

# Portrait Busts of Children in Quattrocento Florence

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THE FOLLOWING STUDY concerns one of the most beloved but least investigated artistic productions of the early Renaissance: sculpted busts of young children (Figures 1, 3, 5, 7, 15, 16).<sup>1</sup> The sculptures form a homogeneous group—exclusively male, always depicted bust-length, usually in marble, and often portrayed as the young St. John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup> The boys are characterized individually, and no two are exactly alike in either form or expression. They first appear in Florence in the mid-fifteenth century and center on the workshops of Desiderio da Settignano, Antonio Rossellino, and Mino da Fiesole.<sup>3</sup> There are no comparable painted counterparts, and the genre has a production span of only about fifty years.<sup>4</sup> The busts thereby constitute an extraordinary genre of sculptural production and of childhood representation whose striking yet brief existence has always been enjoyed but never adequately explained.<sup>5</sup>

These portrait busts are unique to the Renaissance. Antique busts of children do exist but are of a nature contrary to those created in Quattrocento Florence. Roman busts of children normally exhibit none of the liveliness that makes the Renaissance examples so distinctive and charming. The ancient busts are usually filled with sober dignity, without the spontaneity and vivaciousness of childhood itself. As once characterized by Anton Hekler, the Roman busts “show us no blooming, healthy little boys, no merry putti with fat cheeks and delicious snub-noses; the atmosphere of the Roman boy in portraits is not a sunny one; it is oppressive, and full of somber gravity.”<sup>6</sup> The Metropolitan Museum possesses three important examples of these classical busts of children. A marble bust of a young boy (Figure 2) shows the typical austerity of most classical portrait busts and is an example of the type that would have been most familiar to Renaissance artists.<sup>7</sup> A unique bronze bust in the Museum (Figure 4) exhibits more vitality as a result of the expressive

eyes inlaid with silver and its more subtle facial expression.<sup>8</sup> It is clear from its base that the head was to be mounted on a herm pillar and was probably placed in an area of a Roman house reserved for commemorative displays. Indeed the most common sculptural representations of children in classical art appear either in funerary contexts or as part of the cult of ancestor worship, which partly explains their sobriety. Pliny specifically indicates the display of portrait busts in the atria of Roman houses.<sup>9</sup> Both he and Polybius also describe the use of effigies in funeral processions.<sup>10</sup> Classical commemorative portraits celebrating living children, however, are virtually nonexistent.<sup>11</sup> One may compare the Quattrocento example by Desiderio from the Mellon Collection in the National Gallery of Art (Figure 5) to the Metropolitan bust of a Roman infant (Figure 6) to see the stark contrast between the Renaissance celebrations of life and the Roman commemorations of death.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, an example such as Desiderio’s *Laughing Child* in Vienna (Figure 7) has no precedent, classical or otherwise, and marks the changing conception of the Renaissance child—indeed of the modern child. For the Renaissance busts ultimately embody the future promise of the male child and therefore concentrate on the living vitality of his person as it was never before represented in this art form.

With few exceptions, medieval sculptures of children depict either the Christ child or child saints. In both cases the youths display the proportions and physical characteristics of adults rather than children.<sup>13</sup> In Italy, independent sculptures of the Christ child normally show him either in the act of benediction or swaddled as the infant of the nativity. An early-fourteenth-century example (Figure 8) offers a typical depiction of the former portrayal and shows little attempt to portray correct infantile form.<sup>14</sup> During the Renaissance these medieval images of children evolved as a new emphasis began to be placed on the corporeality of the child—particularly the Christ child.<sup>15</sup> The change is most clearly manifested in Desiderio’s *Blessing Christ*, from the

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Figure 1. Desiderio da Settignano (ca. 1430–1464), *Bust of a Young Boy*, ca. 1460–64. Marble. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection (photo: National Gallery of Art)



Figure 2. Roman, *Bust of a Young Boy*. Marble. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931, 32.100.471



Figure 3. Antonio Rossellino (1427–1479), *Bust of the Young St. John the Baptist*, 3rd quarter 15th century. Marble. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection (photo: National Gallery of Art)

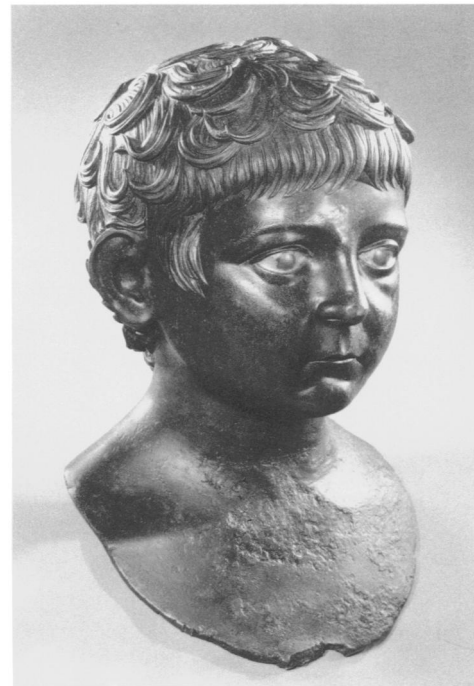


Figure 4. Roman, *Bust of a Young Boy*. Bronze. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Funds from various donors, 1966, 66.11.5

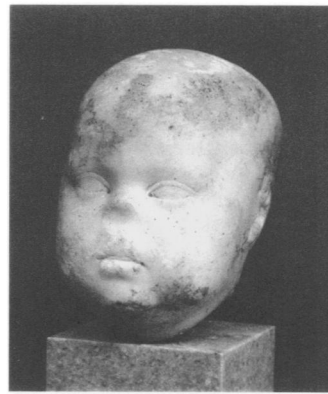


Figure 6. Roman, *Head of a Baby*. Marble. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1912, 12.232.1

Figure 5. Desiderio da Settignano, *Bust of a Young Boy*, ca. 1460–64. Marble. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Mellon Collection (photo: National Gallery of Art)

tabernacle of the sacrament in San Lorenzo (Figure 9). The Renaissance Christ retains the adult presence of the earlier image but gains the realistic body of an actual child and offers a compelling contrast to the medieval depiction.

Yet the most remarkable aspect of these Renaissance images is the powerful effect they were believed to have on those who beheld them. For example, related effigies of the young Christ appeared in the form of a private and portable image, more accurately, a “holy doll.”<sup>16</sup> They were exclusively associated with young women, and one such doll appears in 1466 in the wedding trousseau of Nannina de’ Medici, sister of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Though the dolls served mainly as devotional images, in certain cases women may have held the dolls during pregnancy to influence the character of the unborn child. As explained by Klapisch-Zuber, this engagement with the image involved “a magical transfer of virtues and forces from the effigy to its user.”<sup>17</sup> Through the mother’s spiritual contemplation of the doll and the doll’s physical presence near the child, it was presumed that the effigy could inspire virtuous behavior in the unborn child.

In a complementary manner, the portrait busts of children in Quattrocento Florence reflect a related belief in the ability of images to affect the beholder.

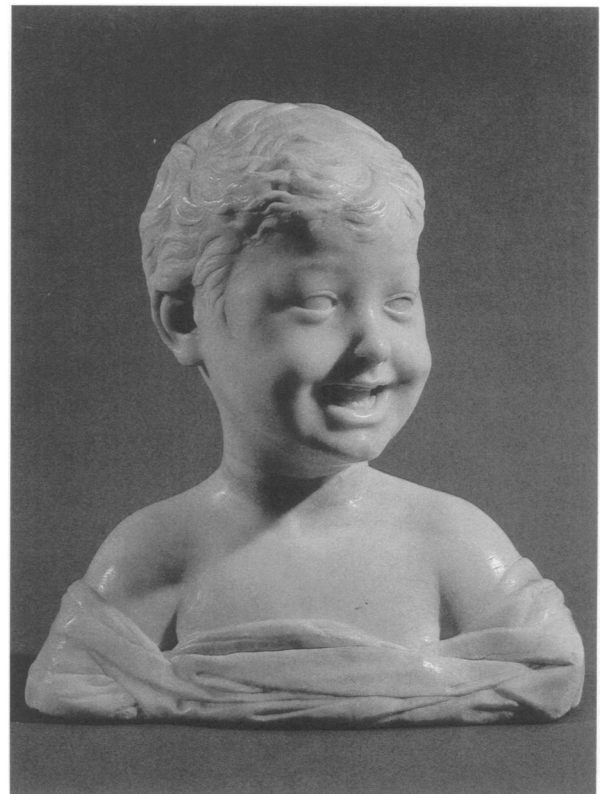


Figure 7. Desiderio da Settignano, *Laughing Child*, ca. 1453–60. Marble. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Erich Lessing from Art Resource)

Ultimately, these busts were intended to influence the child already born by providing a model of individual character for him to emulate. It was hoped that the daily actions and developing personality of the child would eventually reflect the character portrayed in the sculpted bust. Thereby a new perception of childhood was given a unique and tangible artistic form.

The appearance of these busts in the Quattrocento derives from an increased sensitivity toward the child, and in particular the male child. Contemporary sources indicate that the male child was seen specifically as the embodiment of the future of both family and state. Matteo Palmieri, writing in his treatise on civic life, declares, “A useful thing it is to have fostered children, [thereby] having increased the population and given citizens to the homeland.”<sup>18</sup> Producing children to perpetuate the Florentine republic thus satisfied a civic obligation. Such sentiments are not new; indeed they can be traced

back to ancient Rome. Yet their unique articulation in civic humanist philosophy—and artistic creation—became one of the hallmarks of Renaissance Florence.

The public expression of this new perception of children is seen in the foundation of the Ospedale degli Innocenti, prompted by concerns for the welfare of children as a responsibility of the state.<sup>19</sup> Not coincidentally, Palmieri was one of its principal benefactors.<sup>20</sup> Its façade by Brunelleschi (Figure 10) was one of the first manifestations of Renaissance architecture, and its decorative roundels, by Andrea della Robbia, display some of the most veristic images of infants during the period (Figure 11).<sup>21</sup> In the churches, one finds an increased interest in the childhood of saints or their miracles involving children. A particularly revealing example is the fresco from the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità in which St. Francis helps revive a young boy who had fallen from a window (Figure 12).<sup>22</sup> The thirteenth-



Figure 8. Workshop of Nicola Pisano, *Blessing Christ Child*, 1st quarter 14th century. Marble with traces of polychromy. Florence, private collection (photo: author)



Figure 9. Desiderio da Settignano, *Blessing Christ Child*, ca. 1460–64, from Tabernacle of the Sacrament in San Lorenzo. Marble. Florence, San Lorenzo (photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)



Figure 10. Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), Façade of the Ospedale degli Innocenti, begun 1419. Florence, Piazza SS. Annunciata (photo: author)

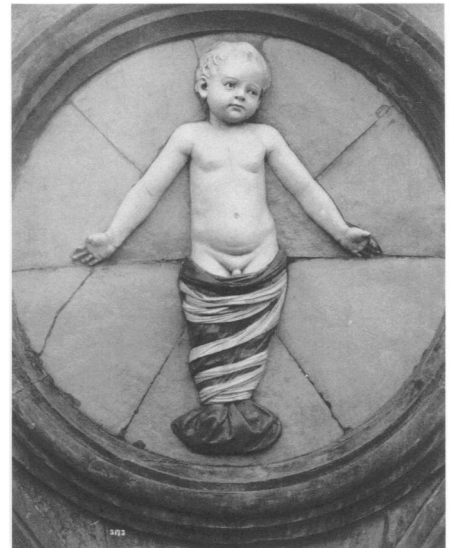


Figure 11. Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525), Foundling roundel. Enamelled terracotta. Installed 1487 on façade of the Ospedale degli Innocenti. Florence, Piazza SS. Annunciata (photo: Alinari)



Figure 12. Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–1494), *St. Francis Raises the Roman Notary's Son*. Fresco, 1479–85. Florence, Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinità (photo: Alinari/Art Resource)

century event that took place in Rome is here set in fifteenth-century Florence, which gives it a contemporary pertinence. Furthermore, the fresco, with its theme of childhood resurrection, was painted shortly after the birth of Teodoro II Sasseti, who was named after his recently deceased sibling.<sup>23</sup>

Portrait busts of children thus emerged in a cul-

tural context of increasing civic and personal sensitivity toward the nature of the child as a sentient and consequential being. Children represented the promise and continuity of both the republic and its families, and the consequences of a child's degradation or premature death took on added tragic significance.<sup>24</sup> The Ospedale was established precisely

as one of the means through which the state could exercise its moral and practical obligations to care for its orphaned children.<sup>25</sup> Children in fact became the physical guarantors of lineal succession and civic prosperity. Giannozzo Manetti, a patron of the Ospedale, wrote a lengthy *Consolateria* on the loss of one of his sons in 1438, in which loss of earthly immortality is a primary theme.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, on the death of her son Matteo in 1459, Alessandra Strozzi wrote to her remaining children of her grief for the loss of his life as well as for the family's having been reduced in number.<sup>27</sup>

The child literally embodied the future, and the character of that future would essentially be determined by the child's development. In contemporary humanistic and civic literature one finds increasing discourse on the idea that the fate of both family and state rests upon the moral integrity of its citizens, with special emphasis on its children. Moreover, since the character of the child would ultimately determine the nature of his family and country, the parent was newly obliged to instruct the child accordingly. In *I libri della famiglia*, Leon Battista Alberti, speaking through Adovardo, states:

... [the father] must attempt to make his children moral and upright. Thus may they serve the advantage of the family—moral character being no less precious in a young man than wealth—and be an ornament and credit to their family, their country, and themselves.<sup>28</sup>

He then adds succinctly:

It is generally thought better for a country . . . to have virtuous and upright citizens rather than many rich and powerful ones. And surely children whose character is poor must be a terrible sorrow to any father who is not insensible and utterly foolish.<sup>29</sup>

Alberti's sentiments are echoed in the writings of Giovanni Rucellai, who, in his *Vita civile*, urges his own children not to take part in formal politics but to be good citizens through their good character and thereby bring prosperity to their city.<sup>30</sup> In fact, this whole genre of civic writings, such as Rucellai's and Palmieri's, is predicated on the theory that familial and civic virtues are better promoted through personal behavior than through laws or governance. As such, instruction began in the home at the child's birth.

Principally out of concern for the child's developing character, all three aristocrats cited above advocate infant nursing by their natural mother

instead of by a wet nurse.<sup>31</sup> Their primary rationale is their belief that the positive qualities of the mother would be passed to the child through nursing. In essence, they believed in a physical transfer of character traits from mother to child through her milk.<sup>32</sup> This process obviously necessitated a virtuous mother, and the fact that busts of secular young women of childbearing age appear at the same time as those of children underscores the woman's new importance both in society and in art.<sup>33</sup>

Once the child reached adolescence, the theoretical notions of Palmieri, Rucellai, and Alberti were put into practice in a number of innovative ways to prepare the boys for their future civic service. Confraternities exclusively for young boys became one method of harnessing youthful energies into productive actions.<sup>34</sup> By 1451 there were about seven such groups, which provided Christian outlets without pressuring the boys to take religious vows or holy orders. Among their varied activities, the confraternity boys marched in processions, preached sermons, and engaged in theatrical productions of *sacre rappresentazioni*, or holy plays.

In processions and preaching the boys directly mimicked or emulated their elders. During a procession of 1428 one observer wrote that the sons had put on their fathers' clothes, learned all of their gestures, and "cop[ied] each and every one of their actions and habits in an admirable way."<sup>35</sup> This account of a fifteenth-century parade stands in stark contrast to a Roman funeral procession described by Polybius in which the role of the younger family members was to commemorate the dead.<sup>36</sup>

Through their dramatic performances the boys literally played more sacred roles. For example, one of the most famous and popular of these plays, written by Feo Belcari around midcentury, dramatized the meeting between Christ and St. John in the desert.<sup>37</sup> In presentations of Belcari's play children took the parts of Christ and St. John, and while performing the play the boys were perceived as the embodiments of the same goodness and virtue.

Whereas plays offered a physically active method for the children to emulate Christ and St. John, images offered a cognitive route. In an important treatise regarding child rearing composed early in the Quattrocento, Fra Giovanni Dominici explains the educational and edifying role of images.<sup>38</sup> Dominici's first piece of advice under home training is "to have pictures of saintly children or young virgins in the home, in which your child, still in swaddling clothes, may take delight and thereby be gladdened by acts and signs pleasing to childhood."<sup>39</sup> Images



Figure 13. Desiderio da Settignano, *Relief Tondo of the Young Christ and St. John the Baptist*, ca. 1460–64. Marble. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Arconati-Visconti Collection (photo: Giraudon/Art Resource)

of virgins, he explains, were for contemplation by young girls. For boys, he specifically advises representations of Christ and St. John the Baptist. A relief such as the Louvre Arconati–Visconti tondo by Desiderio (Figure 13) may be precisely intended when Dominici says of the child, “It will not be amiss if he should see Jesus and the Baptist pictured together.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, a bust similar to the Kress Baptist by Antonio Rossellino in the National Gallery of Art (Figure 3) may be intended when Dominici advises, “. . . So let the child see himself mirrored in the Holy Baptist clothed in camel’s skin.”<sup>41</sup> This mode of self-identification by the child with the image must be seen in the context of the adult perceptions described above. After all, the parents were those responsible for commissioning the works. Through such art forms as sacred images, holy plays, and holy dolls, Florentines demonstrated their understanding that images of children could have tangible influence over their young. The child not only emulated but could also approximate (by association with virtue and piety) that which was depicted. In this context the emergence of portrait

busts of children takes on a new significance. These new depictions of children represented much more than just actual or sacred childhood. They were both real and ideal images of the future family and state. Only partly intended for the child, they also served the parent by giving visual promise of virtuous offspring and assuring the continuity of lineage through a worthy male line.

But the busts are never exact likenesses of any actual child. They are based on natural form and expression, yet all are idealized images. No child bears a physical flaw or displays a blemish. None looks anything other than the very personification of young virtue and innocence. They look similar precisely because what they represent are ideals rather than appearances. This idealizing tendency is also manifested in the convention of giving the busts of boys indeterminate ages. The presumed ages vary from infancy to adolescence but are intentionally vague, since the busts are embodiments of youth and not depictions of a single specific child at a certain time.<sup>42</sup> This point is demonstrated by the only independent child portrait of the period in which we know both the age of the child depicted and the probable date of production—a medal depicting



Figure 14. *Medal of Alfonso I d'Este*, Ferrarese, 1477. Bronze. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (photo: National Gallery of Art)

Alfonso I d'Este (Figure 14).<sup>43</sup> The obverse shows the child bust-length in profile, wearing a robelike garment. The reverse replicates an antique composition, depicting Alfonso as the young Hercules holding two snakes, in reference to the name of his father, Ercole. Alfonso was born in 1476, and the medal bears the date 1477. Therefore the child was only one year old when the medal was most likely issued, despite the fact that the representation is of an older boy. The medal thus explicitly commemorates the child for his future promise—as what he will become rather than what he is.

The idealization of physical form is rooted in the concept that external appearance mirrors internal character, and therefore the busts, like the medal, represented both an actual child and the boy his parents wanted him to be.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately it is the appearance of childhood rather than the actuality of the child that becomes the subject of the busts; and that, in turn, qualifies the terms by which they can be considered portraits at all.

Another notable feature is the fact that these busts so commonly take the form of the young St. John the Baptist. The frequency of representations of the child Baptist should come as no surprise

since the major center of production was Florence, whose patron saint is the Baptist. The young St. John offered the perfect embodiment of unassailable childhood virtue with both sacred and civic connotations.<sup>45</sup>

The busts of the young St. John by Mino da Fiesole serve particularly well to illustrate the increasing popularity of the theme and the extent to which the Quattrocento sculptor was challenged to invent unique depictions of this popular subject.<sup>46</sup> Five busts of children have been attributed to Mino, and each depicts a different and dynamic interpretation of the young St. John.<sup>47</sup> The two finest and most elegant representations are the examples in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 15) and the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris (Figure 16). The two busts are extremely similar in form, yet each conveys a different expression of childhood vitality. Each is as much a portrait of childhood character as a representation of the youthful saint. The bust in the Musée Jacquemart-André bears a sympathetic expression and the head subtly tilts toward the viewer. The work in The Metropolitan Museum of Art is the most actively engaging of all Mino's busts of the young Baptist, as the figure boldly turns his



Figure 15. Mino da Fiesole (1429–1484), *Bust of the Young St. John the Baptist*, ca. 1480. Marble. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913, 14.40.688



Figure 16. Mino da Fiesole, *Bust of the Young St. John the Baptist*, ca. 1480. Marble. Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André (photo: Musée Jacquemart-André)





Figure 17. Antonio Rossellino, *Portrait Bust of Matteo Palmieri*, 1468. Marble. Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello (photo: Alinari)

head to his left in a dynamic and purposeful manner. His expression, moreover, conveys confidence and assurance, while his wavy locks of ruffled hair energize the unusually animated portrayal. In Florence Mino was instrumental in creating portrait busts of adults, and he later exported the type to Rome and Naples.<sup>48</sup> He may have played a similar role in the dissemination of these busts of the young St. John. Documents from 1455–56 show that while Mino was in Naples he was paid for an image of the Baptist, which was probably a bust similar to the Paris and New York examples.<sup>49</sup> Thus, through Mino, an artistic form that emerged in and centered on Florence extended its cultural impact to other regions of Renaissance Italy.

The portrait busts of children had originally served the needs of a Florentine populace increasingly concerned with the idea that their male offspring would determine the character of the future family and state. Familial and civic well-being therefore depended on instilling personal and civic virtues in the young child. A humanist like Palmieri, who had his own portrait carved by Antonio Rossellino (Figure 17), must have been acutely aware of

the significance of these busts of young boys when he stated, “The father to whom a son is born, before every other consideration, must have perfect hope for him and inspire him to succeed in being virtuous and worthy among men.”<sup>50</sup> The portrait busts of children were unique conduits for such personal and civic virtue.

Ultimately, these busts proved a short-lived phenomenon. In fact, they virtually disappeared with the fall of the Florentine republic. The busts were artistic expressions of a civic humanism based on democratic ideals of the future of the state and its citizens. Once that future was fated to be autocratic rather than democratic, these manifestations of republican civic promise ceased to have much relevance, and the genre came to an end.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

1. For the topic of children in 15th-century Florence, see J. Ross, “The Middle-Class Child in Urban Italy, Fourteenth to Early Sixteenth Century,” in *The History of Childhood*, Lloyd deMause, ed. (New York, 1974) pp. 183–226; and the essays in R. Trexler, *The Children of Renaissance Florence* (Binghamton, 1993); and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1985). More general historical studies are by P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, R. Baldick, trans. (New York, 1962), and S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990).

2. This study concentrates on examples in marble since it is by far the most common medium. Several beautiful examples exist in glazed terracotta from the della Robbia shop as well as various works in other media by anonymous masters.

3. Vasari particularly praises Desiderio for his representations of women and children, and indeed the sculptor seems to be the leading producer of these portrait busts. See G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, G. Milanesi, ed. (Florence, 1906) III, p. 107.

4. The first painted portraits of secular children appear either in fresco groups or paired with their elders in panel paintings. Examples include Ghirlandaio's portraits of Francesco Sassetti with Teobaldo and the unidentified double portrait in the Louvre featuring an older man with rhinophyma. A non-Florentine ex-

ample is the portrait in Urbino by Joost von Ghent showing Federigo da Montefeltro with his son Guidobaldo. Though of a different genre, the themes conveyed by the paintings, of lineal continuity and dynastic succession, complement the portrait busts as discussed below.

5. The only prior treatment of portrait busts of children is by W. von Bode, "Portraits of the Sons of the Florentine Nobility of the Quattrocento in Busts of the Boy Christ and the Youthful St. John," in *Florentine Sculptors of the Renaissance*, J. Haynes, trans. (New York, 1928) pp. 154–161. The original article appeared in 1900, and the author was more interested in matters of attribution than meaning. He takes for granted that all busts of young boys necessarily represent either the Baptist or the Christ child. This view is no longer tenable. The development of the adult portrait bust is discussed by J. Schuyler, *Florentine Busts* (New York, 1976), and I. Lavin, "On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust," *Art Quarterly* 33 (1970) pp. 207–226. Neither author specifically treats the representations of children.

6. A. Hekler, *Greek and Roman Portraits* (New York, 1972) p. xxxiii. This source was originally published earlier in the century. On classical portrait busts, see A. N. Zadoks and Josephus Jitta, *Ancestral Portraiture in Rome and the Art of the Last Century of the Republic* (Amsterdam, 1932). Roman busts of children are discussed by W. Gercke, *Untersuchungen zum römischen Kinderporträt* (Hamburg, 1968). For the differences between the Renaissance and classical busts, see I. Lavin, "Sources and Meaning," passim, and Schuyler, *Florentine Busts*, pp. 53ff.

7. See the survey of Roman portraits in the Metropolitan Museum by Gisela M. A. Richter, *Roman Portraits* (New York, 1948) no. 60. Other classical representations of young children known to Renaissance artists included depictions of children in friezes, or sculptures of the child as Eros and the boy holding a goose. For these examples, see P. P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture* (London, 1986) p. 233. A general survey of Eros and putti is found in J. Kunstman, *The Transformation of Eros*, M. von Herzfeld and R. Gaze, trans. (Philadelphia, 1965).

8. See A. Oliver Jr., "Portrait of a Young Boy," *MMAB*, n.s., 25 (March 1967) pp. 264–272; and the catalogue entry in D. von Bothmer, *Ancient Art from New York Private Collections* (New York, 1961) p. 42.

9. Pliny, *Natural History*, 25.6–7 as cited in J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Rome, c. 753 B.C.–337 A.D.* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966) p. 54.

10. Polybius, 6.53 as cited in Pollitt, *Art of Rome*, p. 53. For various classical sources referring to portrait busts, see Pollitt, *Art of Rome*, esp. pp. 53–57 and 91–95.

11. Exceptions exist, such as representations on coins, but there is no antique sculptural tradition comparable to that which produced the vivacious Renaissance busts.

12. Richter, *Roman Portraits*, no. 33. Also see the publication by the MMA, *Augustan Art* (New York, 1939) p. 26, in which the Roman head of an infant is described as follows, "The baby's head and features are carefully recorded, but the portrait style of the period did not make allowance for the actualities which make infancy attractive."

13. Reliquary busts of children are exceedingly rare, and they are invariably in adult form. On the influence of reliquary busts on portrait sculpture, see F. Souchal, "Les bustes reliquaires et la

sculpture," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 67 (1966) pp. 205–216; Schuyler, *Florentine Busts*, pp. 67–69; and I. Lavin, "Sources and Meaning," pp. 211–212.

14. Workshop of Nicola Pisano. See the discussion of this and similar examples in U. Schlegel, "The Christchild as Devotional Image in Medieval Italian Sculpture: A Contribution to Ambrogio Lorenzetti Studies," *Art Bulletin* 52 (1970) pp. 1–10, and especially G. Previtali, "Il 'Bambin Gesù' come 'immagine devozionale' nella scultura del Trecento," *Paragone* 249 (1970) pp. 31–40. Also see illustrations of this figure in R. Papini, "Gesù Bambino," *L'illustrazione italiana*, 59, Christmas and New Year's issue (1931–32) p. 23, and *La città degli Uffizi*, exh. cat. (Florence, 1982) p. 287. A later example attributed to Francesco di Valdambrino appears in *Scultura dipinta: maestri di legname e pittori a Siena, 1250–1450* (Siena, 1987) no. 33.

15. In this context see the discussion in L. Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York, 1983).

16. The following discussion is largely based on C. Klapisch-Zuber, "Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in Florence in the Quattrocento," in *Women*, pp. 310–329. Richard Goldthwaite notes one of these dolls in a domestic setting in "The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972) p. 1011.

17. This idea derives from Giuseppe Marcotti, *Un mercante fiorentino e la sua famiglia nel secolo XV* (Florence, 1881) p. 121 n.43. See discussion by Klapisch-Zuber, "Holy Dolls," p. 319.

18. Matteo Palmieri, *Della vita civile* (Milan, 1825) p. 222. Translation from P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1990) p. 24. I have used "homeland" instead of "patria" to keep the English translation consistent.

19. See Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, passim. Further discussion of this and other founding homes is found in R. Trexler, "The Foundlings of Florence, 1395–1455," in *The Children*, pp. 7–34.

20. On his death in 1475, Palmieri became the only individual actually commemorated by the institution. See Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 275.

21. In 1487 Antonio di Marco della Robbia was paid for his help installing the roundels, yet they were probably modeled and fired by Andrea della Robbia. See G. Morozzi and A. Piccini, *Il restauro dello spedale di Santa Maria degli Innocenti, 1966–1970* (Florence, 1971) p. 38.

22. See discussion in E. Borsook and J. Offerhaus, *Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence* (Doornspijk, 1981).

23. Teodoro I was born in 1460 and died in 1478 or 1479. Teodoro II was born May 12, 1479, and the frescoes were begun shortly thereafter. See Borsook and Offerhaus, pp. 10ff. On the practice of reusing the names of deceased relatives see Klapisch-Zuber, "The Name 'Remade': The Transmission of Given Names in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women*, pp. 283–309.

24. This occurred despite a certain amount of conditioning to loss of young life due to high infant mortality rates, which at times reached fifty percent. See Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 38–43, and Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, pp. 212ff.

25. See Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 273.

26. J. Banker, "Mourning a Son: Childhood and Paternal Love

in the Consolateria of Gianozzo Manetti," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 3 (1976) p. 357.

27. Matteo was actually 23 when he died but was the youngest and favorite of Alessandra's sons. The letter is reprinted in "The Gentlest Art" in *Renaissance Italy*, K. T. Butler, ed. (Cambridge, England, 1954) p. 29. Alessandra's letters are collected in *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina*, C. Guasti, ed. (Florence, 1877). Also see A. M. Crabb, "A Patrician Family in Renaissance Florence: The Family Relations of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi and Her Sons, 1448–1491," Ph.D. diss. (Washington University, 1980).

28. Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia* translated as *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, Renée Neu Watkins, trans. (Columbia, S.C., 1969) p. 58.

29. Ibid.

30. Giovanni Rucellai, *Il zibaldone quaresimale*, A. Perosa, ed. (London, 1960) pp. 39–43.

31. Good discussions of wet-nursing practices are found in Ross, "The Middle-Class Child"; Gavitt, *Charity and Children*; and Klapisch-Zuber, "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300–1530," in *Women*, pp. 132–164.

32. Allowance is made by Alberti (*I libri*, p. 53) for the mother to forgo breast-feeding if she is "weakened by some accident," while Rucellai (*Il zibaldone*, p. 13) states, "And first, that one's own mother should nurse when she can do so without danger or offense to her person." Recognition of the mother-child relationship is noted by Palmieri (*Della vita*, p. 28), following the classical authors, who are generally more responsive to this emotional bond than the Renaissance men of letters. See Ross, "The Middle-Class Child," p. 185.

33. This topic will be expanded upon in my forthcoming study on portrait busts of women in Quattrocento Florence.

34. R. C. Trexler, "Ritual in Florence: Adolescence and Salvation in the Renaissance," in *The Children*, pp. 54–112. On the dynamics between confraternities and the arts, see the essays in K. Eisenbichler, *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1991).

35. Transcribed in R. Hatfield, "The Compagnia de' Magi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970) p. 146. Further discussion appears in Trexler, "Ritual," p. 224.

36. Polybius, 6.53 as cited in Pollitt, *Art of Rome*, p. 53. Pliny also describes the use of portraits in this context, as found in Pollitt, *Art of Rome*, p. 54. I thank John Kenfield for bringing this reference to my attention.

37. See M. A. Lavin, "Giovannino Battista: A Study in Renaissance Religious Symbolism," *Art Bulletin* 37 (1955) pp. 85–101; and a follow-up article, "Giovannino Battista: A Supplement," *Art Bulletin* 43 (1961) pp. 319–326. Various dramatic performances by male children are discussed by Trexler, "Ritual," pp. 74ff.

38. The treatise was written for Bartolomea degli Alberti, whose husband, Antonio degli Alberti, was exiled from Florence at the time. An English translation with discussion appears as G. Dominici, *On the Education of Children*, A. B. Coté, trans. (Baltimore, 1927).

39. Ibid., p. 34.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid. See the catalogue entries for this work by G. Radke in *Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello*, exh. cat., Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit, 1985) pp. 178–179, and U. Middeldorf, *Sculptures from the Samuel H. Kress Collection, European Schools, XIV–XIX century* (London, 1976) pp. 23–24.

42. Note the discussion of the Italian terms *bambolino* and *fanciullo* in Klapisch-Zuber, "Childhood in Tuscany at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century," in *Women*, p. 96.

43. G. F. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals before Cellini* (London, 1930) no. 118; and G. F. Hill and G. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals* (London, 1967) no. 41. The medal of Alfonso forms a companion to one that shows the child's parents, Ercole I and Eleonora, one on each side, as illustrated in Hill, *Corpus of Italian Medals*, no. 117. Also see the medal of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, by Francesco di Giorgio, in which the sitter is depicted as a somewhat older child. Guidobaldo was born in 1472 and the medal was probably made about 1482 upon his accession to the dukedom. See Hill, *Corpus of Italian Medals*, no. 308.

44. Related to the practice of depicting children with the physiognomic features of holy persons is the practice of using animal features to express the soul of the sitter, as discussed in P. Meller, "Physiognomical Theory in Renaissance Heroic Portraits," *The Renaissance and Mannerism: Acts of the Twentieth Congress of the History of Art*, M. Meiss et al., eds. (Princeton, 1963) II, pp. 53–69. For example, see Verrocchio's representation of Bartolomeo Colleoni, who is depicted with leonine characteristics. The concept derives from antique and medieval literary sources and reaches its fullest development in Italian art theory in Pomponius Gauricus, *De sculptura*, A. Chastel and R. Klein, eds. and trans. (Paris, 1969).

45. The rise in sculptural productions of the Baptist culminated in Desiderio's full-length Martelli Baptist in the Bargello and coincided with St. John's increased portrayal as a child in painting. See M. A. Lavin, "Giovannino Battista," pp. 91ff.

46. See especially W. R. Valentiner, "Mino da Fiesole," in *Studies of Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (London, 1950) pp. 70–96; G. C. Sciolla, *La scultura di Mino da Fiesole* (Turin, 1970) and review by A. M. Schulz, *Art Bulletin* 54 (1972) pp. 208–209; and Shelley E. Zuraw, "The Sculpture of Mino da Fiesole (1429–1484)," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1993) pp. 227–231 and cat. nos. 37–41.

47. The five busts are in New York, MMA; Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André; and two busts in Paris, the Louvre. These attributions, all of which have been questioned at one time or another, are discussed by Zuraw, "Sculpture of Mino," cat. nos. 37–41.

48. In fact, the earliest datable Renaissance portrait bust is Mino's depiction of Piero de' Medici in the Bargello, from 1453. Busts executed in the course of Mino's travels include those of Niccolò Strozzi, carved in Rome, and Astorgio Manfredi in Naples. Additional portrait busts depict Luca Mini, Giovanni de' Medici, Rinaldo della Luna, and Dietisalvi Neroni.

49. M. Pepe, "Sul soggiorno napoletano di Mino da Fiesole," *Napoli nobilissima* 5 (1966) pp. 116–120.

50. Matteo Palmieri, *Della vita civile*, F. Battaglia, ed. (Milan, 1944) p. 9.