
Corrado Giaquinto's *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson* and Other Modelli for the Palacio Real of Madrid

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The small canvas of *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson* by Corrado Giaquinto (1703–1766), acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2011, is a significant addition to the artist's Spanish oeuvre (Figure 1).¹ The period that Giaquinto, originally from Italy, spent in Spain has received little attention in the art historical literature in recent times. This article looks broadly at the painter's time in that country and sheds new light in particular on his links to tapestry production at the Bourbon court. The Metropolitan's *Medea* is a key work from this phase of Giaquinto's career and should be understood within the larger context of his many projects for the Spanish royal court.

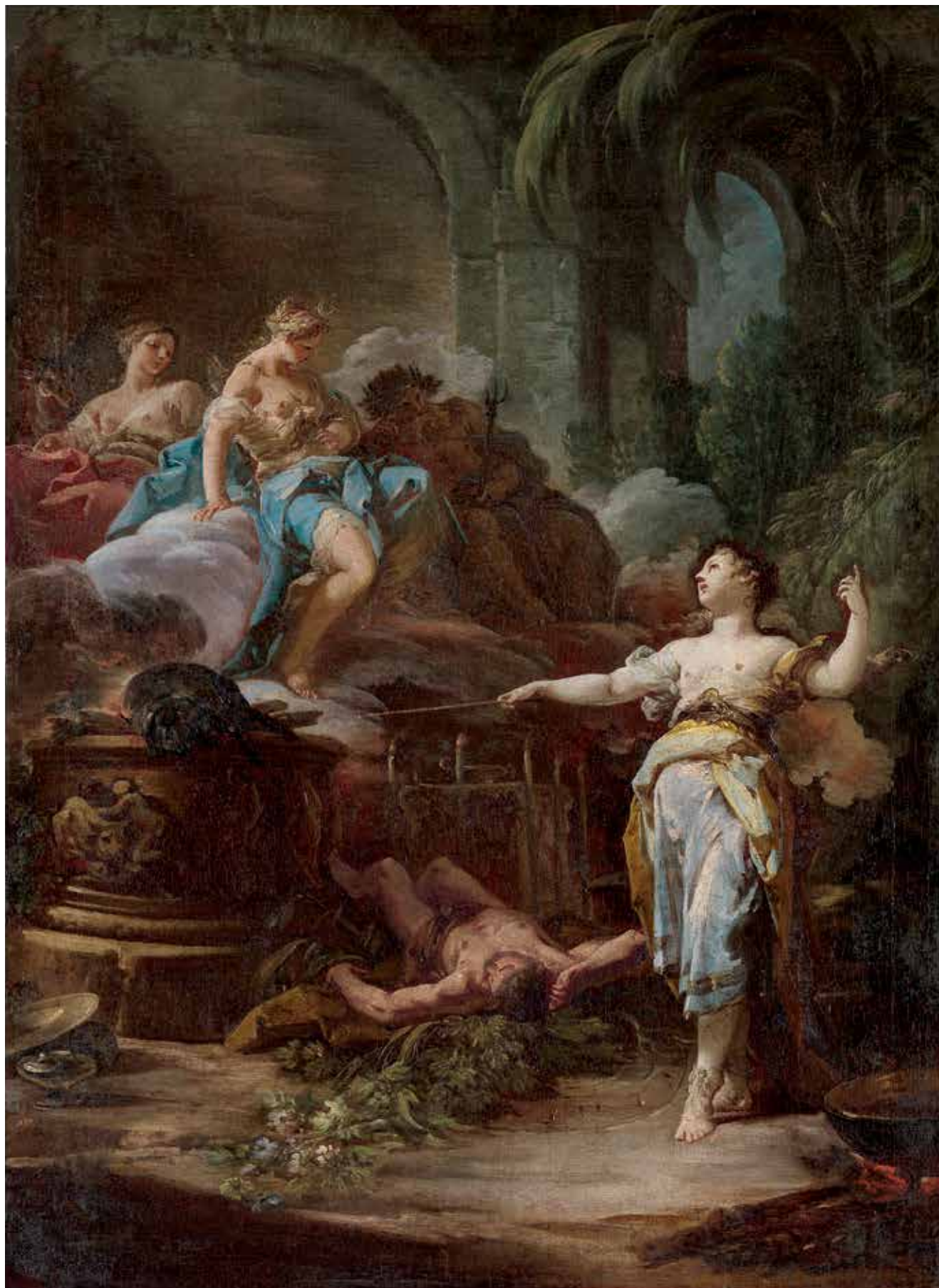
With the establishment of the Bourbon dynasty and the ascent to the throne in 1700 of the duc d'Anjou as Philip V (r. 1700–1746), the arts flourished in Spain. Philip was succeeded consecutively by his children Ferdinand VI (r. 1746–59) and Charles III (r. 1759–88), the two Spanish kings for whom Giaquinto worked (Figure 2). Their respective queens—Barbara of Braganza (1711–1758) and Maria Amalia of Saxony (1724–1760)—were also interested in the visual arts, as was Philip V's widow, the queen mother Elisabetta Farnese (1692–1766), who was still a forceful presence during the reigns of both Ferdinand and Charles. The second half of the eighteenth century in Madrid witnessed substantial architectural work on the royal residences, starting with the building of the new Palacio Real, begun following designs by Filippo Juvarra (1678–1736) for Philip V in 1738. Construction on the royal palace continued under both Ferdinand and Charles, and each king chose a main architect, Giovanni Battista Sacchetti (1690–1764) and Francesco Sabatini (1721–1797), respectively. At the same time, the new palace of Riofrío near Segovia was also being built, and the already existing residences of the Buen Retiro, Pardo, El Escorial, La Granja de San Ildefonso, and

Aranjuez, all in or near Madrid, were refashioned. Under the Bourbons two new artistic institutions were created. In 1720, Jan van der Gotten (Flemish, 1642–1724) was brought from Antwerp to set up the new tapestry factory in Madrid, the Real Fábrica de Tapices de Santa Bárbara, which followed the model of the French Gobelins; and in 1744, the king founded an art academy, which later developed into the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. It was in this context—and in a period of particularly active artistic and architectural patronage in Madrid—that the Bourbon kings called to the city a series of Italian painters, including Jacopo Amigoni (1682–1752), Giaquinto, and subsequently Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770).

Giaquinto's move to Spain followed a considerable thirty-year career as a painter in Italy. Born in 1703 in the southern city of Molfetta, in Puglia, he studied with a minor painter from his hometown, Saverio Porto, before traveling in March 1721 to Naples, where he further trained in the studio of Nicola Maria Rossi (1690–1758), a disciple of Francesco Solimena (1657–1747).² By March 1727, Giaquinto had moved to Rome, and in 1733, he painted his first major fresco cycle in the Church of San Nicola dei Lorenesi. During brief visits to Turin between 1733 and 1735, Giaquinto produced frescoes for the Villa della Regina and for the chapel of Saint Joseph in the Church of Santa Teresa, along with a series of six canvases depicting the stories of Aeneas (now in the Quirinal Palace in Rome). During the 1740s the painter lived and worked in Rome; in 1740 he joined the Accademia di San Luca and worked on the decoration of churches such as San Giovanni Calibita (ca. 1741–42), San Lorenzo in Damaso (1743), and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (ca. 1744). Giaquinto also trained Spanish students in Rome, including Antonio González Velázquez (1723–1793), with whom he worked on a commission from Ferdinand VI of Spain to decorate the Church of the Santissima Trinità degli Spagnoli in Rome in 1750.

After the death of Amigoni on August 22, 1752, Giaquinto was invited by King Ferdinand VI to travel to Spain; he left

1. Corrado Giaquinto
(Italian, 1703–1766). *Medea
Rejuvenating Aeson*,
ca. 1760. Oil on canvas,
29 × 21½ in. (73.7 ×
54.6 cm). The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, Purchase,
University Place Foundation
Gift, 2011 (2011.82)





2. Louis-Michel van Loo (French, 1707–1771). *The Family of Philip V, 1743*. Oil on canvas, 160 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 204 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (408 × 520 cm). The future Ferdinand VI is the third figure from the left; the future Charles III is portrayed at the far right. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (inv. P02283). Photograph: Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Rome in April 1753 and arrived in Madrid in June. Amigoni had been the king's painter in Spain for five years (1747–52), and Giaquinto journeyed to Madrid to assume his place at court. In deciding to summon Giaquinto to Madrid, Ferdinand must have considered the artist's successful commissions from the Church and the aristocracy in Naples, Turin, and Rome as well as the work at Santissima Trinità. The secretary of state, José de Carvajal y Lancáster, and the Spanish ambassador in Naples, Alfonso Clemente de Aróstegui, were two key people who influenced the king's choice. Since 1737, the castrato Carlo Broschi (1705–1782), known as Farinelli, had been a celebrated resident at court, as both Philip V and his son Ferdinand were particularly fond of music, and Farinelli may also have been instrumental in Giaquinto's move to Spain. Soon after his move to Madrid, the painter portrayed the castrato in a magnificent canvas in which the singer was presented together with a self-portrait of the artist and a medallion displaying effigies of Ferdinand and Barbara of Braganza (Figure 3). The art of Giaquinto and the music of Farinelli were defining features of the Madrid art world under Ferdinand.

As soon as Giaquinto arrived, he was provided with lodgings in a house on Calle del Tesoro, near the Palacio Real,



3. Corrado Giaquinto. *Portrait of Carlo Broschi, Known as Farinelli*, ca. 1753. Oil on canvas, 108 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 73 in. (275.5 × 185.5 cm). Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica, Bologna

4. Corrado Giaquinto.
Triumph of Joseph,
 ca. 1754–58. Oil on canvas,
 126 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 128 in. (321 ×
 325 cm). Patrimonio
 Nacional, Palacio Real de
 Aranjuez, Sala de
 Conversación (now
 Comedor de Gala).
 Photograph: © Patrimonio
 Nacional



5. Corrado Giaquinto. *Spain
 Rendering Homage to
 Religion and the Catholic
 Church*, ca. 1755. Fresco.
 Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio
 Real, Madrid, Staircase.
 Photograph: © Patrimonio
 Nacional



where Amigoni had previously lived and which was still decorated with the furniture that had belonged to another painter, Louis-Michel van Loo (1707–1771).³ Official appointments soon followed: on December 7, 1753, he was made “primer pintor de cámara” (First Painter) with a salary of 8,000 pesos per year, and the following day the king nominated him director of the Academia de San Fernando, a year after the institution had received its royal charter.⁴ The painter became its first director, supported in his role by Giovanni Domenico Olivieri (1708–1762) for sculpture and Sacchetti for architecture.

Palace decoration was of primary importance for the royal family in this period. Early in his tenure, Giaquinto was commissioned to restore the frescoes by Luca Giordano (1634–1705) in the Casón del Buen Retiro. While most of Giaquinto’s Spanish works are difficult to date exactly, it seems possible that his first independent work was the series of seven canvases painted between 1754 and 1758 for the Sala de Conversación (now the Comedor de Gala) at the palace in Aranjuez, which completed a project started by Amigoni before his death.⁵ Four illustrate biblical stories from the life of Joseph (Figure 4), and three were allegorical subjects. For his royal patrons, Giaquinto produced other

religious paintings, including the two cycles of small canvases with the Passion of Christ for the oratories of Ferdinand and of Barbara of Braganza (Oratorio del Rey and Oratorio de la Reina) at the Buen Retiro, and the altarpiece of *Saints Francis de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal*, completed in October 1757 for the royal church of Las Salesas. Most of Giaquinto's work, however, focused on the new Palacio Real.⁶ Originally designed by Juvarra, the palace was begun in 1738 under the supervision of his pupil Sacchetti, who had taken over after the former's death in 1736. Giaquinto arrived at a crucial point during construction and worked in three major spaces: the Royal Staircase, Royal Chapel, and Hall of Columns. The decoration was regulated by a specific iconographic program, devised from 1747 to 1757 by the Benedictine monk Martín Sarmiento, and Giaquinto followed Sarmiento's plans for both the staircase and chapel. Sacchetti and Giaquinto collaborated on many of the decorative choices for the building; the division of labor between First Architect and First Painter seems to have been fluid on many occasions. For example, when Giaquinto frescoed the staircase and chapel, he also designed the stuccowork that framed it. On the ceiling of the main staircase—originally intended as a grand double staircase—the artist painted *Spain Rendering Homage to Religion and the Catholic Church* (Figure 5), accompanied by four allegorical figures, depicted as cutouts below the vault, the *modelli* for which also survive: *Peace* (Figure 6), *Magnanimity* (Figure 7), *Liberality* (Figure 8), and *Public Happiness* (Figure 9), and two ovals with *Urania* (Figure 10) and *Security* (Figure 11). In the chapel, he decorated the dome with the *Coronation of the Virgin*; the four pendentives with *Saints Leander* (Figure 12), *Isidore the Laborer* (Figure 13), *Hermenegild* (Figure 14), and *Mary of the Head* (Figure 15); and the three vaults above the entrance, presbytery, and choir. Work on the dome had started in 1754, but most of the decoration took place between 1757 and 1758 and was completed in 1759.⁷

Six years after his arrival in Madrid and while at work on the colossal enterprise of the Palacio Real, Giaquinto suffered the most serious crisis during his time in Spain. In 1759, Ferdinand VI died and was succeeded by his half brother Charles III. On December 3, 1759, Giaquinto wrote to Charles's Neapolitan architect, Luigi Vanvitelli (1700–1773), complaining: "I had to outdo all my reasonable limits, I had to act as an architect, decorator, and more; this is how I live here." He added in a concerned, if somewhat resigned, tone: "all that is left now is that I await this new monarch, as one says, new patron new law."⁸ As soon as the new king arrived from Naples in January 1760, he introduced modifications for the palace, and Sacchetti was replaced as royal architect by another Italian, Francesco Sabatini, Vanvitelli's son-in-law. It became immediately clear that Charles and Sabatini had ideas for the Palacio Real very different from those of Ferdinand and Sacchetti, and many plans were



6. Corrado Giaquinto. *Peace*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (74 × 53 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032932). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



7. Corrado Giaquinto. *Magnanimity*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (73 × 53 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032929). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



8. Corrado Giaquinto. *Liberality*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (73 × 53.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032931). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



9. Corrado Giaquinto. *Public Happiness*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (73 × 53.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032934). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional

radically altered.⁹ Sabatini resented Giaquinto's interference with the stuccowork, and as the paintings for the staircase and chapel ceilings were finished, Sabatini made sure that Giaquinto would not be involved with the architecture and the decoration of the second staircase (now the Hall of Columns). In 1760, Sabatini wrote to the king in no uncertain terms: "I feel it is right that everyone should take care of their part, that is Don Corrado of painting, and I of architecture."¹⁰ Giaquinto decorated what was to become the new main staircase before it was transformed into the Hall of Columns, with a ceiling that featured the *Triumph of Apollo and Bacchus*. After two years under the new regime, he felt undervalued and asked Charles for a leave of absence. As Giaquinto stated he was ill and needed to take the baths in Italy, he was granted six months to return to Naples; in February 1762, he left Spain, never to return. By October the king had granted him permission to remain in Naples, and Charles was free to employ two painters whom he had called to Madrid and whose work hewed closer to his taste, notwithstanding their very different artistic styles: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and Anton Raphael Mengs (German, 1728–1779).¹¹ Giaquinto died in Naples four years later, in 1766.

During his decade in Spain, Giaquinto was also involved in the creation and production of tapestries. These activities are still somewhat unclear despite recent important studies on the subject.¹² Philip V had created the Real Fábrica de Tapices de Santa Bárbara under Van der Goten in 1720, and

after the Flemish tapestry master died in 1724, his children (Francis, Jacob, Cornelis, and Adrian) took over.¹³ While the Van der Goten family ran the factory and produced the tapestries, the *pintores de cámara* provided the designs for them. In spite of his long involvement with the Real Fábrica, Giaquinto is only documented as supervising the cartoons for tapestries after designs by other artists (Giordano and Solimena), and when tapestries were based on his canvases, they replicate paintings that were not initially meant for that purpose. The first established contact between Giaquinto and the Real Fábrica dates to November 7, 1755, when he was asked to choose from a series of paintings by David Teniers the Younger (Flemish, 1610–1690) so that tapestries could be made after their designs.¹⁴ Under Ferdinand VI and after 1756, Giaquinto created tapestry cartoons based on paintings by Giordano, possibly his stories of David and Solomon, which were destined for the Besamanos de la Reina, a room in the queen's apartments (Cuarto de la Reina) that is now part of the dining room (Comedor de Gala).¹⁵ With the death of Charles III's wife, Maria Amalia, soon after they had moved to Madrid in 1760, these apartments were occupied by the queen mother, Elisabetta Farnese. Under the new king, Giaquinto was put in charge of the designs for the Real Fábrica on May 11, 1760. In the following years he was involved with three sets of designs, including a series on Solomon using Giordano paintings and another with scenes from the lives of David and Solomon after works by Giordano and Solimena; about the time of Giaquinto's

10. Right: Corrado Giaquinto. *Urania*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 16 1/2 in. (56 x 42 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio de la Zarzuela (inv. 10055544). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



11. Far right: Corrado Giaquinto. *Security*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 16 3/8 in. (56 x 41.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio de la Zarzuela (inv. 10055545). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional





12. Far left: Corrado Giaquinto. *Saint Leander*, ca. 1757–58. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (83.5 × 55.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032894). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



13. Left: Corrado Giaquinto. *Saint Isidore the Laborer*, ca. 1757–58. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (83.5 × 55.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032897). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



14. Far left: Corrado Giaquinto. *Saint Hermenegild*, ca. 1757–58. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (83.6 × 55 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032895). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



15. Left: Corrado Giaquinto. *Saint Mary of the Head*, ca. 1757–58. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (83.5 × 55.5 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032896). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional

16. Corrado Giaquinto.
Allegory of Wisdom, 1762.
Oil on canvas, 145 $\frac{5}{8}$ x
73 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (370 x 186 cm).
Reggia, Caserta, Italy



departure for Naples, his pupil José del Castillo (1737–1793) produced a group of cartoons based on Giaquinto's Joseph canvases at Aranjuez.¹⁶

The idea to produce tapestries to decorate the Palacio Real had been suggested by Sarmiento. On September 23, 1752, he proposed a set of fifty-one tapestries representing historical events and the deeds of Philip V and Ferdinand VI for the eighteen rooms in the south and west wings.¹⁷ As far as we know, Giaquinto was never directly involved, and the tapestry scheme does not seem to have developed any further than Sarmiento's program. After Giaquinto's return to Naples in 1762, he was commissioned to produce a large cartoon to his own design for the *Allegory of Wisdom* (Royal Palace of Caserta; Figure 16), part of a series of tapestries representing the conjugal virtues, woven by Pietro Duranti (1710–1789) between 1763 and 1767.¹⁸ Intended for the bedroom of Ferdinand IV (r. 1759–1825), son of Charles III, in the Palazzo Reale of Naples, the tapestries were designed by various artists, including Giaquinto, Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787), Stefano Pozzi (1699–1768),

Giuseppe Bonito (1707–1789), and Francesco De Mura (1696–1782).

Research on paintings relating to Giaquinto's design of tapestries in Spain provides new and significant evidence of his activity for the Real Fábrica. The back of the original canvas of *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, the work recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, is inscribed "Arazzi/Medea/CG" (Figure 17).¹⁹ The first word, *arazzi* ("tapestries" in Italian), reveals the work's purpose, and the rest of the text establishes the subject, Medea, and identifies the work as Giaquinto's via his initials. Two other paintings, now in the Casita del Príncipe at El Escorial palace, have similar inscriptions. The first clearly represents *Venus and Adonis* (Figure 18) and is inscribed "Arazzi/Venere/CG" (Figure 20).²⁰ The second is generally described as *Apollo and Daphne* though it appears in early inventories as *Pan and Syrinx* (Figure 19).²¹ Its inscription, "Arazzi/Aretusa/CG," however, clearly identifies the scene as *Alpheus and Arethusa* (Figure 21).²² Four other paintings by Giaquinto in the Casita also have matching inscriptions: *Peace with* "Scala/Pace/CG" (Figure 22); *Magnanimity*, "Scala/Magnanimita/CG" (Figure 23); *Liberality*, "Scala la Liberalita/CG" (Figure 24); and *Public Happiness*, "Scala/Felicita Publica/CG" (Figure 25).²³ These canvases are the *modelli* for the four allegorical figures on the ceiling of the Palacio Real staircase that Giaquinto decorated under Ferdinand VI. On each side of the staircase are two oval frescoes, *Urania* and *Security*, whose *modelli* are in the Palacio de la Zarzuela (Figures 10, 11).²⁴ Both have inscriptions: "Scala/Urania/CG" (Figure 26) and "Scala/Sicurezza/CG" (Figure 27). Thus, all six *modelli* for the staircase had their destination ("scala") and subject matter identified on the back above Giaquinto's initials. Research for this article has uncovered



17. Back of Figure 1



18. Corrado Giaquinto. *Venus and Adonis*, ca. 1760. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (90 × 50 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032933). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional



19. Corrado Giaquinto. *Alpheus and Arethusa*, ca. 1760. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (90 × 50 cm). Patrimonio Nacional, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Casita del Príncipe (inv. 10032930). Photograph: © Patrimonio Nacional

four more similarly inscribed Giaquinto paintings that are also now at the Casita. They represent *Saint Hermenegild*, marked “Angoli/S. Ermenegildo/CG” (Figure 28); *Saint Leander of Seville*, “Angoli/S. Leandro/CG” (Figure 29); *Saint Isidore the Laborer*, “Angoli/S. Isidoro/CG” (Figure 30); and *Saint Mary of the Head*, “Angoli/S. Maria la Caves/sa/CG” (Figure 31).²⁵ The name of one saint, previously identified as Damasus, Ildephonsus, or Isidore of Seville, is now firmly established as Leander.²⁶ The inscriptions match the others and again note the location, in this case the pendentives (“angoli”) of the chapel’s dome.

These thirteen canvases are the only known paintings by Giaquinto with corresponding inscriptions. While more may exist, subsequent canvas linings may now conceal such notations. It is extraordinary that all thirteen *modelli* remain in their unlined state. As nothing similar survives for any of his Italian commissions, before or after his Spanish years, Giaquinto may have added these inscriptions, all in Italian, solely on the back of his Spanish works. However, it cannot be excluded that other paintings may have had similar markings. Ten of the thirteen canvases are related to the staircase and chapel, and it is therefore possible that

the three remaining *modelli* for tapestries may have been intended for the palace or other residences. Except for *Medea*, all the *modelli* are documented as belonging to the Spanish royal collection.²⁷ In the inventory compiled in 1789–90 after the death of Charles III, *Venus and Adonis* and *Alpheus and Arethusa* are described as being in the apartments of the Infante don Pedro in the palace.²⁸ It also lists two *modelli* for the staircase (*Peace* and *Liberality*) in the same apartments, and the four for the chapel pendentives in the sacristy.²⁹ This group was later moved to the Escorial, and the staircase paintings first appear in an unpublished manuscript inventory of the Casita del Príncipe in 1824.³⁰ When the *Medea* was first published in 1977, it was in a private collection in Rodilana, near Valladolid.³¹ It is therefore impossible to ascertain if the painting was ever in the royal collection and, if so, how it reached Rodilana in the twentieth century.

Three of the *modelli* — *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Alpheus and Arethusa* — all likely belong to one tapestry series that was never executed. All three subjects derive from one of the best-known and most often used classical texts, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In book 7 (lines 162–293),



20. Back of Figure 18



21. Back of Figure 19



22. Back of Figure 6



23. Back of Figure 7



24. Back of Figure 8



25. Back of Figure 9



26. Back of Figure 10



27. Back of Figure 11



28. Back of Figure 14



29. Back of Figure 12



30. Back of Figure 13



31. Back of Figure 15

Ovid recounted the story of Medea restoring her father-in-law's youth.³² Aeson was old and nearing death; his son, Medea's lover Jason, asked her if she could prolong his father's life with her magic and even professed willingness to give years of his own life in exchange. The sorceress Medea had previously abandoned and betrayed her own father, Aeëtes of Colchis, for Jason and had helped him steal the Golden Fleece from Aeëtes. She thought back to her father, and moved by this reflection, she agreed to help Aeson without a sacrifice on Jason's part. Ovid described Medea's magic ritual in detail. She waited for a full moon, and barefoot, with her hair loose, and wearing flowing robes, she walked out at midnight while "men, birds, and beasts were sunk in profound repose; there was no sound in the hedgerow; the leaves hung mute and motionless; the dewy air was still." Calling on the gods of the night and the moon above all, Medea flew over Thessaly in her dragon-drawn chariot to gather herbs for her potion for nine days and nine nights before returning home. She built two turf altars, "one on the right to Hecate and one on the left to Youth," and started performing her rite by sacrificing a black sheep and, while uttering her incantations, poured its blood into a ditch, together with honey and milk. Medea prayed to "the king of the shades with his stolen bride not to be in haste to rob the old man's body of the breath of life" and had Aeson's body brought to her. She made him fall asleep and "stretched him out on a bed of herbs," before sending Jason and all others away so that no one would witness her rites. Having lit candles at the altars, "thrice she purified the old man with fire, thrice with water, thrice with sulphur," while her potion, which included "hoar frost gathered under the full moon, the wings of the uncanny screech-owl with the flesh as well, and the entrails of a werewolf, . . . the scaly skin of a slender Cinyphian water-snake, the liver of a long-lived stag, to which she added also eggs and the head of a crow nine generations old," boiled next to her.

Following Ovid's text precisely, Giaquinto presents this moment in the painting. Two altars, one of which is surrounded by candles, are in front of Medea; the sacrificed black sheep burns on one altar, while Aeson sleeps over a pile of herbs and a magic circle on the ground. To the right is the cauldron, in which the potion is being prepared. It is the middle of the night, and three supernatural creatures have appeared above the altars. In the guise of a huntress and with a crescent on her forehead, the central figure is undoubtedly Diana, whom Medea has invoked as the moon. The male god to the right should be identified as Neptune because of his trident; however, with no reason for him to be present at this event, it is possible that Giaquinto intended him to be Pluto, the "king of the shades," who is usually shown with a two-pronged instrument. The woman to the left may be "his stolen bride," Persephone, or possibly Hecate, to whom one altar was dedicated. The deer next to



32. Antonio Tempesta (Italian, 1555–1630). *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, 1606. Etching, 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (10.5 × 12 cm). From *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Ovid 1606, pl. 64). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of S. P. Jones, 1935 (35.6[65])

her is an unusual attribute for either Persephone or Hecate and may be another reference to Diana. The most dramatic moment in the story is about to occur. Medea proceeded to cut the sleeping Aeson's throat, letting all of his blood flow out, and replace it with her potion. As soon as this happened, "his beard and hair lost their hoary grey and quickly became black again; his leanness vanished, away went the pallor and the look of neglect, the deep wrinkles were filled out with new flesh, his limbs had the strength of youth," and he looked forty years younger.

This scene is often confused with another episode in Medea's story that Ovid also narrated. Moved by the miraculous rejuvenation of Aeson, the daughters of King Pelias asked Medea to perform a similar rite on their father. To avenge Aeson and Jason, whose throne Pelias had usurped, Medea began her ceremony, but after cutting Pelias's throat she fled, killing him and leaving his daughters to weep for their father.³³ In two other accounts of Jason and Medea's story—*The Library of Apollodorus* (1.9.27) and *The Library of History* by Diodorus Siculus (4.50.2–52.3)—Pelias was killed in this manner, but Aeson had committed suicide before Jason's return from Colchis with Medea and the Golden Fleece.

The death of Pelias is often depicted in illustrated editions of the *Metamorphoses*, the rejuvenation of Aeson less so. The iconography of Medea and Aeson was rare in antiquity. Starting in the Middle Ages, the event connected magic with the origin of medicine, and in the *Ovide moralisé*, the fourteenth-century French translation, the story was seen as a metaphor for man leaving his sins behind.³⁴ Woodcuts showing Medea and Aeson appear in an edition published by Johannes Steinman in Leipzig in 1582 and in the more famous one illustrated by Antonio Tempesta (1555–1630) and published in Amsterdam in 1606 (Figure 32). Giaquinto probably knew the Tempesta woodcut; the square altar surrounded by tall tapers is similar, as is Aeson's recumbent



33. Bartolomeo Guidobono (Italian, 1654–1709). *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson*, ca. 1690. Oil on canvas, 61 1/4 × 73 1/4 in. (155.5 × 186 cm). Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University (1980.200)



34. Corrado Giaquinto. *Medea*, 1732–33. Oil on canvas, 18 7/8 × 25 1/4 in. (48 × 64 cm). Collection of Marchese Giulio de Luca di Melpignano, Molfetta, Italy

body over the magic circle. In the sixteenth century, Benedetto Caliari (1538–1598; Paolo Veronese's brother) frescoed this subject in chiaroscuro in the courtyard of Ca' Mocenigo in Venice, and a canvas attributed to Orlando Flacco (ca. 1530–ca. 1592) in the Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona shows the story.³⁵ Guercino (1591–1666) drew the subject, and Bartolomeo Guidobono (1654–1709) painted it twice about 1700, in canvases now in a private collection and at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University (Figure 33).³⁶ Giaquinto himself painted the subject of *Medea* on several occasions. As early as 1732–33, the painter produced a series of twelve canvases with mythological subjects—now in the collection of Marchese Giulio de Luca in Molfetta—one of which depicts *Medea* (Figure 34).³⁷ An early 1750s half-length of a sorceress in the Pinacoteca Civica, Montefortino, has been variously identified as *Circe*, *Armida*, and a generic sibyl, but may be another representation of *Medea* (Figure 35).³⁸ A full-length canvas of the same figure by Giaquinto was exhibited at Colnaghi's in May–June 1961.³⁹

The three subjects for the tapestry *modelli*—*Medea*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Alpheus and Arethusa*—suggest that they may have been part of a series from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is likely that more *modelli* existed, and if so, have not yet been identified. The extent and purpose of this series as well as why it was not executed remain open to speculation. A canvas with the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* (Figure 36) in the Museo del Prado in Madrid is similar in style and facture to *Medea*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Alpheus and Arethusa* and could be a fourth *modello* for the tapestry series. Its height is similar to that of *Medea*, but the canvas is substantially wider; however, the difference in format would not be unusual in a tapestry series. The painting has been relined, and if an inscription once appeared on its back, it is no longer visible. The sacrifice of Iphigenia, like the three other subjects, is also described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The inscriptions matching the ones on the staircase and chapel *modelli* make it likely that the commission was related to a royal residence and most likely the Palacio Real itself. Royal patronage is also probably the reason why the project was left unfinished and why the tapestries were never made. While working for the Real Fábrica de Tapices, Giaquinto was paid a regular salary: no documentary evidence survives with regard to his specific work on individual tapestry projects, making it impossible to determine precisely if the Ovid series and the three *modelli* were conceived under Ferdinand or Charles. Both the staircase and chapel were decorated under Ferdinand VI, a fact that would strengthen the idea that the Ovid tapestries *modelli* were painted between 1753 and 1759 for the king. All three paintings, with their delicately orchestrated rhythm and staged compositions, seem appropriate for an opera lover like Ferdinand. *Medea* in particular displays an exceptionally operatic visual approach,



35. Corrado Giaquinto. *Medea*, ca. 1750. Oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 19 1/4 in. (64 x 49 cm). Pinacoteca Civica, Montefortino, Italy

reminding the viewer of fashionable performances of the time, those written by Pietro Metastasio above all. Ferdinand's death in 1759 could be the reason why the project was left unfinished. However, Charles III could have commissioned the tapestries, which would date the *modelli* to 1760–63. The new king was especially fond of mythological subjects, and while Giaquinto's ceiling for Ferdinand's staircase depicted *Spain Rendering Homage to Religion and the Catholic Church*, his ceiling for Charles's staircase represented the *Triumph of Apollo and Bacchus*. A painting by Luis Paret (1746–1799) from about 1775 shows Charles III having lunch in the royal palace (Figure 37). The specific room has never been identified and is likely an imagined setting; behind the king and the courtiers are walls entirely decorated with tapestries that do not correspond to any known series. Their compositions are particularly Giaquinto-esque in style, and the painting suggests what the Ovid series may have looked like if it had been completed and translated into tapestry form. If Charles were the patron, Giaquinto's departure to Naples and the arrival of Mengs and Tiepolo may well explain why the project was abandoned. A third possibility is that the tapestry group, with its focus on the female figures of Medea, Venus, Arethusa, and possibly Iphigenia, may have been intended for the apartments of one of the queens. As Maria Amalia died soon after her arrival in Madrid in 1760, it is unlikely, if not impossible, that they were conceived for her. Giaquinto may have designed the



36. Corrado Giaquinto. *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, ca. 1760. Oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 48 3/8 in. (75 x 123 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (inv. 105). Photograph: Museo Nacional del Prado

37. Luis Paret y Alcázar
(Spanish, 1746–1799).
Charles III Dining at Court,
ca. 1775. Oil on canvas,
19¾ × 25¼ in. (50 × 64 cm).
Museo Nacional del Prado,
Madrid (inv. P02422). Photo-
graph: Museo Nacional del
Prado



series for either Barbara of Braganza before her death in 1758 or even the queen mother, Elisabetta Farnese.

It is apparent, however, that this must have been an important royal commission during Giaquinto's Spanish decade. *Medea Rejuvenating Aeson* is one of the few *modelli* by the artist relating to a Spanish commission, currently in a museum outside Spain. All others remain in the royal collection and are displayed in two royal residences. The discovery of thirteen matching inscriptions on the backs of Giaquinto's *modelli* at El Escorial, Zarzuela Palace, and the Metropolitan is fascinating, and more may be found. It would be interesting to determine if this was a standard practice in Giaquinto's workshop in Italy and Spain, or if these captions appear only on *modelli* relating to the Palacio Real. Even though the tapestry series was never completed, the New York *Medea* and its two companions at the Casita del Príncipe exemplify Giaquinto's art in Spain and bear witnesses to the splendor of the mid-eighteenth-century Bourbon court in Madrid. Art historian and critic Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez praised Giaquinto's sketches in his *Diccionario histórico* of 1800; he extolled the painter's skill and subtlety in color and concluded referring to his frescoes—but this is true of his

modelli and of the *Medea* in particular—that they “illustrate a creative genius, and extraordinary spirit, and a new and admirable taste.”⁴⁰

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NOTES

1. For the arts in Spain in the eighteenth century, see *L'Art européen à la cour d'Espagne* 1979; Mulvey 1981; Bottineau 1986; Helston 1989; and Kasl and Stratton 1997.
2. For Giaquinto's career in Italy, see De Dominici 1745, pp. 722–23; D'Orsi 1958; Olsen and Amato 1971; Amato 1981; *Giaquinto: Capolavori* 1993; Amato 2002; and Scolaro 2005.
3. For Giaquinto in Spain, see García Sáseta 1971; Pérez Sánchez 1971; Cioffi 1984, pp. 434–40; Cioffi 1992; Pérez Sánchez 2005; and *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006.
4. Urrea 2006, especially p. 42.
5. For the most up-to-date chronology of Giaquinto in Spain and for the known documentation on this period, see *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, pp. 94–104.
6. The most complete study of Giaquinto's work in the Palacio Real is Cioffi 1992.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–37.
8. “Qui mi è convenuto oltra passare i miei giusti limiti, havendo dovuto fare da Architetto, Ornamentista ed altro, etc, ecco qui come si vive . . . resta solo che io sto all'evento di esso Nuovo Monarca, como suole dire nuovo Padrone nuova Legge.” Urrea Fernández 1977, p. 121.
9. For the Palacio Real and its decoration in this period, see Sancho 1991a, 1991b, 2004a, and 2004b.
10. “Poiche mi pare giusto che ciascheduno bada alla sua parte, cioè Dn. Corrado alla Pittura, ed io all'Architettura.” Cioffi 1992, p. 361.
11. For Tiepolo, Mengs, and Charles III, see Whistler 1986 and Sancho 1997.
12. For Giaquinto and tapestry designs, see Göbel 1928, pp. 480–82; Held 1971; and especially Frutos Sastre 2006, pp. 57–73.
13. For the Fábrica, see Herrero Carretero 1993 and 2000.
14. Urrea 2006, p. 46.
15. Frutos Sastre 2006, pp. 58–60.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–69.
17. Cioffi 1992, pp. 112–13, 138–43.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 357; Clark 1985, pp. 290–91, no. 262; and *Giaquinto: Capolavori* 1993, pp. 212–13, no. 47.
19. Urrea Fernández 1977, p. 142, mistakenly transcribes the text as “Giaqui/Medea/C.G.”
20. *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, pp. 222–23, no. 58.
21. For the interpretation as Apollo and Daphne, see D'Orsi 1958, pp. 106, 110n5; and Urrea Fernández 1977, pp. 127–28. For Pan and Syrinx, see inventories in Fernández-Miranda 1988 and *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, pp. 224–25, no. 59. None of these sources seem to have known about the inscription on the back of the canvas.
22. The painting is correctly identified as *Alpheus and Arethusa* in Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina 2006, p. 50.
23. For the paintings, see *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, pp. 234–41, nos. 62–65. Pérez Sánchez correctly reports the inscription for *Peace*, but his transcriptions for *Liberality* and *Public Happiness* are partly incorrect, and he does not note an inscription behind *Magnanimity* even though there is one.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 242–45, nos. 66, 67.
25. For the paintings, see *ibid.*, pp. 212–19, nos. 53–56. Pérez Sánchez does not mention any of the inscriptions, except for the one behind *Saint Leander*. They were discovered only when the present author asked the curator at El Escorial to check the back of these *modelli*. I thank Almudena Pérez de Tudela Gabaldón for her help in examining these canvases.
26. Even though the inscription (Figure 29) is mentioned in *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, p. 214, no. 54, the author identifies the saint as Isidore of Seville, Leander's brother.
27. An unpublished 1772 inventory of the Palacio Real (from the Archivo General de Palacio) lists several “fabulas pequeñas” by Giaquinto, but it is impossible to safely identify any of these with the *Medea*. I would like to thank Leticia de Frutos Sastre for this information and for her kindness in checking the inventories of the Palacio Real.
28. Fernández-Miranda 1988, p. 59, in the “Quarto del S.r Ynfante D.n Pedro”: “1 Dos de tres quartas y media de alto y media vara de ancho: El uno el Dios Pan perseguiendo la ninfa Sirings, y el otro Adonis muerto, y Venus sitiendo su muerte, á mil y Quinientos reales cada uno. Corrado.” They also appear as “558. Dos de tres quartas y media de alto y media vara de ancho: El uno el Dios Pan persiguiendo la ninfa Sirings, y el otro Adonis muerto, y Venus sitiendo su muerte, á mil y quinientos reales cada uno. Corrado” in the same location in an unpublished 1789 inventory from the Archivo General de Palacio, Madrid. This information was provided to me by Leticia de Frutos Sastre.
29. Fernández-Miranda 1988, p. 59: “Tres quartas y media de alto y dos tercias de ancho: La Paz con la Cornucopia de la abundancia á los pies y un Genio que quema los Ynstrumentos de Guerra. Yd . . . Otro igual al anterior. La liberalidad repartiendo dones, en mil reales Idem.” For the chapel *modelli*, see p. 62.
30. Biblioteca di Palacio Real, Madrid, II/1882, “figuras alegoricas vocetos de la pinturas de la escalera del R.I Palacio de Madrid.” I thank Almudena Pérez de Tudela Gabaldón and Javier Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina for this information.
31. Urrea Fernández 1977, p. 129. The painting subsequently passed to William Cairns in Girona and Channel Islands until it was auctioned at Sotheby's, New York, January 27, 2011, lot 153, and purchased by the Metropolitan Museum. The painting has appeared in only two publications: Urrea Fernández 1977, and Amato 2002, p. 82.
32. Ovid 1994, vol. 1, with Latin and English translation on facing pages.
33. *Ibid.*, book 7, lines 297–356.
34. For a specific study of the iconography of Medea and Aeson, see Bardon and Bardon 1969, pp. 83–93.
35. Boschini 1666, p. 445; “Medea, ben vera Dea, che al vechio Eson/Rinzovenisse i membri, el cuor e 'l pelo,/Per meritar del so Giason l'anelo,/E mi ghe vogio dar mile rason.”
36. For the drawing, see Morassi 1937, p. 38, no. XLII; for the paintings, see Gelsomina Spione in Arnaldi di Balme et al. 2012, pp. 56–57, no. 10.
37. The other eleven canvases depict the *Triumph of Galatea*, *Polyphe-mus and Galatea*, *Rape of Europa*, *Hermes and Argus*, *Diana and Endymion*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Venus and Vulcan*, *Amphitrite and Neptune*, *Apollo and Daphne*, *Orpheus and Cerberus*, and *Perseus and Andromeda*. For the series, see Amato 2002, pp. 54–93.
38. *Giaquinto: Capolavori* 1993, pp. 184–85, no. 33; Scolaro 2005, pp. 230–31, no. 41; and *Corrado Giaquinto y España* 2006, pp. 140–41, no. 20.
39. A copy of this canvas was sold at Christie's, London, May 27, 1983, lot 163.
40. Ceán Bermúdez 1800, pp. 184–85; “sus obras manifiestan un genio criador, un espíritu extraordinario, y un gusto nuevo y admirable en el fresco.”

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