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KEITH CHRISTIANSEN

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Among the most memorable Renaissance paintings in the Metropolitan is a small painting by Andrea Mantegna depicting the Adoration of the Shepherds (fig. 14). The painting measures only 15 by 21 inches, yet it contains a world of observation, ranging from coarse-featured shepherds in tattered clothing to a classically garbed Saint Joseph overcome with sleep; from a roofless stable and the fissured, barren rocks that describe the foreground to a richly planted distant landscape; from brilliantly colored seraphim and cherubim, their features delicately highlighted in gold, to minuscule figures carrying out everyday tasks along the banks of a meandering river in the Po Valley. In this magical picture the biblical past is recast in the artist's present. Two worlds—the sacred and the profane—intersect and enrich each other.

We owe the presence of this jewel-like masterpiece to the collecting ambitions of one of the Museum's trustees, Clarence Mackay (1874–1938), and to the consequences of the Great Depression. At Harbor Hill, his châteaulike home on Long Island, Mackay amassed a collection of Renaissance paintings of remarkable distinction that included works by Duccio, Botticelli, Antonello da Messina, Mantegna, Sassetta, Giovanni Bellini, and Raphael—all well known and with illustrious provenances. The Raphael had belonged to two of history's most celebrated collectors, Queen Christina of Sweden and Philippe II, duc d'Orléans. The Mantegna *Adoration of the Shepherds* had a no less prestigious history, having belonged to the fabled Este family in Ferrara and the Aldobrandini collection in Rome. Between 1808 and 1924 it had hung in Downton Castle, Herefordshire. What would have happened to this marvelous collection under ideal circumstances we can only conjecture. Quite possibly the entire collection would have entered the Metropolitan. In the event, Mackay, who in 1904 had engineered the first trans-Pacific cable between the United States and the Far East, experienced severe financial reversals following the Crash of 1929. In need of cash, he resigned his position as Museum trustee and sold some of his finest pictures to offset his losses. A number of his paintings—the Botticelli, the Antonello da Messina, and the Duccio among them—were acquired by Samuel H. Kress and Andrew Mellon and are now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, while the Sassettas—seven panels widely viewed as his masterpiece—were bought by the National Gallery, London. Fortunately, the Metropolitan's board members did not sit on their hands. A deal was struck, and the Mantegna and the Raphael (a small panel with the Agony in the Garden that came from the altarpiece given to the Museum in 1916 by J. P. Morgan's son) were purchased for the Museum along with three suits of armor and a tapestry showing King Arthur.

Although the Metropolitan owned two other works by Mantegna—a *Holy Family* left to the Museum in 1913 by Benjamin Altman (fig. 41) and a badly damaged *Madonna and Child* bequeathed by Altman's business partner, Michael Friedsam (fig. 37)—neither could compare with *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, which encapsulates the artist's achievement. In 1986 the Museum was so fortunate as to further enrich its Mantegna holdings with an exceptionally fine impression of his marvelous engraving of a drunken bacchanal (fig. 63). All of these works are discussed in this *Bulletin* by Keith Christiansen, newly appointed Chairman of the Department of European Paintings. The roots for Keith's deep admiration for Mantegna's art go back to his involvement in the landmark exhibition that was co-organized in 1992 by the Royal Academy in London and the Metropolitan Museum. But it was another exhibition—one held at the Musée du Louvre in Paris last year—that prompted him to rethink the place of this great artist in the Renaissance and served as the catalyst for this *Bulletin*, which is thus both a celebration of the Metropolitan's holdings and a reminder that exhibitions not only give pleasure to thousands of visitors, setting before them the work of both familiar and unfamiliar artists, but also provide occasions for the reconsideration of the legacy of the past.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director

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On the cover: Andrea Mantegna (Italian, 1430/31–1506). *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail of fig. 14), ca. 1450–57. Tempera and gold on canvas, transferred from wood.

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PREFACE

In 1435 Leon Battista Alberti, the polymath writer-theorist-architect whose shadow falls across the history of Renaissance art, completed a deceptively short, three-part treatise on painting. Written with remarkable verve as well as erudition, it was addressed to both painters and those who commissioned paintings. The objective was not merely to explain to the uninitiated the science of perspective introduced by that genius architect-sculptor-engineer Brunelleschi, to whom the Italian edition was dedicated, but, more broadly and importantly, to establish a common critical vocabulary by which the new language of Renaissance painting could be understood by all. Alberti derived many of his ideas from his reading of Aristotle, Horace, Cicero, Quintillian, and Pliny, but the vision he put forward really had no equivalent in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

Alberti championed a type of painting—what he called the *istoria*—that centered on some sort of significant action or event that would provide scope for the demonstration of artistic accomplishment and at the same time engage the viewer on an empathetic level and even inspire reflections of a moral nature or contribute "to the honest pleasures of the mind." It was a vision that boldly swept aside the medieval notion of painting as a craft governed by a guild system and ignored entirely the kinds of actual tasks most painters could expect to undertake (altarpieces and devotional images of the Madonna and Child or fresco cycles of the lives of the saints). Rather, it promoted the idea of painting as a noble activity operating at the highest level of creativity, on a par with the writing of poetry and history. Not surprisingly, the practice of this new kind of painting demanded a new breed of artist: someone with a literary background, some knowledge of geometry, and the ambition to emulate the achievement of those legendary geniuses of ancient Greece and Rome so that he, too, might leave his mark on posterity (in the fifteenth century the possibility of a female artist was simply not considered).

Alberti's ideal found its first and most complete embodiment in the person of Andrea Mantegna (1430/31–1506), the court artist for the Gonzaga family in Mantua, midway between Venice and Milan. The Metropolitan Museum is fortunate to possess three pictures by this extraordinary artist. All three are modest in scale and only one really qualifies as a masterpiece, but each nonetheless testifies to some aspect of his genius. The Museum also owns the finest impression of one of Mantegna's most ambitious engravings, a tour de force of the engraver's burin, and good impressions of a number of others, as well as a bronze statuette after a model by him. Taken together, these works begin to suggest the exceptional caliber of Mantegna's mind.

In 1992 the Metropolitan Museum, in collaboration with the Royal Academy in London, organized a landmark exhibition devoted to Mantegna. It was in working on this exhibition that, like so many of Mantegna's contemporaries, I found myself won over by his *alto ingegno*—his high genius. I became convinced that he was not simply a great painter—someone on a par with Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, and Giovanni Bellini—but *the* defining genius of the fifteenth century: the man who embodied Alberti's exalted notion of the artist as poet and moralist. In the fall of 2008 another major Mantegna exhibition was held at the Musée du Louvre in Paris. I was among those who lectured on the works in the exhibition, and I later published an essay in *The New Republic*, "Why Mantegna Matters." This *Bulletin* is based on the lecture I gave, and, like the essay, it attempts to put into words why I think Mantegna's art was crucial to the Renaissance and remains essential today.

Keith Christiansen
John Pope-Hennessy Chairman, European Paintings


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THE GENIUS OF ANDREA MANTEGNA

On September 15, 1506, Andrea Mantegna's eldest son, Francesco, sent off a missive to the marchese of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga, excusing himself for not having written sooner. The reason, he explained, was that the preceding Sunday, at seven in the evening, his father, the Gonzaga's great court painter Andrea Mantegna (fig. 1), had died. "And before the end came," wrote Francesco with well-honed sycophancy, "with a marvelous presence of mind, he asked after your Excellency and greatly lamented your absence [the marchese was away in Gubbio visiting his sister, the duchess of Urbino], and not believing that he was about to die, he enjoined us two brothers to commend him to you and to entreat your lordship to take up with him something that is important to us: . . . that your lordship, always generous to those who truly serve you, will not forget the service of such a man, rendered for fifty years, and that to us, grieving and deprived of all honor and good, you will show your favor and support in all just and equitable causes."

Francesco Mantegna was, of course, pleading for favors. As well he might, since his father had left serious debts that had somehow to be settled. In doing so, he was following the lead given by his father, for Andrea Mantegna had served three generations of Gonzaga rulers—Ludovico, Federico, and Francesco—and they had not only supported him with a stipend but had also seen him through numerous financial difficulties. There was, however, an added complication. The preceding year Francesco's younger brother Ludovico—unlike Francesco a courtier rather than a painter (though by all accounts Francesco was a mediocrity)—had disgraced himself by humiliating one of the most trusted of the marchese's servants and, "under the cover of religion, although the most irreligious man in the world," had uttered calumnies against others and even badmouthed the marchese. Though in his seventies and no longer in good health, old Mantegna had swallowed his famous pride and approached Francesco Gonzaga's wife, Isabella d'Este, on behalf of his son, "weeping and gasping for breath and so crestfallen that he seemed more dead than alive." Taken aback at his condition and desirous at all costs to have him complete the work he had in hand for her private study, Isabella declared herself ready to help this

1. Funerary monument of Andrea Mantegna, with bronze portrait bust on a porphyry disk in a frame of Istrian stone. H. of bust 18 ½ in. (47 cm), diam. of roundel 27 ½ in. (70 cm). Chapel of Saint John the Baptist, Church of Sant'Andrea, Mantua

2. Chapel of Saint John the Baptist (Andrea Mantegna's funerary chapel), Church of Sant'Andrea, Mantua

man of "incomparable virtue and highest merit." But the marchese instructed his wife that she could tell Mantegna that "we wish always to honor his virtue, but we do not wish his son to have either the office [we granted him] or our favor as he is unworthy of it."

How Mantegna ultimately resolved this matter is not altogether clear, but it was only one of the issues that preoccupied him in the years leading up to his death. Foremost on his mind was the matter of raising 200 ducats to endow and decorate a funerary chapel to which he had gained rights in the Church of Sant'Andrea in Mantua (fig. 2). Mantegna clearly attached an importance to the chapel that went well beyond the prayers for his soul that would be said at the altar. The church, a landmark of Renaissance architecture and the most magnificent in the city, had been designed in emulation of classical Roman models by Leon Battista Alberti. (Mantegna, who must have known Alberti well, had designed an engraving to commemorate the foundation of the church in 1472.) The Church of Sant'Andrea housed a precious relic of Christ's blood said to have been gathered at the Crucifixion when the Roman soldier Longinus pierced Jesus' side with his lance. In 1504 Mantegna had managed to secure patronage of the first chapel on the north side, but this entailed the obligation to endow and decorate it. In an attempt to raise the money he needed, he tried to renegotiate the price of a work he had previously agreed to do for the patrician Cornaro family in Venice. Unhappy with this turn of events, Francesco Cornaro enlisted the aid of his brother, Cardinal Marco Cornaro, who in turn asked the celebrated poet-scholar (and later cardinal) Pietro Bembo to intercede with Isabella. For his part, Bembo promised to help the marchesa secure a picture that she wanted from Giovanni Bellini, Mantegna's celebrated Venetian brother-in-law. Such was the high-handed diplomacy brought to bear when the work in question was by an artist of Mantegna's caliber.

Casting about for other means of raising cash, Mantegna decided to sell to Isabella his prize Roman marble bust of the empress Faustina, which he knew she coveted. That Mantegna was ill did not stop Isabella from bargaining relentlessly to reduce the price. Ultimately she agreed to pay what the artist demanded, insisting, however, that she was doing so as an act of generosity, that 100 ducats was excessive, and that in any event she found herself short of cash. She took possession of the bust only a month before Mantegna's death.

So it was above all to meet the financial obligations for their father's funerary chapel that Francesco and Ludovico Mantegna now turned to the marchese for permission to sell some of the paintings that were still in the studio. These included a version of the well-known *Dead Christ* (see fig. 36) that is in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, and the picture undertaken for Cornaro, the *Introduction to the Cult of Cybele at Rome* that is now in the National Gallery, London. Ludovico also informed the marchese that Mantegna had left two paintings to decorate the chapel in the Church of Sant'Andrea, *The Baptism of Christ* (fig. 3) and *The Families of Christ and Saint John the Baptist* (both still in the chapel today): these were installed upon completion of the frescoed decorations, which, in the event, were only carried out some ten years later, possibly by Francesco Mantegna following indications left by his father. Also for the funerary chapel, Mantegna had had a portrait bust cast in bronze (fig. 1). It was later believed to have been modeled and cast by Mantegna himself, but in all likelihood he had called upon the expertise of the talented goldsmith and bronze founder Gian Marco Cavalli, with whom he had established a working relationship thirty years before and who stood as witness when rights to the chapel were ratified.

Mantegna was not the first Renaissance artist to plan his own funerary chapel and prepare its decorations, but his is among the very few to remain more or less intact and as he planned it. (The altarpiece and the masterful bronze statue of the risen Christ that the Sienese painter-sculptor Vecchietta created in 1476 for the chapel he had constructed for his own tomb in the hospital church of Santa Maria della Scala have survived, but the chapel itself has not.) He clearly viewed it both as a place where prayers would be said for his soul and as a monument to a lifetime of achievement. Quite apart from the illusionistic fresco decorations with biblical scenes, probably based on cartoons by Mantegna, the entrance wall is dominated by the bronze bust that, mounted against a porphyry disk with a carved marble surround, intentionally evokes Roman models. Stern-faced as a Roman Republican senator, the artist glowers at the viewer with what we might take as arrogance or disdain but which Mantegna surely intended as an expression of his singular *virtù*, or strength of character and moral worth—those qualities so greatly appreciated by both Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga. His stringy locks are crowned with a wreath of laurels, in emulation of Roman practice. (In 1341 Petrarch had famously been crowned poet laureate in Rome in revival of the ancient practice, and Mantua was of course the birthplace of Virgil, poet to the emperor Augustus, in whose honor Mantegna had designed a monument for Isabella.) Below the bust is a marble tablet bearing an inscription, composed by one of the court humanists, that compares Mantegna to Apelles, the legendary court painter of Alexander the Great. The comparison was a trope of humanist praise, but it assumed special meaning when attached to Mantegna, as he too served a court of professional military commanders, or *condottieri*. Also displayed in the chapel are the armorial bearings the Gonzaga granted the artist in 1459, after he had agreed to move from Padua to Mantua to become their court painter.

Few artists pursued fame as relentlessly as Mantegna, and even fewer have managed to imprint their personality so indelibly on posterity. Art provided the means by which he escaped his humble beginnings (he was the son of a master carpenter in a town north of Padua) to become someone able to stand on equal footing with men of culture and learning. He honored some of those who belonged to the elite circle of friends he established in Padua by including them as spectators in his first cycle of frescoes (see fig. 9), which he began in 1448 in the Chapel of Antonio Ovetari in the Church of the Eremitani there. In 1463 another acquaintance, the endearingly eccentric antiquarian-humanist Felice Feliciano, with whom Mantegna was to make archaeological excursions and discuss matters of common interest, dedicated a collection of classical epigraphs to "the most splendid man and incomparable painter Andrea Mantegna of Padua."

Clearly, Mantegna had a firm sense of his own worth. He was, moreover, a prodigy, and when he felt he had learned what he could from his teacher and adoptive father, an enterprising and clever but otherwise second-rate painter by the name of Francesco Squarcione, he did not hesitate to go to court to sever their ties. Squarcione had begun life as a tailor and climbed the social ladder in Padua by establishing a workshop-academy for young students who drew from an array of plaster casts and drawings of ancient and modern works of art. His pretense as a teacher of the latest innovations in painting, including perspective, far outstripped his real artistic abilities, but he had a keen eye for talent and trained a whole generation of artists.

3. Andrea Mantegna (1430/31–1506). *The Baptism of Christ.* Distemper on canvas, 89¾ x 68⅞ in. (228 x 175 cm). Chapel of Saint John the Baptist, Church of Sant'Andrea, Mantua

Following his separation from Squarcione in 1447, Mantegna quickly established an independent practice in Padua, and the following year began work on the frescoes in the Ovetari Chapel (figs. 4, 5), one of the defining fresco cycles of the fifteenth century. He was not yet twenty but was already being praised for his *alto ingegno*, or great talent and genius. The earliest encomium, by the Venetian humanist poet Ulisse degli Aleotti, singled out the way his mind and hand worked in concert, so that the image formed in the mind was indelibly inscribed ("sculpted" is the verb employed) into paintings "that are really alive and true"—a concept of creativity that would emerge in its full, Neoplatonic form in the poetry of Michelangelo. The image of himself that Mantegna included in that cycle of frescoes (figs. 6, 7) is revealing. The young artist appears alone, off to the side, as a solitary Roman soldier—a participant in his own fiction, gazing with furrowed brow at the viewer below. We already recognize the implacable, proud features found in the bronze bust of more than a half century later. As a witty aside, the face decorating a shield held by a distracted youth casts a timorous glance at the soldier-artist. By the date of this fresco, about 1450–54, Mantegna was unquestionably the outstanding painter of northern Italy (his only competition, Nicolò Pizzolo, was murdered in 1453). In 1449 he had painted a portrait (now lost) of Leonello d'Este, the marchese of Ferrara, and seven years later he received the prestigious commission for an altarpiece for the venerable Benedictine abbey of San Zeno in Verona (see figs. 17–24), a landmark in the history of art. Also in 1456 he was invited to become the court painter to the Gonzaga in Mantua, where he moved his family in the spring of 1460.

Such was Mantegna's fame and the prestige attached to owning a work by him that his paintings came to play a significant role in Gonzaga diplomacy. Requests for a work by Mantegna's hand were either denied or expedited by the marchese as he saw fit. A devotional picture for the duchess of Ferrara, Eleonora of Aragon, received special attention in 1485: she was, after all, the mother of Francesco Gonzaga's future wife, Isabella d'Este. Similarly, in August 1502, following the conquest of Milan by the French troops of Louis XII, Francesco Gonzaga sent a painting (which does not survive) to the general of the French army, Louis de la Trémoïlle. "It is," he assured his correspondent, "one of the most beautiful things Messer Andrea Mantegna has ever done." In 1488 Mantegna was sent to Rome to decorate a chapel for Pope Innocent VIII in the Belvedere in the Vatican. This action, too, was part of Gonzaga diplomacy, and it represented a real sacrifice to the marchese, for it entailed forgoing the artist's help in planning the celebrations for his wedding to Isabella d'Este in February 1490.

Mantegna's sojourn in Rome in 1488 also meant postponing completion of the great project for a series of nine large canvases on the theme of the triumphs of Caesar (see figs. 42–44). Certainly, this extraordinary project depicting a Roman triumph seems always to have been on Mantegna's mind. Writing from Rome in 1489, he told Francesco Gonzaga that he hoped everything would be done to take care of the canvases, as he was not a little proud of them. The marchese reassured him, noting, "as you say, they are worthy things, and we very much want to see them finished, for although they are works from your hand and genius, we nonetheless glory in having them in our residence." No statement is more revealing of the new status an artist could achieve. Mantegna opened the age of competition for the services of great artists. Rather than the court conferring prestige on the painter, it was now the artist who lent luster to his patron. And indeed, without Mantegna and his successor, Giulio Romano, what would our image be of the Gonzaga family?

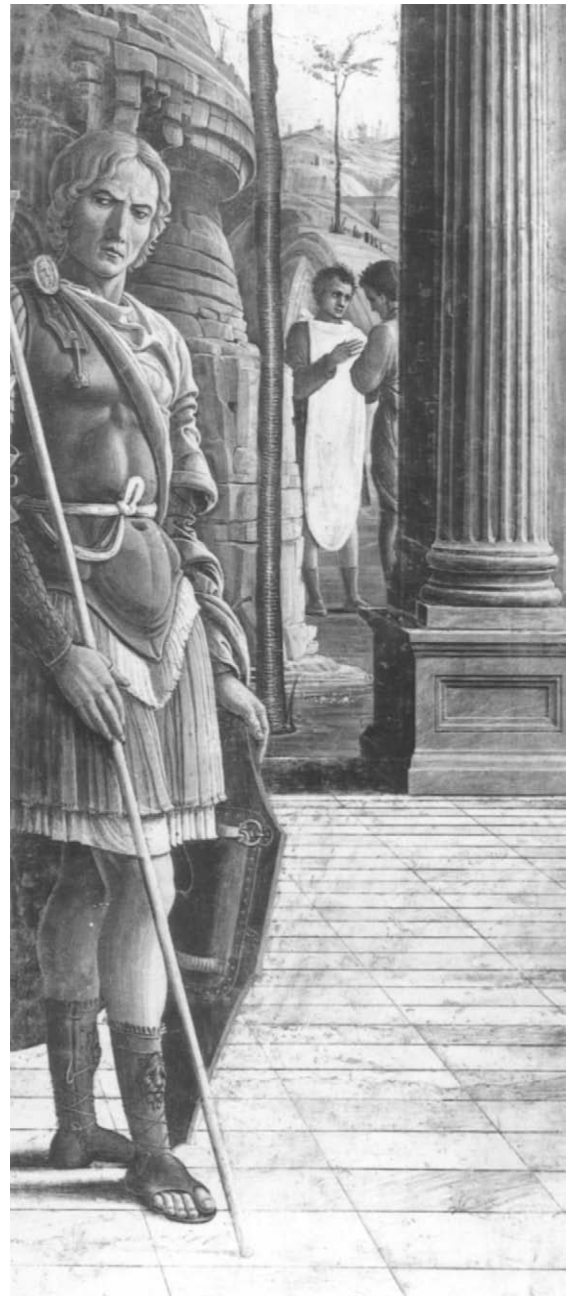
What qualities in his art explain the extraordinary status Mantegna enjoyed? About 1491 the Neapolitan poet Sannazaro described him as "the shrewdest and most ingenious of all artists." Giovanni Santi, Raphael's father and court painter to Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, also ranked Mantegna above all other Italian painters, even including Piero della Francesca, whom he knew personally and whom we today put at the very center of Italian art. Santi related that when Federico da Montefeltro, who was Piero's most important patron, visited Mantua (this would have been in 1482) "he was struck dumb [in se restare istupifacto] when he saw

4, 5. Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua, before 1944

[Mantegna's] pictures and his singular art." *Stupefatto*—speechless—is a strong word. It was, in fact, the highest compliment that could be paid an artist's work, for it implied that at least in this instance, in the typically humanist competition, or *paragone*, between poetry and painting, painting had triumphed and mere words were not sufficient to describe what had been achieved. Santi was quite specific about the qualities that earned Mantegna this supreme position, and it is worth reaffirming what those qualities were, for to do full credit to this paragon of Renaissance painters we must see him with the lens through which his contemporaries saw him, unbiased by the aesthetics and values of our own time.

The first trait Santi alluded to was Mantegna's "exalted and brilliant genius"—a redundancy of praise that in this case, at least, is excusable, since Mantegna redefined the terms by which artistic genius would be identified and measured. Santi then listed what he considered its most important indicators. He accorded pride of place to "*disegno*—the foundation of painting." By *disegno* he of course meant not simply draftsmanship but the ability to give form to an idea, an ability Mantegna had shown even as a young man. According to Santi the balancing attribute was invention, which he called "a shining ornament." He was alluding to an artist's ability to conceive a story or allegory—an artistic or iconographic program—around which to structure visual ideas. (In his 1435 treatise on painting Alberti wrote that so important was invention that a well-conceived pictorial program gave pleasure merely by being described, even without being represented.)

6. Andrea Mantegna. *The Trial of Saint James the Greater*, ca. 1450–54. Photograph of fresco destroyed in 1944 in the Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua



7. Detail of fig. 6, Mantegna's depiction of himself as a Roman soldier

Invention, then, was the area where painting and poetry were most closely allied and where their descriptive aims overlapped. Santi went so far as to assert that if imagination had withered and died over the centuries since antiquity, Mantegna had breathed new life into it.

Santi then mentions Mantegna's mastery with the pen and brush, the technical means by which the ideas of the imagination are transformed into images. Santi claimed that Mantegna's mastery not only equaled the legends of antiquity but surpassed them. He was thinking of those Greek painters whose accomplishments Pliny extolled: Apelles, Zeuxis, and Parrhasius. Although the comparison of a modern artist to one of the greats of the ancient world was a commonality of Renaissance criticism, it took on new meaning in the work of Mantegna because of the way his art incorporated antiquarian references. As subcategories to Mantegna's technical brilliance Santi listed diligence, or mastery of detail, and beauty of color, along with all that was entailed in the representation of distances, or atmospheric perspective. Then there was Mantegna's ability, through drawing, to suggest movement; his skill at representing the most astonishing and difficult foreshortenings, resulting in effects that "stupefy people, deceive the eye, and are the glory of art"; and his mastery of perspective, with its concomitants arithmetic, geometry, and understanding of architecture. Each of these qualities could be found, individually, in other artists. What astonished Santi was that they were united in Mantegna and brought to perfection. Add to this that Mantegna also created relief sculpture

8. Andrea Mantegna. *Assumption of the Virgin*, ca. 1456–57. Detached fresco. Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua (see also fig. 5)

and gave advice on architecture, and you have a paradigm for the universal artist.

Mantegna's career can be read in sequential chapters, each one centered on a defining project. His debut was made on the walls of the Ovetari Chapel in Padua (figs. 8–11)—the one fifteenth-century cycle of frescoes that, had it survived the Second World War, would today enjoy a fame equal to that of Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel in Florence and Piero della Francesca's frescoes in San Francesco, Arezzo. What a loss its destruction is to our appreciation of Mantegna and his pre-eminent place in the Renaissance. All that has survived of his work in the chapel are an *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 8) and two scenes illustrating the life of Saint Christopher (see fig. 9), which had been transferred to canvas because of their poor condition in the 1880s and had been removed from the chapel prior to the bombing of the church during an air raid in 1944. Fortunately, a photographic campaign had been undertaken prior to the Allied bombing.

The landmark altarpiece he painted between 1456 and 1459 for the Church of San Zeno in Verona marks the second chapter in Mantegna's career. The main panels of the altarpiece are still in the frame conceived by Mantegna (fig. 17), while the three astonishing panels from its base, or predella, are divided between the Louvre in Paris and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Tours (figs. 18, 22, 23). The predella panels are a tour de force of representation and redefine the possibilities of narrative painting—Alberti's much desired *istoria*.

The so-called Camera degli Sposi, or Camera Picta, that Mantegna completed in 1474 in the Castello di San Giorgio in Mantua (figs. 25–28, 30, 31) was regarded by those contemporaries fortunate enough to see it as the single most beautiful room in the world. Its illusionistic ceiling was widely imitated, and even though it has been compromised by its uneven condition and a somewhat overzealous restoration in the 1980s, it is still one of the high points of a visit to Mantua.

A special place in Mantegna's oeuvre belongs to the nine great canvases of the *Triumphs of Caesar*, badly preserved but still awe-inspiring in their installation at Hampton Court, an hour's train ride from London (figs. 42–44). And finally there is his work for Isabella d'Este's famed *studiolo* in 1495–97: *Minerva Chasing the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* and *Mars and Venus*, both in the Louvre. Each of these major pictorial projects engaged Mantegna's genius in a different way and produced strikingly original results.

The Ovetari Chapel

Much the most clamorous in effect were the frescoes Mantegna painted between 1448 and 1457 in the Ovetari Chapel of the Church of the Eremitani in Padua. At the outset, Mantegna, still a teenager, was part of an équipe of painters, each of whom was assigned specific scenes. By the time the decorations were completed, he had assumed complete control as the presiding master of northern Italian painting. In this extraordinary cycle Mantegna made his appearance as a great dramatist, especially in the scenes from the lowest tier, situated just above the head of the viewer. In one memorable scene Saint James the Greater is shown being led to his execution by Roman soldiers (fig. 10). In the adjacent scene (fig. 11) he is beheaded, the fictive railing notionally attached to the front face of the painted marble molding in the foreground serving to enhance the effect that his head is about to drop into the viewer's space. In both scenes the primary incident provides the point of departure for staging a drama of compelling complexity, in which the extras, so to speak, are as important as the principals in establishing a quality of compelling verisimilitude.

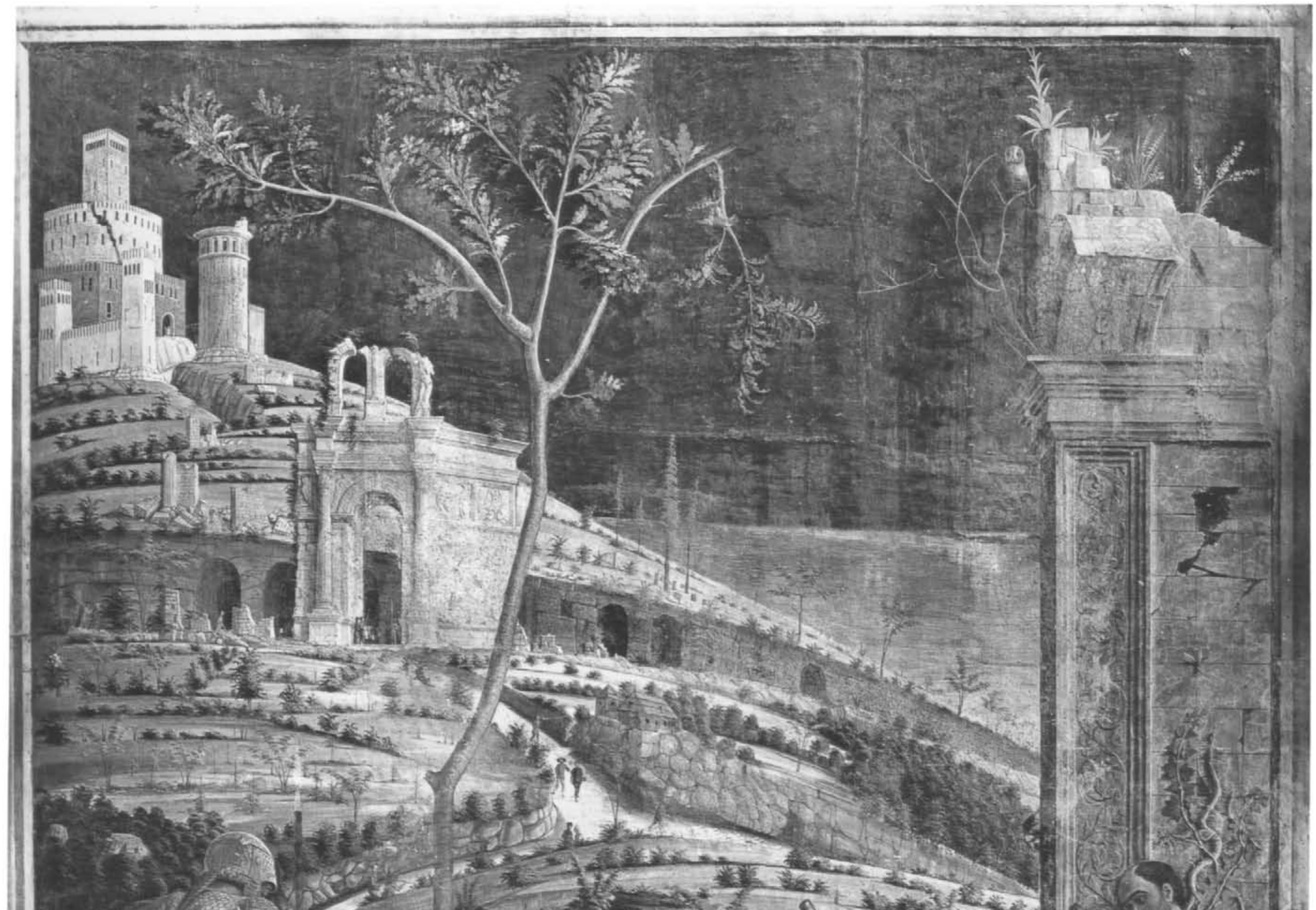
The *Golden Legend* recounts how Saint James paused on his death march to cure a paralyzed man lying on the side of the road, whereupon the scribe Josias, who had put the noose around James to take him to his execution, dropped to his knees to ask the saint's forgiveness. Mantegna imagined this incident happening just after the apostle has passed through a Roman arch, and it is the conversion of Josias that he chose as the dramatic focus of his composition (fig. 10). He boldly divided the picture field into two contrasting halves, risking, one might have thought, a loss of narrative focus. But not for a minute. Rather, like a great filmmaker, he preferred a moving camera, and he encouraged the viewer's eye to pan the scene to take in all of the action and the sweep of the set. Remember, the scene was situated just above the head of the viewer, who had to turn his or her head back and forth to take in the whole. In the left half, symbolically framed by a triumphal arch, the onlookers respond with astonishment and disdain at Josias's supplication. Mantegna set this episode against a milling crowd of bystanders dropping back into space. (The ground plane is sloped sharply downward, so that the vanishing point coincides more or less with the top of the viewers' heads, a device Mantegna employed to make the viewer an active participant in the scene.) One figure's attention is distracted by an altercation that explodes in the right side of the composition. This secondary episode has been included as a contrast to the benevolent action of the saint. A soldier uses his lance to push back an infuriated man, who delivers a sharp knee kick to the soldier's groin. The turbaned man shouts: Mantegna here took up a topos of Renaissance praise by which a painting was said to be so excellent that it lacked only a voice. He gave his figure that voice, turned up to full volume. The turbaned figure carries a long pole with a fluttering banner and, at its top, the scales of Justice swaying precariously in the air. This brilliant detail makes clear that the confrontation is about a miscarriage of justice, and to emphasize it the banner is ingeniously framed by the zigzag of the foreshortened cornices of the buildings lining the street. People drawn to their windows by the commotion furtively observe the scene. The houses are not those of ancient Rome but of Mantegna's time: the Renaissance viewer was clearly meant to experience the episode as an extension of his or her own everyday world.

To call the scene, with its sweeping views, cinematic is an understatement. Nor has Mantegna missed a detail. How much the worn soles of the shoes of Josias, conspicuously exposed to view, tell us about the peripatetic and poorly remunerated life of a Renaissance scribe. They cannot help but add to the sympathy we feel for him. (How Caravaggio would have envied this detail!) Like a great novelist, Mantegna draws us into the drama by a process not of reduction of detail or concentration on a single event, isolating the main characters, but of narrative expansion and even digression. He presents the protagonists within the perpetual drama of life itself, exposing not only cruelty but also tenderness and, inevitably, indifference. His attention to details of setting, characterization of figures, and creating a sense of place is really in a class by itself.

We can point to the artists and works of art that influenced Mantegna's vision, but in the end they provided merely the point of departure—the catalyst—for a highly original and deeply personal vision. First in importance were the bronze reliefs Donatello carried out between 1446 and 1449 for the pilgrimage church of Sant'Antonio, or Basilica del Santo, in Padua (see fig. 12). With their high-pitched dramatic tone, complex layering of architecture, and expressive range, the reliefs are among the most innovative, complex, and engaging compositions in all of Italian art. Mantegna was fortunate indeed that Donatello arrived in Padua for a ten-year stay in 1443, at precisely the time he was coming of age. Unquestionably, he

9. Andrea Mantegna. *The Martyrdom and Translocation of the Body of Saint Christopher*, ca. 1456–57. Detached fresco. Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua

10. Andrea Mantegna. *Saint James the Greater Led to His Martyrdom*, ca. 1454–57. Photograph of fresco destroyed in 1944 in the Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua



11. Andrea Mantegna. *The Martyrdom of Saint James the Greater*, ca. 1454–57. Photograph of fresco destroyed in 1944 in the Ovetari Chapel, Church of the Eremitani, Padua

12. Donatello (ca. 1386–1466). *Miracle of the Miser's Heart*, 1447–48. Bronze, 22½ x 48⅜ in. (57 x 123 cm). Basilica del Santo, Padua

profited infinitely more from his study of Donatello's reliefs than he did from the teachings of Squarcione. Indeed, without Donatello's presence in Padua the history of Renaissance painting would have been dramatically different. In Donatello's bronze reliefs Mantegna encountered for the first time an art in which a narrative theme from Christian hagiography becomes the occasion for exploring the drama of life. That said, whereas Donatello invariably preferred tightly choreographed compositions, with dense crowds responding excitedly to the protagonists at center stage, Mantegna, striving for

13. Jacopo Bellini (ca. 1400–1470/71). *The Flagellation of Christ*. Metalpoint on paper, 16⅜ x 26½ in. (41.5 x 67.3 cm). From the Jacopo Bellini Album. British Museum, London (1855,0811.72, .73)

14. Andrea Mantegna. *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, ca. 1450–57. Tempera and gold on canvas, transferred from wood, painted surface 14⅞ x 21 in. (37.8 x 53.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 1932 (32.130.2)

a more compelling effect of actuality, pulled the camera back and allowed the actors on his much deeper stage to go about their business. A model for this more ambivalent and discursive approach to narrative painting was provided by Jacopo Bellini. Mantegna must have taken advantage of his marriage to Jacopo's daughter Nicolosia in 1453 to repeatedly thumb through two marvelous drawing albums, now divided between the British Museum in London and the Louvre in Paris. In those albums Bellini treated both novel and traditional themes with little regard for their practical use: rather, he presented his private ruminations on the possibilities of an Albertian *istoria*. The charm and inexhaustible invention of these drawings (see fig. 13) cannot help but impress, but the elaborate compositions, with their emphasis on a deep, tunneling perspective, richly ornamented architectural settings and figures often shown merely milling about, can seem placid and lacking in focus. By contrast, Mantegna never sacrificed the narrative to a mere demonstration of his mastery of perspectival space, and his passive spectators are always used to set off those who are fully engaged. The third great catalyst for Mantegna was provided by the microcosmic world of Netherlandish painting, with its descriptive mastery and the impression it gives of encompassing the entire visual world.

What stands out in Mantegna's first great fresco cycle is a quality of gravity and an acute sense of irony, even wit. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Martyrdom of Saint James the Greater* (fig. 11), in which a soldier holding a shield with a grimacing face stands directly above the saint, whose head is beneath the blade of a guillotine. Higher still, a branch of the tree has been snapped off, reminiscent of those sequences in movies where instead of showing a violent murder on screen, the camera cuts to an image of a door slamming shut or a piece of fruit rolling off the edge of a table. In another tree a small owl stares out hauntingly: is this Minerva's bird of wisdom—a transgression of justice—or merely a bird of the night?

It was while he was at work on the Ovetari Chapel frescoes that Mantegna painted the small *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 14). He seems to have painted the picture for Borso d'Este, the ruler of Ferrara, since the squash hanging over the wattle fence resembles one of Borso's favorite heraldic devices, the *paraduro* (these wattle dykes were used to

15 (above) and 16 (opposite). Details of fig. 14

drain the marshes around Ferrara). In any event, the picture is mentioned in Ferrara in sixteenth-century documents, but in 1598 it was taken to Rome by the pope's nephew Pietro Aldobrandini, and it remained in the Aldobrandini collection until the British painter and art dealer Alexander Day purchased it in 1800 or 1801. That the *Adoration of the Shepherds* was painted for the Este court would be important for two reasons. First, Borso's predecessor, his half brother Leonello, had commissioned a number of pictures, including an altarpiece with the Deposition of Christ, from the great Netherlandish painter Rogier van der Weyden. (For these commissions he employed an agent in Bruges.) The coarse-featured shepherds in Mantegna's painting, no less than the meticulous details of the landscape, have long been thought to reflect his admiration for Netherlandish painting. Second, Ferrara was a center of humanist thought as well as enlightened artistic patronage. At the Este court the relative merits of poetry and painting were debated, and it became popular to compose a distinctive type of descriptive poem—the *ekphrasis*—that has as its putative objective the re-creation through words of a visual experience. A key figure in reviving this poetic form was Guarino da Verona, who came to Ferrara in 1429 to tutor Leonello d'Este and remained there until his death in 1460. In one characteristic poem Guarino praises the ability of Pisanello—an artist favored by Leonello—to evoke the myriad effects of nature, whether the sounds of waves breaking on the seashore or the pleasures of springtime: "If you set the action in spring, varied flowers smile in the green meadows, the old brilliance returns to the trees, and the hills bloom; here the air quivers with the songs of birds." While Pisanello's work is filled with carefully observed details of the most varied sort, he was hardly the poet of nature evoked by Guarino, who was writing a set piece rather than describing an actual painting. In other words, he was demonstrating his mastery of a classical literary genre: Pisanello's art merely provided the occasion. The importance of this type of literary exercise was the challenge it posed to painters to match its descriptive powers. It is not surprising to learn from *De politia litteraria*, a dialogue on literary polish written by Angelo Decembrio about 1450, that although Leonello prized exquisitely wrought small pictures with details counterfeiting the effects of nature, he too doubted the potential of painting to match the descriptive powers of poetry (it was, of course, Decembrio's own bias that he was attributing to Leonello).

There can be little doubt that Mantegna's *Adoration of the Shepherds* was in part his pointed response to this kind of condescending view. Indeed, in his description of the deep landscape setting beneath the placid skies of the Val Padana, Mantegna seems to have been responding to the very terms of Guarino's description of springtime. A pruned willow puts forth new shoots, and the orange tree against which Saint Joseph leans bears lush fruit, glistening in the sun. Plants spring from crevices in the rocky foreground, and the surface of the meandering river ripples against the gentle banks. Although the subject of the picture is traditional, the way Mantegna has incorporated details that give prominence to artistic achievement and also enhance the expressive treatment of the figures is typical of him. There is the classically garbed, sleeping figure of Joseph (fig. 15) that serves as a counterpoint to the two shepherds (fig. 16), who are shown in tattered, contemporary dress in active poses: both about to kneel, one with hands joined prayerfully, the other having doffed his hat. There is the rapt devotion of the Virgin and the foreshortened placement of the Child lying on her hem, his head surrounded by cherubim whose features are highlighted in gold. There is the ox, intent on his mouthful of grass (curiously, Mantegna omitted the ass). And there are the contrast of the rocky foreground and the gentle green plane in the distance; the curving river with a shepherd greeted by an angel on one bank and a man with two barrels waiting for the arrival of a barge on the other (fig. 16); and the description of the plants. The picture is a tour de force, and it reminds us that Mantegna was just as comfortable painting on a small scale, such as Leonello is said to have preferred, as he was frescoing the walls of a chapel or a room in a palace.

The San Zeno Altarpiece

To fully enter the mind of Mantegna's intended Renaissance viewer, try the following exercise. Compose a mental description of the action or narrative Mantegna sets before you, noting the remarkable delineation of setting and character as well as naturalistic detail and paying special attention to visual metaphors and puns (such as the orange tree that has regenerated itself and the wattle fence). It is the sort of engaged viewing Mantegna expected from his most avid patrons and the mindset he practiced himself. We see it fully in force in the three scenes from Christ's Passion that made up the predella of the San Zeno altarpiece (figs. 17–24), painted a few years after the Metropolitan's *Adoration of the Shepherds*. The scenes follow one after the other like successive chapters of a continuous narrative. It was Mantegna's brilliant poetic insight to show Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane against an evening sky (fig. 18), the Crucifixion at midday (fig. 22), and the Resurrection, the third of the predella scenes (fig. 23), at dawn, with a pale pink horizon contrasting with the brilliant, coral-colored light emanating from Christ within the cavern sheltering his tomb. No less marvelous is the attention he lavished on the depiction of the city of Jerusalem in the background of the three scenes, viewed in each instance from a different topographical position: from the Mount of Olives in the *Agony in the Garden*, from Golgotha in the *Crucifixion*, and from the cemetery where Christ was buried in the *Resurrection*.

Just as in the *Adoration of the Shepherds* Mantegna encouraged viewers to experience the sacred event as real by setting it in a landscape similar to the Val Padana, filled with details culled from everyday life, so in the San Zeno predella scenes he encouraged viewers to experience the depicted events in a new way, journeying in their imaginations from sacred site to

17. Andrea Mantegna. *The Virgin and Child with Saints* (the San Zeno altarpiece), 1456–59. Tempera on wood, 15 ft. 9 in. x 14 ft. 8 in. (4.8 x 4.5 m). Church of San Zeno, Verona. The three predella scenes are copies painted by Paolino Caliari.

18. Andrea Mantegna. *The Agony in the Garden*, 1456–59. Predella panel from the San Zeno altarpiece. Tempera on wood, 28 x 37 in. (71 x 94 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours

sacred site and moving from one day to the next. If in the main panels of the San Zeno altarpiece (fig. 17) the Virgin and her court are made more palpable by their placement in a meticulously described classical pavilion that is complemented by the real architecture of the frame, in the predella everything is conceived to inspire a deeper, more intimate and personal reflection on the events of the Passion. Verisimilitude—one of the driving concepts of Renaissance painting—here achieves a new level of complexity.

What explains this complexity? Some of the credit must go to the man who commissioned the altarpiece, Gregorio Correr. Correr was a man of great intellect. He had had a humanist education; indeed, he had spent two years in Mantua as a pupil of the greatest pedagogue of the age, Vittorino da Feltre, who also taught Mantegna's first Gonzaga patron, Ludovico, and Federico da Montefeltro, the future ruler of Urbino. He was an admirer of the writings of Augustine and Jerome and surely set forth a number of texts for Mantegna that he hoped would inform the individual scenes: not necessarily a detailed program but rather a series of literary references that Mantegna might consult for inspiration. This would have been in line with Horace's famous dictum that painting is a kind of silent poetry.

Literary accomplishment enjoyed a privileged place in Renaissance society, and the *ekphrasis* provided an occasion for humanists to assert in a very specific fashion the superiority of the descriptive powers of the writer's pen over the painter's brush, of poetry over painting. But while Mantegna's paintings share the descriptive richness of the *ekphrasis*, they proceed from the opposite position: that the brush is superior to the pen. What follows is my own, pseudo-humanist *ekphrasis*, composed to give an idea of the imaginative framework that informs the scene of the Agony in the Garden (figs. 18–21). It incorporates, as fifteenth-century *ekphrases* so often do, passages from the kinds of texts Gregorio Correr might have brought to Mantegna's attention. These would have ranged from the Old and New Testaments to Saint Jerome's Latin edition of Eusebius' *Onomasticon* (a dictionary of place names in sacred history) and Augustine's *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, from Flavius Josephus' *Jewish War*, with its detailed

19. Detail (enlarged) of fig. 18

20. Detail (enlarged) of fig. 18

21. Detail of fig. 18

22. Andrea Mantegna. *The Crucifixion*, 1456–59. Predella panel from the San Zeno altarpiece. Tempera and gold on wood, 29 ⅞ x 37 ¾ in. (76 x 96 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris (368)

description of Jerusalem on the eve of its destruction by Titus in A.D. 70, to the thirteenth-century devotional book *The Meditations on the Life of Christ.*

> It is evening and the cloud-scudded sky is still lit by the dying rays of the sun, which has sunk behind the distant hill, its soft, golden light delicately illuminating the walls of the ancient city of Jerusalem below Mount Zion. Jesus, having foretold his fate to the disciples and having sung with them a Passover Hymn, has "crossed the Kedron ravine" (John 18:1) to the Mount of Olives and entered a garden, "a place called Gethsemane," taking with him "Peter and the two sons of Zebedee" (Matthew 26:36–37). The three disciples, exhausted by the day's events, lie sleeping in the foreground, "worn out by grief" (Luke 22:45), while behind and above them, "about a stone's throw" (Luke 22:41)—"not as when the arm is violently agitated, but as when the stone is thrown without great force"—Jesus kneels in prayer. "Consider how anguished he is now in his soul. Also note here, in contrast to our impatience, that the Lord Jesus prayed three times before he received any answer" (*Meditations* 75). "And now there appeared to him an angel from heaven bringing him strength" (Luke 22:43–44). The angel, descending at a sharp angle from on high, flies on colored wings and leaves behind a trail of swirling clouds, his silhouette defined against the sharp-edged shafts of stone of a rocky outcrop. In his hands, ever so delicately yet firmly, he carries a chalice from which Christ must take his oh so bitter drink. A crystalline light plays across the face of Christ and the rocky escarpment, illuminating the angel from below. "My Father," implores Christ, looking up with his pained face, his lips parted in speech, "if it is not possible for this cup to pass me by without my drinking it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Two fruit-bearing trees, a quince and an apple, stand like lonely sentinels of hope in this scene of arid desolation. Yet a vine has somehow managed to flourish, bringing forth grapes amidst the dead branches of a blasted tree, for as Christ said, "I am the true vine. . . . Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away" (John 15:1–2). A garden of great beauty, a veritable Eden, must once have grown here, for on the hard slopes behind Christ can be seen barren stumps, hacked near to the

23. Andrea Mantegna. *The Resurrection*, 1456–59. Predella panel from the San Zeno altarpiece. Tempera on wood, 28 x 37 in. (71.1 x 94 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours

ground: "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Luke 3:9). This orchard was once pollinated by bees that swarm around a pair of hives set up on a shelf of rocks.

Around the edges of the mount, marking its boundaries, flows a stream, its surface rippled by the fast-flowing current as it winds its way through the Valley of Jehoshaphat "between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem." Two bridges, constructed from the cleaved trunks of trees, traverse the stream. They will be crossed by the approaching mob led by Judas, who pauses to look back at "a detachment of soldiers, and police provided by the chief priests and Pharisees, equipped with . . . weapons" (John 18:3). A small rabbit stops in fright on the bridge nearest to hand; the winding path leads up to the main gate of Jerusalem, "fortified by three walls," with towers "twenty cubits broad and twenty high, square and solid as the wall itself," and dominated at its highest point by a fortress. "Owing to its strength [this portion of the city] was called by King David . . . the Stronghold, but we called it the upper agora" (Josephus). By contrast, in the lower city is seen the domed mass of the temple, proud as the Pantheon, its circular walls with a revetment of an arched colonnade. Yet another part of the city extends down a slope, "encompassed by deep ravines [so that] the precipitous cliffs on either side of it rendered the town nowhere accessible" (Josephus). Here the walls and towers have been allowed to crumble and fall into ruin; pointed staves, driven into the ground, block the only entrance. Below this, directly above a cleavage in the cliff, can be seen the fountain of Siloam, "for so we called that fountain of sweet and abundant water" (Josephus). From the spigot of this fountain water splashes onto the rocks below, feeding the stream that runs past the advancing mob and the sleeping apostles. Only days before, Jesus had passed near this very spot and wept over the sight of Jerusalem, saying, "If only you had known, on this great day, the way that leads to peace! But no; it is hidden from your sight. For a time will come upon you, when your enemies will set up siege-works against you; they will encircle you and hem you in at every point; they will bring you to the ground, you and your children within

24. Detail of fig. 23

25. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, or Camera degli Sposi, 1465–74. Fresco and tempera. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

> your walls, and not leave you one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize God's moment when it came" (Luke 19:41–44). Not four decades later Titus gave his troops orders "to encamp at a distance of six furlongs from Jerusalem at the mount called the Mount of Olives, which lies over against the city on the east, being separated from it by a deep intervening ravine called Kedron" (Josephus). It is on this same place that we see Jesus praying, and it is to this place, so filled with mournful memories, that Mantegna has brought us.

This exercise reminds us of the descriptive richness of Mantegna's pictures and the degree to which they contain potential prompts for the informed viewer: his pictures incorporate memory and associations. Thus, the bees swarming around their beehive (fig. 20) could have recalled for one viewer Saint Augustine's commentary on Psalm 118:12: "They compassed me about like bees"—a reference to Christ's capture. Others might have been reminded of the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics*, which deals with the care of bees. These kinds of literary references may be viewed as the complement to the classical architecture and antiquarian details of the Virgin's pavilion in the main panels of the altarpiece, archaeological detail and humanist scholarship combining in the creation of an altarpiece of unprecedented allusive richness and expressivity, with images that can be and must always have been read on multiple levels by audiences with vastly different educations, some able to elaborate imaginatively on the visual clues the artist provided while others remained intent on the human drama.

Of course, as in the frescoes of the Ovetari Chapel, expressivity was unquestionably at the forefront of Mantegna's conception. In no earlier treatment of the Agony in the Garden does Christ's suffering acquire the quality of an existential crisis, made the more poignant by the uncomprehending apostles asleep in the foreground, their poses studiously varied; the astonishing foreshortening of the descending angel, messenger of the bitter consolation sent from heaven; the stony, barren terrain of the foreground; the threatening crowds arriving in the distance; and the soft, green hill of Jerusalem set against the incandescent light of the evening sky. All those signifiers of artistic accomplishment that led Giovanni Santi to rank Mantegna the supreme artist of his day are incorporated into this depiction without in any way detracting from the narrative.

26. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, north wall, showing Ludovico Gonzaga and his court. Fresco and tempera. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

The Camera Picta

Between 1465 and 1474 Mantegna undertook for the marchese Ludovico Gonzaga the decoration of a room that served both as a bedroom and audience chamber, the so-called Camera Picta (Painted Room), later called the Camera degli Sposi (Bridal Chamber), in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua (fig. 25). Despite its modest dimensions (26½ feet square), the room is one of the defining works of Renaissance art, for in it Mantegna reconceived the notion of court portraiture. He did this by organizing the portraits around two narrative events. Although scholars have attempted to relate these events to real historical incidents, what they are trying to decipher is nothing less than the imagination of the artist. For these are imaginary encounters. There is a parallel in the scholarship surrounding Velázquez's great portrait of the Infanta Margarita and her maids: *Las Meninas*. As in that masterpiece, so in Mantegna's depiction we can identify all of the main characters, including the dog taking his rest beneath his master's chair (his name is Rubino, or Red), but we still cannot explicate the particular event it shows. Velázquez seems to have been inviting the viewer to participate in an informal moment of court life, and so does Mantegna.

Unlike the situation in the Ovetari Chapel, where the viewer stands below and outside the scene, in the Camera Picta Mantegna sought an interactive relationship with visitors to the room, which he transformed into a fictive pavilion raised on a low, marble-encrusted wall. On two of the walls simulated heavy brocade curtains have been drawn back to reveal the Gonzaga court. On the north wall, neatly conceived to incorporate the actual fireplace, the view looks out toward a walled garden; on the west wall is an open landscape. On the two remaining walls the heavy brocade curtains have been drawn shut. Mantegna has in effect cleverly adapted the conceit of the San Zeno altarpiece, in which the viewer-worshiper looks through the tripartite opening of the frame at the Virgin and her attendants holding court in a Roman-style pavilion surrounded by a rose hedge. In the Camera Picta he puts us inside the pavilion, in the position of the Virgin, if you will, looking out. It is a remarkable demonstration of the flexibility and ingenuity of Mantegna's mind: a mind that conceives of itself as inhabiting the very fictions it generates. And he invites us to do likewise: to enter into his fictions. By imagining the position and experience of the viewer, he redefined the very character of painting.

27. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, detail of north wall, showing Ludovico Gonzaga discussing the contents of a letter with a courtier. Fresco and tempera. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

On the north wall of the Camera Picta, above the fireplace (fig. 26), young courtiers in Gonzaga livery push back the brocaded curtain, seeking an audience with the marchese. The much-admired marchesa Barbara of Brandenburg listens attentively as her husband discusses the contents of a letter he has just received (fig. 27). With one arm she embraces her daughter, while with the other she gathers up the folds of her dress in a preoccupied fashion. In Mantegna's pictures gestures always convey character as well as support the narrative drama. And has anyone other than Velázquez succeeded so well in suggesting the role and the character of the dwarfs who were such an essential part of court life?

On the adjacent wall (fig. 28), the whole family surrounds Ludovico Gonzaga as he greets his son, Cardinal Francesco, who is evidently paying a visit from Rome. The figures have been meticulously arranged to illustrate a hierarchy of importance as well as the line of dynastic succession. At the same time the grouping seems completely casual and natural. The marchese raises his hand in greeting. The cardinal fingers a letter, and with gentle firmness he holds the hand of his

28. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, detail of west wall, showing Ludovico Gonzaga with his sons and relations. Fresco. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

29. *Ara Pacis*, detail of the procession of Augustus' family. Roman, Imperial, 13–9 B.C. Marble. Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome

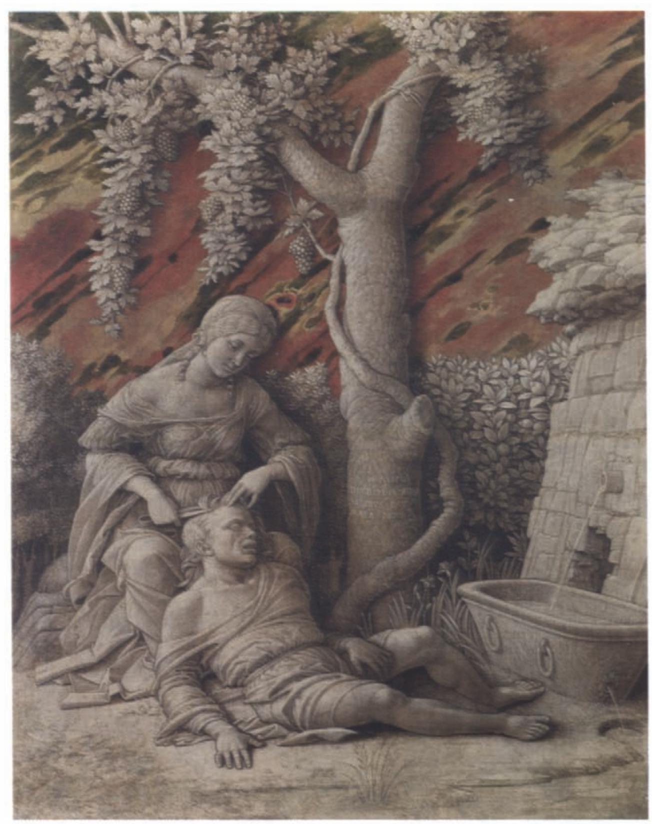
younger brother Ludovico, whose own left hand is held by his little cousin Sigismondo. The gestures convey a quality of trust and protection. It is an achievement Goya might have envied (think of his portrait of the family of Charles IV in the Museo del Prado, Madrid), though there can be little doubt that when grouping the figures in overlapping rows and showing most of them in profile, with only Cardinal Francesco in near full-face, Mantegna took his inspiration from classical sculpture. Perhaps the closest points of comparison are with Aurelian or Augustan reliefs such as the *Ara Pacis* (fig. 29), though whether Mantegna could have seen any significant part of this monument is uncertain. Behind the figures unfolds a landscape of extraordinary complexity and beauty that recasts flat, placid, swampy Mantua as a dazzling hilltop city adorned with Roman ruins, villas, and quarries. (To dispel any doubt about the site, the Gonzaga arms are displayed above the entrance gate.) Reality and an imagination reared on the humanist culture of antiquity intersect here in an unprecedented fashion.

On the ceiling of the Camera Picta Mantegna conceived an ingenious decoration to complete the effect of stepping

30. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, ceiling decoration. Fresco. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

31. Andrea Mantegna. Camera Picta, oculus. Fresco. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua

32. Andrea Mantegna, the San Zeno altarpiece (fig. 17), detail of the base of the Virgin's throne



33. Andrea Mantegna. *Samson and Delilah*, ca. 1500. Glue size on linen, 18½ x 14½ in. (47 x 36.8 cm). National Gallery, London (NG1145)

34. After a model by Andrea Mantegna. Putto. Mantua, third quarter 15th century. Bronze with silvered eyes, h. 8 ¼ in. (21 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1402)

35. Detail of fig. 31

into a Roman-style marble pavilion (fig. 30). He divided the ceiling into compartments separated by fictive marble moldings. Into these are set feigned roundels with busts of Roman emperors supported by figures of winged putti, again conceived as marble or stucco, set against a background of painted gold mosaics. It is a solution that may owe something to the precedent of the ceramic ceilings of Luca della Robbia, but the intention was obviously to evoke Imperial Rome. The scheme seems to embrace Alberti's comment that what counts in the decoration of a building is not the expense but the "wealth of ingenuity" displayed. Not only do the individual compartments pay compliments to the Gonzaga by including eight Roman emperors as well as mythological scenes of Hercules, Orpheus, and Arion, but they make a display of the ability of painting to simulate sculpture, and, in so doing, to surpass it. It is the kind of dialectic that runs through Renaissance and Baroque art, right down to Annibale Carracci's use of feigned sculpture in his frescoes on the vault of Palazzo Farnese more than two centuries later. At the very center of the ceiling, painting trumps sculpture definitively by opening up to the viewer an oculus to the sky (fig. 31)—an oculus surrounded by festoons of colored fruit that we are meant to compare with the feigned carved festoons encircling the Roman busts. This is the world of the Renaissance *paragone*, or comparison of the arts. The arguments maintaining the superiority of sculpture over painting or of painting over sculpture were rehearsed by every writer on art, most famously by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and, later still, by the Florentine historian-poet Benedetto Varchi (1502?–1565). Mantegna gave expression to the idea in the San Zeno altarpiece (fig. 32), where he depicted sculpted putti decorating the base of the Virgin's throne, their heads wittily hidden by a fringed Anatolian carpet, and juxtaposed them with flesh-colored putti playing musical instruments. The message was clear: painting can counterfeit sculpture, but it can go one better and simulate life itself.

Just as the *Agony in the Garden* shows some of the same concerns with dramatic narration that we find in the Ovetari Chapel frescoes, so there are a series of independent works that share the concerns found in the Camera Picta. For example, Mantegna followed up the idea of feigned sculpture so evident on the ceiling of the Camera Picta with modest-sized, independent paintings (see fig. 33) that emulate both marble and bronze reliefs and that assert, indirectly, his mastery over a kind of sculpture that has come to be associated with the Venetian sculptors Antonio Lombardo (ca. 1458?–?1516) and his brother Tullio (ca. 1455?–1532) but was explored in Mantua by Gian Cristoforo Romano (ca. 1465–1512). What makes these paintings so remarkable is the discipline Mantegna showed in emulating sculpture without trespassing its limitations. Part of his mastery may well have come from his direct involvement with sculpture. A bronze statuette in the Metropolitan's collection of a youth, or putto (fig. 34), seems to be based on a model Mantegna made to use in creating one of his engravings, the *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* (see fig. 63). (Mantegna, like Piero della Francesca, is known to have used figurines modeled in clay or wax to study poses and compositions.) No fewer than eight casts of the model exist: they must have been popular as studio props for artists and were collected as objects in their own right. If we are looking for evidence that Mantegna could have created the model for the bust in his funerary chapel (fig. 1), it is to be found in the feigned marble or stucco busts of emperors on the ceiling of the Camera Picta.

On the other hand, the extreme foreshortening of the winged putti who stand precariously on the rim of the oculus (fig. 35) must have spurred Mantegna to further explore the expressive potential of sharply angled viewpoints. The most original outgrowth of this kind of thinking was his famous haunting and vastly influential foreshortened *Dead Christ* in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan (fig. 36). There really can be no doubt that the same kind of projection system he employed for the putti in the oculus was put to use in this extraordinary devotional image. As with the putti, the foreshortening of the figure of Christ puts us in a particular position and requires us to assume a particular attitude and response. In the *Dead Christ*, however, the lighthearted mood of the ceiling, which is conceived as a *scherzo*, or pictorial joke, becomes serious tragedy, and we are invited to

36. Andrea Mantegna. *The Dead Christ*, ca. 1490. Distemper on canvas, backed with wood; 26¾ x 31⅞ in. (68 x 81 cm). Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

37. Andrea Mantegna. *Madonna and Child with Seraphim and Cherubim*, ca. 1460. Tempera and gold on wood, 17⅜ x 11¼ in. (44.1 x 28.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931 (32.100.97)

38. Andrea Mantegna. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1465–70. Distemper on canvas, 16⅞ x 12⅝ in. (43 x 32 cm). Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (s.5)

anoint Christ's feet with our tears—even as Mary Magdalene did. The painting is a striking testament to the flexibility of mind and desire to rethink traditional imagery based on ideas growing out of a particularly demanding commission.

The same process is at work in Mantegna's devotional paintings of the Madonna and Child. The earliest surviving example is a small picture in the Metropolitan that is, alas, so badly damaged that the two principal figures are all but faceless (fig. 37). The composition is framed by a fictive window surround, and a marble parapet set behind the arched surround provides another spatial division (note the angled shadow in the lower left, establishing the incidence of light). The sacred figures of the Virgin and Child are set behind the parapet and against a crowded host of cherubim and seraphim, each head beautifully positioned in space and viewed at a different angle—the exact opposite of the flat gold ground of traditional images of this sort. The Christ Child is so positioned that his legs stretch forward and rest on the parapet, thereby connecting our space with his and adding to the affective quality of the image. What we have is a use of illusionistic framing similar to what is found in the Ovetari Chapel, where on the back wall is a fresco of the Virgin shown ascending into heaven, surrounded by flying cherubs, while the apostles spill out of the framing arch and onto a ledge (figs. 5, 8). The Metropolitan's little picture must have been painted while Mantegna was at work on that fresco, and, like so many of his works of the 1450s, it reveals a profound debt to the sculpture of Donatello.

What a contrast there is between this small picture and two later paintings of the Madonna and Child that Mantegna must have painted while he was working on the Camera Picta in Mantua in 1465–74. They are not concerned with a play

39. Andrea Mantegna. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1470–74. Distemper and gold on canvas, 16⅞ x 12¼ in. (43 x 31 cm). Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (484)

40. Andrea Mantegna. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1475. Engraving on laid paper; sheet, trimmed with plate mark, 10⅞ x 9⅛ in. (27.7 x 23.1 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Patrons' Permanent Fund (1998.50.1./PR)

between real and fictive space so much as with creating a quality of verisimilitude based on his experience of portraiture. It is possible to argue that one of these pictures—the *Madonna and Child* now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (fig. 38)—was painted while Mantegna was working on what might be thought of as the more informal and domestic wall of the Camera Picta, showing the marchese Ludovico and his wife, Barbara of Brandenburg (figs. 26, 27), while the other, in the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo (fig. 39), is more closely related to the west wall (figs. 25, 28), with its much more formal, tighter organization. In both of these paintings, we feel in the presence of a real mother holding a real child. In one, the Child sleeps, and his little hands move involuntarily as he dreams. In the other, the infant is in the early stages of teething. In both, the affection between mother and child is described in believable and tender terms.

Not the least fascinating aspect of these two paintings is Mantegna's apparent concern over the risks involved in painting a devotional image in such strikingly human terms: of slipping into mere genre painting. He avoided this by maintaining a mood of melancholy and gravity, and also by simulating gold brocade and moiré for the Virgin's cloak, a

41. Andrea Mantegna. *The Holy Family with Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1496–1506. Distemper and gold on canvas, 22 ½ x 18 in. (57.2 x 45.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.643)

naturalistic way of harking back to the gold striations on the clothes of the saints on Byzantine icons. Mantegna's art has often been compared to that of his brother-in-law Giovanni Bellini, and it is sometimes even said that his pictures lack in feeling and humanity, but nothing could be further from the truth. Roger Fry described the matter beautifully in an article of 1905 whose critical insight has never been surpassed. Of the exquisite *Madonna and Child* in the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, Fry wrote, "[The Madonna] lives a life apart, a life in which feelings unknown to us, more intense than ours, still do not avail to ruffle the serenity of a superhuman insight. In the Child the main idea is more on a plane with that of other artists, notably with Bellini. Like him Mantegna here gives expression to the agony of a mind already conscious of the burden it has taken upon it, but even so the sense of mystery is stronger than in Bellini, and with a greater realism there is yet a greater remoteness." Of the *Madonna and Child* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, Fry noted that "there is here no idealization in the ordinary sense, no attempt to escape from the facts. All the penalty, all the humiliation, almost the squalor attendant on being 'made flesh' are marked." Is it any wonder that Mantegna's engraving of the Virgin seated on the ground, bent over the Child she cradles in her lap (fig. 40), should have inspired Rembrandt to create one of his most intimate as well as affecting etchings?

What a change in emotional tenor when, two decades or so later, Mantegna painted *The Holy Family with Saint Mary Magdalene* in the Metropolitan (fig. 41). The picture has suffered from abrasion: it is painted in distemper on canvas, a medium that Mantegna preferred for the precision he could achieve, but that could be easily damaged by the application of varnish or by the use of strong solvents in cleaning. We might be forgiven for thinking that Mantegna had intended to show not Saint Joseph but a Republican senator or Stoic philosopher, and that Mary Magdalene looks like a Roman matron. It is easy to see in this picture a reflection of Renaissance syncretism: an effort to accommodate Roman Stoic values to Christian faith and vice versa. But the Mother and Child are as affecting as those in the Berlin and Bergamo paintings. What distinguishes these figures are their interlocking poses—the way the Child's left arm embraces his mother and his left leg is extended over her left arm while her left hand steadies his other leg—and the sharpness of the contours. The style of this ultrarefined, intricately composed picture is

42. Andrea Mantegna. *The Triumphs of Caesar, II: The Bearers of Standards and Siege Equipment*, ca. 1484–1506. Tempera on canvas, 8 ft. 9 in. x 9 ft. 2 in. (2.7 x 2.8 m). The Royal Collection, Hampton Court, Acquired by Charles I (RCIN403959)

characteristic of Mantegna's paintings for Isabella d'Este's private study: once again, the ideas growing out of a major project have spilled over into other areas of his activity.

The Triumphs of Caesar

The centerpiece of Mantegna's legacy was always the series of canvases showing the triumphs of Caesar, now installed at Hampton Court (figs. 42–44). At the time the Gonzaga sold the series to Charles I of England, in 1629, the French ambassador in Venice declared it "the most beautiful and accomplished work that exists." These sublime canvases brought out yet another aspect of Mantegna's character, concerning which we have a unique record. In September of 1464—two decades before he undertook the series—Mantegna set out with a group of friends for an excursion on Lago di Garda. The group included that eccentric humanist scholar and scribe Felice Feliciano, the painter Samuele da Tradate, and another companion sometimes identified as the Gonzaga architect-engineer Giovanni da Padova and sometimes as the Paduan antiquarian Giovanni di Marcanova. Each assumed a role, as though they were Romans. Felice wore a garland of myrtle and ivy; Samuele sang and played the lute as they sailed around

43. Andrea Mantegna. *The Triumphs of Caesar, III: The Bearers of Trophies and Bullion*, ca. 1484–1506. Tempera on canvas, 8 ft. 9 in. x 9 ft. 2 in. (2.7 x 2.8 m). The Royal Collection, Hampton Court, Acquired by Charles I (RCIN403960)

the lake in their boat decorated with carpets and laurel. They explored the islands looking for classical inscriptions and monuments. One monument they identified as a shrine to Diana and her nymphs. An orchard reminded them of the gardens of the Muses. Upon returning from this expedition, they entered a church and gave thanks to the Virgin and her almighty son, whom they addressed in terms more appropriate to Zeus. The impulse was a romantic antiquarianism: a desire not simply to read about the Roman past and study its remains but to participate imaginatively in its very life. This is the spirit that underlies the nine canvases of *The Triumphs of Caesar*, and it is what makes them such a landmark in Western art. Francesco Gonzaga himself recognized this when he listed them among Mantegna's outstanding achievements. The images, he declared, "are almost alive and breathing so that the subject seems not represented but to actually exist."

Much earlier in the fifteenth century the Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras had written some letters that were much read by Italian humanists. He found himself in Rome wandering among the ruins of the city, "in the hope of finding in these places beauty not in living bodies but in stones, marbles, and images." He marveled that "the skill of these representations

44. Andrea Mantegna. *The Triumphs of Caesar, VI: The Corselet Bearers*, ca. 1484–1506. Tempera on canvas, 8 ft. 9 in. x 9 ft. 2 in. (2.7 x 2.8 m). The Royal Collection, Hampton Court, Acquired by Charles I (RCIN403963)

equals and rivals Nature herself, so that one seems to see a real man, horse, city, or army, breastplate, sword, or armor, and real people captured or fleeing, laughing, weeping, excited or angry." It was this attitude toward the art of ancient Rome that Mantegna revived in the *Triumphs of Caesar*. In all of the canvases, archaeological knowledge is matched by narrative sweep and an eye for the kind of incidental detail that gives life and movement to what could easily have turned into a pompous, heavy-handed piece of pedantry.

The effect must have been astonishing when the nine canvases, each of them approximately 9 by 9 feet, were installed in a room above eye level, so that the viewer was confronted with a veritable parade, its various parts viewed through a screen of enframing classical pilasters. In effect, the viewer was transported back to antiquity as Mantegna brought to life one of the exciting celebrations following a great military victory. In the first three grand scenes booty is being carried through the streets. In the second of them (fig. 42) a Gonzaga dog has somehow managed to insert himself alongside a figure struggling with a bronze statue of a priestess or female votary. In the canvas showing the trophy bearers (fig. 43), the pace seems to pick up, and the effect of figures moving across the canvas is irresistible. One figure pauses under the weight of the trophy he has to carry. In the sixth of the *Triumphs* canvases (fig. 44), spectators have climbed up on the wall or aqueduct that defines the background. It is typical of the workings of Mantegna's

45. Andrea Mantegna. *Ecce Homo*, ca. 1500. Distemper and gold on canvas, backed with wood; 21 ¼ x 16 ½ in. (54 x 42 cm). Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris (MJAP-P-1840)

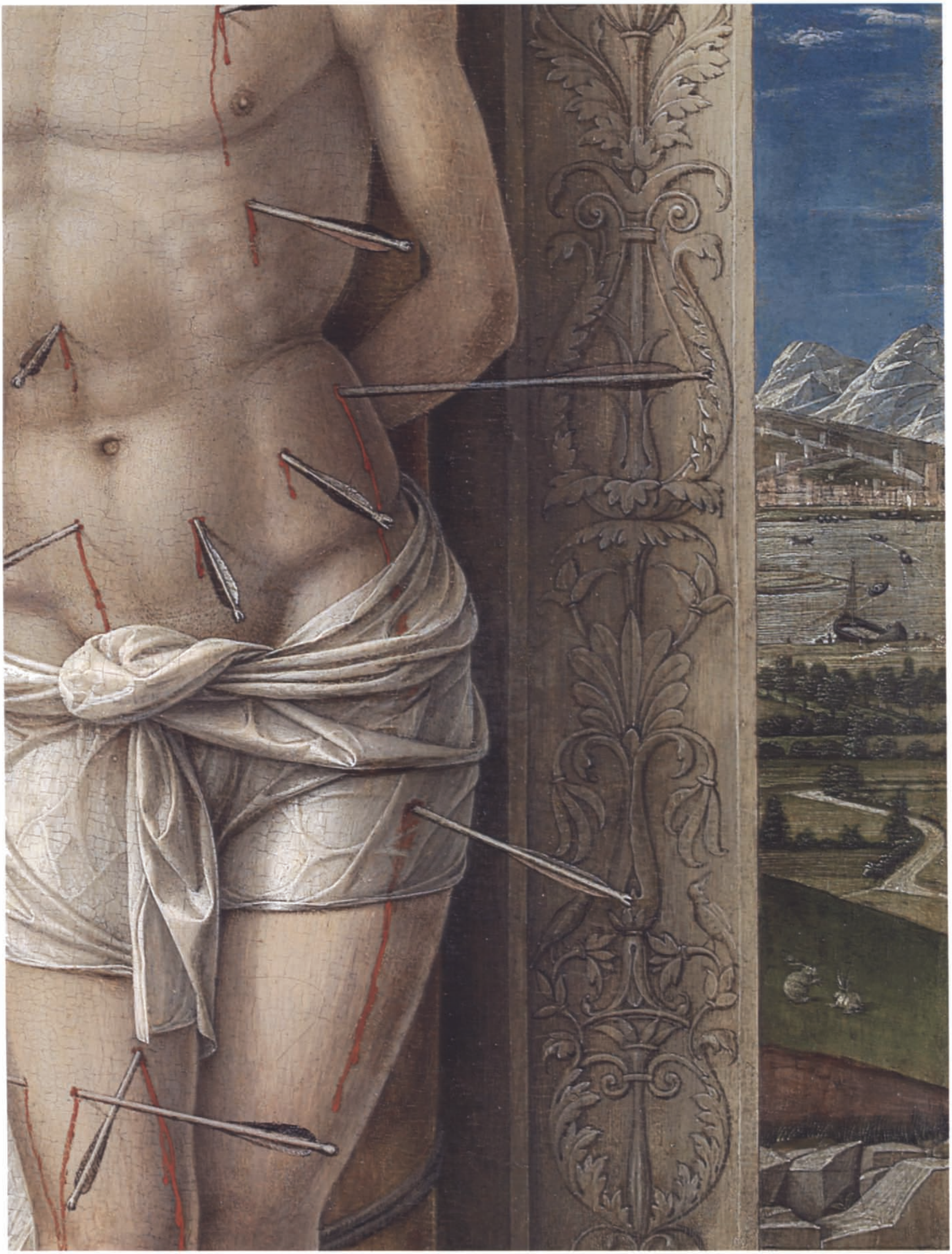
mind that the figure with bowed head bearing a suit of armor should have been translated so readily into a canvas (alas in wretched condition) of Christ carrying the cross (Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona), a work that is curiously underrated by many scholars but was clearly designed by Mantegna and is deeply affecting.

The great devotional picture of this moment—and one of the best preserved of all of Mantegna's canvases—is a painting of the Ecce Homo in the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris (fig. 45). Like the Metropolitan's *Holy Family with Saint Mary Magdalene* (fig. 41), it was conceived along the lines of a Roman funerary relief, with a figure viewed frontally set against two in three-quarter view. In the background of this scheme Mantegna added two further figures, one in profile and another full face, depicted in the pictorial equivalent of *relievo schiacciato*, or low relief. The beautifully lettered inscriptions—pieces of paper (juridical indictments, really) that have seemingly been affixed to the frame with red sealing wax—evince both Mantegna's love of Roman letters (he wrote a beautiful, humanist script) and his desire to quite literally put words into the snarling mouths of Christ's accusers.

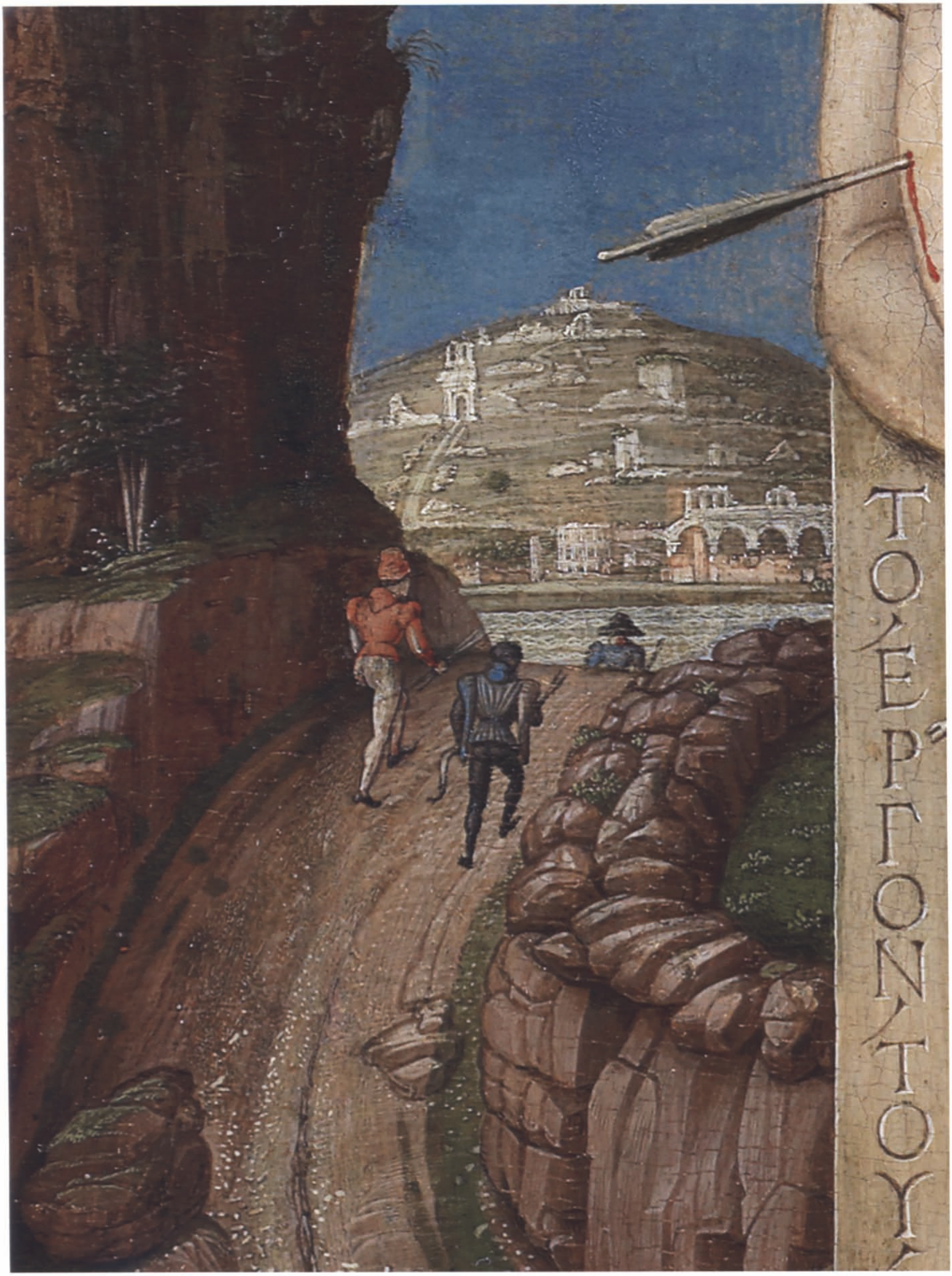
As has perhaps become clear, nothing in Mantegna's art is casual. It demands and repays the closest viewing; it requires an engaged viewer. Let us take yet one more example—a small painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (figs. 46–49) that cannot help but elicit admiration for this artist and seems to encapsulate his complex and exalted imagination. The Vienna *Saint Sebastian* is often put forward as a candidate for the *operetta*, or little work, that in 1459 Mantegna was painting for the Venetian scholar and soldier Jacopo Marcello. It would be nice if this were so, for Marcello had close ties to Mantegna's circle of humanist friends in Padua. Moreover, on his property on Monselice, south of the city, were Roman inscriptions and reliefs, some of which were sketched by Jacopo Bellini and studied by Mantegna and Felice Feliciano. The picture would have perfectly suited Marcello's tastes and his sophistication. How he would have appreciated the signature Mantegna inscribed on the pier to the left

46. Andrea Mantegna. *Saint Sebastian*, 1459(?). Tempera and gold on wood, 26 ¾ x 11 ⅞ in. (68 x 30 cm). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (GG 301)

47 (opposite). Detail (enlarged) of fig. 46



48 (above) and 49 (opposite). Details (enlarged) of fig. 46


ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΤΟΥ

of the saint: *To ergon tou Andreou* (This is the work of Andrea)! That the signature is in Greek signals immediately that this is a picture with a designated audience or viewer: someone steeped in classical culture. Going against all pictorial conventions and even the story as recounted in the *Golden Legend*, Mantegna showed Sebastian tied not to a post or a tree, as was traditional, but to a classical column. This transposition not only situates the story in the time of Diocletian, under whom Sebastian was martyred, but it also enabled Mantegna to elaborate upon the theme of Christian victory. The column Sebastian is tied to is not just a column; it once formed part of an arcade in what seems to have been a Roman basilica, which is to say a ruined tribunal or place of judgment. Above and to the right is a figure of Victory. Of course, the victory Mantegna was celebrating was not military victory (though Sebastian was a member of the Praetorian Guard) but Christian victory over paganism.

Around Saint Sebastian, depicted with meticulous care, are broken pieces of Roman sculpture, including a bacchic relief with putti and grapes (see fig. 48). The beauty with which these archaeological fragments are painted partly undercuts the message of Christian victory, for we cannot help but lament the destruction of these once great works, regardless of the fact that they were made by pagans. But if on the one hand, these fragments cause us to reflect with a combination of nostalgia and regret on the transitoriness of the works of man—a topos of humanist writing—on the other, we are invited to admire the artist's skill at painting sculpture as well as living flesh. The juxtaposition of the sculpted marble foot with Sebastian's blood-stained one is very much to the point.

Mantegna also clearly gave careful thought to the building practices of the ancients, and his depiction of the fragmentary arcade is a demonstration of that knowledge, for behind the marble revetment is a brick core. He was fascinated by the reuse of building materials: the way the detritus of one culture becomes the building material for the next. He rarely forwent the opportunity to display this archaeological fascination in his depiction of the walls surrounding cities. In the *Saint Sebastian* his signature is shown incised into a piece of reused stone behind the carved pilaster (note that the bottommost letter is buried behind the later construction). His name, like Sebastian's victory over paganism, has thus been revealed through the destruction of the Roman building.

Does this Greek signature also carry an allusion to Mantegna reaching back beyond Rome to the art of Greece? The contrapposto pose of Sebastian is an obvious emulation of the fabled work of Polycleitus, whom Pliny credited with conceiving of the idea of "making statues throwing their weight on one leg," thereby establishing a universal canon. But the pose is also the equivalent of a rhetorical figure of suffering—perhaps the first such in Renaissance art. In subsequent centuries this sort of rhetorical-expressive device was repeated ad nauseam. Following the discovery of the *Laocoön* in Rome in 1506, the contrapposto with upturned head to signify pain or ecstasy became a commonplace in Baroque art. But when Mantegna painted this picture he was breaking new ground. Here, then, is Giovanni Santi's true successor to the ancients: someone who had gone beyond the Romans, asserting with his signature his competition with the greatest masters of ancient Greece.

Beyond the shattered walls of the building the scene shifts, for the archers walking on the path (fig. 49) are in contemporary dress, and they lead us into a deep landscape with a hill littered with classical monuments on one side and a lake with boats ferrying back and forth to a fortified city on the other. In short, this is a world in which past and present coalesce: a world of the imagination. In the upper left Mantegna drew an intentional comparison between his creative skills and those images that Nature makes on occasion in passing clouds: images made by chance. Comparing the artist's ability to create to Nature's was a common theme of Renaissance criticism, and Mantegna included such images again and again in his work. Of course, chance images of nature and the artifacts of man are really very unlike each other, for as Cicero rightly noted, "no perfect imitation of a thing was ever made by chance." And that is what Mantegna was most interested in: perfect imitation. The puffy, indistinct forms of his horseman in the clouds could not be more different from the hard, sharp delineation of the figure, a delineation very much enhanced by his insistence on the contour line. "[The drawing of outlines] in painting is the high-water mark of refinement," Pliny tells us (*Natural History* 35:67–68). "To paint bulk and the surface within the outlines, though no doubt a great achievement, is one in which many have won distinction, but to give the contour of the figures, and make a satisfactory boundary where the painting within finishes, is rarely attained in successful artistry. . . . This is the distinction conceded to Parrhasius." Three centuries after Mantegna's death, William Blake, commenting on a drawing of his own showing the biblical heroine Ruth, asked, "How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflections and movements? . . . What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions? Leave out this line and you leave out life itself." Blake takes us very close, indeed, to an understanding of the hard, lapidary, intellectually complex and high-minded, demanding world of Mantegna and his insistence on the "wirey line of rectitude."

Mantegna left yet another comment on his notion of the creative powers of an artist. On the base of the throne in his great altarpiece *The Madonna della Vittoria* in the Louvre are three scenes depicting the creation and fall of Adam and Eve. The scene on the left is a fragmentary view of God modeling Adam out of clay, a representation as rare as it is faithful to the Bible, which says that God created man from the dust

50. After Andrea Mantegna. *The Triumphs of Caesar, VI: The Corselet Bearers* (see fig. 44), ca. 1500(?). Engraving, 11 x 12⅞ in. (27.8 x 32.6 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris, Rothschild Collection (3848LR). The pilaster may record the carved pilasters that separated the canvases when they were installed together

of the earth (Genesis 2:7). Surely this detail goes well beyond Mantegna's penchant for introducing visual references to the *paragone*, or comparison, between sculpture and painting. It is not only a singular illustration of Genesis but a comment on the godlike character of artistic creation—God as artist. As early as 1411 Manuel Chrysoloras had declared that "we admire not so much the beauties of the bodies in statues and paintings as the beauty of the mind of their maker." The divine nature of creativity was much discussed in the Renaissance. It was famously taken up by the Florentine Neoplatonists and is a recurrent theme in the poetry of Michelangelo. In his paintings Mantegna often included references to quarrying marble and the carving of statues and columns. Might these be construed as yet further comments on the theme of creativity? On the one hand, these details attest to the artist's fascination with what we might call the culture of marble—a fascination that led to his paintings being criticized by his first teacher, Squarcione, for their stonelike quality. (The same criticism was to be leveled two centuries later at Poussin, another artist obsessed with the legacy of the ancient world.) Yet in these pictures Mantegna seems to have been contrasting his mastery of the brush with the manual labor of those who work in stone and marble—a theme Leonardo was to express powerfully in his arguments for the superiority of painting over sculpture. Over and over Mantegna insisted on calling attention to the quality of his genius—that same genius he wished to commemorate in his funerary chapel.

Mantegna and Engraving

To discuss Mantegna's place in the Renaissance without saying at least a few words about the engravings associated with him is impossible, for even more than his paintings they ensured his broad and continued legacy, and it is in them that he affirmed most uncompromisingly his belief in that "hard and wirey line of rectitude": *disegno*, the foundation of Italian art. For this discussion we need to make a distinction between two broad categories of printmaking. The first is comprised of reproductive engravings publicizing famous paintings: the engravings after Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, for example, or Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican and Michelangelo's in the Sistine Chapel. The prints after Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar* (see fig. 50) fall into this category. For our purposes, however, greater interest attaches to a second group: those engravings that reproduce drawings by Mantegna, compositions that were never intended to be translated into paint but were made specifically to be engraved. On them rests Mantegna's claim to being one of the innovators of engraving—a role his contemporaries, followed by Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (first published in 1550), did not hesitate to assign to him.

In recent years Mantegna's role in printmaking has been much discussed, thanks largely to a controversy that erupted in the wake of preparations for the Mantegna exhibition that was held in London and New York in 1992. In brief, the two specialists cataloguing the prints to be shown in the exhibition reached opposite conclusions about Mantegna's involvement. Their common point of departure was the recognition that most of the prints based on his designs were made by professional printmakers. In the fifteenth century this usually meant a goldsmith. So far so good. Where the two scholars parted company was in their acceptance or rejection of the traditional view that the seven finest prints associated with Mantegna's name (figs. 40, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65) had actually been engraved by Mantegna himself and that he had, in consequence, played a crucial role in the history of the technique of printmaking in Italy. The debate was fueled by what might be thought of as an overly narrow attitude toward the idea of authorship, an attitude that would have seemed anachronistic to the Renaissance mind and that perhaps underplayed the fact that the technical innovations of these engravings had to have been conceived by Mantegna, regardless of whether or not he actually wielded the burin.

New light was shed on this question nine years ago, with the discovery of an absolutely fascinating document: a formal arrangement Mantegna made in April 1475 with a goldsmith named Gian Marco Cavalli to engrave copperplates after his designs. According to the stipulations, Mantegna was to retain the plates engraved by Gian Marco, and heavy fines would be levied if the terms were not met. One passage runs, "item: the same Giovan Marco promises Messer Andrea, both for himself and his heirs, that he will not show the designs and plates nor allow said designs to be copied by anyone without permission from Messer Andrea, under penalty of being fined 100 ducats." So much for a casual attitude toward the process of printmaking. There is no way of knowing

51. After Andrea Mantegna. *Hercules and Antaeus*, ca. 1497. Engraving, plate 13⅜ x 9 in. (34 x 23 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.65.3)

52. After Andrea Mantegna. *Four Dancing Muses*, ca. 1497. Engraving, sheet 9¾ x 12½ in. (24.7 x 31.9 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Helen and Alice Colburn Fund (M28357)

53. After Andrea Mantegna. *The Flagellation of Christ, with the Pavement*, ca. 1470–75(?). Engraving, trimmed, eliminating door molding at top and right; plate 15 ¼ x 11 ⅝ in. (38.6 x 29.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, 1929 (29.44.19)

whether the arrangement with Gian Marco was unique, how long it lasted, or whether Mantegna had been involved in printmaking before that date. Whichever was the case, Mantegna retained a core group of engraved plates (including five of the seven finest ones), which he passed on to his son Leonardo; they appear in a post-mortem inventory of Leonardo's effects in 1510. What this establishes very clearly is the importance Mantegna attached to what today we would call "intellectual property."

The report of a virtually contemporaneous event underscores how seriously Mantegna took the translation of his designs into engravings. In September of 1475 the painter-printmaker Simone da Reggio registered a complaint against Mantegna. It seems that he had come to Mantua hoping for employment. Mantegna had made him offers, but nothing seems to have come of them. Unfortunately for Simone, he was a friend of another Mantuan painter who had recently had some drawings, engravings, and medals stolen from him.

54. After Andrea Mantegna. *Christ's Descent into Limbo*, ca. 1470–75. Engraving, sheet 16⅝ x 13½ in. (42.2 x 34.3 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection (1943.3.5767.[B-8266]/PR)

Simone offered to make replacements for the engravings, working on them for four months. When Mantegna heard what Simone was up to he became enraged. First came threats, then a beating by hired thugs, and then an accusation of sodomy, a crime punishable by death. Simone fled the city and then petitioned the marchese for a pardon. Whatever else one makes of this extraordinary drama, Mantegna quite clearly did not take printmaking casually and was willing to go to extremes to ensure that he had no competition. Not only did he insist on total control of the plates that would be engraved, but once he engaged Gian Marco Cavalli, there was no room in Mantua for another printmaker, regardless of whom that person was working for.

Since Gian Marco was still on good terms with Mantegna some thirty years later there really can be no doubt that he had not failed Mantegna in 1475 and that he was, in consequence, responsible for translating at least some of Mantegna's designs into engravings. The question is, which ones? Do we

55. Andrea Mantegna. *Christ's Descent into Limbo*, ca. 1465–70. Pen, ink, and brown wash on vellum, 14⅝ x 11 in. (37.2 x 28 cm). École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (189)

owe to him prints such as the marvelous *Hercules and Antaeus*, the finest impression of which is in the Metropolitan (fig. 51)? If so, he would probably also have been responsible for the less dazzling engraving of four dancing muses (fig. 52), as these two compositions were actually engraved on the front and back of a single copperplate that is listed in the 1510 inventory of Leonardo Mantegna's property. The muses derive from Mantegna's work on a painting of about 1497, so both engravings must date from that time as well—more than twenty years after the initial contract with Gian Marco.

Two fascinating engravings showing the Flagellation of Christ and the Descent into Limbo (figs. 53, 54) were also done on the front and back of the same plate and are listed in that same 1510 inventory. But unlike *Hercules and Antaeus* and *Four Dancing Muses*, these engravings record compositions that Mantegna seems to have devised in the 1460s, not long after arriving in Mantua (there are still echoes of his work in

56. Andrea Mantegna. *The Entombment*, detail of Saint John (enlarged). Engraving, plate 11 ⅜ x 16⅜ in. (29 x 41.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1937 (37.42.30)

the Ovetari Chapel). The designs for these engravings are wonderfully inventive. In the *Flagellation* a rectangular opening frames the scene, with two soldiers—one sitting, the other standing—observing the action, which is staged in the background. The figures are rendered schematically, however, and the engraver lost his way when it came to finishing the columns (the one at the right lacks a base) and the entablature (which was left blank). The engraving is clearly unfinished.

The same is true of *Christ's Descent into Limbo* (fig. 54), and in this case we can see exactly where the engraver ran into difficulties transposing Mantegna's design, for what seems to be the autograph drawing (exceptionally, on vellum rather than paper) on which the engraving is based survives (fig. 55). The brilliant way Mantegna described the opening of Hell in the drawing as a tunnel viewed in steep foreshortening, the crevices between the stones beautifully defined, has been completely lost in the pathetic gloss of the print. Similarly, the marvelously complex poses of the flying demons in the drawing become flattened out in the engraving. The same inability to translate the drawing into a print is evident in all the figures. It is not surprising that when Mantegna's brother-in-law, Giovanni Bellini (who lived in awe of Mantegna), wanted to paint his version of the subject (also on vellum), he got hold of the original drawing. In short, this engraving too represents a failed effort. But on the part of whom? Gian Marco? Another, as yet anonymous, engraver whom Mantegna dismissed in favor of Gian Marco (let us hope with greater consideration than Simone experienced)?

This brings us to the seven truly superb engravings that lie at the very heart of the debate: *The Entombment*, *The Risen Christ between Saints Andrew and Longinus*, a *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* and a pendant *Bacchanal with Silenus*, a double-sheet

57. Andrea Mantegna. *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* (fig. 63), detail (enlarged)

Battle of the Sea Gods, and the *Madonna and Child* (figs. 59–65, 40). Their chronological sequence has been much discussed, as has the issue of whether their production spans a long or relatively brief period of time. It seems likely that the *Christ between Saints Andrew and Longinus* (fig. 59) has some connection with the laying of the foundation stone for the Church of Sant'Andrea on June 12, 1472 (the church, designed by Alberti, housed a relic of Christ's blood, whence the presence of the Roman soldier Longinus, who pierced Christ's side). Everyone agrees that these seven engravings stand out from the rest for their exceptionally high quality and innovative technique. It is because of their extraordinary qualities that the old idea that Mantegna himself may, after all, have made prints—that he wielded the burin and did not simply breathe down the back of a proficient goldsmith—cannot be dismissed out of hand. An exemplary technical analysis of these prints undertaken by Shelley Fletcher, of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, has underscored their special status in the history of printmaking and given reason to view them as the products not of a professional goldsmith applying an established technique but of an artist experimenting in an unfamiliar medium, which he pushed in a new direction. His manner of engraving was then imitated by other professional printmakers, some more competent than others. Alternatively—and at this stage we can only suggest alternatives—Mantegna, after some initial experiments, possibly with a number of goldsmiths, managed by literally standing over Gian Marco to get him to do exactly what he envisioned. Then, with time, he loosened control, and Gian Marco fell back into a more rote manner of working.

To demonstrate just what it was that Mantegna was after, perhaps it will be enough to show a detail of the profile of the weeping Saint John (fig. 56) in the great print of the

58. Andrea Mantegna. *Man on a Stone Slab*, ca. 1470–75. Pen and brown ink, over traces of black chalk or charcoal, 8 x 5 ½ in. (20.3 x 13.9 cm). British Museum, London (1860,0616.63)

59. Andrea Mantegna. *The Risen Christ between Saints Andrew and Longinus*, ca. 1472. Engraving, plate 12 3/8 x 11 3/8 in. (31.5 x 28.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921 (21.28)

60. Andrea Mantegna. *The Entombment*, ca. 1470–75. Engraving, laid down; sheet, trimmed to and within plate mark, 11¾ x 17⅜ in. (29.9 x 44.2 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Patrons' Permanent Fund (1986.98.1./PR)

Entombment. The way the burin has been manipulated to achieve the ductility of a pen line is equally clear in a detail from the print of a bacchanal (fig. 57), the finest impression of which is in the Metropolitan (most of these prints have unfortunately come down to us in poor impressions, sometimes retouched at a later date with pen and ink). Nothing could be further removed from normal engraving practice. The results contrast markedly with the diligent dullness found in Baccio Baldini's transcription of Botticelli's designs for the *Divine Comedy* published in Florence in 1481. This is because Mantegna conceived of the print medium not simply as a means of recording his *invenzioni*, or compositional ideas, but as an imitation of his manner of drawing, that oneness of mind and hand that had so impressed his admirers from an early stage. One need only compare the modeling of these two engravings with Mantegna's marvelous pen and ink drawings, such as the beautiful *Man on a Stone Slab* in the British Museum (fig. 58), to see the close relationship he sought. Both drawing and engraving show the same emphasis on contour and interior definition, with enormous variability in the line, and in both the same sort of parallel hatching, sometimes finer, sometimes denser, creates wonderfully subtle effects of light and shade. So whether Mantegna made these prints himself or whether he found in Gian Marco Cavalli someone who was able to realize his intentions, they represent a revolution in the history of printmaking, the impetus for which clearly came from Mantegna himself. In the most important sense he is the author of these prints and their innovative style.

But of course the importance of the prints goes well beyond their technique and style. The core group of seven cover a range of subjects that extend from the devotional intimacy of the *Madonna and Child* (fig. 40), which shows Mary against a neutral background, humbly seated on the floor cradling her child in her arms, to the deeply moving narrative of the *Entombment* (fig. 60), set against a rocky landscape with the three crosses of Calvary in the distance; from scenes of drunken revelry in *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* (fig. 63) and the grotesquery of the companion *Bacchanal with Silenus* (fig. 65) to the mock *Battle of the Sea Gods* (fig. 62)—an unprecedented double print that when

61. Andrea Mantegna. *The Entombment*, detail (enlarged). Engraving, plate 11⅜ x 16⅜ in. (29 x 41.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1937 (37.42.30)

pasted together and viewed as a continuous frieze suggests the format of a Roman relief on a sarcophagus.

Then too, Mantegna used these prints to showcase certain visual problems as demonstrations of his *ingegno*. His constant emphasis of figures viewed in complex, often foreshortened, poses is apparent in them all. The engraving *The Risen Christ between Saints Andrew and Longinus* (fig. 59), for example, with its three figures viewed *di sotto in sù*, their feet overlapping the edge of the podium and the cross angled so as to project out of the picture plane, is an exercise in illusionism. That the *Entombment* (fig. 60) is a brilliant illustration of an Albertian *istoria* was demonstrated by Michael Baxandall, who noted the correlations with Alberti's treatise on painting. As Alberti recommended, there are ten figures, one of which, the grieving Saint John isolated to one side, is Alberti's choric figure, whose response serves as an emotional cue for the viewer. The saint's face, contorted by grief (see fig. 56), is marvelously contrasted with another grieving figure who covers his face with a cloth (fig. 61), an obvious allusion to the ancient painting by Timanthes mentioned by Pliny and Alberti. Timanthes' painting illustrated the sacrifice of Iphegenia, and to express the inexpressible—the grief of Iphegenia's father—Timanthes hit upon the idea of showing him with his head covered with a veil, "and thus," as Alberti said, "he left more for the onlooker to imagine about his grief than he could see with the eye." The woman with outflung arms was derived from a sarcophagus of the dead Meleager that Donatello had already mined for his great marble relief in Padua and that Alberti also admired. The dead Christ, with his limp limbs, is borne with obvious effort by two men (they provided the point of departure for Raphael when he painted his *Entombment* some thirty years later). And all ten figures are clad in windblown drapery, much prized by Alberti because it allows the underlying forms of the body to be described. It is typical of Mantegna that he should have invested the subject with so many signifiers of artistic accomplishment, all of which also enhance the tragic mood.

The high seriousness of this religious narrative contrasts abruptly with the mordant humor of the *Battle of the Sea Gods* (fig. 62), an extraordinary frieze of marine creatures battling

62. Andrea Mantegna. *Battle of the Sea Gods*, ca. 1470–75. Engraving and drypoint (in two parts), overall 11 ⅛ x 32 ½ in. (28.3 x 82.6 cm). Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth (Album I, n. 38)

each other under the aegis of an old hag with sagging breasts who holds aloft a cartel with the inscription "INVID[IA]" (envy). But envy of what? A statue of Neptune stands on the shore amidst the rushes that border the shallow marsh. It is rotated so that the god sees nothing. Indeed, his head is also turned away from what appears to be a circular mirror that would allow him to observe the fracas indirectly. Or is the mirror an emblem of art as the mirror of nature? Whatever the specifics of the allegory—and it does not seem to be based on any single literary text—what is apparent is the ridicule that Mantegna heaps on the sea gods and their female companions, who use clusters of fish to beat each other as one of the marine creatures holds up a bull's skull as a shield. It is like a brawl among students in an American college fraternity. Envy, the print seems to say, leads to folly that even the gods refuse to observe.

The two bacchanal prints (figs. 63, 65) are the products of the same scathing wit. In the foreground of *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat* (fig. 64) two infants have passed out after drinking too much, while a still sober companion climbs up the side of the barrel, placing one foot on a spigot with a notably phallic shape. The comic pair at the right celebrate in drunken fashion. One is a sort of fool or court jester who wears bells on his ankles and whose legs are adorned with acanthus-like foliage, a highly original, intentionally ridiculous concept. His companion has leafy hair, wears a goat skin, and blows through a ram's horn. In the center of the composition another leafy-haired figure takes advantage of the inebriated youth who sits teetering on the edge of the wine vat. Who can fail to admire Mantegna's brilliant description of character and motive: the contrast between the two mouths, one unconsciously hanging open in slumber, the other forming a lascivious grin (see fig. 57), or between the coddling hands of the seducer and the limp, defenseless ones of the youth. At the left, Bacchus—shown young and ideally beautiful, with his right hand resting on a cornucopia of grapes—reaches up to claim his wreath of victory, which is offered to him by an unlikely pair: an older

man sitting on the shoulders of a Hercules-like figure wearing a lion skin.

There can be little doubt that in creating these engravings with classical themes Mantegna was inspired by Roman sarcophagi—the pose of the Bacchus, for instance, can be traced to a sarcophagus in the Villa Medici in Rome. But Mantegna has transformed his ancient sources into moralizing allegories, and he has subverted the language of classicism to his own ends. This is not a celebration of the kingdom of Bacchus but an exposure, once again, of degenerate human folly. Like Poussin two centuries later, Mantegna appropriated the terms of the ancient world only to subvert them to his own high moral purpose.

These seven engravings encapsulate Mantegna's ambition as an artist, and there is every reason to believe that they were undertaken for precisely this reason. After all, Mantua was not the center of the world—or even of northern Italy, for that matter. Mantegna must have worried that whatever prestige attached to being the court artist of the Gonzaga carried with it the downside of working in an out-of-the-way town on projects that few people were likely to see. He had been to Florence in 1466 and while there he must have been reminded of what it was like to work, as he had in Padua in the 1450s, in a city of real cultural consequence among competing artists of genius. In Florence he must have taken note of the burgeoning printmaking activity—including, quite possibly, Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Nude Men* (fig. 66). Not coincidentally, the theme of that print is also a battle without apparent cause and without clear outcome: an exposé on the futility of unbridled violence. And it too involves figures in a variety of complex poses. Pollaiuolo's engraving would have made quite clear the possibilities this new medium provided for spreading fame. When a printing press was set up in Mantua in 1472, the opportunity to make prints to advertise his status as the supreme Italian artist must have been irresistible to Mantegna. Alberti's friend Cristoforo Landini reported that Alberti himself made engravings—which

63. Andrea Mantegna. *Bacchanal with a Wine Vat*, ca. 1470–75. Engraving and drypoint, 11 ¾ x 17 ¼ in. (29.8 x 43.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Rogers Fund, The Charles Engelhard Foundation Gift, and The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1986 (1986.1159)

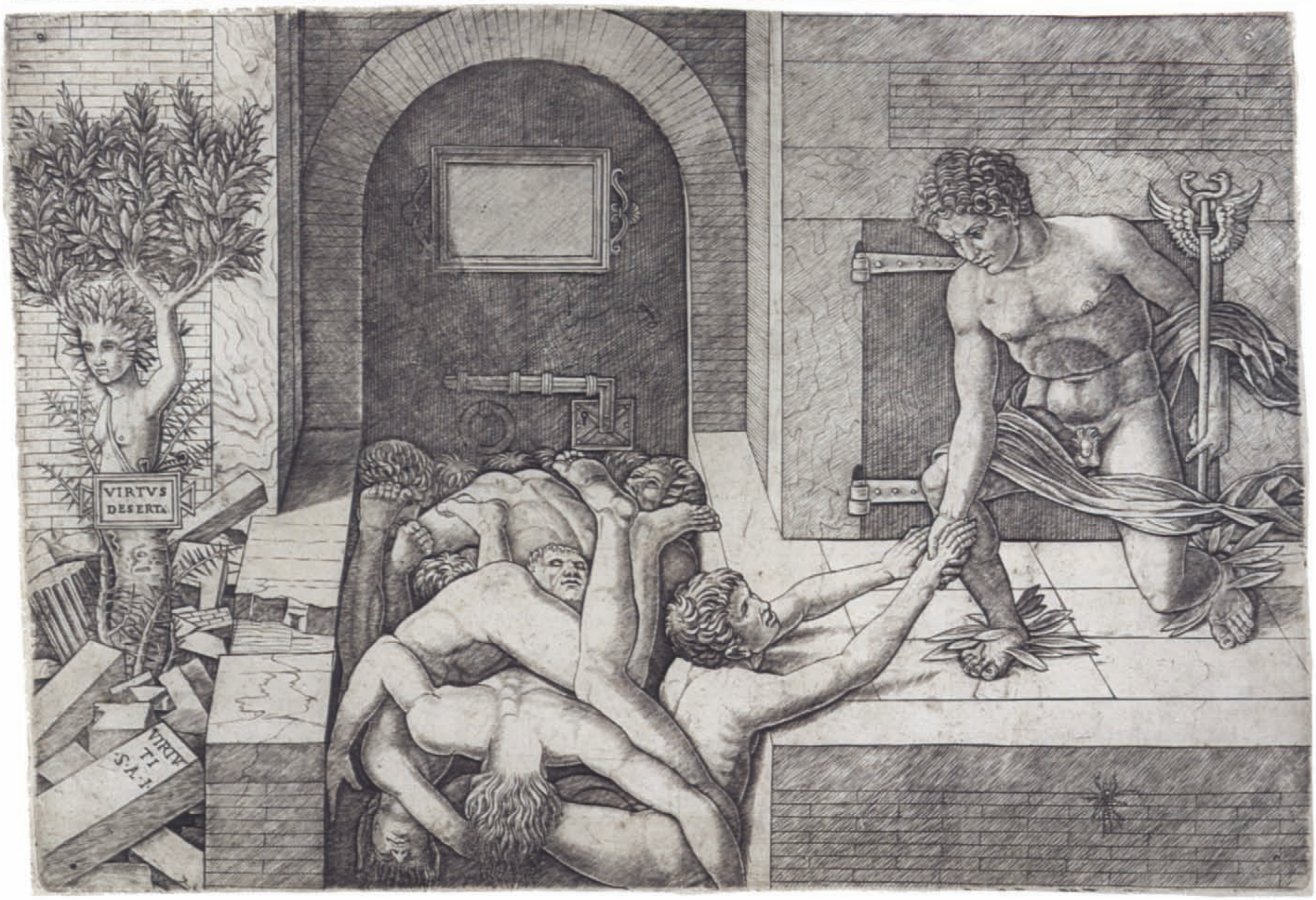
64. Detail of fig. 63 (enlarged)

65. Andrea Mantegna. *Bacchanal with Silenus*, early 1470s(?). Engraving and drypoint, plate 11 ¾ x 17 ¼ in. (29.9 x 43.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, 1929 (29.44.15)

66. Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1431/32–1498). *Battle of Nude Men*, ca. 1460. Engraving, 16 ¾ x 24 in. (42.4 x 60.9 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund (1967.127)

is another indication of the way printmaking was being transformed from the specialty of goldsmiths into a means for propagating ideas by the intellectual as well as artistic elite.

Mantegna's persistent tendency to moralize—to use art not only to depict ideal cityscapes for human activities but to characterize the follies of humankind—does not always receive the attention it deserves. But surely it is one of the outstanding traits of this most extraordinary artist. There can be no more poignant example of this than an exquisite drawing in the British Museum (fig. 67). It is not uniformly finished, but its use of color and a black background demonstrate that it was intended as a finished work of art, and that it was meant to remind its owner of those antique cameos and intaglios that were so prized by connoisseurs. That it was later translated into an engraving is an index of the admiration the invention inspired. Because of the existence of the engraving—alas, not one of those over which Mantegna exercised any guiding control—we know that the drawing preserves only the upper half of a larger composition. What we see is humanity under the reign of Ignorance, shown as an obese woman seated on a globe holding a rudder—attributes of the vagaries of Fortune. The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globe is supported by three-legged sphinxes and alongside them are sacks of money. Ignorance is advised by Ingratitude, shown blindfolded, and Avarice—she's the old skinny woman with sagging breasts and pointed ears (her resemblance to the figure of Envy in the *Battle of the Sea Gods* is not coincidental). Beside them burn branches of laurel: the traditional symbol of virtue and merit. Mantegna has inscribed the drawing "VIRTUS COMBUSTA" (Virtue set ablaze). To the left, a group of figures grope their way, only to fall into a pit. The theme reminds one a bit of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's famous painting of the blind leading the blind, for the nude female figure is indeed blind. She is guided to her fate by a figure with ass's ears—Error—and is encouraged by a satyr with webbed feet and bat's wings playing bagpipes—Lust. Another man has a cloth tied over his head and holds a dog on a leash. Is he Fraud?

In the pit below—and here we are obliged to move from the drawing to the print by Giovan Antonio da Brescia (fig. 68)—the bodies have piled up. At the left is a woman transformed into a laurel tree: Virtue deserted amidst the thorns and ruins of civilization, an image Mantegna derived from a dialogue written by Alberti. One of the discarded marble blocks is inscribed with letters that ominously declare, "Ignorance is always opposed to Virtue." Mantegna attached a personal meaning to this idea, for he voiced it in letters to Francesco Gonzaga. But to the right Mercury, the inventor of the arts, the god of eloquence and logic, has arrived. Like Christ at the gates of Hell, he reaches out and rescues one of the victims of Ignorance. This is a remarkable *invenzione*. The voice assumed is both proud and cynical, seeming almost to take more pleasure in the scathing description of the blind and ignorant than in their rescue. We are prone to think of the Renaissance in terms of optimism and the progress of the human spirit—rather as Jacob Burckhardt framed the period in the nineteenth century. But both Leonardo da Vinci and Mantegna cast a far more critical and pessimistic eye on the world around them, and what they saw was ignorance, folly, wantonness—and a lack of recognition of real genius (whence Mantegna's and his sons' concern about the funerary chapel in Sant'Andrea). It is this biting, hypercritical but always exalted mind that gives the art of Mantegna such an extraordinary edge and makes him the pivotal artist of the fifteenth century.

67. Andrea Mantegna. *Allegory of Vice and Virtue*, ca. 1490–1500. Pen and brown ink over leadpoint(?), brown, red, and indigo wash, heightened with white, with a black over red (vermilion) background, on paper given a light brown wash; 11 ¼ x 17⅜ in. (28.6 x 44.1 cm). British Museum, London (PD Pp,1.23)

68. Giovan Antonio da Brescia (active ca. 1490–ca. 1525), after Andrea Mantegna. *Ignorance and Mercury*, bottom half of *An Allegory of Vice and Virtue*. Engraving, sheet 11 ⅞ x 17⅜ in. (30.3 x 44 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Janos Scholz Gift, 1954 (54.579)

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