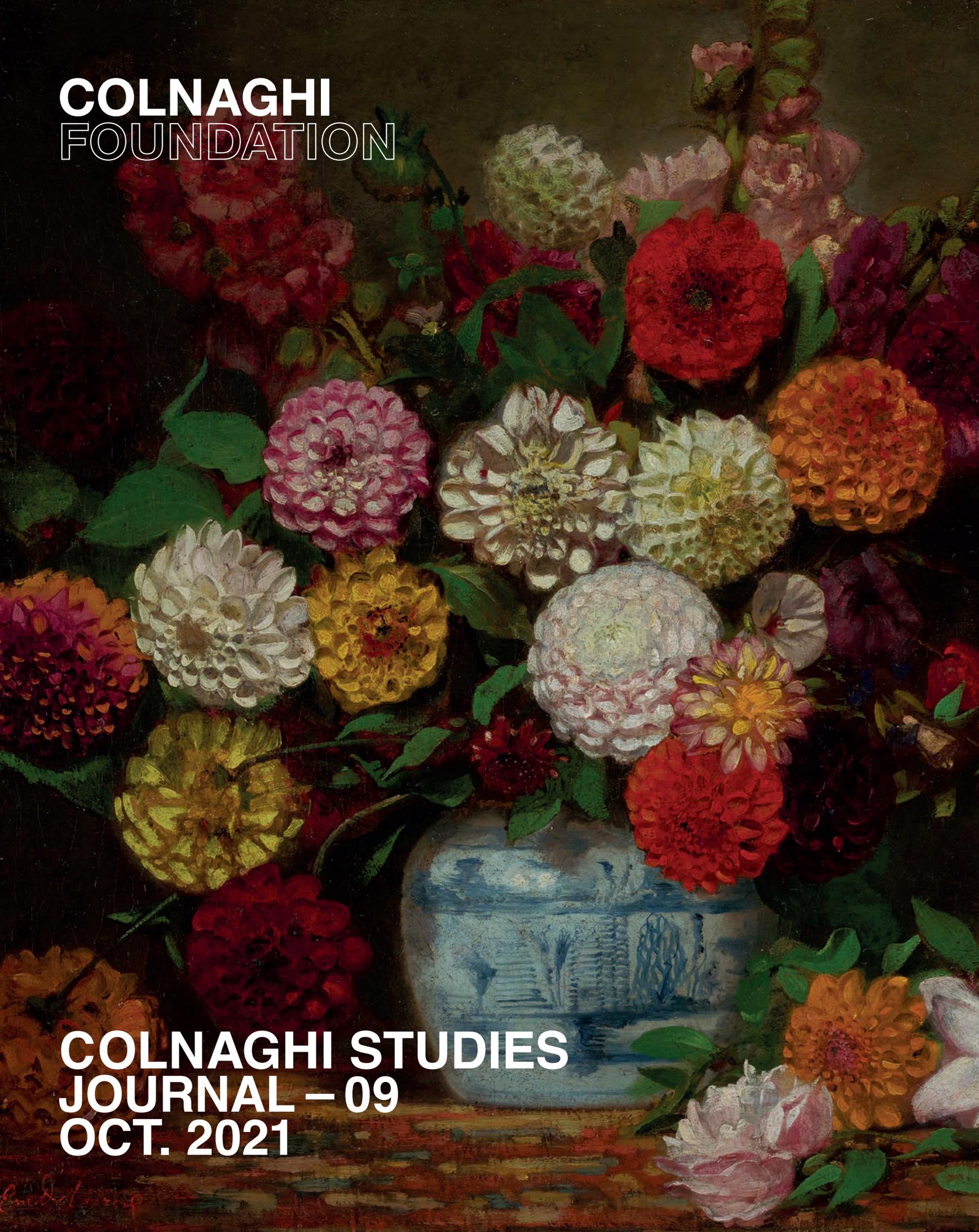


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Published by the Colnaghi Foundation
Produced by the Athena Art Foundation
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A newly discovered Delacroix still life

PATRICK NOON



Fig. 1 / Eugène Delacroix, *Still Life with Dahlias, Zinnias, Hollyhocks and Plums*, ca. 1835, oil on canvas, 55 x 65.6 cm, Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

The final maxim Eugène Delacroix crayoned in his voluminous *Journal* on 22 June 1863, was his professional conviction that “the first merit of a painting is to be a feast for the eye.”¹ Upon reading that assertion in 1893 Henri Fantin-Latour, the most celebrated still-life painter of the nineteenth century, enthused: “It’s there completely. It’s the true definition of what Painting ought to be!”² Through the century Delacroix aggressively advanced the transition in European painting from representation to formalism, which commenced at the beginning of the nineteenth century primarily in the practice of British landscape painters, and it was in the realm of his own non-narrative subject matter – *fauve*, still-life, landscape, and generic orientalist imagery – that most of his aesthetic predilections and technical innovations were graphically displayed and collectively scrutinized. The Minneapolis Institute of Art recently acquired one such “feast for the eye,” *Still Life with Dahlias, Zinnias, Hollyhocks and Plums* (fig. 1). A virtuoso performance unknown to previous Delacroix commentators from Alfred Robaut to Lee Johnson, its placement in the artist’s *œuvre* is the subject of this essay.

Until his death in 1825, Jacques-Louis David made certain that classicism remained the official language of the French Academy, but there were other events within his own sphere of influence that would begin to erode this hegemony. Principal among those events was the emergence in Lyon of what we now refer to as the

Troubadour Style, which made its initial appearance in the Paris Salon of 1802 in the works of two David pupils, Fleury Francis Richard and Pierre Révoil. Both artists challenged the monopoly of neoclassical history painting and the hierarchy of genres by promoting an intimate cabinet art remarkable for its porcelain-like surfaces and indebted to the meticulously finished pictures of seventeenth-century Flemish and Dutch artists. The originality of this style resided in its strict fidelity to details so as to evoke a literal imitation of nature. Although the founders of the school of Lyon focused on resuscitating and ennobling eighteenth-century genre painting by replacing its often trivial or erotic anecdotes with historical profiles drawn from the lives of illustrious Renaissance artists and monarchs, or tragic medieval lovers, others with ties to Lyon’s prosperous textile industry formed an incredibly prolific cadre of floral still-life painters.³ The Salon exhibitions of the first quarter of the nineteenth century were swamped with such paintings. By 1830 the “ersatz authenticity” of the narrative pictures, which had been jolting in its descriptive clarity, was deemed lifeless and without sentiment by progressive critics. However, the purely decorative naturalism of floral still-life painting, as practiced by artists like Antoine Berjon (fig. 2) and Simon Saint-Jean, actually sustained the popularity of the Lyon school well into the century. Against this backdrop, and as early as the 1830s, Delacroix would begin a casual engagement with this minor class of subject matter to advance his own divergent aesthetic interests.



Fig. 2 / Antoine Berjon, *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*, 1810, oil on canvas, 107 x 87 cm, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Fig. 3 / Eugène Delacroix, *A Vase of Flowers*, 1833, oil on canvas, 57.5 x 48.8 cm, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland.

At present a mere seventeen floral paintings in oils by Delacroix have been identified. Seven might be considered finished – or “complete” to Charles Baudelaire’s thinking – works of art and the remainder fragments, sketches or studies. Six of the seven easel paintings date between 1833 and 1849. The earliest, *A Vase of Flowers* (fig. 3),⁴ signed and dated 1833, was painted for Frédéric Villot, the artist’s friend and confidant from childhood and a controversial curator of the Louvre. At a sale of his collection in 1865, Villot described his picture as a “brilliant study [*étude*]” painted for him by Delacroix at Villot’s home in Champrosay in the autumn of 1833. He also remarked that the artist was so pleased with

his “success” that he “immediately commenced several paintings [*tableaux*] of flowers”.⁵ He further stressed that these were Delacroix’s earliest floral still lifes, undoubtedly drawing a distinction between those works and the more familiar series of Salon exhibition pictures from the late 1840s, which appeared in Delacroix’s posthumous studio sale a year earlier in 1864 (see figs. 9-10). Thus far, none from the earliest group have been identified with any certainty in the literature, although two large studies of equal dimensions and character, *Study of Dahlias, Zinnias, etc.*,⁶ and *Study of Asters and Balsamine* (fig. 4),⁷ are frequently dated ca. 1834 on the speculation that they belong to the exercises mentioned by Villot.



Fig. 4 / Eugène Delacroix, *Étude d'asters et balsamine (Study of Asters and Balsamine)*, 1833, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 92.5 cm / 104.2 x 122 x 14.5 cm (framed), Zürich, Kunsthau Zürich.



Fig. 5 / Eugène Delacroix, *Study of Dahlias, Zinnias and Hollyhocks (Still Life with Dahlias)*, ca. 1833, oil on canvas, 50.1 x 33 cm, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Fig. 6 / Eugène Delacroix, *Flower Studies*, ca. 1834, oil on canvas, 37 x 56 cm, Paris, Galerie de Bayser.

They are, however, more *études* than *tableaux*. Also assigned an early date on stylistic grounds is another sketch *Study of Dahlias, Zinnias and Hollyhocks in a Crystal Vase (Still Life with Dahlias)* (fig. 5),⁸ which once belonged to Gustave Arosa, the guardian of Paul Gauguin, who made a watercolour version of it as a frontispiece to his autobiography *Noa Noa*. Arosa appears to have acquired most of his numerous Delacroix paintings during the lifetime of the artist, who mentions him frequently in his *Journal* after 1856. Other more hastily sketched bouquets floating on a single canvas, previously with the descendants of Delacroix's sister Henriette de Verninac (see, for example, fig. 6),⁹ are at least conceptually related to the Minneapolis painting, in that both evoke Baudelaire's analogous description of Delacroix's "delicately prepared palette" as "an expertly-matched bouquet of flowers".¹⁰

The next picture dateable with authority is *Still Life with Flowers* (fig. 7)¹¹ painted for another of Delacroix's intimate friends, George Sand, during one of his stays with her and Frédéric Chopin at her country estate at Nohant in 1842 or 1843.¹² Sand later boasted in a letter to Delacroix's biographer Théophile Silvestre, "I own several first drafts [*pensées*] by this rare and fecund genius ... [including] ... a splendid sketch [*esquisse*] of flowers of incomparable éclat and relief. This sketch was also made for me and at my place."¹³ As had Villot for his picture, Sand described her painting as a sketch or study, even though it bears the artist's signature. The very loose handling and thin application of medium throughout tend to explain Sand's categorization. After receiving her *Still Life with Flowers*, she wrote to the artist in November 1843:

I can't plant a sprig of herb without thinking of you, without recalling how you love, how you *appreciate* flowers, and how you *sense* them, and how you understand them, and how you paint them. My beautiful vase painted by you is framed...In the place where it hangs I see it from my bed when I awake and from my desk while writing, and from everywhere. It is my *cynosure*. There is not a little flower, a detail that does not remind me of all that we discussed while you were at your easel.¹⁴

Much later she recalled in an essay published shortly after Delacroix's death:

I saw Eugène Delacroix try for the first time to paint flowers. He had studied botany as a child and, as he had an admirable memory, he still knew it; but it had not appealed to him as an artist, and the construction was revealed to him only when he carefully reproduced the colour and shape of the plant. I surprised him in a state of ecstatic rapture before a yellow lily of which he had just comprehended its beautiful *architecture*: that was the lovely term he used. He hastened to paint, seeing that at each instant his model, coming to full bloom in its water, changed tone and posture. He thought he had finished, and the result was marvelous; but the next day, when he compared the art to nature, he was unhappy and retouched. The lily had changed completely... There was still a harmony but it was not the same. The next day the plant was beautiful in a totally different way. It became increasingly *architectural*. The flower dried off and showed organs more developed, its forms became *geometric*; that's what he spoke of. He saw the skeleton to be drawn, and its beauty charmed him. It had to be snatched from him so that he didn't transform the study of a plant in the splendid state of anthesis, into a study of a [desiccated] plant in the herbarium.¹⁵

Fig. 7 / Eugène Delacroix, *Still Life with Flowers*, ca. 1834, oil on canvas, 103 x 124 x 10 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere.



Fig. 8 / Eugène Delacroix, *Flowers in a Patterned Vase*, 1847, oil on canvas, 64.5 x 54 cm, Cairo, Gezira Museum.



Fig. 9 / Eugène Delacroix, *Basket of Flowers*, 1848-1849, oil on canvas, 107 x 142 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



These recollections are often associated with the still life Delacroix painted for Sand at Nohant. Lee Johnson observed that if Sand had witnessed Delacroix's first attempts at painting flowers that should have occurred around or shortly after 1833-1834, when Villot asserted that Delacroix painted his earliest floral still lifes and when Delacroix was engaged in painting his first portrait of Sand in Paris. Alternatively, and this seems most likely, Sand was simply unaware in 1843 of Delacroix's earlier, infrequent efforts in this genre. Furthermore, the "first attempts" she recollects witnessing might well have included the two previously mentioned *Study of Dahlias, Zinnias, etc.*, and *Study of Asters and Balsamine* (see fig. 4), which are on canvases of identical dimensions to her *Still Life with Flowers*, and which visually conform to the type of analytical studies she described. Whatever the case, she appreciated the intensity of Delacroix's naturalistic observation and his passion to convey the essence or the chromatic and structural dynamism of natural organisms by means of a technical virtuosity that all of Delacroix's contemporaries admired generally in his art. This was especially true of his non-narrative paintings as early as the *Women of Algiers* of 1834, which Théophile Gautier lyrically pronounced a "bouquet of living flowers".¹⁶

Flowers in a Patterned Vase (fig. 8), signed and dated 1847, appeared inadvertently in the posthumous 1864 sale. Delacroix's universal legatee Achille Piron withdrew the painting and subsequently catalogued it as belonging to a "M. Simon", possibly the brother of Eugénie Dalton, Delacroix's "*délicieuse passion*" from 1828 to 1833.¹⁷ The best documented of Delacroix's floral paintings were the five works executed in 1848-1849 in anticipation of the Paris Salon. Of the two eventually exhibited, Gautier famously wrote, "The baskets and garlands that form the theme of these compositions are treated with a breadth of touch, a powerful effect and a totally historic facility ... quite simply they



Fig. 10 / Eugène Delacroix, *Vase of Flowers on a Console*, 1848-1849, oil on canvas, 135 x 102 cm, Montauban, Musée Ingres Bourdelle.

are a debauch of the palette, a feast of colour for the eyes."¹⁸ Three of these monumental paintings are known today: *Basket of Flowers* (fig. 9), *Basket of Fruit in a Flower Garden* (Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *Vase of Flowers on a Console* (fig. 10). Two others of similar imposing dimensions have disappeared, *A Bed of Marguerites and Dahlias* and *Hydrangeas and Agapanthus by a Pond*.¹⁹ Unsold during the artist's lifetime, the three known paintings reappeared in the 1855 *Exposition Universelle*, and again for a brief display in the commercial Galerie du Cercle des Beaux-Arts in May 1862. Delacroix informed the gallery owner Francis Petit that he had hoped to place the suite in a grand patrician residence but was disappointed in that effort. That grand patrician was Daniel Wilson, a Scottish industrialist and owner of the *Death of Sardanapalus*, who had expressed admiration for the Salon pictures but died a short time later.²⁰ When featured in the 1864 studio sale the Philadelphia and New York oils created a sensation. Among the next generation of painters in attendance at that sale was Frédéric Bazille, who immediately thereafter "commenced a study of flowers in my atelier". Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir also engaged in flower painting at this moment, while Henri Fantin-Latour launched his professional career as a still-life painter and, according to Odilon Redon, was "the clairvoyant disciple of Delacroix".²¹



Fig. 11 / Eugène Delacroix, *Bouquet of Flowers*, ca. 1849, watercolor, pencil, gouache with pastel highlights on grey paper, 65 x 65.4 cm, Paris, Musée National Eugène Delacroix.

Fig. 12 / Eugène Delacroix, *Still Life with Flowers (Study in Two Vases of Dahlias, Chicory, Coreopsis, Datura and Elderberry)*, ca. 1848?, oil on card, 45 x 59 cm, Bremen, Kunsthalle.



Fig. 13 / Eugène Delacroix, *Wire Basket of Flowers*, ca. 1850?, oil on paper on canvas, 62 x 87 cm, Lille, Palais des Beaux Arts.

Traditionally related in date to the 1848-1849 Salon paintings is the ravishing watercolor and gouache *Bouquet of Flowers* (fig. 11)²² of dimensions nearly identical to those of the Minneapolis *Still Life with Dahlias*. Delacroix was emphatic that this watercolour be included in his posthumous sale, describing it in his will as “flowers seemingly posed at random”.²³ It was acquired by Victor Choquet and then Paul Cézanne, who made an oil copy now in the Hermitage. Another related work is an undated, highly worked fragment in oils *Study in Two Vases of Dahlias, Chicory, Coreopsis, Datura and Elderberry* (fig. 12)²⁴ that Delacroix bequeathed to his lifelong friend and patron, Baron Charles Rivet. The last still life, *Wire Basket of*

Flowers (fig. 13),²⁵ presumably finished in that it bears the artist’s signature, is generally dated ca. 1850 or later, so different is it from the previous examples in its delicate execution and its overtly conventional format. Its earliest history is obscure and unlike any of the above-mentioned examples, the support is paper affixed to canvas.

Additional floral studies in oils recorded in the studio sale are presently untraced, although a substantial number of watercolour, graphite and pastel studies of flowers spanning Delacroix’s entire career have survived to corroborate contemporary verbal reports of the artist’s lifelong preoccupation with flowers and horticulture.



Fig. 14 / Eugène Delacroix, *Milton dictant à ses filles son poème épique "Le paradis perdu"* (Milton Dictating to his Daughters), 1827/1828, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 64.5 cm / 95 x 78.5 x 8 cm (framed), Zürich, Kunsthaus Zürich.

To cite but one eyewitness account, the novelist Alexandre Dumas on a visit in 1850 to Delacroix's notoriously sweltering studio found it crowded with dahlias, agapanthus and chrysanthemums. Floral and other still-life subjects also functioned as important subsidiary elements in a number of the artist's easel and mural paintings. The earliest botanicals embellish the allegorical *Four Seasons* lunettes painted for the actor Talma in 1821;²⁶ the easel paintings *Milton Dictating to His Daughters* (1828-1829; fig. 14) and *Portrait of Louis Auguste Schwiter* (1826-1828; London, National Gallery);²⁷ and the murals painted for his cousin at Valmont Abbey in 1834. His first substantial flower composition to grace a public setting was the basket of blossoms carried by a winged putto representing *Fertility* in the vault decorations for the *Salon du Roi* in the Bourbon Palace, also painted in 1834-1835 (see fig. 19). In *Milton Dictating to his Daughters* a vase of flowers rests on a table covered with a Turkish carpet of similar texture and coloration to the covering in the Minneapolis *Still Life with Dahlias*. Such *tapis* are an uncommon usage in nineteenth-century floral painting, but another abstract rendering appears in Delacroix's capricious *Still Life with Squirrel* of ca. 1828-1830.²⁸ His early Moroccan watercolours and those included in his souvenir album for the Count de Mornay in 1832 are rich with illustrations of oriental textiles brushed-in with a similar shorthand hatching, while the penned observations in his annotated Moroccan sketchbooks abound in images like that written at Wadi Emda: "Countless flowers of a thousand species forming the most variegated carpet".²⁹

We continue to think of Delacroix primarily as an Orientalist or a history painter in the Grand Tradition, but the scope of his interests and the reach of his influence were considerably broader. In fact, the direct study of inanimate nature was not only an essential component of his artistic practice and his philosophy of art; it was, throughout his life, a cathartic exercise that he relished. Delacroix's *Journal* also abounds in penetrating observations of natural phenomena, which he savoured during his many retreats to the country estates of his cousins in Valmont and Frépillon, his friends at Nohant, his own villa in Champrosay, and finally in the *hortus conclusus* he designed and created for himself with considerable attention to aesthetic effect in his final residence in the rue de Furstenberg. His floral still lifes, which numerically constituted a footnote to his vast production, were nevertheless some of his most influential creations because they were perceived as being vitally concerned with what Delacroix and his modernist admirers esteemed as the "abstract" side of painting – colour, composition, harmonious effect, and an execution that was ineffable but not mannered. As Gautier marvelled, "He gave flowers the essence of the very idea of the subject without strapping himself to trifling details or a prosaic truth that would divert attention or cause dissonance."³⁰ Those virtues were antithetic to the prevailing style of still-life painting in France before mid-century.



Fig. 15 / Detail of fig. 1, Eugène Delacroix's signature on *Still Life with Dahlias, Zinnias, Hollyhocks and Plums*.

Fig. 16 / Eugène Delacroix, *Portrait of Eugène Berry d'Ouville*, 1828, oil on canvas, 61 x 49 cm, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Fig. 16a / Detail of fig. 16, Eugène Delacroix's signature on *Portrait of Eugène Berry d'Ouville*.

Fig. 17 / Eugène Delacroix, *Study of Peonies*, ca. 1848, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 66 cm, Private Collection.

Supporting an early date for the Minneapolis *Still Life with Dahlias* is the cursive signature (fig. 15) of a type Delacroix most frequently employed in the 1820s and 1830s for his correspondence and his watercolours. An example appears on at least one portrait painting from the late 1820s (figs. 16-16a).³¹ The style of execution is also characteristic of his earlier work, where the touch is less fluid and more precise than in the still lifes of the 1840s. Later examples, especially the Salon machines, exhibit a number of experimental techniques recorded in Delacroix's *Journal* that have scarcely withstood the ravages of time and the disastrous consequences of ill-advised restorations. The sparkling visual effects from his recorded use of copal varnish as a medium can only be appreciated today in the unmolested oil sketches preparatory to those Salon paintings (for example, fig. 17).³² The absence of such advanced technical experimentation in *Still Life with Dahlias*, an unlined and perfectly preserved canvas, further argues for an earlier date. What we do observe in this picture is an exploratory and vibrant massing of primary and secondary hues, thus anticipating Delacroix's mature appreciation of Michel-Eugène Chevreul's theories of colour, harmony and contrast first published in 1839.

Technical examination has revealed that the artist stretched and primed the canvas himself. The stretcher



is of an odd and low-grade construction compared to an artist's commercial-grade product of the period. Evidence of a second unrelated set of tack holes, with some round-headed, fabric tacks still embedded, indicates that the stretcher had some other use prior to the artist removing whatever was attached and affixing his own piece of linen. This structural anomaly might indicate that Delacroix painted this picture in the country, employing materials that were readily at hand. Were he working in his Paris studio he would almost certainly have had, or easily secured, a proper pre-primed and stretched canvas from his colour merchants the Haros.



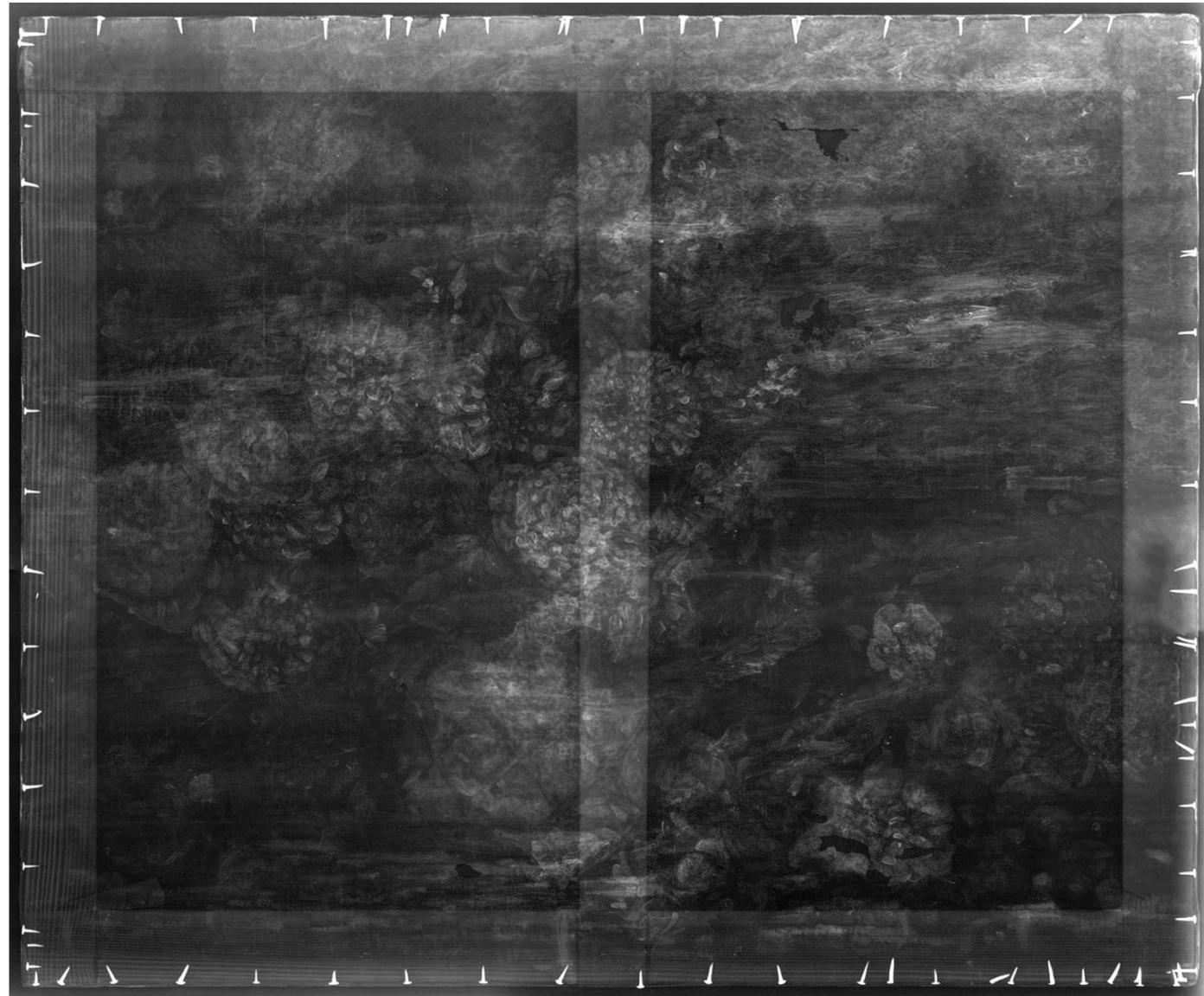


Fig. 18 / X-radiograph of fig. 1.

X-radiography has exposed some startling adjustments that the artist made in composing the picture (fig. 18). Most apparent is the substitution of the blue and white faience vase for a more common form of wire or wicker garden basket with a diamond-lattice pattern. In several of the known still lifes, Delacroix arranged his flowers in similar wicker and wire baskets. As previously mentioned, one of his earliest finished floral compositions – a winged putto with a woven basket of flowers – appears in the vault decorations for the *Salon du Roi* in the Bourbon Palace (fig. 19). It was at Valmont Abbey in September 1834 that Delacroix experimented with a number of techniques for painting the *Salon du Roi* murals.³³ He also contemplated the motifs and compositions for that program with its rich vegetal and floral ornamentation. One drawing from his stay depicts a schematic design for the ceiling vaults on a sheet with a landscape sketched in the vicinity of Valmont. It is likely that the still life painted for Villot in 1833 and any examples immediately following that picture, which should include *Still Life with Dahlias*, were exercises in nature painting preparatory to his assaying similar motifs in the *Salon du Roi* murals, just as his landscape paintings at Valmont, Champrosay or along the Normandy coast furnished the naturalistic settings for many of his narrative pictures.

The x-radiographs revealed other alterations including the painting out of flowers in the lower foreground and the repositioning or reorientation of blossoms throughout the composition. The entire bouquet, which vibrantly crowds the surface plane, appears also to have been painted over a landscape composition, the most visible areas of which are in the upper quadrants of the x-ray image. Delacroix clearly meant to juxtapose his still life onto a landscape background or within a landscape setting. The latter was his stated intent for the 1848-1849 Salon paintings, about which he wrote to his friend Constant Dutilleux:

I have subordinated the details to the ensemble as much as I could. I wanted also to avoid the cliché that appears to condemn all of the flower painters to paint the same vase with the same columns or the same fantastic draperies to serve as backgrounds or foils. I have tried to make morsels of nature as they present themselves in the gardens, only uniting in the same frame and in a manner slightly improbable the greatest possible variety of flowers.³⁴

Given that Delacroix could cogitate on an idea or subject for several decades before actually acting on such inspiration, it is entirely plausible that *Still Life with Dahlias* was conceived and commenced initially in a garden setting. The shift indoors necessitated the radical changes visible in the x-radiographs and the “slightly improbable” and gravity-defying arrangement of blossoms in the upper right quadrant to conceal further the landscape elements in the underpainting.

Aside from the large Salon paintings that remained unsold until his posthumous studio sale in 1864, most of Delacroix’s finished florals and more advanced sketches were either lifetime gifts or final bequests to intimate friends and professional associates. The absence of provenance or exhibition documentation concerning the Minneapolis *Still Life with Dahlias* indicates it was probably not a work commissioned by a collector or patron, but rather a presentation piece for a friend or *inamorata*, of which there were many in the 1830s. One possible candidate would be his cousin Joséphine de Forget with whom he commenced a decades-long relationship around 1835. Of that relationship Raymond Escholier observed, “The flowers that both adored (and we give to Delacroix the most beautiful flower paintings of the nineteenth century) were always between them the most charming of bonds.”³⁵

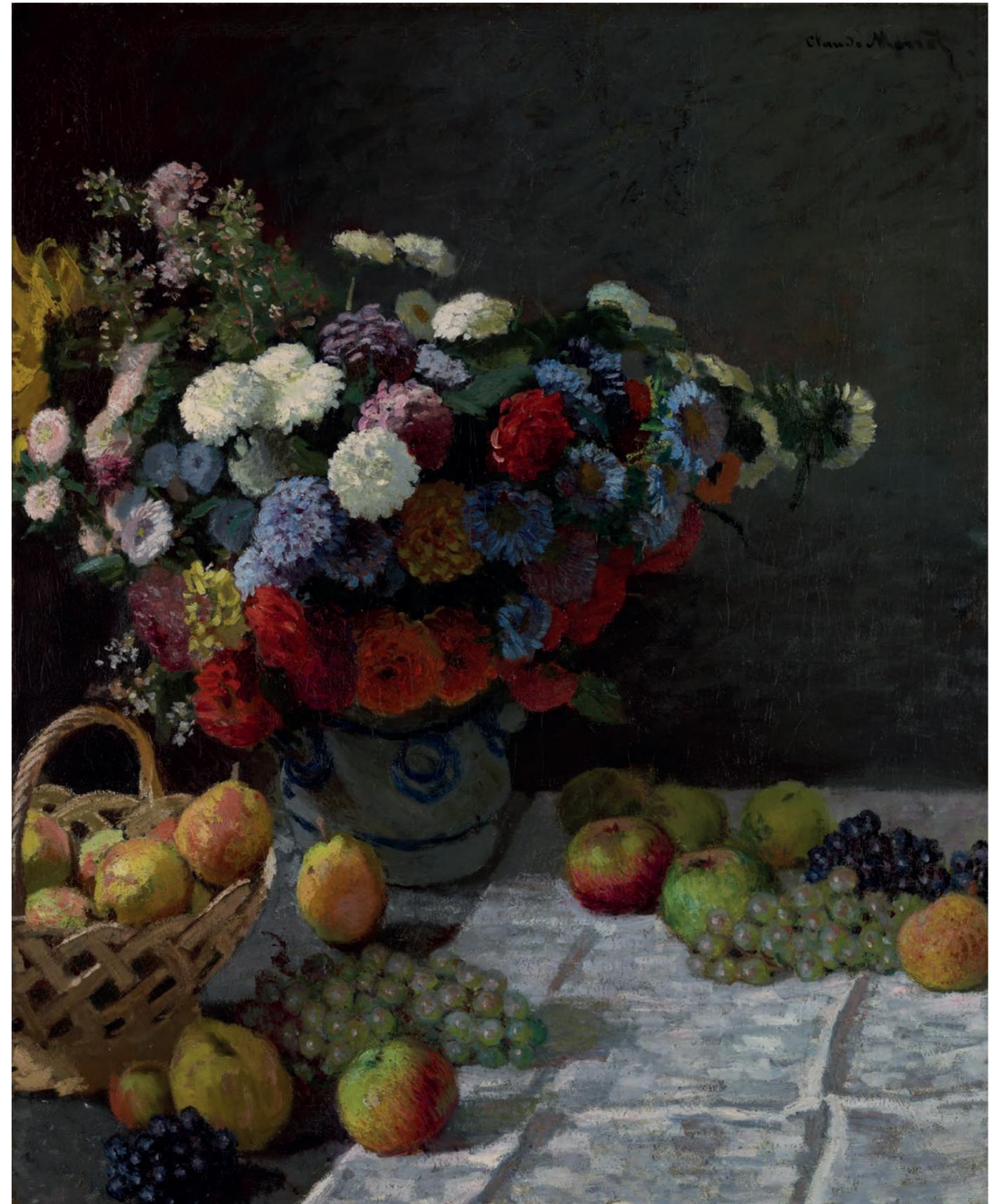


Fig. 19 / Eugène Delacroix, *Winged Putto in the Salon du Roi, Paris, 1834/35*, oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm.

Fig. 20 / Claude Monet, *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*, 1869, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 81.3 cm, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Among Delacroix's contemporaries and followers, flowers became a metaphor for his creative persona and the emotive force of his vibrant hues, what Odilon Redon later described as his "colouristic expression". For Baudelaire, he was "a volcanic crater artfully concealed behind bouquets of flowers".³⁶ For Dumas "his temperament was the tree; his works were the flowers and fruits".³⁷ In his 1849 Salon review Gautier lavishly praised the two exhibited examples, now in New York and Philadelphia, as bravura celebrations of pure, non-narrative painting and of colour harmonies over design, an interpretation perpetuated in the efforts of younger artists from Edgar Degas to Paul Cézanne to own and meditate on such creations (fig. 20). From his earliest essays in this specialized genre, although he did not break entirely with the conventions of the still-life tradition in his compositional inventions, Delacroix certainly did so in his treatment of these subjects as optical and sensual stimulants rather than scientific or moralizing expositions.

In conclusion, *Still Life with Dahlias, Zinnias, Hollyhocks and Plums* has little in common with botanical illustration or the traditional conventions of floral still lifes as they persisted and thrived in the early nineteenth century. Rather, this bouquet of flowers "seemingly posed at random", but actually "expertly matched", validates, as it exalts, an idea of pure painting. As such it is one of the earliest exercises by Delacroix on a course that would transform the aesthetics of painting in France, anticipating by several decades the abundant forays into this particular genre by virtually every progressive artist in his wake – Courbet, Fantin-Latour, Cézanne, Degas, Monet, Renoir, Bazille, and Van Gogh – to name but the most illustrious.



NOTES

1. Michèle Hannoosh, ed., *Eugène Delacroix, Journal*, vol. 2 (Paris: José Corti, 2009) p. 1412: “Le premier mérite d’un tableau est d’être une fête pour l’œil.” Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
2. See Christophe Leribault et al., *Fantîn-Latour, Manet, Baudelaire, L’Hommage à Delacroix* (Paris: Musée national Eugène-Delacroix, 2011), pp. 133-136: “écrite au crayon en juin, je crois. Il est là tout entière. C’est la vraie définition de ce que doit être la Peinture.”
3. Eveline Deneer, “Between Dou and David: The Importance of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art to Troubadour Painting in France, 1790-1830,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 35 (2011): pp. 218-226.
4. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh; see Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, A Critical Catalogue*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), no. 492.
5. Johnson, *Paintings*, p. 256: “Cette brillante étude a été faite chez M. V., à Champrosay. Sa réussite engagea Delacroix à commencer immédiatement plusieurs tableaux de fleurs; celles-ci sont les premières qu’il ait peintes.”
6. See Christophe Leribault et al., *Delacroix, Othoniel, Creten, Des fleurs en hiver* (Paris: Musée Delacroix, 2013), repr. p. 73, pl. 40.
7. Hermitage, Saint Petersburg and Kunsthau, Zürich, respectively. The Zürich painting is Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 495. The Hermitage painting was unknown before 1997.
8. Philadelphia Museum of Art; Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 493.
9. Private Collection (Boisgirard-Antonini, Paris, 6 December 2013, lot 15); Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 496.
10. Charles Baudelaire, “The Life and Work of Eugène Delacroix,” in *Charles Baudelaire, the Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), p. 50.
11. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna; Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 497.
12. Delacroix listed the picture in a notebook in use around 1845-1847; see Hannoosh, *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 1542.
13. Georges Lubin, ed., *George Sand Correspondance*, vol. 12 (Paris: Editions Garnier Frère, 1976), p. 536 (letter 5771 dated 5 January 1853).
14. Lubin, *Correspondance*, vol. 6, pp. 265-267 (letter 2734 dated 4 November 1843): “Je ne plante un brin d’herbe sans penser à vous, sans me rappeler comme vous aimez et comme vous appréciez les fleurs, et comme vous les sentez. Et comme vous les comprenez, et comme vous les peignez. Mon beau vase peint par vous est encadré... Au lieu que là où il est, je le vois de mon lit en m’éveillant et de ma table en écrivant, et de partout. C’est mon point de mire. Il n’y a pas une fleur, un détail qui ne me rappelle tout ce que nous disions pendant que vous étiez à votre chevalet.”
15. George Sand, “A propos de botanique,” *Revue des Deux-Mondes* 75 (1868): pp. 577-578. “J’ai vu Eugène Delacroix essayer pour la première fois de peindre des fleurs. Il avait étudié la botanique dans son enfance, et, comme il avait une admirable mémoire, il la savait encore; mais elle ne l’avait pas frappé en tant qu’artiste, et le sens ne lui en fut révélé que lorsqu’il reproduisit attentivement la couleur et la forme de la plante. Je le surpris dans en extase de ravissement devant un lis jaune don’t il venait de comprendre la belle *architecture*, c’est le mot heureux don’t il se servit. Il se hâta de peindre, voyant qu’à chaque instant son modèle, accomplissant dans l’eau l’ensemble de sa floraison, changeait de ton et d’attitude. Il pensait avoir fini, et le résultat était merveilleux; mais le lendemain, lorsqu’il compara l’art à la nature, il fut mécontent et retoucha. Le lis avait complètement changé. Les lobes du périanthe s’étaient recourbés en dehors, le ton des étamines avait pâli, celui de la fleur s’était accusé, le jaune d’or était devenu orange, la hampe était plus ferme et plus droite, les feuilles plus serrées contre la tige semblaient plus étroites. C’était encore une harmonie, ce n’était plus la même. Le jour suivant, la plante était belle tout autrement. Elle devenait de plus en plus *architecturale*. La fleur se séchait et montrait ses organes plus développés; ses forms devenaient *géométriques*, c’est encore lui qui parle. Il voyait le squelette se dessiner, et la beauté de squelette le charmait. Il fallut le lui arracher pour qu’il ne fit pas, d’une étude de plante à l’état splendide de l’anthèse, une étude de plante en herbier.”
16. Théophile Gautier, *Le Moniteur Universel*, 17 November 1864, p. 1. Delacroix had referred to the female participants in the Jewish wedding he witnessed in Tangiers as “staged in tiers like pots of flowers. white and gold dominant and their kerchiefs yellow”.
17. Gezira Museum, Cairo; Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 498. The painting was not one of the two Delacroix works in Eugénie’s possession at her death in 1859 that her heirs placed for sale with Philippe Burty in 1864; see Hannoosh, *Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 2381-2382.
18. Théophile Gautier, “Salon de 1849,” *La Presse*, 1 August 1849, p. 2: “Les corbeilles et guirlandes qui forment le theme de ces compositions fleuries sont traitées avec une largeur de touche, une puissance à effet et une facilité tout historique... C’est tout simplement une débauche de palette, un régal du couleur donné aux yeux.”
19. Johnson, *Paintings*, nos. L213-214, pp. 501-503.
20. André Joubin, ed., *Correspondance Générale d’Eugène Delacroix*, vol. 4 (Paris: Librairie Plan, 1935), pp. 351ff. and Hannoosh, *Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 417-418.
21. Roseline Bacou, *Odilon Redon*, vol. 2 (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1956), p. 148.
22. Leribault, *L’Hommage*, figs. 9-10.
23. Philippe Burty, *Lettres de Eugène Delacroix*, vol. 1 (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1880), p. IX: “J’entends expressément qu’on comprenne dans la vente un grand cadre brun représentant des Fleurs, comme posées au hasard sur un fond gris.”
24. Kunsthalle Bremen; Johnson, *Paintings*, p. 499. A similar fragment, *Fleurs en bouquet* (Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 500) was purchased by Victor Chocquet at the 1864 Delacroix studio sale, lot 92. It is purportedly signed and dated 1848, which may account for its inclusion in the “Tableaux” section of the sale catalogue rather than the “Etudes d’après nature” section.
25. Palais des Beaux Arts, Lille; Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 504.
26. Piasa, Paris, 19 June 1998, lot 31, repr.
27. Johnson, *Paintings*, nos. 128 (Zürich) and 82 (London).
28. Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 491. The earliest examples of this pairing occur in the lithograph *Marguerite au Rouet* from the illustrations to *Faust* (1828). Turkish carpets were a fixture in Delacroix’s studio in the 1820s.
29. Hannoosh, *Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 232-233.
30. Gautier, *Le Moniteur Universel*, p. 1: “Il donne la fleur, l’essence de l’idée même du sujet, sans s’astreindre à des détails oiseux ou d’une vérité prosaïque qui détourneraient l’attention ou feraient dissonance.”
31. For instance, *Portrait of Eugène d’Ouille*, signed and dated 1828; Johnson, *Paintings*, no. 75.
32. For another recently discovered example, see Patrick Noon and Christopher Riopelle, *Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art*, exh. cat. (London and Minneapolis: National Gallery and Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2015-2016) no. 66, p. 224, repr.
33. See Maurice Scrullaz, “Les premières décorations murales de Delacroix” and Annie Conan, “Delacroix à l’Abbaye de Valmont,” *Art de France* 3 (1963): pp. 265-276.
34. Joubin, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, p. 373 (6 February 1849): “J’ai subordonné les détails à l’ensemble autant que je l’ai pu. J’ai voulu aussi sortir un peu de l’espèce de poncif qui semble condamner tous les peintres de fleurs à faire le même vase les mêmes colonnes ou les mêmes draperies fantastiques qui servent de fond ou de repoussoir. J’ai essayé de faire des morceaux de nature comme ils se présentent dans des jardins, seulement un réunissant dans le même cadre et d’une manière un peu probable la plus grande variété possible des fleurs.”
35. Raymond Escholier, “Eugène Delacroix et la Consolatrice,” *Revue des Deux-Mondes* 57 (1930): p. 801: “Les fleurs que tous deux adoraient (nous devons à Delacroix les plus beaux tableaux de fleurs du 19 siècle) furent toujours entre eux le plus charmant des liens.”
36. Baudelaire, “Life and Work,” pp. 54ff.
37. Alexandre Dumas, *Mes Mémoires*, ed. Isabelle Chanteur (Paris: Plon, 1986), p. 746.





Copying drawings in the Renaissance: animal studies, an altarpiece by Orazio Gentileschi and a drawing by Raphael

DAVID EKSERDJIAN

There can be no doubt that the survival of almost every single individual Italian Renaissance drawing to have come down to us has in essence been a matter of luck.¹ In the period, there were two main reasons for preserving drawings, one of which gradually gave way to the other over time. Whilst as early as the fourteenth century, they were evidently already being passed down within artists' workshops, today virtually no Trecento sheets still exist. The simple reason for their retention must have been that they were deemed to be valuable records of earlier visual ideas, and in their turn themselves to have the power to inspire new inventions. The examples of the large groups of extant drawings by Pisanello and his school and Jacopo Bellini attest to the continuation of this practice in the fifteenth century, for all that these works are the rarest of exceptions to the more general disappearance of such sheets.² It was only during the sixteenth century that the second reason for the preservation of drawings took hold, as they began to be regarded not just as tools of the trade but also as works of art in their own right, and consequently started to pass from workshops to collectors.

The practice of regarding drawings as a valuable legacy must have been incredibly widespread, at least by the fifteenth century, as is demonstrated by two totally forgotten but utterly fascinating documents, both of them wills, from the Friuli. The first concerns a painter called Antonio, whose father Leonardo was likewise a painter. In his will of 21 August 1443, which was drawn up in Udine, Antonio di Leonardo stipulates that his heirs – his

wife and two sons – must not dispose either of his drawings or of his other artists' materials, whether by sale or gift, but must retain them.³ The second will, which was again drawn up in Udine, on 4 September 1436, is that of a painter called Marco di Daniele, who left all his drawings, which were kept in a chest, to "Georgio suo familiari" – evidently his principal assistant – with the instruction that he should complete an image or figure of Saint Mark that Marco di Daniele had already begun to paint. It is further stated that the rest of his estate should go to his wife.⁴ These two Friulian artists could hardly be more obscure, with not a single work by either known to exist. Moreover, the second of them heroically managed to elude the virtual omniscience of Thieme-Becker,⁵ and yet, in Udine before 1450, they both took considerable care to ensure the survival and destiny of their body of drawings, which must presumably have been sufficiently numerous to warrant all this trouble. Exactly the same sort of provision is also found at a later date in the will of Gentile Bellini, which was drawn up on 18 February 1507 (new style), where Gentile's drawings are left to his two assistants, Ventura and Girolamo.⁶

Evidence of the survival of drawings and their re-use down the generations is necessarily dependent on two connected factors, namely the existence of both the drawings in question and the works that depend upon them. It is important to add that in theory any specific borrowing might derive from study of a now lost painting, as opposed to an invention that never



progressed beyond the drawing stage, but conversely it seems worth underlining the fact that drawings were both more mobile and more easily copied. As a result, it has to be admitted that it can never be proved that any borrowing of this kind was not derived from an entirely faithful intermediate copy drawing. The existence of such copies is demonstrated by the survival of a number of versions of a dromedary that must all derive from a highly finished, lost drawing by Pisanello – all we have by his own hand are a ghostly pair of studies of the same creature on a sheet in the Louvre.⁷ As has been recognized, the finished invention was subsequently quoted by Pintoricchio in the middle distance of the *Adoration of the Shepherds and Magi* in his fresco cycle in the Baglione Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore at Spello.⁸ Be that as it may, it is extremely hard to find other instances of fifteenth-century drawings being copied into the sixteenth century, and therefore used beyond their creator's immediate circle.

A second example, which is not coincidentally an animal study, involves another drawing of a dromedary by Pisanello, now in the Louvre (fig. 1).⁹ Its hitherto unrecognized reappearance occurs in a painting of the *Animals Entering the Ark* by Dosso Dossi in the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design (fig. 2).¹⁰ The reason for arguing that animal studies were particularly likely to be copied is not only that animals – whether exotic or commonplace – were not necessarily obliging when it came to posing for their likenesses, but also, and specifically, because the pair of rabbits in the lower left corner of this same painting were not invented by Dosso.

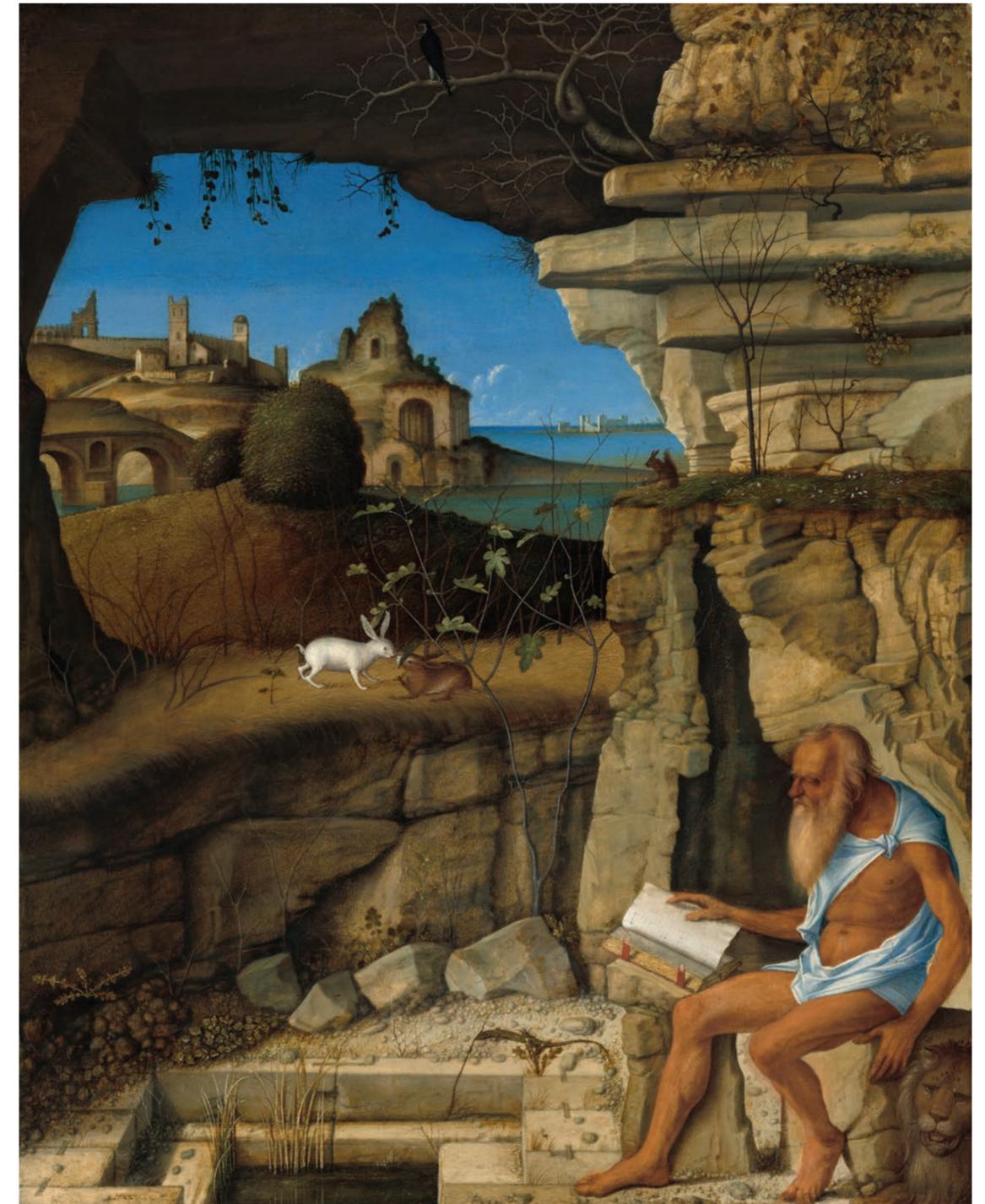
In Giovanni Bellini's *Saint Jerome Reading* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (fig. 3), the same two rabbits – one white and one brown – charmingly confront each other. They are also to be found in his *Risen Christ* in the Kimbell Art Museum at Fort Worth, and then a third time in his *Madonna and Child* at the Detroit Institute of Arts.¹¹ The *Madonna* is dated 1509; the other pictures are



Fig. 1 / Pisanello, *A Dromedary*, brush and brown ink, metalpoint on prepared paper, 15.5 x 18.7 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins.

Fig. 2 / Dosso Dossi, *Entry into the Ark*, ca. 1520, oil on canvas, 107 x 112.4 cm, Providence, RI, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Fig. 3 / Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Jerome Reading*, 1505, oil on panel, 48.9 x 39.5 cm, Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art.



almost certainly earlier. The obvious presumption has to be that a coloured record drawing of this motif was preserved in the artist's workshop, to allow it to be recycled. As it happens, there is compelling evidence in the form of Bellini school productions that not only the main figures from compositions, but also landscape backgrounds and even minor

details within landscapes were repeated. One of the most fascinating of these involves a tree-stump with new branches growing from it, which features both in Giovanni's *Transfiguration* in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples and in his *Pietà* in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, a motif it is hard to believe was devoid of religious significance.¹²



Fig. 4 / Girolamo da Santa Croce, *The Annunciation* (detail), ca. 1540, oil on panel, 57.7 x 74.9 cm, Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

The rabbits pretty swiftly migrated beyond the confines of Bellini's workshop, and are to be found not only in the aforementioned Dosso Dossi *Animals Entering the Ark*, where – uniquely – the one on the left is darker than the one on the right, but also in an even earlier *Virgin and Child with Saints* by him in the Capitoline Gallery in Rome, where they are respectively pale grey and brown.¹³ Intriguingly, this is one of a group of works not universally accepted as being by Dosso, but the fact that its author, like Dosso in the Rhode Island painting, borrowed Bellini's rabbits strengthens the notion that they are by the same hand. Another painter – this time a fellow-Venetian, albeit of

the second division, Girolamo da Santa Croce – and his workshop incorporated the rabbits in no fewer than four pictures, a *Noli me Tangere* (in 1932 in a private collection), a *Holy Family with Mary Magdalen* (in 2016 offered at the Dorotheum, Vienna), an *Annunciation* in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (fig. 4), and a workshop *Resurrection with Saints Catherine and Benedict and a Donor* in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.¹⁴ Altogether less expected, however, is their final bow – at least as far as I am aware – in an early Tintoretto of around 1550-1553 of *God Creating the Animals* (fig. 5), where the unprecedented uniformity of colour-scheme cannot disguise their congruence of pose.¹⁵

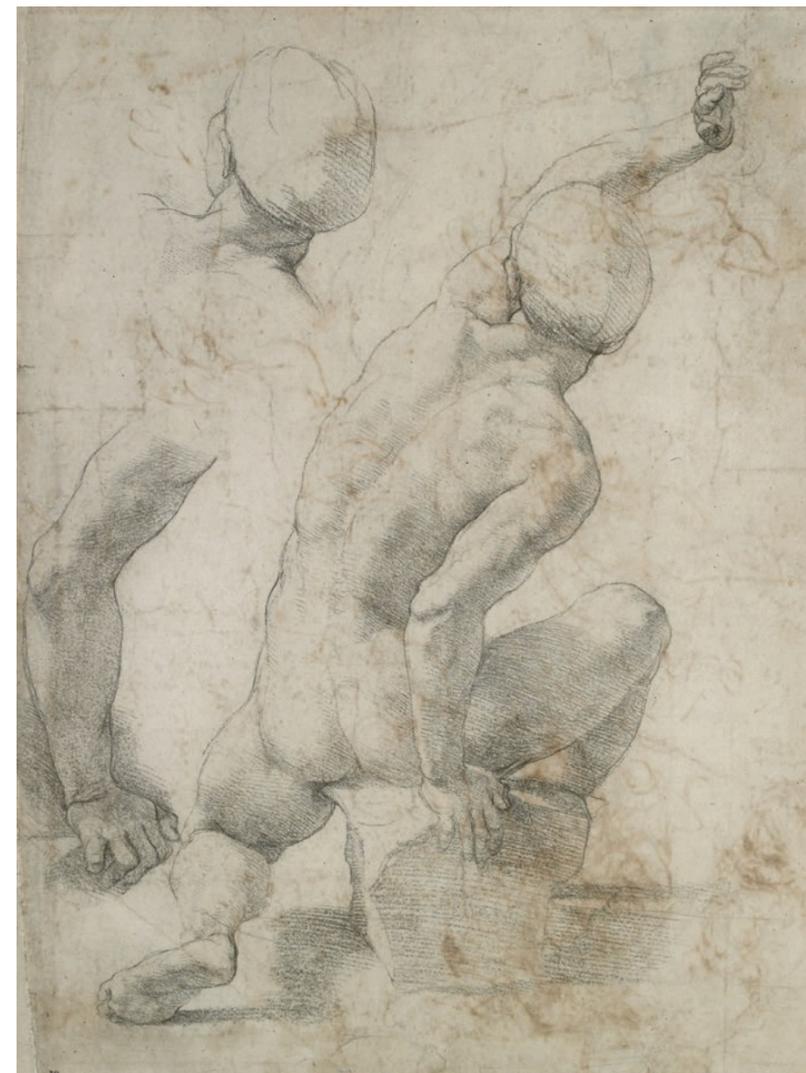


Fig. 5 / Tintoretto, *God Creating the Animals*, ca. 1550-1553, oil on canvas, 140 x 196 cm, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.



Fig. 6 / Orazio Gentileschi, *Saint Michael and the Devil*, ca. 1607-1608, oil on canvas, 278 x 192 cm, Church of Santissimo Salvatore, Farnese (Viterbo).

Fig. 7 / Raphael, *Seated Male Nude* (recto), here illustrated in reverse, ca. 1511-1514, black chalk on off-white paper, 34.5 x 26.5 cm, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.



Sadly, all too often drawings were evidently disposed of before the second reason for their preservation took hold, and they began to be regarded as works of art in their own right and passed from workshops to collectors. Of course, artists themselves were some of the first collectors, Vasari being the most celebrated example.¹⁶ The purpose of the second part of the present note is to point out a straightforward – but at the same time arguably rather unexpected – instance of a significantly later artist borrowing from an earlier one, with Orazio Gentileschi looking to Raphael for inspiration. When the recoiling devil seen from behind in the former's altarpiece of 1607-1608 representing *Saint Michael and the Devil* in the parish church of Santissimo Salvatore in Farnese (Viterbo) (fig. 6) is compared with a black chalk drawing of a *Seated Male Nude* by Raphael, now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (fig. 7), the correspondence between the attitudes of the two – admittedly in reverse – is incontrovertible.¹⁷

Raphael's artistic brilliance had already been trumpeted far and wide before his sudden and premature death at the age of thirty-seven in 1520, and consequently by Orazio Gentileschi's time – nearly a century later – the notion of his genius was regarded as a long-established truth. Indeed, he was by no means the only subsequent artist to have drawn inspiration from Raphael's drawings as opposed to his paintings, a theme I have explored elsewhere.¹⁸ Of itself, however, that only explains why Orazio should have wanted to borrow Raphael's invention, but not how he was acquainted with it.



Fig. 8 / Cherubino Alberti after Raphael, *Male Nude*, ca. 1550-1560, red chalk on paper, Rome, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica.

The Oxford *Male Nude* is one of a small group of life drawings that have been convincingly associated with a projected but never executed *Resurrection* altarpiece by Raphael for the chapel of Agostino Chigi in Santa Maria della Pace in Rome.¹⁹ As it happens, we are unusually well informed about the peregrinations of this particular sheet during the Cinquecento, which are the subject of an important forthcoming paper by Claudia La Malfa.²⁰ In it, she will expand upon Tom Henry's observation that the drawing was not only a source of inspiration for Raffaellino del Colle in two paintings, again on the theme of the *Resurrection*, but must also have been given to him by Giulio Romano.²¹ It subsequently passed to Cherubino Alberti, who copied it – in reverse – in red chalk in a drawing now in the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome (fig. 8).²² It must also have been during the time when it was in his possession that it was copied – yet again in reverse and this time in pen and brown ink (fig. 9) – by Bartolomeo Passerotti, who was in Rome in 1551, and is next documented in his native Bologna in 1560.²³ The drawing was presumably still with Cherubino, who did not die until 1615, when Orazio adapted it for his altarpiece. By the second half of the seventeenth century, if not before, it had reached England and belonged to Sir Peter Lely, who died in 1680, and whose collector's mark the sheet bears in its bottom right corner.²⁴ It is therefore not impossible – although absolutely not proven – that it may have accompanied Orazio to these shores when he came to work for King Charles I in September/October 1626.²⁵



Fig. 9 / Bartolomeo Passerotti after Raphael, *A Male Nude, seen from behind*, pen and brown ink on laid paper, 31.6 x 20 cm, Private Collection.

NOTES

- David Ekserdjian, "The Tip of the Iceberg: Barocci's Postmortem Inventory and the Survival of Renaissance Drawings," in *Federico Barocci: Inspiration and Innovation in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Judith W. Mann (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 154-173, for an overview of how much must be lost.
- Maria Fossi Todorow, *I Disegni del Pisanello e della sua Cerchia* (Florence: Olschki, 1966); Dominique Cordellier and Paola Marini, *Pisanello: Le Peintre aux Sept Vertus*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1996), and Colin Eisler, *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (New York: Abrams, 1989).
- Vincenzo Joppi, *Contributo quarto ed ultimo alla storia dell'arte nel Friuli ed alla vita dei pittori, intagliatori, scultori, architetti e orfici friulani* (Venice, 1891), pp. 55-56, doc. XI, Udine, Rogito di Giovanni a Varis, 21 August 1443, will of Magister Antonio Pittore q. Magister Leonardo Pittore: "Item voluit et mandavit quod dicti eius eredes non possint nec debeant vendere vel distribuere designamenta artis sue et alias formas spectantia et spectantes dicte arti sue sed ea penes retinere."
- Vincenzo Joppi, *Contributo quarto ed ultimo alla storia dell'arte nel Friuli ed alla vita dei pittori, intagliatori, scultori, architetti e orfici friulani* (Venice, 1891), pp. 60-61, doc. XVII, Udine, Rogito di Antonio a Fabris, 4 September 1436, will of Marco di Daniele: "Item legavit Georgio suo familiari omnia et quecumque designamenta sua existentia in quadam sua capsula, cum hoc quod debeat complere unam ymaginem seu figuram S. Marci que est in domo incepta."
- Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 37 vols. (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1907-1950), I, p. 597, for Antonio di Leonardo.
- Jürg Meyer zur Cappellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), p. 120, doc. 75: "Item dimitto et dari volo Venture et Hieronimo meis garzonibus mea omnia designa retracta de Roma que inter ipsos equaliter dividantur."
- Cordellier and Marini, *Pisanello: Le Peintre aux Sept Vertus*, pp. 417 and 420-422, no. 293, for the summary drawings of a dromedary by Pisanello see also Fossi Todorow, *I Disegni del Pisanello*, pp. 78-79, no. 54, and plate LXV, where the drawing in question – in Windsor – is erroneously regarded as autograph, and A. E. Popham and Philip Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1950), I, no. 223, p. 136, and II, plate CXCI, for a second copy in the British Museum. An extremely similar *Dromedary*, admittedly in reverse, whose present whereabouts are unknown, was formerly in the J.P. Heseltine Collection in London.
- Popham and Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the British Museum*, vol. I, no. 223, p. 136, for the Pintoricchio connection, and nos. 7-8, pp. 5-6, for the same artist's use of drawings by Gentile Bellini. See also Giordana Benazzi, ed., *Pintoricchio a Spello. La Capella Baglioni in Santa Maria Maggiore* (Milan: Silvana, 2000), pp. 71 and 83, for the frescoes.
- Fossi Todorow, *I Disegni del Pisanello*, no. 53, p. 78, and plate LXIV, and Cordellier and Marini, *Pisanello: Le Peintre aux Sept Vertus*, no. 218, pp. 329 and 331-332.
- Alessandro Ballarin, *Dosso Dossi: la pittura a Ferrara negli anni del ducato di Alfonso I*, 2 vols. (Padua: Bertonecello, 1995), I, no. 329, p. 294, and vol. II, fig. 226.
- Johannes Grave, *Giovanni Bellini: The Art of Contemplation* (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2018), p. 173, fig. 120, and p. 176, figs. 123-124.
- Anchise Tempestini, *Giovanni Bellini: catalogo complete dei dipinti* (Florence: Cantini, 1992), no. 50, pp. 147-149, and no. 87, pp. 243-245.
- Ballarin, *Dosso Dossi*, I, no. 337, p. 297, plate LXXXIII, and vol. II, fig. 274.
- See respectively *Burlington Magazine* 60 (1932): pp. 288-289, plate IVb; Dorotheum, Vienna, 18 October 2016, lot 24; <https://useum.org/artwork/The-Annunciation-Girolamo-da-Santacroce-1540>; and Siobhan Davis, *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in National Museums Liverpool* (London: The Public Catalogue Foundation, 2013), p. 330. It is interesting to note that both the ex-Dorotheum picture and the one in Minneapolis also quote figures from Martin Schongauer's engraving of a *Peasant Family Going to Market* – in both cases in reverse – in the background, and that the latter adds the architecture from Dürer's *Holy Family in Egypt* from the *Marienleben* series.
- Pierluigi De Vecchi, *L'opera completa del Tintoretto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1970), plate VII, and no. 82a, pp. 94-95.
- Licia Collobi Ragghianti, *Il Libro de' Disegni del Vasari*, 2 vols. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974).
- Keith Christiansen and Judith W. Mann, *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*, exh. cat. (Rome: Museo del Palazzo di Venezia; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Saint Louis: Saint Louis Museum of Art 2002), no. 14, pp. 86-90, (entry by Livia Carloni), with previous literature, for the painting, and Eckhart Knab, Erwin Mitsch, and Konrad Oberhuber, *Raffaello: i disegni* (Florence: Nardini, 1983), no. 477, for the drawing.
- David Ekserdjian, "The Afterlife of Raphael's Drawings before 1600," in *Rethinking Renaissance Drawings: Essays in Honor of David McTavish*, ed. Una Roman D'Elia (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), pp. 193-208.
- Knab, Mitsch, and Oberhuber, *Raffaello*, nos. 476-479, and 481-482, for the drawings.
- Claudia La Malfa, forthcoming.
- Tom Henry, "Raphael in Oxford and Vienna," *Burlington Magazine* 160 (2018): pp. 226-233, especially p. 231. For Raffaellino, see also David Franklin, "Raffaellino del Colle: Painting and Patronage in Sansepolcro during the First Half of the Sixteenth-Century," *Studi di Storia dell'Arte* 1 (1990): pp. 145-170, and especially p. 160, fig. 1b, and p. 164, fig. 5, and Vittorio Sgarbi, ed., *Da Raffaello: Raffaellino del Colle*, exh. cat. (Urbino: Palazzo Ducale, 2019), p. 22.
- Kristina Herrmann-Fiore, *Disegni degli Alberti: Il volume 2503 del Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe* (Rome: De Luca, 1984), no. 114, pp. 185-186.
- The drawing, formerly in a private collection, was offered at the Dorotheum, Vienna, 30 March 2016, as lot 79.
- Diana Dethloff, "The Executors' Account Book and the Dispersal of Sir Peter Lely's Collection," *Journal of the History of Collections* 8 (1996): pp. 15-51.
- Christiansen and Mann, *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*, p. XVI.





Fig. 1 / Here attributed to Taddeo Zuccaro, *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese*, ca. 1555, oil on canvas, 113 x 87.5 cm, New York, Private Collection.

A “rediscovered” portrait of Vittoria Farnese, Duchess of Urbino, by Taddeo Zuccaro

IAN VERSTEGEN

A portrait in a New York private collection (fig. 1) can be identified as one of the lost, primary portraits of the Duchess of Urbino, Vittoria Farnese (1521-1602), dating from her reign as the wife of Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574).¹ A large portrait on canvas, it shows the duchess piously holding prayer beads and a cameo bearing the likeness and name of her husband. On the table behind sits a miniature armillary sphere. An inscription on the lower right side of the painting records, in Roman numerals, the year 1566. The painting was last exhibited at the *Four Centuries of European Art* exhibition in El Paso in 1957 as a portrait of “Vittoria Farnese, Duchess of Urbino” by “Titian”.² Shortly thereafter it was purchased by the father of the present owner and was moved to San Francisco, and thence to New York City where it remains today. The significance of this portrait in relation to the duchess’s iconography has not been explored in the literature. This article will seek to redress this and offer a more convincing attribution for the work.

It is really quite remarkable that no portraits of Vittoria as Duchess of Urbino have hitherto been identified. Indeed, after her high-profile marriage to Guidobaldo II in 1547, there would have been a need for her image to be captured in a painted portrait. Alternately, portraits of her dating to her days as an eligible bachelorette in Rome as the granddaughter of the reigning pope, Paul III Farnese (r. 1534-1549), by Jacopino del Conte (fig. 2)³ and by Titian (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest), may have been paired later with the Yale University Art Gallery portrait of her new husband.⁴ These early portraits compare with images of her from the same era that are found in different

contexts: among the Farnese portraits in the frescoes of the family place at Caprarola (fig. 3),⁵ in a miniature by Giulio Clovio (then employed by the Farnese),⁶ and perhaps even a mosaic in Santa Pudenziana.⁷

The identification of the New York portrait in question is based not on a physiognomic resemblance, however, but on iconographic details – most importantly the presence of the cameo of Guidobaldo II. To judge from the age of the sitter, the New York portrait seems to have been made at a slightly later moment in Vittoria’s life, perhaps between 1553-1560. Interestingly, though, the present portrait still closely follows the format of that made by Titian’s workshop for Guidobaldo’s first wife, Giulia Varano (fig. 4).⁸ It will be shown, however, that by the time this portrait was made Guidobaldo turned not to Titian, but to a new artist, for on the basis of both style and documentary sources, Taddeo Zuccaro can be identified as the artist responsible.

The inventories of the Pesaro ducal collections made in 1623 at the death of Prince Federico Ubaldo della Rovere (grandson of Vittoria Farnese) seem to identify two separate but similar portraits, one of which could be this work:

[341] One painting on panel with the portrait of her Most Serene Madama with a black dress, pearls and jewels on her collar and a portrait of Duke Guidobaldo in a little box, no frame.⁹

[520] One painting, a portrait of her Most Serene Madama while she was duchess with a beadroll in hand and a little box with the portrait of Lord Duke Guidobaldo.¹⁰



Fig. 2 / Jacopino del Conte, *Vittoria Farnese*, ca. 1546, oil on slate, 106 x 78 cm, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

Fig. 3 / Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, *Marriage of Ottavio Farnese and Margaret of Austria*, 1562-1563, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese.

The descriptions are similar, but one indicates a painting on panel and the other is unspecified. The second description would also seem to align best with the New York picture because it is described as depicting the sitter “while she was duchess” – a description appropriate for her age in the New York canvas, but not for the other images of her as a widow, which will be discussed shortly. That one or both of these portraits was fairly well known is suggested in a reference by the sixteenth-century Pesarese Ludovico Zacconi, who in his chronicle of Pesaro mentions Vittoria’s modesty: “the extent of her constancy is shown to this day in her portraits”.¹¹

At this point, it is useful to turn to a similar portrait that has also recently emerged on the art market and shows Vittoria as an older woman, but which is clearly derived from the New York prototype.¹² Still for sale at the Dorotheum (at the time of writing), the painting is of the same dimensions as the New York portrait, but its quality is inferior. It is signed by the painter Giacomo Vighi and dated 1566 (fig. 5). Because Vighi was a court painter for the Savoy dynasty in Turin, it seems probable that at some point the artist copied one of the two paintings of Vittoria described in the inventories, making her appear older and adding a modest head scarf to indicate her matronly status in 1566.

The question of date brings us to the inscription on the New York painting, which records the year 1566. This is problematic, for Vittoria looks much younger in the New York canvas than in Vighi’s portrait, also dated 1566. Upon closer examination, however, one discovers that the “1566” crosses over an old area of damage on the New York canvas; it is not an original element of the paint surface. Aristocratic portraits often have inscriptions and dates added by later generations, often erroneous; one wonders whether a portrait akin to Vighi’s was elsewhere in Urbino, leading to the mistaken addition of the 1566 date to an earlier picture. In any case, the inscription on the New York canvas is not reliable evidence for the actual date of the painting.





Fig. 4 / Titian, *Portrait of Giulia Varano*, ca. 1547, oil on panel, 113.5 x 88 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti.

Moreover, if one interprets the portrait cameo held by Vittoria as an indication that her spouse was absent at the time of the painting’s execution, it is difficult to reconcile the work with a date in the 1560s. By the 1560s, Guidobaldo no longer lived the peripatetic lifestyle that he had when in the employ

of the Venetian Republic or papacy. His position as Captain General of land forces in the *Regno di Napoli* did not require extensive travel. Instead, a date in the 1550s would be much more consistent with the painting’s iconography, not to mention style. Until 1552, Guidobaldo II was regularly in the territory



Fig. 5 / Giacomo Viggi (l'Argenta), *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese*, 1566, oil on canvas, 120 x 94.5 cm, European Private Collection.

of the Venetian Republic. From 1553 till 1555 he was Captain General of the papacy, during a tense period of the war over Siena (1555-1556) and the escalation of Paul IV’s war against Spain (1556-1557). If executed at this time, the imagery would be entirely appropriate.

The Viggi portrait, whose details are more literal and therefore clearer, assists with a full iconographic analysis of the earlier portrait. Vittoria wears a rich damask dress, difficult to see in the New York portrait, and holds a standard rosary. Interestingly, it is painted quite freely in the New York portrait, but in Viggi’s version



Fig. 6 / Camilla Guerrieri, *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese as a Widow*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 30 x 23 cm, Pesaro, Museo Civico.

the decades of ten beads are carefully rendered. In both, a small armillary sphere is reproduced on the table behind the sitter's hand. This serves as a kind of counterpart to the table clock represented in Titian's portrait of Guidobaldo II's mother, Eleonora Gonzaga (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi). Usually, armillary spheres are shown as attributes of astronomers, as in Ptolemy's likeness in the Urbino *studiolo*. But here, as with Eleonora, it is represented as a luxury, precision instrument.¹³

More evidence that the New York canvas was indeed a major ducal portrait comes with the recognition that it also served as a model for another image of Vittoria, in the group of ducal portraits now in Pesaro in the Museo Civico, which were painted by Camilla Guerrieri in the 1650s (fig. 6).¹⁴ This work formed part of a group of twelve portraits of dukes and duchesses of Urbino, both Montefeltro and della Rovere. According to a late seventeenth-century inscription no longer visible, the Pesarese nobleman Girolamo Giordani commissioned the portraits from Guerrieri. As we shall see, in some cases these were copied after copies of originals that had already been sent to Florence.

It would be easy to dismiss the accuracy of the Guerrieri portrait due to its clumsy handling, but it is clear from the emergence of both the New York and Vienna (Dorotheum) portraits that its inclusion in a set of highly canonical portraits of the ducal family – the series includes copies after Raphael's portrait of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, and Titian's portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere (both Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi) – suggests that it too was considered one of Vittoria's most characteristic likenesses, indeed, with faint echoes in other works (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 / Anonymous, *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese*, formerly Urbino, Palazzo Ducale.

Guerrieri's portrait of Vittoria resembles the New York picture in pose but differs in the clothing. While in both the sitter holds the cameo and a rosary, in the Guerrieri portrait she wears a widow's peaked headdress (the so-called *Attifét*) and a dress of a different style to that shown in the Dorotheum painting. This suggests either that Guerrieri copied a later portrait, painted after 1574 when the duke died, or that one of the two inventoried portraits was altered at some later date to make Vittoria's clothing more appropriate for a widow. This is plausible, for she outlived her husband by twenty-five years and was long a fixture at the court. If indeed the Dorotheum painting was made in 1566 (the date inscribed on the canvas), it may have copied the New York painting for pose and dress but updated the sitter's face and head covering.

As Vighi was mainly a painter for the Savoy Court, perhaps he was sent to Urbino to make an image of the duchess as part of ongoing diplomatic relations, but then took his painting back to Turin.¹⁵ This would explain why Guerrieri's image does not match it.

Moreover, some of the original portraits in Urbino were removed with the devolution of the duchy to the Holy See in 1626. Raphael's portrait of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, for example, was sent to Florence in 1631 after the death of Francesco Maria II, where it was recorded by Venturi in 1654.¹⁶ Similarly, Titian's portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere was also included in the shipment to Florence where the pictures joined the belongings of the last heir of Urbino, Vittoria della Rovere, Duchess of Florence.

Thus, in some cases Guerrieri copied versions of original portraits that had already been shipped to the young Vittoria della Rovere in Florence, and in others she copied paintings that had remained in the former duchy. The divergence from the known originals in some of Guerrieri's portrait series confirms this. The portraits of Oddantonio and Guidobaldo, which are known to have been small pictures including only heads and shoulders, were lengthened to include the upper body. Yet, there is no record of a portrait of Vittoria Farnese among the pictures sent to Florence, so it may be that Guerrieri's portrait of her (see fig. 6) was copied directly from the panel portrait recorded in the 1623 inventory (which unlike the second portrait of Vittoria listed in the inventory is not recorded as showing her “while duchess”). Alternatively, it may have been based on the New York canvas, but with Vittoria changed into a widow. Either way, these “lesser” portraits in the 1623 inventory that were not selected for Florence in the following decade seem later to have been dispersed.



Fig. 8 / Marchegian artist, *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, ca. 1560, oil on canvas, 114 x 86 cm, Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale.

Fig. 9 / Titian, *Portrait of Guidobaldo II*, ca. 1555, oil on canvas, 198 x 113 cm, The Klesch Collection.

A standing portrait of Guidobaldo II (fig. 8), which in size and format is very similar to the rediscovered portrait of Vittoria, further suggests that the New York picture functioned as the duchess’s “official” portrait and might have been exhibited as a pair with the portrait of her husband.¹⁷ The latter survives only in a copy (which in turn inspired a large number of copies) in the Pinacoteca of Bologna. However, it is possible that the portrait of Guidobaldo by Taddeo Zuccaro which Vasari mentions was the original version of the Bologna canvas. If this is the case, then the New York portrait of Vittoria may also have been painted by Zuccaro and intended as a pendant to his portrait of Guidobaldo.



After a few difficult years, Taddeo Zuccaro became known to the ducal family of Urbino as a promising youth from their lands.¹⁸ Vasari tells us that he was invited to Urbino to work, and even accompanied the duke on his inspection of the fortifications of Verona, where he copied a Raphael in the collection of the Canossa family. In 1553, while still in Urbino, Taddeo accompanied the duke to Rome, along with a large retinue including probably a young Federico Barocci, to obtain the baton of command of papal forces.¹⁹ It would have been appropriate for Taddeo to portray the duchess at this time, as outlined below.

Although Zuccaro is not generally known as a portraitist, Vasari recalls that Taddeo had painted a portrait of Virginia della Rovere in 1560 at the time of her nuptials to Count Federico Borromeo.²⁰ And as observed, he notes that Taddeo had painted a full-length portrait of Duke Guidobaldo.²¹ While Taddeo may have created an independent portrait of the duke, he may also have copied the one by Titian, which has recently been examined and published, in the Klesch Collection (fig. 9).²² That portrait is dated to about 1555, the occasion of the duke’s attainment of the title of Captain General of papal forces.

Stylistically, this also seems an appropriate date for the portrait of Vittoria Farnese. It is difficult to compare the portrait to Taddeo’s other production, because he produced few altarpieces and most of his work was undertaken in fresco. Nevertheless, there are some similarities in handling in the Fitzwilliam Museum’s *Adoration of the Kings*. The figure of Mary in particular (fig. 10) bears traits characteristic of Taddeo’s figures, and his elegant manner has been minimized for the portrait-like treatment of the Virgin. Although the small size of the painting exaggerates the impasto, both figures have delicate faces, and the treatment lacks the plasticity of central Italian painting, showing instead signs of Taddeo’s assimilation of Correggio’s style.



Fig. 10 / Taddeo Zuccaro, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail), ca. 1557, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.

Evidence for an earlier date of the New York portrait can also be found in the representation of Vittoria Farnese in the Room of Farnese Deeds at Caprarola, painted in 1562-1563 by Taddeo Zuccaro and his workshop (see fig. 3). Of the portraits of Farnese women in the fresco of the *Marriage of Ottavio Farnese*, Vittoria is the only figure depicted facing to the left, just as in the New York portrait, suggesting that Taddeo

may have recycled his original image of the duchess for the fresco. In addition to a definite physiognomic similarity (though the fresco is painted more freely), the unusual pose also indicates that Taddeo could have relied on his drawings for the earlier portrait on canvas, still in his possession at that time.²³

While style seems to suggest a date in the mid-1550s, further evidence can also be found in the cameo. The cameo of Duke Guidobaldo need not necessarily suggest a posthumous image (i.e., post-1574). Apart from the fact that Vittoria does not look beyond middle age, there is evidence that the cameo could be interpreted to refer to the long periods of separation suffered by the couple, and the wife's steadfast endurance of these circumstances. It has been argued that Bernardino Licinio's *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Portrait of a Man* (1525-1530; fig. 11) need not represent a widow.²⁴ Although Vittoria wears black, like the woman in Licinio's painting, the signs of widowhood are not pronounced. Certainly, the addition of the veil in the Vighi version of the portrait points to the need to adapt the image to that of an older woman. In this case, the veil is an accessory that only suggests widowhood if black and worn with non-sumptuous black garb. Therefore, the succession of portraits seems to begin with one reflecting Vittoria Farnese's beauty within the safe bounds of mother- and wifehood (Zuccaro, New York), her maturation into a decorous, veiled duchess (Vighi, the Dorotheum) and finally a pious widow (Guerrieri, Pesaro).

Heretofore, a gap existed between portraits of the young Vittoria Farnese, before marriage, and those of her later in life as dowager duchess. The arrival of the Vighi portrait on the art market filled in this lacuna to some degree. The New York portrait, however, has been shown to have provided the model for this and for all subsequent copies, evidently establishing the duchess's “official” portrait type and forming a worthy pendant to the portrait of Duke Guidobaldo II (see fig. 8).²⁵



Fig. 11 / Bernardino Licinio, *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1525-1530, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 91.5 cm, Milan, Castello Sforzesco.

NOTES

1. Here attributed to Taddeo Zuccaro, *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese*, ca. 1555, oil on canvas, 113 x 87.5 cm, New York, Private Collection.
2. *An Exhibition of Paintings by Famous Masters of Four Centuries*, 25 January – 15 February 1957, exh. cat. (El Paso, TX: El Paso Public Library, 1957).
3. Paolo Moreno and Chiara Stefani, *Galleria Borghese* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 2000), p. 346.
4. Giulia Varano, the duke’s first wife, had recently died and Titian may have painted on panel to match her portrait. Georg Gombosi, “Tizians Bildnis der Victoria Farnese,” *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 49 (1928): pp. 55-61; Fert Sangiorgi, ed., *Documenti urbinati: Inventari del Palazzo Ducale (1582-1631)* (Urbino: Accademia Raffaello, 1976), pp. 236-237. The Budapest portrait is currently identified by the museum as *Portrait of Settimia Jacovacci (?)*. For the Yale portrait, see Ian Verstegen, “Guidobaldo II della Rovere in European Perspective,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2016): pp. 43-52.
5. Loren Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds,” *Art Bulletin* 60 (1978): p. 513.
6. Giulio Clovio, *The Calling of the Apostles*, Towneley Lectinary, ca. 1555, New York Public Library; see Robert Simon, “Giulio Clovio’s Portrait of Eleonora di Toledo,” *Burlington Magazine* 131 (1989): p. 484.
7. See Patrizia Rosini, “Un mistero durato cinquecento anni Viaggio nel Rinascimento tra i Farnese ed i Caetani – La Basilica di Santa Pudenziana”; https://www.chiesadelgesu.org/nuovo/pdf-documenti/Rosini_Viaggio_nel_Rinascimento.pdf (accessed 6 July 2021).
8. Titian, *Portrait of Giulia Varano*, oil on panel, 113.5 x 88 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti; Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian* (London: Phaidon, 1969-1975), II, no. 90, p. 136; Grazia Agostini et al., *Tiziano nelle gallerie fiorentine*, exh. cat. (Florence: Palazzo Pitti, 1978-1979), p. 144; Alessandro Cecchi, “Ritratto di Giulia da Varano della Rovere,” in *I Della Rovere: Piero della Francesca, Raffaello, Tiziano*, ed. Paolo Dal Poggetto, exh. cat. (Senigallia: Palazzo Ducale; Urbino: Palazzo Ducale; Pesaro: Palazzo Ducale; Urbina: Palazzo Ducale, 2004), pp. 318-321.
9. “Quadri uno in tavola col retratto di Madama Serenissima con una veste negra, perle et gioie al collo et retratto del duca Guidobaldo in un scattolino in mano, senza cornice.” Sangiorgi, *Documenti urbinati*, p. 348.
10. “Quadri uno retratto di Madama Serenissima mentre era Duchessa con una corona in mano et un scattolino col retratto del signor duca Guido Baldo.” Sangiorgi, *Documenti urbinati*, p. 364.
11. “quanto al di d’oggi mostrano i costanti sui ritratti”; Ludovico Zacconi, *Orditura cronica* (Cronica di Pesaro), inv. 323, Biblioteca Oliveriana, Pesaro; Quoted in Matilda Rossi Parisi, *Vittoria Farnese duchessa d’Urbino* (Modena: Ferraguti, 1927), p. 138.
12. Giacomo Vighi (l’Argenta), *Portrait of Vittoria Farnese*, oil on canvas, 120 x 94.5 cm; offered at the Dorotheum, Vienna, 19 April 2016, lot 17; <https://www.dorotheum.com/en/1/1858097/>; (accessed 6 July 2021). There is some documentation linking Vighi to the Urbino court; see Andrea Marchesi, *Delizie d’archivio. Regesti e documenti per la storia delle residenze estensi nella Ferrara del Cinquecento* (Ferrara: le Immagini edizioni, 2015), p. 718, regarding a portrait of the Duke of Ferrara by Vighi, for the Duke of Urbino.
13. For armillary spheres in the duchy of Urbino, see David A. King, “The Astrolabe Depicted in the Intarsia of the Studiolo of Archduke Federico in Urbino,” in *The Science of the Dukedom of Urbino*, ed. Flavio Vetrano (Urbino: Accademia Raffaello, 2001), pp. 101-126. For the armillary sphere as an “intellectual ornament”, see Martin Kemp, “Intellectual Ornaments: Style, Interpretation and Function and Society in Some Instruments of Art,” in *Interpretation and Cultural History*, eds. Joan H. Pittock and Andrew Wear (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 135-152.
14. Luisa Fontebuoni, *Ritratti dei Della Rovere di Camilla Guerrieri* (Pesaro: Museo Civico, 1981).
15. In 1566, the Savoy and della Rovere courts were on very friendly terms. That year, a subject of Urbino, Francesco Paciotto, was supervising the completion of Turin’s citadel and designing another for Cuneo, and the Duke of Savoy greeted the prince of Urbino, Francesco Maria II, on his passage to the Spanish court in Madrid. See Alessandra Coppa, *Francesco Paciotto, Architetto Militare* (Milan: Unicopli, 2002).
16. Sangiorgi, *Documenti urbinati*, p. 70.
17. Anna Maria Ambrosini Massari in *Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Catalogo Generale. II, Da Raffaello ai Carracci*, eds. Jadranka Bentini et al. (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), pp. 433-434; Ian Verstegen, “Guidobaldo II della Rovere and Titian, Witnesses to History,” in Anne-Marie Eze, Matthew Hayes, Ian Kennedy, and Ian Verstegen, *Titian, the Della Rovere Family, & his Portrait of Guidobaldo II and his Son* (London: The Klesch Collection, 2021), pp. 69-91.
18. Barbara Agosti, “Sulla vita vasariana di Taddeo Zuccaro,” *Prospettiva* 153-154 (2014): pp. 136-157.
19. James Dennistoun, *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino: Illustrating the Arms, Arts, and Literature of Italy, 1440-1630*, vol. 3 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), p. 97; Michael Mallett and John Hale, *Military Organization of a Renaissance State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 300-301; and Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), p. 597.
20. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architetti*, 1568, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, vol. 7 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), p. 90: “Donna Verginia figliuola del Duca Guidobaldo d’ Urbino, fu mandato Taddeo a ritrarla, il che fece ottimamente.” Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. A. B. Hinds, vol. 4 (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1900), p. 203: “Taddeo was commissioned to paint the portrait of Verginia, daughter of Duke Guido Baldo of Urbino.”
21. Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, et architetti*, p. 81: “il ritratto di quell duca in un quadro grande quanto il vivo”; *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 7:197: “a life-size portrait of the duke”.
22. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, II, no. 91, p. 37, and Maria Sapio, ed., *Tiziano e il ritratto di corte: Da Raffaello ai Carracci*, exh. cat. (Naples: Museo di Capodimonte, 2006); and now Eze, Hayes, Kennedy, and Verstegen, *Titian, the Della Rovere Family*.
23. In general, Taddeo seems to have availed himself of any available portraits. For example, the figure of Margaret of Austria is similar to portraits by Antonis Mor (e.g. Philadelphia Museum of Art).
24. Nancy Edwards in *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Andrea Bayer, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), p. 270.
25. In writing this note, I am grateful to Esperanza Camara, Enrico Gamba, John Marciari, and Anna Maria Ambrosini for their advice and expertise.



The collection formed by the 4th Earl of Darnley and his Picture Gallery at Cobham Hall, Kent

PETER HUMFREY



John 4th Earl of Darnley.

Fig. 1 / (Studio of?) Thomas Phillips, *Portrait of 4th Earl of Darnley*, oil on canvas, 140.5 x 110 cm, ca. 1805, Mount Stewart, County Down, National Trust.

The recent temporary return to the South East of England of Titian's magnificent *Rape of Europa* (see fig. 14) may serve as a timely reminder of the distinction of the collection from which it was sold to Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston in 1896.¹ Even in the context of the many, extraordinarily rich collections of continental Old Master paintings in nineteenth-century Britain, the Darnley collection, housed at Cobham Hall in Kent, stands out as exceptional. Formed by John Bligh, 4th Earl of Darnley (1767-1831; fig. 1), over the course of about thirty years from the 1790s, it was one of those that benefited most conspicuously from the sale in London of the Orléans collection, as well as from the dispersal of other French and Italian collections immediately after the French Revolution. Darnley's ex-Orléans pictures included, besides the *Europa*, Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way* (see fig. 12) and Veronese's four large *Allegories of Love* (see fig. 13) (all five now in the National Gallery, London), and Rubens's *Head of Cyrus brought to Queen Tomyris* (see fig. 5) (also now in Boston, at the Museum of Fine Arts). But these are just some of the highlights of a collection of about one hundred paintings, which also included Titian's *Man with a Blue Sleeve* (see fig. 9), and works by other major names such as Guido Reni, Poussin and Salvator Rosa.² From the beginning, the collection was destined for Darnley's country seat of Cobham, near Rochester (fig. 2), and between 1805 and 1808 he employed James Wyatt (1746-1813) to transform its Elizabethan Long Gallery into a modern Picture Gallery, where the collection was accessible to visitors throughout the nineteenth century. In common, however, with many other aristocratic

collections of the period, choice items had already begun to be sold off before the end of the century, and most of the remainder was dispersed at large sales in 1925 and 1957. Soon afterwards the house itself was sold, and it now accommodates a private school for girls, with only copies of some of the family portraits remaining *in situ*.

The main aim of the present essay is the rather simple one of providing a convenient overview of this once important collection. No catalogue, let alone an illustrated catalogue, was ever published, but soon before and soon after the death of the 4th Earl in 1831, two checklists – apparently based on printed lists provided for visitors – were published as appendices to general guides to Cobham. These accounts of the house appeared respectively in volume II (1819) of J. P. Neale's encyclopaedic *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen*,³ and in the *Day Excursions out of London ... to Kent* by Felix Summerly (the pseudonym of Henry Cole) of 1843.⁴ Complementing these two published lists are two manuscript inventories of the collection drawn up immediately after the earl's death: a probate inventory of 1831,⁵ and another compiled by the painter (and perhaps curator of the collection) Douglas Guest in 1833.⁶ These four sources, together with the somewhat later account of the collection provided by G. F. Waagen, following his visit in 1851,⁷ provide the basis for the list included in the present Appendix (p. 88). This list makes no claim to be comprehensive, and it omits a number of evidently minor works, and also those that the 4th Earl had already disposed of before 1819.

More importantly, the list is deliberately selective in its exclusion of the many inherited and commissioned family portraits, even though some of them – notably Van Dyck’s *Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart* (fig. 3) and *Lord George Stuart, Sieur d’Aubigny, in Pastoral Guise* (London, National Portrait Gallery) – are of outstanding quality. By focusing instead on the continental Old Master paintings that the 4th Earl chose to acquire and retain for his Picture Gallery, the Appendix is intended to illustrate his mature taste as a collector.

A rather more complicated task is that of tracing the history of Darnley’s purchases. Especially at the beginning of his career as a collector, a number of his

acquisitions – but even more of the items he consigned for sale – are recorded in the sales catalogues of the main London auction houses. For the most part, however, he evidently bought through dealers, or sometimes perhaps directly from fellow collectors, and dates and circumstances are not documented. Or, perhaps he and his descendants were careless in preserving such records;⁸ in any case, the Darnley family papers preserved in the Medway Archives in Rochester contain disappointingly little material relating to the 4th Earl’s activities as a collector. This is not, however, to say that there exists no evidence at all, and an attempt will be made below to sketch an approximate chronology.

Equally complicated is the task of visualizing the hang of Darnley’s collection, in the Picture Gallery and in other rooms and spaces at Cobham. The written sources tend to provide only very general indications of the distribution of the paintings, and none enumerates them systematically, wall by wall. Furthermore, in the decade after the 4th Earl’s death in 1831 the hang was altered when some of his most important acquisitions were moved out of the Picture Gallery. Visual records are also scanty, and it remains difficult to identify individual paintings in the single known watercolour view of the Picture Gallery (see fig. 25), or in later photographs (see figs. 21-23). But again, it will be part of the purpose of the present study to assemble what evidence does exist about how Darnley and Wyatt sought to display the collection, for the owner’s own pleasure and for that of his guests.



Fig. 2 / John Buckler, *South West View of Cobham Hall, Kent*, 1820, watercolour on paper, 35.6 x 50.2 cm, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art.

Fig. 3 / Anthony van Dyck, *Lord John Stuart and his Brother, Lord Bernard Stuart*, ca. 1638, oil on canvas, 237.5 x 146.1 cm, London, National Gallery.

THE 4TH EARL AND HIS FOREBEARS

The 4th Earl was a member of only the third generation of the Bligh family to enjoy noble status, and to own the grand Elizabethan mansion of Cobham. His grandfather, John Bligh of Rathmore (1687-1728), had begun his career as a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry, before an extremely advantageous marriage to a cousin and goddaughter of Queen Anne – followed by clever political manoeuvrings under George I – resulted in his elevation from commoner to an earldom within a space of just four years (1721-1725). More than compensating for the relative modesty of the 4th Earl's Bligh ancestry was the line of his paternal grandmother, Theodosia Hyde.⁹ She was the sole heir not only to the Earls of Clarendon, but also to the Dukes of Lennox and Richmond, members of the cadet branch of the royal house of Stuart. It was to signal this royal Scottish connection that the 1st Earl chose Darnley as his title, and it was from these ancestors that the Blighs inherited Cobham, as well as several distinguished family portraits. Besides the above-mentioned Van Dyck portraits of three dashing Stuart cavaliers,¹⁰ these included Kneller's portrait of Theodosia Hyde; Lely's portrait of her great-grandfather, Lord Chancellor Clarendon; and an anonymous full-length portrait of a more remote forebear, Mary, Queen of Scots.¹¹ Presumably likewise deriving from the family's connections with international royalty in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were a number of other portraits in the Darnley collection, including an anonymous French portrait of the Duke of Alençon, dated 1572 (Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art);¹² and a pair of portraits by Pantoja de la Cruz, dated 1609, of Philip III and Queen Margaret of Spain (respectively BBVA collection and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston);¹³ and most famous of all, the so-called "Darnley" portrait of *Queen Elizabeth Holding a Fan* of ca. 1575 (London, National Portrait Gallery). It is possible that the Darnleys also inherited the occasional Old Master from their Stuart forebears: a Cobham inventory of 1672, for example, included an anonymous Italian *Jacob and Esau*, which Waagen tentatively attributed to Caravaggio, but which is now untraced.¹⁴

There is little evidence that the 4th Earl's father, the 3rd Earl (1719-1781), made any serious attempt to set a seal on his family's arrival into the ranks of the upper nobility by becoming a collector. He undertook the Grand Tour in 1739-1741, but as a young man, dependent on funds from his elder brother the 2nd Earl, he did not buy any works of art in Italy.¹⁵ Even after unexpectedly succeeding to the title in 1747 he did not attend to the much-needed restoration of Cobham until after 1766, when a late marriage with an Anglo-Irish heiress provided both a new incentive and a necessary injection of income. From 1769, from the couple's town house at no. 7 (now no. 46) Berkeley Square, the 3rd Earl supervised extensive work on the house and garden at Cobham, employing first William Chambers (before 1768-1770) and the builder-architect George Shakespear (1770-1781), and then James Wyatt. By 1773 he could turn his attention to some of the interior furnishings, beginning with the state rooms in the central, Stuart block, followed by the countess's apartments in the south, Elizabethan wing.¹⁶ To the back of the central block he also added the so-called Portrait Gallery (1771-1773). Lined on one wall with portraits of family and other worthies, and lit by windows facing east, this was essentially a corridor, created as a first-floor link between the north and south wings. In 1761 the 3rd Earl had had his own portrait painted by Reynolds (Private Collection),¹⁷ and at the time of the marriage of his niece Theodosia Magill in 1765, he again had Reynolds, and also Gainsborough, paint portraits of her (both Belfast, Ulster Museum). In 1772 he also commissioned a portrait by Nathaniel Dance of the countess with their two eldest children, including John, the future 4th Earl (Private Collection). But there is no record of commissions or acquisitions of any paintings other than portraits.

Neither the 3rd nor the 4th Earls of Darnley ever held political office, and neither has an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.¹⁸ But the latter regularly attended the House of Lords as a Whig, and in later life he occasionally spoke in support of reforming measures



Fig. 4 / Cobham Hall, view of Gilt Hall.

close to his heart, such as Catholic emancipation and electoral reform. For the most part, however, he devoted his life to spending his considerable inherited wealth on making further improvements at Cobham and on his art collection. This wealth derived chiefly from his extensive estates, in County Meath as well as in Kent, but since these did not yield mineral resources, he was in no position, unlike many of his fellow aristocrats, to exploit them for industry. Not all of his contemporaries warmed to his personality: the sculptor Richard Westmacott, for example, reported him to be “very proud, with the high notions of the Old Nobility ... The manner of Lord Darnley is uniform, cold, & reserved.”¹⁹ On the other hand, on a visit to Cobham in 1827, Prince Pückler-Muskau (admittedly a fellow aristocrat) wrote that his hosts “are extraordinarily enlightened and unpretentious and are among the most pleasant of all people of rank here ... He is totally unselfish and a genuine patriot, the finest label a cultured man can have.”²⁰ It is also evident from a number of his surviving letters that Darnley enjoyed a warm personal relationship with his wife, mother and children, including his eldest son and heir; and although also on friendly terms with George IV and his brothers, he did not share their reputation for moral laxity.²¹ He seems to have regarded himself as something of an expert on artistic matters, and on a visit to Grosvenor House in June 1829 he did not hesitate to pronounce the four newly installed tapestry cartoons by Rubens as “too large and coarse”.²²

Even before he came of age in June 1788 Darnley took a keen interest in his father’s work on the house and outbuildings at Cobham, and he continued to employ Wyatt as well as numerous builders and craftsmen.²³ In 1793 Wyatt completed the refurbishment of the magnificent Gilt Hall on the north side of the central block (figs. 4, 20; marked 43 on the plan), to which Westmacott’s father (Richard the Elder) had already contributed a marble fireplace (1778), complete with flanking caryatids and a relief after Guido Reni’s *Aurora*

from the Casino Rospigliosi in Rome, above which was placed Anthony van Dyck’s double portrait of *Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart*. This formed part of a suite of grand spaces that also included an Adamesque entrance vestibule, a library and a drawing room. Around this time the young earl undertook a series of extensive travels, taking in The Hague in 1787, Saint Petersburg, Warsaw and Berlin in 1788, Rome and Venice in 1789-1790, and Brussels and Antwerp in 1793.²⁴ In Rome he celebrated his coming of age by commissioning for Cobham a marble chimney-piece,²⁵ and by acquiring a sarcophagus of red Egyptian granite weighing six tons,²⁶ and a number of antique sculptures, including a seven-foot high statue of the Emperor Hadrian, from the Villa Peretti Montalto.²⁷ In Rome, too, he made his first, tentative acquisition of at least one Old Master painting; and then from 1791, when he married Elizabeth Brownlow, like his mother an Anglo-Irish heiress, he was able fully to indulge his passion for pictures.

Thereafter, apart from visits to Ireland to supervise his estates there, his travels became much less frequent.²⁸ Elizabeth bore him seven children, and Cobham became very much a family home, as well as the destination of the ever-growing number of paintings Darnley acquired on the London art market. Presumably likewise assembled through specialist London dealers was his exceptionally valuable collection of porcelain, Dresden and Sèvres, as well as Chinese.²⁹ Soon after the collections were installed in the new Picture Gallery in the Elizabethan north wing, in about 1810, his purchases came to a halt – partly, no doubt, because of the financial difficulties caused by the agricultural depression after Waterloo, but perhaps also in part because he now judged the house, and its decoration, to be complete.³⁰ After his death in 1831, his son the 5th Earl (1795-1835) died too soon to make any additions; and although his grandson the 6th Earl (1827-1896) did add a few paintings in his own, rather different taste, his long reign was to be characterized more by sales than by acquisitions.



Fig. 5 / Peter Paul Rubens, *Head of Cyrus brought to Queen Tomyris*, ca. 1622-1623, oil on canvas, 205.1 x 361 cm, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

TASTE AND CHRONOLOGY

Even a cursory glance at the present Appendix will reveal that Darnley had a rather particular aesthetic taste. The list is dominated by the names of Titian, Rubens, Guido Reni and Salvator Rosa; and his reputed partiality for the work of Rubens is explicitly confirmed in a letter of April 1804 from the dealer William Buchanan to his agent David Stewart.³¹ Although these painters were also fashionable with other collectors of the time, Darnley seems to have made little attempt to balance them with other, equally fashionable artists and schools. While Tintoretto, Veronese, Annibale Carracci, Jordaens, Snyders, and Poussin may all be seen as natural complements to the most favoured names, other major figures such as Raphael, Correggio and Parmigianino are poorly represented, and whole areas are completely absent from Darnley’s collection. These include the well-established favourites among British collectors, Claude

and Dughet; all of Dutch painting; and the entire eighteenth century. In a burgeoning art market Darnley bought as originals several works that have since turned out to be copies,³² but so did most of his fellow collectors. More remarkable is the number of undisputed masterpieces he managed to secure.

In terms of subjects, Darnley was evidently not attracted to genre painting or landscape (including by Rubens and Rosa), and even paintings with conventional religious subjects are outnumbered by those depicting subjects from classical mythology, and especially from Roman history. In the last group, a striking number of these were violent, even gruesome.³³ One of the largest paintings, displayed as the focal point of the Picture Gallery, was Rubens’s *Tomyris* (fig. 5), in which the Scythian queen is seen vindictively supervising the dousing of the decapitated head of her enemy Cyrus in a basin of blood.

Likewise not for the squeamish was Rosa's *Death of Regulus* (fig. 6), in which the Roman consul is tortured to death by the Carthaginians by being rolled in a barrel filled with spikes. Several more paintings in the collection showed scenes of gory combat ("Giorgione", Pordenone, Rubens's *Lion and Boar Hunts*, Rosa's *Jason*, Le Brun), rape (Titian), decapitation (another "Giorgione"), and an agonizing suicide ("Romanelli"; though more probably Reni). Even the works by the usually classically serene Reni included another depiction of a severed head being placed in a blood-filled salver (the *Daughter of Herodias*; fig. 7), and a copy of the large *Massacre of the Innocents*. It is difficult to know what to make of this aspect of Darnley's taste: it cannot easily be linked to any other known aspect of his personality, and the only record

of a contemporary comment on it is the observation by Prince Pückler-Muskau that both the Rubens and the Reni depicted the unpleasant subject of a severed head.³⁴ It may simply be that unlike many of his fellow collectors, Darnley was not discouraged by violent iconography when buying paintings by artists whom he admired. This consideration might also apply to his willingness to acquire for his home large-scale paintings with conspicuous displays of naked female flesh, such as those by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese. Even more explicitly erotic in content were a couple of early Poussins depicting the antics of nymphs and satyrs;³⁵ and the same is true of Rubens's lusty *Loves of the Centaurs* (Lisbon, Gulbenkian Museum) (for which, however, Darnley was outbid at auction in 1802).³⁶



Fig. 6 / Salvator Rosa, *Death of Regulus*, ca. 1650-1652, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 219.7 cm, Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Fig. 7 / Guido Reni, *Daughter of Herodias*, ca. 1639-1642, oil on canvas, 248.5 x 174 cm, Art Institute of Chicago.





Fig. 8 / Salvator Rosa, *Pythagoras and the Fishermen*, 1662, oil on canvas, 132 x 188 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Fig. 9 / Titian, *Man with a Blue Sleeve* ("Ariosto"), ca. 1510, oil on canvas, 81.2 x 66.3 cm, London, National Gallery.

It should be emphasized that these generalizations about Darnley's taste are based on the list of paintings he decided to keep, and that they do not take account of the many that passed through his hands, especially during the first ten years of his career as a collector, when his taste in Old Masters seems to have been more catholic. It may also be admitted that while the distinction between paintings he is likely to have inherited (mostly family portraits) and those he purchased is usually clear, this is not always the case. An anonymous *Jacob and Esau*, for example, tentatively attributed by Waagen to Caravaggio, is already recorded at Cobham in a Stuart inventory of 1672;³⁷ and an old, half-sized copy of Raphael's *Transfiguration* may similarly already have been in the house in the seventeenth century. In such cases he presumably

retained these works as much for reasons of piety towards his ancestors, as because they were consistent with his own aesthetic taste.

On the whole, the earliest years of Darnley's majority were also those of his closest involvement with contemporary painters. Just as he inherited the architect Wyatt from his father, so too he continued to employ Reynolds and Gainsborough to paint family portraits,³⁸ progressing only later to John Hoppner, Thomas Phillips and William Fowler.³⁹ It must have been partly a sense of loyalty to his father and ancestors that in 1788 Darnley bought – from Gainsborough's widow – his copy of Van Dyck's *Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart* (Saint Louis Art Museum), which the painter had made in 1785, presumably at the family's house in Berkeley Square.

In 1791 he bought from Reynolds a version of Van Dyck's portrait of Inigo Jones – probably again primarily for reasons of family piety, since the architect of the central block at Cobham was traditionally (but mistakenly) attributed to Jones. But Darnley's patronage of the elderly Reynolds was not limited to portraiture: in the same year, and perhaps on the same occasion, he bought from him a version of his *Calling of Samuel*, perhaps in conscious emulation of the version of 1776 that he would already have known in the nearby Tudor mansion of Knole.⁴⁰

The only Old Master Darnley is definitely known to have bought in Rome in 1789 was an unconventional choice for a young man on his first visit to the Eternal City: a version of Salvator Rosa's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, a surrealistic vision of the saint being threatened by peculiarly repulsive monsters. Although Rosa was to remain a favourite, perhaps Darnley quickly regretted his choice of subject, because by 1794 he had offloaded the painting to the London dealer Benjamin Vandergucht.⁴¹ But his appetite for Old Masters had been whetted, and in about 1791 he bought a group of paintings from another neighbour in Kent, Thomas Moore Slade (1749-1831) of Rochester.⁴² Slade was a dealer as much as a collector, and as a result of an unsuccessful business



venture, he was forced to sell a large part of his stock, including the fifty-six paintings he had bought in 1776 from the enormous collection formed by Bartolomeo Vitturi in Venice, immediately after the owner's death. According to his fellow-dealer William Buchanan, Slade sold to Darnley nine ex-Vitturi pictures, including five attributed to Titian. But of these nine, only four (including two of the Titians, the *Salvator Mundi* and the *Self-Portrait with Francesco Zuccato*) were later retained and appear in the present Appendix,⁴³ and Darnley seems to have quickly recognized the others (none of which are now identifiable) as second rate and to have got rid of them. Evidently to his longer-term satisfaction was another purchase from Slade, Rosa's *Pythagoras and the Fishermen* (fig. 8), which, according to Buchanan, had recently been sent from Rome by Gavin Hamilton for sale by Desenfans in London. Buchanan adds that Slade also offered Darnley Claude's *Embarkation of Saint Ursula* (London, National Gallery), but that the offer was declined.

Slade was also the organizer of the sale in London in April 1793 of the recently imported Flemish and Dutch pictures from the Orléans collection. Darnley bought only one painting at the sale, but it was a very large and important one – Rubens's *Tomiris* – for which he paid the correspondingly very large sum of 1200 guineas.⁴⁴ In December of the same year, as he wrote to his wife during a trip to the southern Netherlands, he bought five obviously much smaller paintings (two more by Rubens, a Claude, a Snyders, and a Van de Velde landscape) for just £500.⁴⁵ In his letter Darnley was somewhat defensive, perhaps because the countess may have considered that his outlay on pictures that year had already been extravagant; but he assured her that this latest purchase was a bargain, and anyway, if necessary he would easily be able to sell the paintings on at no loss. Probably around this time he also bought two works of outstanding quality, recently imported from Paris by the dealer Le Brun: Titian's *Man with a Blue Sleeve* (fig. 9), and Rubens's oil-sketch for one of the scenes from the cycle of the *Life of Henri IV* (fig. 10).⁴⁶ In 1795 Darnley bought another painting from the Reynolds collection, this time from the artist's posthumous sale, Titian's *Saint Margaret and the Dragon*. Although this had reputedly once belonged to the royal collection, Darnley secured it for only 50 guineas.⁴⁷

These patchy records relating to Darnley's first eight years as a collector raise a number of questions about the record of a sale at Christie's on 6 May 1796, at which he consigned no less than twenty-seven paintings.⁴⁸ A number of the artists listed (Cuyp, Rembrandt, Steen, Swanevelt – and very surprisingly, Giovanni Bellini) do not conform to his mature taste, and it is tempting to suppose that he had inherited them from his father and wanted to replace them with his own preferences. But as has been seen, there is no evidence that the 3rd Earl ever bought any Old Masters; and in any case, the majority of other paintings sent for sale were attributed to artists (Albani, Carracci, Cignani, Domenichino, Reni, Rubens, Titian, and Veronese) whom Darnley very much continued to favour. Furthermore, one of the Titians (the *Saint Margaret*) he had bought only in the previous year; and the two Domenichinos (or, more probably, by Furini) both showed figures (David, Judith) holding decapitated heads.⁴⁹ The conclusion must be that Darnley himself had acquired all twenty-seven – and probably many others as well – in the years immediately following his coming of his age and his marriage, but that for some reason he now decided to re-sell them. Perhaps

he was already trying to weed out works of lesser quality (although none of the ex-Vitturi pictures were included); perhaps, as a result of his recent spending spree, he was in urgent need of funds; or perhaps he was testing whether he could indeed easily recover his expenditure on the art market, and even make a profit. But if this was his strategy it does not seem to have worked, since all twenty-seven works were bought in, despite their rather low valuations. He must, however, have managed somehow to dispose of most of them in the immediately following years, since with the exception of the probable Furinis, none of them formed part of his definitive collection.

By the time of the celebrated sale of the Italian pictures from the Orléans collection, organized by the dealer Michael Bryan in 1798/99, any of Darnley's earlier cashflow problems must at least in part have been resolved, because he bought six of them, at a total cost of 800 guineas.⁵⁰ Actually, for four of the six (a pair by "Giorgione"/ Pordenone; and a very large, full-length pair of Greek philosophers attributed to Ribera) he paid relatively little (80 guineas and 40 guineas respectively),⁵¹ but rather more for a Carracci



Fig. 10 / Peter Paul Rubens, *Triumph of Henri IV*, ca. 1630, oil on panel, 49.5 x 83.5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 11 / Titian, *Venus with a Mirror*, ca. 1560, oil on canvas, 117 x 89 cm, Private Collection.



Martyrdom of Saint Stephen on copper (now Chantilly, Musée Condé, as Domenichino) (250 guineas) and a Titian *Venus with a Mirror* (300 guineas) (fig. 11). Except for the *Saint Stephen*, all were to remain in the collection; and although the *Venus* is nowadays regarded as by Titian's workshop, Darnley was evidently sufficiently proud of it later to acquire a copy (or another version)

of it.⁵² Nevertheless, in relation to the rich pickings offered by the Orléans sale, Darnley's initial haul was modest, and in the immediately following few years he gave himself a second chance by buying seven more – all of which were visually sumptuous mythologies (or profane allegories), and all but one of which were unusually imposing in scale.



Fig. 12 / Tintoretto, *Origin of the Milky Way*, ca. 1575, oil on canvas, 149.4 x 168 cm, London, National Gallery.

Fig. 13 / Paolo Veronese, *Allegory of Love* ("Respect"), ca. 1575, oil on canvas, 186.1 x 194.3 cm, London, National Gallery.

Five of the seven, Tintoretto's *Milky Way* (fig. 12) and Veronese's set of four *Allegories of Love* (fig. 13), had failed to sell in 1799, and in the following year Bryan sold them to Darnley privately.⁵³ The reason for their failure in 1799 remains a mystery, but not every collector owned houses in which large-scale works depicting female nudity could easily be accommodated; furthermore, it was clear from the low viewpoints of the Veroneses that they were meant to be ceiling paintings. Even Darnley did not yet have an appropriate space, although he must already have been planning to create one by restructuring his Elizabethan Long Gallery at Cobham. The other two ex-Orléans paintings he went on to acquire – Titian's *Rape of Europa* (fig. 14) and the rather smaller *Toilet of Venus* (fig. 15) attributed to Annibale Carracci (but nowadays to Albani) – had been bought at the sale by Thomas, 2nd Lord Berwick, together with two supposed Raphaels, for the large total of 3800 guineas. Berwick was likewise in the process of planning a Picture Gallery for his country seat, in this case Attingham Park in Shropshire, and no doubt this was the intended destination of his Orléans purchases.⁵⁴ But he was notoriously a spendthrift, and often in debt, and it is likely that he was forced to sell both the Titian and the "Carracci" to Darnley at some date early in the new century. Darnley certainly owned the *Europa* by 1816, when he lent it for exhibition at the British Institution.⁵⁵

In the decade up to 1810 Darnley made several other purchases of trophy paintings, as well as holding another large sale, presumably of pictures that he now saw as surplus to requirements. This auction was held at Christie's on 8 May 1802, and it comprised as many as sixty-two lots.⁵⁶ As in 1796, the circumstances are difficult to interpret. The items included five Claudes (one of which may correspond to the one bought by Darnley in Brussels in 1793), three Dughets, and a large number of Dutch paintings (including a couple of Adriaen van de Velde landscapes, one of which might again have been bought in 1793). Although only two of the Dutch paintings are now recognizable, both are of high quality (Cuypp's *View of Dort*, now in London, Wallace Collection; and Ruisdael's *View of Bentheim Castle*, now in Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland), and Darnley's decision to sell them must have been based on a matured conception of the character of his collection as one that was predominantly Italian and Flemish. If so, the inclusion of several works by, or attributed to, Rosa, Rubens, and Titian remains



Fig. 14 / Titian, *Rape of Europa*, 1559-1562, oil on canvas, 178 x 205 cm, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.



Fig. 15 / Francesco Albani, *Toilet of Venus*, ca. 1605/1610, oil on canvas, 90 x 100 cm, Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale.

surprising, unless Darnley considered that he already owned better examples by these masters, and could now afford to be more selective. In any case, as with the 1796 sale, that of 1802 provides evidence of how active he must have been in amassing a wide range of paintings in the 1790s, as well as suggesting that, as he laid plans for his new Picture Gallery, his taste became more focused.

The 1802 auction was more successful than that of 1796, but even so, twenty-four lots were bought in; and although one painting – an oval *Cupid and Psyche* on marble attributed to Giulio Romano – returned to the collection, Darnley must have disposed of the others elsewhere. At the same time, he continued to buy at auction: just four days later he bought an enormous *Stag Hunt* by Snyders (seven feet by eleven) from the collection of the Duke of Bridgewater.⁵⁷ In the previous year he had bought a *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, allegedly a preparatory sketch by Raphael himself for the celebrated tapestry cartoon,⁵⁸ and a *Danaë* attributed to Titian.⁵⁹ In 1804 he bought a pair of small paintings on stone, then given to Lodovico Carracci (but later to Turchi), another supposed Giorgione, *Pompey's Head presented to Caesar*, and three oil sketches, one of which was attributed to Correggio.⁶⁰ And in 1806 he bought a sketch by Van Dyck, a Lebrun, and a pair of Colombels.⁶¹ Although it can seem difficult to distinguish such items from those he was currently trying to sell off, it may be noted that he planned to hang the "Giorgione" immediately above Rubens's *Tomyris* (see fig. 5), and so was probably attracted to it as an iconographic pendant. In the case of the "Raphael" it may also be observed that small-scale versions of famous compositions, today recognized as mere copies, were very widely accepted as preliminary originals, and for the collector often represented his best chance of acquiring a work by a stellar but very rare artist. Darnley already owned an unquestionably authentic sketch for a tapestry cartoon, Rubens's *Triumph of Henri IV* (see fig. 10), and perhaps thought that the *Miraculous Draught* would make a nice complement. But the case of the *Danaë* illustrates a more serious error. Bought at a sale of paintings owned by the antiquarian William Young Ottley (1771-1836), it had been acquired in Italy as an autograph Titian by the vendor's grandfather on his Grand Tour of 1752-1753,⁶² and was claimed by the sale catalogue to be the work described by Vasari "as seen whilst painting, and much praised by Michael Angelo".⁶³



Fig. 17/ Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, ca. 1560, oil on canvas, 106.7 x 133.4 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

accounts with Coutts, which record substantial sums paid between January 1806 and May 1808 to William Buchanan, and between August 1811 and September 1815 to another prominent dealer, Angelo Bonelli.⁶⁶

Although the exact purpose of these payments is not itemized, at least one work of particular prestige can be identified as having been acquired from each of these dealers around this time. In his *Memoirs*, Buchanan himself provides the background to Darnley's purchase of the version of Titian's *Venus and Adonis* now in New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 17).⁶⁷ A dramatic and erotic mythology executed in the same richly chromatic style as the *Europa*, the painting had previously been in Palazzo Mariscotti in Rome, but was sent to London in 1804 by Buchanan's agent in Italy, James Irvine, and Darnley reserved it even before he had seen it. Although usually intensely interested in the prices paid for paintings, Buchanan

was too delicate on this occasion to mention how much he had charged. By contrast, in 1816 Farington recorded that four or five years earlier Darnley had paid Bonelli the enormous sum of 5000 guineas for Rosa's *Death of Regulus* (fig. 6).⁶⁸ Previously in the Colonna Gallery in Rome, and presumably seen there by Darnley on his visit in 1790, the *Regulus* had belonged to a batch of four, imported into England by Bonelli's partner John Udny the Younger in 1800.⁶⁹ Given the close involvement of the Udny-Bonelli partnership in acquiring and exporting paintings from the Colonna collection, it is worth wondering whether Bonelli was also the source of the finest of Darnley's group of works by Guido Reni, the *Daughter of Herodias* (fig. 7), which is likewise known to have had a Colonna provenance.⁷⁰ In any case, it is likely that Bonelli had already been instrumental in securing for Darnley the two "Carracci" in 1804; and a good long-term working relationship may also be inferred from the fact that when the Italian dealer sought British naturalization in 1817, Darnley acted as his primary sponsor.⁷¹



Perhaps also acting as occasional adviser to Darnley on his collection was the history painter Douglas Guest (1781-1845), the compiler of the manuscript inventory of 1833. In the inventory Guest provides a long excursus on a small panel he describes as Correggio's *Zingarella*, and calls "one of the finest cabinet pictures in the world".⁷²

Formerly in Palazzo Chigi in Rome, it was brought to England by Lord Duncannon, and was bought in 1807 by Guest, who despite "the many offers made", later sold it on to Darnley, presumably for a sum resembling the very high valuation of £2000 (£500 more than Titian's *Europa*) he placed on it in 1833. The work has now disappeared, but although it was not recorded by Summerly, Waagen, or any other discriminating viewer, it is unlikely to have been the national treasure that Guest claimed it to be. Probably no more than a copy of the famous painting in Naples, it fetched a mere 22 guineas when it came under the hammer in 1925.⁷³

Whether or not he knew that it had been dismissed by Mengs as worthless, or that Vasari was referring to the quite different painting now in Naples, Darnley prized his purchase very highly, and later placed it in a position of honour in one of the principal alcoves of the Picture Gallery at Cobham. In his inventory of 1833 Douglas Guest loyally placed the very high valuation of £4000 on it (as opposed to his valuation of the *Europa* at £1500). The work itself is currently untraced, but to judge from a copy on enamel by Henry Bone of 1812 (fig. 16),⁶⁴ it was no more than a seventeenth-century pastiche, and Mengs's assessment was much more accurate than that of Darnley. Waagen likewise pronounced it to be too feeble for Titian.⁶⁵

Several of these auction records specifically record that the bidding was undertaken by dealers and *marchand-amateurs* on behalf of Darnley: the "Carracci" in 1804 by Michael Bryan; the three sketches in the same year by John Breen; the Van Dyck, the Lebrun, and the two Colombels in 1806, all by Samuel Woodburn; and a "Rubens" (in fact a Van Dyck) in 1824 by William Segulier. Similarly, the direct purchasers of the *Danaë* in 1801 and of the "Giorgione" in 1804 are recorded respectively as Charles Birch and "Howard", and even if they were not acting for Darnley, they must have quickly passed their acquisitions on to him. These names add valuable insight into Darnley's contacts with the art market in these years, as do the records of his bank

Fig. 16 / Henry Bone, copy after *Danaë* attributed to Titian, 1812, enamel, 21.5 x 30 cm, Private Collection.



Fig. 18 / Jacob Jordaens, *Man and Woman with a Parrot*, 1638-1640, oil on canvas, 85 x 80 cm, Vaduz, Liechtenstein, The Princely Collections.

Fig. 19 / Henry Bone, copy after *Judas Betraying Christ* attributed to Guido Reni, enamel on copper, 20 x 15 cm, Private Collection.



There are very few recorded purchases (or sales) by Darnley after the acquisition of the *Regulus* in 1809/10. Exceptions include a *Flagellation* bought in 1819 as by Schiavone, but always maintained by the earl as a Titian;⁷⁴ and the *Boys blowing Bubbles* (formerly in the Reynolds collection) bought in 1824 as by Rubens, but now recognized as by Van Dyck. Another, much more important exception is represented by a large marble sculpture by Canova: a *Reclining Naiad* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), a version of the sculpture presented by Lord Cawdor to the Prince Regent in 1817. Darnley's figure was apparently ordered at long range from the master in Rome in 1819, was completed by his assistants after his death in 1822, and was delivered to Cobham in 1824.⁷⁵

There remain a number of important paintings from the collection with no acquisition dates. They include a large cartoon of a *Lion Hunt* by Rubens;⁷⁶ Jordaens's *Man and Woman with a Parrot* (before the Revolution in the Choiseul collection) (fig. 18); Rosa's *Jason and the Dragon* and *Birth of Orion*;⁷⁷ and the *Transfiguration* by Lodovico Carracci (then attributed to Schedoni), now in the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. But all of these are already listed by Neale in 1819 and are likely to have been acquired much earlier. The Rubens, the Jordaens, and Rosa's *Orion* already appear, in fact, on a diagram of the hang of the Picture Gallery datable to ca. 1804 (see fig. 24); and one of Darnley's favourite paintings, a *Judas Betraying Christ* attributed to Reni (fig. 19), is recorded at Cobham by E. W. Brayley in 1808.⁷⁸

As suggested above, one good reason why Darnley more or less ceased to collect paintings soon after 1810, after two decades of frantic buying, was simply that the Picture Gallery was now complete, and the paintings had been arranged in their definitive places here and in other spaces at Cobham.

Although Darnley was a generous lender to the annual Old Master exhibitions at the British Institution,⁷⁹ he seems to have been much less interested in the parallel exhibitions of new works by living painters. As has been seen, he was in any case less attracted to landscape and genre than to history painting; and a telling exception to his general failure to buy the work of modern artists is provided by his purchase – following on from that of Reynolds's *Calling of Samuel* in 1791 – of Benjamin West's study of 1811 (now in Rochester, NY, Memorial Art Gallery) for his colossal *Christ Rejected* (now in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). Presumably Darnley bought the sketch after it had been exhibited to great acclaim at the Royal Academy in 1815.⁸⁰

Only in about 1825 did Darnley commission a work of art (apart from family portraits) *ex novo* from a British painter.⁸¹ In that year he admired the huge canvas by William Etty representing *Combat* in the possession of John Martin; and declaring his “anxious desire to encourage the highest walk in the Art”, he commissioned Etty to paint for him a *Judgement of Paris* (Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery) for the generous fee of £500. Patron, painter, and subject ought to have been perfectly matched. Etty was an ambitious practitioner of histories and mythologies; he shared Darnley's passion for Titian and Rubens and had recently returned from Venice; and the subject, while not exactly repeating that of anything in the collection, called for an opulent display of female nudity of a kind already well represented by Darnley's Venetian pictures. But the project foundered after a breakdown in personal relations. The painter seems to have found the earl's instructions too prescriptive; and although the work was completed on time and received considerable public praise when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1826, Darnley was dilatory both in paying the agreed fee and in taking delivery. Eventually Etty received nearly the balance of the full amount after the earl's death, but the unloved painting was sold from the collection in 1848.

DISPLAY

During the 1790s, in what appears to have been a busy decade in Darnley's career as a collector, there is little certain information on where he kept and hung his acquisitions. Since, however, Wyatt's work on the new Picture Gallery in the north wing at Cobham was not complete until 1809, it is likely that the paintings were kept partly elsewhere in the house and partly at Berkeley Square. In his brief account of Cobham published in 1808, in fact, E. W. Brayley says that during building works many of the pictures due to be displayed in the north wing, including Rubens's *Tomiris*, were at that time temporarily housed in the south wing, while others had been sent to London.⁸²

As has been mentioned above, the long campaign of renovating the interiors at Cobham had been begun by the 3rd Earl in 1773, and was continued after his death by his son, even during the latter's minority. From the beginning both earls must have aimed to create a more systematic arrangement of their paintings, and the first floor corridor built by the 3rd Earl at the back of the central, Stuart block (see fig. 20; marked 131 on the

plan) was always intended for the display of portraits. As already seen, between 1788 and 1791 the 4th Earl transformed the former Banqueting Hall at the front of the block into an exceptionally lavish, two-storey Music Room, with Van Dyck's magnificent double portrait of *Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart* displayed in pride of place above Westmacott's marble fireplace (figs. 3, 4, 20; marked 43 on the plan).⁸³ To judge from the later descriptions by Neale and Summerly, the private apartments in the south wing then became the site of recent family portraits (Reynolds, Gainsborough, Dance, Hoppner, etc.), while most of the Tudor and Stuart ancestral portraits were hung in a new Dining Room on the ground floor of the north wing, underneath the Picture Gallery. Slightly later, an appropriately prominent position was found for Lely's portrait of Lord Chancellor Clarendon above the mantelpiece in the Library in the central block, completed in 1820 by the Repton brothers (sons of Humphry). The 3rd Earl's "Portrait Gallery" to the east of the central block was filled with portraits of celebrities, such as one claimed to be of Luther by Holbein, and another of Calvin by Lucas van Leyden.⁸⁴

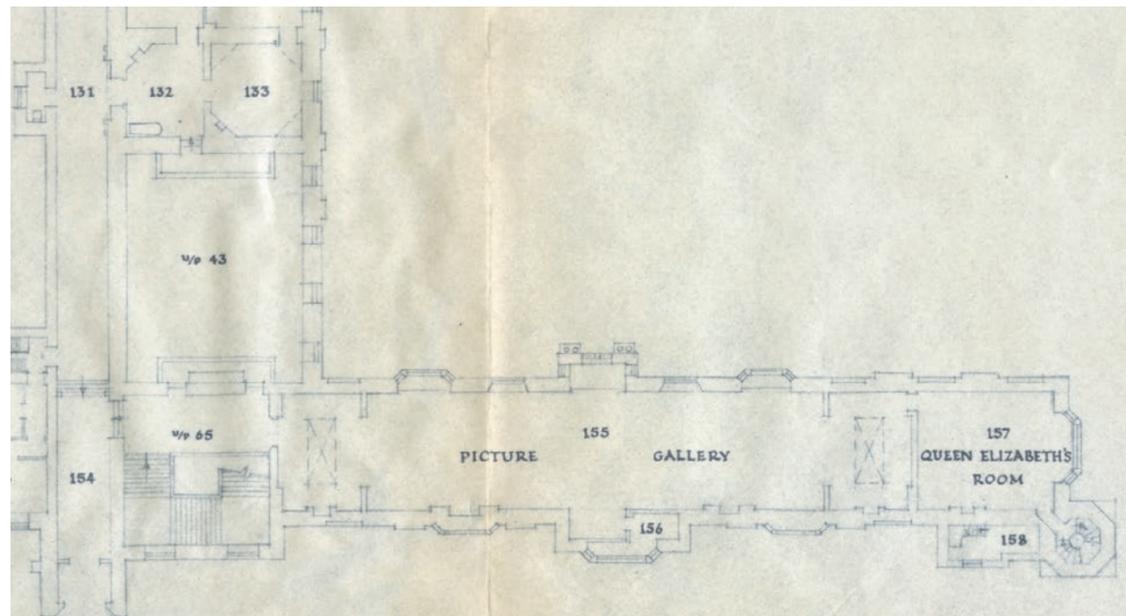


Fig. 20 / Cobham Hall, plan of first floor (drawn ca. 1957/1958): detail of north wing, with part of central block.



Fig. 21 / Cobham Hall, photograph by Charles Latham of Picture Gallery, 1904 (looking west).



The Elizabethan Long Gallery originally ran the full length of the north wing,⁸⁵ and measured some 170 feet from the staircase landing to the east and the large bay window to the west (see figs. 2, 20). The interior was further illuminated by nine windows on each of its flanks. When the central block of the house was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, the original, extravagantly ornate entrance porch was moved to the centre of the south flank. When remodelling the existing gallery to create a Picture Gallery for the display of Darnley's collection, Wyatt introduced a series of extensive alterations. In the first place, he created a large chamber to the west, two bays long, romantically entitled the Queen Elizabeth Room (despite the fact that the only certain visit to Cobham by the Virgin Queen had been to the earlier manor house on the same site). Although intended as a bedroom, it seems never to have been used as such, and later it served as

an additional, secluded space for the picture collection. The truncated Gallery is nevertheless of a considerable length (136 feet by 24 wide), and Wyatt retained in the central section of the north wall two enormous, richly sculptural Tudor fireplaces of 1599 by Giles de Witt (figs. 21, 22, 23). But he further compartmentalized the longitudinal space by creating one-bay vestibules (each about 17 feet wide) at either end, semi-separated from the main space by a sort of *proscenium*; and in the same spirit, on the north wall he added a recess, large enough to accommodate paintings on all three of its walls, between the fireplaces and opposite the Tudor porch to the south. To endow the interior design with a new flavour of classicism he framed the openings to the vestibules and recesses with wreath ornament within rectilinear mouldings, and placed a much smaller, Ionic fireplace on the north wall in each of the vestibules. To effect a harmonious transition from the main walls to a flat ceiling he introduced a broad coving. And finally, he blocked all nine of the north-facing windows, as well as the south-facing windows in the two vestibules, introducing, in compensation, top lighting in the vestibules and in the north recess.

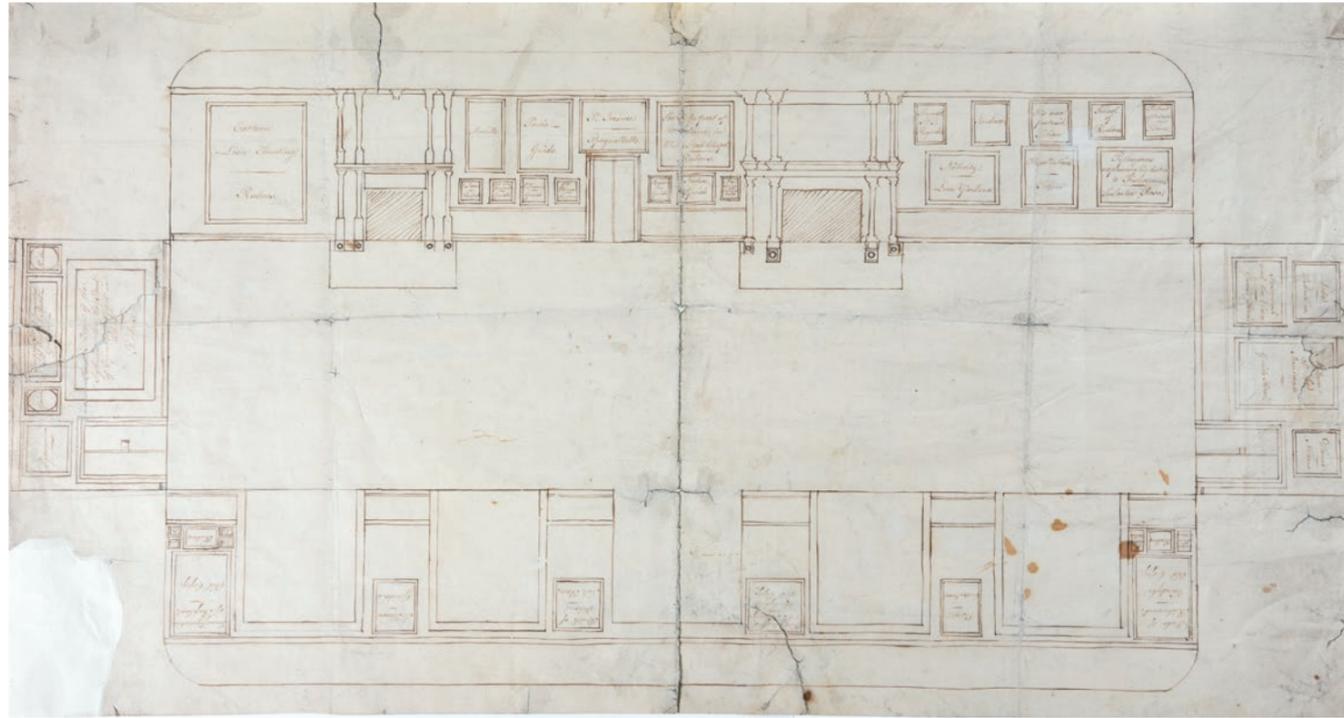
Together these alterations had the triple effect of endowing the space with more classical proportions; of creating a much greater area of wall for the hanging of paintings; and of creating lighting conditions that would make the paintings more legible. The owners of houses with an Elizabethan or Jacobean Long Gallery had long been aware that their characteristically large windows on both sides provided abundant but competing sources of light, setting up both too much glare and too much shadow.⁸⁶ Wyatt mitigated this defect in the central section of the Gallery at Cobham by arranging for the majority of the pictures to be placed on the north wall, so that their principal illumination came from the row of five remaining south-facing windows. The inevitable downside was that the pictures between the windows on the south wall must always have been made practically invisible

by their placing in *contre-jour*. In the two vestibules, however, the top lighting, together with the diffuse light from the main part of the Gallery, would have created a much more even illumination, showing off the choicest paintings to particular advantage.

What appears to be an early project for the hang of the Picture Gallery is documented by an unpublished drawing, perhaps by Wyatt himself, in which the paintings are identified by inscriptions (fig. 24).⁸⁷ Most of the paintings can be matched up with those in the present Appendix, although the drawing also records a number of inherited historical portraits that were later displayed in the Portrait Gallery and elsewhere in the house. Also recorded is a small number of Old Masters, including a *Leda* by Padovanino, a *Danaë* by Albani, and a *Saint Jerome* by Ribera, which, although presumably bought by Darnley, subsequently disappeared from the collection, without any record in sales catalogues. The drawing is undated, but it cannot be from before May 1804, since it includes in the upper tier of the west wall *Pompey's Head presented to Caesar* attributed to Giorgione, which Darnley bought in that month. On the other hand, the walls at either end are solid, and do not yet show the open *proscenia* linking the main space to what were to become vestibules to the east and west. The drawing may be interpreted, therefore, as a preliminary project for the hang, rather than as a record of it after the completion of the Picture Gallery in 1808. The entrance to the north recess is still, in fact, rather small, and is not yet placed directly opposite the south recess; the relative sizes of the paintings are not recorded accurately; and their frames, like the fireplaces, are rendered schematically. Yet the idea of presenting Rubens's *Tommyris* as a visual climax at the far end of the room was to become a reality, and it is possible that several of the other paintings were also later given positions corresponding to those seen in the drawing – even though it is hard to discern any particular logic in the proposed display, which is not arranged by painter or subject, and follows only the loosest symmetry.

Fig. 22 / Cobham Hall, photograph of former Picture Gallery, ca. 1919 (?) (looking west).

Fig. 23 / Cobham Hall, photograph of former Picture Gallery, ca. 1919 (?) (looking east).



Finally, it may be observed that the drawing indicates the positions of only forty-three of those in the collection, and that several of the most important recent purchases – even if they did not yet include Titian's *Europa* and *Venus and Adonis* – are not shown. It is clear, therefore, that this main space could never have accommodated the whole collection, and that it was always intended that a large part would be displayed in neighbouring spaces.

Perhaps the best surviving visual idea of the appearance of Wyatt's completed gallery is provided by a watercolour by Anne Rushout (1768-1849), sister of the important collector Lord Northwick, and a friend of Emma, wife of the 5th Earl of Darnley (fig. 25).⁸⁸ The watercolour is undated, but to judge from the ages of the two children at the centre, it is likely to date from ca. 1834: that is to say, soon after the death of the 4th

Earl in 1831, and just before the early death of his son the 5th Earl – in a tree-felling accident – in February 1835. The children are likely to be John, the future 6th Earl (born 1827) and his sister Elizabeth (born 1830); and perhaps the adult seated in front of the fire is the 5th Earl himself. In addition to the row of south-facing windows on the left and the Tudor fireplaces on the right, the watercolour shows the *proscenium* opening on to the west vestibule, framing Rubens's *Tomyris* on the end wall. The theatricality of this presentation is further emphasized by the presence of red curtains, which could be drawn to reveal or conceal the dramatic image. The only other readily identifiable painting is the one propped up against the table in the foreground, the *Taking of Christ* attributed to Guido Reni, currently untraced but known from a copy on enamel by Henry Bone (see fig. 19).⁸⁹ On the basis of the manuscript inventory by Guest, which is organized according to the



Fig. 25 / Anne Rushout, *The Picture Gallery at Cobham Hall* (looking west), watercolour on paper, 35.5 x 45.5 cm, here dated to ca. 1834, Private Collection.

positions of the paintings on the walls, it is possible to suggest some five more identifications: thus Jordaens's *Man and Woman with a Parrot* (see fig. 18) may just be discerned at the upper right on the end wall; the tall painting seen at the far end of the adjacent wall (in the position in which it appears in a later photograph, fig. 23) is probably Reni's *Daughter of Herodias* (see fig. 7); the upper of the two to the left of the recess is probably Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* (see fig. 11); to the right of the recess, at the top, is Sassoferrato's *Praying Virgin*; and to the left of the composition, between the tall windows, is the full-length *Mary, Queen of Scots*.⁹⁰ Otherwise the watercolour is of rather limited value

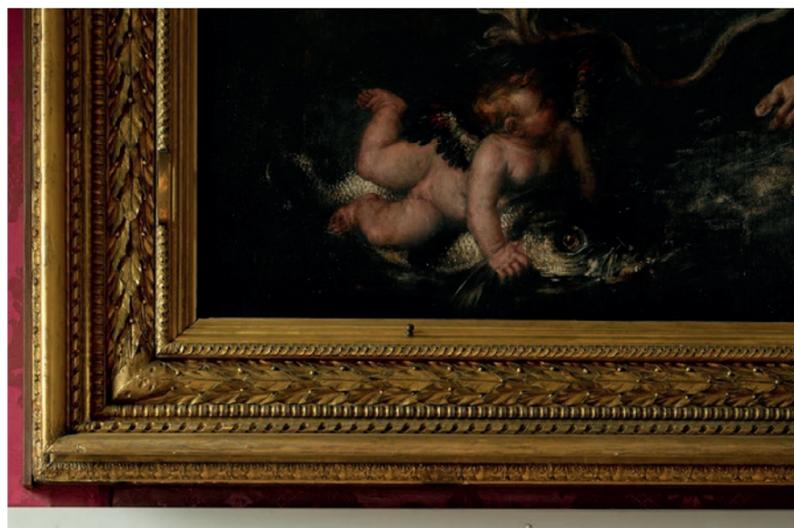
in identifying where particular works were hung, especially since it shows only a very partial view of the room. Nevertheless, it conveys an attractive impression of the Gallery as a comfortable, sunlit space, in which the central table is strewn with papers, and presents a casual display of some of the 4th Earl's choice pieces of porcelain. The gilt armchairs upholstered in crimson damask and the turkey carpets are mentioned in the probate inventory of 1831.⁹¹

The dark red walls seen in the watercolour, besides matching the crimson upholstery, provide an effective foil for the uniformly gilt frames of the paintings.

Fig. 24 / Drawing, here identified as a project for Picture Gallery at Cobham Hall, ca. 1804/1808, Rochester, Medway Archives. For key to the paintings, see note 87.

The frame of the “Reni” in the foreground differs from the rest in its ornate, Louis XV design, with swept rails, and it presumably came with the painting from a previous French owner.⁹² All the others seen here, however, are of the rectilinear, Carlo Maratta type of frame, standard in England during the period in which Darnley was active as a collector, and probably for the most part applied by him. Following their sale from Cobham Hall most of Darnley’s frames have now been replaced, but an outstanding surviving example is that of Titian’s *Europa* (fig. 26). This is unusually elaborate in its inclusion of a wide band of laurel wreath ornament in addition to several mouldings, and it was evidently designed to complement an Italian Old Master of exceptional prestige. Indeed, the pattern of leaves and seed heads closely resembles that designed by Wyatt for the framing of the openings in the Gallery, and suggests that he may also have played a part in designing frames for Darnley’s paintings. To judge from the watercolour, another wide and densely carved frame of a similar design was also made for Rubens’s *Tomyris*, another prestigious work from the Orléans collection, the paintings from which had been hurriedly sent to London without their frames.⁹³ The other frames shown on the walls in the watercolour appear to have

Fig. 26 / Detail of fig. 14, detail of the frame.



been rather simpler and narrower, while conforming to the same essential design, and lending an effect of unity to the collection. This is not to say, however, that any attempt was made to impose absolute uniformity, and in fact, later photographs of the Gallery (figs. 21, 22, 23) show a range of designs, including another Louis XV frame enclosing the Sassoferrato.

The early visual records provided by the drawing and the watercolour are complemented by the above-mentioned written descriptions, by Neale (1819), Guest (1833), Summerly (1843) and Waagen (1854). In his account of the improvements made to the interior of Cobham in the preceding thirty years, the draughtsman and antiquarian J. P. Neale writes:

A considerable collection of Pictures has been made, and placed for the most part in a Gallery which occupies a portion of the principal floor of the North Wing, being 136 feet in length and 24 in width, exclusive of two recesses in the centre of the room, in one of which is the magnificent picture of Danaë by Titian. There are also in the Gallery six other Pictures by the same great master. The Gallery is furnished with crimson, and contains four Fire-places with Marble Chimney-pieces of the same date as the house.

In the terminology of the time, the word “gallery” is often used synonymously with “collection”, and in the appended “Catalogue of Pictures in the Gallery at Cobham Hall”, Neale includes a number that were not in the Gallery proper but in other spaces, including the main staircase. Although he does not identify these different spaces, it is nevertheless clear that his list begins with those in the Picture Gallery, and that all the other principal Old Masters, in addition to the seven Titians, were from the beginning displayed there, and in the adjacent vestibules. From the fact, however, that his list begins with the thirteen paintings from the Orléans collection, it is equally clear that its order bears no relation to the actual hang.

At the end of his description Neale mentions that, with the exception of the private apartments in the south wing, the house “is open to strangers between the hours or two and four; and at all times to travellers, upon application, except on Sundays”. In his manuscript inventory of 1833 Guest confirms that the Picture Gallery was accessible to visitors, and states that his order follows that of the “catalogue” – presumably a printed handlist. He begins with Rubens’s *Tomyris* and the west vestibule, and implies that this space contained no less than twenty-five other paintings, some of them, such as Titian’s *Europa* and the four Veronese Allegories, also quite large. Guest then proceeds along the very long north wall, from west to east. He makes no clear distinction between the north and the east walls and the east vestibule, but he does specify what pictures were placed on the south wall, between the windows. The *Danaë* supposedly by Titian (see fig. 16) and “highly esteemed by the late earl” occupied a place of honour in the central, top-lit recess. Altogether the Gallery and its two vestibules contained seventy-eight paintings. Strangely missing from the list, either here or elsewhere at Cobham, is any mention of the Tintoretto, the Albani or the Lebrun. Guest does, however, say that Rosa’s *Regulus* was just one of two works left behind in Berkeley Square; and in the probate inventory of 1831 the Tintoretto is recorded as being at “Mr Segquier’s Country Seat”.⁹⁴ As has been mentioned above, Segquier was employed by Darnley in 1824 to bid on his behalf at auction; and presumably at the time of the latter’s death he had taken the Tintoretto to his house to restore it.

The most useful and detailed of all nineteenth-century accounts of Cobham is that published in 1843 by Felix Summerly – *nom de plume* of the Victorian polymath Henry Cole, who in the same year was to invent the Christmas Card, and who was later virtually to invent the South Kensington Museum. Summerly’s guide was designed to be visitor-friendly, and the author begins with detailed practical advice on how to get to Cobham from central London by train and steamer. With easier travel, and consequently a greater number of applications to see the house, visiting hours had

been restricted to just one day a week (Fridays), and Summerly gives information about how to obtain tickets and the price (now reduced from two shillings to one). He takes the visitor on a room-by-room tour of the rooms open to the public, but warns that some of the finest paintings listed by Neale were now “shewn only by special leave”. In 1843 the 6th Earl was still aged only seventeen, and these altered arrangements were no doubt introduced by his mother and the acting *châtelaine* of the house, Countess Emma. Summerly mentions that it was with her permission that he had compiled the catalogue of works appended to his tour. This is much more comprehensive and meticulous than the lists provided by Neale and Guest, and as well as listing the paintings by room, it records dimensions and inscriptions, and sometimes provenances. The author also provides brief descriptions of most of the compositions, and often, too, discriminating and forthright critical comments.

Summerly’s account shows that in the decade after the death of the 4th Earl, all his Old Masters were hung on the first floor of the north wing, with the exception of a few on the two staircases, one at either side of the central block. The most important to be relegated to the main staircase were the ex-Orléans mythological pair (which Summerly rightly recognizes as both by Pordenone, instead of one by Giorgione), and two very large paintings: a cartoon for a *Lion Hunt* by Rubens; and an *Entry of the Spanish Viceroy into Naples*, the attribution of which to Domenichino Summerly probably was also justifiably sceptical.⁹⁵ In the Picture Gallery the author first draws the reader-visitor’s attention to the theatrical effect of the *Tomyris*: “As soon as the door is opened, the eye is riveted by a large picture by Rubens at the further end of the gallery. It is under excellent light, separated by crimson silk draperies from all the surrounding pictures, and its effect is that of a magnificent *tableau vivant*.”⁹⁶ After this, however, the author decides to enumerate the highlights of the Gallery by artist, not according to the paintings’ positions on the walls, so it is not possible to assess properly the extent of the alterations of the



Fig. 27 / Cobham Hall, photograph of former Picture Gallery, 1958 (looking east).

hang since Guest compiled his inventory, or Rushout painted her watercolour. Now present was the *Regulus* (a subject that Summerly found “disgusting”), brought back from London to be reunited with the other three Rosas. By contrast, some forty paintings had by now been transferred from the Gallery to the adjoining Queen Elizabeth Room, which was not shown to the public “without special permission”.⁹⁷ They included, as Summerly had said, some of the finest in the collection: in addition to Titian’s *Europa* and the other large Venetian mythologies, the Carracci-Albani *Toilet of Venus*, Reni’s *Liberality and Modesty*, Poussin’s *Nymphs and Satyrs*, and a *Bacchanal* by Luca Giordano. It may be noted that the great majority of these subjects involved erotic lust and/or displays of nudity, and there can be little doubt that the paintings had been removed from the public gaze by Countess Emma in the interests of propriety. In marked contrast to her liberal-minded and hedonistic father-in-law, the countess was a person of puritanical piety, hostile to any indulgence in worldly pleasure.⁹⁸ Whereas scenes of violence and cruelty were apparently acceptable, those involving sensuality were not. It seems to have been she who sold Etty’s *Judgement of Paris* in 1848, on the eve of her son’s majority.

By the time of the visit by Waagen in 1851, the 6th Earl had come of age, and his mother had moved out. The director of the Berlin Museum – who was escorted by the Keeper of the National Gallery, Charles Eastlake – regretted that so many of the best Italian pictures were hung in a side room, while the Picture Gallery contained so many inferior works.⁹⁹ Although he was assured by his young host that this arrangement was soon to be remedied, it is not certain that it ever was, since the 6th Earl shared his mother’s evangelical leanings. In any case, there are no photographs or any other evidence to document any return to the Gallery of the *Europa*, which Waagen called “the pearl of the collection”. But as always, Waagen’s principal concern was with critical assessment and connoisseurship. He praises and

debunks selected works in equal measure; he notes the particular strength of the collection in Venetian and Flemish painting; and he mentions a couple of its principal sources (Vitturi, Orléans). He notes just one work that had been added by his host, a large, overtly pious altarpiece by Carlo Dolci, which had presumably been purchased on his trip to Florence in the previous year.¹⁰⁰ Although, therefore, Waagen inspected the collection when it was still in its full glory, his account conveys little sense of the Gallery as a space, and of the way in which the paintings were displayed.

This is also true, for different reasons, of the visual record left by another distinguished expert, George Scharf, who visited Cobham in November 1856. The visit was made in preparation for the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition of the following year, and for this purpose Scharf made quick sketches of eighteen potential loans. Of these, no less than twelve materialized, including – in addition to works of special patriotic interest such as the *Portrait of Queen Elizabeth with a Fan* – Titian’s *Europa* and all five of the other ex-Orléans Venetian mythologies, Titian’s *Man with a Blue Sleeve*, and Rubens’s *Tomyris* and *Triumph of Henri IV*. When following up his visit with a letter of 12 January 1857 to thank the earl for his generosity, Scharf wrote that he was especially gratified by these loans, since one of the aims of the exhibition was to reassemble as many works as possible from the former Orléans collection. Although he could hardly have asked his host to be even more generous, Scharf hinted that ideally he would also have liked to request one or two of the Darnley Salvator Rosas, given that he had found rather few “really authentic and good specimens” by him in other British collections.¹⁰¹ But even without the Rosas and other desirable Italian seventeenth-century paintings, the quantity and quality of the loans from the Darnley collection on display in Manchester brought it to the attention of an unprecedentedly wide general public as one of the outstanding British art collections of the period.

Unfortunately, the early written accounts of the contents of the Picture Gallery seem not to be complemented by any photographs dating from before the beginning of the twentieth century. The earliest known photograph, published in a *Country Life* volume of 1904 (see fig. 21),¹⁰² shows much the same arrangement as in the Rushout watercolour of seventy years earlier (see fig. 25), with Rubens's *Tomiris* dominating the far end of the room, and the walls and coving still painted in a dark colour, presumably red. But Canova's *Naiad* is now placed at the entrance to the north recess; Dolci's altarpiece in its opulently baroque frame now occupies the middle of the principal wall; and most of the smaller pictures have changed positions. Two more photographs (see figs. 22, 23) are unpublished, but apparently date from immediately after the First World War: electricity has now been installed, and the walls have been painted white. In the view looking west, the Rubens (to be sold in 1919), although in the dark and almost illegible, still appears in its Louis XIV frame. The painting prominently visible on the right is probably *Portia Consuming Burning Coals* attributed in the collection both to Romanelli, and, more plausibly, to Reni.¹⁰³ In the view looking east, the first two large paintings are clearly identifiable as the *Daughter of Herodias* (see fig. 7) and *Liberality and Modesty*, both by Reni; and the photograph helps confirm that they had always occupied these respective positions.

Although these two photographs precede the first big Darnley sale at Christie's in 1925, the Picture Gallery already looks somewhat neglected and depleted compared with its sumptuous appearance in the Rushout watercolour. Indeed, the long and sad epilogue to the creation of the Darnley collection had already begun much earlier. In 1862 the 6th Earl sent thirty-six paintings to auction, including four of his grandfather's relatively minor purchases from the

Orléans collection (the two Pordenones, and the two Riberas).¹⁰⁴ Many of the others are now difficult to identify, but they seem to have been of lesser artistic importance; relatively few seem to have been de-accessioned in the interests of propriety. After the agricultural slump of the 1870s, however, the earl came under greater pressure to sell, and his eye fell upon the six big Venetian mythologies – in part because the publicity surrounding the Manchester Treasures exhibition had much increased their market value, but probably also in part because their sensuous eroticism had never been to his taste anyway. When negotiating for the sale to the National Gallery of the Tintoretto and the four Veroneses in 1889, he wrote that he had been trying to dispose of them for years.¹⁰⁵ Six years later, when it became publicly known that Titian's *Europa* had become available, potential buyers such as the trustees of the National Gallery, and Wilhelm Bode of the Berlin Museum, found the earl awkward to deal with. But this was essentially because their offers were too low, and when Isabella Stewart Gardner was able to offer a much larger sum the painting went to Boston.¹⁰⁶

Private sales of individual masterpieces – such as Titian's *Man with a Blue Sleeve*, Van Dyck's *Lords John and Bernard Stuart*,¹⁰⁷ and Rubens's *Tomiris* – continued under the 7th and 8th Earls, and it was the latter who sent a large part of the collection to auction in 1925. Although a large number of items were bought in, including Rosa's *Regulus*, many others departed, including Titian's *Venus and Adonis* and the "Darnley" portrait of Queen Elizabeth. This sale was followed by the even larger one organized by Sotheby's on the Cobham Hall premises in 1957, soon before the sale of the house itself. The resultingly desolate appearance of the former Picture Gallery, retaining the two De Witt fireplaces and the early eighteenth-century Darnley state carriage, but stripped of its paintings, is recorded in a photograph of 1958 (fig. 27).



APPENDIX

Listed here are the Old Master paintings certainly or presumably acquired by the 4th Earl and retained by him at the time of his death in 1831. Not included are the various portraits and other paintings that he commissioned or bought from contemporary British artists. Likewise excluded are works that he had already re-sold before 1831, and works, mostly portraits, that he presumably inherited.

The present list is based on the following three sources:

- J. P. Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London: W. H. Reid, 1818-23), II (1819), (unpaginated) (abbreviated as **N**)
- Douglas Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, unpublished MS of 1833, Medway Archives Office, Rochester (U565/F27) (abbreviated as **G**, with Guest’s valuation)
- Felix Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London, to Erith, Rochester and Cobham in Kent* (London: George Bell, 1843), pp. 83-113 (abbreviated as **S**)

Also indicated, if known, is the source and date of the work’s acquisition by Darnley (abbreviated as **D**); the date of its sale from the collection (abbreviated as **1862**; **1925**; **1957**);* its present whereabouts, if known, and any change of attribution.

*The abbreviated dates refer to the following three sales: Christie’s, London, 12 July 1862; Christie’s, London, 1 May 1925; and Sotheby’s, Cobham Hall sale, 23 July 1957.

* * *

Albani, *Apollo expelled from Olympus*

N107; **G** --; **S**251.
1925, lot 5.

A version of the painting on copper of the same dimensions in the Louvre; perhaps identical with the canvas sold at Hampel, Munich, 30 March 2017, lot 253.

Anonymous, *Mary Magdalen* (small, on copper)

N43; **G**50 (ℒ50).

Anonymous Italian, *Esau and Jacob*

S61.
1862, lot 105 (Anon. Italian).
Perhaps already at Cobham in 1672; Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 22, suggested an attribution to Caravaggio. See note 14.

Anonymous Venetian (Paolo Veronese?), *Triumph of Bacchus*

N85; **G**79 (ℒ20); **S**151.

1862, lot 120.

Barocci (or Correggio?), *Virgin and Child*

N71; **G**64 (?) (as copy after Correggio) (ℒ50); **S**26.

D: Ex-Vitturi, bought from Slade, ca. 1791.

Borgognone, Two Battle Pieces

S58 and **S**66.

Now in a Private Collection.

Bril, *Landscape with Fishermen*

N84; **G**80 (ℒ25).

Carracci, Annibale, *Toilet of Venus*

N2; **G**9 (ℒ400); **S**240.

D: Ex-Orléans, acquired from Lord Berwick,

ca. 1800/10.

1925, lot 11.

Now Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (as Albani) (fig. 15).

Cignani, *Venus with Cupids* (oval)

N32; **G**18 (ℒ25); **S**?

1862, lot 106.

Colombel, *Christ Expelling the Moneylenders*

D: Bought Christie’s, London, 21 March 1806, lot 64.

1925, lot 90 (as Benjamin West).

Now Saint Louis Art Museum.

Colombel, *Christ Healing the Blind*

D: Bought Christie’s, London, 21 March 1806, lot 65.

1925, lot 91 (as Benjamin West).

Now Saint Louis Art Museum.

Correggio, “*La Zingarella*”

N-; **G**23 (ℒ2000).

D: Acquired through Guest after 1807.

1925, lot 13.

Almost certainly one of the many copies of the

painting in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte,

Naples.

Domenichino, *Solemn Entrance of Viceroy into Naples*

N110; **G**161.

1957, lot 322.

Domenichino, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*

1957, lot 334 (as Furini).

Presented for sale in 1796, lot 63, but bought in.

Domenichino, *David with the Head of Goliath*

1957, lot 335 (as Furini).

Presented for sale in 1796, lot 62, but bought in.

Giordano, *Adoration of the Shepherds*

N58; **G**56 (ℒ100); **S**4.

Giordano, *Bacchanal*

N97; **G**95 (ℒ200).

1862, lot 98.

Giordano, *Conversion of Saul*

N57; **G**65 (ℒ30).

Giorgione, *Milo of Croton*

N10; **G**85 (ℒ50); **S**156.

D: Bought at Orléans sale, 1798, lot 274.

1862, lot 93.

Now Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago (as

Pordenone). See note 51.

Giorgione, *Pompey’s Head Presented to Caesar*

N47; **G**42 (ℒ70); **S**28.

D: Evans sale, Christie’s, London, 29 May 1804, lot

33a, bought by ‘Howard’.

1925, lot 26.

Giulio Romano, *Cupid and Psyche* (small oval)

N19; **G**8 (on stone) (ℒ100).

Presented for sale at Christie’s, 8 May 1802, lot 61, but

bought in.

Guercino, *Head of Saint Peter*

N53; **G**67 (ℒ40).

Sold from the collection in the 1960s; Sotheby’s,

London, 5 July 2006, lot 47.

Guercino, *Samian Sibyl*

N82; **G**58 (ℒ250); **S**20.

Perhaps a version or copy of the painting now in the

Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, Bologna.

Guercino, *Self-Portrait with Brush and Easel*

S121.

Presumably a version of the composition known

from paintings in the Louvre and in the Schoeppler

collection, London.

Jordaens, *Man and Woman with a Parrot*

N35; **G**27 (ℒ250); **S**68.

1925, lot 38.

Since 1990 in the Liechtenstein Princely collections,

Vaduz (fig. 18)

Jordaens, *Pomona*

N34; **G**76 (ℒ150); **S**40.

1925, lot 39.

Le Brun, *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs*

N108; **S**257.

1925, lot 58 (as Poussin).

Now National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Maratti, *Vestal Tuccia*

N76; **G**60 (ℒ50); **S**22.

1957, lot 301.

Presumably a version or copy of the painting formerly

in the Seafield collection and sold at Christie’s, London,

8 July 1994, lot 36.

Mola, *Boys* (small)

N104.

Mola, *Infant Satyrs* (small)

N105; **G**108-09.

Murillo, *Immaculate Conception*

N60; **G**53 (ℒ40); **S**17.

Parmigianino, *Head of Saint John the Baptist*

N54; **G**40 (ℒ60).

1957, lot 309 (?) (as “Italian School”; after the

altarpiece in the National Gallery, London).

Pietro da Cortona, *Sacrifice* (sketch)

N111.

Pordenone, *Hercules and Achelous*

N11; **G**86 (ℒ50); **S**158.

D: Bought at Orléans sale, 1798, lot 147.

1862, lot 90. See note 51.

Poussin, *Cupids* (small study)

N102.

Poussin, *Saving of Infant Pyrrhus*

N27; **G**13 (ℒ100).

1925, lot 59.

Recognized by Waagen as a version or copy of the

painting in the Louvre.

Poussin, *Dance to the Music of Time*

N87; **G**84 (ℒ50); **S**155.

1862, lot 121.

Already recognized in Darnley’s day as a copy of the

painting now in the Wallace Collection, London.

Poussin, *Mercury and Battus* (small study)

N103; ?

Poussin, *Nymphs and Satyrs*

N28; **G**10 (ℒ60); **S**253.

D: Ex-Lansdowne.

1925, lot 60; anonymous sale, Christie’s, 20 July 1956, lot 50.

A copy of the painting in the Gemäldegalerie Alte

Meister, Kassel. See note 35.

Poussin, *Cupid kissing a Nymph*

N29; **G**12 (ℒ60); **S**272.

D: Ex-Lansdowne; acquired after 1806.

1925, lot 61.

With Wildenstein, New York, in 1966. See note 35.

Raphael, *Golden Gate* (copy)

N81; **D**61 (ℒ20).

Raphael (school; Giulio Romano?), *Venus and Minerva*

N101.

Raphael, *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (copy)

N51; **G**39 (ℒ10).

D: Bought at Purling sale, 17 February 1801, lot 84.

1925 lot 63; **1957**, lot 311.

Raphael, *Transfiguration* (old copy)

N52; **G**68 (ℒ200).

Still at Cobham.

Régnier, Nicolas, *Saint Mary Magdalen Reading*

N59; **G**52 (ℒ300); **S**16.

D: Ex-Vitturi, bought from Slade, ca. 1791.

1957, lot 329 (as “G. Franceschini”).

Now Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (as

Régnier).

Reni, Guido, *Allegory of Fortune* (small)

N26; **G**14 (ℒ50).

Probably a copy or one of the various versions either of

Fortune with a Purse of Fortune with a Crown.

Reni, Guido, *Allegory of the World, the Flesh and the Devil*

N69; **G**78 (ℒ150).

1862, lot 95.

Reni, Guido, *Aurora*

N100; **G**124 (ℒ200).

1957, lot 317.

Copy of the fresco in the Casino Pallavicini Rospigliosi,

Rome.

Reni, Guido, *Daughter of Herodias*

N15; **G**29 (ℒ1500); **S**72.

D: Ex-Colonna.

1957, lot 318.

Now Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 7).

Reni, Guido, *Female Head with a Turban*

N61; **G**51 (ℒ25); **S**15.

Perhaps a version or copy of the painting now in the

Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Reni, Guido, *Head of Hercules*

N30; **G**4 (oval) (ℒ60).

1957, lot 331 (as Italian School).

Reni, Guido, *Head of Mary Magdalen*

N65; **G**55 (ℒ70); **S**7.

1957, lot 307.

Reni, Guido, *Head of Saint Francis*

N70; **G**44 (ℒ25).

Reni, Guido, *Judas Betraying Christ*

N75; **G**62 (ℒ400); **S**25 (see fig. 19).

D: Bought before 1808.

Reni, Guido, *Liberality and Modesty* (large)

N109; **G**30 (ℒ1500); **S**242.

1957, lot 316.

A copy of the painting formerly at Althorp, now in a

private collection, New York.

Reni, Guido, *Liberality and Modesty* (small)

N50; **G**69 (ℒ150).

Reni, Guido, *Massacre of the Innocents* (copy of the painting in

the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)

N44; **G**35 (ℒ600); **S**77.

D: Ex-Reynolds.

1957, lot 324.

Reni, Guido, *Old Head*

N78; **G**45 (ℒ20); **S**10.

Reni, Guido, *Self-Portrait*

N66; **G**54 (ℒ60); **S**19.

Reni, Guido, Small Female Head

N22; **G**126 (ℒ25)

Reni, Guido, *Saint Teresa*

Snyders, *Stag Hunt*

N94; S166.
D: Bought at Bridgewater sale, 12 May 1802, lot 34.
1925, lot 76.

Snyders, *Stags' Heads*

N86; G83 (£50).
1862, lot 118.

Tintoretto, *Origin of the Milky Way*

N3; F243.
D: Ex-Orléans, bought from Michael Bryan, ca. 1800. Sold to the National Gallery, London, in 1889 (fig. 12).
Titian (or Schiavone?), *Flagellation*
N112; G47 (£300); S2.
D: Probably the painting bought at Christie's, 29 March 1819, lot 90, as Schiavone.
1925, lot 75 (as Schiavone). See note 74.

Titian, *Danaë*

N56; G72 (£4000); S233.
D: Otley sale, 16 May 1801, lot 49.
1925, lot 83.
To judge from the copy by Bone (fig. 16) a seventeenth-century pastiche.

Titian, *Head of Christ (Salvator Mundi)*

N68; G46 (£250); S9.
D: Ex-Ruzzini and Vitturi. Bought from Slade, ca. 1791.
1925, lot 80, bought in; 1957, lot 327, bought in. See note 43.

Titian, *Portrait of a Man ("Ariosto")*

N16; G7 (£400); S57.
D: Probably acquired ca. 1790/95 (see note 46). Sold through Donaldson to the National Gallery, London, in 1904 (fig. 9).

Titian, *Rape of Europa*

N8; G24 (£1500); S260.
D: Ex-Orléans, acquired from Lord Berwick, ca. 1800/10; lent by Darnley to the British Institution, 1816. Sold to Isabella Stewart Gardner, 1896 (see note 1) (fig. 14).

Titian, *Self-Portrait with a Friend ("Francesco del Mosaico", or Francesco Zuccato)*

N18; G3 (£250); S51.
D: Ex-Ruzzini and Vitturi. Bought from Slade, ca. 1791.
1925, lot 82.
Bonham's, 4 December 2013, lot 8.

Titian, *Venus and Adonis*

N42; G350 (£350); S265.
D: Ex-Mariscotti, Rome, bought from Buchanan, soon after 1804 (see note 67).
1925, lot 79.
Now Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 17).

Titian, *Venus and Cupid with a Mirror*

N9; G33 (£70); S239.
D: Bought at Orléans sale, 1798, lot 84.
1925, lot 61 (fig. 11).

Turchi (Alessandro Veronese), *Diana and Endymion* (on stone)

N46; G37 (£20); S91.
D: Bought at Christie's, 24 February 1804, lot 44 (as Lodovico Carracci). 1862, lot 125 (as "Carracci").

Turchi (Alessandro Veronese), *Lot and his Daughters* (on stone)

N45; G36 (£35); S247.

D: Bought at Christie's, 24 February 1804, lot 45 (as Lodovico Carracci).

Van Dyck, *Cupids* (sketch)

N88; G87 (£250).
1862, lot 122.

Van Dyck, *Portrait of Inigo Jones*

N23; G24 (£60).
D: Bought from Reynolds, 1791.
1925, lot 88; 1957, lot 308 (an oval).
Probably after Van Voerst's engraving after Van Dyck.

Veronese, Four *Allegories of Love*

N4-7; G, 16, 19, 26 (£500); S235-38.
D: Ex-Orléans, bought from Michael Bryan, ca. 1800. Sold to the National Gallery, London, in 1889 (fig. 13).

Veronese, *Small Allegory*

N25; G11 (-).



NOTES

- Of the many friends and colleagues who have kindly helped me with different aspects of this essay, I would like to express particular gratitude to Ivo and Peta Darnley, Sylvia Hammond, Timothy Newbery, Nicholas Penny, and Francis Russell.
- I refer to the recent, much disrupted exhibition (*Titian. Love, Desire, Death*) at the National Gallery in 2020-2021. For the circumstances of the sale of the *Europa* by the 6th Earl of Darnley through Colnaghi to Isabella Stewart Gardner, see Jeremy Howard, "Titian's *Rape of Europa*: its reception in Britain and sale to America," in *The Reception of Titian in Britain from Reynolds to Ruskin*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 189-201.
 - For an illuminating sketch of Darnley as a collector, see Nicholas Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II: Venice 1540-1600* (London: National Gallery Company, 2008), pp. 448-452.
 - J. P. Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London: W. H. Reid, 1818-23), II (1819), (unpaginated).
 - Felix Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London, to Erith, Rochester and Cobham in Kent* (London: George Bell, 1843), pp. 83-113.
 - Inventory of the household furniture, books, paintings, plate, linen, china & glass, wines, horses, carriages and effects, late the property of the Right Hon. Earl Darnley, at Cobham Hall in the county of Kent taken and valued for the purpose of probate, June 10th and following days, 1831*, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, MS 86.00.9. The list of paintings in this document (ff. 137v-141v) is, however, less useful than those in the other sources because of the lack of any indication of dimensions, valuations or provenance.
 - Douglas Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, unpublished MS of 1833, Medway Archives Office, Rochester (U565/F27).
 - G. F. Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854), III, pp. 17-26. Five years later, at the beginning of November 1856, George Scharf visited Cobham as part of his preparations for the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition and made sketches of eighteen paintings in the collection (see his "Notes and Sketches on Works of Art," Sketchbook no. 44, National Portrait Gallery, London, ff. 25-32; <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw28578/Scharf-Sketchbook-44>, accessed 28 July 2021). All sketches, however, are of relatively well-known works, and they are not particularly useful for identification purposes.
 - For the dearth of Darnley family records, see Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall* (London: Cassell, 1959), pp. 3-4, 295, 336.
 - For Darnley's Bligh, Stuart, and Hyde ancestors, see Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 84-192.
 - The two portraits of the three younger brothers of the Duke of Richmond and Lennox, all three of whom were killed in the Civil War, are already recorded at Cobham in 1672: see Scott Robertson, "Furniture and Pictures at Cobham Hall in 1672," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 17 (1887): pp. 392-408 (esp. pp. 393, 405).
 - The portraits of Clarendon and Mary are recorded at Cobham by Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen*, II (1819), nos. 99, 55; Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, nos. 97, 98 (or 70); Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, nos. 171, 33; Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, pp. 24-25. The portrait of Mary is also likely to be the one recorded in the inventory of 1672 (Robertson, "Furniture and Pictures at Cobham Hall in 1672," p. 402). Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, pp. 87-88, describes the portrait in great detail, and points out that the composition corresponds to that in the Royal Collection (now in the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh). It is therefore probably identical with the portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots that remains at Cobham at the foot of the main staircase. Kneller's portrait of Theodosia Hyde also remains at Cobham, in the former Picture Gallery.
 - The website of the National Gallery of Art (<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.46154.html#provenance>; accessed 28 July 2021) gives 1851 as the earliest record of the portrait at Cobham, but it was recorded there in 1843 by Summerly (*Day Excursions out of London*, no. 100), and before that in 1833 by Guest (*Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 99). Since it appears to be an unlikely acquisition by the 4th Earl, it may be assumed to have been inherited from his grandmother Theodosia; it does not, however, appear in the Cobham inventory of 1672 published by Robertson, "Furniture and Pictures at Cobham Hall in 1672." Elizabeth Goldring, "The Earl of Leicester and Portraits of the duc d'Alençon," *Burlington Magazine* 146 (2004): p. 110, suggests that the painting is identical with one recorded at Wanstead before 1588, but there is no record of when and how it reached Cobham.
 - Like the *Duke of Alençon* (see previous note), these are recorded by Summerly (*Day Excursions out of London*, nos. 102, 110), and are probably identifiable with those listed by Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, nos. 100 and 101 (as Philip IV of Spain and Queen Elizabeth). But, also like the *Duke of Alençon*, they are not recorded in the Cobham inventory of 1672.
 - Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 22; for the archival reference, see Robertson, "Furniture and Pictures at Cobham Hall in 1672," no. 47, p. 402.
 - Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 166; John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 99-100.
 - For the building history of Cobham, see John Newman, *West Kent and the Weald*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 231-236. For the work undertaken by the 3rd Earl, see Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 168-188; and especially John Cornforth, "Cobham Hall, Kent," *Country Life*, 24 February 1983, pp. 448-451; *Country Life*, 3 March 1983, pp. 508-511; and *Country Life*, 10 March 1983, pp. 568-571.
 - David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds. A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), no. 194, p. 93.
 - The fullest biography of the 4th Earl remains the account by Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 193-390.
 - The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, 16 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978-1984), VI, p. 2263 (10 March 1804).
 - Letters of a Dead Man. Prince Herrmann von Pückler-Muskau*, edited and translated by Linda B. Parshall (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016), p. 165.
 - Elizabeth Cust and Evelyn G. Pelham, *Edward, Fifth Earl of Darnley and Emma Parnell, his Wife* (Leeds: Richard Jackson, 1913), pp. 217-218.
 - Cust and Pelham, *Edward, Fifth Earl of Darnley*, pp. 320-321. The four paintings are now at the Ringling Museum, Sarasota.
 - For the work undertaken by the 4th Earl at Cobham, see Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 285-289; Cornforth, "Cobham Hall, Kent," p. 510; John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt. Architect to George III* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 328.
 - Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 281, 296; Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, p. 277.
 - Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, p. 277.
 - Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 297.
 - The "Cobham Hall Hadrian" was recently sold at Christie's, New York, 29 October 2019, lot 1023.
 - Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 336. Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 450, mentions a second visit to Italy in about 1818.
 - Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 299. The china displayed in the Picture Gallery is itemized in the probate inventory of 1831 (see above, note 5), ff. 94r-v.
 - For differing interpretations see respectively Roger Bowdler, "Cobham Hall, Kent", *Country Life* 14 (2005): pp. 100-105 (p. 104); Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 297.
 - Hugh Brigstocke, *William Buchanan and the 19th-Century Art Trade* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1982), pp. 231-232.
 - Without explicitly dismissing them as copies, both Summerly and Waagen noted that a number of Darnley's paintings were "versions" of well-known compositions in other collections. Certain others (for example, by Raphael, Parmigianino, Reni and Poussin) were already accepted as copies.
 - For this aspect of Darnley's taste, see Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 448.
 - Parshall, *Letters of a Dead Man*, p. 164.
 - Nymph, Satyr, Faun and Cupids and Venus and Cupid with a Man Offering Fruit*. Of similar dimensions and subjects,



- both had previously been in the Lansdowne collection, and in the Darnley collection they were regarded as a pair. But they had different histories, and while the latter is accepted as an autograph original, the former was a copy. See Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin: Critical Catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1966), no. 188, p. 132, and no. 198c, p. 137, respectively. They may be identical with two *Bacchanals* by Poussin formerly in the Lansdowne collection, and sold at Hoggart and Phillips, London, 22 May 1810, lot 78 (names of seller and buyer unrecorded).
36. Garlick and Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington, V* (1925), p. 1781.
37. Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 22. For the 1672 inventory, see Robertson, “Furniture and Pictures at Cobham Hall in 1672,” no. 47, p. 402.
38. Thomas Gainsborough, *4th Earl of Darnley* (1785; Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art); Joshua Reynolds, *4th Earl of Darnley* (bust-length portrait of 1787 at Eton College; full-length portrait of 1789, untraced); Joshua Reynolds, *Miss Frances Harris with a Dog* (1789; formerly Toledo Museum of Art, sold at Sotheby’s, New York, 25 January 2007, lot 67).
39. John Hoppner, *Ladies Sarah and Catherine Bligh* (the 4th Earl’s sisters) (ca. 1790, Frick Collection, New York); *Countess of Darnley and Lady Catherine Bligh* (the 4th Earl’s wife and eldest daughter) (ca. 1794; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston); Thomas Phillips, *4th Earl of Darnley* (fig. 1). Hoppner’s portrait of the Countess and Lady Catherine (mistakenly called Elizabeth, a younger daughter born in 1800, on the Museum’s website) may be the one that the artist went to Cobham to paint in October 1794, as recorded in Farington’s Diary (Garlick and Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, I, [1978], p. 248).
40. For this composition, see Martin Postle in Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, no. 2151, p. 561; Darnley’s version is currently untraced.
41. The acquisition of the Rosa by Darnley in Rome (from an unknown collection) is mentioned in a letter of 5 January 1795 from Charles Greville in London to Sir William Hamilton in Naples: see *Catalogue of the Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison*, 2nd series: *The Hamilton & Nelson Papers*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for private circulation, 1882-1893), I (1892), no. 252, p. 199. The picture was seen and described by Greville after it had been consigned by Darnley to the dealer Benjamin Vandergucht (who accidentally drowned in September 1794); as emerges from the record of the Vandergucht sale at Christie’s, London, 11 March 1796, lot 28. It represented the Temptation of Saint Anthony Abbot, and is perhaps identical with the painting now in the Pinacoteca Rambaldi, San Remo. This was not, therefore, the *Death of Regulus* or any of the other Rosas subsequently retained in the collection.
42. William Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, 2 vols. (London: Ackermann, 1824), I (1824), pp. 320-334; Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 448. The date of ca. 1791 for Darnley’s acquisition of the Vitturi pictures is deduced from Buchanan’s report that Slade owned them for fifteen years before selling

- them on. For Bartolomeo Vitturi (1719-1776) and his collection, see Francesca Pitacco in *Il Collezionismo d’Arte a Venezia: il Settecento*, eds. Linda Borean and Stefania Mason (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), pp. 312-314. Many of Vitturi’s most important paintings had already been sold before his death.
43. For the former, see most recently Paul Joannides, “...la faccia bella, dolce e delicata tanto quanto la saprete fare”: Titian’s paintings of the *Salvator Mundi* and *Temptation of Christ* and their patrons,” *Colnaghi Studies Journal* 4 (2019): pp. 82-95 (pp. 84, 94) (calling it a damaged masterpiece); for the latter see Giorgio Tagliaferro and Bernard Aikema, *Le Botteghe di Tiziano* (Florence: Alinari, 2009), p. 209 (with a tentative attribution to Titian’s son Orazio). The other two retained pictures were respectively by Régnier and attributed to Barocci.
44. Orléans sale, London, April 1793, lot 142.
45. Wingfield-Stratford, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, p. 297. The paintings by Rubens are described as “Heads”, and one of them is almost certainly the *Old Woman* now in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa: see Christopher Etheridge and Stephen Gritt, “Rubens, Van Dyck, and Jordaens: Paintings from the Collection of the National Gallery of Canada,” *National Gallery of Canada Review* 7 (2016): pp. 1-80 (pp. 10-14).
46. Burton Fredericksen, “Titian’s Barbarigo Portrait and Lord Darnley,” *Burlington Magazine* 155 (2013): pp. 16-18.
47. Reynolds sale, Christie’s, London, 16 March 1795, lot 92. The catalogue says that it had belonged to King James – presumably James II – not King Charles; in any case, this is not the version formerly in the Kisters collection, that was sold at Sotheby’s, New York, 1 February 2018, lot 27.
48. The sale catalogue describes the paintings as coming from “A Nobleman’s Seat in the Country”; according to the auctioneer’s copy used by the Getty Provenance Index this unnamed nobleman was Darnley.
49. Lots 62-63. Although they probably correspond to lots 335-336 in the 1925 sale, as works by Furini, they are not listed in any of the other sources (Neale, Guest, Summerly, Waagen) used to compile the present Appendix, perhaps because they were not kept at Cobham, or because they were hung in a secondary space not visited by these writers.
50. Orléans sale, London, 26 December 1798, lots 6, 274, 147, 201, 222, 84.
51. The separate attributions of two of the paintings to Giorgione and Pordenone were inherited from the Orléans collection. But Summerly (*Day Excursions out of London*, no. 156) thought that the “Giorgione” appeared to be later; and in fact, the two are almost certainly by Pordenone. See Charles Cohen, *The Art of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), II, pp. 703-709. The two “Riberas” of *Democritus* and *Heracitus* (9 foot 7 inches by 6 foot 4 inches each) were engraved as such in volume II of *Galerie du Palais-Royal*, 3 vols. (Paris: J. Couché et Bouilliard, 1786-1808), but Waagen (*Treasures of Art*, p. 23) dismissed them as bad paintings of the Neapolitan school. They are currently untraced.

52. Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 156 (located in the family’s private apartments); Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, no. 266; sold at Christie’s, London, 12 July 1862, lot 112 (as “Venus with the Mirror, after Titian”).
53. Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, pp. 162, 425.
54. For Berwick as a collector, see Alastair Laing, *In Trust for the Nation: Paintings from National Trust Houses* (London: The National Trust, 1995), p. 225.
55. Howard, “Titian’s *Rape of Europa*,” p. 190.
56. Again the contents are described as the property of “a nobleman, brought from his Seat in Kent”. For the identification of this nobleman as Darnley and a discussion of the circumstances of the sale, see Burton Fredericksen in the Getty Provenance Index (sales catalog Br-108).
57. Bridgewater sale, Cox, Burrell, and Foster, London, 12 May 1802, lot 34. The dimensions are given as 81 by 133 inches in the catalogue of the Darnley sale of 1925, lot 76.
58. Purling sale, White, London, 17 February 1801, lot 84.
59. Otle sale, Christie’s, London, 16 May 1801, lot 49, bought by Birch. At the same sale Darnley bought Poussin’s *Sacrifice of Noah* (lot 48), now at Tatton Park and attributed to a follower. This was re-sold at Christie’s on 22 May 1824, and Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, II, p. 30, already records it in the collection of Sir Mark Masterman Sykes (1771-1823).
60. See respectively Christie’s, 24 February 1804, lots 44-45; Farebrother, London, 29 May 1804, lot 33a; Greenwood, London, 7 June 1804, lot 1. In the twentieth century the “Giorgione” has usually been attributed to Palma Vecchio, but it is catalogued as “Venetian School” by Philip Rylands, *Palma Vecchio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 294.
61. Hulse sale, Christie’s, London, 21-22 March 1806, lots 33, 58, 64 and 65.
62. Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, pp. 1036-1037.
63. The claim is repeated by Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, II, p. 30.
64. The version that appeared at Sotheby’s, London, 27 April 2016, lot 777, was painted for the Marquess of Lansdowne, but Bone’s original is recorded by Guest (*Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 130) in the private apartments at Cobham. For Bone’s preparatory drawing, see Richard Walker, “Henry Bone’s Pencil Drawings in the National Portrait Gallery,” *Walpole Society* 61 (1999): pp. 305-367 (no. 672, p. 359).
65. Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 19.
66. Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, pp. 449, 451 n. 22.
67. Buchanan, *Memoirs of Painting*, I, p. 123; II, pp. 153-154. See also the references to the painting in his correspondence with Irvine in April and July 1805: Brigstocke, *William Buchanan*, pp. 395, 411-412.
68. Garlick and Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, XIV (1984), p. 4848.
69. Lothar Sickel, “Angelo Bonelli (c. 1760-1827): An Italian Art Dealer in London and his Partnership with John Udney Junior,” *Walpole Society* 80 (2018): pp. 262-348 (pp. 267, 283).

70. Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, pp. 75-76; Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 22. Timothy Newbery dates the Morland frame seen in fig 23 to ca. 1795, implying that the painting had reached London by this date.
71. Sickel, “Angelo Bonelli,” pp. 326, nos. 23-24, and 264 respectively.
72. Guest, *Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 23.
73. Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, pp. 450, 452 n. 43.
74. Christie’s, 29 March 1819, lot 90, as Schiavone. Neale (*Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen*, no. 112) and Summerly (*Day Excursions out of London*, no. 2) note the attribution to Schiavone, but they and Guest (*Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 47) follow Darnley’s preference for Titian. Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, pp. 19-20, considered it to be a good Schiavone, and noted its compositional dependence on Sebastiano del Piombo’s mural in San Pietro in Montorio in Rome. The painting, which was perhaps by neither Titian nor Schiavone, is now lost or unrecognized. It may be pointed out that an otherwise unknown *Flagellation* attributed to Titian already belonged to Darnley by ca. 1804/08 (see below, note 87; fig. 24).
75. John Goldsmith Phillips, “Canova’s Reclining Naiad,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 29 (1970): pp. 1-10.
76. Still recorded in the collection by Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, p. 23, but now untraced. Possibly made in preparation for the now lost painting for Philip IV of Spain, for which see Arnout Balis, *Rubens Hunting Scenes. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* 18-2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1986), p. 199.
77. The present whereabouts of neither of these Rosas is known; the *Jason* is not the version now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal. Caterina Volpi, *Salvator Rosa* (Rome: Ugo Bozzi, 2014), no. 284, gives the pre-Darnley provenance of the *Orion*, like that of the *Regulus*, as the Colonna collection in Rome, but provides no source for this information. Unlike the *Regulus* and Reni’s *Daughter of Herodias*, the *Orion* is not mentioned in the catalogue of the Colonna collection of 1783.
78. Edward Wedlake Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, VII (London: Thomas Maiden, 1808), p. 604. The painting, almost certainly not by Reni, is untraced, but is known though the copy by Bone. For this see Walker, “Henry Bone’s Pencil Drawings,” no. 655, p. 357.
79. Between 1815 and 1829 he lent thirty-three of his paintings to the British Institution, including five in 1816. See the lists in Algernon Graves, *A Century of Loan Exhibitions 1813-1912*, 5 vols. (London: A. Graves, 1913-1915).
80. Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 360-361; Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 450.
81. Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Etty, R.A.*, 2 vols. (London: David Bogue, 1855), I, pp. 233-235.
82. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, VII, pp. 603-604.
83. According to Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, pp. 449, 451 n. 25, the florid Louis XV-style frame that today surrounds the life-size, digital photograph of the Van Dyck above the fireplace is the same “Massive richly carved Frame”

- recorded by Guest in 1833 (*Catalogue of Pictures at Cobham*, no. 96) as surrounding the original. But as Timothy Newbery kindly informs me, the present frame dates from ca. 1910 – the date, in other words, when the Van Dyck was sold from the collection and the copy was installed in its place.
84. The fullest account is that of Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, pp. 71-72, 97-102. Other works he lists include Pantoja de la Cruz’s portraits of Philip III of Spain and his queen, the anonymous French *Duc d’Alençon*, and portraits of various other kings, queens, noblemen, philosophers and poets, many of them admitted to be copies.
85. Newman, *West Kent and the Weald*, p. 235.
86. For this aspect of country house Picture Galleries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see David Adshead, “The Architectural Evolution of Picture and Sculpture Galleries in British Country Houses,” *Art and the Country House*, 20 November 2020: <https://doi.org/10.17658/ACH/TE578> (accessed 28 July 2021).
87. Medway Archives, Rochester, U565/P27. The paintings are identified on the plan as follows: clockwise, beginning with the west wall, and from upper to lower tiers. West wall. Padovanino; Reni (oval); “Giorgione”, *Head of Pompey*; Rubens, *Tommyris* (see fig. 5); Rubens (oval). North wall, west of the fireplace: Rubens, *Lion Hunt* (cartoon). Between the fireplaces: Murillo, *Immaculate Conception*; Van Dyck, *Portrait of Inigo Jones*; Reni, *Self-Portrait*; Reni, *Portia*; Reni, *Saint Francis*; Rubens, *Head of Old Woman*; Spagnoletto (Ribera), *Saint Jerome*; Rubens, “Part of Whitehall ceiling chapel”; Reni, *Mary Magdalen*; “Reni”, *Judas Betraying Christ* (see fig. 19); Sassoferrato, *Praying Virgin*. North wall, east of the fireplace: Reynolds, *Calling of Samuel*; Jordaens; Giordano, *Adoration of the Shepherds*; Titian, *Self-Portrait with a Friend*; “Titian”, *Flagellation*; School of Rubens; Titian, “*Ariosto*” (see fig. 9); Rosa, *Pythagoras* (fig. 8). East wall: Padovanino, *Leda*; Reni, *Susannah*; Reni, *Massacre of the Innocents*; Albani, *Danaë*. South (window) wall: “Lucas van Leyden, *Calvin*”; Rubens; “Holbein, *Luther*”; Maratti, *Vestal Tuccia*; Van Dyck, *Strafford and Secretary* (old copy); Rosa, *Orion*; Reni, *Saint Teresa*; Raphael, *Transfiguration* (old copy); a small Poussin and a small Mola; Rubens; a small Poussin and a small Mola. (For further details of most of them, see Appendix)
88. Cust and Pelham, *Edward, Fifth Earl of Darnley*, p. 437. The watercolour was sold from the Northwick Park collection at Christie’s, London, 25 May 1965, lot 211, and again at Tennant’s, Leyburn, 25 November 2005, lot 810. I am grateful to Charlotte Conboy of Tennant’s for providing the image in fig. 25.
89. Walker, “Henry Bone’s Pencil Drawings,” no. 655, p. 357.
90. For the *Mary, Queen of Scots*, see above, note 11.
91. MS inventory of 1831 (see above, note 5), ff. 47v-49v; Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 450. Not shown, however, in the watercolour is the “Harpichord in a walnut tree case” listed in the inventory.
92. For the following discussion of the frames represented in the watercolour I am indebted to the observations of Timothy Newbery.
93. Peter Humfrey, *The Stafford Gallery: The Greatest Art*

- Collection of Regency London* (Norwich: Unicorn Press, 2019), p. 74. By the time of the photograph of the Picture Gallery, made by Charles Latham and published in *In English Homes*, volume 1, introduction by H. Avray Tipping (London: Country Life, 1904), p. XI (see fig. 21), the *Tommyris* had been reframed in a mid-nineteenth-century Louis XIV-style frame.
94. MS inventory of 1831 (see above, note 5), f. 141v.
95. Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, pp. 69-71.
96. Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, p. 73.
97. Summerly, *Day Excursions out of London*, pp. 106, 113. In the MS inventory of 1831 (see above, note 5), no paintings are recorded hanging in the Queen Elizabeth Room, and even the furniture (f. 50r) was very sparse.
98. Stratford-Wingfield, *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, pp. 353-356, 373-375, 417-422.
99. Waagen, *Treasures of Art*, III, pp. 17-26.
100. For the Dolci, cut into fragments after its sale at Sotheby’s in 1957, see Charles McCorquodale, “Some unpublished works by Carlo Dolci,” *Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979): pp. 140-150. For the 6th Earl’s continental tour in 1850, see Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 450.
101. Philip Cottrell, “Introduction to Scharf’s Sketchbook no. 44,” National Portrait Gallery, London: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw285578/Scharf-Sketchbook-44> (accessed 28 July 2021). For the wider context, see Elizabeth Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public* (Farnham and Burlington VT: Routledge, 2011).
102. Latham, *In English Homes*, p. XI.
103. The *Portia* already appears on the diagram of ca. 1804/08 (see fig. 24; note 87) as by Reni; Neale and Guest list it as by Romanelli; Summerly lists it as by either Romanelli or Reni. It was sent for sale in 1862 (lot 101, as Romanelli), but according to the annotated sale catalogue at Christie’s, it failed to reach the reserve price of 40 guineas. It is very likely, therefore, to correspond to a painting that appears in the Sotheby’s Cobham Hall sale catalogue of 1957 as lot 347, an otherwise unrecorded *Cleopatra* (attributed simply to “Italian School”, 73 1/2 x 56 inches). These dimensions correspond closely to those given by Summerly for the *Portia* (6 foot 3 by 4 foot 8). Reni (or one of his followers) seems a more likely author than Romanelli. As pointed out to me by Aidan Weston-Lewis, the heroine’s pose is very similar to that of Potiphar’s wife in Reni’s painting in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; it is also close to that of Venus in the *Venus and Adonis* in the Wellington Collection at Apsley House, traditionally attributed to Reni’s follower Carlo Cignani, and now more usually to an even closer follower, Michele Desubleo.
104. Christie’s, London, 12 July 1862, lots 89 to 128.
105. Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 425.
106. Howard, “Titian’s *Rape of Europa*”. Of the £20,000 paid by Gardner, Darnley received £14,000.
107. Both sold in 1904 to the dealer Sir George Donaldson. See Penny, *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume II*, p. 451.

A gamechanger for Giorgione¹

JAYNIE ANDERSON

The surprising discovery of a drawing by Giorgione, accompanied by an inscription, giving the date of his death (figs. 1-3), on the last page of an edition of Dante's *Commedia* (*Divine Comedy*; 1497) in the University Library, Sydney published for the first time in 2019,² has stimulated considerable discussion.³ This article considers some significant questions posed by the find and records something of recent discussions following lectures in London and Venice. As predicted by Salvatore Settis in his Linbury lecture at the National Gallery, London in April 2021, it may take a long time to understand the repercussions of the Sydney discovery, that Settis considered to be as game changing for Venetian art as was the discovery that ancient Greek sculpture was polychrome.⁴ Here is the inscription that aroused curiosity:

A dì 17 setenbrio morì Zorzo(n) da Castelo franco de peste/
fintore excelentissimo da peste in Venezia de/
anni 36 & requiese in pace/

And in translation:

On the day of 17 September, Giorgione of Castelfranco, a very excellent artist died of the plague in Venice at the age of 36 and he rests in peace.

Although no one in the contested world of Giorgione studies has questioned the authenticity of the drawing on the last page of the *Commedia*, the inscription has been challenged. In a newspaper article, one reaction to the discovery was to consider whether

the inscription might be a forgery.⁵ Certain linguistic expressions of place names were questioned, such as the spelling of “Venezia” and “Castelo Franco”, as being uncharacteristic of the Veneto in the first decade of the sixteenth century. In an article that extensively discussed the find, Piermario Vescovo commented that he had found in linguistic dictionaries at least fifty examples of the spelling “Venezia”, many Tuscan, but a fair proportion from the Veneto, while “Castelo Franco” was also common and reflected the local dialect.⁶ As Vescovo demonstrates, there is no linguistic evidence that is at odds with a late fifteenth-century Venetian origin for the inscription.

Until now the provenance of the Sydney Dante is unknown. There are two rarer editions of the *Commedia* in the University of Sydney Library, the earliest being the Venetian edition of 1477 (Inc. 77.1) with the commentary of Jacopo della Lana; the other is the edition published by Octavianus Scotus, in Venice, in March 1484 (Inc. 84.2). Both have the bookplate of Sir Charles Nicholson (1808-1903), the first Chancellor of the University, who gave all the other incunables to the Fisher Library, University of Sydney. His bookplate is not in the 1497 edition of the *Commedia*; maybe, one could argue, an oversight? But unfortunately, a provenance cannot be argued in the absence of evidence. There are 122 copies of the 1497 edition of the *Commedia* listed in the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC) created by the British Library. The 1497 edition has never attracted as much interest as the other two earlier printings, and there is no interpretive literature, maybe because it is less rare and was popular – the Renaissance equivalent of a paperback.

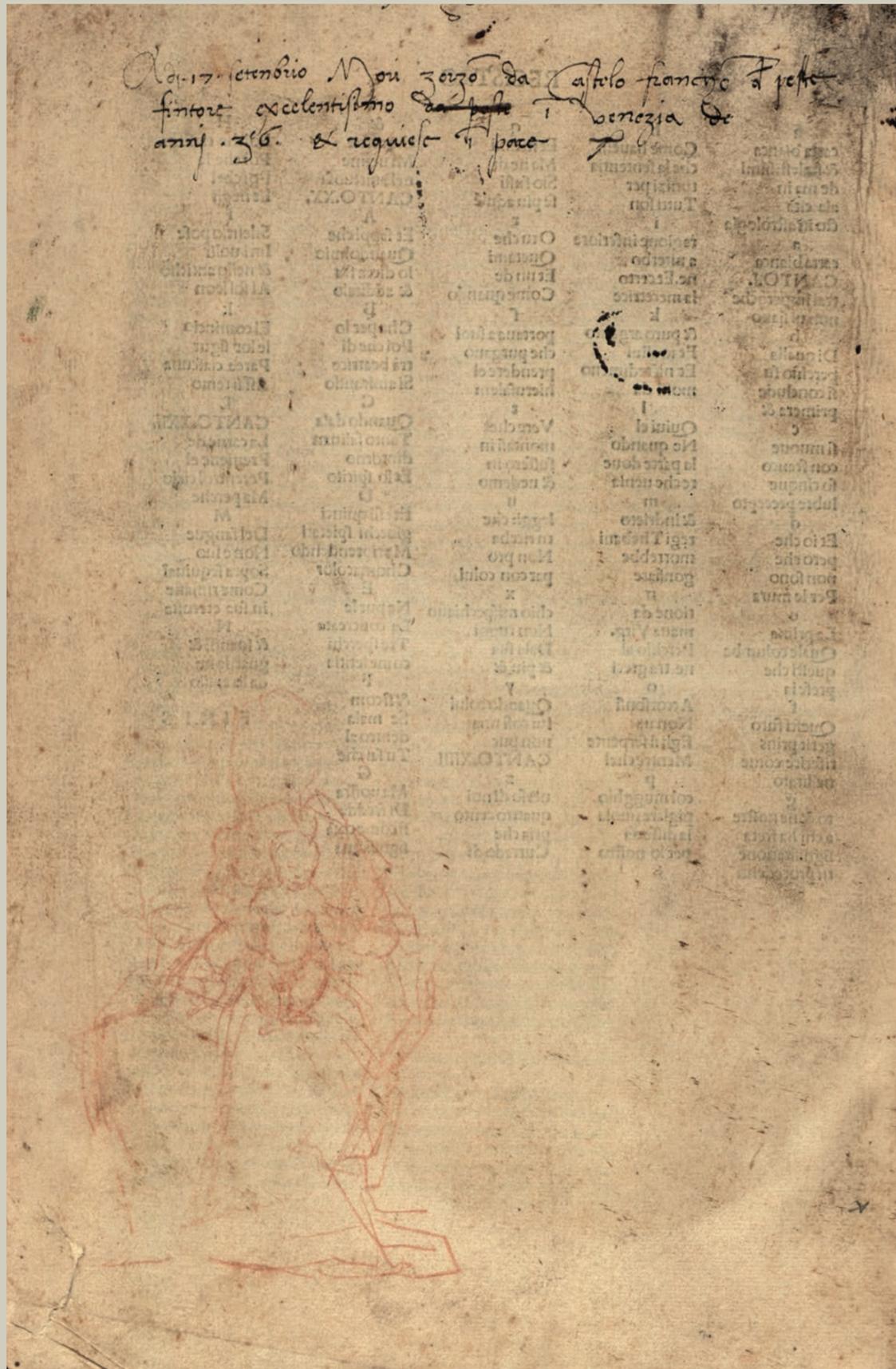


Fig. 1 / The verso of folio CCXCVIII in a copy of Dante's *Commedia*, published in Venice 1497, with an inscription, and a drawing of the Virgin and Child, Sidney, University of Sydney Library, Inc. 97.1.

There is ongoing research on how the Fisher Library acquired the Dante Giorgione, and on the provenances of the rich collections of Italian manuscripts and early Italian printed books in Sydney, in the hope that comparative material may emerge. Conversations are proceeding with international research partners on the scientific evaluation of the book itself and on the 1497 edition of the *Divine Comedy*.

Also brought into question by the naysayers was the chic, but rare term “fintore” used to describe Giorgione. The term is virtually impossible to translate into English, but approximately it might be, as Pat Boyd suggested to me: an artist who is a “belief maker”. Leonardo loved the term, and it occurs regularly in his writings; when in Venice, he presumably introduced it to Carpaccio – who signed several canvases with variants of the verb “fingere” – and to Giorgione.⁷ For Vescovo, who also highlighted the usage of the term in relation to Dürer, the word was too eccentric to be used by a forger.⁸

Who could this hypothetical forger be? One hypothesis is to see the forger as a nineteenth-century figure; the other as a more recent one, a super sophisticate, who had knowledge of the drawing, who somehow managed to enter the enclosed safe room of the University of Sydney – where it had been for most of the twentieth century – write the inscription and then, unlike any other known forger, vanished, thereby remaining indifferent to financial gain. In either case, s/he would have had to have X-ray eyes to see the drawing beneath the surface of the *Adoration of the Magi*. At a recent conference on Venetian drawing in the early modern period at the Warburg Institute, several speakers stated that there was no relationship between works on paper and drawings hidden by paint layers revealed by infra-red analysis.⁹ But the Giorgione drawing in Sydney most resembles the underdrawing of the Madonna and Child in the *Adoration of the Magi* at the National Gallery, London. As Jill Dunkerton remarked to me both works gain authenticity by their relationship with one another.¹⁰

Even if the earlier provenance of the volume has not been traced, and the book could have been on the rare book market in the nineteenth century – when documents relating to Renaissance art appear very occasionally to have been fabricated – the likelihood that an earlier observer would have connected the drawing to Giorgione does indeed seem an impossible stretch. Therefore the hypothesis that the inscription is a forgery seems highly unlikely.

The most compelling question, as yet unanswered, is who could have written the inscription above the drawing on the last page of the Sydney incunabulum of Dante’s *Commedia*. When the discovery was discussed on RAI television in Italy in 2019, it was hoped that an archivist or librarian might have recognized the handwriting, but despite a considerable response, to date this has not happened. The most frequent hypothesis has been to see the inscription as having been written by one of Giorgione’s patrons, such as Taddeo Contarini,¹¹ one of the richest men in Venice, a patrician bibliophile and legal authority, who owned several paintings by Giorgione, the most famous being the *Three Philosophers* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), and another of a “Night” which was in Giorgione’s studio when he died. Such a person could have read the *Commedia* with Giorgione, when the drawing may have been made, in response to Dante’s text. After Giorgione’s death Taddeo (or another of Giorgione’s patrons) could have written the inscription remembering discussions with the artist. It is, however, extremely difficult to find secure examples of the handwriting of Giorgione’s patrons, for often the related documents are written by notaries, leaving only the possibility of a signature in their hand.

Opinions differ as to who owned the book. Could it be Giorgione himself, or could it have been one of his patrons or artist friends? Given the lack of provenance

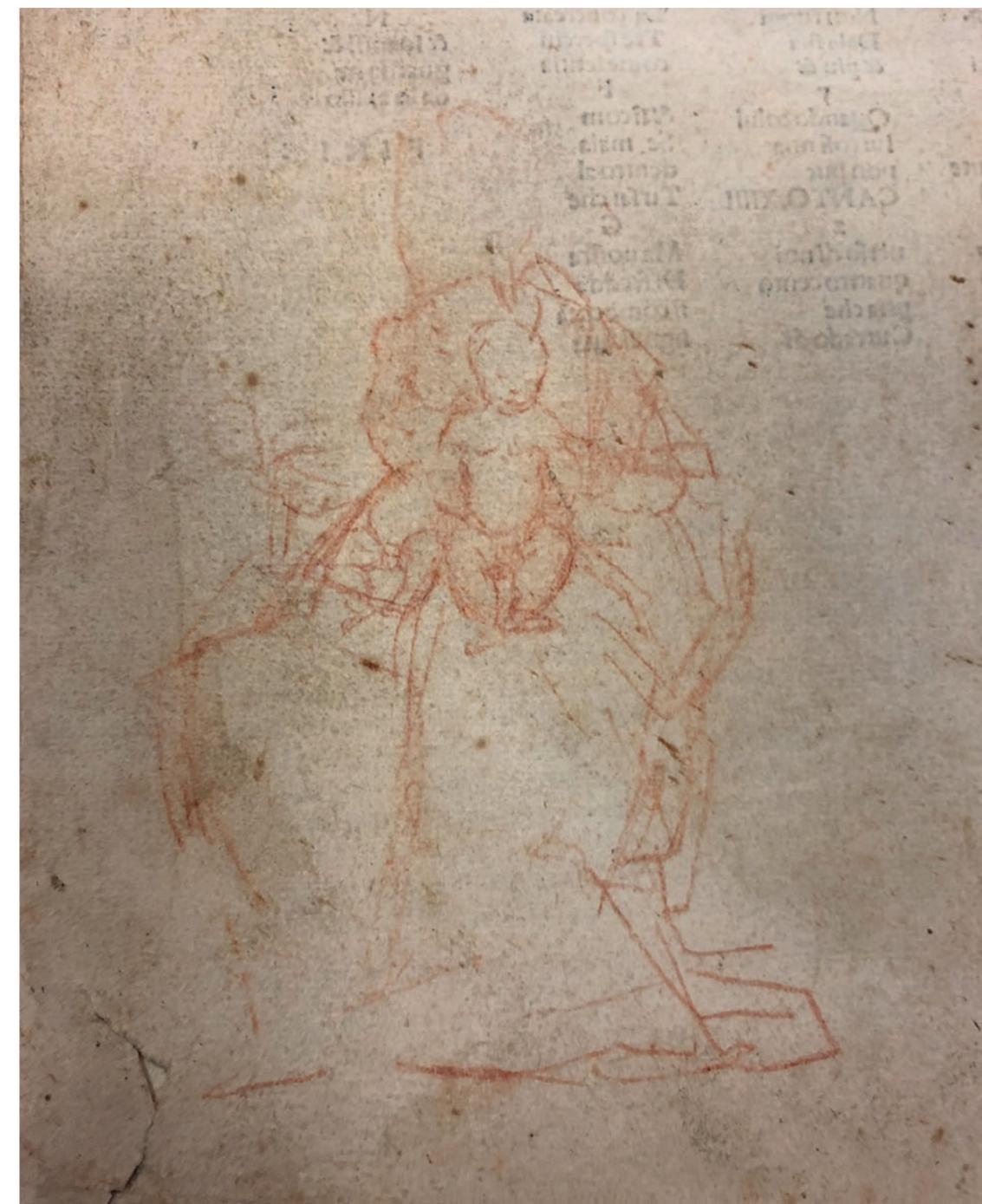


Fig. 2 / Detail of fig. 1, showing the drawing of the Virgin and Child in red chalk.

before the nineteenth century for the National Gallery's *Adoration of the Magi*, the painting to which the Sydney drawing is most closely related, we do not know who owned this work either. We know little of artists' libraries in Renaissance Venice, with occasional exceptions, such as the case of Giancristoforo Romano, who when he died in May 1512, left to the notary who drew up his will his copy of Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani*, his most precious possession.¹² It has been suggested that this may have been one of the rare copies signed by Bembo himself.¹³ Art historians on the whole are reluctant to believe that Renaissance artists were well read, but there are continual surprises – as in the case of Giulio Cesare Procaccini, who was thought to be illiterate until recently it was discovered that as a teenager he owned a signed copy of Lomazzo's treatise on painting.¹⁴ As Lino Pertile reveals in his book on “Dante Popolare”, Dante is so rich a writer that even

the totally unprepared reader can find something extraordinary in the poem.¹⁵ Giovanni di Paolo, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo were obsessed with how to represent Dante's words, as shown in their manuscripts and drawings. The *Commedia* has always been a genuinely popular poem that unleashed a catalogue of emotions among Dante's contemporaries and still does today among twenty-first century translators and admirers. Suffice to mention the remarkable translation of the *Commedia* by the Australian Clive James, whose wife Professor Prue Shaw is a famous Australian Dante scholar in Cambridge and London; as an undergraduate she was educated in the Sydney library with the Dante collection. The phenomenon of producing Dante translations is world-wide, as shown by the Californian Marcus Sandars who has given us a contemporary American translation.

Fig. 3 / Detail of fig. 1, showing the inscription in iron gall ink.

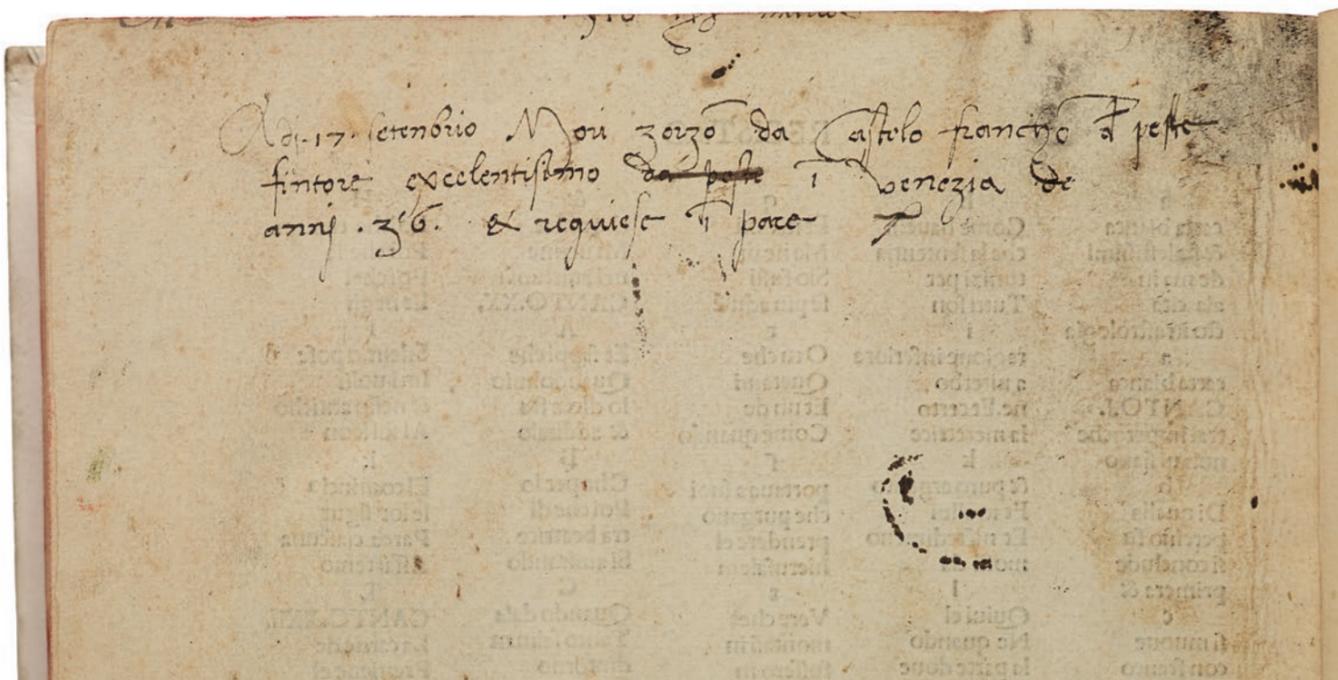


Fig. 4 / Leonardo da Vinci's annotation and drawing in the manuscript of the *Trattato di architettura* by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, ca. 1504-1506, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Ashburnham 361, fol. 25r.

It is hardly surprising that Giorgione may have responded to the text. The edition that he owned or read had a Latin commentary by Cristoforo Landino, surprising for a vernacular text. Giorgione's image is probably made in response to Bernard of Clairvaux's Invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are a few attempts before Giorgione to respond to this part of Dante's text.¹⁶ Some writers have considered Giorgione to have been illiterate, others that he was as learned as a professor of classics at the University of Oxford. We now know that Giorgione is likely to have read and responded to the text of Dante's *Commedia*, not the easiest of books, although one with a popular following; thus he can no longer be considered illiterate. The majority view expressed in recent discussions was that an artist would only have drawn in his own book.

A near contemporary example of a drawing by a Renaissance artist in a manuscript may be found in the library of Leonardo da Vinci, never a passive reader. Carlo Vecce's meticulous reconstruction of Leonardo's library, based on the various lists that Leonardo made of books in his possession, identifies only one volume, among two hundred that belonged to him, which he annotated, a manuscript of Francesco di Giorgio's *Trattato di architettura e machine* now in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.¹⁷ Pietro Marani dates Leonardo's annotations to circa 1504-1506, transcribes twelve critical observations about Francesco di Giorgio's text, and comments on Leonardo's drawing of coastlines and ports (fig. 4).

Of all Giorgione's contemporaries it is Albrecht Dürer who annotated and drew more frequently in books than any other artist. Dürer decorated the titlepages of at least fourteen classical books for his friend and patron, Willibald Pirckheimer, the best known of which is the frontispiece to the Aldine edition of Theocritus, from about 1504. The imagery closely follows the classical text and is probably the result of conversations between Dürer and Pirckheimer.¹⁸



Fig. 5 / Albrecht Dürer, *An Artist Using a Perspective Device to Draw a Male Nude Model*, drawing in pen and ink on a page from the manuscript of *Underweysung der Messung*, after 1525, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 Limpr.c.n.mss. 119, folio 89bv.

Fig. 6 / Anonymous printmaker, *An Artist Using a Perspective Device to Draw a Female Nude Model*, woodcut, from the *Underweysung der Messung*, 1538, London, British Museum.



Dürer must have had a library even though he is known to have owned only sixteen books. One Venetian book, the 1499 edition of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in the Bavarian State Library, Munich, has an inscription with a provenance: “ex bibliotheca Alberti Dyreri”. Presumably he also had access to the distinguished libraries of his humanist friends, Hartman Schedel, Willibald Pirckheimer, Christoff Scheurl, to name a few, and to those of the Benedictines and Dominicans.¹⁹

The circumstances surrounding Dürer’s creation and revision of his famous *Manual of Measurement* (*Underweysung der Messung, mit dem Zirkel un[d] Richtsteht in Linien, Eben unnd gantzen Corporen*), published in Nuremberg in 1525, reveal how punctilious he was in preparing texts and illustrating them. Shortly after the *Manual* (also known as the *Four Books on Measurement*) was published, Dürer composed a manuscript to correct the first printed version, with many edits and additions. It was the basis for a second edition, printed posthumously in 1538, by Hieronymus Andreas Formscheider on the instruction of Dürer’s widow, Agnes. On the titlepage of the manuscript, which is in the Bavarian

State Library, Dürer writes that this corrected version should be precisely followed in any reprinting.²⁰ Dürer’s manuscript was forgotten for centuries and has only recently been studied. At the end of book 4 in his manuscript, Dürer added an image of an artist looking through an eyepiece, drawing a nude man in perspective, with the device of a net (fig. 5).²¹ The model lies supine, his head languidly lying backwards, while his left leg is raised to hide his genitalia from the viewer’s gaze but not from the draughtsman. The model is drawn with a deft minimalist outline in an erotic foreshortened position. The spare linear style continues the elegance of the earlier drawings of geometrical shapes and men in perspective.

In the second printing of the *Underweysung*, dated 1538, the drawing is replaced with a woodcut of an artist depicting a buxom female model, lying wantonly (fig. 6). It is a frequently reproduced print that has stimulated feminist outrage (and is a good example of what the Guerrilla Girls call “male grazing”). Who was responsible for changing the gender of the model and why? Can the later print really be by Dürer, although it has often been reproduced in his name?

Stylistically it is hard to believe that this famous image is comparable to Dürer's other female nudes, for the complex swirling forms of mark making in the woodcut are characteristic of a proto-baroque master. The publisher or Agnes may have made this change finding a female model more suited to taste, or perhaps they disliked the homoeroticism of the image of the artist? Whatever the answer, the example shows the importance of studying artists' manuscripts.

Giorgione and Dürer have always been compared in terms of borrowings, when one might have influenced the other, such as the presumed relationship between Giorgione's *La Vecchia* and Dürer's portrait drawing of his mother in old age. They have never previously been considered comparable readers or annotators of texts. It is more than probable that they met during Dürer's lengthy stay in Venice in 1506. Dürer was also praised as a "fintore", by Christoph Scheurl, as noted by Vescovo. The term was possibly appropriated from Giorgione or Carpaccio. Did Giorgione have a friend/humanist/patron like Pirckheimer? We have still to discover who that may have been.

There are other examples of artists who annotated and drew in books, such as Agnolo Bronzino, whose copy of the Jacopo Foresti's *Supplementum chronicarum* of 1494, which he signed and extensively annotated, is now in the Library of the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Strangely there is no secondary literature on this important book with an analysis of Bronzino's annotations, except for a brief enticing catalogue entry for the exhibition: *In the Library: Deforming and Adorning with Annotations and Marginalia*, from 3 March to 27 June 2014, where twenty-nine volumes of annotated artists' books were displayed at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.²² To have this exhibition available online, especially a scan of the many annotations in Bronzino's volume, would encourage scholarship; and Bronzino's description of the trial and execution of Savonarola is of more than art historical interest.

As Lilian Armstrong has revealed, Giulio Romano owned a Latin manuscript of Virgil's works,²³ and a printed edition of Alberti's *Treatise on Architecture*,²⁴ an indication that he may have had a larger library. His ownership of the Virgil is declared with his signature in Latin; the Alberti bears his signature in Italian. To date the only known comparable library to that of Leonardo

is El Greco's collection of books, who at his death was known to have had at least 130 volumes, the subject of an exhibition at the Prado Museum in 2014.²⁵ More of the actual books that El Greco owned are extant. El Greco annotated many of them, especially his editions of Vitruvius and of Vasari's *Lives*. These annotations give an intimacy to our understanding of El Greco's paintings and his theoretical beliefs, written in the privacy of his study, the significance of which is brought out in the exhibition.

Artists have often taken Vasari to task by commenting in the margins of his *Lives*. There is increasing attention being paid to the marginalia of artist readers in their criticisms of Vasari, such as in the copies of Vasari's biographies that were owned by Taddeo Zuccaro, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Annibale and Agostino Carracci, and the anonymous Paduan commentators on an edition of Vasari's first edition of the *Vite* (1550), discovered by Marco Ruffini in the Beinecke Library at Yale University.²⁶ The Paduan commentators, whose critical remarks may be dated to the second half of the sixteenth century, were close to Domenico Campagnola, whose importance as an artist and art valuer is constantly emphasized, whereas Vasari neglected to mention him. They drew attention to the significance of Carpaccio, especially his Ursula cycle and commented on many other Venetian/Lombard artists, especially Titian. There were no drawings as commentary on Vasari's text.

Following a lecture at the Accademia, Venice, in November 2019, Stefania Mason told me about a similar example of an annotated drawing by Giacomo Palma il Giovane (fig. 7).²⁷ The drawing was made some decades after the drawing in the Sydney Dante but suggests a continuing Venetian tradition. The drawing represents a group of nude soldiers clambering across rocks, like Michelangelo's Florentine soldiers on the banks of the Arno, rushing out of the water to fight at Cascina. Palma's drawing was the last one he made and is inscribed by a pupil: "1628 adi 16 ottobre marti/questo sono lultimo/ disegno disegnato dal Sig. palma mio car.mo maestro." (1628, on the day of the sixteenth of October, this is the last drawing that was made by Palma, my dearest master). Palma was buried the day after, on 17 October, in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice.



Fig. 7 / Giacomo Palma il Giovane, *A Group of Nude Soldiers Climbing on Rocks*, 1628, pen and ink, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

The sheet is a poignant reminder of Carlo Ridolfi's testimony to Palma's never-ending ability to draw, even in the last days of his life, when he could no longer speak but even though knowing he was dying, asked for a pencil and continued to draw: "And just before the spirit departed, he asked to write; and they found for him a pencil, although it was realized that he was dying."²⁸ As recently discussed, Palma's creative process involved words on his informal drawings, never the formal ones; and the sheets of his designs are covered with recurring phrases.²⁹

Palma's testament, dated 1 April 1627, shows that he left legacies in the form of drawings to his loved ones, whether family or some of his numerous pupils.³⁰ Palma's best known pupil was Jacopo or Giacomo Albarelli, who was in Palma's workshop for thirty-four years, without leaving much trace of his presence in the works, "con poca ricognitione"; yet he was rewarded in Palma's will with the gift of thirty drawings, two paintings and all his books.³¹ In the will, Palma also mentions that he was teaching the son of Giacomo, who was staying in his house. Thus, the inscription could also have been made by Albarello's son. Other assistants included Marco Boschini, the writer and dealer, Gambarata, who frequently modelled for him, as well as others. Also mentioned in the will is a gift to the son of Maria Miona, a young boy who was in Palma's studio to learn the profession of painting, a gift which could have included some drawings.

In a codicil to his will, dated 1 August 1628, Palma named his daughter Lucrezia as his heir except for the things that concerned the profession of painter, which he left to Lucrezia's son Giacomo in the hope that he too would become a painter. If Giacomo junior did not want to become a painter, then the paintings should be divided between his daughters, Lucrezia and Giulia. Towards the end of his will Palma speaks of Domenico Tintoretto (son of Jacopo), with whom he was close in age, and to whom he left the choice of four drawings from the estate. Any of these pupils could have written the inscription on the drawing.

The example of Palma's inscribed drawing might suggest that it was a pupil or associate of Giorgione, who wrote the inscription in Dante's *Commedia*. Only a few are known, Giorgione's "creatures" Titian and Sebastiano del Piombo, as well as his "colleague" Vincenzo Catena, and the peripatetic Morto da Feltre or Lorenzo Luzzo, whom Vasari recorded as having assisted him on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. We know nothing of the circumstances in which each artist actually worked with Giorgione, whether they were apprenticed to him or not, but there has been infinite speculation as to what they might have contributed, except in the case of Morto da Feltre, who has been comparatively neglected. It is worth looking at the handwriting of each of Giorgione's associates to see if the author of the inscription is one of them.

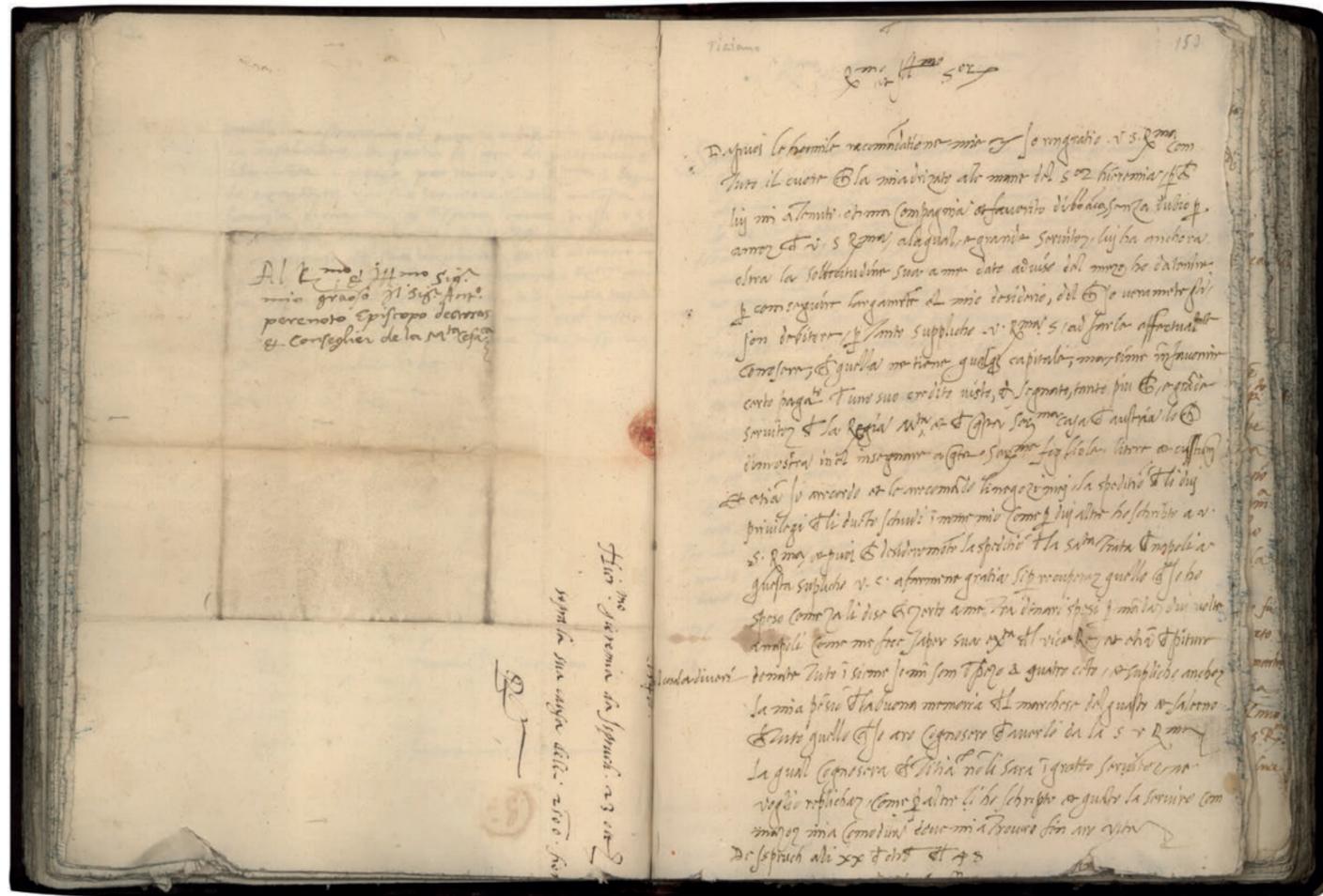


Fig. 8 / Letter from Titian to Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, from Innsbruck, 20 October 1548, Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Palacio Real, RMa, II-2267, fol. 153.

Although Titian is famous as a letter writer, he composed very few letters in his own hand. It is possible to identify his characteristic writing in the few he composed and also the style of his writing, as Erica Tietze-Conrat defined it in his literary corpus in an excellent article.³² Her approach is developed in Lionello Puppi's exemplary edition of Titian's letters.³³ Titian's correspondence was mostly written by his literary friends, throughout his entire life, the most famous "ghost writers" being Pietro Aretino and

Giovanni Maria Verdizotti, whose roles were first recognized by Carlo Ridolfi. Puppi and others concur that Titian's letters to Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle are in his own hand (fig. 8) and allow us to rule him out as the author of the inscription in Sydney.³⁴ As Tietze-Conrat remarked, Titian collaborated with others both in his paintings and letters, seemingly indifferent to what we would call attribution or for being responsible for what was by his hand, in letter writing, but also maybe in his studio.

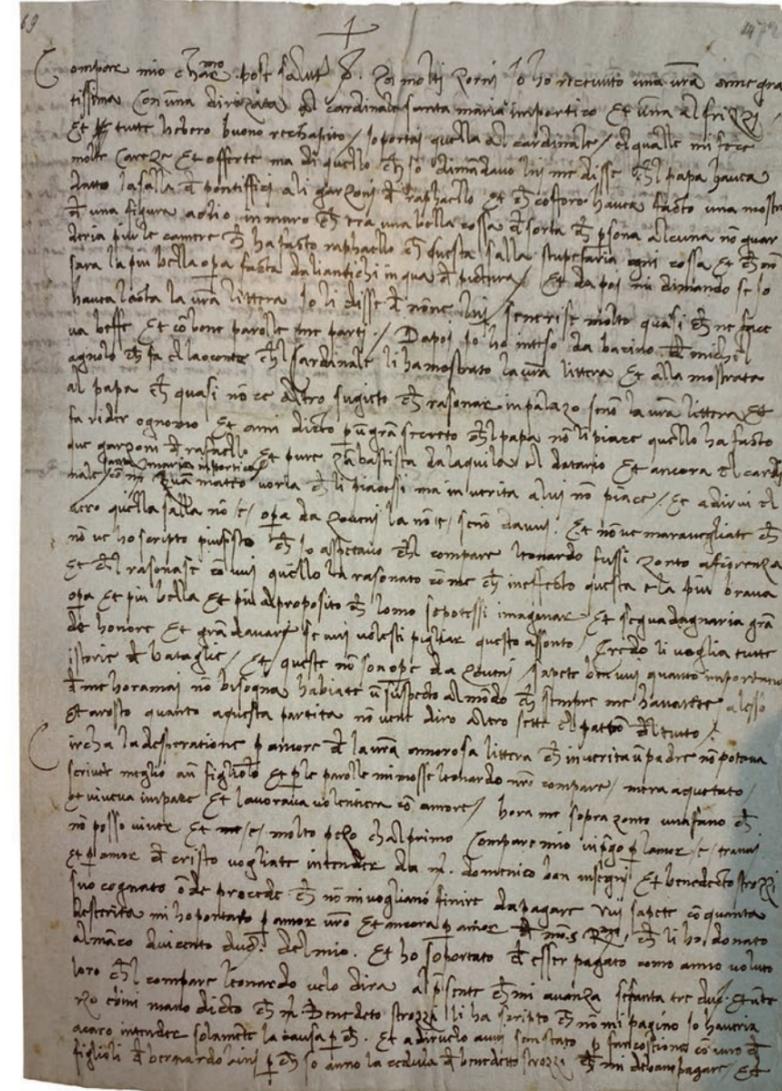


Fig. 9 / Letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michelangelo, 3 July 1525, Florence, Fondazione Casa Buonarroti.

By contrast, Sebastiano del Piombo was assured and witty in his correspondence, whether with Michelangelo or Pietro Aretino; his letters were well written in his own hand. Although nothing is known about Sebastiano's education or early life, his letters reveal him to be well educated, even better educated than Titian. Paintings now believed to have been by his hand were earlier attributed to Giorgione, such as the unfinished painting of the *Judgment of Solomon* at Kingston Lacy, Dorset, first attributed to Giorgione by Ridolfi, or the San Crisostomo Altarpiece, which may be dated to within Giorgione's life, as Rodolfo Gallo has shown. Of all Giorgione's pupils Sebastiano's handwriting is closest to the writer of the inscription, as is evident when compared with Sebastiano's letter to Michelangelo of 3 July 1525 (fig. 9),³⁵ but not so close as to identify him as the writer.

Among the three hundred and eighty-nine correspondents whose letters Aretino included in his intentionally innovatory book of letters in the vernacular, *Lettere a Pietro Aretino* (Venice, 1552),³⁶ only three were painters, Titian, Sebastiano, and Vasari. There were only two letters by Titian,³⁷ three from Sebastiano,³⁸ and three from Giorgio Vasari,³⁹ perhaps a value judgement from the inventor of a book of letters in the vernacular on the value of artists' letters. Only two architects were represented, Francesco Sansovino with seven letters and one from Sebastiano Serlio.

An example of Vincenzo Catena's handwriting is in the first of his four wills, written on 3 February 1513, according to his own testimony on the seventh line of the first page (fig. 10): "de sua mano proprio" – in his own hand. Although Catena, the friend of humanists, might seem the ideal candidate as the author of the inscription, as a person who could have read and interpreted Dante with Giorgione, and who could have owned such a book, he is excluded by his own handwriting as shown in his testament: if we can take his assertion for real that his testament is written in his own hand, then alas he is not the author of the inscription.⁴⁰

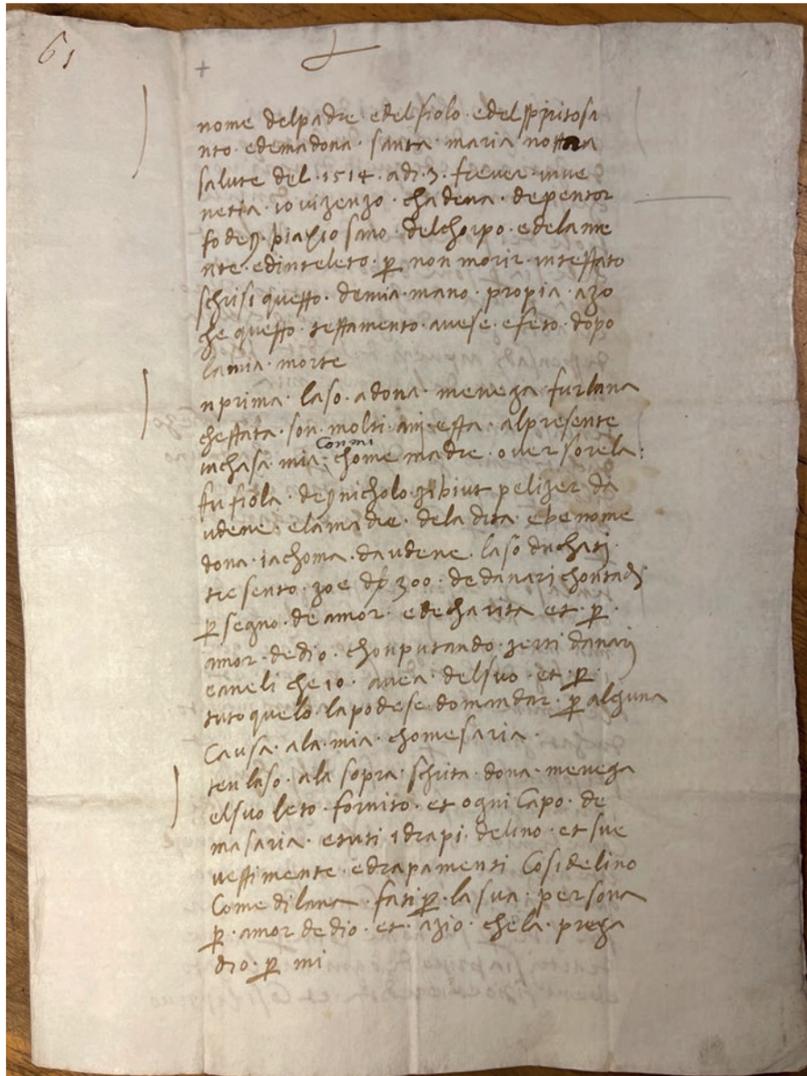


Fig. 10 / Vincenzo Catena, page from his will, Venice, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Testamenti, Notarile, acts of Zaccaria di Priuli, Ba. 777, no. 455.

Another candidate could be Morto da Feltre, usually assumed to be Lorenzo Luzzo, who was identified by Vasari (in the second half of the Cinquecento) as an assistant to Giorgione on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. It is possible that a drawing of the curved ceiling of the Domus Aurea in Rome, with a very early attribution to Morto da Feltre, may be a testimony to the artist's interest in *grottesche*, before his assistance to Giorgione, on the Fondaco.⁴¹ Like Titian, Morto's debt to Giorgione emerges in the mid-Cinquecento according to Vasari, but unlike Titian his Giorgionesque inventions have been largely ignored. His altarpiece from Caupo-Seren del Grappa, of unusual, if not unique iconography, combines the Resurrection of Christ with a *sacra conversazione* of the Madonna between Saints Vito and Modesto (figs. 11-12) and has on the reverse fine drawings, including two nude female figures that recall the frescoes of the Fondaco,⁴² especially the nude female figure (fig. 13).⁴³ There is no known example of Morto/Luzzo's handwriting. If any of these associates of Giorgione could have been identified by their handwriting as the author of the inscription, art history might be dramatically rewritten. It still could be, should the author be identified.

Some art historians have commented on the precision of the information in the Sydney inscription about the date of Giorgione's death, which they have candidly confessed to have found difficult to explain, given that it was sometimes difficult to remember how old even their best friends are. One explanation for the precision of detail may be that the inscription records a death notice of some kind that came from the island where Giorgione died, and was sent to his loved ones, whether to a patron or studio assistant. If Giorgione died of the plague, as now confirmed by several sources, he probably would have died on the Lazaretto Vecchio, and have been buried in a mass grave.



Fig. 11 / Lorenzo Luzzo, called Morto da Feltre, *Madonna and Christ Child, between Saint Vito and Saint Modesto and with the Resurrected Christ* (Caupo Altarpiece), ca. 1510-1514, canvas, 189.5 x 122 cm, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.



Fig. 12 / Detail of fig. 11, reverse of the Caupo Altarpiece, with drawings of female figures and putto, reminiscent of the frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.

Fig. 13 / Giorgione, *Nude Female Figure*, ca. 1508, detached fresco, 250 x 140 cm, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.



As Jane Stevens Crawshaw reveals in her recent book on plague hospitals in Venice,⁴⁴ the surviving documentation reveals more about the journey made to the Lazaretto, rather than about how news of deaths was reported to loved ones in Venice. Some sufferers from the plague had time to make a will, and for some, small slips of paper were sent as death notices to the family. Not many of these survive, but enough to speculate that this might have been the source for the writer of the inscription. On the Lazaretto Vecchio there was a permanent staff, a prior, a chaplain, doctors, medical personnel and those who buried the dead. There is no known instance of a person who died from the plague being buried anywhere other than on the island for fear of contamination. Thus, the story that Giorgione's body was buried in the Barbarella family tomb at Castelfranco (now no longer extant according to a lost inscription on a lost tomb), a local legend frequently repeated by chroniclers, appears impossible, even though Giorgione may have belonged to that family, as Carlo Ridolfi maintained.

The last drawing by Palma Giovane suggests possibilities for our understanding of the inscription accompanying the drawing by Giorgione in the Sydney Dante, but still there are no easy solutions among Giorgione's associates as to who wrote the inscription at his death. This brief outline of artists' literary activities and the books they owned reveals that commenting on texts and writing were very much part of their daily lives, much more so than has been understood previously.

NOTES

1. My thanks to Stefania Mason for telling me about the last drawing by Palma il Giovane, to Jane Stevens Crawshaw for sharing her knowledge of the plague in Venice and to Roberto Sgarbossa for photographing Catena's will during lockdown.
2. Jaynie Anderson, Kim Wilson, Nerida Newbiggin, and Julie Sommerfeldt, "Giorgione in Sydney," *The Burlington Magazine* 161 (2019): pp. 190-199; "Letter to the Editor," *The Burlington Magazine* 161 (2019): pp. 800-801.
3. Some recent discussion in the popular press is analyzed by Piermario Vescovo, "Tra Sydney e Castelfranco. Note giorgionesche," *Arte veneta* 76 (2019): pp. 188-194.
4. Salvatore Settis, "Deeper Thoughts: Beyond the allegory of Bellini, Giorgione and Titian," <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/linbury-lecture-2020> (accessed 6 April 2021).
5. Enrico Maria dal Pozzolo, "Giorgione. Una scritta da Sydney riapre il mistero della sua vita," *La Tribuna di Treviso*, 26 March 2019, p. 36.
6. Vescovo, "Tra Sydney e Castelfranco," p. 188 n. 5.
7. For further discussion see Anderson et al., "Giorgione in Sydney," p. 192.
8. Vescovo, "Tra Sydney e Castelfranco," p. 188 n. 4.
9. *Venetian Disegno: New Frontiers*, conference held at the Warburg Institute, London, 20-21 May 2021.
10. For further discussion of the relationship between the drawing and underdrawing see Anderson et al., "Giorgione in Sydney," pp. 194-197.
11. See Jaynie Anderson, *Giorgione. The Painter of 'Poetic Brevity'* (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1997), pp. 148-160. Still invaluable for the collection of documents about Giorgione's patrons, is the article by Donata Battilotti and Maria Teresa Franco, "Registri di Committenti e dei primi collezionisti di Giorgione," *Antichità Viva* 17:4-5 (1978): pp. 58-86.
12. Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, 1474 to 1539: A Study of the Renaissance*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1903), II, p. 13.
13. Cecil Clough, "Pietro Bembo's Gli Asolani of 1505," *Modern Language Notes* 84:1, The Italian Issue (1969): pp. 16-45, esp. pp. 32-33.
14. Angelo Lo Conte, *The Procaccini and the Business of Painting in Early Modern Milan* (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), p. 91.
15. Lino Pertile, *Dante popolare* (Ravenna: Angelo Longo, 2021).
16. A couple more (less impressive) images are in Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss and Charles S. Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal Ms-8530, fol. 172r (Italian, mid-fourteenth century) and (formerly) Norfolk, Holkham Hall MS. 514 (now Oxford, Bodleian Library, as MS. Holkham misc. 48.), p. 146.
17. Carlo Vecce, *La Biblioteca di Leonardo* (Florence: Giunti, 2021), see especially pp. 297-300.
18. Jane Campbell-Hutchison, *Albrecht Dürer: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 50.
19. The best account of Dürer's library is by Thomas Eser, "Dürer und das Buch: Facetten einer Beziehung," in *Heilige und Hasen: Bücherschätze der Dürerzeit*, eds. Thomas Eser and Anja Grebe, exh. cat. (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2008), pp. 31-43.
20. See Thomas Eser's catalogue entry in Eser and Grebe, *Heilige und Hasen*, pp. 56-57. For a more detailed analysis, see Noam Andrews, "Albrecht Dürer's personal Underweysung der Messung," *Word & Image* 32:4 (2016): pp. 409-429.
21. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 L.impr.c.n.mss. 119, fol. 89bv.
22. See the extensive online catalogue entry at <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2014/library-marginalia.html> (accessed July 2021).
23. Publius Vergilius Maro, *Opera* (Venice: Antonio di Bartolomeo Miscomini, October '1486' [i.e., 1476]); London, British Library, C.19.e.14 = IB.20448 (ISTC no. iv00167000). This manuscript in the BL was signed by Giulio Romano in Latin, as discussed by Lilian Armstrong in *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450-1550*, ed. Jonathan J. Alexander, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts; New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1994-1995), no. 90, pp. 182-183.
24. Massimo Bulgarelli et al., eds., *Leon Battista Alberti e l'architettura* (Milan: Silvana, 2006), see pp. 220-221 for Giulio Romano's signature in Italian on the 1485 Florence edition of Alberti.
25. Javier Docampo and José Riello, eds., *La Biblioteca del Greco*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2014).
26. Marco Ruffini, "Sixteenth-Century Paduan Annotations to the First Edition of Vasari's 'Vite' 1550," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62 (2009): pp. 748-808.
27. Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1944), no. 1178, p. 222, pl. CLXXXIII. Their reading of the inscription is followed here.
28. "E poco prima d'esarare lo spirito chiese da scrivere; ed essendogli recato il lapis, benchè fosse agonizzante, così noto." Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori Veneti e dello stato. Edizione seconda* (Padua: Cartallier, 1835), p. 428.
29. Maria Aresin, "Scriptures and Scribbles in Palma il Giovane's drawings," lecture at the conference *Venetian Disegno: New Frontiers*, Warburg Institute, London, 20 May 2021.
30. Ileana Chiappini Di Sorio, "Le ultime volontà di Giacomo Palma il Giovane," *Notizie di Palazzo Albani* 2 (1979): pp. 61-66.
31. Chiappini Di Sorio, "Le ultime volontà," p. 65.
32. Erica Tietze-Conrat, "Titian as a Letter Writer," *The Art Bulletin* 26 (1944): pp. 117-123.
33. Lionello Puppi, ed., Tiziano. *L'Epistolario* (Florence: Alinari, 2012).
34. Reproduced in Puppi, *L'Epistolario*, p. 161.
35. Matthias Wivel et al., *Michelangelo & Sebastiano*, exh. cat. (London: National Gallery, 2017), Letters, pp. 225-237, especially p. 224 for a reproduction of Sebastiano's letter of 3 July 1525.
36. Gonaria Floris and Luisa Mulas, eds., *Lettere a Pietro Aretino*, 3 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1997).
37. Floris and Mulas, *Lettere a Pietro Aretino*, II, nos. 154 and 155, pp. 146-8.
38. Floris and Mulas, *Lettere a Pietro Aretino*, II, nos. 10, 11, 12, pp. 10-14.
39. Floris and Mulas, *Lettere a Pietro Aretino*, II, nos. 259, 268.
40. For the transcription of Catena's wills, see Gustav Ludwig, "Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Venezianischen Malerei," *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 26 (1905), Beiheft: pp. 1-159, especially p. 82.
41. Marzia Faietti, "Frammenti di Cieli sulle Carte: L'Antico decontestualizzato," in *I cieli in una stanza. Soffitti lignei a Firenze e a Roma nel Rinascimento*, eds. Claudia Conforti et al., exh. cat. (Florence: Gallerie degli Uffizi, 2019), pp. 48-57, see fig. 2. The drawing can also be found via the Uffizi online catalogue: <https://euploos.uffizi.it/inventario-euploos.php?invn=129+O+di+%C2%ABAnonimo+Italia+settentrionale+fine+sec.+XV%C2%BB#opimages-45919ng1-1> (accessed 23 July 2021).
42. For the altarpiece, see Sergio Claut, "Lorenzo Luzzo oltre Giorgione," in *Petriciolijevo Zbornik (Raccolta di saggi in onore di I. Petricioli)*, ed. J. Belamarić, *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 36/1 (1996): pp. 205-221. For an overview of his life, see Laura di Calisto, "Lorenzo Luzzo," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 66 (Rome: Treccani, 2006).
43. For the most recent account of Giorgione's Nude, see Sandra Rossi and Silvia Benassai in *Il Rinascimento di Pordenone con Giorgione, Tiziano, Lotto, Correggio, Bassano e Tintoretto*, eds. Caterina Furlan and Vittoria Sgarbi, exh. cat. (Pordenone: Galleria d'Arte Moderna and Museo Civico d'arte, 2019), pp. 152-155.
44. Jane Stevens Crawshaw, *Plague Hospitals: Public Health for the City in Early Modern Venice* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), esp. chapter 5, "Dying in the Lazaretti".



Simultaneous vision in Paolo Fiammingo's *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona*

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Fig. 1 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo (here attributed), *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona*, 1581, oil on canvas, 90.2 x 116.8 cm, Oberlin, OH, Allen Memorial Art Museum. Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Ever since the Samuel H. Kress Foundation donated the profoundly curious sixteenth-century painting of *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* to the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College in 1961 (fig. 1), the work's author and subject have presented a problem for scholars.¹ The painted image is in fact comprised of two overlapping compositions. Bright rays tinting the clouds gold and orange in the crepuscular sky above the cityscape at right dominate the bucolic twilight landscape with a shepherd tending his flock and travellers traversing the hills near the city's fortified wall. Disrupting this pastoral image, however, is the depiction of the edge of a canvas rolling down across the top third of the composition. Underneath this partially opaque and partially transparent illusionistic canvas is a group of figures – the Holy Family (Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child) and the infant John the Baptist with a lamb – in a wooded setting. But these obscured figures are painted in a completely different scale to the landscape beneath them, and their sylvan location is illuminated by a second sunset or sunrise on the opposite side of the canvas. At the bottom of the composition, a cartellino provides some information about the painting's production location and date: “VERONA Fatta nel monasterio Santo Anzolo Ao 1581 (Verona, made in the monastery Santo Anzolo [in the] year 1581)”. Close examination shows that the name of the monastery is written as the transliteration of the Venetian dialect pronunciation of “Sant’Angiolo”. The monastery of Sant’Angiolo in Monte is no longer extant, but was once located in the hills to the northeast of Verona, probably where the Parco delle Colombarie is today, and affiliated with the Secular Canons starting in the fifteenth century.²

The monastery's northeast location suggests that the painting depicts a view looking west at a sunset as night falls over the city.

The painting has been formerly attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, School of Verona, and later to Marco Angolo del Moro (ca. 1537-1586).³ While the attribution to Leonardo today seems far off the mark, it acknowledges in some way the most remarkable quality of the painting: its inventiveness and complexity – its *ingegno*. The attribution to a member of the Angolo del Moro family, who worked throughout the Veneto during the second half of the Cinquecento, rests entirely on Terence Mullaly's misreading of the cartellino as stating the monastery's name as “Angolo”.⁴ David Alan Brown further suggested that it might be the work of Marco Angolo del Moro based on his landscape prints,⁵ but there are very few surviving paintings that have been securely attributed to this artist and none of these have much relationship to this work.⁶ Instead, it seems to make far more sense that this work should be given to the artist Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo (ca. 1540-1596), a Flemish artist who worked in Tintoretto's workshop in Venice and later independently in the city and around the Veneto.

Over the last thirty-five years, *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* has been included in a number of exhibitions on illusionistic and *trompe l'oeil* painting.⁷ Yet, even when considering this work in the context of the history of illusionistic painting, its idiosyncrasy persists, as it stands apart from typical *trompe l'oeil* compositions of the Renaissance.



Fig. 2 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *Landscape with a Scene of Enchantment*, ca. 1590, oil on canvas, 185 x 206.5 cm, London, National Gallery.

The painting's inscrutability has frustrated attempts to determine its meaning, or the circumstances of its creation. Layers of discoloured varnish and dirt obscured the painting's complex composition for decades, making it nearly illegible in photographs. Moreover, its location in a collection outside of a major metropolitan centre has meant that it remains relatively unknown to scholars and connoisseurs. Recent cleaning of the canvas has improved its overall appearance and allowed for closer examination of the handling and facture, revealing the painting to be in reasonably good condition, if a bit abraded, especially in the lower margins of the canvas.⁸ First-hand examination of the cleaned painting, however, dispels any

suspicions that the painting's double image is due to the re-use of a canvas with an earlier composition. Yet, even with a better grasp of the painting's surface appearance and construction, the subject remains difficult to comprehend and seems to defy traditional approaches to understanding its significance. This article seeks to establish this work within the context of Paolo Fiammingo's oeuvre and late sixteenth-century Verona, as well as consider this picture in relation to historical modes of vision and attitudes toward veiling and revelation in Renaissance painting.

A PROPOSAL: PAOLO FIAMMINGO PINXIT

Mauro Lucco was the first to suggest that Paolo Fiammingo might be considered in connection to the Oberlin painting, citing as points of comparison the organ shutters *Adam and Eve* and *Cain and Abel* made for San Niccolò ai Frari ("San Nicoletto"), now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (ca. 1580, in storage at the Prefettura), as well as a painting in the National Gallery, London, *Landscape with a Scene of Enchantment* (ca. 1590, fig. 2).⁹ Lucco pointed out similarities in the bird's eye view of the distant landscapes and the feathery arrangement of ovoid foliage found in the Oberlin painting. Other characteristics of the Oberlin canvas can also be identified in paintings by Paolo Fiammingo like the pair *Elijah Fed by the Ravens* and *The Lord Commands the Prophet Elijah to Proceed to Zarepath* (ca. 1585-1589, figs. 3-4).¹⁰ The golden clouds lit from below are depicted with the same technique of dragging a loaded brush across the canvas, while the lobed foliage follows a similar fan formation. The physiognomies of Joseph in the Oberlin painting and that of the figure of Elijah in the San Francisco paintings are strikingly comparable, and the mannered, yet fleshy hand of the Virgin finds parallels in those of Elijah and the figure of God in the sky.



Fig. 3 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *Elijah Fed by the Ravens*, ca. 1585-1559, oil on canvas, 88.3 x 141 cm, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



Fig. 4 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *The Lord Commands the Prophet Elijah to Proceed to Zarepath*, ca. 1585-1589, oil on canvas, 88.6 x 141 cm, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



Fig. 5 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *Landscape with a View of Verona*, ca. 1581, oil on canvas, 86 x 115 cm, formerly with Im Kinsky auction house, Vienna (2014).

Fiammingo excelled at mythological, allegorical, and religious subjects situated in expansive verdant landscapes, but he also produced pure landscape paintings. One of the city of Verona, accepted by Stefania Mason and Daniele Benati as an autograph work, came up at auction in 2010 and again in 2014 (fig. 5).¹¹ Although this *Landscape with a View of Verona* has a more poetic than topographical quality to it, it nevertheless depicts the major monuments and landmarks of the city, such as the Adige River, Ponte Romano, and the Castello

San Pietro, but seemingly from the opposite direction as the vantage point of Oberlin's *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona*. The *View of Verona* and the Oberlin composition share several similarities in handling, such as the summarily rendered sheep and shepherd, the dramatically staged sky with beaming rays of sunlight that create golden ribbon-like patterns in the clouds, and the familiar feathery foliage. Both works have similarly dark backgrounds against which the silvery highlights and jewel-toned colours resonate.

The 2010 and 2014 sales catalogue entries note a connection between the *View of Verona* and a landscape drawing by Fiammingo in the Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung in Munich (fig. 6), which shows a similar bird's eye view of a city – probably based on Verona – nestled in a river valley with travellers visible in the foreground.¹² While details of the city view depicted in the Munich drawing diverge from the Oberlin painting, the works do share a striking detail in the right foreground: a seated traveller resting with his elbow raised over his knapsack and leaning staff, a type of figure that often functions in this period as a point of entry into landscape imagery. This convergence of details and subject matter within this group of depictions of Verona on canvas and on paper suggests the possibility that they were created around the same time, cross-pollinating the artist's portrayal of different viewpoints around Verona. Given the inscription of the date 1581 on the Oberlin painting, it is worth considering this work as a benchmark by which to date the other two.

Fig. 6 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *Landscape with Pilgrims and a View of a City*, ca. 1581, pen and brown ink on paper, 20.8 x 30.5 cm, Munich, Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung.



The compositional complexity of *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* also fits well with the types of subjects that Fiammingo treated throughout his career. In his 1648 biography of the artist, Carlo Ridolfi lauded Fiammingo for his inventive landscape compositions, noting that he created “numerosi capricci (numerous capricci)”.¹³ Aside from the works he made for Venice's churches and civic spaces, the majority of Fiammingo's paintings are landscapes with allegorical or mythological subjects, which Stefania Mason has described as often containing a “second level of reading”; such works undoubtedly appealed to connoisseurs who engaged in an intellectual and artistic culture preoccupied with conceptualized tropes and veiled meanings.¹⁴ Some of Fiammingo's most elaborate subjects can be found in the numerous mythological and allegorical landscape paintings he created in the 1580s for the German banker and patron of the arts Hans Fugger (1531-1598), intended for his Schloss Kirchheim, near Augsburg.¹⁵ Created at the same time as the Oberlin painting, these landscape cycles are characterized by Mason as “pure landscapes that did not have equals in Venetian painting of the time”.¹⁶ While complicated, even bizarre interpretations might be expected for works with secular subject matter made for a private patron, Fiammingo also created a fanciful interpretation of a religious subject on at least one other occasion. A painting depicting the *Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man* (formerly on the Florentine art market), datable to the artist's last years, shows a fantastical rendering of a sacred theme.¹⁷ Despite the odd juxtaposition of figures and details in this painting, it functions as a fairly straightforward illustration of the biblical parable. To this author's knowledge, however, no other work given to Fiammingo approaches the compositional complexity and illusionism found in the Oberlin painting. Nevertheless, the attribution of this work to Fiammingo is credible on the basis of the stylistic comparisons cited above and the visual and theoretical contexts from which the artist originated.

BETWEEN SACRED AND SECULAR

Though singular in nature, the Oberlin painting is not without thematic precursors. Setting aside for the moment its obvious and compelling use of illusionism, the painting draws on iconographic and pictorial practices that were established in Venice and the Veneto during the sixteenth century. The painting's title *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* might lead one to expect a traditional Italian Renaissance image of a spectral vision of holy figures hovering protectively over a cityscape, iconography that served both a beneficent and legitimizing purpose, as in Bonifacio de' Pitati's *God the Father over Piazza San Marco* (1540s) and Paolo Veronese's *The Battle of Lepanto* (ca. 1572), both now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Paolo Farinati's *Allegory of the Baptism of Andriana Verona Ferro* (fig. 7) from 1558 provides a Veronese point of comparison, with a depiction of the allegorical personification of the city situated before its famed colosseum and the Adige River, above which appear God the Father and musical angels.¹⁸ This positioning of supernatural figures over a landscape finds parallels with the iconographic tradition of interpreting celestial bodies in anthropomorphic terms, by depicting pagan deities occupying the heavens above the mundane world below, a conceit that Fiammingo employed extensively in his cycle of eight paintings depicting the planets that he made for the Fugger castle in Kirchheim.¹⁹ Yet, the members of the Holy Family in the Oberlin painting are decidedly grounded in the terrestrial world, surrounded by fruit trees situated in a completely separate, albeit murky landscape, replete with its own light source. They do not perch on clouds that hover above, but are nevertheless integrated into the city's atmosphere; they exist in their own realm, one that recalls timeless, symbolic descriptions of gardens and wilderness rather than a specific, identifiable setting.

Several traditional Christian motifs emerge when considering the Oberlin painting's seemingly incongruent realms in relation to each other. The shepherd at left in the Verona landscape could perhaps recall the Annunciation to the Shepherds; the three travellers in the middle ground could be the three Magi searching for the Christ Child. The Holy Family sits under fruit trees that may allude to the Garden of Eden, where the first sin occurred, and the position of Christ in the centre of the canvas between the two light sources may refer to his role as Light of the World, whose coming expunged that sin.²⁰ In this context, the sunset at right could be interpreted as the fading of the old world order, whereas the sun appearing across the composition in the landscape with the Holy Family could be understood as a sunrise, a symbol of Christ's Resurrection. The evocation of the Flight into Egypt infers the themes of travel and pilgrimage, which resonate with the prominent placement of the traveller in the lower right foreground next to the cartellino.

The speculative nature of these interpretations for Fiammingo's painting finds precedence in sixteenth-century landscape painting on both sides of the Alps. In Venice, there was a history of ambiguity of subject matter that accompanied the development of landscape as a genre – demonstrable in seminal works like Giorgione's *Tempest* – in which artists pursued increasingly spiritualized or poetic characterizations that reflected the mood and doctrine of religious narratives without relying on overt symbolic references.²¹ Stefania Mason has argued that landscape imagery created by northern Europeans working in sixteenth-century Venice contributed to this trend in religious landscape painting, giving rise to the “biblical-allegorical-pastoral” hybrid that informed Veronese's later landscapes and fully blossomed in the work of the Bassani.²²



Fig. 7 / Paolo Farinati, *Allegory of the Baptism of Andriana Ferro*, 1558, oil on canvas, 132 x 117 cm, on loan to the Musei Civici di Verona dalla Direzione Regionale Musei Veneto, Palazzo Grimani.



Fig. 8 / Pauwels Franck, called Paolo Fiammingo, *Allegory of Painting*, ca. 1580, pen and brown ink over graphite, 16.4 x 27.8 cm, London, British Museum.

Fiammingo's origins in the Low Countries are worth emphasizing here, as there too a long tradition persisted of religious subjects being rendered in highly imaginative landscape settings that confuse attempts at a singular reading of the painting's meaning. The mountainous panoramic landscapes of Joachim Patinir and hallucinatory worlds presented by Hieronymus Bosch gave way to more naturalistic representations of daily rural life, such as the works of Jan Brueghel and his family workshop, yet these later treatments did not abandon their inherently moralistic or devotional conceits. Indeed, the philosophical culture in sixteenth-century Antwerp cultivated a practice of visual exegesis typical for viewing devotional subjects as a means for regarding

landscape paintings, subscribing to the concept, among others, of "doctrina serena" in which nature could be the domain of the sacred.²³ Liturgically, viewing landscape as a matrix for religious meaning and nature as proof of God's existence was a standard element in basic catechistic instruction to clergy and laity alike during the late sixteenth century.²⁴ Viewed against this context of northern and Venetian approaches to marrying secular natural settings with religious narratives, Fiammingo's painting seems less anomalous, despite its highly unusual layering of two worlds on top of each other. But its presentation of such a destabilizing visual rhetoric of illusionism suggests that there must be something more to understanding the image.

DISRUPTIVE ILLUSIONISM

To better contextualize Fiammingo's spectacular presentation of illusionism in this painting, it is useful to examine it in terms of established critical theory and evidence of the artist's own comprehension of the role of nature and its portrayal in his art. Shortly before the Oberlin painting was executed, Cristoforo Sorte (1510-1595), a native of Verona, published his *Osservazioni nella pittura* (1580), where he discusses the technique of constructing landscape scenes as layered images, "because landscapes want to be distinct in three parts. The first wants to be visible immediately, the second more dazzling, and the third almost lost in infinity, because the second is composed correctly in perspectival effect with the first."²⁵ While Sorte's words could be construed simply as advice on how to create the effect of atmospheric perspective, reading them with Fiammingo's painting in mind conjures up a different interpretation of Sorte's commentary, which points to a familiarity with the importance of layers in the construction of illusionism in landscape painting. Sorte's profession as a cartographer and painter suggests that he was familiar with the demands of balancing observation and imagination in the construction of a landscape view; the introduction of outright illusionism into the equation presents an intriguing variation on this formula.²⁶ Judging from the elaborate care that Fiammingo took to construct the overlapping landscape images in the Oberlin painting – attempting to preserve the legibility of the two compositions while simultaneously exploring the possibility of their being read as a single image – it is clear that the artist was deeply interested in the illusionistic possibilities of rendering landscape, a theme that pervaded his career and a tradition that had deep and profound roots in his native Flanders.

A drawing by Fiammingo, depicting an *Allegory of Painting* (ca. 1580, fig. 8), further illustrates his keen awareness of the ontology of his creative practice and the important role that nature and illusionism played

in it. Depicted on the sheet is an allegorical figure of Nature, who, like an artist at work, is seated in front of a canvas which bears an inscription that can be interpreted as a challenge to artists: Nature, it states, can represent the principle of movement (*motus*) while the artist is limited to portraying specific acts of movement (*actus*).²⁷ In the middle distance of the surrounding lush landscape there is a hunting scene, presumably meant to illustrate the movement to which the inscription refers. A hunter raises his spear to strike a stag as his dogs run alongside; this group is reflected upside down in the nearby pond. This vignette gives form to Nature's challenge to capture motion, but it also allows the artist to create a double illusion within the mimetic depiction of the subject itself and its reflection in the water. The drawing underscores Fiammingo's interest in exploring the concept of illusionism within the context of landscape and the artist's awareness of the broader theoretical debate about the relationship between art and nature. Given the complexity of its layering effect, the Oberlin painting can also be interpreted as a response to Nature's challenge, functioning as a visual treatise on the possibilities of landscape painting to move beyond the limits of sacred and secular portrayal through the vehicle of illusion.

The Oberlin painting's landscape, rendered from an identifiable location, raises the question of its intended setting and audience; the latter presumably would appreciate, if not inform, the complicated sacred and metapictorial interpretive possibilities of the image. The cartellino's mention of the Sant'Angiolo monastery provides an obvious starting point. Sant'Angiolo in Monte is listed among several monasteries in Verona that were united together under the Secular Canons' church of San Giorgio in Braida in 1537.²⁸ The Canons had a history of commissioning art for San Giorgio in Braida that specifically incorporated views of the local landscape

as a way to forge their own Veronese identity, distinct from the order's mother church in Venice.²⁹ Michele da Verona's 1501 *Crucifixion* (fig. 9) for San Giorgio in Braida's refectory provides an interesting point of comparison with the Oberlin painting in that it depicts a specific view of the city – albeit from a different vantage point – transforming the wall on which it hung into a window onto the surrounding Veronese landscape.³⁰ The cartellino in the Oberlin painting arguably indicates a similar intended effect by recording the place from which the view in the painting was observed and therefore cementing the connection between the depicted landscape and its intended location. The Canons' practice of commissioning works for San Giorgio in Braida that portrayed views of Verona continued throughout the sixteenth century: the city of Verona appears twice in the background of Gian Francesco Caroto's altarpiece predella panels of the *Agony in the Garden* and the *Deposition* (ca. 1512) and again in Paolo Farinati's *Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes* (1603) on the chancel wall (both still *in situ*).³¹



Fig. 9 / Michele da Verona, *Crucifixion*, 1501, oil on canvas, 335 x 720 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera.

In light of the Secular Canons' proclivity for commissioning images that celebrate illusionism and geographic specificity, it is very possible that the patron of the Oberlin painting was a member of the order who resided at Sant'Angiolo.

While Paolo Fiammingo does not appear to be recorded among those artists known to have worked on the decorations of San Giorgio in Braida or other Veronese churches of the Secular Canons,³² by 1581 he had moved from working as a painter of landscape backgrounds in Jacopo Tintoretto's workshop to his first independent commissions in the Veneto, including the works he produced for San Nicoletto in Venice.³³ His time in the Tintoretto workshop may have introduced him to the Secular Canons in Verona. Jacopo Tintoretto had provided paintings for the Canons' churches in both Venice and Verona: from 1552 to 1577 he painted several works for the Church of the Madonna dell'Orto in Venice, and his workshop executed a *Baptism of Christ* for San Giorgio in Braida.



Fig. 10 / Giotto, *The Last Judgment* (detail), 1306, fresco, Padua, Scrovegni Chapel.

Probably executed around 1576, the *Baptism* seems to have been commissioned by Prior Nicolò Bruno, who paid for several other decorations of the church.³⁴ That Paolo Fiammingo was introduced to the Canons during this period – either in Venice or Verona – is possible, but his exact connection to Sant'Angiolo in Monte remains unknown. Fiammingo's commissions from Hans Fugger during the 1580s also raise the possibility that the Oberlin painting was informed by the secular nature of those mythological and allegorical subjects.

Whether the Oberlin painting was intended as a work for public display in the church, or rather for personal enjoyment remains unclear, although it is worth pointing out that the format of the painting resembles that of a cabinet picture, more than an altarpiece. Given its unorthodox representation of holy figures and bizarre visual presentation, a more private setting for this painting would seem to make sense.

To be sure, the most unusual – and most actively disruptive – element of the composition is the peeling down of the illusionistic “canvas” that supports the landscape image. Indeed, the entire landscape view seems simultaneously to dissolve and slip away from the underlying image of the Holy Family, which is partially visible through the transparent portion of the fugitive canvas. These motifs of rolling and peeling are also found in images of the Last Judgment and the Apocalypse. For example, in the upper right and left corners of the west wall of Giotto's fresco of the Last Judgment in the Arena chapel in Padua (fig. 10), two angels peel back the edges of the sky to reveal the “new heaven and new earth” that occurs with the Judgment in the Book of Revelations (21:1-4).³⁵ This conjoined theme of rolling and revelation is also explicitly mentioned in Saint John's description of the opening of the Sixth Seal: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal... the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together...” (6:12-14). Albrecht Dürer's woodblock print from the 1498 *Apocalypse* (fig. 11) conveys the chaos and disruption that occurs during the opening of the sixth seal, and it is possible that the textual reference to the “scrolling up” of the sky informed his arrangement of the heavens into sections of rolling banks of clouds. The theme of the sky tearing apart and rolling up, of destabilization and rupture, is appropriate for the depiction of the Apocalypse, but it is also arguably suitable to employ when conveying a general sense of transition, discovery, and revelation of a new order.



Fig. 11 / Albrecht Dürer, *The Opening of the Fifth and Sixth Seals, from the Apocalypse*, 1498, woodcut. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The motif of the peeling canvas in the Oberlin painting may convey the cataclysmic effect of Christ's revelation and the subsequent disruption of the old world order, but the significance and integrity of the underlying image of the Holy Family is confounded by the fact that the figures' faces are cleaved by the edge of the canvas and their bodies disappear in the atmospheric haze of the Verona evening sky surmounted upon them. The Christ Child – purportedly the main focus of the painting's messianic message – is barely discernible under the peeling “canvas”, and his precursor John the Baptist is rendered almost completely illegible. As the topmost visual layer peels away, so does our presumed understanding of the purpose of this image, of the certainty that we are occupying a specific place and time in relation to the portrayed landscape, and the clarity of the sacred figures emerging beneath it. The slipping canvas negates the seemingly concrete indication of location provided on the cartellino and as a result the entire image exudes a sense of instability and rupture. Moreover, the artist further complicates the viewer's comprehension of the image by portraying the slipping canvas as transparent, effectively overlapping the images and forcing the viewer to perceive them concurrently. It is not just a case of revelation, but of dramatically portrayed simultaneous contemplation.

SIMULTANEOUS VISION

This emphasis on visual simultaneity situates the painting in a discourse on the nature of vision and the rhetoric surrounding its pictorial expression during the sixteenth century. Attitudes toward vision during the sixteenth century were informed by various theological arguments current among educated clergy and humanists, especially those centred on the writings of Saint Augustine.³⁶ These interpretations of the nature of vision, in turn based on antique theories, characterized sight as a contemplative

process that elevated the mind from the material world, including several varieties of cognitive and spiritual reflection.³⁷ Vicente Pérez de León has made a compelling argument for viewing the Oberlin *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* in the context of Saint Augustine's classifications of different modes of vision.³⁸ In his fifth-century exegesis of the chapter of Genesis, *De genesi ad litteram*, Augustine defined three categories of vision: that of the corporeal, the lowest; spiritual vision, that often occurs in dreams or in the imagination; and the highest level, intellectual vision.³⁹ Within this last category, Augustine acknowledged the potential for the comprehension of divine truths, but he believed that dreams allowed for a mixture of the various forms of vision, both mundane and spiritual. The dream or ecstatic state, according to Augustine, was a liminal condition that allowed for the intermingling of what can be determined with the senses and what cannot: “When images of bodies are formed in sleep or in ecstasy, a person does not distinguish them from bodies until he returns to the life of the bodily senses and recognizes that he was in a world of images which he did not derive from the senses of the body.”⁴⁰ In light of Augustine's description of liminal vision, the layered representation of a holy and a secular image in the Oberlin painting lends itself to a richer interpretation, one that encourages not only the simultaneous perception of both sacred and worldly images, but an inextricable linking of their meanings as symbol and illusion.

An Augustinian reading of the painting's extraordinary illusionism is further supported by the fact that the Canons occupying Sant'Angiolo in Monte had been forced to take monastic vows in 1568 due to a papal bull issued by Pius V as a measure of reform, making them Canons Regular by the time *A Vision of the Holy Family* was painted.⁴¹ The Canons Regular lived under the Rule of Saint Augustine and must have been familiar with his writings, including those on modes of vision.

While a direct connection cannot be made at this time between the painting's patronage and the artist's unusual compositional approach, it is intriguing to consider the possibility that the work's patron would have been aware of concepts pertaining to simultaneous vision and found a painter who could render and interpret these concepts visually.

The Oberlin painting has been referred to consistently as a trompe l'oeil,⁴² but it is worth noting here that, despite its profound exploration of illusionistic possibilities, it does not follow the same rules of illusionism that have been applied historically to the definition of a trompe l'oeil. This term – to “trick the eye” – functions today as a collective reference to all consciously illusionistic painting, but its specific origins derive from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. In the well-known tale of a contest between the two fifth-century BC Greek painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasios (35:36),⁴³ the former painted a bunch of grapes so realistic that birds, pecking at the fruit, were fooled by it. Parrhasios, looking to outdo his compatriot, depicted a curtain over an easel, which Zeuxis asked him to pull aside so that he could see the painting underneath and thus was defeated: it is one thing to fool an animal, but another thing to fool a man. Pliny's anecdote became the accepted origin of illusionism in European painting, persisting well into the early modern era, but its defining aspect is that the Zeuxis was tricked into believing – even if only for a moment – that Parrhasios's pictorial illusion was real. Judging by this standard, illusionistic paintings are not always trompe l'oeil, but trompe l'oeil paintings exploit a comprehensive degree of illusionism.

Perhaps the portion of the Oberlin composition that most closely aligns with the goals of a trompe l'oeil is the cartellino at the bottom centre of the painting. The cartellino derives from a long tradition that developed in North Italian painting and in northern Europe as a means for an artist to declare his mastery of illusionism.⁴⁴ Here too, however, the Oberlin painting is something of an atypical example, since a cartellino would usually feature an artist's name, date, or other distinguishing *insignia*. By the mid-sixteenth century, painters were less inclined to sign their names on paintings, relying instead on their artistic talent to proclaim their identity as the work's author, and Fiammingo may have felt it unnecessary to inscribe his name for similar reasons.⁴⁵ This cartellino seems to have more in common with the types found in ex-voto imagery, in which the location of the depicted miracle, details about its occurrence, or exhortation to the intended holy figure are indicated in writing within the composition. This tradition might suggest that this work was intended for a similar purpose – to commemorate a miraculous event – though the words on the fictive piece of paper do not offer details other than location and date.

In its illusionism, the Oberlin painting does not quite achieve the same kind of effect as traditional trompe l'oeil paintings due to the fact that its two main fictitious components – the view of Verona and the second composition of the Holy Family – do not remain distinct from each other. The semi-transparency of the top “canvas” undermines a believable conceit of portraying a painting rolling down to reveal another. The peeling canvas offers the promise of believable solidity in its form – particularly

at its meticulously rendered edge displaying tack holes and fraying threads – but nevertheless must be depicted as translucent to preserve the legibility of the image of the Holy Family beneath it. Thus, Fiammingo created an image that openly and immediately exposes its own artifice and illusionism from the start – the “trick” of the trompe l'oeil is never fully established or resolved. Instead, the viewer is aware of its effort to be illusionistic from the beginning and continually reminded of it as one looks. The two compositions in the Oberlin painting are wedded together by the illusionistic matrix of the destabilized composition; the viewer cannot see one without the other, nor can one see them without being aware of the illusionistic device that presents them.

This layering of imagery constructed on an openly fallacious conception underscores the role of painting itself as a deceptive fiction, a topos prevalent in Renaissance art theory. Klaus Krüger has connected the Oberlin painting with contemporary discourse that addresses the simultaneously deceptive and revealing nature of painting and poetry.⁴⁶ Art theorists of the Renaissance alternated between casting painting as a means to fool through illusion, or to uncover a truth not at first visible. Cennino Cennini, in his early fifteenth-century *Il libro dell'arte*, states that the purpose of painting is to “discover unseen things concealed beneath the obscurity of natural objects, the sight of which did not before appear to exist”.⁴⁷ In Tommaso Garzoni's encyclopaedic treatise *La Piazza universale* of 1586, painting is described as “a rare and monstrous art” that uses perspective to make one “see things that are not as they are”, generating “infinite amazement” for the viewer.⁴⁸

The prominence of the rolling canvas in the Oberlin painting draws attention to its status as a textile, which in turn recalls literary rhetoric that explores the idea of poetry as *textus*, the weaving of words into a deceptive surface of fictive veiling.⁴⁹ Both Boccaccio and Petrarch characterized poetry as an illusory device that “covers truth with a comely veil of fable” and as a “veil of delightful fictions”.⁵⁰ In this reading, the two fictive layers in the Oberlin painting function together much like a veil that simultaneously uncovers and obscures the very images they bear.

Recent scholarship has explored the numerous interpretations and functions of the veil: as an obstacle of vision, an instrument of revelation and devotion, and a boundary that controls access and entices transgression.⁵¹ Scriptural sources frequently use the veil as a metaphor of ignorance of God, as in Corinthians: “But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.”⁵² The *sudarium* of Saint Veronica, by virtue of its encounter with Christ's face, transforms into a vehicle for revelation and an acheiropoietic object of devotion, the *Vera Icon*.⁵³ At the same time, the veil connotes protection in representations of the Virgin enveloping the Christ Child in her veil or mantle, or functions as a “mechanism of mediation” between a sacred image and its audience.⁵⁴ But veils were not solely intended to be opaque dividers of space and experience. Indeed, it was often the instrument of the veil that made the act of looking more precise and activated.⁵⁵ Alberti, in his *De Pictura*, employed the veil in his discussion of means to concentrate the eye, recommending the use of a thin, translucent veil to assist in tracing figural contours.⁵⁶

By eschewing clarity and unimpeded sight, the artist could instead create images that were artful and intellectually guided by a liminal state between reality and the imaginary, the seen and the unseen.

The prominence of the unfurling canvas which appears to function as a veil over the underlying composition – with both a translucent and opaque components – signals a sophisticated intertwining of religious and creative modes of vision. Rather than function merely as a divider of the holy from the secular, the illusionistic construction of the transparent canvas in the Oberlin painting facilitates simultaneous viewing of sacred and secular images while drawing attention to both the act of looking and the art of painting. The rolling, transparent canvas depicted in the act of slipping away may have been intended to visualize the slippage between the traditional binaries of the secular and sacred, nature and artifice, and the seen and unseen.

As such, insistence on the visual experience – on the act of looking – is embedded throughout the painting and encourages a constant ocular shifting between the various layers of the image. It cannot be mere coincidence that the rolling edge of the canvas – the very detail that destabilizes and signals the painting's illusory quality – creates a physical connection between the eyes of Joseph and Mary. Moreover, the artist provides another detail that intensifies this movement in and out of the painting's fictive layers: Mary's head covering transitions into a transparent veil, the edging of which is painted with heavy dragging brushstrokes of white paint that transform into the edges of a cloud catching the rays of the sun in the Verona landscape below. Assimilating veils with clouds of the heavenly realm occurs in numerous Italian Renaissance altarpieces, especially many by Titian, but here Fiammingo uses it to connect the layers of the painting visually.³⁷ Just as the vista draws the viewer deeper into the image, the detail of the

Virgin's veil immediately pulls the eye back out, onto the surface of the work.

In this way, one might categorize the self-conscious quality of *A Vision of the Holy Family near Verona* as a “meta-painting,” produced as commentary on the artist's manual and intellectual talents.⁵⁸ But there seems to be more in this image beyond an artist displaying his prowess. The very device that could announce most clearly the artist and his talents – the cartellino – is denied the opportunity to self-promote by not stating a name. Instead, the complex illusionistic structure of the rolled edge of the translucent canvas seems to point the viewer's attention to the mechanism of looking itself. Rather than trying to trick or conceal, the illusionistic canvas-veil demands an active simultaneous perception, encouraging the viewer to contemplate the liminal space between reality and illusion through the act of looking. This illusionistic device acts as a tether between the religious imagery and the visual transition that is central to navigating the image's structure predicated on the powers of vision, belief, and illusion.



NOTES

- The author acknowledges gratefully Selina Bartlett, Liliانا Milkova, Jill Pederson, and April Oettinger, who were instrumental in the realization of this article. This painting was the subject of a paper given at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Berlin in 2015, for which the author received support from a Renaissance Society of America/Kress Travel Grant.
- Giambattista Biancolini, *Notizie storiche delle Chiese di Verona*, vol. 1 (Verona: A. Scolari, 1749), p. 387. Sant'Angiolo in Monte appears on the horizon between Castel San Pietro and Castel San Felice in Paolo Ligozzi's bird's eye view of *Verona Città Celeberrima*, ca. 1630, engraved by Francesco Valegio (Biblioteca Civica di Verona). For an illustration, see Giorgio Marini, "Panorami di Verona nell'iconografia a stampa della città dal Cinquecento ad oggi," in *Panorami di Verona*, exh. cat. (Verona: Biblioteca Civica di Verona, 2002), pp. 8-9.
- Handwritten records of the painting's earlier attributions can be found in the painting's file at the Allen Memorial Art Museum. The painting was sold as "School of Verona" when Samuel H. Kress acquired it from the Durlacher Brothers in 1946. Between Kress's acquisition of the painting in 1948 and its dispersal to the Allen Memorial Art Museum in 1961, the painting briefly gained an attribution to Leonardo da Vinci, according to its intake information when it was being considered for accession by the National Gallery of Art, which ultimately did not occur. Who determined this attribution was not recorded. Kress Study Collection Notes indicate that William Suida saw certain elements of Domenico Tintoretto's hand as well as Jacopo Tintoretto's influence in the painting, but he settled for a more generic attribution to a Venetian painter.
- Mullaly's attribution is noted in Wolfgang Stechow, *Catalogue of European and American Paintings and Sculpture in the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College* (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1967), p. 85.
- David Alan Brown in *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe l'Oeil Painting*, ed. Sybille Ebert-Schiffeler, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2002-2003) p. 296.
- Paola Marini rejected an attribution to Marco Angolo del Moro via email communication in 2014 with this author.
- Jean-Hubert Martin, ed., *Carambolages*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 2016); Takashi Sumi, *Visual Deception*, exh. cat. (Nagoya: Chunichi Shinbunsha, 2009); Ebert-Schiffeler, *Deceptions and Illusions*; Joy Kenseth, ed., *The Age of the Marvelous*, exh. cat. (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, 1991); E. Jane Connell and William Kloss, *More than Meets the Eye: The Art of Trompe L'Oeil*, exh. cat. (Columbus, OH: Columbus Museum of Art, 1985-1986).
- Cleaning and treatment of the painting was carried out in 2015 by Andrea Chevalier, Senior Paintings Conservator, at the Intermuseum Conservation Association in Cleveland, OH. Her report is in the painting's curatorial file at the Allen Memorial Art Museum.
- Mauro Lucco, email message to this author, 24 October 2014. For the cited works, see Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 11 (1978): no. 33, pp. 47-188, figs. 10-13, and Peter Humfrey and Allison Sherman, "The Lost Church of San Niccolò ai Frari (San Nicoletto) in Venice and its Painted Decoration," *Artibus et Historiae* 36 (2015): p. 260. Contemporary writers – Carlo Ridolfi (1648) and Marco Boschini (1664) – historically attributed the organ shutters to Fiammingo; see Humfrey and Sherman, "The Lost Church of San Niccolò ai Frari," p. 258, who argue for a later date (ca. 1580) for Fiammingo's contribution to the church's decoration campaign.
- Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," no. 28, figs. 38-39.
- Im Kinsky Auktionenhaus, Vienna, 24 June 2014, lot 465, and the Dorotheum, Vienna, 13 October 2010, lot 322.
- See Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," no. 50, p. 73, fig. 74; Holm Bevers, *Niederländische Zeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts in der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung München* (Munich: Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung, 1989), no. 25, p. 32, fig. 81. The drawing bears an old, inscribed attribution to Fiammingo.
- Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell'arte*, ed. Detlev Freiherrn von Hadeln (Rome: Società multigrafica editrice SOMU, 1965), pp. 82-83.
- Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," in *Da Tiziano a El Greco: Per la storia del Manierismo a Venezia, 1540-1590*, ed. Anna Della Valle, exh. cat. (Venice: Palazzo Ducale, 1981), p. 238. See also Élinor Myara Kelif, "'Cueillir la rose': une métaphore visuelle dans la peinture vénitienne du XVIIe siècle, de Paris Bordone à Paolo Fiammingo," *Revue de l'Art* 199 (2018): pp. 19-28.
- Andrew John Martin, "Erdzeitalter, nicht der 'Frühling'. Hans Fugger und die Zyklen Paolo Fiammingos," in *Die Welt des Hans Fugger (1531-1598), Material zur Geschichte der Fugger*, eds. Johannes Burkhardt and Franz Karg, vol. 1 (Augsburg: Wissner, 2007), pp. 197-216.
- Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," p. 56. See Martin, "Erdzeitalter, nicht der 'Frühling,'" pp. 199-204, for documentation of these commissions and attempts at reconstructing their iconographic program.
- Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," no. 6, p. 59, fig. 71.
- Lia Camerlengo, "Vedute e visioni: realtà e immaginario urbano tra medioevo e seicento," in *Imago Urbis: Il volto di Verona nell'arte*, ed. Flavia Pesci (Verona: Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Verona Vicenza Belluno e Ancona, 2001), p. 71, fig. 12.
- Stefania Mason Rinaldi, "Un nuovo ciclo di Paolo Fiammingo," *Arte Veneta* 24 (1970): pp. 224-230.
- Jeanne Conte, "Regarding a Painting," *Messenger of Saint Anthony* 9 (1986): pp. 26-27.
- For discussion of the origins and motivations of sixteenth-century Venetian pastoral landscape painting, see Patricia Egan, "Poesia and the Fete Champêtre," *The Art Bulletin* 4 (1959): pp. 303-313; David Rosand, "Giorgione, Venice and the Pastoral Vision," in *Places*

- of Delight: The Pastoral Landscape*, eds. Robert C. Cafritz, Lawrence Gowing, and David Rosand (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988), pp. 20-81; Jaynie Anderson, *Giorgione: The Painter of 'Poetic Brevity,' Including Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Flammarion, 1996); Stephen J. Campbell, "Giorgione's *Tempest*, Studiolo Culture, and the Renaissance Lucretius," *Renaissance Quarterly* 56 (2003): pp. 299-332; Jodi Cranston, *Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019). For the ambiguous nature of pastoral landscape painting as an artificial construct, see David Rosand, "Pastoral Topoi: On the Construction of Meaning in Landscape," in *The Pastoral Landscape*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1992), pp. 161-177.
- Stefania Mason, "Low Life and Landscape: Minor Pictures in late Sixteenth-Century Venice," in *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*, eds. Bernard Aikema, Beverly L. Brown, and Giovanna Nepi Scirà, exh. cat. (Venice: Palazzo Grassi, 1999), pp. 564-565.
- Leopoldine Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy in the Art of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625)* (Farnham: Taylor & Francis, 2009), p. 45.
- Arnold Witte, "The Power of Repetition: Christian Doctrine and the Visual Exegesis of Nature in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Painting," in *Le paysage sacré: Le paysage comme exégèse dans l'Europe de la première modernité / Sacred Landscape: Landscape as Exegesis in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Denis Ribouillault and Michel Weemans (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011), pp. 93-112.
- Cited in Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," p. 56: "...perchè i paesi volgiono essere distinti in tre parti. La prima vuol'essere visibile d'appresso, la seconda, più abbagliata, e la terza che quasi si smarrisca affatto e perda in infinito, sicche la seconda si compogna in effetto giusta di prospettiva con la prima."
- Moshe Barasch, "Cristoforo Sorte as a Critic of Art," in *Studi in onore di Giusta Nicco Fasola. Arte Lombarda* 10 (1965): pp. 253-259.
- Mason Rinaldi, "Paolo Fiammingo," no. 48, p. 72. The inscription states: "Che miri o pittor / al mio fatto / Io il moto dipingo / tu solo l'atto." Mason Rinaldi notes that Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann and Erwin Panofsky determined the interpretation of the drawing's subject.
- Biancolini, *Notizie storiche*, vol. 1, p. 313.
- Heather Nolin, "Uniting Faith and Image: The Collective Visual Identity of the Congregation of Secular Canons and its Expression in the Artistic Commission at San Giorgio in Braida, Verona (1441-1668)" (PhD diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2011), p. 168.
- Nolin, "Uniting Faith and Image," pp. 175-176.
- Nolin, "Uniting Faith and Image," p. 177.
- Thanks to Heather Nolin for confirming the absence of Fiammingo's name among the records she consulted for her dissertation research (see note 29).

- See Humfrey and Sherman, "The Lost Church of San Niccolò ai Frari," p. 270.
- Nolin, "Uniting Faith and Image," p. 351.
- Claude Gandelman, *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 135.
- See Christian Kleinbub, *Vision and the Visionary in Raphael* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011); Robert S. Nelson, ed., *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kāndī to Kepler* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1981).
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- Vicente Pérez de León, *Cervantes y el cuarto misterio* (Alcalá de Henares: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 2010), pp. 90-102.
- See Cynthia Hahn, "VISEO DEI: Changes in Medieval Visuality," in Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, p. 171. See also Annemarie Mahler, "Medieval Style and St. Augustine's Theory of Threefold Vision," *Mediaevalia* 4 (1978): pp. 277-313.
- De genesi ad literam*, cited in Pérez de León, *Cervantes y el cuarto misterio*, p. 195.
- Nolin, "Uniting Faith and Image," p. 15.
- Connell and Kloss, *More Than Meets the Eye*, p. 21; Kenseth, *The Age of the Marvelous*, no. 199, p. 432; David Alan Brown in Ebert-Schiffeler, *Deceptions and Illusions*, no. 81; Pérez de León, *Cervantes y el cuarto misterio*.
- Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, ed. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S. H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A. (London, 1855), p. 35:36.
- Louisa C. Matthew, "The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures," *The Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): pp. 616-648; see also Kandice Rawlings, "Andrea Mantegna's Saint Mark and the Origins of the Cartellino," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, eds. Blake de Maria and Mary E. Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Edition, 2013), pp. 23-29.
- Matthew, "The Painter's Presence," p. 641.
- Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001), pp. 37-38, 42.
- Christiana J. Herringham, trans., *The Book of the Art of Cennino Cennini: A Contemporary Practical Treatise on Quattrocento Painting* (London, 1899), p. 4 (accessed 29 December 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/p?d=hvd.32044034775148&view=1up&seq=11>).
- Tommaso Garzoni, *La Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, eds. Paolo Perchi and Beatrice Collina, vol. 2 (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1996), p. 1073; cited in Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*, p. 37.
- Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*, p. 41. See also Mary Pardo, "Veiling the *Venus of Urbino*," in

- Titian's Venus of Urbino*, ed. Rona Goffen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 108-128.
- See Mary Pardo, "The Subject of Savoldo's Magdalene," *The Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): pp. 67-91, and Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*, pp. 39-40.
- Patricia Simons, "The Visual Dynamics of (Un)veiling in Early Modern Culture," in *Visual Cultures of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Timothy McCall, Sean Roberts, and Giancarlo Fiorenza (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2013), pp. 24-53.
- 2 Corinthians 3:14.
- Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a 'True' Image* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 196-197.
- Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 218ff.
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- See Pardo, "The Subject of Savoldo's Magdalene," pp. 112-119, and Simons, "The Visual Dynamics of (Un)veiling," p. 46.
- Paul Hills, *Veiled Presence: Body and Drapery from Giotto to Titian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), esp. pp. 183-187.
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Epic Iran

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

29 May – 12 September 2021

MARGARET SQUIRES

Billed as the first comprehensive exhibition of art from Iran on British soil in 90 years, *Epic Iran* (Victoria and Albert Museum, 29 May – 12 September 2021) presents a sweeping view of Iranian artistic achievements from the earliest bloom of civilization in the fourth millennium BC to the present day.¹ This is an extraordinarily ambitious feat, intended to introduce new audiences to Iranian culture and dispel misconceptions brought on by negative portrayals in the media and the ongoing conflict between Iran and the West. The exhibition draws on the V&A's own outstanding holdings of art from Iranian lands and includes loans from numerous other UK, European, and American institutions like the British Library, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, and the State Hermitage Museum. It also showcases a great many objects from the London-based Sarikhani Collection, a privately owned trove of art from Iranian lands covering the vast scope of the region's history.

At the entrance to *Epic Iran*, images of the Iranian landscape impart a sense of place – a setting which grounds an exhibition spanning the myriad kingdoms, dynasties, languages, and religions that have held sway there over 5,000 years. Crossing through to the first gallery, heavy walls made to look like mud brick signal the room's focus on the material histories of Iran's earliest civilizations. That such a highly sophisticated society existed in Iran contemporaneously with the so-called "cradle of civilisation" in nearby Mesopotamia is one of *Epic*

Iran's most significant revelations. The first treasures on display in this gallery give an indication of the exceptional quality of the works of art that await the visitor throughout the exhibition. Two gold beakers decorated with human and animal forms embossed and chased in extraordinarily fine detail are a particular highlight here (fig. 1).

While the ancient civilisations represented in the first gallery may be unfamiliar to most, the next room transports visitors to one of Iran's best-known historical sites: the city of Persepolis (fig. 2). This gallery of works from the Achaemenid period includes examples of relief sculpture, intricate gold objects and vessels, and the famous Cyrus Cylinder, a prized loan from the British Museum. This room includes the first of two ambitious attempts within the exhibition to recreate elements of Iranian architecture through large-scale digital projection. Nineteenth-century casts taken at Persepolis by British archaeologists in 1827 are illuminated by projections that approximate their original polychromy, with three-dimensional line drawings of the rest of the frieze flanking on either side. An intriguing juxtaposition of modern and historical methods of reproducing a work of art, this display has a strong visual impact. It may be difficult, however, for many visitors to sort out the layers of recreation, approximation, and estimation at play here. The design of this gallery follows similar principles to the first, with a nod to the architecture in the stone-coloured display cases reminiscent of the pillars of Persepolis.

Fig. 1 / Beakers, Iran, about 1200-1000 BC, gold, h. 20.7 cm, diam. 12.8 cm (front), h. 13.2 cm, diam. 9 cm (centre), h. 6.5 cm (back) The Sarikhani Collection A. MW. 1076 (front) and A. MW. 1021 (centre), The Metropolitan Museum of Art 62.84 (back).



Fig. 2 / Gallery 2 (The Persian Empire), looking toward gallery 1.

The next section has a starkly different appearance, narrowing into a row of display cases set into plain grey walls. This section devoted to the art of the Parthian and Sasanian periods beautifully showcases examples of metalwork and glass. Dramatic lighting gleams against silver and gold, casting shadows that emphasize the elegant forms of the vessels on display (fig. 3). On one side of the gallery the Zoroastrian religion is introduced with several manuscripts and a video from a documentary about the practice of the faith today.

A small room painted in electric yellow extends from the Sasanian gallery, featuring illustrations from the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) (fig. 4). This epic tale tells the stories of Iran's great kings and heroes leading up to the fall of the Sasanian dynasty to Arab invaders. Placing this gallery here breaks the chronology of the exhibition, making a 600-year leap from the end of the Sasanian period to the earliest known illustrated copies of the *Shahnameh*. This placement is intended to frame the *Shahnameh* as a bridge between Iran's ancient

past and the later Islamic dynasties who visualized and interpreted their history through this text. From the early fourteenth century, Iranian rulers commissioned illustrated copies of the *Shahnameh* as a means of legitimizing their own rule and linking themselves to Iran's glorious past. Spectacular illustrations are showcased here, including an enchanting night-time battle scene from the magnificent *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp on loan from the Sarikhani Collection and the rarely exhibited Windsor *Shahnameh* from The Royal Collection.

This transition and the gallery that follows represent one of the moments of discontinuity in an exhibition which lacks cohesion in its overall design. Loosely centred on the adoption and practice of Islam in Iran, the 'Islamic' gallery opens with a leaf from one of the earliest known manuscripts of the Qur'an produced in the Arabian Peninsula. The diversity of works here presents an opportunity for a multifaceted discussion of the practice of Islam in Iran, including an image of



Fig. 3 / Sasanian silver, gallery 3 (The Last of the Ancient Empires).

the Imam ‘Ali fighting a demon that was once part of a manuscript used for fortune-telling at the Safavid court and an illustration to a story showing a cross-dressing Islamic warrior dancing before a king. Unfortunately, the interpretation given in didactic materials provides only a cursory overview of Islam’s introduction and the distinctions between its Sunni and Shi’i branches, leaving visitors to speculate about the more complex meanings held within these works for themselves. One of the most spectacular manuscript paintings in the exhibition is the magnificent *Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan* (fig. 5), a double-page painting depicting the position of the stars on the day of Iskandar Sultan’s birth in 1384 CE. Although on display in this gallery, to see it requires good luck or patience, as the light-sensitive work on loan from the Wellcome Collection is illuminated only briefly every quarter-hour, and is otherwise covered in complete shadow.

A mesmerizing audio recording of a woman reciting verses by the thirteenth-century poet Sa’di beckons the visitor into the next gallery, a twelve-sided room centred on the theme of literary excellence. This room’s shape is another nod to Iranian architecture, picking up on a design strategy seen earlier in the exhibition. Inscribed ceramics and metalwork alongside manuscripts and album pages demonstrate the broad reach of Iran’s rich literary traditions and invite a moment of contemplation amidst *Epic Iran*’s expansive galleries. A small carpet woven with animal forms, scrolling vines, and poetic verses increases the sense of intimacy in this gallery, almost as if you could take a seat on its luxurious pile and appreciate one of the many fine manuscripts on display nearby.

Passing by a pair of robes-of-honour, one magnificently woven in metal-wrapped silk, an impressive gallery devoted to the theme of royal patronage is revealed. Full-scale reproductions of tilework designs, including an animated digital projection of a dome, transport the visitor to the city of Isfahan (fig. 6). This room in particular presents a compelling story about the V&A’s own interests in the arts of Iran: the museum commissioned these to-scale paintings of Isfahan’s tile designs in the 1870s as part of a broader scheme to record globally significant architectural ornament. With a carpet placed horizontally on a slightly elevated platform, tile designs reproduced on the walls and rising toward the ceiling, and two large-scale paintings of figures within an architectural setting placed at eye level, this gallery effectively gives the visitor an opportunity to consider how such objects interacted within their original display context.

The next gallery focuses on the nineteenth century in Iran, featuring paintings, manuscripts, photography, tiles, and textiles from the Qajar era. This gallery includes the first reference within the exhibition to the lives of women at an Iranian court, with a small section showcasing several examples of women’s clothing and paintings from a costume album. The language used here nonetheless centres the male perspective, focusing on the Qajar king Fath ‘Ali Shah’s preferences for women’s attire, the number of children he fathered with the women of his court, and the ways in which the male gaze operates in depictions of women from this era. Iranian classical music plays overhead, enlivening the displays but sometimes clashing with audio overheard from the poetry recitation and two contemporary video works that follow.



Fig. 4 / Qaran Unhorses Barman, a folio from the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, Tabriz, ca. 1525-1535, opaque watercolour, ink, silver, and gold on paper, The Sarikhani Collection.



Fig. 5 / The Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan, Shiraz, Iran, 1411, bound manuscript with ink, watercolour, and gold on paper, each folio 26.5 x 16.7 cm, Wellcome Collection Ms Persian 474.



Fig. 6 / Gallery 6 (Royal Patronage).

Women feature prominently in the last section of *Epic Iran*, which includes a large proportion of women artists working in different media. The modern and contemporary sections of *Epic Iran* are divided into pre- and post-1979, though the Islamic Revolution itself is deliberately not a central focus of the narrative. The curators instead have chosen to concentrate on Iranian artists' contributions to modernism and the global contemporary art scene, in keeping with the overarching themes of the exhibition. Artists like Shirazeh Houshiary, who has lived and worked in London since the mid-1970s, represent the experiences of the many Iranians living in diaspora across the world today.

Epic Iran's sweeping nature will probably leave specialists wishing for more depth, catering instead to the casual visitor whose lack of awareness about Iranian culture it seeks to amend and correct by showcasing the beauty, longevity, and diversity of art produced in Iranian lands. While the exhibition succeeds in conveying the epic proportions of Iran's contributions to global cultural heritage, its disharmonious design and staggering scope make it

difficult to draw out the many important masterworks on display and convey deeper insights about the evolution of Iranian art and culture over time. Seeing the exceptional quality of so many of the works assembled for *Epic Iran*, one imagines how many opportunities exist to expand upon each and to engage in more nuanced discussions about the innumerable themes they present. With the blockbuster success of *Epic Iran*, there is hope that such exhibitions will come to fruition in the future.

NOTES

1. A lavish catalogue accompanies the exhibition: John Curtis, Ina Sarikhani Sandmann, and Tim Stanley, *Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture*, exh. cat. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2021).

PUBLICATION CREDITS

Colnaghi Studies

Journal / 9

October 2021

Publisher COLNAGHI FOUNDATION

Editors Irene Brooke, Nicola Jennings, and Jeremy Howard

Associate Editor Anna Koopstra

Produced by Athena Art Foundation

Designer Laura Eguiluz de la Rica

Project coordinator and picture research Sarah Gallagher

Printing & Binding Jiménez Godoy

ISBN: 978-1-9162294-4-0

Published by Colnaghi Foundation

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Colnaghi Studies Journal is produced
by the Athena Art Foundation.

The Colnaghi Foundation is grateful to Colnaghi for the generous support which has made this edition possible.

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Est. 1760