

ART MARKET

DAMS (L-3)

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DIPARTIMENTO DI
SCIENZE DELLA
COMUNICAZIONE

*XI LESSON – CLIENTS,
PATRONS, AGENTS AND
INTERMEDIARIES*

CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

The patron is not simply the financier of the work, but often actively participates in its conception, influencing the subject, style and technical characteristics of the work itself. The relationship between client and artist is therefore dynamic and collaborative.

Types of Clients

Clergy: many patrons belong to the clergy, including parishes, religious orders, and high prelates. They commissioned works for churches, chapels and monasteries, often with the aim of promoting religious worship and decorating places of worship.

Aristocrats: nobles and aristocrats commission works to decorate their residences and demonstrate their social status and culture.

Merchants and Bourgeois: the merchant and bourgeois class also actively participates in the commission of works of art, both for reasons of prestige and as an investment.

Giacomo and
Giulio Francia,
Virgin, Child,
Sebastiano,
Bernardino,
Francesco, Giorgio
and Giovannino,
Bologna,
Pinacoteca
Nazionale.



ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CLIENT

CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Artist Selection: artist selection is an important process and can be influenced by the fame, style, and recommendations of other patrons. Often, artists are also selected on the basis of competitions and comparisons with other artists.

Specifications of the Work: the clients provide detailed information on the subject and dimensions of the work. In some cases, they may require preliminary concept art for approval.

Control and Feedback: during the creation of the work, clients can visit the artist's studio to monitor progress and provide feedback, requesting any changes.

Guido Reni,
Rape of Helen,
Paris, Louvre



CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Contracts and Payments: the financial details of the commissions are formalized through contracts that set out the payment conditions, often divided into advances and final balance. Clarity of economic terms is essential to avoid disputes.

Value of Works: the fee for works varies according to the complexity, size and fame of the artist. The most prestigious works, such as the frescoes in the noble chapels, involve higher earnings.



Lavinia Fontana,
Assumption, Bologna, St.
Peter's Cathedral

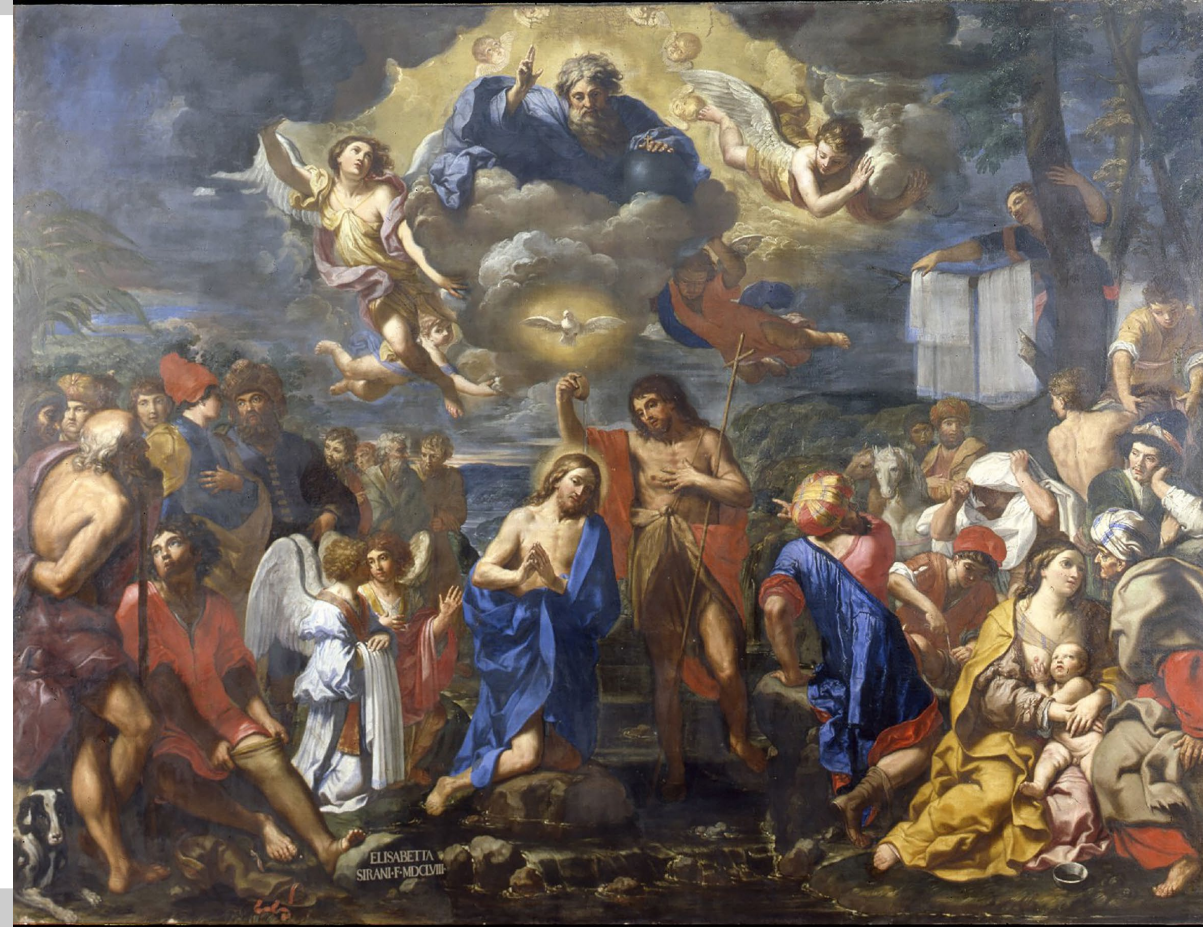
CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Rome: nerve center of the art market, thanks to the presence of the papacy and noble families. The city was the main place of commission for religious and civil works, attracting artists from all over Europe.

Venice: important commercial and artistic center, known for its large-format works and prestigious commissions from the Venetian nobility and churches.

Bologna: renowned for its Academy and for the production of works of art for a refined and cultured clientele.

Elisabetta Sirani,
Baptism of Christ,
Bologna, Certosa



CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Contracts: detailed and formal, the contracts specified the size of the work, the materials to be used, the iconographic themes, the delivery time and the fee. These contracts could include clauses regarding reviews and interim approvals.

Patronage: ongoing relationships between artists and patrons, which often guaranteed artists a certain economic stability and creative freedom.

Direct Sales and Auctions: although less common than commissions, direct sales and auctions represented another sales channel for artists, especially for small works or portraits.

Alessandro Tiarini (or Bernabei), banner: Madonna della Misericordia and the society of the BV of Mount Carmel, National Gallery of Parma



CLIENTS, PATRONS, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

The art market was characterized by the presence of various intermediaries and art agents who facilitated commissions between artists and patrons. These intermediaries played a crucial role in promoting works of art, negotiating contracts, and managing professional relationships.

NOBLE INTERMEDIARIES

- **Noble families:** Some noble families acted as intermediaries, using their networks of contacts to commission works from artists and ensure their dissemination. These intermediaries not only financed the works but also guaranteed their display in palaces and churches.

- **Example:** The Borghese family in Rome, who used their vast connections to promote artists such as Guido Reni and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, facilitating the creation and dissemination of their works.

Annibale Carracci,
Santa Margherita,
Santa Caterina dei
Funari, Rome



ART DEALERS

- **Role of Art Dealers:** Art Dealers were crucial in connecting artists and buyers. They ran galleries, organized exhibitions, and sold both local and imported artwork. They acted as mediators, often negotiating prices and terms of sale.
- **Example:** Agostino Tassi, a well-known painter and art dealer, who managed the sale of both his own works and those of other artists. Tassi was known for his negotiating skills with clients and for his extensive network of contacts.

PERSONAL AGENTS

- **Artist Agents:** some successful artists employed personal agents to manage their commissions and promote their works. These agents took care of relations with clients, organized exhibitions and often negotiated contracts and fees.
- **Example:** Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the celebrated Baroque sculptor and architect, used agents to manage his many papal and noble commissions. These agents facilitated negotiations and ensured that the works were completed according to the agreed terms.

ECCLESIASTICAL INTERMEDIARIES

- **Church as Intermediary:** the Church played a leading role in the art market, often acting as an intermediary between patrons and artists. Bishops, cardinals and other ecclesiastical dignitaries commissioned works for churches and cathedrals, guaranteeing visibility and prestige to the artists involved.

- **Example:** Cardinal Scipione Borghese, a well-known patron of Baroque art, commissioned numerous works for Roman churches and used his position to promote artists such as Caravaggio.



Annibale Carracci, Santa
Margherita, Santa
Caterina dei Funari,
Rome