

Title - Uccello's Great Battle

Premise - For 15th Century Florentine painter, depicting a recent battle becomes his own biggest battle.

Scenes

Orientation and Crisis

Images of battle, and memories of people telling him about it. They were fully armoured, including helmets over heads. There were boys there - so young they looked like girls. Horses and men fallen to the ground. It all spins in Paolo's head. Why by the fifth circle of hell did he say he could do this!

Uccello remembers. Salimbini commissioning for bed-chamber [We see the room with the arched walls]. The widower has a new wife, and wants an impressive bedroom. He was part of commissioning the battle, and now wants to commemorate it. It is also a statement of his macho virility. He has liked Uccello's paintings of people on horses - [Salimbini in the duomo looking up at Hawkwood painting, admiring the scale and perspective] but these are static single figures - don't prepare him for a scene of this scale and complexity.

Developing Crisis

Salimbini comes round to check the drawings/studies. He wants more actual battle, corpses, and lances.

With Donatello: both had been apprentices of Ghiberti, and both dealing with problems of advanced space: Donatello's David is thought to be first sculpture fully in the round since classical times. [Check when D left Florence]. [Donatello was said to have said of one U painting he was keeping covered, that it was best so.

Flashback to Manetti teaching him geometry and perspective. [We see him doing geometric drawings, and perspective grids - later famous from paintings]. "Paolo, be done with this study. Go and put it into your art!"

[Midpoint] Salimbini harangues Uccello for lack of progress: only perspective grid on the walls [for first panel]. This is meant to demonstrate his power and virility - if he seems unable to manage an artist...? "Perhaps it could demonstrate, not just virility, but patient attention to the finest detail, and most satisfying result."

Uccello doing drawings of individual details. Final crisis is trying to bring this all together.

Lull

Salimbini is perhaps away on honeymoon with his wife, creates a lull in the external pressure. Uccello produces the various drawings/studies. Drawing them in side view [as Vasari criticised - perhaps Donatello does too...?] enables them to be placed at various points in the picture.

Final Crisis

Donatello and David sculpture. Complex perspective drawing of the hat. Donatello berates him for being too into the theory, whereas he just feels the figure - imagines it in his hands - they could not be more different.

Salimbini returns, and is angry at lack of progress. Threatens to cancel the whole deal, and more besides. Asks/tells Uccello to live in to get more work done. Does Uccello know he has links with the [powerful and feared] Medici? S leaves the room momentarily leaving his steward with U: he threatens him with a knife to the throat. gets steward to hold knife to his throat [or gets assistant/

heavy to do?] This instills the adrenalin to inhabit the painting. Stewards (in rotation) watching him. He keeps imagining painful attack and death Focus on time, gives Paolo a revelation, to capture different stages of actions through different figures {separate this out to drawings in comics panels, then see combined at end. comics p

Turn

Uccello works for days and nights without stopping. Scene of someone bringing him cheese based meal and Uccello complaining - throwing it at him. [Flashback to earlier commission when continually fed cheese meals]. Pulling the drawing together [on the actual wall or just on paper?]

They imagine the finished work, Sambilini's wife admiring it, aroused, gripping the bed post. Uccello sent home to his own wife. "Do lay down for me dear' She does so and he sees a vision of shapes and perspective lines. He is reminded of Donatello saying how he touches, or imagines rouching the form. "This perspective is a wonderful thing!"

The cavalry engaged first. Thundering across, heavily armoured man and steed
[Uccello, imagines this, a sea of metal, all helmets, no faces, no contrast].
Men on the ground, toppled by the weight of their armour, like beetles on their back
(armoured man face up - unlike finished picture)

There were men - boys so young they looked like girls!

Why, by the fifth circle of hell, did he agree to do this!?

Wife - Paolo, you've not come out of that room for days. It's as if those lines you construct are more real than these walls, the animals you draw: more real than me.

U - this perspective is a wonderful thing!

- I saw Donatello

- Donatello! [He could just see his smirking face!]

- He says are you still lost in lines on a page.

- Perspective! It's a wonderful thing - the mathematics of depicting real space. it shows us the world as we never knew it was. The future will prove me right. The primitives knew that objects looked smaller if farther away. Perspective lets us depict it exactly. Donatello looks to rediscover the past, while I uncover the future.

- if you don't turn this into paying work, our future is starvation!

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[Salimbini commission scene]

Salimbini was back in Florence - he'd want to see the progress!

Ghiberti didn't think he could do it! "You have painted one man on a horse, a cantor frozen mid-step - this is a full battle, a cavalry charge.battle joined.

Nor Donatello [sculpting his David], "Your work lacks true space: figures located in mathematical grids [Uccello's St George]. You think the space, where I feel it. Know it in the round. [He runs his fingers down the back of sculpture] Uccello - yours, Donatello, are frozen in time: I see movement across the picture - stages, fragments of actions. Lances raised and lowered. The eye moves around creating pictures within pictures.

The one person who believed in him, dangerously, was... Well not, thankfully, quite a Medici, but [Salimbini's assistant approaches him] you are the painter of this? [points at Hawkwood painting] Paolo Uccello? [Uccello confirms]. My master is Leonardo xx Salimbini. He would speak with you. Bow when you are introduced.

Salimbini - You capture the grandeur - man and steed. I need something similar... scenes for my bed chamber. They must convey power and virility...of Florence. Our victory over, crushing of, Naples - the rout of San Romano.

He [the assistant] less polite today. My master returns in two days. He will visit to see progress. He does or like to be disappointed.

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How easy it seemed! - as if the hard work was already done! Or - now all I needed to do was draw and paint it!

A commission! His wife is delighted, and from such a rich and powerful man! I will start looking for a better house!

This will show Ghiberti and Donatello- each panel like a window opening to a scene from the battle [is he in fact telling Salimbini this?] capturing not only deep, realistic space better than Donatello, but time, like Ghiberti, as the battle develops.

[Paolo to steward] This will be an epic scene - forces locked in battle, yet ordered, composed in perspective - moving like chess pieces on a board!

[Individual drawings of soldiers, etc]

That sounds very ambitious master Uccello, more perhaps, than my master was expecting, but you have thoroughly sold it to him. He may even have told his wife I don't know much about painting, but how much harder, would you say it is, from one man on horseback, and somehow posed, To go to several horse and men in, well in fact, a full cavalry charge.

- Well, I could not count as yet, but indeed, slightly harder.
- You have certainly got my master very excited. He may even have told his young wife. My master does not like to be disappointed. That cannot happen.

[Drawing of man falling off horse, or hanging off]

Doubt scenes with Ghiberti and Donatello, then scene with wife. The only person who believes I can do this is Salimbini himself - even his steward doubts me!