

Syracuse Scholar (1979-1991)

Volume 11
Issue 1 *Syracuse Scholar Spring 1991*

Article 5

3-21-1991

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Gordon Moran

Michael Mallory

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Recommended Citation

Moran, Gordon and Mallory, Michael (1991) "The Guido Riccio controversy and resistance to critical thinking," *Syracuse Scholar (1979-1991)*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/susolar/vol11/iss1/5>

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THE GUIDO RICCIO CONTROVERSY AND RESISTANCE TO CRITICAL THINKING

GORDON MORAN *and* MICHAEL MALLORY

THE PALAZZO PUBBLICO IN SIENA, ITALY, is decorated with some of Italian art's most famous murals, or frescoes. The undisputed favorite of many art lovers and of the Sieneese themselves is the *Guido Riccio da Fogliano at the Siege of Montemassi* (fig. 1, upper fresco), a work traditionally believed to have been painted in 1330 by Siena's most renowned master, Simone Martini. Supposedly painted at the height of the golden age of Sieneese painting, the Guido Riccio fresco has come to be seen as the quintessential example of late medieval taste and the embodiment of all that is Sieneese in the art of the early decades of the fourteenth century.

Despite its fame and popularity, there have long been nagging doubts about the painting. Its subject matter, the bloodless siege of the castle of Montemassi by the Sieneese army with their war captain, Guido Riccio da Fogliano, riding phantomlike across the scene, seemed unusual. Also, its style, with horse and rider detached from the rest of the scene, signaled for some observers that something was wrong with this curiously atypical work. Art historians, however, explained away these problems by claiming that the Guido Riccio was one of the few works of its time that depicted the sort of subject that it did. The fresco might not seem so unusual, it was argued, if other, similar paintings had not all vanished over the centuries. Besides, Simone was an exceptional genius who was well capable of creating unusual and atypical works.

With the problematic aspects of the Guido Riccio apparently set to rest, art historians went on to generalize about the fresco's place within the history of art. The Guido Riccio became of major importance for establishing Simone's oeuvre and chronology and for assessing just what kind of an artist he really was. His prominent place in the history of fourteenth-century art was to some extent determined by the Guido Riccio. In the history of art in general, the painting's curiously diffuse landscape came to be seen as reflecting a crucial, formulative stage for the development of modern landscape painting, an early forerunner of later creations by Brueghel, Rubens, and the great Dutch masters of the seventeenth century. Similarly, the fresco was cited as European art's earliest extant equestrian portrait since Roman times and hence as the precursor not only of the famous statues by Donatello and Verrocchio but also of the paintings by Uccello, Castagno, Titian, and Velázquez.

More than other paintings of its supposed era, the Guido Riccio fresco inspired elaborate and eloquent analysis. One can read about how the famed Simone Martini fused realism, fantasy, and pictorial imagination in a truly exceptional manner. He provided the viewer not only with the facts about a specific siege—in this, it is emphasized, the painter was especially accurate—but with the universal truths about warfare, its destruction, and its desolation. All of this, we are told, Simone presented with a refined elegance that is unique to his special sensibilities. In short, the Guido Riccio became an exquisite example of fourteenth-century taste and a testimony to Simone's genius.

Quite naturally, attributions of other works to Simone and his followers came to depend, at least in part, on their similarity to the contours, colors, and decorative details of the Guido Riccio; and the chronology of works by other fourteenth-century artists have been influenced by their relationship to this masterpiece. Unquestionably, the precociousness of the entire Sieneese school of painting that flourished during the fourteenth century was considered resoundingly affirmed by the Guido Riccio. As it turns out, art historians might better have questioned whether the Guido Riccio really was a documented work by Simone before assessing its importance. That it stands out as a unique production in Siena, Florence, and other great centers of Italian art might have been a signal to art historians to be wary.

Specialists in other fields, who accepted art historians' views about the painting, found it fascinating. Few works seemed to present a comparable glimpse into aspects of fourteenth-century life. Historians drew conclusions about aspects of medieval warfare from the painting, and books on military architecture actually cite the fortifications on the right side of the fresco as an illustration of what a *battifolle*, once a common type of siege machine, actually was (Detail A). That documentary sources and, as it turns out, even common sense appeared to contradict such conclusions seemed to have passed unnoticed.

The Guido Riccio's special status has had an economic impact. Paintings for which high prices were paid and that today hang in important museums and private collections lay claim to their present attributions and classifications through, at least in part, their association with the great Guido Riccio fresco. Just how many tourists come to Siena to see this exceptional work is hard to determine, but judging from the crowds that gather below it daily, the Guido Riccio has contributed substantially to Siena's current popularity as *the* city in Tuscany to visit outside of Florence. Not surprisingly, the people of Siena are especially devoted to the Guido Riccio fresco. The painting's equestrian portrait appears not only in guidebooks, history books, and art history books but on postcards, lampshades, ashtrays, cookie boxes, plates, wine bottles, bathroom tiles, and posters boosting Siena's healthy tourist industry.

When the Guido Riccio's notoriety increased during the last decade, however, and it became the subject of hundreds of articles in popular and scholarly presses, the scholarly community and the citizens of Siena were not entirely pleased. The recent "Guido Riccio fever" results from our contention that the famous fresco is neither by Simone Martini nor by any



Detail A

1. G. Moran, "An Investigation regarding the Equestrian Portrait of Guido Riccio da Fogliano in the Siena Palazzo Pubblico," *Paragone* 28 (November 1977): 81–88. For a general summary of the debate: A. Wohl, "In Siena, an Old Masterpiece Challenged, a New One Discovered," *News from RILA*, no. 2 (February 1984): 1, 4–5, 11; idem, "The Case of the Century," *Art and Antiques* (October 1984): 68–71; W. Reynor, "The Case against Simone," *Connoisseur* (October 1984): 60–71.

2. N. Fagnoli Simonicca, "Il 'caso' Guidoriccio," *Buletino senese di storia patria* 91 (1984): 266.

3. *Biccherna*, vol. 165, January–June 1330, Archivio di Stato di Siena, p. 31.

other painter of the fourteenth century.¹ In our view, the painting is a more modern work that came into existence only centuries after Simone's death. We have not as yet discovered its artist's name and its precise date of origin, but we now speculate that it came into being in various stages until its completion around 1834.

For us, the famous Guido Riccio is an elaborate restoration, in effect, a fanciful re-creation, of works, or at least of fragments of works, from the fourteenth century. While some of these actually were painted by Simone Martini, the new Guido Riccio fresco bears little if any resemblance to the originals. They were smaller and probably included no horse and rider. Not only does the Guido Riccio distort our view of what a genuine fourteenth-century work might look like, but it may actually be covering the still-extant originals that it seems to have replaced. There remains, then, the exciting possibility that these originals may some day be recovered.

Any new theory about a "guidebook-textbook" example of Italian art is likely to raise some eyebrows, but the stakes in this particular case are especially high. A modern origin for the Guido Riccio would tarnish Siena's prized symbol and would embarrass a number of art historians whose "trained eyes," which led them to many subjective intuitions about this painting, about the nature of Simone's art, and about the special qualities of fourteenth-century Italian painting in general, failed to see that the famous Guido Riccio is a pastiche created hundreds of years after its supposed year of origin. Conditioned responses obscured the issue that stylistically it seems to be only superficially related to documented works by the famous Simone Martini.

The Guido Riccio story that we shall relate here—"the enigma of the century"²—concerns far more than red-faced art historians, an outraged city government, and reluctance to face the distinct possibility that parts of textbooks and guidebooks will have to be revised. More important are the issues of scholarly ethics, censorship, and the possible withholding and even destruction of crucial evidence. The resistance to critical thinking that is reflected in these issues is discussed in later sections of this article. We first, however, present the evidence substantiating our claims about the painting's modern origins.

THE EVIDENCE FOR A NEW VIEW OF THE GUIDO RICCIO

In 1328, Siena, under the leadership of its war captain, Guido Riccio da Fogliano, besieged and captured the nearby town of Montemassi. As was custom, the Siennese government soon after (1330) commissioned a picture of the recently captured town to be painted by Simone Martini in the town hall of Siena, the Palazzo Pubblico.³ Because the Guido Riccio fresco portrays the castle of Montemassi on its left side (Detail B) and includes the depiction of other supposed circumstances surrounding that castle's capture, art historians have assumed that what exists today is Simone's original. But does this make sense?

When the Siennese government had Simone paint Montemassi in 1330, he had also been commissioned to paint the castle of Sassoforte, seemingly



Detail B

as part of the same work. The present Guido Riccio fresco depicts Montemassi alone (the fortifications to the right of the equestrian portrait, as mentioned, are intended to represent a medieval *battifolle*), so how can it be the painting in question? It could be associated with the document only if it were a part, logically about one-half, of what was painted. But if this were so, the size of each of these castle representations (the Guido Riccio measures 340 × 968 cm [approximately 11 × 31.5 ft.]) would have had to have been enormous, something that the rather modest amounts of payment specified (the artist was paid eight lire for each) do not suggest. Furthermore, Simone was paid to portray two additional castles, Arcidosso and Castel del Piano, in 1331.⁴ All four of Simone's castle representations would seem to have been part of a series of such scenes that had been initiated decades earlier.⁵ The amount paid for each painting, when known, was about equal (like Simone in 1330, the unknown artist of the two 1311 scenes was paid eight lire each; in 1331, Simone was paid slightly more for his scenes of Arcidosso and Castel del Piano), which indicates they were all of roughly similar dimensions. But if the Guido Riccio were indicative of each castle representation's size, there is simply not space enough in this room of the Palazzo Pubblico to accommodate them all.

Also, the documents indicate that the purpose of these paintings was to commemorate the acquisition of territories by the Siennese state and not to glorify individuals such as Guido Riccio. For that matter, several scholars have pointed out that, during the Renaissance and earlier, equestrian portraits were reserved for the deceased; in 1330, Guido Riccio da Fogliano was very much alive.

Even if one could somehow reconcile the Guido Riccio fresco with the 1330 Montemassi-Sassoforte document, there is other considerable evidence that what we see today was not painted in Simone Martini's time.⁶ The castle of Montemassi that is represented, although it does resemble extant remains, would seem to be one that was rebuilt later in the fifteenth century and not the one that existed during Simone's time. The date painted at the bottom of the fresco, which commemorates Montemassi's defeat and which is in part restored, is not in the Gothic script common to other paintings of late medieval times (Detail C). The Fogliani coat of arms, the separate elements of which decorate the rider's robes and the horse's trappings, seems not to have been the one of Guido Riccio's branch of the family, and there are other anachronistic features of the heraldry as well.

Scholars agree that the fortifications to the right of center are clearly intended to represent a *battifolle*, a type of siege machine documented as having been employed at Montemassi and at many other sieges. What is shown, however, is an entirely fanciful rendition of such a structure; it does not even remotely record a *battifolle's* appearance or construction. Additionally, the two vineyards shown at the right of the painting in the area of the Siennese soldiers' encampment (Detail D) are not, according to viticulturists, the type grown in Italy during the fourteenth century. Their presence in the painting in the

4. *Biccherna*, vol. 171, July–December 1331, Archivio di Stato di Siena, p. 80.

5. Payments for what appear to be two castle representations painted in 1311 are preserved in U. Benvoglianti, *Miscellanea*, MS. C.V.4, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, p. 131. These documents and other aspects of the Guido Riccio controversy are discussed in M. Mallory and G. Moran, "Interessanti documentazioni sul Guido Riccio e sul ciclo di castelli dipinti nel civico palazzo," *La gazzetta di Siena*, no. 15 (November 1983): 1–2. On 30 March 1314, the Siennese government decided to add a portrayal of Giuncarico to other, already painted representations (*Deliberazioni del Consiglio Generale*, vol. 83, Archivio di Stato di Siena, p. 120).

6. For a fuller, documented discussion of the following inconsistencies in the Guido Riccio fresco: M. Mallory and G. Moran, "Guido Riccio da Fogliano: A Challenge to the Famous Fresco Long Ascribed



Detail C



Detail D

to Simone Martini and the Discovery of a New One in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena," *Studies in Iconography* 7–8 (1981–82): 1–13; idem, "Precisioni e aggiornamenti sul 'caso' Guido Riccio," *Bullettino senese di storia patria* 92 (1985): 334–43; idem, "New Evidence concerning 'Guido Riccio,'" *Burlington Magazine* 128 (April 1986): 250–59 (with additional bibliography).

7. F. Zeri, "No, non è di Simone questo brutto Guidoriccio," in *Giotto e i maestri del trecento* (supplement to the newspaper *La Repubblica*), 26 October 1988, 26.

8. G. Gavazzi, "Realizzazione tecnica dell'affresco di Simone Martini raffigurante Guido Riccio da Fogliano," 1981, TS, P9000 "raro," Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence. For a published version of a large part of Gavazzi's report: Mallory and Moran, "New Evidence," 256–59.

9. V. Sgarbi, "Siena/Pinacoteca," *FMR*, no. 32 (April 1985): 29.



Detail E

first place may be, as the eminent Italian art historian Federico Zeri put it, the result of a "giant mix-up" by the painting's artist.⁷ Although a *vigna* was present at Montemassi, it was in all probability the common type of siege machine of that name and not a vineyard. The Guido Riccio's artist may have read in highly fantastical accounts of Sienese history, written centuries after the events they reported, that Montemassi's *vigna* was a vineyard and, on this basis, included it and another in the painting. In any case, this inconsistency and others in the painting make no sense if the Guido Riccio fresco is really a visual record of events that had recently transpired, as modern art historians claim.

Giuseppe Gavazzi, who restored the work in 1980, determined that small parts of it overlap and thus postdate an adjoining fresco of 1364. He also noted that its rapidly applied, broad brush strokes are reminiscent of frescoes done centuries later. Gavazzi believes that the Guido Riccio dates later than the fourteenth century, though not as late as we do.⁸ In our view, this pastiche, with all of its incongruities and anachronisms, and which reminds one Italian critic of a "giant comic strip,"⁹ is really the product of a much later era's romantic view of a long-past century's history and art.

A MAJOR PROBLEM with the Guido Riccio fresco ever having anything to do with Simone Martini is that this huge, fanciful vision of a figure on horseback does not agree with the earlier cited documentation recording a series of castle representations painted shortly after the castles were acquired by Siena. How incongruous it really was became conspicuously apparent with the discovery and uncovering of a new fresco lower down on the same wall in 1980–81 (Detail E). This work, which depicts two figures and a castle and which was clearly part of the original castle series, is of such importance that the city of Siena formed an official commission to supervise its uncovering, to identify its subject and author, and to establish its relationship to the famous Guido Riccio. Because we will frequently mention this commission and the written and spoken statements of its members, we shall list the latter here: Professors Max Seidel, Luciano Bellosi, Giovanni Previtali, Aldo Cairola, and Piero Torriti.

Now there was a fresco from the original castle series with which to compare the Guido Riccio. Because of the overlap of intonaco layers, it was immediately clear that the newly discovered work was the earlier; when, however, was it painted? Though there continues to be considerable debate, most scholars concur that the obvious differences in style, size, and content between these two works indicate that they were painted many years apart.

The new fresco is entirely compatible with what we know through documents about the series of castle representations. Its size, originally about half that of the Guido Riccio, is what we might expect from the amounts paid for these frescoes. Also, its concise style and refined technique are typical of works of the fourteenth century. Finally, its emphasis

on the castle's acquisition by Siena—everyone agrees that the two people are involved with transferring the castle to Siennese control—is expected from what we know about the commissioning of the paintings.

For us and others, the newly discovered fresco depicts Arcidosso, which, along with Castel del Piano, is documented as having been added to the castle series in 1331. Its structures and landscape resemble present-day Arcidosso exceptionally closely, and included as an additional identifying feature is a three-branched tree that leans out from the base of the keep, a device found in many of Arcidosso's town seals. Logically, the figure with the sheathed sword is Siena's war captain at the time of Arcidosso's acquisition accepting the submission of the other figure, the castle's count, who removes his gloves in a gesture of fealty. Inasmuch as the newly discovered fresco originally extended further to the left and was subsequently covered by the painter Sodoma's depiction of Saint Ansanus around 1530, it could well have included a representation of Castel del Piano, as we would expect from the document of 1331.

The identification of the newly discovered fresco as Arcidosso had and continues to have an explosive impact on the whole Guido Riccio controversy. Arcidosso was painted in 1331, over a year later than the presumed date of origin of the Guido Riccio. How, then, can a later fresco lie partially beneath an earlier one? If the newly discovered fresco does, indeed, represent Arcidosso, the art world faces a truly ironic situation. Because the castle is recorded as having been painted by "Simone," supposedly Simone Martini, it would be the newly discovered fresco, and not the famous one, that is actually an original by the renowned artist. The *pièce de résistance* is that the recently discovered, real Simone Martini fresco actually might include a portrait of Guido Riccio da Fogliano; he was Siena's war captain at the time of Arcidosso's acquisition and would logically be the warrior taking possession of the castle.

What is striking to nearly everyone, expert or layperson, is the contrast in every aspect of style and iconography between the new fresco and the Guido Riccio. For us and others, this contrast highlights just how atypical the famous work really would be as a product of any artist of the fourteenth century. When and by whom, then, was the famous Guido Riccio fresco actually painted? No documents have as yet been uncovered to definitively answer these important questions, but there is some evidence to help us at least determine the fresco's date. Two of Siena's patron saints, Victor and Ansanus, were painted by Sodoma around 1530 on the same wall as the two frescoes we are discussing (Details F and G). As mentioned, Ansanus may cover over Simone's representation of Castel del Piano, but Victor and Ansanus may be hiding something more. As we see them today, Sodoma's painted niches seem curiously truncated at the top and have no entablatures, a unique situation in the history of art and



Detail F



Detail G

10. G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi, vol. 6 (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1906), 391.

11. S. Tizio, *Historiarum senensium*, vol. 10, MS. B.II.1, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, p. 73.

12. G. Tommasi, *Dell'istoria di Siena* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Pulciani Sanese, 1625–26), 319; G. Macchi, *Memorie*, MS. D.III, Archivio di Stato di Siena, pp. 4–7.

13. L. Ghiberti, *I commentari*, ed. O. Morisana (Naples: Ricciardi, 1947), 38–39; A. Ficarra, ed., *L'Anonimo Magliabechiano* (Naples: Stamperia Napolitana, 1968), 92–93; Vasari, *Le vite*, 1:545–60; I. Azzolini-Ugurgieri, *Le pompe senesi*, vol. 2 (Pistoia: Pier'Antonio Fortunati, 1649), 332–35; F. Chigi, *L'elenco delle pitture, sculture e architettura di Siena*, MS. II.i.11, Biblioteca Vaticana, pp. 213–14; G. Mancini, *Ragguaglio compendioso della città di Siena*, MS. D60, Archivio di Stato di Siena, pp. 141, 149; G. Piccolomini, *Siena illustre*, MS. C.II.23, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, p. 52; G. Nasini, untitled, MS. L.V.16, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, p. 104.

14. G. Pecci, *Raccolta universale di tutte l'iscrizioni, arme, e altri monumenti. . . . fino a presente anno, 1730*, MS. D5, Archivio di Stato di Siena, p. 191. In his *Relazioni delle cose più nobili della città di Siena* (Siena, 1752), 76–77, Pecci attributed the Guido Riccio to Simone di Lorenzo; G. Della Valle, *Lettere senesi sopra le belle arti*, vol. 2 (Rome: Salomon, 1785), 88; M. Ferri, *Guida della città di Siena per gli amatori delle belle arti* (Siena, 1832), 100–101.

15. A. Bandini, *Diario senese*, MS. D.I.9, pp. 44, 143; P. Litta, "Fogliani," in *Famiglie celebri italiane*, vol. 4 (Milan: 1834); K. Baedeker, *Italy* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1904), 24–25.

architecture as far as we can determine. We speculate that the Guido Riccio was painted after these sixteenth-century works were painted and that the famous fresco covers important parts of their architectural settings. Technical evidence on this point is not yet entirely clear, but Vasari's description of them in 1568 tempts one to believe that they had complete entablatures adorned with many angels, similar to what we see today in Sodoma's third standing figure, the Blessed Bernardo Tolomei, painted on the adjacent wall.¹⁰

When is the first time that the Guido Riccio fresco is described? An undated supplement to a manuscript of the sixteenth-century historian Tizio records an image of Guido Riccio painted in the Sala di Mappamondo, the room in the Palazzo Pubblico where the paintings in question are located.¹¹ We are not told whether this was an equestrian portrait, and there is no clue that the writer was recording the grand, panoramic siege scene we see there today. Two sources from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also mentioned a portrait in the room, this time an equestrian one, but its identification is in doubt; Tommasi claimed its subject to be Guido Riccio da Fogliano, whereas Macchi stated that it portrayed Giovanni d'Azzo Ubaldini, like Guido Riccio a foreign mercenary in the employ of Siena but at a later date (1390).¹² Neither author mentioned anything about the rest of the fresco, and it is difficult to imagine how Macchi could have been confused about who was portrayed if he were looking at the fresco that today exists; it is dated and clearly portrays the special circumstances associated with Guido Riccio's victory at Montemassi.

More significant than these fragmentary and problematic identifications are the sources from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries that mention not a word about the grand fresco of Guido Riccio. One wonders how Ghiberti, the "Anonimo Magliabechiano," Vasari, Ugurgieri, Chigi, Mancini, Piccolomini, Nasini,¹³ and others, all of whom had personal knowledge of Siena's art works, discussed Simone's career, and described other works in the same room as the Guido Riccio, could have failed to mention such a prominent painting. Confusion or silence about what is so lavish a work suggests to us that during these centuries the painting that we see today had not yet come into existence.

By 1730, at least, a Guido Riccio fresco does seem to have been painted. Around this time, Pecci recorded its inscription, though he believed it to be by a Simone di Lorenzo. About fifty years later, Della Valle described it more fully and claimed it was by Simone Martini. In his 1832 guidebook written for visitors to Siena, Ferri "officially" ascribed it to the master.¹⁴ There is some evidence, however, to suggest that even then it was not in the form we see it today. In 1834, two little-known artists of the time, one a specialist in historical and landscape painting, were cited with relation to the Guido Riccio fresco. Soon after, it was described as "cleaned" but arousing the skepticism of people about how its bright colors could possibly date from the time of Simone Martini. Years later, a famous guidebook still described the fresco as "freely restored."¹⁵

Weighing all this information, we theorize that sometime around 1700, when local scholars were keenly interested in Siena's glorious past, the remains of Simone Martini's castle scenes and the others in the series on

the end wall of the Sala di Mappamondo were covered by a new, substitute fresco that glorified Guido Riccio and his siege of Montemassi. It was known that Simone had depicted Montemassi in the Palazzo, and perhaps parts of the original castle series were even visible, so the Guido Riccio might well have been conceived as a sort of restoration intended to preserve the memory of the city's legendary painter's masterpiece. Later in the same century, Della Valle emphasized the importance of the painting by claiming that it was by Simone himself and that it was the only work by him made for Siena to have survived.¹⁶ During the next century, around 1834, the Guido Riccio's bright colors and, possibly, other details of Montemassi's siege reported in romanticized and erroneous accounts in a few concocted chronicles were incorporated into the scene, and it acquired its present pseudo-Gothic appearance.

We stress that this theory about the famous fresco's origins is for now only a working hypothesis—one that allows for the Guido Riccio's obscurity in early sources, its chaotic, sometimes anachronistic depiction of events, and its unusual technique and style. If made recently, the painting's uniqueness within the context of medieval and Renaissance art is also explained. As mentioned, there is also the tantalizing possibility that, in addition to Arcidosso lower down on the wall, other remains of the original castle series lie hidden beneath the Guido Riccio; just possibly, they may someday be recovered.

16. Della Valle, *Lettere*, 88.

RESISTANCE TO A NEW VIEW OF GUIDO RICCIO

The foregoing discussion is intended to familiarize readers with the evidence in the Guido Riccio controversy and with the propositions we have formulated. How our ideas have been received and what this reception reveals about the workings of modern art history are, ultimately, more important than whether we are right or wrong. What could have been a routine discussion among art historians regarding the attribution and dating of an important painting, a "business-as-usual" exchange among specialists, has instead become a highly charged controversy demonstrating some major problems facing critical inquiry in our field. Soon after its inception, the Guido Riccio controversy expanded, and protagonists and antagonists multiplied in number and type to include not only individuals and publications from the academic world but, directly or indirectly, certain outside interests, such as political organizations, a tourist board, the local government of Siena, the University of Siena, the powerful office of the Superintendent of Artistic Patrimony for the Provinces of Siena and Grosseto (hereafter referred to as the Superintendent of Monuments), the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, one of the world's most prestigious art libraries, and the College Art Association of America. In fact, the Guido Riccio affair has become so clamorous that it justifies its description as "the case of the century" in art history.¹⁷ What follows is not intended, nor should it be interpreted, as a personal attack or an accusation against any individual or any institution. What we seek to present and discuss are certain events, attitudes, and activities that have become part of the Guido Riccio story.

17. Wohl, "Case of the Century."

Even though we all endorse intellectual freedom and the unimpeded, open discussion of problematic issues in the academic world and elsewhere, we are not naive enough to contend that this is always the case. As Derek Bok, president of Harvard, put it in his book *Beyond the Ivory Tower*:

*academic freedom has always been founded on the firm belief that the pursuit of knowledge will proceed most fruitfully if scholars can follow their own convictions without limitations from official orthodoxies. . . . but experience teaches us that major discoveries and advances in knowledge are often highly unsettling and distasteful to the existing order. . . . If we wish to stimulate progress, we cannot afford to inhibit such persons by imposing orthodoxies, censorship, and other artificial barriers to creative thought.*¹⁸

18. D. Bok, *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 18.

19. See, among others, E. Sina-baldi, *Cimabue* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975), 116–17.

Art history has not always been quick to accept new ideas. For example, in 1790, documents were published indicating that the Siene- s artist Duccio di Buoninsegna painted the famous *Rucellai Madonna* in 1285.¹⁹ This information contradicted the account of sixteenth-century art historian Giorgio Vasari, who claimed that the painting was done by the Florentine painter Cimabue. A debate ensued, and it was only about one and one-half centuries after the documents' publication that Duccio's authorship of the painting was generally accepted. It was not a lack of critical faculties on the part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art historians that prolonged the debate. Rather, it seems to have been civic rivalry between Siena and Florence and, perhaps even more important, too much faith in Vasari. His writings had attained the status of orthodoxy, and he was seen as an authoritative source, a status he still enjoys today to a large extent, despite his errors of fact and unlikely assertions.

It may be that for the history of art, where subjective critical judgments rather than facts are often used to interpret the course of history, the quest for truth is even more difficult than it is in other fields. In the eighteenth century, the artist Raphael Mengs warned, in an unpublished manuscript, that the fields of art and connoisseurship were particularly susceptible when faced with critical judgment and that frequently scorn would be heaped on the person who told the truth.²⁰ Mengs' thoughts were echoed on various occasions in the unpublished writings of the nineteenth-century archivist Gaetano Milanesi, who commented on how long it took for cherished but erroneous ideas to yield to the truth and how many barriers were set up to impede this process.²¹ More recently, Max Friedlaender, one of the world's most highly respected connoisseurs and art historians, published the more blunt observation: "the vain desire for a 'certain' result of one's studies is often stronger than the love of truth."²²

20. In Benvoglianti, *Miscellanea*, MS. C.IV.28, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, pp. 12–13.

21. In G. Milanesi, *Miscellanea*, MS. P.III.40, Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, pp. 18, 44.

22. M. Friedlaender, *On Art and Connoisseurship* (Oxford: Bruno Cassier, 1946), 172.

23. A. Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 5 (Milan: Hopli, 1907), 614 n. 1.

EVEN AFTER THE GUIDO RICCIO fresco had become a fixture in the art history literature as one of the relatively few secure works by Simone Martini, incongruities in its dimensions, style, and iconography were detected. In 1907, Adolfo Venturi speculated that the horse and rider in the painting were not part of the original castle series and should be associated with a later work, but this idea seems to have gone unheeded.²³ Fifty years later, then Yale University professor Helmut

Wohl expressed his doubts about the Guido Riccio in the classroom, and more recently Federico Zeri claimed that he had long nurtured doubts about its attribution to Simone Martini.²⁴ Others, too, have now come forward and stated that they had always felt uncomfortable about the famous work. Dissension from the standard view of this sort did not appear in art historical journals and therefore did not stimulate more in-depth study of the problem.

It is not easy for a scholar, particularly a young one, to question a renowned work like the Guido Riccio. Bok seems to have isolated the problem when he cited the pressure placed on scholars by “the unconscious desire for peer approval” and also by “the subtle burdens of conventional paradigms and modes of thought.”²⁵ For the historian of Italian art, there is the added fear of upsetting the Italian authorities, whose cooperation, permissions, and assistance are often needed in nearly every phase of scholarly research. Nonetheless, avoiding problematic issues is a form of resistance to critical thinking.

Fear of our stirring up too much trouble and thereby offending important people seems to have prompted a number of colleagues to repeatedly advise us to “back off” and to stop studying the Guido Riccio problem so that art history might “skip a generation” of scholars and pass on to others more receptive to our ideas. For us and others to avoid potentially unpleasant confrontations over a controversial subject and to fail coming to grips with such a pertinent problem as the authorship and date of the Guido Riccio and its newly discovered neighboring fresco would also amount to a passive resistance to critical thinking. When in 1980 the Guido Riccio issue did explode into the open, it was no longer a question of covert resistance to new ideas. “The war over Guido Riccio,” as one scholar put it, had broken out.²⁶

PERSONAL ATTACKS One way to cope with disturbing and disquieting hypotheses is to discredit the persons who have formulated them. To direct attention *ad hominem* avoids the real issues and the evidence. This strategy has been repeatedly employed during the unfolding debate over the Guido Riccio.

The Pig’s Snout. At first, our views were ignored in print, and personal attacks were exclusively oral. As the Guido Riccio debate became more heated and widely known, insults began to appear in the press. In 1979, for example, the word *grugno* (snout of a pig) was used to describe one of our faces (Moran’s), and he was told to return to America by boat, a clear indication that he should stop studying Sieneese art.²⁷ “Dilettante” and “amateur” were soon leveled at authors whose ideas differed from those who restated the traditional view that the Guido Riccio was Simone Martini’s documented masterpiece. Some personal attacks were ridiculous enough to be humorous. Three separate sources reported that we had been accused of being agents of the Central Intelligence Agency who had been sent to Siena to embarrass the local, leftist Sieneese government!²⁸

The Salon des Refusés. Insults were heard and read in March 1985, around the time of a three-day conference, Simone Martini and His Circle,

24. F. Zeri, *L'inchiostro variopinto* (Milan: Longanesi, 1985), 268.

25. Bok, *Ivory Tower*, 26.

26. J. White, “Archaeology, Documentation and the History of Sieneese Art,” *Art History* 8 (December 1985): 484–85.

27. A. Pecchioli, “E adesso, signor avvocato,” *Il campo*, 25 May 1979, 1.

28. See “Altro che agente della CIA! Sono uno che dice in comune furono dipinti da 17 a 20 castelli,” *Il campo*, 28 March 1985, 1, 10.

29. E. Mariotti, "Da Modi a Guidoriccio," *Nuovo corriere senese*, 19 September 1984, 6–7.

30. D. Balestracci, "Il Guidoriccio annega in mezzo all'intolleranza," *Nuovo corriere senese*, 3 April 1985, 6.

31. J. Young and L. Widmann, "Italy's Great Fresco Fracas," *Newsweek International*, 4 February 1985, 49. "From the start, he was denounced by the Italian art establishment in vicious terms; he was called a CIA agent, a monomaniac and a paranoid."

32. The words of Mayor Vittorio Mazzoni were: "Io ho l'abitudine di chiamare amici a quanti altri ritengo a casa mia. Non ho l'abitudine di chiamarla a casa degli altri senza avere chiesto, perlomeno la cortesia di renderla a disposizione." See also "Moran e Guidoriccio: no, tu no," *Il giornale dell'arte* (May 1985): 8–9.

33. G. Mascherpa, "Guidoriccio e del trecento," *Avvenire*, 30 March 1985: "con somma impudenza (come se fosse a casa sua anziché nella sede del comune di Siena) proprio nel salone del 'Guidoriccio.'" In recent years, thousands of guides, tourist group leaders, schoolteachers, and university professors have spoken to groups about the Guido Riccio during museum hours. Are all of these persons also guilty of the highest form of impudence?

34. Letter from Professor Patricia Mainardi to Michael Mallory, 7 May 1985.

35. M. Seidel, "'Castrum pingatur in palatio' 1. Ricerche storiche e iconografiche sui castelli dipinti nel Palazzo Pubblico di Siena," *Prospettiva*, no. 28 (January 1982): 17. Seidel changed the title of Zeri's article (*La stampa*, 4 June 1981, 1) from "Guidoriccio due volte sfregiato" to "Guido Riccio o ricciarellino da panforte?" He then described this fictitious title as one of the "titoli sensazionali" of the press and listed it among a group of articles that for him have "gusto della sensazione."

held in Siena. By then, our theory that the Guido Riccio fresco was not painted by Simone had gained considerable notoriety and credibility. Though papers on various aspects of Simone's art were to be read by a number of scholars, we were not invited to participate. Believing our research to be of particular interest to others attending such a conference, we then asked permission to speak. Before we received a response, the late Giovanni Previtali, who had been chosen by the Sieneese city government to help organize the conference and who had recently headed the art history department of the University of Siena, was quoted in a local newspaper as stating that the Guido Riccio problem "is the invention of a non-expert who has not had the minimum consensus on the part of anyone else. . . . he is spending all his life trying to demonstrate that Guido Riccio is not by Simone. Poor man, by now he has taken on a form of a monomaniac."²⁹ Our request to speak was denied.

Reactions in the Italian press came from the entire political spectrum: left, center, and right. One newspaper later declared in a headline, "Guido Riccio Drowns in a Sea of Intolerance."³⁰ Nonetheless, a staff member of Torriti (Siena's Superintendent of Monuments), who was apparently also an official at the conference, claimed that "Moran's reactions were paranoid."³¹ When enough pressure had been put on the organizers of the conference to allow us time to speak, it was agreed that we would give an informal talk in the Palazzo Pubblico after the conference was officially over so that people interested in our views would have the opportunity to hear them. A representative of the city government was to announce our presentation at the conference itself. When no announcement was forthcoming, we informed the audience ourselves. Unexpectedly, the mayor responded, publicly, that although he was in the habit of inviting friends to his home he did not invite his friends to another's home without permission or without knowing whether it was even available.³² A few days later, a national newspaper stated that our decision to give an informal talk in the Sala di Mappamondo in the Palazzo Pubblico during public visiting hours displayed "the highest form of impudence."³³ Another scholar, however, spoke of the Sala di Mappamondo in the Palazzo Pubblico as Siena's own "Salon des Refusés."

Elitism: Who Is a "Real" Art Historian? To attempt to discredit a scholar's credentials is another form of personal attack. We were informed that at a study session on the Guido Riccio controversy at Harvard University one of its faculty members stated, even before discussing the evidence, that we were not "real art historians" and that we were therefore not in the position to challenge the authority of those who upheld the traditional attribution.³⁴

Or consider the manner in which Max Seidel, in his lengthy article setting forth the commission's view of the two frescoes, dealt with the opposing ideas of Federico Zeri, which had earlier appeared in the newspaper *La stampa*. Zeri's article was retitled and lumped together with a number of others, all of which were dismissed on the grounds that they smacked of journalistic sensationalism.³⁵ None of Zeri's pertinent observations were acknowledged. Along the same lines, Luciano Bellosi, the author of another long article on the official commission's view of the

frescoes,³⁶ commented in a newspaper interview that, for the past eight years, our intellectual energy had been “consumed” by studying a single painting and merely its “marginal” aspects at that.³⁷ Bellosi seems to have overlooked that during this period we had written, singly or collaboratively, fifteen articles on subjects other than the Guido Riccio fresco. Readers can judge for themselves whether the evidence, summarized at the outset of this paper, is “marginal.”

CENSORSHIP Censorship, as with personal attacks and insults, has no place in serious scholarship. Nevertheless, several attempts have been made to suppress our ideas regarding the Guido Riccio problem. Though not the first, the March 1985 Siena conference is the most obvious example. After our request to speak had been rejected, we inquired about why this might be. We were informed that our views were already known and, besides, the subject of the Guido Riccio was “exhausted.” Not so exhausted, however, that Torriti, Siena’s Superintendent of Monuments and a member of the official commission, did not deliver a lengthy paper concerning the famous fresco in which he reiterated many of the commission’s previously published views.

The Professional Journals. Institutionalized intolerance toward divergent views results in more subtle forms of censorship. So far, five major art history journals in four countries have rejected one or another aspect of our research. To be sure, an editorial board can reject an article without it constituting censorship, and it is generally agreed that not all articles are publishable. Rejections in our case, however, hint at censorship and resistance to critical thinking.

In 1980, the editor-in-chief of one leading art history journal suggested that several pages of a future issue be reserved for our thoughts about the newly discovered fresco. It was evident even then that this fresco’s identification would have important ramifications for determining the origin of the famous Guido Riccio. The editorial board must have overruled this decision because it was later decided that no article by us on this subject would be acceptable. Obviously this rejection was not based on any shortcomings of the text submitted because no text had yet been written!

Explanations of rejections by the art history journals included, among others, the following, which we have paraphrased and condensed (our own comments are in parentheses).

1. We will not publish an article by you because another scholar is writing an article on the same subject for another journal. (Might not this situation have been better seen as an opportunity to present contrasting views?)
2. Your article is inappropriate in this form. It should appear as a letter to the editor. (This came from an associate editor, apparently on the suggestion of the editor-in-chief.)
3. I am sorry. We cannot publish your article in the form of a letter to the editor because our journal does not accept letters to the editor for publication. (This came from the editor-in-chief of the same journal mentioned in [2], but only after we had taken the associate editor’s suggestion.)

36. L. Bellosi, “‘Castrum pingatur in palatio’ 2. Duccio e Simone Martini pittori di castelli senesi a l’esempio come erano,” *Prospettiva*, no. 28 (January 1982): 41–65.

37. L. Bellosi, “Nella cittadella del gotico,” *Nuovo corriere senese*, 27 March 1985, 10.

4. It is difficult to find anything new in your article; it seems a mere repetition of the *Studies in Iconography* articles. (In reality, this submission contained documentary evidence and additional information discovered only after the *Studies in Iconography* articles had been published.)
5. The controversy is too heated. (Wouldn't one expect that the introduction of new evidence in a "heated controversy" to be especially welcomed by a journal?)
6. Perhaps you are too *parti pris* to write this article. (What scholars do not believe in the hypotheses they have formulated?)
7. Your article is too long. (Recent articles in the same journal were as long or longer.)
8. The articles and sources you cite are "not easily accessible," and it is difficult for people to follow your article if they are coming to the topic fresh. (The purposes of this submission were to make a wider audience familiar with information that had appeared in obscure publications and to allow people coming to the Guido Riccio situation for the first time to become involved!)
9. Evidence should not come out piecemeal. (Most articles in scholarly journals are examples of evidence coming out piecemeal.)
10. There is no document in your article showing who painted the Guido Riccio fresco. A theory that is so radical should have a final document. (In art history and many other fields, it is common for theories that once seemed "radical" and that are now widely accepted to have never been proven by a final document. Besides, if we had a final document, there would be no purpose in publishing our theories in article form in the first place.)
11. We have the power to reject whatever articles we want to. (No comment.)
12. Your article is written for specialists. (All articles in art history journals are to one degree or another written for specialists. The Guido Riccio fresco is a world-famous painting that appears in textbooks as a standard of late medieval taste and, therefore, of especially wide interest.)
13. Your article repeats information that has already been published. (The information in question appeared in not easily accessible publications, such as local newspapers with limited circulation.)
14. Your article does not repeat information that has already been published, leaving the reader groundless. (This objection is from the same editor who made the comments in [13].)

Readers can decide whether these are valid reasons for not publishing new evidence, much of it documentary, in the Guido Riccio controversy. They can also consider whether the editors of these journals might have been reluctant to become involved in such a controversial subject and might have forgotten, for the moment at least, that the purpose of scholarly journals is to present new evidence for others to evaluate no matter what accepted truths that evidence might challenge. If these same criteria were applied to all art historians, how many fundamental studies in our field would never have found their way into print?

Out of "Cite," Out of Mind? Failure to discuss or even cite opposing views is another obvious form of censorship. Since 1977, there has been a tendency among proponents of the official view of the Guido Riccio and of the newly discovered fresco to ignore in scholarly publications the substance of views different from their own. A few examples will suffice.

In 1983, six years after the initial doubts about the Guido Riccio fresco had been raised, three years after the new fresco had been uncovered, and some time after a number of scholars had expressed opinions about both paintings, some dissenting from the official view, Professor Gabriele Borghini declared that Simone Martini's authorship of the famous Guido Riccio was doubted by Moran alone.³⁸ By citing only the initial study of 1977 and by failing to mention his and others' more recent views, Borghini left readers with the distinct impression that Moran had no support from other scholars.³⁹

A year later, Previtali created the same impression, and two years later, Professor Alessandro Conti followed suit.⁴⁰ In 1986, after Professors Federico Zeri, Giulio Briganti, Florenz Deuchler, Mario Aschieri, Alessandro Parronchi, and Vittorio Sgarbi had published contrary views,⁴¹ Professor Fabbio Bisogni stated in his guidebook of the Palazzo Pubblico Museum that there was no justifiable reason to doubt the traditional attribution of the famous Guido Riccio fresco to Simone Martini, and he endorsed the opinion that the newly discovered fresco was a work by Duccio. The opinions of certain scholars disagreeing with some aspects of the official view were cited, but only those that did not challenge the Simone Martini attribution of the Guido Riccio, and the unwary museum visitor was left with the impression that the main issues had been settled.⁴²

Bisogni justified his treatment of the Guido Riccio question on the occasion of his book's presentation.⁴³ To the press and to others present who were curious about opposing views that had received increasing attention over the last few years, he declared (we paraphrase): an attribution is changed only when there has been a convincing "*contributo scientifico*" (scholarly contribution) that would warrant this. What does this mean? Presumably, Seidel's and Bellosi's articles that had established the official attributions of the two works and that were cited by Bisogni were *contributi scientifici*. The opinions of certain other scholars who differed in details from the official view but who did not challenge the attribution of Guido Riccio to Simone Martini seem also to have been *contributi scientifici*, because they, too, were cited. Other studies, some lengthy, that presented abundant new information, some of it documentary, but that did question the official view were apparently not *contributi scientifici*, because they were not mentioned. How, then, we wonder, can Bisogni's use of the term *contributo scientifico* be anything more than a buzzword for censorship?

Bisogni's logic and methodology can be examined in light of the scandal over three sculptures "discovered" at the bottom of a canal near Livorno and declared to be long-lost works by the famous sculptor Modigliani. The Modigliani attribution appeared in what surely would be considered a *contributo scientifico*, a 1984 catalog published in collaboration with the office of the Superintendent of Artistic Patrimony for the Provinces of Pisa, Livorno, Lucca, and Massa-Carrara. This attribution was confirmed by the authoritative opinions of important art historians. The media revealed the

38. G. Borghini, "La decorazione," in *Palazzo Pubblico di Siena* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1983), 215-20, 342-46. This monograph was sponsored by the powerful Monte dei Paschi bank of Siena.

39. For a summary of the dissenting views: Wohl, "Old Masterpiece Challenged."

40. Mariotti, "Da Modì a Guidoriccio"; A. Conti, "Simone o non Simone," *Alfabeta* (June 1985): 34.

41. For a compilation of numerous articles concerning the Guido Riccio: *Notizie d'arte* (March 1985 and May 1985).

42. F. Bisogni and M. Ciampolini, *Guida al Museo Civico di Siena* (Siena: Edisiena, 1985), 105-6.

43. Reported in *La nazione*, 28 August 1985.

truth. Four college students had carved one of the sculptures with a Black & Decker hand tool as a prank. (They later carved another one on national television to prove that they had done it.) A Livornese painter and dock-worker had made the other two as an artistic happening. Are we to continue to believe that the false works are genuine Modiglianis? No *contributo scientifico* superseding the 1984 catalog has appeared; there is only the evidence brought to light by the media, whose efforts would not seem to coincide with Bisogni's notion of a *contributo scientifico*.

The Situation at the Kunsthistorisches Institut. The Kunsthistorisches Institut is a major art history library in Florence, Italy, and one of the major art history libraries in the world. In its index of art periodicals, one can find listed in one or several cross-reference files nearly everything published on Italian art in cultural and art history periodicals since 1945. It is a starting point for a young scholar's research and a touchstone for anyone wanting to keep abreast of new developments in the field of Italian art history.

Since about 1980, however, newly published art historical literature has been indexed more selectively than it had been before. Because of financial restrictions, we were informed, the Institut ceased indexing certain publications it considered to be "unimportant." Surprisingly, there is no indication for index users which publications these are, a misleading situation because scholars have come to depend upon the index for its completeness. Also, index users are not told why a given periodical, after having been indexed for years, should suddenly have become unimportant. We learned about this "important-unimportant" policy only after lengthy correspondence with the Institut, and we were informed that the importance of a journal is now being determined by two criteria: the "special knowledge or interests" of the two collaborators who do the indexing and whether that journal is "especially rich" in articles on Italian art. Several days of research revealed that some of the periodicals declared unimportant and no longer being regularly indexed actually contained more material on Italian art than did those still considered important. The second criterion seems, then, not to have been the major consideration. The real determining factor was "special interests."

The Kunsthistorisches Institut's policy toward the indexing of periodical literature has special relevance to the Guido Riccio controversy and the theme of resistance to critical thinking. Excepting Moran's initial 1977 publication that expressed some doubts about the Guido Riccio fresco but that appeared when there was as yet no widespread controversy over the painting, no articles by us or by any other authors who disagreed with the official view of one or both of the frescoes were listed anywhere in the index's several cross-reference files from 1980 to early 1986—that is, through the important, intensive early stages of the Guido Riccio controversy. The periodicals in which dissenting theories appeared all seem to have been judged unimportant. Even more curiously, they had lost their important status only recently, in more than one case with the very issue in which a contesting article appeared.

During the same span of time, any periodical article that stated the view of the official commission or agreed with the commission's conclusions

was indexed. Both Seidel and Bellosi, who first published the views of the official commission, were indexed and cross-referenced. It would seem that the journals in which these articles appeared had remained important, as had journals that published the views of others supporting the commission's conclusions, because references to these contributions were to be found in the index.

In early 1984, we presented the Kunsthistorisches Institut with a copy of the latest issue of *News from RILA* (International Repertory of the Literature of Art). It contained the fullest discussion to date of the Guido Riccio controversy and abstracts of thirteen articles that disagreed with the views of the official commission (none of which could be found in the Institut's periodical index by author). Offprints that are given to the Institut are usually bound and within a few months appear on the appropriate shelf, and though we specifically requested that our gift be treated as an offprint, this issue of the *News* has never been seen again. Our repeated inquiries about its whereabouts were met with silence until Dr. Berndt Doll, an official of the Ministerium für Forschung und Technologie in Bonn, told us, in a letter of 24 September 1986, to refrain from making further inquiries about the missing *News from RILA*; the director of the Institut and his staff, we were informed, were too busy to reply to our inquiries. As a subscriber to this newsletter, the Institut had received its own copy of the issue in question, but for nearly two years it was not put out on its proper shelf in the library. More than one scholar informed us of denied access to this *News*. It finally appeared in February 1986, but only after the inquiry of other scholars about its whereabouts.

We persisted in our efforts to get more clarification about the indexing. Eventually, in January 1986, some of our material was partially indexed. After years of inquiry, our names suddenly appeared in the authors' file (though in none of the other cross-reference files) the first working day after an important American art historian made specific inquiries about why they were not to be found. The Institut maintained throughout this period that it was a mere coincidence that our studies and those of others who in one way or another agreed with us in the Guido Riccio controversy were difficult if not impossible to locate in the library. Perhaps this is so. But it is interesting that three officials of the Institut were also members of the organizing committee that had rejected our request to speak at the 1985 conference on Simone Martini.

We corresponded with a number of individuals, including librarians and schools of librarianship, about the situation at the Institut. In addition, we presented a paper at the 1986 Annual Meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Amsterdam in which we summarized what had happened and pointed out how one scholarly point of view of a growing art historical controversy had been effectively obscured for about five years.⁴⁴ Professor Serge Lang (Department of Mathematics, Yale University), a well-known champion for ethical practices in academe, responded: "If anyone had told me that the kind of censorship that you expose occurs in the Western World to the extent that you are now documenting, I would have not believed it. I thought the libraries, at least, would be above reproach." Professor Sanford Berman

44. G. Moran and M. Mallory, "Selective' Card Cataloging (or In-House Screening of Periodical Indexing) of Art History Articles in Authors' Files, Relating to Specific Art Historical Problems: A Case Study," in *Art Periodicals: Papers of the Second European Conference of the Art Libraries of IFLA, Amsterdam, 13-17 October 1986*, ed. K. Wynia (Amsterdam: 1988), 123-32.

(Hennepin County Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota) wrote (excerpted from two letters):

The situation that you describe regarding the non-cataloging of material hostile to Professor Seidel's views appears to be a gross example of censorship, which all scholars and librarians genuinely committed to intellectual freedom, to the free interplay of ideas, should roundly denounce. . . . The "explanation" for indexing or cataloging some titles, but not others, I find capricious, defensive, and ultimately absurd. . . . I trust that the present, censorious policy at the Institut Library will be promptly corrected—before it becomes a serious and perhaps indelible embarrassment to the Institut, the German government, the art history discipline, and the library profession.

After seeing further evidence of what was going on, Berman wrote to an official of the Institut stating he was "appalled" and "disgusted" by the "transparent censorship" that was taking place.

Other people, especially those affiliated with IFLA, held a different view. Professor Robert Wedgeworth, dean of the School of Library Sciences at Columbia University and member of the IFLA Executive Board, wrote: "many well-meaning persons are reluctant to criticize operations." Professor Margreet Wijnstroom, a colleague of Wedgeworth on the IFLA Executive Board, wrote: "Very few libraries would acknowledge such a gift [our copy of *News from RILA*]. . . . I would suggest that you let the matter rest, and in any case cease to bother the members of my Executive Board and my staff. . . ." Another IFLA official, Professor A. L. Wesemael, even contended that "the intellectual reliability and the special knowledge or interests of the staff cataloging are the only 'tools' which can help to decide on which item should be cataloged and which should not." Ten other IFLA officials refused to respond to our requests for their views on the Kunsthistorisches Institut situation. Also, a number of administrators of the Art Libraries of North America and of the Art Libraries Association of UK and Eire did the same.

QUESTIONABLE RESEARCH PRACTICES If the search for truth were the foundation of the academic ethic, scholars would present what they research as completely and accurately as possible. Some research relevant to the Guido Riccio controversy seems not to conform to such a standard. Unfortunately, what we report here is but a sampling.

How High Is Montemassi? Professor Italo Moretti, in an attempt to establish that the Guido Riccio fresco is by Simone Martini, contended that the site of the castle of Montemassi, including the topography and orography of the surrounding countryside, is respected ("*rispettata*") in the fresco.⁴⁵ The close coincidence of what was painted and what actually exists confirmed, for him at least, that the extant work must be Simone's original. Leaving aside the logic of this argument—why couldn't another later artist have painted the site of Montemassi just as accurately?—and the evidence that the castle in the fresco may have been built over a century after the

45. I. Moretti, "Simone Martini a Montemassi," *Prospettiva*, no. 23 (October 1980): 66–72.

date that it was supposedly painted, our own visit to Montemassi established that what the painting portrays is not an accurate rendition of the castle site or of the surrounding countryside. Moretti claimed that, viewing the castle the way the painter did, one sees first, to the right, Casa Battifolle, a house on the supposed site of the legendary siege machine, and then the hill of Poggio Colombo, just as they are portrayed in the fresco. Actually, the reverse is true; the casa and the hill appear on the left, and to the castle's right is the open plain leading to Grosseto.

More important, the castle of Montemassi is higher in relation to the hill than what the fresco shows. Curiously, Moretti's study "lowers" the extant castle so that it would appear to coincide more closely with what is portrayed. Using the definitive *Carte d'Italia* as his source and providing a detailed illustration of it in his study, Moretti claimed that the height of the castle is 260 meters. Our own copy of the same map clearly gives Montemassi's height as 280 meters. A close examination of Moretti's illustration reveals that the map's figure "8" has been altered to read as a "6" as the text asserts.

The Commission and the Submission. As noted, a key piece of evidence establishing the date of origin of the Guido Riccio fresco is the identification of the newly discovered fresco's castle. The official commission eventually identified it as Giuncarico, which the Siense government had planned to portray in the Palazzo Pubblico in 1314. Even though there are significant topographical differences between the site of Giuncarico and what is portrayed in the fresco, the commission concluded that, on the basis of its iconography, what was shown was Giuncarico.

Seidel's report of the commission's findings summed up its views.⁴⁶ He claimed that the submission of Giuncarico was exceptional because the citizenry "spontaneously" and "peacefully" submitted to Siena. He further asserted that it was this unusual act, formally carried out by the town's *sindaco* (whom he identified as the figure with the sword), that is being enacted in the new fresco. Proof of this peaceful submission of Giuncarico to Siena, according to Seidel, was contained in the subsequently concluded peace treaty, which he published; it "repeated" that the submission of Giuncarico was "spontaneous" and independent of military action or pressure.

Seidel did not specify where it was first mentioned that Giuncarico spontaneously and peacefully submitted to Siense control. Neither he nor any other member of the commission has subsequently cited this reference. The treaty itself, then, becomes the only hard evidence on which the commission's theory might rest. Nowhere in its transcription by Seidel is a spontaneous submission mentioned. The absence of such a reference is somewhat surprising because peace treaties between Siena and other towns frequently stated that, contrary to what actually happened, a castle's or a territory's submission to Siense control was spontaneous and peaceful. What, then, is the basis for the commission's interpretation of the fresco's iconography and identification?

When we turn from Seidel's transcription of the Giuncarico-Siena peace treaty to the original document itself, we find written: "cumque ad acquisitionem dicta terra fuerit labor non modicus, adhibitus personarum, viribus

46. Seidel, "Castrum pingatur in palatio" 1," 30-33.

corporis et armorum insistentibus circa acquisitionem prefatum et studium etiam sapientum” (And since there was no small labor exerted by persons toward the acquisition of the said land with strength of body and weapons applied with a view toward obtaining the aforesaid acquisition and also effort of the wise [strategy?]). How, then, can the surrender of Giuncarico be considered in any way spontaneous and peaceful? And how, in the light of this new evidence, can we possibly interpret the fresco’s iconography in the way Seidel does? Unfortunately, the crucial lines just quoted from the original document are missing from Seidel’s otherwise complete transcription.

Furrows and the Destruction of the Guido Riccio’s Border. Since the new fresco was first uncovered in 1980, scholars and restorers concur that the large, curved furrows gouged into its surface are important evidence. This damage seems to have been caused by the rotation of a map, initially identified as a mappamondo (map of the world) painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1345, that was affixed to the wall. Recent archival finds indicate that, rather than a mappamondo, it was a map of the Siennese state, a *carta topografica*, painted around 1424 and enlarged once in 1459 and quite possibly at other times, that was actually located here.⁴⁷ Whichever map it was, the damage it caused is crucial to the question of the Guido Riccio’s date. If the rotated map damaged the surface of the famous fresco, it would date earlier than the map. If the Guido Riccio covers the furrows, however, the map would have been already installed, and removed, before the fresco was painted.

Seidel claimed that the map, which he believed to be Ambrogio’s, damaged the Guido Riccio and, hence, the famous fresco was already in existence by 1345 and must be Simone’s fourteenth-century original. Illustrating his points with photographs and drawings, he went on to theorize that after the Guido Riccio had been damaged, the map was moved lower on the wall so that it fell just below the lowest extremity of the famous fresco and avoided further mutilation.

In truth, the only evidence of any map having damaged the Guido Riccio fresco is one thin, precisely incised, curving line whose course would seem to have been determined by a compass. Whatever its origin, this damage is entirely different in nature from the broad furrows that mar the surface of the new fresco, a fact that is not brought out in Seidel’s report. We speculate that this curved incision may have originated during the early years of the present century when a reconstruction of Ambrogio’s map was contemplated for this wall. Far more important, and contrary to what Seidel claimed, old photographs indicate that the Guido Riccio’s lower border covered the map’s furrows and hence postdates the time of its installation. Therefore, it cannot have been painted by Simone Martini, who died in 1344—before any map was made. But we shall never know for certain.

Part of the Guido Riccio’s lower border (an area roughly twelve feet long and several inches wide), in the precise area where the crucial overlap occurred, has disappeared. In what has developed into the most serious aspect of the whole controversy, this portion of the border, which is referred to in two separate technical reports as an integral part of the fresco,⁴⁸

47. G. Moran, “Studi sul mappamondo,” *Notizie d’arte* (February 1982): 6–7.

48. L. Tintori, “Ricerche tecniche sul Guido Riccio a gli altri affreschi nella Sala del Mappamondo del Palazzo Pubblico a Siena,” 1979, TS, Poood “raro,” Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence; Gavazzi, “Realizzazione tecnica.”

was destroyed in 1980–81 when the new fresco was uncovered. The official commission could hardly have been ignorant of this loss because it was the commission itself that was in charge of the day-to-day affairs of the new fresco's liberation from the overcoating layer of whitewash. Yet Seidel mentioned nothing about the removal of a part of the Guido Riccio's border. To the contrary, his published statements, photographs, and drawings make it unclear whether the original border was in place and what its relationship to the map's furrows really was.

The disappearance of part of the Guido Riccio's border, the failure to report it, and the obfuscated manner in which the overlaps were presented by Seidel seem to defy basic principles of accuracy in reporting research results and fundamental rules relating to the restoration of paintings. Not only was evidence effaced so that future generations will never know precisely what the relationship of fresco to furrows was, but an original part of a historically significant work of art, whatever its date of origin, was destroyed.⁴⁹

"You'll Wonder Where the Yellow Went." The first suspicions that the equestrian portrait in the Guido Riccio fresco was painted after Simone Martini's death revolved around the questions of when Guido Riccio was knighted and of whether there was gold on the equestrian's spurs and uniform. Because chronicles indicated that Guido Riccio was not knighted until 1333 and because only knights, judges, and doctors were allowed to wear gold or silver in Siena during the fourteenth century, spurs of gold would have been an anachronism if the portrait was painted in 1330. This situation seemed resolvable only through a determination of whether gold was actually present.

Based on a preliminary investigation in 1977, it appeared that both gold and silver were on the fresco. Doubts about the equestrian portrait having been painted in 1330 seemed justified. In 1979, after further technical investigations, it was announced at a press conference that there was silver on the figure; no longer was there mention of gold. The full technical report summarizing the 1979 investigations, however, stated that not only was there no gold but there was no silver either.⁵⁰ In a subsequent article in *The Burlington Magazine*, Professor Lionetto Tintori, who carried out the 1979 investigations, proclaimed that there was no gold on the fresco or any attempt to imitate the color or appearance of gold!⁵¹ Looking at the painting afresh at this point, one might recall the words of the old Pepsodent toothpaste commercial, "You'll wonder where the yellow went."

After the 1979 investigations had been concluded, it was discovered that Guido Riccio was probably knighted before coming to Siena in 1327.⁵² Now the situation was reversed. If the figure on horseback really was an accurate contemporary portrait of 1330, the noble Guido Riccio would logically have worn gold, something that the technical reports had emphatically denied. Once again, Simonesque origins for the figure would seem to be in question. But now there was a new twist to this question of gold. 1980–81 technical investigations established that there was gold on the belt of the standing figure with a sword in the newly discovered fresco, which would seem to confirm our view that it is this figure that is a genuine portrait of Guido Riccio painted by Simone Martini.

49. For recent developments in this aspect of the controversy: M. Mallory and G. Moran, "A Border Incident in the War over Guido Riccio," *Source 5* (Fall 1985): 14–17; idem, Letter to the Editor, *Burlington Magazine* 129 (March 1987): 187; P. Torriti, Letter to the Editor, *Burlington Magazine* 131 (July 1989): 485–86; and our Letter to the Editor, *Burlington Magazine* 133 (January 1991).

50. Tintori, "Ricerche tecniche."

51. L. Tintori, "Golden Tin in Siennese Murals of the Trecento," *Burlington Magazine* 124 (February 1982): 94–95.

52. *Archivio Gonsoga*, vol. 42, 1848, ad annum, 1321, Archivio di Stato di Mantova.

More recently, the issue of whether there is gold on the Guido Riccio has returned. Professors Joseph Polzer and Piero Torriti have now claimed that either gold or silver plate or the appearance of precious metal is to be found in the famous Guido Riccio fresco.⁵³ How this is to be reconciled with the technical investigations remains to be seen. However it may be resolved, this question of gold or no gold hardly inspires confidence in the way technical data are gathered and utilized in the resolution of art historical problems.

The list of questionable research practices in the Guido Riccio controversy contains many more instances than those we cite; alas, it continues to grow. Even if one were to try to explain these lapses as the inadvertent errors that inevitably creep into research, one would soon realize that there is a common direction to them all: to affirm the traditional attribution of the Guido Riccio to Simone Martini.

ACADEMIC COVER-UP As a scholarly debate develops, participants normally present the evidence for their hypotheses, discuss and attempt to rebut opposing views, and defend their own views when challenged by others. When new evidence comes to light, it is contemplated and debated. If it is valid and relevant, it is included in the discussion and former theories are modified and new hypotheses are formulated. Only if it is convincingly demonstrated that the new evidence is not valid or relevant can it be put aside.

Hit-and-Run Scholarship. A far less desirable alternative to the ideal platform for a scholarly debate might be for a scholar or a group of scholars sharing one point of view about a given question to retreat into what Professor David Rosand has called “studied silence.”⁵⁴ Refusal to respond as a policy and not as a temporary and prudent time-out to think through a problem is a sort of intellectual hit-and-run. The silent scholar and the hit-and-run driver both leave the scene in hopes of avoiding all consequences and explanations of their words and actions.

By November 1983, we had published our discovery that the submission of Giuncarico seems not to have been peaceful and spontaneous and that lines omitted from Seidel’s transcription of the peace treaty made this clear.⁵⁵ In April 1984, we put forth this discovery again during a lecture at Harvard University’s Villa I Tatti in Florence, at which Seidel himself was present. We asked him to defend his theory of a spontaneous and peaceful submission in light of the new evidence. He did not respond to the question and claimed that our challenge to his theory was a “serious accusation.” When we assured him, publicly, that no accusation was intended but that we would like his view about the seemingly conflicting evidence, he replied that there might have been an oversight (“*svista*”) in his transcription of the document, and he refused to discuss the matter further. Later, he informed us that he would not respond to our hypotheses or challenges to his theories unless they appeared in a journal that was worthy of being read. (Apparently, *Studies in Iconography*, *Bulletino senese di storia patria*, and *The Burlington Magazine* do not qualify.) Still later, we are informed, Seidel claimed that because of pressing academic matters his studies of this subject are a thing of the past and that he will not return to them.

53. J. Polzer, “Simone Martini’s Guidoriccio Fresco: The Polemic concerning Its Origin Reviewed, and the Fresco Considered as Serving the Military Triumph of a Tuscan Comune,” *RACAR* 14 (1987): 23. For Torriti’s views, see his “I mass-media ed il ‘caso Guido Riccio,’” *Il campo*, 13 June 1985.

54. D. Rosand, “The Elusive Michelangelo,” *Art News* 78 (Summer 1979): 49.

55. Mallory and Moran, “Inte-ressanti documentazioni,” 1–2.

To simplify and focus the problem of no response, we compiled a list of over fifty points of evidence—some of which are summarized at the beginning of this article—disputing the official view of the authorship and date of the two frescoes under discussion. In our view, no member of the official commission nor any other scholar supporting its position has made a convincing rebuttal to any of these, and the most important points have been ignored. At the same time, supporters of the official position have formulated elaborate studies that simply repeat the commission's conclusions, as though our contrasting evidence did not exist.

Collegial Protection. The art historical world has not been quick to step into the Guido Riccio controversy or to express concern about any possible breach of ethical standards. To the contrary, there has been a tendency to look the other way. Our attempts to make the facts known have met considerable resistance. Professor Henry Turner, himself involved in an ongoing controversy in modern German history, put it well in a letter to us: “the first reaction of others is to revile the whistle blowers. What I have observed is a cozy, lodge-like attitude that inclines others to protect what they perceive as an imperiled member of the fraternity, regardless of the facts of the case.”

Consider, for example, the *Biccherna* book cover incident. The cover, purported to have originated from a 1328 account book of the Siene government agency *La Biccherna*, was decorated with a scene obviously derived from the Guido Riccio fresco. It was seized upon by some art historians, including John White, Anthony Fehm, Jr., Bruce Cole, and Edna Southard, to be proof that the famous Guido Riccio fresco was already in existence by the date the cover was painted. Southard wrote that we had failed to take this *Biccherna* cover into account, that it was a “very important piece of evidence,” that it appeared “unlikely” to be a “forgery or a later painting,” and that it therefore might be “evidence that the fresco of Guidoriccio could have been painted in the council room in 1328.”⁵⁶ She and the other scholars apparently were unaware that the painted cover had been exhibited and repeatedly published as a forgery. Had they and others not been so eager to counter our theories, or had these individuals first asked us about the cover before making their pronouncements, this episode of the Guido Riccio controversy might have been avoided. Be that as it may, a subsequent publication, *Le Biccherno*,⁵⁷ smoothed over the potentially embarrassing situation for the art historians. Carla Zarrilli noted in the original manuscript of her entry about this cover that White, Cole, Southard, and Fehm believed it to be authentic, even though it was certainly a forgery. This disclosure never appeared, and in her published entry, all these art historians' names were withdrawn; only William Bowsky, not an art historian, is named as having been fooled. (For the record, it was Fehm who showed Bowsky the cover in the first place, expressing no doubts as to its authenticity.)

Elsewhere in the literature of the Guido Riccio controversy there is conspicuous silence about potentially embarrassing situations. Nowhere in the so-called core art history literature, excepting in our publications, will one read that, when seeing freshly uncovered parts of the newly discovered fresco, the official commission was the first to proclaim enthusiastically that

56. E. Southard, *The Frescoes in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico (1289-1539)* (New York: Garland Press, 1979), 234.

57. L. Borgia, E. Carli, M. A. Ceppari, U. Morandi, P. Sini-baldi, and C. Zarrilli, eds., *Le Biccherno* (Rome: Le Monnier, 1984), 318-19.

the castle represented was Arcidosso and that the fresco's painter was Simone Martini. Only after it was realized that such an identification would compromise the traditional attribution of the famous Guido Riccio fresco were another identification (Giuncarico) and another attribution (Duccio) substituted. Nor is it possible to find in the art historical literature, excepting our publications, any thorough discussion of Seidel's incomplete transcription of the peace treaty and the missing lines' disastrous effect for a Giuncarico identification of the newly discovered fresco.

One well-known art historical journal rejected our short article on the latter subject, which seemed especially ironic in light of some statements excerpted from its own introduction. (1) This journal's specifically stated philosophy and intention is to publish only those art history articles that deal precisely with the problems of documentary research. ("... il dedicarsi, in modo assoluto, ai studi che abbiano a base ricerche documentarie; essa infatti accoglierà ora scritti di tal genere. . .") (2) This journal's expressed intention is to propagate the concept of absolute scrupulousness in the publication of documents. ("Cercar di diffondere il concetto di scrupolosità assoluta nella pubblicazione dei documenti. . .") (3) Another particular concern of this journal is for authors to make clear what documents actually say and not what authors might like them to say. ("Far dire ai documenti quello che possono dire e non quello che piacerebbero dicessero.")

In the multiple letters of rejection we received, the journal's editors stated that our contribution was too "polemical" and that we had accused Seidel of having left out the crucial lines on purpose. It is difficult to see how the correction of a mistranscribed document is in and of itself polemical; as for us having accused Seidel of having left out anything on purpose, what we wrote was that the omission, we supposed, was no more than an inadvertent "slip of the pen" ("Supponiamo che l'omissione di questa parte cruciale del documento fosse niente altro che un innocente 'lapsus calamai'"). Our article was soon after published in local weekly newspaper.

The inquiring scholar might conclude that, in the face of evidence that might prove embarrassing to friends, colleagues, and even the field, professional journals do not live up to the high standards they proclaim. Whether intended, the journal we cite protected Seidel from having to defend his identification of the newly discovered castle representation as Giuncarico by refusing to publish our material. As a consequence, the Giuncarico identification still stands for many, and an identification that is demonstratively false continues to be passed off as fact. Even recently, Polzer, in a lengthy article again asserting the official commission's view of the two frescoes, complimented Seidel on the documentary information that he had introduced.⁵⁸ Polzer conceded that Seidel might be wrong about the precise Giuncarico identification but contended that the newly discovered fresco, which "cannot be Arcidosso," must have been done about the same time as the Giuncarico. He mentioned that an article of ours brought to light some new documentation about the Sienese struggle to obtain Giuncarico, but he continued to follow Seidel's contention that Giuncarico's submission was spontaneous. Polzer made no mention that in this same article we pointed out the missing lines in Seidel's transcription. Again, an embarrassing issue has been avoided, and the Giuncarico theory lives on.

58. Polzer, "Simone Martini's Guidoriccio Fresco."

Polzer provided us with one more example of protecting a scholar who published flawed research. He endorsed Moretti's view that the Guido Riccio fresco respects the topography and orography of the site of Montemassi. Although he recognized that what is shown does not correspond exactly to what is actually there, he repeated Moretti's observations about the relative heights of the actual castle and the hill of Poggio Colombo and how they allegedly correspond to what we see in the fresco. Polzer published what he claimed to be the pertinent detail of the *Carte d'Italia* to once again prove this point. And once again, as in Moretti's illustration of the same detail, an "8" has become a "6." Whatever one concludes from this curious situation, Moretti's publication takes on additional credence, and an unfortunate error is prolonged rather than corrected.

The resistance to critical thinking of the sort outlined here is ongoing. In our opinion at least, Polzer's most recent contribution to the Guido Riccio controversy distorts fact, ignores evidence, and adheres to the illogical—just the sorts of things that have blocked the path to an accurate assessment of the pertinent evidence. If this trend continues, the worst is yet to come.

IN AN ATTEMPT to make art historians aware of what has been going on and to clarify ethical standards for how research is carried out and applied, we appealed to an American art historians' professional organization, the College Art Association of America (CAA). The CAA's response was less than what we had hoped for. We discovered that the organization's committee on ethics had been disbanded, a curious situation considering Americans' increasing concern about ethical standards in the aftermath of recent scandals in the political and financial worlds. Even more curious is the CAA's apparent reluctance to disclose when this ethics committee was disbanded; repeated requests for this information have gone unanswered.

A special CAA committee was convened to consider whether the information we submitted on unethical practices among some scholars involved in the Guido Riccio controversy warranted a revision in the CAA's code of ethics or, for that matter, any response from them. Some of our submitted material repeated what we have outlined in this article. Also, one of us requested permission to attend the special committee's meetings to clarify and add to what we had presented. No response to this request was forthcoming, and the committee considered the matter without our presence.

A letter from Paul Arnold, the president of the CAA, subsequently informed us that the board of directors saw no reason to revise the organization's code of ethics or to take any action. What we outlined was too "subjective," Arnold informed us, and the CAA's code of ethics was concerned with "objective" issues. And anyway, the CAA can only state principles, not enforce them. Reactions, or in some cases the lack of reactions, to the CAA's characterization of incomplete transcriptions of documents, misrepresentation and destruction of evidence, and censorship as "subjective matters" from specialists in the field of academic ethics suggest to us that we will soon have another chapter to write on the ongoing saga of the Guido Riccio controversy. At this time, we leave readers with the words

of Serge Lang, who wrote us regarding the contents of the CAA board's letter:

You can quote me that I fully support your efforts to expose the corruption and censorship in the art history world and the world of librarians, which you have documented and encountered. Of course, not all people in art history or libraries are corrupt or censor, and it is for the grass roots to clean up their environment. . . . I do wish the CAA and similar organizations took cognizance of the facts of obstructions, evasiveness, falsifications, misrepresentations, which occur on a much more widespread basis than is usually recognized. I don't especially care if they do this in a statutory way or not, but they should get involved and lend support to cases that have merit, on the basis of the merits of the case. By refusing to get involved, they become accessories after the fact. And I object. . . . ♦

Acknowledgment: *We thank Professor John Agnew of Syracuse University, whose concern for intellectual fair play, open-mindedness, and academic integrity prompted these comments about resistance to critical thinking in the Guido Riccio controversy.*