

ART MARKET

DAMS (L-3)

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UNIVERSITÀ
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DIPARTIMENTO DI
SCIENZE DELLA
COMUNICAZIONE

*VIII LESSON – CONTRACTS,
PRICES AND COSTS IN
PAINTING*

The value of altarpieces and other paintings depended on various factors, including the number of figures depicted, the complexity of the composition, and the materials used. The support (canvas, board, or copper) and the size of the work were crucial variables in determining the price. The text highlights how each painter had his own method of calculation, often influenced by market demand and relationships with patrons.

Notarial contracts were the norm for public and private commissions of great importance, such as altarpieces. However, even more informal agreements, often between private individuals, could be settled through simple receipts attesting to the delivery or payment of the work. The complexity and formality of contracts tended to grow with the importance of the commission and the client.

Orazio Samacchini,
Crucifix with Virgin,
Baptist and Kneeling
Ulysses Gozzadini,
Bologna, Santa Maria
de' Servi



CONTRACTS, PRICES AND COSTS

Marco Palmezzano: in 1492, the agreement for the Dozza altarpiece provided that the work was to be carried out "bene et diligenter condita, picta, constructa et aurata ac ornata". This emphasizes the attention to quality and detail required in the commissioned works.

Bartolomeo Passerotti: in 1583, he signed a contract with the Gabella grossa of Bologna for an altarpiece, healing a pre-existing verbal agreement. The artist had already received a deposit and the work had to be completed within eight months, under penalty of a fine of one hundred scudi.

Ludovico Carracci: in 1587, a simple document regulated the commission for the "Conversion of St. Paul," with clear terms on size, price, and payment deadlines.

Ludovico Carracci,
Conversion of St.
Paul, Bologna,
Pinacoteca Nazionale



CONTRACTS, PRICES AND COSTS

Carlo Maratti: he received two hundred scudi on account for an altarpiece for Santa Maria della Vallicella in Rome, commissioned after the death of Elisabetta Sirani, who was originally supposed to execute the work. This shows how contracts could be transferred and modified according to circumstances.

Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Guercino): the 1620 contract with the church of the Voto in Modena specified that the painter did not have to contribute to the costs of materials, highlighting an evolution in contractual practices that provided greater protection for artists.

Marcantonio Franceschini: the "Blessing of Abraham to Jacob" by Franceschini, completed by his master and sold for two hundred and twenty-five lire.

Carlo Maratti,
Madonna with Ignatius
of Loyola and Charles
Borromeo, Vallicella



CONTRACTS, PRICES AND COSTS IN PAINTING

Advances and deposits were common, especially for artists in high demand. For example, Guido Reni often returned advances without completing the works. This system allowed patrons to secure the services of the most renowned painters, despite the uncertainty of the actual delivery of the work.

The cost of materials, such as ultramarine color, frame, and canvases, varied significantly based on the size and quality of the work. For example, Alessandro Tiarini received sixteen lire to buy the blue color needed for a painting in 1615, while in 1629 he obtained eighty lire for the overseas used in another work.

The correspondence between the Marquis Giuseppe Albicini and the friar Antonio da Parma provides further details on the negotiations with artists such as Francesco Albani and Lucio Massari. This correspondence reveals valuable information about the reputation and working methods of seventeenth-century Bolognese painters.



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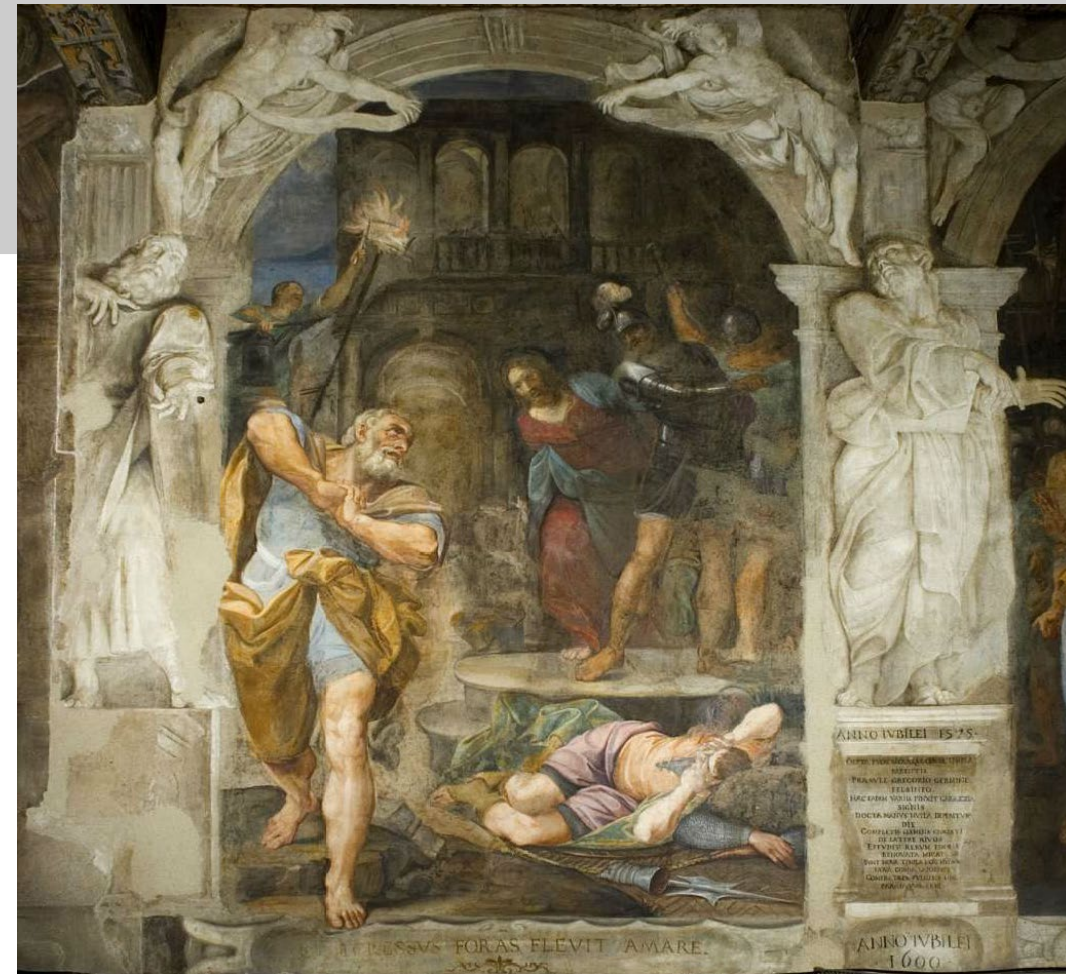


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PAYMENT METHODS

Wall paintings were another important source of income for painters. These works, often commissioned for churches, palaces and public buildings, required special technical skills and could be very profitable. Bologna and the surrounding areas saw a lively activity in this field, with numerous artists engaged in large decorative projects.

Examples illustrate how commissions were handled and the type of compensation artists received for their works, reflecting the importance and prestige of mural works in the artistic context of the time.



Francesco Albani, *Pentimento di San Pietro*, Bologna, Oratorio di San Colombano