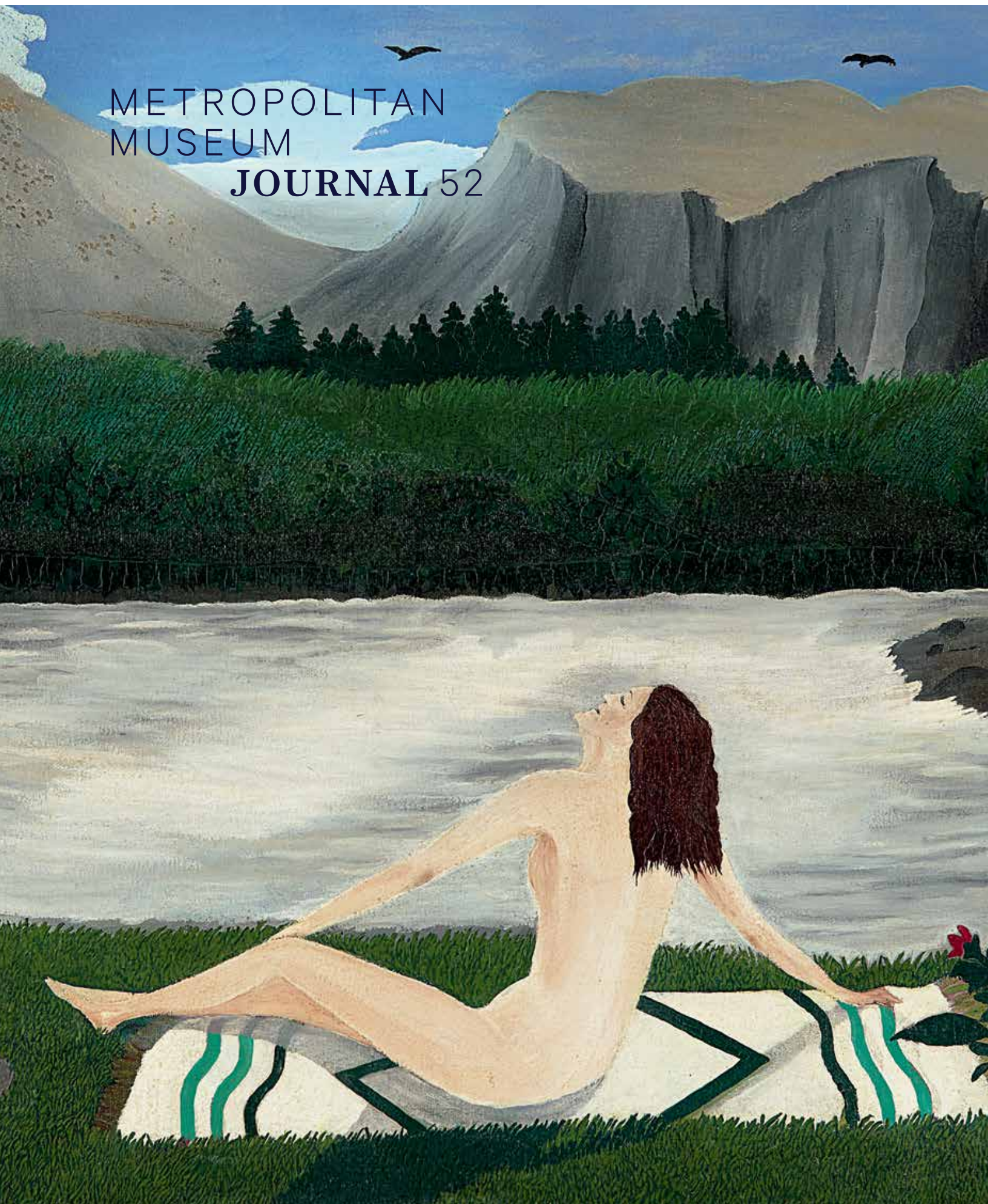


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Illustration on p. 2: Paolo Veronese (Italian, 1528–1588). Detail of *Alessandro Vittoria*, ca. 1575. See fig. 1, p. 116.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
MMJ Metropolitan Museum Journal

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

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MARTINA COLOMBI

The Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Dominic and Angels by Giulio Cesare Procaccini: A Masterpiece from the Archinto Collection

In 1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired the *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Dominic and Angels*, a major altarpiece by the painter Giulio Cesare Procaccini (1574–1625) (fig. 1). The same year, in an article in this journal, Keith Christiansen published the painting together with documents relating to its commission in 1612, its presumed installation in the church of the Madonna dei Miracoli in the town of Corbetta, just west of Milan, and its eventual replacement by a copy.¹ Christiansen conjectured that the work was installed in the church—in a frame designed by Procaccini—after its completion in 1613, and that it was later removed from its frame and replaced. As it turns out, this account of the picture's history is partly inaccurate, for Procaccini's painting never made it to its intended destination.

Let us begin at the end of the story as it can now be reconstructed. On May 18, 1863, at Hôtel Drouot in Paris,

the Metropolitan Museum's picture appeared in a sale of paintings from the famous collection of Giuseppe Archinto (1783–1861).² A Milanese count known for his eccentric and dissolute ways, Archinto had squandered his estate, forcing his son Luigi (1821–1899) to sell off the family's property after his father's death. On this occasion, ninety-five pieces were sold—probably the most significant works of the collection. Among those mentioned in the sale catalogue is a painting by Giulio Cesare Procaccini that, judging from its description, must be the one now in the Metropolitan Museum: “The Holy Virgin and Child Jesus, surrounded by angels, between two saints. Canvas. H. 255 cm, L. 143 cm.”³

The painting was made for the chapel dedicated to Saints Francis and Dominic in the church of the Madonna dei Miracoli in Corbetta. In November 1612, the deputies of the church gave Filippo Spanzotta and his brother Gaspare the responsibility of providing the chapel's decoration, including an altarpiece by an esteemed painter that was to be completed within one year.⁴ Whether the picture was finished in time is uncertain, but it was not installed in the chapel. This is made clear by two successive wills (dated 1625 and 1637) in which Filippo Spanzotta charged his heirs with placing an appropriate painting on the altar, which was apparently still bare.⁵ As this request does not appear in Spanzotta's final will, drafted in 1640, his obligation must have been fulfilled by then—but not by the work he had commissioned from Procaccini.⁶ Instead, the nobleman had a copy made for the chapel and, as we will explain, most probably retained Procaccini's altarpiece for himself.⁷ The painting registered in the 1642 inventory of the church's possessions must be the copy, which in the mid-twentieth century was transferred to the rector's office, where it was housed until 2011.⁸ It was then restored and placed in the museum of the church, located nearby. That Spanzotta kept Procaccini's original is supported by the posthumous inventory of Spanzotta's assets. Drafted in 1641, the inventory mentions a painting depicting “Our Lady with the image of the Saints Francis and Dominic.”⁹

Although the precise moment when the picture entered the Archinto collection is not known, it was possibly a short time after Spanzotta's death. What can be said with certainty is that there was a close bond between the Archinto family and the church of the Madonna dei Miracoli that can be traced back to Carlo Archinto (1670–1732). A document in the Archinto archives dated May 4, 1717, states that the sanctuary received two hundred lire from Count Carlo acting as the executor of his wife, Giulia Barbiano di Belgiojoso, who had died two years earlier.¹⁰ In his own last will, dated

December 12, 1732, the count bequeathed to the church his Golden Fleece collar encrusted with diamonds.¹¹

Just over a decade earlier, in 1721, the British traveler Edward Wright had visited Count Carlo's home and noted “two large and fine pieces of Jul. Ces. Procaccini.”¹² One of the two—unfinished—depicted the Massacre of the Innocents; the other, not described, was possibly the painting commissioned for the church in Corbetta. Procaccini's painting was certainly displayed in Palazzo Archinto by 1772, when it is specifically mentioned by the Bolognese painter and collector Marcello Oretti: “Archinto residence. . . . An altarpiece with the Virgin, Child, S. Dominic and S. Francis by Giulio Cesare Procaccini. . . .”¹³

Documents from the nineteenth century are of great interest as well. In 1844, the historian Cesare Cantù mentioned in a brief description of his tour of the Archinto collection a Virgin Mary in Glory by Giulio Cesare Procaccini¹⁴—probably the same painting that was to attract the attention of Otto Mündler, who visited Palazzo Archinto in the company of Giovanni Morelli and Clementina Reichmann (Mme Frizzoni) on January 13, 1856.¹⁵ Mündler's *Travel Diaries* are the last record of the famous Milanese collection before its dispersal, the most tragic and significant episode of which was the 1863 auction in Paris, referred to above. A copy of the auction catalogue in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, contains manuscript annotations indicating that an Italian named Scotti purchased the painting by Giulio Cesare Procaccini, while Otto Mündler scored lot number one: a Head of a Child by Correggio—a study for his *Madonna with Saint George* now in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.¹⁶

We then lose track of the Metropolitan Museum's picture until 1978, when it was offered for sale in London, first by Colnaghi's¹⁷ and then by Matthiesen Gallery, London.¹⁸ By purchasing this splendid altarpiece in 1979, the Museum fulfilled the expectations of the experts at the 1863 sale in Paris: in the catalogue, they described the work as a “really museum-worthy painting.”¹⁹

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MARTINA COLOMBI

Postgraduate candidate in the Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment, University of Milan

fig. 1 Giulio Cesare Procaccini (Italian, 1574–1625). *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Dominic and Angels*. Oil on canvas, 101½ × 56¾ in. (256.9 × 143.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Enid A. Haupt Gift, 1979 (1979.209)



NOTES

- 1 See Christiansen 1979, in which the author logically assumed that an inventory of church property drawn up in 1642 referred to the museum's altarpiece; however, as will be shown, it describes the copy, today in the museum of the church. See also Brigstocke 1980, p. 39; Rosci 1993, pp. 84–85; and Brigstocke 2002, pp. 84–85.
- 2 The original core of the Archinto collection was made up mainly of sixteenth-century Venetian and Lombard works and was assembled by Filippo Archinto (1495–1558). In the following centuries, the collection was augmented by other notable family members, including Ottavio (1584–1656), Carlo (1670–1732), and Filippo (1697–1751). Their acquisitions included not only paintings but also ancient sculpture, drawings, tapestries, books, precious objects, and musical and scientific instruments. An inventory of the paintings in the collection, dated April 10, 1741 (Archivio Archinto, Milan, fascicolo 148), included some five hundred and fifty works (unfortunately without attribution). For further information on the family, see Litta 1843 and Forte 1932.
- 3 “La sainte Vierge et l'Enfant Jésus, entourés d'une gloire d'anges, apparaissent à deux saints. Toile. H. 2 m. 55 c. L. 1 m. 43 c.” Archinto sale 1863, lot 50, p. 13. The subject, material, and dimensions of the Museum's painting are a perfect match.
- 4 The brothers were descendants of Giovanni Ambrogio Spanzotta, who in the second half of the sixteenth century had financed the restoration and enlargement of the church.
- 5 Archivio di Stato di Milano, Notarile, fascicoli 28174 (March 17, 1625) and 28177 (April 11, 1637).
- 6 Ibid., fascicolo 29446 (October 11, 1640).
- 7 The copy was first mentioned in Bona Castellotti 1978, especially pp. 89–90. The painting, which measures 105½ × 58¼ in. (268 × 148 cm), was initially attributed to Procaccini but was recognized as a later copy after the original version was discovered.
- 8 “Inventario,” 1642, Archivio della Chiesa della Madonna dei Miracoli, Proprietà del Santuario, Cartella VI, fascicolo 2.
- 9 “Nostra Signora con l'immagine dei Santi Francesco e Domenico.” Archivio di Stato di Milano, Notarile, fascicolo 29446 (January 11, 1641). For further information on the history of the two paintings, see Comincini 1999, pp. 150–51, 188. Additional hypotheses about the relationship of these works are provided in the same volume by Cavalieri 1999, pp. 38–39, 184.
- 10 “Legato disposto da Giulia Archinto, nata Barbiano di Belgiojoso, moglie di Carlo,” Milan, May 4, 1717, Archivio Archinto, Milan, fascicolo 138.
- 11 “Testamento di Carlo Archinto, figlio di Filippo e di Camilla Stampa,” Milan, December 12, 1732, Archivio Archinto, Milan, fascicolo 114.
- 12 Wright 1730, vol. 2, p. 470.
- 13 “Casa Archinti Una Tavola d'altare con la Mad.a Bamb.o | S. Dom.o e S. Francesco di Giul. Ces. Procaccino” Marcello Oretti, “Libro Quarto | Miscellanee | Pitture nella città | di Milano | Raccolte e scritte in d.a Città | da Marcello Oretti | nell'Anno 1772,” Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna, ms. 96bis. The first printed edition of the manuscript is forthcoming. For further information on the author and the manuscript, see Stoppa 2015, especially p. 199.
- 14 Cantù 1844, vol. 2, p. 280.
- 15 Mündler [1855–58] 1985, p. 93: “13 January. Sunday. Milan. With Morelli & Mme Frizzoni to Palazzo Archinti, where visitors are very seldom admitted. Besides a large and excellent Procaccini, a Titian, Portrait of a Cardinal seated with a transparent white curtain covering half of his face; and a fine portrait of a man, of Leonardo's school. There is a precious portrait of a young man, of 20, of the Archinti family, painted in ‘1494,’ and most likely by Leonardo da Vinci, whose beautiful modelling & execution it certainly has.” The four paintings mentioned by Otto Mündler are the one by Procaccini, which is probably the altarpiece in the Metropolitan Museum's collection; Titian's *Portrait of Archbishop Filippo Archinto*, today in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 204; an unknown male portrait of the “Leonardeschi” school; and *Portrait of a Man Aged Twenty (The Archinto Portrait)*, attributed to Marco d'Oggiono and today in the National Gallery, London (NG1665). Both Titian's and d'Oggiono's paintings were auctioned at the Archinto sale in Paris in 1863. The present author's research into the catalogue of that sale has revealed the provenance of paintings, the history of which was previously unknown. The most important among these are Scipione Pulzone's *Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici* (Art Gallery of South Australia [985P39]), and, most likely, Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's *Portrait of a Youth Crowned with Flowers* (North Carolina Museum of Art [GL.60.17.40]). *The Temptations of Saint Anthony*, by Camillo Procaccini, Giulio Cesare's older brother, is not mentioned in the sale catalogue but was seen in the Archinto mansion by Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1678, vol. 1, p. 285) and Marcello Oretti (1772; see note 13 above). The painting was exhibited by the Milanese Galleria Nobili in 2015.
- 16 Archinto sale 1863, lot 1, p. 5, and lot 50, p. 13. The names “Mündler” and “Scotti” are handwritten next to the descriptions of the paintings.
- 17 Brigstocke 1980, p. 39; Hall 1992, p. 31.
- 18 Colnaghi's built an international reputation in the field of Italian Baroque painting in the 1970s. Michael Simpson, director of the paintings department, was joined by Patrick Matthiesen at the beginning of the decade. Matthiesen established his own gallery in 1978. See Howard 2010, especially pp. 48–49.
- 19 “page vraiment digne d'un musée.” Archinto sale 1863, introduction, p. 4.

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