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The March of the Statues in early Quattrocento Florence: Resilience in Art?

In this paper, I will discuss the statues, made for the Orsanmichele at the beginning of the Quattrocento in Florence. These statues represent the patron saints of the guilds of Florence and stand at the beginning of the return to the all'antica style in art, the Renaissance. Famous examples are the Quattro Coronati by Nanni di Banco, the Saint George by Donatello and the Saint Matthew by Ghiberti. In the art-historical literature these statues have been seen as manifestations of resilience in a time of crisis. I wonder if they can indeed be defined as such. Therefore I will focus on the following question: to what extent can the statues at the Orsanmichele be seen as manifestations of resilience in a time of crisis?

First of all I will discuss the writings of Hans Baron and Frederick Hartt. These authors have shaped the theory in which it was stated that the sculptures at the Orsanmichele were acts of resilience. Then I will take a closer look at the church of the Orsanmichele. This church was originally the grain market of the commune of Florence. In the fourteenth century it became a church where the 21 guilds of Florence would gather to celebrate the feast days of their patron saints. In the first decade of the fifteenth century the major and middle guilds of Florence all commissioned larger than life statues of their patron saints to be placed at the exterior of the church. Were these statues acts of resilience?