

Collectors and Collecting Renaissance Era Patrons, Artists and Spaces



Carafa Chapel, Filippino Lippi, Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome

DAY 2: Today is Wednesday, January 4th, and we are examining the first iterations of the art market during the Italian Renaissance through the connections between artists, collectors patrons and the "commissioning game." Read the introduction and chapters 1-3 of Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zechhauser's pioneering study *The Patron's Payoff: Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Renaissance Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) and view the powerpoint presentation of these chapters. Once this has been completed, write a response to the reading, considering the following questions: 1) Who were the patrons – specify private and corporate patrons – and what was their relationship to one another and their significance in the commissioning game? 2) What were the stakes (costs and benefits) of the commissioning game? 3) What provided incentives for the Patron's Payoff? 3) Name and describe at least three avenues for expenditures and conspicuous consumption (i.e. art: portraits, frescoes, tomb/chapel decoration). 5) Detail and give examples of signaling, stretching and sign-posting. 6) Who were the audiences? 7) Discuss the attributes of "being distinguished" with reference to magnificence and signaling.

Patron's Payoff

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Individual Contributions

Christina Chaplin

In the art market commissioning game, the patrons (often referred to as principals in game theory) were the party with the request for work who contracted a second party (the artist a.k.a. the agent) because of the artist's or architect's extensive knowledge of the venue through which the patron hoped to gain benefit. It seems that the patrons were commonly men, and sometimes women, who could afford the financial cost of the commissioning and were willing to take on the financial and social risks associated with failure.

Yet we may wonder why anyone would take on overwhelming financial and even social risks, without a guarantee of success. It is also worthy here to note that even if success was acquired, it would not necessarily represent a monetary compensation. Therefore the benefits to the patrons are measured subjectively. Each patron must have weighed the social status benefits of the commission against their own fortunes and made the choice to risk it all based merely on a hope that the benefits available to the agents would be incentive enough for quality work, and the cost of humiliation would be enough to prevent incomplete assignments. Who would take such risks and why?

The answer seems to lie in the nature of the elite status of the times and a desire for ever expanding power and prestige. Patrons in Renaissance Italy were both private patrons such as individual aristocrats like Cosimo de'Medici, Popes like Pope Clement VII, and even merchants such as Giovanni Tornabuoni, and also corporate patrons such as governmental bodies and religious orders like the Dominican order. Often it could be seen that individual patrons would commission works as private patrons, but still represent the order or family to which they belonged. These individuals and groups of great wealth were desirous of ever increasing power through perceived social status, financial stability, and magnificence. They were willing to go to great lengths to find venues which would, in a sense, advertise these qualities to the public. So, much like corporations today who all reach out to the same ends, they attempted to use the very best of means to compete with each other for the limited positions of distinction.

Each needed to prove that he was not like the others, but instead better in one way or another. The initial costs of such a thrust begin where all projects of great effort must begin, with financial outlay. Patrons would weigh the cost of construction or creation against perceived benefits. If the project was successful, then the benefits would outweigh the cost which would hopefully be merely monetary. If the project were to fail, then there were be the risk of incurring social costs with implications of bad taste, poor financial stability, or even religious rejection. These social costs could have additional financial costs should the reputation of the aristocrat be spoiled, cutting them off from necessary alliances or lines of credit within society.

On the other hand, the benefits sought by patrons were numerous. By utilizing the art to convey messages about oneself, one's family, one's piety, one's status, one's wealth, or one's history, the patron could hope to gain recognition and acceptance from the audiences as contemporary, future, and Heavenly. If one could convey the right subtle messages, in the appropriate decorum of the time, he could hope to increase his social standing among peers, form important alliances, and increase the availability of credit lines to himself and his family. If the monument were to be a lasting beacon it could serve to launch that individual or group into future fame and remembrance, a desire of many elite of the time. And if the monument were pious enough, crafted well enough to inspire a contemporary or future audience, the patron could hope to shorten his stay in purgatory by pleasing the heavenly audience.

While art and architecture were the main avenues described in our reading for displaying messages, there were not by any means the only ways. The principals of the game could also hope to show wealth through other types of conspicuous consumption such as grand processions and funerals with an emphasis on final resting places, residential and personal décor such as tapestries, furniture, and clothing, or even the varieties of food they could be seen buying or eating. Like the first Medici Popes, the final resting place of a patron could signal his importance, wealth, power, etc. If the place were to be an estate or plot unavailable to others, this alone would signal his prestige without the additional need for decoration, exaltation, and the like. In this mode, each form of conspicuous consumption employed a variety of strategies for conveying messages to audiences, with the messages in art and architecture being the most "readable" due to their lasting nature and visual forms.

Signaling was the method of prominently displaying an object or piece of information which would appreciate the value of the patron. Much like a college degree signals quality in a potential employee, the signature of Michelangelo could signal a huge monetary output and thus the vast wealth of the principal. In Carafa's chapel in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, his inclusion of St. Thomas Aquinas was a signal to his fellow Dominican brotherhood of his piety, knowledge, and dedication to their cause. A commission could achieve a greater value as a signal if it could effectively distinguish its patron. "Being distinguished" was a primary goal for many of the Italian Renaissance. Through portrayals of magnificence and strong signals, patrons could differentiate themselves from their peers. Magnificence is not merely based on the amount of money spent, but also upon the ways in which the expenses were utilized to represent virtuous spending for the public good and increased prestige of the patron himself. Strong signals, in this sense, gave the audience the impression that the patron was of rare quality through the costs of the signal (which would constrain other patrons), the signal's appropriateness in the informal rules of decorum, or an erudite quality which excluded some of the audience to give a feel of prestige to the work.

Similarly, sign-posting was about giving pieces of information to appreciate the value of the patron, but differs from signaling in the efforts of sign-posting to include only specific information while discarding other, less desirable, facts. Sign-posting was used in this way by the artist Leone Leoni. Being of a less desirable profession, Leoni left the source of his fortune out of the façade he commissioned for his home while he included his ties to the emperor of the time and reference his learning.

The final strategy of stretching is a fairly straightforward one in which the patron would have a quality or point of history exaggerated in order to increase his prestige. Stretching was the most risky of these three strategies as it is the only one to use potentially false information to portray status. Should a patron be caught stretching himself too far in one direction or another, it would be unseemly in the eyes of his audience and he could potentially be shunned or discredited for his exaggerations. Like the commission of Francesco Gonzaga, it was safer to merely imply a sort of victory than to show the winning of a battle unwon.

Dalanda Jalloh

The reading is very telling about the manner in which art, status, patrons, artists, and audiences were connected in Renaissance Italy. From the reading it becomes clear that many factors were considered when a patron pursued an artist to create a piece of art. Patrons had desires of improving status for themselves and their families, as well as enriching the city in which they lived, while promoting worship and a better afterlife for themselves. This desire could not be fulfilled without the proper artist, who was usually an elite artist who only interacted with the elite patrons—money alone could not afford the artist's services. The mechanisms by which this art was constructed and subsequently the way status was portrayed varied greatly. Different art forms were constructed. In addition, different methods of distinction were employed by patrons to set themselves apart from those of lesser status.

1. **Private Patrons:** Merchants and humanists, aristocrats, rulers, even a few artists.

Corporate Patrons: City governments, religious orders, and brotherhoods or confraternities

Relationship: Private and corporate patrons overlapped at times, especially since individuals sometimes represented the interests of the groups to which they belong.

Significance: The patron (along with the artist) needed to be able to predict how the audience would receive the artwork produced. The patron was the principal in the principal-agent relationship. This principal is responsible for knowing what he or she wants commissioned. An individual patron acted as a representative of a family, brotherhood, or guild. He or she played a significant role as an agent for many audiences including his clan, fellow citizens, and the heavenly one.

2. **Stakes:** Better afterlife if patrons drew pictures that inspired or aided worship; they could also impress the elites of the cities or regions by creating displays that would please those elite and thus increase their status, and establish an honorable reputation (for example putting coat of arms on the back of vestments which could be seen well by all the people). Also, in his treatise *On the Art of Building*, the humanist Leon Battista Alberti wrote that "we build great works so as to appear great in the eyes of our descendants; equally we decorate our property as much to distinguish family and country as for any personal display".

Benefits: Exquisite homes, the opportunity to serve God, honor the city, obtain goodwill from local rulers, celebrate/commemorate the family/guild of the artist, and commemorate the artist himself.

Costs/limitations: Availability of desirable artists, materials, and display locations, prestigious locations were always highly sought after yet not readily available. Also, financial outlay and the risk that the artwork produced by the artist is received negatively by audiences. Another constraint are the unspoken rules of decorum—patrons could not place any art from just anywhere they wanted, nor could they attempt to construct any type of art form merely because they had the financial means of doing so. Chapel decorations had to identify and thus celebrate the holy figure to which the altar was dedicated. Chance of bankruptcy from the sheer cost of building these magnificent structures, some chapels only had one altarpiece, chance of unwanted envy or public rage from others,

3. The ability for social mobility provided incentive to the Patrons Payoff. Those with the money could greatly enhance their reputation. The opportunity to do repeat business with an agent; possibility of obtaining goodwill from local rulers;

4. Food, drink, narcotics, shelter, services ornaments, apparel, weapons, accoutrements, palaces and coaches are all types of conspicuous consumption. Some patrons spent large amounts of money on gardens, tapestries, and works in precious materials. In addition, they spent a lot on expensive banquets, processions, and spectacles. All of this conspicuous consumption was done as an attempt to distinguish the elite from the non-elite and those of lesser status in the region. Impressive homes, servants, and horses were also a trademark of the elite.

5. **Signaling:** An object, which portrays the value of someone or something and is a reliable indicator of quality. Works of art were used to display favorable characteristics of patrons. Usually they conveyed wealth, status, and piety of a specific patron. Some examples consisted of signs found outside of merchant shops in Renaissance Italy, stamping or providing a certificate quality silk cloth from the Silk Guild in Milan, or the presence of a stone canopy or arch at tombs. The key to signaling was differential costs, which ensured that a work of art was not something cheap.

Stretching: Can be described as the exaggeration or misrepresentation of important characteristics to convey an image intended to shower the patron in a favorable light. For example, during the Italian Renaissance, patrons and audiences create embellishments in art. Another example was when artist Francesco Gonzaga used art to show that a major battle against the French was a significant victory, despite many of his contemporaries revealing that the results were mixed at best.

Sign posting: An actor reveals specific, truthful, and important characteristics while simultaneously omitting other information; it can be characterized by selective revelation. For example, non-aristocratic patrons would not reveal the way in which they earned their wealth when the intended audience included nobles, as a means to not lose any credibility.

6. Audiences consisted of nobles, elite, women, non-elite, other artists, God, and future people in later centuries. Those who were there social equals, inferiors, and superiors.

7. To be distinguished from those of lesser status patrons needed to employ both the strategy of displaying magnificence and the use of signaling status. Houses, furniture, exquisite clothing, palaces, weddings, parties, receptions of distinguished guests, banquets, different architecture, etc needed to be extravagant and not easily imitated by others. The magnificence must not just portray the ability to spend and thus vast wealth, it should reveal the nobility in those expenditures. Signaling allowed the patrons to display to the masses that they possessed certain favorable characteristics. Both of these would enable the patrons to be well distinguished.

Charles Saunders

The art market in the Italian Renaissance was relatively unique in that the major players involved created, consumed, and enjoyed art through many different variables than purely financial consideration. Material wealth was less important in Italy than social status, prestige, and relationships---indeed, a significant portion of financial transactions, especially for the high socioeconomic strata, revolved around lines of credit, which in turn was based on reputation. Art and art patronage became a very important vehicle for outward representation of one's status and rank in society, and the public image conveyed by conspicuous works of art had very real ramifications through all aspects of economic, social, and political life.

Through an economic lens, this "game" is significant as all key players (patrons, artists, and audience) can be defined as both an agent and a principle depending in which direction the relationship is viewed. Corporate patrons, such as city governments, religious orders, or "confraternities" (namely organizations) combined with private patrons represented by families, aristocrats, rulers, or merchants to achieve multifaceted goals of contribution to the public good and increased personal prominence. These definitions often overlapped, as private patrons often represented corporate interests, and at times private individuals served as intermediaries between artists and larger organizations. The audience played a key factor as well; comprised of contemporary, future, and heavenly components, the audience ultimately determined the worth and final judgment for a commissioned work of art.

In general, the patron served as the more traditional form of the principal, as they possessed the means and dictated the ultimate goal or purpose of the art, the focus of its representation, and the selection of constraints. The artist, or agent, contributed the unique ability to combine the capability for aesthetic art creation with the skill to navigate the constraints imposed on them. In other analyses, the principal can also be seen as an agent with the audience acting as principal, as the intended audience dictated in large part the content of the work, and their final judgment ultimately rendered any value which the patron originally sought.

Much of the art market can be explained through incentives, costs, and constraints, within the traditional economic mindset of maximization of value subject to a constraint. The interests of the artist and patron were generally aligned, fortunately circumventing the potential issues raised given the difficulty in monitoring the artist once a contract had been assigned. Artists made their living through their reputation; they bore the majority of the risk in the artistic endeavor and their effort was ensured through fear of rejection of work, humiliation through negative feedback, and a desire for repeat commissions from affluent patrons, as well as a fear of reduced compensation for a substandard finished product. Price was extraordinarily subjective, as the value of their art was generally dependent on its reception and reputation, and as a result the place of instruction and personal relationships played a large role in inflating prices.

Patrons also bore considerable cost in commissioning works of art, and the large possible benefits of public recognition and status carried with them considerable social and financial risk. Risk sources necessary for consideration included the possibility of financial loss due to faulty work, risk of negative reception and thus reduced benefit, delays, changes in ownership or patronage, confusing iconography or design, or a finished product that was low in quality. Relationships associated with commissioning art, and the art's content played a large role in the political status of the patrons, and could confer large benefits or loss, such as Lorenzo de' Medici ultimately securing a cardinalship for his thirteen-year old son based on a favor in patronage to Carafa. High social risks came from avoidance of accepted societal norms, and opportunity costs and wealth constraints made true valuation of potential artistic investments difficult to measure. Yet often the signals of wealth and status gained through these endeavors far outweighed the high potential risk.

Some of the more significant avenues for the ostentatious displays were religious chapels and altarpieces, which although conferred high status due to the contemporary spiritual emphasis also produced a high constraint as these location were severely limited. Others included paintings, which clearly captured iconography and content that could convey connection and curry favor, and architecture, which although more expensive, also provided the dual benefit of the beautification of the city, as this display of public generosity helped mitigate some of the social risk of personal glorification. Audiences consisted of the heavenly, which was satisfied through religious displays and helped to reduce the time the patron spent in purgatory, the contemporary, which ultimately decided the fate of the commission and secured the status of the patron, and the future, which ensured the legacy and honor of the patron continued throughout history.

Status through displays of magnificence was of primary concern to patrons of art in Renaissance Italy. Displays of art from wealthy patrons are examples of signaling, a method that suggested that patrons were of higher social quality purely through their ability to commission extravagant and expensive works of art. Often times this was reliable, as the many constraints placed on prestigious commissions often ensured that only those with means and political influence could obtain them. Sign-posting and stretching were significant in the planning and design of the commissioned art, as patrons, in true Machiavellian fashion, often highlighted specific and favorable information while omitting others in an effort to increase personal image, and "stretched" or exaggerated other favorable qualities to the extent that social norms allowed. In this way patrons were able to "self-fashion" their public image. This desire for magnificence also increased the appeal of the host city, as works of art served to glorify the surrounding state as well as increase personal status, thus becoming more palatable to audiences. It can be argued that personal preference for art was almost insignificant, and art commissioning had a primary role in creating and influencing power shifts in Renaissance Italy.

Lipei Yu

H Hunt Bradley III

Daniel Chazen

1) The patrons were those that typically purchased artwork, satisfying their need for what Nelson and Zeckhauser term "self-promotion" and "value" (Nelson 1). Patrons could be either individual or corporate. Individual patrons included those acting not only for themselves, but also as a representative of a "family, brotherhood or guild" (Nelson 18). Merchants, aristocrats and rulers were amongst the private patrons. Corporate patrons were made up of city governments, religious orders, as well as brotherhoods. The interaction between patron and artist has been compared to a game in which "the payoff for each player depends on the behavior of the other" (Nelson 17). For example, there is a relationship between the principal and the agent, with the principal paying for requested work to be completed by the agent in return for compensation. But it was not that simple. There were several needs and relationships at issue. A desire for honor or negotiating with clergy was often a requirement of families and institutions. Sometimes, the patron also acted as an agent for his family and fellow citizens. As Nelson writes, many "individuals and groups influenced the strategies of the patron and the artist" (Nelson 18). Both patron and artist used contracts and negotiations to facilitate the transaction. Renaissance patrons specified such criteria as material, dimension, budget, and even had an impact on the viewing conditions of a work, such as framing and lighting. It was clearly the patron who played the central role in commissioning the work.

2) The stakes were high in the commission of renaissance artwork. Social, as well as financial benefits and costs, were both at issue. Social benefits included prestige, honor and power. Social costs included the possibility of the artwork being negatively received. Financial benefits included signaling political connections, which often "led to economic benefits" (Nelson 50). Financial costs were made up of expenditures for labor and materials. However, financial costs brought its own benefit - the higher the cost, the more wealth that was conveyed. The key goal of the patron who commissions a work is that the benefit exceeds the cost. Yet, as Nelson writes, "commissions rarely bring direct financial gain to patrons" (Nelson 5). The benefit sort by Renaissance patrons was therefore not necessarily financial, but varied depending on the circumstances.

3) The incentive for the patron's payoff included being distinguished as members of the elite, as opposed to lower status. The payoff for the patron was distinction, prestige and image. It was certainly a strong incentive for the patron as relative prestige and availability of disposable income served to define the "norms of behavior and appearance in their society," behavior that has been described as "self-fashioning (Nelson 5). Another incentive for the patron was that he could use art to secure goodwill from the local rulers, as illustrated in Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi* (Nelson 49). Here is a photo of the painting:



4) Three common avenues for expenditure and conspicuous consumption:

- Architecture, such as public buildings, private chapels, tombs or country villas.
- Ceremonies, such as marriages, funerals and festivities.
- Artwork, including frescoes, portraits and decoration.

5) **Signaling:** Clients need to "see signs of quality" before making purchases (Nelson 74). There is a need to portray ("signal") something in a favorable and impressive way, for example a magnificent palace. In Renaissance Italy, for example, shoppers were concerned about deception, which resulted in merchants signaling that their goods were genuine by offering a certificate. (I guess similar in nature to a provenance for a piece of art.) With regard to the Renaissance era, grand statues or palaces was a very likely and strong signal that the patron "fit the criteria of magnificence" (Nelson 76). In other words, something grand importantly signaled a patron with status.

Stretching: Basically what we sometimes refer to as an exaggeration or over-embellishment. Stretching, which was common in the Italian Renaissance, was used to put the patron in a favorable light by overstating his success. One example is how Gonzaga used art to portray a major battle against the French as a significant victory, while there were many that thought the "results were mixed at best" (Nelson 8).

Signposting: This is the omission of significant and truthful information when indicating specific and important characteristics – in other words, not giving the full story. An example of signposting was when sculptor Leone Leoni referenced his ties to learning and the emperor in the façade for his home, but failed to reveal that he made his name and fortune as an artist.

6) Audiences included:

- People living in the future – thus providing a durable legacy for the patron.
- Contemporaries – basically the target audience, such as fellow nobles and elites.
- For God – Heavenly, inspirational and uplifting to the soul.

7) For the affluent and noble in the Renaissance era, a central part of the image they sort to portray was that of magnificence. This was important as their image defined the "norms of behavior and appearance in their society." Its importance was described by Pontano, who wrote that noble people are particularly intent "to realize the long lasting of their name and reputation..." (Nelson 5). In the renaissance era, it was key to signal something of grandeur, as that in turn portrayed an individual of magnificence. Amongst the attributes of magnificence is an association with greatness and a public display or indication of decorum. Attributes of signaling included exclusiveness and appropriateness. While signaling and magnificence were distinct concepts, they essentially worked hand in hand to achieve distinction for the patron.

Kwame Nana-Atoot

Patrons were people who were given commissions. They were the people who gave looked for which artist to give the work to. Among this group were private and corporate patrons. The private patrons were rich aristocrats, kings and people who governed in high place, merchants and in very rare cases artists themselves. The corporate patrons involved unions of brotherhoods, city governments and religious orders. Status was very important during this era and people who were involved in art projects being it the commissioner, patron or agent automatically increased in status and prestige. The patrons could come from the same family commissioning the art, or they could come from other high governing institution.

From the observations of Gilbert and Charles Hope, I agree that it is very difficult to give an artist a commission and then influence their creative practice to a very large extent. In the commissioning game, I think it depends greatly on the "brief" presented to the artist. Sometimes the patrons have specific details and knowledge on what they want in the project- sometimes these projects if they are religiously inclined, might have come about through dreams and visions, and so when the commission is proposed, there is an exactness to what they want and they just look for an agent to produce it. Other times, they commissioner and patron may have no idea about their proposal and the information provided on their briefs might be very minimal that they need an artistic guide. This is when the artist comes in and offers his ideas on it. When the artist presents his ideas, the patron and the artist can then begin to work together to both agree on a similar model.

In the renaissance era, prestige and high status led to many advantages and interestingly it was through commissioning of artworks, and how well it was done. Obviously since the patrons needed that high status of recognition, they looked for the best artist, the ones that had made name but certainly did charge a lot. Looking at the hierarchy of the renaissance, it is evident that patrons will do everything to get the commission while the artist, doing his best to get into good schools with high reputation so as to gain and win commission.- in this case the main incentives for patron getting the commission is for a prestigious status in his community through which, if gained, he can mobilize the people in the community and gain favor to rise to a higher position and for the artist, a way of putting his skills out there to get more works which in turn will fill his pockets.

When it comes to the audience, I was very surprised to learn that they targeted heaven, as in they did it for God to see and appreciate their love for Him through iconography and images. I really don't see the correlation as, the bible forbids worshiping through images and iconographies. For me the audience is the second group that the article tells us people but to me, more importantly is the people who come to church. If the audience is for the members of the elite, what good did it do to them but to enhance their already elite status. However, the people that I think mostly deserve to be the targets are the ordinary people, the people who are seeking to know God. Through the images, it tells them stories of biblical experiences as well as individual miracles people have encountered. When they see this they will get inspired to find out more about their spiritual journey to Christ.

In order to be distinguished, the patrons had to self-fashion themselves. They did that through signaling, signposting and stretching . Signaling is the process of conveying information about ones self to other people in order to attain satisfaction and honor from a group of people. I think what led to signaling itself is that the society at the point in time did not depend only on money to commission a work, but also status. In gaining statuses, patrons did that through signaling. While signaling, they targeted the audience who were, I believe, of very elite positions probably people who gave out the commissions so that they the patrons would easily be favored when giving out commissions. The Italian renaissance patrons found it best to signal the family name and heighten funeral ceremonies as well as build magnificent tombs, to keep the extravagance in the minds of the public.

Some patrons, to enhance their status in a community, stretched their accomplishments and achievements. There were dire consequences when they were found to be unjust such as huge fees and loss of virtue. An example is the story of Francesco Gonzaga who commissioned works of art in various medium to depict scenes of victory over France, even though it did happen as he had showed them.

In sign-posting, patrons exalted themselves by including only accomplished and achieved memoirs in their history while omitting the negative aspect of their lifestyle. This action of conviction, made them look like the perfect pick for commissions. Also one way of executing this act was to exclude how the patrons made money and this was very frequent when the audiences were members of a noble congregation.

Magnificence became a very prominent way of leaving a mark and establishing your elite status in public. It was mainly expressed through enormous buildings, which not benefited the owners but also the general public, that way they will always be remembered after they die. Such was the case of Filippo Strozzi. The readings state that we should not be quick to declare that the use of magnificence was only for selfish needs just to be exalted, but in doing so, something which was common in other cities, they also beautified the place. i think that the main purpose was for selfish and greedy expositions and that the beautification and others were just after thoughts and effect that came about. This can guide us to the reason why they spent so much money in building tombs, it was to keep their name going even after they die. An interesting observation from the reading is that even with building of magnificent house, they just cant be built because the patron had money, but they should be built according to the accomplishments of the patron.

A patron becomes distinguished through what he has achieved through commissions made, the magnificence of the expressed signaling and how long he has had positive influence in the community. It was only through these very highly proclaimed entities that distinguished a prominent patron for his counterparts.

June Shin

1) Corporate patrons included city governments, religious orders, and brotherhoods. Private ones were merchants, humanists, aristocrats, rulers, and sometimes artists but only few are known. The goals of private patrons often overlapped those of corporate patrons because it was more than common that individual patrons were not only representing himself but also certain groups (family, brotherhood, clan, guild, etc.). All these patrons are the principals in the principal-agent relationship they form with artists. As principals, patrons played a significant role in the commissioning game because all commissions started with them. They were responsible for deciding the kind of art they wanted, its purpose, and sometimes even media to be used and details of the work. They also controlled the displaying of the artwork.

2) In the commissioning game, the principals, or the patrons, have to pay their agents, or the artists, so there is financial cost on their part (but this is only a small portion of the total cost in commissioning art). Social costs may incur when the commission work fails to produce the desired effects or even receives a bad response from the audience. This is called the "negative reception cost." The benefits of the patrons are social, political and even financial. The social benefit is that the commissioned work can elevate or secure the status of the patrons. When this major aim of the patrons is achieved, political and economic advantages are likely to follow due to the high esteem they hold in the community. Francesco Medici's marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor's sister is a good example for the political benefit. Socially and politically powerful patron may well then win a lucrative official position, which will bring him wealth.

As for the agents, or the artists, they receive money in exchange for the work they produce. Apart from this financial benefit, the artist can also achieve fame if his product is successful and praised, and this will attract more commissions in the future. However, if the patron rejects the artist's end product or it is ridiculed or hated by the audience, not only is the artist faced with financial loss, as the patron will refuse to pay all of the promised fee or pay him at all, but he also suffers from bad reputation as an artist. Bad reputation does a lot of damage, for potential patrons will now turn away and seek another artist.

3) The incentives for art patronage were fame, prestige, virtue and status. In some regions of Italy, social status was more flexible than in others. Also, the old elite class had been thrown out by the new government. This provided for the possibility of social mobility, which led people to claim their status through patronage of extravagant art projects. Moreover, because the pope was not succeeded by someone from his clan, respectable cardinals commissioned numerous religious works of art that showed his piety to God in hopes of getting elected as the next pope.

4) There are numerous avenues for conspicuous consumption: gardens, tapestries, metalwork, antiquities, clothing, banquets, processions, and spectacles. Three of the most talked about conspicuous commissions are paintings, architecture, and sculpture. All three were used to convey the patron's status, wealth, and power.

5) Like a degree from a prestigious college indicates the person's level of education and, by inference, overall quality, a work of art was to signal the patron's characteristics such as his wealth, status, and piety. Wealth was well demonstrated by such large expenditures as architectural structures, and religious works were used to convey one's devotion to God.

Sign-posting is basically selective signaling. It discloses specific information about the patron but passes over others that he does not want communicated. For example, the façade of Leone Leoni's home in Milan reveals his intellect but says nothing about how he acquired the wealth with which he was able to commission the work, because an artist, which he was, was considered a humble profession at the time.

Stretching is when some qualities are exaggerated as to render the patron as better than he really is. For example, Francesco Gonzaga commissioned paintings, coinage, medals and celebrations depicting his battle against the French, which was not exactly his victory but he wanted to make it appear as one.

Because sign-posting and stretching probably required considerable input of the patrons, employment of such devices in certain works sometimes reveals the relationship between the patron and the artist in production of the particular works of art.

6) There are three major types of audience: contemporary, divine, and future. Contemporary audiences included rulers, aristocrats, and laypeople, whom the patrons sought to "impress, influence, and inspire." The patrons also commissioned works that glorified God and showed his piety to Him in hopes of attaining divine salvation. The future was also a big concern as the patrons wished to leave long lasting legacies such as buildings and paintings. Tomb is a good example of this because it does nothing for the deceased but brings fame and status for the surviving members of the family as long as the tomb is preserved.

7) According to Burke, families commissioned such things as palaces and portraits to demonstrate "magnificence." For a patron to be magnificent, he should not only project his own greatness but also seek to create something that does civic good. For example, large and extravagant architecture can glorify the name of the patron's family and the whole community at the same time. Also, religious commissions like altarpieces could inspire the believers to be more pious. It was obvious that only those who could afford all these expenditures made them, and thus patronage of extravagant projects was an exclusive virtue of the rich. Therefore, a work of art could signal its patron's magnificence, which entailed his wealth, status, and decorum.

McKenzie Sullivan

Corporate patrons in Renaissance Italy were city governments, religious orders and brotherhoods; while private patrons ranged from wealthy merchants and humanists to aristocrats, rulers and nobles and even several artists themselves. The act of commissioning an artwork had enormous ramifications within the world of the Italian Renaissance. Corporate and private categories often overlapped since individuals represented the interests of the groups to which they personally belonged. Each Patron played a significant role in the commissioning game, as it was important for Patrons to demonstrate their wealth and stature through commissioning artworks. The range amongst wealthy Patrons also created a divide in the success of their achievements. Wealthier patrons commissioned more important works than those of lesser means.

The selection by a Patron of an artist, the materials he would use, the size, the location and ultimately the subject itself all helped to indicate the benefits that a commission was expected to bring; as well as the audience it was intended for. It was important for both Patron and Artist that their audience would react very positively to a newly created work. An audience also created an unpredictable stake in the commissioning game. The strategic benefits of a commission depended strongly on the assumed reaction of audience members.

Artists were as concerned about their reputations as their Patrons were concerned about the quality of the works they were commissioning. Beyond an artist's loss of reputation, a rejected painting or sculpture would ultimately have little or no value. The possibility of rejection always remained at stake in any commission. Though the benefits of a high-quality work included future commissions for the artist as well as everlasting renown for the finished work for both Artist and Patron, the cost of the work remained with the Artist, should the Patron have decided it was unfavourable.

The main factors that provided incentive for the Patron's Payoff were his intense desire for prestige, the availability of significant disposable income as well as a strategic desire for upward social mobility. It was as crucial for a patron to gain personal promotion through commissioned artworks as it was for him to enhance his reputation through wise commissions. As quoted in Richard Goldthwaite's study *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy* the author concludes that affluent patrons in Italy wanted to maintain their noble status and show off their spending habits that arose from a "universal desire of the rich to utilize wealth to set themselves off from ordinary people." The desire for fame and to enhance one's lifestyle would have been at the root of most commissions.

Three important avenues for expenditure and such conspicuous spending and consumption included: paintings (on walls, panels and canvasses), architecture (churches, city palaces, tombs and gardens) as well as objets d'art including sculptures, bronzes, tapestries and even clothing. Any and all of these creations could be used to convey the consumer's status and communicate information about Patrons in perpetuity. The intended audience for these works could associate details about specific patrons or their families through details, subject matter and execution in the works. Many family names of such Patrons are still recognizable in present day.

Since "gentleman of leisure" and "noble families" always consumed well beyond the minimum required by the status quo of the time, more and even greater artworks became physical evidence of their great honor and wealth. Failure to generate such magnificent works was actually regarded as a mark of inferiority among the elite. Hence places of public worship, gilded by paintings or frescoes, important architecture in prominent cities created expressly by and for the nobility, as well as the extravagance of certain artworks all enhanced a Patron's relevance to the society he lived in.

Signaling, Stretching and Sign-Posting were all models for examining commissions. Patrons used these mechanisms to communicate information about themselves and the importance of their commissions.

Examples of "signaling" are the private chapels patrons built in the late medieval period, especially in Renaissance Florence. Though Patrons rarely visited or prayed in these private chapels, they spent enormous amounts of money to purchase and decorate them. These efforts offered Patrons extraordinary opportunities to communicate information about themselves and to elevate their status in the world of the Italian Renaissance. Such chapels were only available to wealthy and noble patrons and were difficult or even impossible for the less affluent to commission. Such projects effectively separated potential Patrons into two groups. The more complete the divide from the less affluent, the greater the value of the commission as a signal of nobility and status.

Through "signposting" a patron was able to indicate specific truths and important characteristics about themselves while simultaneously omitting other significant information. What distinguished "signposting" from "signaling" is the selective disclosure of information. The strategy of not indicating the source of one's wealth proved popular with many non-aristocratic Patrons especially when the intended audience included nobles. For example, Francesco Gonzaga employed stretching by using art to portray a major battle against the French as a significant victory, even though many of his contemporaries considered the actual results mixed at best. The paintings, medals and celebrations he commissioned, most notably Mantegna's *Madonna of Victory*, never assert that Gonzaga's troops overpowered the army of King Charles VIII. However, the images give a clear impression that the Italians won. These signposts had the influence to enhance a ruler's or even a merchant's reputation. A variety of surrounding elements, such as celebrations and coinage were also conceived to complement an important picture.

"Stretching" is the exaggeration or misrepresentation of important characteristics to convey an impression intended to bathe the Patron in the most favorable light. Most prominent Patrons and even their audiences during the Italian Renaissance expected to see embellishments in art. However standards of the time did dictate limits to the degree of permitted idealization. Throughout the ages, Artists have shown their acumen in stretching claims about Patrons. An Artist and Patron worked together to determine where and how far to embellish the intended information within a specific work.

As a result, audiences were perceived as belonging to three categories at the time: Contemporary, Future and Heavenly. Patrons knew how crucial it was to satisfy all aspects of the intended audience. For all Patrons of religious works during the Italian Renaissance, the primary audience they believed actually existed in Heaven. Patrons wanted God and the Saints to see their devotion and hoped that their commissions would help them reduce their time in Purgatory.

Patrons frequently displayed personal emblems in religious works as elements intended for their secondary audience: the contemporary viewers on earth. The general Contemporary Audience was generally neither affluent nor noble. They were the common man (and more usually the average woman – as women formed the greatest affected audience) who gazed in awe at these important members of the Establishment and their ability to communicate with God. Patrons also wished to communicate with their fellow-elites, of course, particularly those in their own city or region who could immediately identify the Patron's status by personal symbols that accompanied the commissioned artworks.

In addition to their contemporary audiences in heaven and on earth, many Patrons were concerned with future viewers and posterity. Consideration of this additional audience was a major benefit that distinguished works of art and architecture from other forms of conspicuous consumption. Banquets, clothing, and funerals were transient, however painting, sculpture, and building would endure for generations. Being aware of the future audiences created durable legacies.

As members of the elite, Patrons had to distinguish themselves from those of lower status as well as act in a manner considered appropriate for their class. As a result of this separation, art patronage benefitted and flourished. Distinction was a major strategy for players in the commissioning game. The elite found ways in both art and society, to indicate and to elevate their status by distinguishing themselves from the less affluent and lower classes through patronage.

The ability to differentiate between culturally laden symbols increased the cultural or "symbolic capital" of the noble and affluent. It served to separate the "distinguished" from the "vulgar." In his treatise on Magnificence, written in 1552, Sienese nobleman Alexandro Piccolomini explained that "only someone who makes great things while spending could be properly called 'magnificent.'" He focused on public displays such as the "building of temples, and theaters" and the presentation of "public festivals and comedies." Piccolomini observed that magnificence "could show itself on private occasions, which happen seldom, such as weddings, parties, banquets, receptions of distinguished guests, expenditures on town and country residences, domestic ornaments and furnishings, and other similar things where one can see sumptuousness and grandness".

The theories of magnificence and signaling both attempt to explain why patrons made certain expenditures. How such expenditures were ultimately perceived by their intended audience was what a patron thrived on. To create Magnificence players had to exercise both skill and subtlety in working with the artist and his assumptions about the audience.

Elena Cestero

The introduction and first three chapters of, *The Patron's Payoff*, written and edited by Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zeckhauser are an enlightening study of the art market in Renaissance Italy. The authors successfully employ economic frameworks and theories in combination with art history to describe the system and culture of art commissions at that time. The use of the economics of information and game theory are quite adequate in explaining the "agent and principal" relationships and negotiations between artists, patrons, and audiences in the commissioning of art.

The principal/patron provides the funding and defines the project while the agent/artist fulfills the request and receives payment, and both must seriously consider the reaction of the audience who will view the work. Whether the patron is corporate (religious order, city government, brotherhood) or private (aristocrat, merchant, ruler, humanist, artist) the considerations are much the same and there are many times when there is an overlap between the two as private individuals may represent themselves, and in addition, a group or social or cultural traditions. The goals or incentives of different patrons are essentially the same, as they all seek to advertise or increase their status, reputation, or honor.

The benefits of a commission must outweigh the costs for the patron to receive a payoff. The elevation in long lasting status and distinction must be greater than the financial cost (which is higher for the materials than the labor), social cost (risk of a negative audience reception), and work within the constraints of budget, space/location, availability of artists, and decorum. The avenues for expenditures and "conspicuous commissions" were many and included portraits, frescoes, altarpieces, tombs (i.e.: the Alberti and Medici families), chapels (i.e.: Cardinal Carafa), and sculptures all of which endure for extended periods of time. There were other avenues such as gardens, processions, and dress but these were less effective due to their transient nature.

Signaling, stretching, and sign-posting were important elements of the communication strategy of commissions and were employed in an effort to ensure a worthwhile payoff. Signaling provided indications of quality though conveyed wealth, status, and piety. Stretching exaggerated the important qualities of a patron so as to convey them favorably (i.e.: Francesco Gonzaga), while sign-posting employed selectivity in presenting or omitting certain information regarding the patron (i.e.: Leone Leoni). The difference between sign-posting and signaling lies in the element of selectivity.

The intended audience of a commission depended on the patron and location of the work but the contemporary, future, and heavenly audiences were carefully considered. A commission could be used to communicate with other elites, women, or various other contemporary audiences. The future audience was one that the patron wished to inspire with the work and in so doing preserve their memory and reputation in the long-term. The heavenly audience was considered especially in the commissioning of religious works and was seen as a way for the patron to express devotion to God or Saints and as a result gain advantage in the afterlife.

An interesting concept discussed in Chapter 3 is that of magnificence. What makes magnificence significant is that it is not simply determined by the expenditure of money but also how the money is used and how the work is beheld by the audience. The money must be spent virtuously on a public work for the common good. The work must be characterized by discriminating taste and "dignity not overdone" in order to signal the distinction of the patron and thus be considered magnificence. Commissioning buildings was an especially effective way of signaling magnificence, or "status through taste or discernment".

Overall, the reading provides a fascinating insight into art commissions in Renaissance Italy but perhaps more fascinating is the parallel that can be drawn with contemporary society. Signaling, stretching, sign-posting and even displays of magnificence are witnessed regularly today through the uses and displays of degrees, jobs, cars, clothing, houses, philanthropy, and of course art.

Kelly Zona

The patrons of the Italian Renaissance included corporate patrons such as city governments, brotherhoods and religious orders. Private patrons included nobility, rulers, merchants, and sometimes successful artists. The goals of corporate and private patrons were often shared because individual agendas often reflected those of the larger group. These patrons played a central role in the commissioning game, along with artists and an audience. The patrons took the role of the principal, or the generator of the initial concept for a work of art, while the artist took the role of the agent, in charge of executing the actual work. The patron usually specified the subject, materials, and general organization of the work, as well as budgetary and time limitations. The patron-artist relationship was usually bound under some sort of contract, consisting of detailed drawings and models, which enabled more direct communication between the parties. Both the patron and the artist's main objective was to boost their reputation through the commissioned work, and so they worked to influence each other to get the best outcome for the work. Both needed to stay mindful of the audience, trying to predict how the work will be received.

These audiences are sub-categorized as contemporary, heavenly, and future. A work might address any or all of these audiences. The contemporary audience was the primary audience that patrons and artists sought to address, and was usually composed of rulers, nobility, elites, and even the lower classes. Religious works also addresses the heavenly audience, which included God and the saints. Addressing this audience was a means of exaltation. The future audience included future generations who would come to know the work through its lasting legacy.

The commissioning game had to be navigated skillfully by the patron and artist, both needing to keep in mind the potential benefits versus the costs. For the patron, the benefits included prestige, political and social influence, and potentially the generation of capital through high ranking appointments. If executed skillfully, a work could ensure a legacy for the patron for generations to come. However, these benefits were only possible if the patron could afford to finance the project in the first place. This was a huge investment as it carried not only financial risk, but the risk of a negative audience response and a tarnish on the patrons reputation. For the artist, the benefits of a successful work included increasing their reputation, monetary compensation, and increased chances of securing future work, although any work carried the risk of a negative reception by the audience and a diminished reputation for the artist.

Despite inherent risks of the commissioned works, certain incentives motivated patrons to see the works through, and these incentives were known as the patron's payoff. The desire for increased prestige and to indicate social status was a major incentive for patrons. The desire to stand apart from others also played a role, as did the desire for social mobility that was possible in Italy at this time. Of course, many patrons had disposable monetary resources to finance such projects.

Expenditures could take the form of many different works, including public ceremonies, architecture, sculpture, and painting. This could even include clothes and tapestries. When excessive amounts of money is put towards these efforts, it is known as conspicuous consumption. This was a technique for the elites to distinguish themselves, as their displays were exclusive to the wealthy.

Commissioned works often employed techniques to signify, emphasize, and exaggerate desirable attributes of the patron. Signaling was a technique in which a signifier indicated a level of quality of the patrons reputation. An example of this can be found on the facade of the Santa Maria Novella, in which the Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai's family name is carved. The ability to afford to have ones name carved on a church facade indicates wealth and social rank.

Sign posting is the creation of a narrative to convey some truth about the patron, but not in its entirety. For example, the Italian Renaissance sculptor, Leone Leoni, made references to his extensive education on the facade of his home, but neglected to mention that he established himself financially as an artist, which was not an exalted profession at the time.

Stretching is the exaggeration of a patron's attributes or accomplishments. The Italian ruler Francesco Gonzaga commissioned a series of paintings that implied that his troops beat the French in a battle that in reality had no clear victor.

Patrons constantly sought to distinguish themselves and thus used signaling to indicate rank through the commission of expensive works. The motivation to create these excessively expensive works is known as the "theory of magnificence." These motivations could extend beyond the individual patron and act to enhance the public realm for the benefit of the city, including many of the ornate works of architecture completed during this time. These commissions often signaled exclusiveness on the part of the patron as few could afford such things.

Jacqueline Park

Tadd Phillips

1. There were two groups of patrons: corporate patrons and private patrons. Corporate patrons included city governments, religious orders and brotherhoods. Private patrons were wealthy individuals and families. The two types were not entirely separate, however. Individuals often represented groups in commissioning artwork. Although they had considerable latitude in their instructions to artists, they still reflected the desires of their group. As the text says, "a private chapel in a church ordered by a single merchant still reveals the 'social identity' of a group."

The text mainly discusses private patrons in Renaissance Italy. They were the elite, whose social status was bestowed upon them by other elites. Therefore, they were simultaneously both patrons and audiences. Patrons were critical in the commissioning game; without them, there would be no commissions. Not only did they commission artwork themselves, but they showed it off to other patrons, often leading to future commissions for the artist.

2. For the patrons, the costs of the commissioning game were relatively small. The text gives an example of one set of courts that spent only 0.4% of their expenditures on artwork. The benefits were gaining and maintaining social status, as discussed below in #3. For the artists, the stakes depended on whether their patrons and audiences were satisfied with what they produced. If a patron and his audience approved of an artist's work, the artist would enjoy future commissions and financial success. If they did not approve, the artist's reputation might be tarnished. Such was the case with Rosso Fiorentino. His patrons in Florence were dissatisfied with him and he had to leave the city to find work.

3. The wealthy in Renaissance Italy had some degree of social mobility. The text states that "Florence, in particular, had a loosely defined standard of elite status." Those seeking to move up in status by signaling their magnificence could do so by commissioning works of art. But the elite were also in danger of moving down; those who did not consistently commission works of art ran the risk of losing the respect of their peers.

4. **Paintings:** Paintings were specialized to highlight the characteristics of a given patron or family, to the point where a painting produced for one patron could not be sold to another if the original patron rejected it. Patrons often had specifications for the content and style of paintings and carried out research on artists to find the one most able to produce the painting they wanted.

Buildings: Patrons often took a hands-on approach in the planning of buildings they commissioned. For example, when Michelangelo was planning the Laurentian Library, his patron, Pope Clement VII, discussed with him details such as the lighting and the number of books that could fit on a desk.

Events: Patrons also paid large amounts of money for events such as banquets and funerals. For example, the Medici family spent 3000 florins, the amount a laborer would earn if he worked for 96 years, on the funeral of Giovanni de Medici.

5. To **signal** something is to display evidence of it to your audience. The elite of Renaissance Italy wanted to signal social status, wealth, and devotion to God, and they commissioned artwork to do so. For example, Isabella d'Este ordered cloth for her mantle that was "without a rival in the world" to show that she could afford the best.

Stretching means taking something true and exaggerating it. For example, Francesco Gonzaga's men once fought a battle against the French with mixed results at best, as the text puts it. A painting he commissioned to celebrate the battle, Madonna of Victory by Andrea Mantegna, stretched the positive aspects of the battle to the extent that it appeared Gonzaga had won.

Signposting means drawing attention to part of the truth and minimizing other aspects of it. Madonna of Victory again serves as an example. Mantegna did not just stretch the positive aspects of the battle to make it appear as if the Italians had won; he ignored the negative ones as well.

6. There were several components of the audiences. First, there were contemporary viewers. Most of them had little influence, but the elite few were the real targets. Second, there were future viewers. According to Giovanni Pontano, patrons wanted "to realize the long lasting of their name and reputation, for which man's desire is infinite." Third, patrons wanted God to see their work. They hoped that by glorifying God through art, they would ensure their passage to Heaven and spend less time in purgatory.

Different avenues of conspicuous consumption, as discussed in #4, were directed at different audiences. While paintings, sculptures, and buildings could last for centuries, events such as extravagant banquets would mostly only affect contemporaries' opinions. Thus, such events were used mainly to increase or maintain social status, while paintings and architecture also contributed to long-lasting glory and the respect of future audiences.

7. A distinguished person had to signal his magnificence in multiple ways. He had to commission paintings, sculptures, buildings, and other artwork frequently in order to demonstrate that he could afford to do so and that he had the taste to procure high-quality art. He also had to host lavish events such as the 3000-florin funeral of Giovanni de Medici.

Khristyne Wilson

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Today's readings in *Renaissance Art* provided a good introduction into how one studies the Art Market, by focusing on the beginnings of the Art Market during the Italian Renaissance. The authors convincingly explained the Art Market in contemporary economic terms, for example: applying the game theory to the artists and patrons participating in the art market at this time. I found their examples extremely helpful, and through their demonstrations, it is clear what to look for when examining art that may be helpful in determining their value through the art market. For example, in Italian Renaissance art, we can clearly determine the motive of the Patron through what he/she is exhibited doing, i.e. praying, reading etc or wearing: i.e. furs, jewelry. The use of the game theory to explain the art market in the Italian Renaissance was quite informative. I found this analogy to be the most convincing. In the Italian Renaissance, there were the players, i.e. the patrons, artists, and intended audience, and the principal players, the patrons and artists, would either rise, or decline in society based on the art they either commissioned or created. Overall this reading was very interesting, and I can see how the methods in which the authors examined the Italian Renaissance art market, will prove useful in all locations and eras up into the modern art market.

- 1) The patrons of the Art market in the Italian Renaissance were those who paid for the art. These could be private patrons, who were individuals commissioning work for themselves, their family, guild or brotherhood, or corporate patrons, such as religious groups, governments, and also brotherhoods. The private patrons were often merchants, aristocrats and rulers. Private and corporate patrons sometimes overlapped, as in a brotherhood could be either a private or a corporate patron. Mostly, private patrons were individuals within these corporations, which often encompassed those who could and could not afford to become private patrons. These patrons would commission artwork with a audience in mind, thus they commissioned work that would benefit them in some way, either to their immediate audience, future audience or heavenly audience. Because of this, the patrons would commission work to represent the family, brotherhood, guild or corporation. Patrons were in charge of choosing the kind of art (painting, sculpture, relief etc), its purpose, and other details, thus they played a significant role in the commissioning game.
- 2) Both the artist and patrons could either be benefited or harmed by the commissioning game, due to the outcome of their commissioned or created art. The audience played a large role in deciding whether a piece of art was worth its cost, by their reaction to the artwork. By choosing what was included in an artwork, a patron can decide what he/she wants to portray to the audience, and through the artists work, this portrayal could either be achieved or not. Through commissioning a piece of art, the patron could show himself as elevated in status, or pious in nature, strong, victorious, etc. etc. Thus, one had to weigh the cost financially with the social benefits one might gain by having a well-known artist create a portrait of him or her looking financially secure. Another cost of commissioning a work of art was the potential that the artwork would be received negatively. This could occur if the patron, or artist, reached too far beyond their current position and portrayed themselves as higher above their status, political connections, or finances. Patrons were hardly ever financially compensated for these pieces of art, thus the benefits were never financial, but rather were social through their demonstration within the work of art of wealth, power and political connections.
- 3) There were many incentives for the Patron to commission a work of art. By having a certain caliber of art, or a personal piece of art made by a well-known artist, patrons could distinguish themselves as above the norm. For private patrons, this means they could distinguish themselves as financially, or socially above the general population. This was especially true in some regions of Italy, such as Florence, where social strata were not as rigidly enforced, and there was potential for social mobility. Thus, by possessing a piece of art that demonstrated power, or wealth, one could potentially elevate them within the social world. For corporate patrons, such as a religious group, they could distinguish themselves as above the general populace in their piety and regard for religious figures and events.
- 4) Three of the most important avenues for expenditures and conspicuous consumption were paintings/portraits, architecture and chapel/tomb decoration. Other avenues were through clothing, banquets and parties, sculpture, frescos, and reliefs. All of these avenues could portray a desired quality, such as wealth and status in portraits, power in reliefs or frescos describing battles, and piety within chapel or tomb decorations.
- 5) Signaling was a patron's way of demonstrating the desired attribute through a piece of artwork. The quality of the work, along with the portrayal as wealthy, high in status, and pious could all be determined by signaling to demonstrate an overall portrayal of the characteristics the patron wanted to impress upon his audience. For example, to signal wealth within a painting, one might be wearing certain clothing, or jewelry, or be positioned in front of impressive architecture. Another example of signaling is when a patron wants to be portrayed as pious the could be shown in a painting as reading a piece of religious work, or praying.

The term sign-posting describes specific signaling in order to show specific information about the patron, but omit other information. One example of this would be in political art demonstrating a war, the patron could exhibit how they won a specific battle, but could omit the fact that they lost the war.

Stretching is exhibited through a patron's desire to increase his social, or financial appearance, however he/she exaggerates or misrepresents their real status. An example of this is when a baker created a magnificent tomb for himself, however it was looked down upon because he had over-extended his social status as a baker.

- 6) Audiences were primarily put into one of three categories: the contemporary audience, the future audience, and the heavenly audience. The contemporary audience consisted of the people that the patron would like to immediately impress upon. Examples would be, nobles, elites, political figures, other artists etc etc. The patron could also want to impress the future audience, and example of this was when political leaders would commission works of art to be made regarding wars or battles won, in order to preserve the power and prestige of a specific ruler or country, for future generations. The last group is the heavenly audience. Many patrons, specifically when designing chapel/tomb decorations would be commissioned with the aim to impress God or his messengers with the patrons' piety.
- 7) In the Renaissance period, it was important for patrons to demonstrate their "magnificence" whether it be their individual or family magnificence, the magnificence of their position, or their corporation's magnificence. This magnificence would not only serve to demonstrate the individual strength and power of a person, family or corporation, but also that of the community that it is encompassed within. The magnificence was often compared with the other patrons of the time, and thus one had to portray maximum greatness in order to distinguish oneself from the crowd. Architecture, clothing, banquets and receptions could all be used to signal grandeur, thus demonstrating the magnificence of the patron. By using signaling to set one apart from the general populace, one could achieve this goal of becoming magnificent.

Nicholas Kristov

1. Who were the patrons specify and corporate patrons – and what was their relationship to one another and their significance in the commissioning game?

Patrons and artists fulfilled a principal- agent situation found commonly in economics. Patrons hired artists (commissioned) them to build ornate pieces of art, tombs, palaces, churches in tribute to the patron, religious figures, battles- or anything else the patron wanted to highlight to society.

Private patrons could be an individual who wants to celebrate a battle win, or show they are part of a famous family - as often done in the Medici clan. These included merchants, Popes, government leaders, and the elite.

Corporate patrons were groups of people- often governments, religious sects, or societies which wanted to collectively commission an artist. Instead of doing this individually- just like corporations today- corporate patrons commissioned artists to complete work on behalf of the organization.

Each patron had to prove to society and the other patrons their social standing, and a commissioning was a common way to do so. It became a competition however, with judgements based on the end product (or failings) on the patron. So, if a project was the best of its kind- the patron would be seen in a better light or if it was not completed, the patron would not be as highly regarded

2) What were the stakes (costs and benefits) of the commissioning game? 3) What provided incentives for the Patron's Payoff?

The stakes were quite large for the commissioning game. Commissions were seen as one of the main factors which showed that a patron was part of the elite sect of society. By creating exquisite paintings, sculptures palaces and other pieces of art, patrons could be seen as wealthy and powerful. Some religious commissions assured a better afterlife. However, often it was to impress upon the other elite of a patron's status. These served as monuments to people, ideas, families, battles and almost anything else which was worth bragging about. A good piece could mean recognition from current and future generations for your family- cementing elite status.

The costs, however were great for these commissioning. Just as the glory came to those who had an exquisite commissioning, the opposite befell those who failed to commission a quality piece. This could mean a fall from grace with the elite, a loss of future business(if a patron was a merchant) from the state or others in high society. The costs for the commissioning were quite large compared to a laborer's yearly salary. Often taking many years to complete, the financial risk did not compare to the risk in status if the work was not well received or if it was not actually completed.

Name and describe at least three avenues for expenditures and conspicuous consumption (i.e. art: portraits, frescoes, tomb/chapel decoration).

Conspicuous consumption was a tactic used by patrons to show status, wealth and power. This was done through many avenues such as

Paintings- portraits, battles, religious themes

Architecture- community buildings, palaces, religious buildings

Sculptures

Processions- Funerals, weddings

5) Detail and give examples of

Signaling- a tool to signal to society regarding a certain characteristic about a patron this could be indication wealth, status or power. A statue or large palace was often an easy way to signal to society about a patron's large wealth. One example of this is the use of family shields within commissions in the church. Savonarola explained that shields were shown behind the altar because "when the priest stands...the arms can be seen well by all the people." This display was not for God, but to signal to society regarding the holiness of the patron.

when the priest

stands at the altar, the arms can be seen well by all the people:

Stretching is a use of exaggeration in terms of certain facts about the patron. An example is that many families stretched or purposely changed their coat of arms in order to play up their wealth, power and familial status.

Sign-posting- was a more selective form of signaling. By using sign-posting a patron was trying to show a certain aspect of themselves, group or family and omit others. It could be as subtle as who appears in the painting, or as blatant as showing that you are part of the Medici family but ignoring any misgivings.

6) Who were the audiences?

Nobel and Elite- Often patrons used commissions to prove to the contemporary elite and nobel that they were of common status. Aristocrats and rulers were also part of the audience as impressing all of the individuals with high status was greatly sought after. By producing a beautiful piece, patrons were seen in the contemporary high society as deserving of status, wealth and power. As it was highly competitive for patrons at this time, judgements of their contemporaries were taken with great magnitude.

Heavenly- Using commissions to honor God was used by patrons in order to gain a better afterlife and show their devotion. Building beautiful tombs, personal chapels and other religious work which would primarily be only "seen" by God was extremely common, and used to honor the heavens.

Future generations- Showing future generations of the Elite was something to be sought after. Leaving a permanent legacy on earth showed the highest honor.

7) Discuss the attributes of "being distinguished" with reference to magnificence and signaling.

One of the most common attributes of being distinguished when it comes magnificence and signaling is how tasteful it needs to be to be considered truly magnificent. The work had to ultimately be for the greater good and yet still tasteful, despite signaling great power and wealth. This can be seen in architecture which despite being commissioned by the elite still could not be seen as "vulgar" by exuberant wealth for one's selfish gain. The ability of the patron to commission an artist to create something beautiful, useful and lasting created a legacy for the patron for future generations and religious eternity.

Consider & comment:

Please use this space to respond to your classmates' work and to engage in lively discussions on the day's topic. Keep your comments concise and conversational by responding to others, rebutting or supporting their ideas. Use the comment box below for these observations.