows his works with better skill should be paid more. As is the case in the art of painting, where a great master will demand much more pay two or three times more than an unskilled man for making the same type of figure. There were various ways of diverting funds from material to skill one might direct that a panel have
representational rather than gilt backgrounds; more radically, one could demand and pay for a relatively high proportion of the great master's expensive personal attention. For the picture still to make a handsome impression, this expensive skill must manifest itself clearly to the beholder.

In the fifteenth century, painting was still too important to be left to the painters. The picture trade was quite different from that in today's experience, in which painters paint what they think best and then look around for a buyer. We buy our pictures ready-made now; this need not be a matter of our having more respect for the artist's individual talent than fifteenth-century people like Giovanni Rucellai did, so much as of our living in a different sort of commercial society.

Conclusions. Finally, the article explores the relationship between clients and painters in the fifteenth century and highlights how clients influenced the content and execution of works of art. One particular example was the Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai, who expressed his motivation for commissioning paintings designed to glorify God, glorify the city, and commemorate himself.

The article emphasizes that the distinction between “public” and “private” arts commissions is blurred, as even seemingly private commissions often play public roles in public spaces. Painters are usually employed and controlled by individual clients, with their duties specified in a formal contract. These contracts typically specify the subject matter of the artwork, payment terms, and quality standards.

A recurring theme in artistic discussions of this period is the balance between the quality of materials and the quality of skill. Clients can influence the allocation of funds between these aspects, for example by favoring detailed landscaping over gilding.

Ultimately, the art patronage system of the 15th century was fundamentally different from contemporary practice. Art is a commercial business with clear agreements between patrons and artists, whereas today's artists often create works independently and then find buyers. This difference reflects the differences in trading companies across the ages.

References:

Література: