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Front cover: Detail of *The Three Ages of Man*, by Dosso Dossi (see. fig. 33). Back cover: Detail of *Bartolommeo Bonghi*, by Giovanni Battista Moroni (see fig. 26)

NORTH OF THE APENNINES



*Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting in Lombardy
and Emilia-Romagna*

ANDREA BAYER

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES, selections from the Museum's renowned collection of Italian paintings have been presented to the public in issues of the *Bulletin*. These range from investigations of early works, such as fifteenth-century secular Tuscan painting (1980), fourteenth-century altarpieces (1982), and early Renaissance narrative paintings (1983), to monographic works on Giovanni di Paolo (1988), on the great eighteenth-century Venetians, Domenico Tiepolo (1997) and his father, Giambattista, specifically his paintings for the Ca'Dolphin, Venice (1998). Oddly enough, although they have been studied in many other contexts, paintings of the sixteenth century—the period of the High Renaissance and its aftermath—have not yet appeared in this publication. In this issue, Andrea Bayer, associate curator in the Department of European Paintings, presents a rich selection of sixteenth-century artists of Lombardy and its capital, Milan, and of Emilia-Romagna and its principal city, Bologna. In a second *Bulletin*, scheduled for the summer of 2005, she will turn her attention to painters from Venice and its territory. Artists from Brescia and Bergamo, two great cities that were at the western border of the Venetian empire in the sixteenth century but are now part of the region of Lombardy, will be discussed in the present publication.

The paintings of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna were collected early and passionately in New York. More than twenty five entered the Museum's collection by the early decades of the twentieth century. Pictures such as the portrait of *Federigo Gonzaga* by Francesco Francia and Correggio's altarpiece of *Saints Peter, Martha, Mary Magdalen, and Leonard* were widely discussed and considered among the most important Italian paintings available at the time. When recommending the acquisition of the Correggio altarpiece to the Metropolitan in 1908, the English art critic Roger Fry, active as both Museum curator and European adviser on

paintings, wrote: "This is so important a picture that the Museum would be justified in an exceptional effort to acquire it"—justified both because of Correggio's importance and rarity and because of the quality, the "mystery and magic," of this painting.

While a taste for Correggio may seem self-evident today, that for the painters of the schools of Brescia and Bergamo, and even for that of Milan, requires more explanation. Here, Americans followed the lead of British collectors and scholars, above all of Sir Charles Eastlake, first keeper and then director of the National Gallery of Art, London, from 1855. He traveled extensively in northern Italy in the 1850s and 1860s, and in his enthusiasm for works of these schools, he visited and revisited private collections, always with acquisitions in mind. In large part thanks to his travels, the National Gallery has, for example, more than ten works by Giovanni Battista Moroni of Bergamo. Eastlake shared with other great connoisseurs and art critics, such as Giovanni Morelli, his belief in the seriousness and importance of these artists, and the impact of their writings carried over to New York. During the 1890s and early 1900s, bequests, gifts, and funds provided by some of the Metropolitan's most important benefactors—Benjamin Altman, Theodore M. Davis, John Stewart Kennedy, Henry G. Marquand, J. Pierpont Morgan, Joseph Pulitzer, and Jacob S. Rogers—formed the core of our holdings of these sixteenth-century Italian paintings.

A number of works discussed here underwent thorough examination and reevaluation in preparation for this publication. Charlotte Hale, conservator in the Museum's Sherman Fairchild Paintings Conservation Center, worked closely with the author to interpret the technical evidence.

Philippe de Montebello
Director

INTRODUCTION



Thence we wandered on to San Francesco, empty too, where, in the sun-spangled dimness, the great Romanino [was] throned behind the high altar. The sacristan drew back the curtain before the picture, and as it was revealed to us in all its sun-bathed glory he exclaimed with sudden wonder, as though he had never seen it before: È stupendo! È stupendo! — Edith Wharton on Brescia and its art in Italian Backgrounds (1905)

BY THE END OF THE fifteenth century, a remarkable number of Italian cities north of the Apennines were firmly established as great artistic centers. These included cities with dazzling courts, such as Milan, Bologna, Ferrara, and Mantua, and, of course, the Republic of Venice. Other cities, such as Bergamo, Brescia, and Parma, rose to prominence in the sixteenth century. The region was dominated by Venice and Milan, which had long vied for control of the lands that stretched between them. By the 1420s, Venice had consolidated its *terraferma* empire, extending it as far to the west as Bergamo. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the political situation in northern Italy was further complicated by the arrival of French and Spanish troops, with claims to various parts of the peninsula. The papacy also sought aggressively to extend its territories (taking over Bologna in 1506), and during the War of the League of Cambrai (1509–16), all of these forces clashed in ever-changing alliances across the entire region. In the years that followed, the Spanish, the Venetians, and the Papal States consolidated their control, although some cities managed to maintain their independence. Despite the political uncertainty of the first decades of the century, the arts flourished in all of the principal cities. Even the contemporary artist and biographer Giorgio Vasari, author of the groundbreaking *Lives of the Artists* (1550, 1568) and a staunch defender of all things Tuscan and Roman, had to admit that Giorgione and Titian in Venice and Correggio in Parma were brilliant practitioners of what he called the *maniera moderna*, or modern manner, of painting. Historically, New Yorkers have collected deeply in this area (often following the British example), and the European paintings galleries of the Metropolitan Museum reflect this taste.

When discussing these schools of painting, distinct regional characteristics are evident. For example, in Lombardy and its capital, Milan, beginning in the late fifteenth century there was a fascination with the visual effects of perspective. In Bologna and Ferrara, in Emilia, there were other interests, such as a desire to emulate Raphael and other artists active in central Italy and the creation of paintings suggestive of poetry. Nonetheless, painters in the two regions shared many artistic goals, and for contemporary art critics these geographic differences sometimes seem to have scarcely mattered. For example, Vasari called the Emilian Correggio “the first in Lombardy” to begin working in the modern manner and referred to the Emilian Dosso Dossi as the “greatest landscape artist in Lombardy.”

In fact, many artistic ties bound together these northern Italian regions. For one, after the 1480s and well into the next century, Leonardo da Vinci’s influence was strong and can be seen in paintings from Milan, Bologna, and Parma. More broadly, observant viewers and authors sensed that Lombard and Emilian painters were unified by the naturalism of their painting—in degrees that varied from artist to artist and area to area but was nonetheless present almost everywhere. “Naturalism” to them meant an investigation of the natural world, with its emphasis on direct observation as translated into paint—an emphasis that separated their work from the strongly classicizing styles of their fellow artists south of the Apennines. In the following pages, I will examine both sides of this coin: those characteristics that remained particular to each region and those that were common to this swath of territory across northern Italy during the sixteenth century.



LOMBARDY



WITH MILAN AT ITS CENTER, present-day Lombardy includes Varese and Como to the northwest; Pavia, Cremona, Brescia, Bergamo, and Mantua are its other major cities. In the sixteenth century, Mantua was an independent state ruled by the Gonzaga family, while Bergamo and Brescia were both part of Venice's western *terraferma*. The proximity of the latter two to Milan, however, is deeply significant for the development of their artistic schools, and their painters are frequently grouped with other Lombard artists; I will therefore consider them at the end of this section.

The Sforza dukes presided over their court, one of the most magnificent in Europe, at the Castello Sforzesco in the heart of Milan. The dukes were great patrons of the arts, founding churches and building grand castles in neighboring Pavia and Vigevano, as well as in Milan.

Milan

The course of artistic development in Milan at the end of the fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth was set by the arrival of two of the geniuses of the High Renaissance: Donato Bramante, the painter and architect, who was born near Urbino and took up residence in the late 1470s, and the Florentine Leonardo da Vinci, who was invited to Milan in 1482 or 1483. Their example was to revolutionize all of the arts in the city, and both had significant followers. But before their appearance, the most important painter working for the court was arguably Vincenzo Foppa (active by 1456,

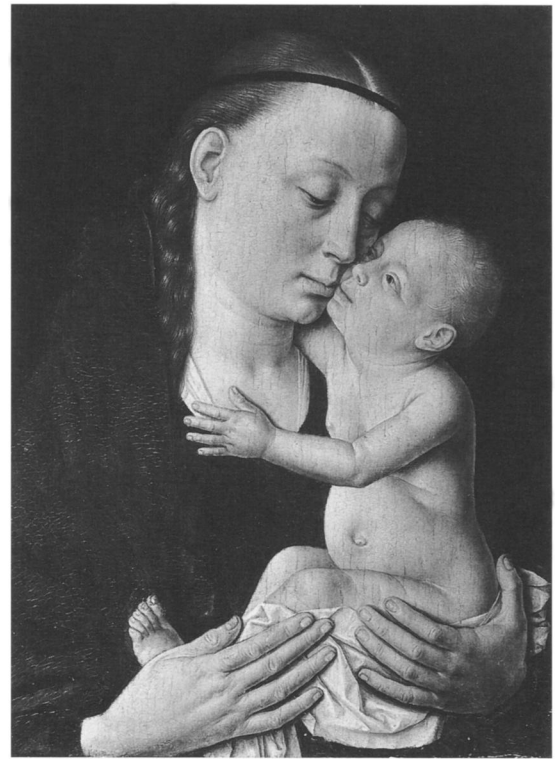
At their suggestion, the French, under Charles VIII, first entered Italy in 1494—it was a disastrous invitation, leading ultimately to the loss of Milanese independence. Louis XII, returning to Italy in 1499, drove out the Sforza duke Ludovico, known as “il Moro.” Although the French were briefly dislodged during the War of the League of Cambrai, by 1515 Francis I had reestablished French rule. Even so, there was little stability, as Milan and its territory fell definitively under imperial domination following the Battle of Pavia (1525), which Francis lost to the Habsburg emperor Charles V. Although Francesco II Sforza was made duke, it was at Charles's sufferance, and after Francesco's death in 1535 the city was ruled by Spanish governors. These political twists and turns had a major impact on the local community of artists.

d. 1515/16), born in Brescia but active throughout Lombardy and Liguria. The Museum's *Madonna and Child* (fig. 1), which probably dates to about 1480, is suggestive of the general direction of Milanese art right at the moment of change. The Madonna is shown standing behind a fictive gold frame before a rose hedge; the Christ child is held up close to her cheek and grasps the hem of her cloak. The image might appear to be old-fashioned in its formal character, but in fact it is intentionally archaistic, in that it refers to a venerable fourteenth-century Sienese painting (itself



1. Vincenzo Foppa (Brescian, active by 1456, d. 1515/16). *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1480. Tempera, oil, and gold on wood; 17¼ × 12⅝ in. (43.8 × 32.1 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.95.293)

2. An infrared photograph that penetrates the paint layer of Foppa's *Madonna and Child* shows the delicate drawing around the fingers of the Madonna's right hand and reveals the dark underlayer that the artist employed when building up the flesh tones of the heads of both the Madonna and the Christ child. This method resulted in the characteristic gray tonality of his work, which a number of artists in the region were later to emulate.



3. Dieric Bouts (Netherlandish, active by 1457, d. 1475). *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1455–60. Oil on wood, 8½ × 6½ in. (21.6 × 16.5 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.95.280)

a replica of an earlier icon) that hangs in Cambrai Cathedral, in northern France, and is known as the Cambrai Madonna. In some details, such as the veil covering the Madonna's hair and the gray-hued flesh tones (see fig. 2), Foppa's painting comes very close to the Cambrai picture and suggests the possibility that Foppa knew a copy of it, or of another, similar work, that may have been circulating in northern Italy. However, it is more likely that Foppa's version of the image is inspired by one of the numerous Netherlandish paintings that were themselves inspired by the Cambrai Madonna. These include images such as the Museum's *Virgin and Child* by Dieric Bouts (fig. 3) and others by Rogier van der Weyden (The Museum of

Fine Arts, Houston) and Hans Memling (Werner Collection, Ranger's House, London). Each of these, in turn, modifies the Cambrai Madonna in some way: Foppa's, for example, is closest to the Memling version in the positions of the child's right hand and head. Lombard painters of the fifteenth century were deeply influenced by Netherlandish paintings—indeed the vogue for them was nowhere greater than in Milan—which existed in many of the region's collections, and this influence continued to be felt well into the next century.

Also characteristic of Milanese painting at this moment is the subtle play between surface decoration and the perspectival description of pictorial space: here, the Madonna stands behind



4. Bramantino (Bartolomeo Suardi; Milanese, active by 1490, d. 1530). *Madonna and Child*, probably before 1508. Tempera on wood, $9\frac{5}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{4}$ in. (24.3 × 28.6 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1912 (12.178.2)

the gold enframing border, yet her halo is evidently flush with it. (In another small devotional painting by Foppa in Milan, in the Museo d'Arte Antica, Castello Sforzesco, the Madonna stands behind a similar fictional frame, but her halo protrudes in front of it.) An interest in perspective, and in the description of space in paint, had fascinated Foppa since his early years in Padua, where he would have seen the famous bronze reliefs by Donatello in the church of the Santo, with their elaborate interior scenes of the life of Saint Anthony. This interest would have been reinforced by Bramante's arrival in Lombardy and by the appearance of his first painted works in Bergamo and Milan.

Bramante (1443/44?–1514), best known as the brilliant architect of the Tempietto in Rome and of the first plans for the new church of Saint Peter's, is less well known as a painter. However, in his earlier career in Milan, he painted a number of important frescoes that are noteworthy, above all, for a forceful figure style—not unlike that of Andrea Mantegna—and for elaborate architectural settings, with classicizing ornament and carefully calculated perspectives. He had one outstanding pupil, Bartolomeo Suardi (active by 1490, d. 1530), known as Bramantino after his teacher. Bramantino painted panels and frescoes, prepared cartoons for an extraordinary set of tapestries

(the Trivulzio *Months*, 1501–9; Civiche Raccolte d'Arte Applicata, Castello Sforzesco, Milan), and designed architecture: in all of these activities, he expressed a preference for clearly defined spaces and rather austere beautiful, monumental architecture. Technical study of one of his most intricate compositions, *The Adoration of the Kings* (The National Gallery, London), shows that its severe, ruined architecture and the objects placed on the steps of the throne were designed to fall along the orthogonals of the grid laid out on the receding pavement. Perspective also plays a major role in the impact of the *Saint Michael* triptych (Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan), in which a demon in the form of a frog and a nude male are seen lying across the ground in steep foreshortening, stretched out toward the picture plane. Bramantino was the most innovative artist of his day in Milan, and in 1525 he was named official painter and architect to Duke Francesco II Sforza.

Our Bramantino *Madonna and Child* (fig. 4) is conceived, albeit in a modest way, along similar lines. The Madonna, with her voluminous robe and oversized hands, is planted in the center of the painting, while the Christ child stands on a table set at an oblique angle to the picture plane. The setting is an extensive but barren courtyard; dark trees grow in a garden at the left, but the background is dominated by the crenellated walls of a stronghold with towers, suggesting a well-fortified *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden). The planes of these unadorned buildings are defined by light and shadow and continue the perspective of the walls of the courtyard. Although the effect is somewhat austere, the painting has, in the words of the important Bloomsbury critic Roger Fry, “a delicate sense of interval and silhouette. . . . [Bramantino] realizes, with a tenderness which reminds one of his contemporary Bergognone, the idea of the beautiful seclusion and repose of the Virgin’s life.”

The fascination with perspective and acute foreshortening, classical architecture, and the depiction of space remained strong among Milanese painters well into the sixteenth century. This predilection can be seen in one of the most

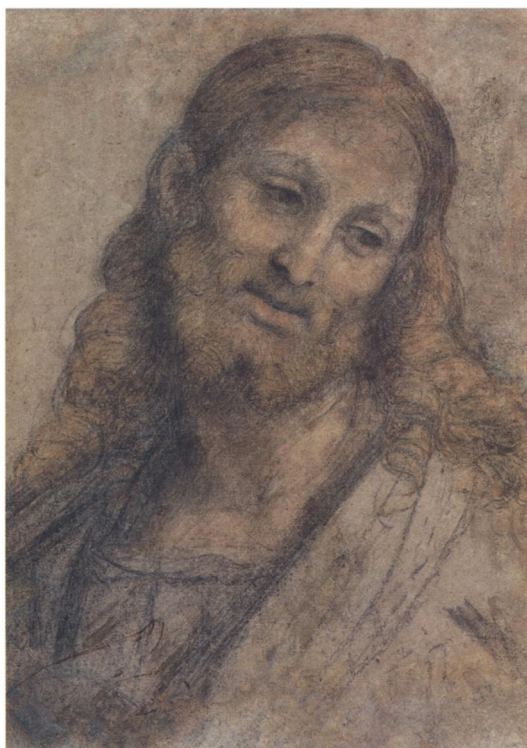
monumental and impressive works of the period in the Museum, Andrea Solario’s (active by 1490, d. 1524) *Christ Blessing* (fig. 5), which was painted late in his career, in about 1524. What appears at first glance to be a rather simple image repays closer attention. The space in which Christ stands is defined by a simple doorlike opening, one lit side of which we can see, while the other is visible as a dark edge, introducing an element of asymmetry. The back wall is bounded by another doorway flanked by columns; we can just make out the edges of their bases and capitals. The heavy green curtain hangs in an unusual, rather mysterious manner: the corners have been twisted into balls, then tied by ribbons that thread through the volutes of the capitals and drop down in ringlets. Although the curtain is bunched up on the floor at the right, it falls behind the pavement at the left, forcing us to reflect further about the nature of the space being described and the way the floor must drop off in the background. The recession of the pavement, with its colored marble inlay of a circle inscribed in a square, has also been carefully calculated. Infrared photography of the lower left-hand corner (see illustration in Notes) reveals the underdrawing and scoring that established the perspectival scheme. This perspective creates the illusion that Christ stands in a sacred space that is an extension of the viewer’s.

Given the importance and grand scale of this painting, it is odd that we know neither in which church it originally hung nor whether it was intended as an independent work or as part of a larger program. It closely resembles the central portion of a cycle painted by a contemporary of Solario’s, Bergognone, about 1511 for the Sala Capitolare of the church of Santa Maria della Passione in Milan—indeed, it is probable that the Solario intentionally refers to this ensemble. The more completely described architecture around the central figure hints at the way our *Christ* would have appeared in a strongly architectural frame typical of the region (see fig. 7). But Bergognone portrayed his Christ surrounded by the apostles, with the adjacent walls frescoed with saints of



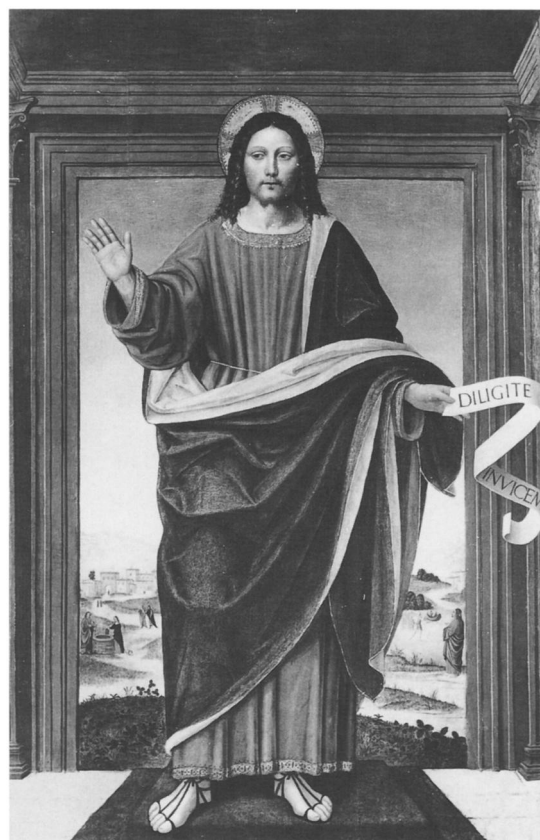
5. Andrea Solario (Milanese, active by 1490, d. 1524). *Christ Blessing*, ca. 1524. Oil on wood, 80¼ × 51½ in. (203.8 × 130.8 cm). From the Collection of James Stillman, Gift of Dr. Ernest G. Stillman, 1922 (22.16.12)

Federico Zeri, coauthor of the Museum's catalogue of northern Italian paintings (1986), proposed that the distinctly statuesque quality of this figure, with its simple but sweeping drapery suggesting the forms underneath, may have been inspired by a statue of Christ carved by Antonio di Giusto Betti (Antoine Juste, 1479–1519) for the chapel of the château at Gaillon, where Solario was at work from 1507.



6. Andrea Solario. *Head of a Bearded Man*. Black, red, and yellow chalk on brownish paper, 14¾ × 10¾ in. (37.4 × 27.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1051.19)

This impressive drawing is close in style and date, although not directly related, to *Christ Blessing* (fig. 5). Its technique grows out of Leonardo's chalk drawings, and it is one of a small group in which his followers experimented with colored chalks.



7. Bergognone (Ambrogio di Stefano da Fossano; Milanese, ca. 1453–1523). *Christ*, ca. 1511. Sala Capitolare, Santa Maria della Passione, Milan. Photograph: Soprintendenza per Beni Artistici e Storici de Milano

This image is part of the decoration of the Sala Capitolare, painted in both fresco and oil, representing Christ and the apostles with other sacred figures.

devotional importance to the Augustinians, who officiated at the church. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assign any such precise meaning to Solario's *Christ Blessing*, but it may be suggested that the severe architecture of the draped door is meant to evoke antique tombs, and that Christ is being shown as triumphant over death. This interpretation is reinforced by the floor pattern—the circle inscribed in the square—which refers to the nature of Christ as God in human form.

Solario came from a family of Milanese sculptors. Trips to Venice and probably to Rome were influential for his development, but his career was based in Milan, and there he was one of Leonardo's most distinguished followers.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) had arrived to work for Ludovico “il Moro” in 1482, having advertised his expertise in many fields, including engineering. He stayed until 1499 and left the city along with his patron. His multifarious activities during those seventeen years included painting some of his greatest works—*The Last Supper* (Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan) and probably the first version of *The Virgin of the Rocks* (Musée du Louvre, Paris)—and recording ideas for other major projects in many notebooks and drawings. Leonardo returned to Milan again in late 1506 and remained there much of the time until 1513, working for the French governor and the marshal Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. In 1491 Leonardo wrote an account of an incident in his studio that makes it clear that some of the local artists were his students and assistants. He complained that his new, young assistant, known as Salaì—“thief, liar, obstinate, glutton,” Leonardo calls him—was stealing from two other students, Marco d’Oggiono and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio. Other notes by Leonardo indicate that he helped his students with drawings and in numerous other ways. Andrea Solario probably worked in his studio at some point.

Leonardo’s impact on the local art scene was incalculable—although not necessarily completely positive. Of the many critics who have attacked the *leonardeschi*, I will quote only one here, the great Italian art historian Roberto Longhi: “[...those] macabre embalmers of busts in wax and skin, those dour draftsmen of chilly beauty, not one capable of reanimating the corpses which shortly before had trembled under Leonardo’s miraculous anatomist’s touch.” However, renewed interest in this school of painting has revealed that some adherents were very talented, successfully grafting Leonardo’s ideas onto a more traditional way of painting.

Leonardo’s influence on Solario can be seen in *Christ Blessing* in the figure’s strong, rhetorical gesture. The position of his left hand—stretched out toward the viewer, lit from above and shadowed below—was inspired by hand gestures found in both *The Virgin of the Rocks* and *The*

Last Supper. Solario’s *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 8) is also influenced by Leonardo. The subject itself, the rather gruesome one of the executioner’s placing the Baptist’s head in a salver for the waiting Salome, is found frequently in Milan at this period among Leonardo’s followers. These paintings depict the moment in the Gospel of Mark (6:21–28, especially 28) when the young Salome, daughter of Herod’s wife Herodias, is granted her wish to have John the Baptist executed. Although there are versions by numerous other artists—with both full- and half-length figures—it is rare for the executioner to be so severely cropped that we see only his outstretched arm. This arm, with its clenched fist and rough drapery, is an unsettling synecdoche for the man as a whole.

8. Andrea Solario. *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist*, probably ca. 1506–07. Oil on wood, 22½ × 18½ in. (57.2 × 47 cm). Signed (lower right): ANDREAS DE / SOLARIO / F. The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931 (32.100.81)

There are several close variants of this painting, including another signed version (formerly Northumberland Collection, Syon House, Brentford), but the Metropolitan’s is the finest in quality. Both close observation with the naked eye and study with infrared reflectography (IRR) show numerous small changes as the artist worked, in Salome’s neckline and fingers and at the edge of her sleeve, as well as in the executioner’s sleeve and wrist. The Museum conservator Charlotte Hale, who performed the infrared examination, notes that the artist took considerable pains to achieve the picture’s elegant contours, which suggests that we indeed have the primary version of the composition. Although no underdrawing was found in the flesh tones, there is a distinctive brushy, tonal underpainting in the shadows of the flesh, which were subsequently finished with thin scumbles of paint. IRR also reveals that some of the decorative elements of the costume had first been drawn, before any paint was applied, and that some of the drapery folds brushed in with underpaint were later changed in the upper paint layers. Finally, throughout the right half of the painting, lines that were incised into the gesso with a straight edge are legible in raking light. It appears that the artist was thinking of some kind of architectural setting but never carried out the idea. None of the direct variants of the work contains any such architecture.



Many of the Milanese paintings of Salome probably derive from a lost composition by Leonardo. Here, both the enigmatic character of Salome's gaze and the modeling of her flesh are inspired by his work, as is the intentional contrast between her skin tone, that of the Baptist, and the ruddy, rough executioner's arm—a dynamic that grew out of Leonardo's interest in the contrast of beauty and ugliness and what that contrast can imply about a

figure's character. To a Renaissance viewer, Salome's beauty was highly ambiguous, as she combined within herself both admirable and reprehensible qualities. Finally, Salome's elaborate coiffure, braided and spilling over her shoulders, reflects Leonardo's studies for the head of Leda, either the standing or kneeling *Leda and the Swan* emulated by so many of the artist's followers.

The *Salome*, which is conspicuously signed in

the lower right corner, is one of Solario's finest paintings and is completely characteristic of his style. It is worked up to a high finish, one that—as the eminent connoisseur Bernard Berenson pointed out—is similar to the surfaces perfected by his brother, the sculptor Cristoforo Solari. In this picture, Solario achieves some astonishing effects: the reflections and sheen of the silver basin, the transparent bodice of Salome's dress, the delicacy of description of the Baptist's head, and the marbling of the parapet. Above all, Salome's jewelry and the ornamentation of her dress are imagined and painted with the utmost precision and care. Her finery includes a necklace strung with pearls and a square-cut gem (a sapphire?) and an abundance of jewels sewn onto cuffs and borders and into elaborate *all'antica* epaulets. Interestingly, the blue band, or *frontale*, that she wears in her hair is commonly associated with wedding imagery, as in the Museum's *Venus and Cupid* by Lorenzo Lotto (fig. 9). This, too, is a reminder of Salome's apocryphal positive roles. Some authors claimed that she loved John the Baptist; others presented her allegorically, as an agent in the transition from the Old Testament period of the law to the New Testament age of grace.

Although Solario was active principally in Milan, he journeyed to France in 1507 and spent at least two years, and perhaps longer, working for Cardinal Georges d'Amboise (1440–1510), uncle of Charles II (1473–1511), the French governor of Milan, at his château at Gaillon. Solario's stay there is one of the first major instances of an Italian Renaissance artist at work in France, and his jewel-like paintings were much coveted and had a major impact on French artists. The *Salome* is undated but can be traced to French collections from the late eighteenth century, and it may well have been painted in France. Recent research has suggested that the subject itself was of particular meaning to his French patrons, the Amboise family. From 1503 to 1512, Georges's brother, Aimery, was the grand master of the Order of the Knights of Saint John (later usually known as the Knights of Malta), who were dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, and it may be no coin-



9. Lorenzo Lotto (Venetian, ca. 1480–1556). *Venus and Cupid*, probably mid-1520s. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 43 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (92.4 × 111.4 cm). Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, in honor of Marietta Tree, 1986 (1986.138)

cidence that devotional paintings focusing on John the Baptist's martyrdom became so desirable in Milan and France during these exact years.

The panel known as *Girl with Cherries* (fig. 10) was also painted by an artist in Leonardo's circle and is deeply indebted to his example. It portrays a young woman wearing a garland of ground ivy (with its beautiful tiny blue flowers) around her head and holding a bowl of fruit—not just cherries, but pears and other varieties. It first appeared in the nineteenth century with an attribution to Leonardo himself, and the subject was identified at that time as Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit. Berenson rather scoffed at the attribution, and soon thereafter, in 1906, it hung in an exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum organized by Roger Fry as a work of Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis, an artist active at the Sforza court. Interestingly, the late-sixteenth-century Milanese painter and author Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo recorded a “laughing Pomona” that Leonardo was said to have painted, suggesting that the subject—and related images—would have been current in his milieu. However, as in so many paintings of the period,

10. Attributed to Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis (Milanese, active by 1472, d. after 1508) but possibly by Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (Milanese, ca. 1467–1516). *Girl with Cherries*, ca. 1491–95. Oil on wood, 19¼ × 14¾ in. (48.9 × 37.5 cm). Marquand Collection, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1890 (91.26.5)

The painting was examined to discern whether any of its technical characteristics could help resolve the question of its attribution. Unfortunately, a lead-white ground renders the X radiograph virtually illegible in terms of handling

of the paint layers, and no underdrawing can be seen either through the surface of the paint or by using infrared reflectography. The rather extensive, small-scale craquelure found in the flesh tones and elsewhere has been noted in many works by Leonardo's followers in Milan: this is a medium defect, not especially surprising given the master's often experimental technique. However, the more disturbing damage to the girl's left hand and the bowl of fruit may be the result of later exposure to heat. Susan Moody, horticulturalist at The Cloisters, identified the wreath with blue flowers as ground ivy.



the subject seems intentionally vague, and it is more likely to represent an idealized portrait type. That the girl is crowned with ivy, which often encircles the heads of poets in drawings and paintings of this school, might suggest her connection with humanistic and literary circles in Milan. For example, there is a rare Leonardesque engraving of a young woman with a comparable wreath around her head and including the following words: Acha[demia] Le[onardi] Vi[nci] (Academy of Leonardo da Vinci).

This painting must be considered in light of the example set by Leonardo's brilliant portraits and figure studies. For example, from *Lady with an Ermine* (fig. 11), a portrait of Ludovico "il Moro's" mistress Cecilia Gallerani, painted about 1490, comes the close attention paid to the hand, with its outstretched fingers; the slight twist of the head, with eyes glancing past the viewer; and the subtle fall of light over the flesh. The studied quality of the hands was probably achieved through carefully rendered sketches; a brilliant precedent would have been the slightly earlier drawing by Leonardo in metalpoint heightened with white for the hands of Ginevra de' Benci (see fig. 12). The vibrant sense of life in the girl's curls is a testament to Leonardo's love of the movement of hair, which he saw as similar to water currents and other paradigms of motion and which he studied in many drawings.

Yet this painting is also a good example of the limitations of Leonardo's followers. Although the fall of light over the hands, neck, and face is carefully calibrated, the effect in no way approaches the shimmer of life in a painting by Leonardo himself. The areas that represent flesh seem to float within the costume, which has a flatter, less modeled appearance (some of which may be due to condition). The whole has the somewhat frozen character that marks so many works by the *leonardeschi*.

To which of the latter should this charming and very characteristic painting be ascribed? The persistent attribution to Giovanni Ambrogio de Predis (active by 1472, d. after 1508), best known as a portraitist at the Sforza court and later at the Habsburg court of Emperor



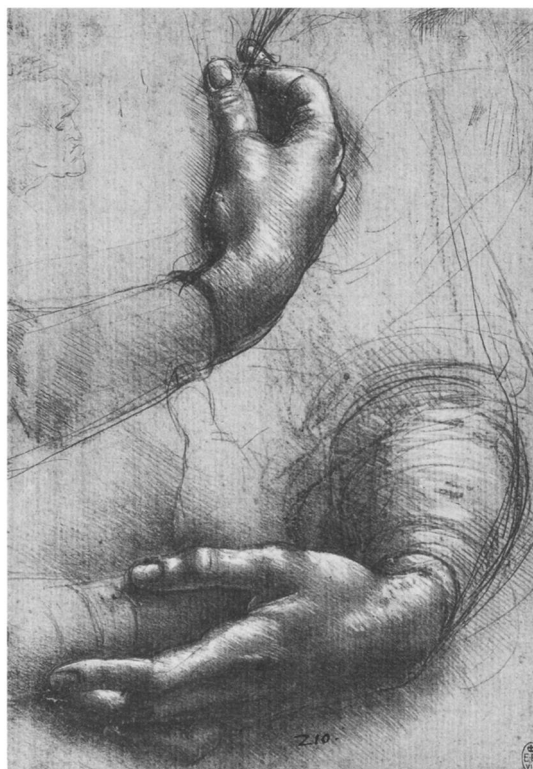
Maximilian I, seems unpersuasive. The portraits that are firmly attributed to him suggest that he remained tied to an older generation of painters and was scarcely influenced by Leonardo. Our *Girl with Cherries* instead shows an artist grappling with Leonardo's ideas and technique; it belongs to a group of paintings of disputed authorship that share similar characteristics. It has sometimes been suggested that the creator of this fine group of works may have been the young Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (ca. 1467–1516), one of Leonardo's most gifted followers. (It was he who suffered the loss of a silverpoint stylus from the thieving young Salai, as recorded by Leonardo in 1491.) The early years of Boltraffio's career have afforded us just one documented altarpiece, made in collaboration with another member of Leonardo's workshop, and are therefore not easy to reconstruct. Yet it is clear that from the outset he was a keen

11. Leonardo da Vinci (Florentine, 1452–1519). *Lady with an Ermine* (*Cecilia Gallerani*), ca. 1488–90. Oil on wood, 21 × 15½ in. (53.4 × 39.3 cm). Czartoryski Museum, Crakow. Photograph: Copyright Nimatallah/Art Resource, N.Y.

12. Leonardo da Vinci. *Study of Arms and Hands*, ca. 1475–78. Metalpoint heightened with white, over black chalk, on paper coated with a buff-colored preparation; 8⅜ × 5⅞ in. (21.4 × 15 cm). Royal Collection, Windsor Castle (Windsor-Leoni 12558). Photograph: Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

13. Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (Milanese, ca. 1467–1516). *Youth Crowned with a Garland*. Metalpoint on gray prepared paper, 6⅜ × 5⅜ in. (16.2 × 13.8 cm). Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence (425E). Photograph: Gianluca Mengozzi and Roberto Palermo

observer and a brilliant draftsman, and that he genuinely understood his master's ideas. The group of paintings alluded to above could plausibly have been produced by him from about 1491 to 1495, just before he truly hit his stride with a number of magisterial works about 1500. A beautiful silverpoint drawing by Boltraffio in the Uffizi, *Youth Crowned with a Garland* (fig. 13), suggests what a preparatory study for this painting could have looked like: the lightly



waving hair surrounds an exquisitely ideal face, with hatching that delicately describes the lips, nostrils, and curve of the cheek.

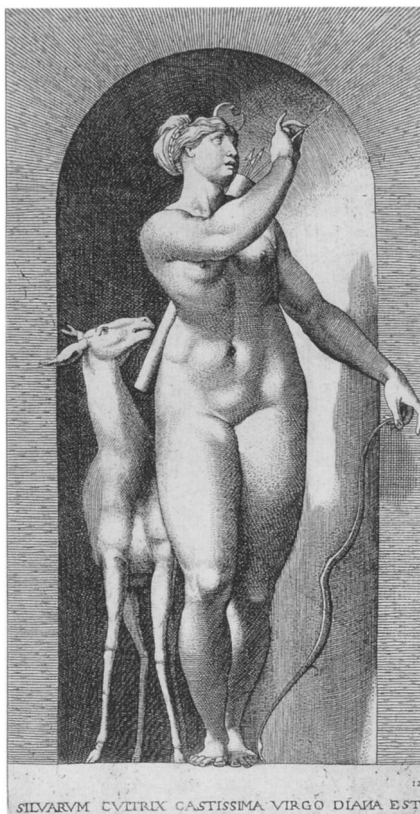
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It is only quite recently that the artist traditionally known as Giampietrino has been rather securely identified as Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli (active by ca. 1495, d. 1549). He is referred to as Gioanpietro in one of Leonardo's lists of people in the workshop and reappears in various guises in the texts of several later writers, as one of Leonardo's more famous pupils. Although he was an accomplished painter of altarpieces and devotional works, Giampietrino seems to have carved a niche for himself with the depiction of female heroines of mythology and Roman history. Inspired by the two *Leda and the Swan* compositions by Leonardo (both lost), the figures are generally shown nude and, often, full length and set in a landscape. *Diana the Huntress* (fig. 14), portraying the chaste goddess of the hunt before a dense bank of trees with a delicate deer beside her, is one of the most beautiful and poetic of these. Milanese copies after Leonardo's so-called *Standing Leda* show a woman in a contrapposto stance similar to that of our Diana, with one hip back and the opposite foot forward. Carefully observed plants and flowers must have been an important



14. Giampietrino (Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli; Milanese, active by ca. 1495, d. 1549). *Diana the Huntress*, after 1526. Oil on wood, 44 ⁷/₈ × 23 ¹/₄ in. (114 × 59.1 cm). Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Richardson Gift, 1989 (1989.21)

The painting entered the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in a gently bowdlerized state, with a sheer swath of drapery fluttering around the figure's midsection. This proved to be a much later addition and was removed in the course of cleaning the picture.



15. Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio (Veronese or Parmese, ca. 1500/1505–1565), after Rosso Fiorentino (Florentine, 1494–1540). *Diana*, from the series *Gods in Niches*. Engraving, as retouched by Francesco Villamena (1566–1624). Engraving (Bartsch xv.78.35), sheet $8\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ in. (21 × 10.8 cm). The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949 (49.97.233)

element of Leonardo's painting as well. But if the original inspiration is from Leonardo, Giampietrino has relied on another source for the figure itself. She is based on a print of Diana (fig. 15) by the engraver Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, dated 1526, which is, in turn, part of the twenty-print series *Gods in Niches*, drawn for the engraver by the great Florentine Mannerist Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540). While reliance on a print source is not at all uncommon in Renaissance painting, Giampietrino's interest in Florentine art and his ability to weave together his two disparate sources are quite remarkable. It has been suggested that the *Diana* was one of a group of four images of "female deities," including other panels depicting Minerva, Juno, and Venus and Cupid, all painted for the same commission. None of the other images is based as directly on a Caraglio print, although the *Minerva* is related to one. The *Juno* and the *Venus* are instead closely related to Leonardo's *Standing Leda* in composition, and it is more likely that Giampietrino continued to work with these popular subjects over time, beginning with ideas from Leonardo

and then seeking new inspiration in the Caraglio prints after they appeared in 1526.

Although we do not know who owned Giampietrino's *Diana* originally, it is very suggestive that our first record of the painting is in a French collection. Rosso himself went to work for Francis I at Fontainebleau in 1530, and his ideas and compositions—known especially through prints after them—were widely circulated and admired in the country. As we have already seen, through the early decades of the century, Milan was governed by the French, who grew to admire Milanese artists, above all the *leonardeschi*. Then, too, by mid-century the subject of Diana and the stag had become particularly current in France through the influence of Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry II. Her château at Anet (under construction from ca. 1547) was filled with images relating to the goddess, including the great marble group *Diana with a Stag*, now in the Louvre. It seems possible that the *Diana* was painted specifically for a French patron toward the end of Giampietrino's career.

Not all artists in Milan so closely followed in Leonardo's footsteps: there was a strong and continuing local tradition largely untouched by his example. *The Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16) by Ambrogio di Stefano da Fossano (ca. 1453–1523), known as Bergognone, is a fine example of this approach. Bergognone was among the most admired and sought-after artists active in the later years of the Sforza court. He was a principal contributor to the decoration of the family's most significant foundation, the Certosa di Pavia; he frescoed the transepts of the great church and supplied many of its altarpieces. Bergognone's smaller-scale devotional paintings have a particular poignancy and beauty. The sacred figures are delicately painted, with slender, sometimes mournful faces, and often inhabit recognizable landscapes of the region. As is characteristic of Lombard painting, the saints are apt to share their space with donors in an intimate way.

The Museum's large *Assumption* certainly is the work of a very traditional artist, one steeped in conventions that go back to the quattrocento.



16. Bergognone. *The Assumption of the Virgin*, ca. 1500–1510. Oil and gold on wood, 95 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (242.3 × 108 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1926 (27.39.1)

The painting relates closely in composition to an *Assumption of the Virgin* (Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan) painted by Bergognone in 1522 for the church of Santa Maria dell'Incoronata in Nerviano (province of Milan). That painting is wider and longer, includes additional saints, and shows the apostles full-length. The Brera altarpiece omits the bands of music-making angels that are one of the most attractive elements of this painting. It is widely believed that the Metropolitan's *Assumption* was done well before that in the Pinacoteca di Brera, which has a rather repetitive, stolid quality.

The gold stars on the Virgin's gown are probably a later addition.

The staid groupings show little of the movement, unity, and expressivity that were Leonardo's and Raphael's contributions to sixteenth-century painting. Nonetheless, it is a work of exceptional quiet beauty, with passages of bravura painting. The artist has nicely contrasted the gravity of the apostles with the sweetness of the

music-making angels, who sing, puff out their cheeks while playing wind instruments, and often catch the viewer's eye. As in many of the artist's works, the landscape is painted with considerable freedom; here, it is subtly monochromatic and thinly painted, and the butt of the brush has been used to define the contours of hills and fields.

The Western Veneto

Now thirty and fifty minutes by train from Milan, respectively, Bergamo and Brescia were, in the sixteenth century, the great western outposts of the Venetian *terraferma*. Both cities saw a remarkable flowering of the arts in the early decades of the century, with the advent of strong schools of local painting and the arrival of talented "foreigners," mostly from Venice. In both places, artists were attracted to Venice and Milan by turns; this push and pull is one of the recurrent and fascinating aspects of their painting. The Museum is particularly rich in works by the three principal Brescian painters: Moretto, Girolamo Romanino, and Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo. Although they belonged to a regional school of painting, they were to have an impact on Italian art disproportionate to their apparent place thanks to their influence on a young artist born in the region later in the century: Michelangelo Merisi (1571–1610), known to us as Caravaggio, after the town of his birth. Caravaggio deeply admired the Brescians' approach to sacred painting, with its deliberately humble, earthy character. Indeed, these painters formed the core of the group that Roberto Longhi dubbed *i precedenti di Caravaggio* (Caravaggio's predecessors).

Vincenzo Foppa, whom I discussed earlier, must actually be considered the founder of the Brescian school. He spent much of the earlier part of his career outside his hometown but returned later in life to become the city's official painter and to teach painting to young artists. Although his production dropped off at the end of his life and must have seemed archaic in some ways, other late works—especially a fresco,

The Justice of Trajan, that he painted under the porticoes of the Piazza della Loggia, Brescia—were extremely influential for the younger generation.

Of that generation, Girolamo Romanino (1484/87–?1560) was one of the first to become an independent master, in about 1508. The Metropolitan Museum has only recently added a significant painting by him to its collection, a double-sided canvas: *The Flagellation* and *The Madonna of Mercy* (fig. 17). Dated to about 1540, this painting exemplifies the artist's approach and those characteristics that brought him fame—and notoriety. It is a processional standard, meant to be carried by confraternity members through the streets during a religious procession. This accounts for its double-sided construction, for the thin and very fine support, and for the medium, which has the appearance of distemper, perhaps with some oil paint (the medium has not been analyzed). Distemper is a medium of pigments mixed with a glue size on a barely primed canvas and typically used for works that had to travel or were to be seen from a distance: processional standards and organ shutters are the most common examples. Artists who painted in distemper were able to work loosely and thinly; the picture was usually left unvarnished, resulting in a matte surface and a very distinctive appearance.

Taking full advantage of this technique—and reflecting his early study of Titian in Venice—Romanino has worked with broad and sketchy brushstrokes, in which, for example, faces are defined by a few darker strokes



17. Girolamo Romanino (Brescian, 1484/87–?1560). *The Flagellation and The Madonna of Mercy*, ca. 1540. Oil (?) and distemper (?) on canvas, 70⁷/₈ × 47¹/₂ in. (180 × 120.7 cm). Purchase, Anonymous Bequest, by exchange, 1989 (1989.86)

When first rediscovered, only slightly more than a decade ago, the painting was lined so that only one side of the banner was visible. The removal of the lining was therefore a revelation. Unfortunately, as is clear from the photograph, the condition of *The Madonna of Mercy* on the reverse side had been somewhat compromised. Restoration also revealed an irregular area at the base of the canvas where a pole would have been attached to carry it through the street during processions. When the banner was hung permanently in a church, and no longer filled its original function, this area of attachment was painted over.



punctuated with flicks of white to suggest the highlight on a nose or cheek as it emerges from shadow. *The Flagellation* shows Christ tied to a column at the center, with his tormentors grouped tightly around him, cropped at the sides. Their brutishness, the drama of their gestures, and the mountainous background are reminiscent of German prints of scenes of Christ's Passion, such as those by Hans Baldung Grien and Albrecht Altdorfer, well known to artists working in the north of Italy. Here, appropriately, the artist exploits this expressivity to contrast the gentle vulnerability of Christ with the roughness of the soldiers who bind their switches and threaten him. (On other occasions, Romanino was accused of going beyond the bounds of the appropriate and the decorous in his imagery, creating paintings that some contemporaries deemed "bizarre.")

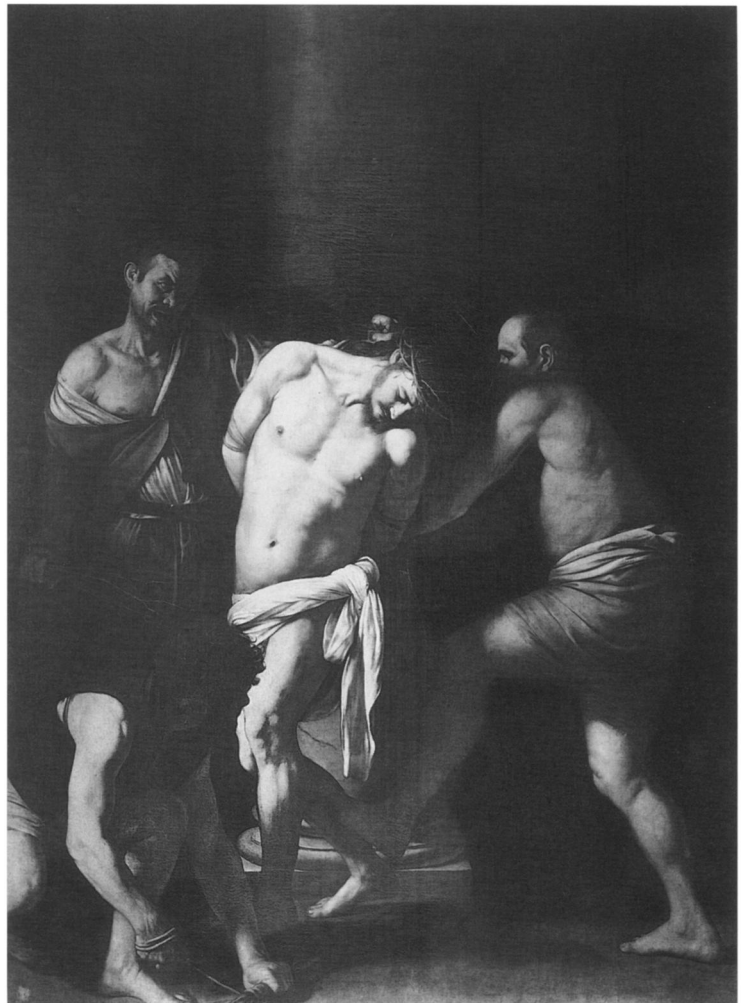
On the reverse, a rather more staid Madonna (similar to those painted by his rival Moretto) stands with Saints Francis and Anthony, sheltering a group of men in hooded white robes who are carrying scourges. These are the patrons of the standard, members of a flagellant confraternity dedicated to the Franciscans, who used the image of Christ's flagellation to encourage their own devotional practices. Their portraits have been wonderfully captured by the artist, especially those at the left of the canvas, where one man gazes up at the Madonna and is regarded in turn by his neighbor.

It is very unfortunate that we have so far been unable to determine which confraternity is represented here; in which church it was housed and eventually hung its processional standard; and whether this church was in the city of Brescia or its territory. The early history of the painting would be of great interest in any case, but is even more so because it appears that Caravaggio knew this very work. As a young artist, he would have been fascinated by the naturalistic representation of the soldiers' unpleasant tasks, the way light is used to enhance the drama, and the careful observation of the portrait heads. But it is remarkable that he seems to have carried this image with him (in his memory? a lost drawing?) as far as

Naples, where, in 1607, he painted his own *Flagellation* (fig. 18) for the church of San Domenico Maggiore. Although reversed, the figure of Christ is remarkably similar, with crossed legs and a broad, beautifully modeled torso. In Caravaggio's painting, too, we find one of the same torturers, his leg cropped at the left, bending to bind a bundle of branches with his face cast in deep shadow. Caravaggio's reinterpretation of Romanino's image is a testament to its visual impact.

The three works by Alessandro Bonvicino (ca. 1498–1554), known as Moretto da Brescia, in the Museum's collection span the full career of this important artist and represent the two

18. Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi; Lombard, 1571–1610). *The Flagellation of Christ*, 1607. Oil on canvas, 8 ft. 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. \times 6 ft. 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (266 \times 213 cm). Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. Photograph: Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.



principal sides of his activity, as a religious painter and a portraitist. He was known both for the deeply devotional cast of his altarpieces and for bringing a real understanding of central Italian art to his hometown. Giorgio Vasari found his painting to be imbued with a classicism similar to Raphael's and noted that if Moretto had lived nearer to Raphael, he would have been even more like him—stressing the physical and mental distance between artists in northern Italy and those in Florence or Rome. At the same time, Moretto's paintings, especially early on, suggest that he was keenly aware of contemporary Venetian art, particularly that of Titian and Lorenzo Lotto.

In the early *Christ in the Wilderness* (fig. 19), painted in about 1515, the scene is one narrated in the Gospel of Mark (1:13): "And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him." Most of the animals gathering near the seated Christ are recognizable, but some are mythical, like basilisks or dragons, as are described in Psalms 91:13: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." The creatures are dotted across the landscape in a pattern that is still suggestive of how Pisanello painted animals a half century earlier. Until the painting's recent cleaning and restoration, the angels hovering near Christ at the right and the cherubim who are just visible at the left had been covered by overpaint (see fig. 20). The canvas had probably been altered to disguise the fact that it is a fragment: the cherubim must have formed a mandorla that surrounded another figure, and the foliage has been very oddly cropped at the bottom left. But a fragment of what? This question has never been answered satisfactorily. It is sometimes suggested that *Christ in the Wilderness* originally formed the background of a larger altarpiece or devotional painting, or that it was somehow paired with a comparable painting by Moretto, *Christ Blessing Saint John the Baptist* (The National Gallery, London), but both possibilities remain conjectural. In any case, a number of Moretto's earliest works treat similar

themes of Christ and the Baptist in landscapes, with angels or heavenly visions partially in view. The most impressive aspect of the painting is the figure of Christ himself. He sits solidly within the rocky landscape, swathed in robes of red and blue. With his chin cupped in his hand, his face is thoughtful and introspective—almost oblivious to the swirl of activity around him. The seriousness and intensity of this figure would be the hallmarks of Moretto's approach to religious themes.

Moretto was a more mature artist when he came to paint *Portrait of a Man* (fig. 21) in about 1520–25. The sitter is unknown, but he must have been from one of Brescia's notable families. By the mid-eighteenth century, the painting could be seen in an outstanding collection, that of the Maffei family, and it remained with one branch of that family until about 1871. While it belonged to Erizzo Maffei, it was praised by two of the greatest art experts of the nineteenth century, Otto Mündler and Sir Charles Eastlake.

In the third volume of their seminal book *A History of Painting in North Italy* (1871/1912), J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle also turned their attention to this painting, calling it Titianesque or Giorgionesque in its movement and in the contrast of light and shadow. The portrait was, indeed, done at the time when the artist was most drawn to artistic currents in Venice. Its format—the torso wide and parallel to the picture plane, the head turned over the shoulder, the hand wonderfully observed at the lower center of the composition, the curtain and landscape behind—all come from Titian, as in his *Gentleman in a Black Beret* (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen) of about 1515–18. Like Titian as well is the broadly painted, shimmering silk of the man's clothing. Moretto was also inspired by the remarkable portraits of the Venetian artist Lorenzo Lotto, whose sitters often have a rather inward-looking expression, as does this one, and who hold or are surrounded by objects that have special meaning to them. Here, an hourglass sits on a carpet-covered ledge, and the man grasps a scrolled sheet of paper, the blank side of which



19. Moretto da Brescia (Alessandro Bonvicino; Brescian, ca. 1498–1554). *Christ in the Wilderness*, ca. 1515. Oil on canvas, 18 × 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (45.7 × 55.2 cm). Rogers Fund, 1911 (II.53)

20. Moretto's *Christ in the Wilderness* before recent restoration

21. Moretto da Brescia. *Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1520–25. Oil on canvas, 34 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 32 in. (87 × 81.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1928 (28.79)

faces the viewer. Some musing on the passage of time must be intended, but the precise meaning remains hidden to us. Interestingly, the viewpoint of the painting is more characteristic of Milanese painting than of Venetian. Everything is viewed from slightly below: we cannot see the top of the ledge or the plinth on which the man leans, as both drop back away from the picture

plane. This subtle play with the vantage point is to be found above all in the Milanese works of Bramantino, whom the artist clearly admired. Moretto's own very personal approach to color—evident in the rather subdued blue-green tones of the landscape—complements his successful synthesis of Venetian and Milanese tradition in this portrait.



The final painting by Moretto in the collection is both the latest and the most difficult for viewers. Indeed, it was his very last, as it is inscribed with a date—October 1554—just two months before his death. In *The Entombment* (fig. 22), Christ is supported by the Virgin, Saint John, and the Magdalen, with Joseph of Arimathea holding the crown of thorns and Nicodemus the nails of the Crucifixion. The painting is inscribed with words, in Latin, from one of Paul's Epistles (Philippians 2:8): "he... became obedient unto death..." Poignantly, although the principal reference is obviously to Christ and his sacrifice, the words ring true for the devout painter as well.

The Entombment was commissioned by a confraternity for an oratory, or *disciplina*, adjacent to the church of San Giovanni Evangelista. It hung on the upper level—as with many such institutions in Brescia, the oratory was built on two stories, one for men and the other for women. The somber quality of the painting, with its muted, rich tones, its crepuscular landscape punctuated by three crosses, the dark tomb opening, and the elderly and suffering Virgin, created a mood proper to the devotions of the confraternity members. So, too, did the artist's arrangement of the figures—pressed close to the picture plane, with Christ supported, awkwardly, in a position analogous to that he had held on the cross. Moretto and the other painters in Brescia strove to interpret traditional religious subjects in light of the fervent desire for church reform and renewed piety on the part of the lay community that swept through northern Italy from the 1520s, following Martin Luther's break from the Catholic Church. Moretto himself participated in this movement by his involvement in confraternities, such as that of the Santissimo Sacramento (Most Holy Sacrament) based in the city's cathedral. By the end of his life, such activities were being inexorably channeled and censored by Rome, with the Council of Trent (1545–63) well under way and its participants attempting to impose artistic orthodoxy. However, the very particular and intense devotional cast of much Brescian art from the 1520s to the 1550s is one of its principal contributions.

The Entombment probably left the oratory when the confraternity that had commissioned it was suppressed in 1771; in the nineteenth century, it belonged to two important Brescian families, the Brognoli and the Frizzoni. The provenance is significant because, like Moretto's *Portrait of a Man*, this work was seen and admired by such connoisseurs as Eastlake, who took long notes on the painting when he considered it for purchase by London's National Gallery in 1862. Eastlake appreciated the Brescian school and understood its idiosyncrasies, but he could not quite accept the awkward relationship between Christ and the Virgin: "The C[hrist] is hardly represented seated on her lap the legs being nearly straight. The head drops forward awkwardly. Her hands are around the body, her right hand on the chest, her left, very unfortunately, on the abdomen..." He wondered to himself whether a judicious addition of some white drapery wouldn't ameliorate this section of the painting (a jarring attitude common to nineteenth-century collectors that must be kept in mind) but, in the end, decided against the purchase. It is fascinating that the very aspects of the painting that Eastlake found indecorous were those that Moretto struggled to bring out for the devout confraternity: the helplessness of Christ, the resemblance of the pose to that of a Crucifixion, and the closeness between mother and son.

The Magdalen's flowing hair and shimmering silks show the influence of the last of the triumvirate of Brescian painters, Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo (active by 1506, d. soon after 1548). His depictions of the Magdalen, wrapped in a silken cloak and glancing at the viewer, were famous during his lifetime; one of them is known to have been in a Brescian Collection

22. Moretto da Brescia. *The Entombment*. Oil on canvas, 94½ × 74½ in. (240 × 189.2 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1912 (12.61)

The painting is dated on the *cartellino* at the lower left: AN[N]O DOM[INI] / MCLIV MENS[IS] OCT[OB]RIS (In the year of our Lord 1554 in the month of October); the artist died in late December of that year.





from an early date. Unlike Romanino and Moretto, Savoldo did not settle in his native city. He traveled early on to Parma (1506) and Florence (1508) and was living in Venice by 1521 (and perhaps well before then). Savoldo had students in Venice, notably the painter and author Paolo Pino, and his work was well known there. Pino wrote in praise of him but mentioned that his works were few.

The Metropolitan's *Saint Matthew and the Angel* (fig. 23) is one of the most fascinating that have come down to us and may be one of the small group that was singled out and discussed by Savoldo's contemporaries. In it, Saint Matthew the Evangelist is writing his Gospel, with the assistance of his accompanying angel, in a dark room lit by a single lamp. Behind are other scenes from Matthew's life, as narrated in the thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea* (*Golden Legend*). At the right we probably see Matthew—

23. Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo (Brescian, active by 1506, d. soon after 1548). *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, 1534. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 49 in. (93.4 × 124.5 cm). Marquand Fund, 1912 (12.14)

now elderly and seated before a fire—receiving hospitality in the house of the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia, a country in which he preached and exposed the falseness of two magicians. The left-hand scene is more difficult to interpret. Four small figures, one lower down on the ground, are silhouetted against a towering edifice seen in moonlight. These may be citizens of Ethiopia whom Matthew is healing of the malign sorcery of the two magicians; or, the tower may be the principal symbolic element of the vignette, as Matthew used that very metaphor to describe the “tower” of virtues the apostles could build through their knowledge of many tongues and contrasted it to the Tower

of Babel. Finally, the scene could represent another moment during Matthew's long sojourn in North Africa. When the son of the king of Ethiopia died (perhaps he is the figure on the ground?) and the people lamented, the magicians were unable to bring him back to life, but Matthew miraculously did so; in response, the king and his people built a great church.

We are almost certain that the painting originally hung in the palazzo of the *zecca*, or mint, of Milan. Vasari describes four paintings there by Savoldo, "nocturnes, with fires, very beautiful"—a description that would fit the *Saint Matthew*. Documents show that Savoldo worked for the Milanese duke Francesco II Sforza in 1534, the date given by most scholars to this painting. Its subject, the Evangelist, who had originally been a tax collector, would also be appropriate, given the function of the mint.

But it is not often noted that the works by Savoldo were only part of the extensive decoration of what must have been an imposing public building—an institution that merits further study. Vasari describes a work by Savoldo's compatriot Moretto there, as well as a painting by Bramantino and two by Leonardo's gifted follower Cesare da Sesto. Of the latter, one representing Salome sounds similar to our painting by Andrea Solario, while the other is one of the great masterpieces of Lombard art, a monumental *Baptism of Christ* (Collection Gallarati Scotti, Milan). These examples show that the subjects of the pictures hanging in the palazzo were not limited to those with a direct connection to the mint and its activities. Their eclectic nature makes it difficult to guess the criteria for their selection. In this regard, they are quite different from, say, the painting commissioned from Lorenzo Lotto for the *zecca* in Venice in 1547, which was a much more straightforward votive work of the Madonna and child with saints and portraits of the donors, Jacopo Pisani and Lorenzo Giustinian, two magistrates of the mint.

The *Saint Matthew* is one of the most evocative nocturnal scenes in Italian painting. Savoldo was known in his time for such themes *di notte*, and it is clear that they were always con-

sidered extraordinary. Here, the simple, rough lamp at the edge of the table throws the figure into areas of intense light and dark, strongly illuminating the torso but leaving much of the head in shadow. Each of the background scenes has its own source of light—firelight and the moon—and the expressive drama of the painting is linked with this investigation of light and dark. At about the same time, Romanino painted a similar nocturnal image of Matthew for the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Brescia; both artists emphasized the saint's humble surroundings and lack of adornment. Because of these qualities, Roberto Longhi, the critic who reintroduced the Brescians to modern viewers, considered Savoldo's *Saint Matthew* to be the paradigmatic pre-Caravaggesque work of art. At the same time, the poetic gentleness of the angel was inspired by paintings by Leonardo, such as *The Virgin of the Rocks*, that Savoldo could have seen in Milan—yet another demonstration of the wide territory through which these Brescian artists traveled, and of their close study of the great works of art they encountered.

Recent technical study has disclosed a rather extraordinary secret hidden beneath the painting in its current state (see fig. 24). X radiographs reveal, at the right of the canvas, the fully worked-up figure of a woman, hands clasped in prayer, gazing in the direction of the saint. It is of the same scale as the other figures, although the woman's exact location and position in the pictorial space are difficult to comprehend. There are two possible explanations for the presence of this figure, which was ultimately completely painted out by the artist. It may have belonged to an entirely separate composition—that is, to a painting that was abandoned but the canvas of which was subsequently reused for the *Saint Matthew*. A second possibility is that it was intended to be part of this composition, but that the artist changed his mind after having painted the woman. In the latter case, it is most likely that she was a donor, perhaps someone related to Duke Francesco, the probable patron. There are other examples in Savoldo's work of donors

24. X radiograph of Savoldo's *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, with the image of a praying woman, which was later painted out, visible at the right-hand side of the canvas.



being included at the very heart of the sacred narrative, most notably in a *Nativity* (Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey) in which a husband and wife stand at either end of the Christ child's bed. Why this figure was painted over we cannot say, but the removal made way for the scene at the fireplace at the far right, with its wonderfully observed interior.

The great tradition of Brescian painting was continued into the next generation in the career of Giovanni Battista Moroni (b. no later than 1524, d. 1578). Born in Albino, a town near Bergamo, he studied with Moretto—from whom he openly borrowed motifs in his religious painting—in the early 1540s. He was active in Trent during the opening years of the great council but then returned to Bergamo and, ultimately, to Albino. There, he became one of the most outstanding portrait painters of the sixteenth century—but one who worked in a very particular vein. He built upon the naturalistic tendencies of the Brescians, even outdoing them with his incisive observation and forthrightness. A well-known anecdote attributed to Titian summarizes Moroni's contemporaries' estimation of him. When two Venetian patricians were about to take up governmental positions in Bergamo, Titian advised them to have Moroni paint their portraits if they wanted them done "from nature" (not necessarily a pure compliment from the Venetian).

The portrait of Abbess Lucrezia Agliardi Vertova (1490?–?1557) brilliantly makes this point (fig. 25). It depicts a woman from one of the most important families in Bergamo, who was widowed young (her veil is of a type often worn by widows) and went on to found the Carmelite convent of Sant'Anna in Albino in 1525. She was probably painted in 1556, the year she made her will; the inscription records her likely death date of 1557 (interestingly, Moroni's cousin was *sindaco*, or auditor, of the convent in 1556). The abbess was buried at Sant'Anna, and the portrait remained there for more than two centuries, until shortly after the convent's suppression in 1797. Lucrezia is shown in a plain Carmelite habit, holding a

25. Giovanni Battista Moroni (Bergamese, b. no later than 1524, d. 1578). *Abbess Lucrezia Agliardi Vertova*. Oil on canvas, 36 × 27 in. (91.4 × 68.6 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.95.255)

The inscription on the cartouche reads: LVCRETIA NOBILISS[IMI]. ALEXIS ALARDI / BERGOMENSIS FILIA HONORATISS[IMI]. / FRANCISCI CATANEI VERTVATIS / VXOR DIVAE ANNAE ALBINENSE / TEMPLVM IPSA STATVENDV CVRAVIT. / M.D.LVII. (Lucretia, daughter of the most noble Alessio Agliardi of Bergamo, wife of the most honorable Francesco Cataneo Vertova, herself founded the church of Sant'Anna at Albino, 1557).



LVCRETIA NOBILISS. ALEXIS ALARDI
BERGOMENSIS FILIA HONORATISS.
FRANCISCI CATANEI VERTVATIS
VXOR DIVAE ANNAE ALBINENSE
TEMPLVM IPSA STATVENDV CVRAVIT.
M . D . LVII .

book and standing behind a ledge with marble scrollwork bearing a long inscription. Moroni has been unsparing in his description of her: she is unadorned and wrinkled and has a small goiter. Her simple shape is set against an absolutely neutral background. This depiction is in keeping both with the artist's approach to portraiture and with the sitter's devout, unpretentious lifestyle. Yet at the same time, this is a painting of marvelous elegance. Like many Brescian and Bergamese paintings, it is cool in tonality, built around a medley of grays, with innumerable subtle transitions in tone throughout the background and fictive stonework. Only the abbess's brown habit, the warm flesh tones, and the blue gray of the edges of the book's pages provide contrast. The scholar Lionello Venturi, writing in 1933, captured the allure of this painting: Moroni's "love of realised forms and of silvery tones, inherited from Moretto, enable [him] to abandon himself to the re-evocation of life, with an absoluteness, an impartiality, a creative spontaneity without parallel. The figure appears here as if arising from its own tomb, demonstrating the religious piety of the founder of the temple of St. Anna at Albino..."

The portrait of Bartolommeo Bonghi (d. 1584) is a less austere, but no less penetrating, depiction (fig. 26). Important steps in describing the circumstances of the commission and the sitter were made in articles published between 1913 and 1922, when, for example, it was noted that the name on the cover of the book in Bonghi's hand, Plauzio, is that of a contemporary author: Camillo Plauzio Pezzoni, a professor of law at the University of Pavia, who, in 1553, wrote a commentary on a work that codified Roman civil law, the *Pandects of Justinian*. The man holding the book is its dedicatee, a member of an important Bergamo family who was also an expert in canon and civil law. Plauzio and Bonghi were colleagues at Pavia, where Bonghi served as rector from 1552 to 1553. His costume, with its *berretta a corni* and fur collar, is appropriate to a university rector.

Despite the telling coincidence of the dates, there is some debate about the year in which

the portrait was painted. It is a curious fact that the crumbling tower portrayed in the background—instantly recognizable to a native as that of the Palazzo Comunale of Bergamo—was restored in 1551–52. Given the date of Plauzio's publication, the painting cannot have been done before 1553, and therefore the background scene intentionally refers to an older view, perhaps one of historic resonance. Some critics believe that Bonghi's portrait should actually be dated several years after these events in his and Plauzio's careers, to about 1560, as it is stylistically close to a number of Moroni's dated paintings from that moment. Bonghi's intense and intelligent gaze and the elegant play of his complex form against the neutral, but inflected, wall make this one of the artist's most successful works. The Venetian patricians who received Titian's advice might have been quite gratified to be portrayed thus.

26. Giovanni Battista Moroni. *Bartolommeo Bonghi*, probably ca. 1560. Oil on canvas, 40 × 32¼ in. (101.6 × 81.9 cm). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1913 (13.177)

When the painting was conserved in 1991, a coat of arms and an inscription that had been added after the sitter's death—and after that of the artist—were removed from the background. This maneuver revealed the beautiful tonal painting of the wall behind Bonghi and the original shape of the recessed window embrasure, thus adding to the sense of space in the picture. The inscription, which was probably suggested by a member of Bonghi's family, reads: *BARTHOLOMEVS BONGVS. I[TRIVSQUE]. D[OCTOR]. / CAN[ONIC]VS ET PRIMICER[I]VS CATH[EDRA]S BERG[AMEN]SIS / PROTHONOT[ARI]VS AB[OSTO]LICVS. COMES ET AEQV[ES] / ANNO. D[OMI]NI. MDLXXXIV.* (Bartolommeo Bonghi, doctor of either law [canon or civil], canon and dean of the cathedral of Bergamo, apostolic protonotary, count and knight, in the year of our Lord 1584).





EMILIA - ROMAGNA



MOST OF THE CITIES of the province of Emilia-Romagna are stretched in a remarkably direct, diagonal line along the ancient Roman Via Aemilia, from Piacenza in the west through Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Bologna, Faenza, Forlì, and Rimini. The notable exception is Ferrara, located northeast of Bologna and close to the border of the Veneto. During the sixteenth century, these cities—although mostly small in population—were vibrant and quite distinctive, artistically and culturally. The three principal centers, Ferrara, Bologna, and Parma, were especially so, and each had a unique trajectory both in politics

and in the arts. Ferrara was home to one of the most important humanist courts of the Renaissance, that of the Este dukes, while Bologna was renowned for its university, founded in the second half of the eleventh century. Both Bologna and Parma are crucial in the history of Renaissance and Baroque painting, thanks to the groundbreaking and influential artistry of Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio, and Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, known as Parmigianino, who were active in the first half of the sixteenth century, and to the innovations of Ludovico, Agostino, and Annibale Carracci in the second half.

Bologna

Bologna, now one of the wealthiest and most attractive cities in Italy, saw its political status change dramatically in the first decades of the sixteenth century, in a crisis similar to that we have already encountered in Lombardy. Governed in the fifteenth century by a senate with a member of the Bentivoglio family as its *capo*, and much of the time by the long-ruling Giovanni II Bentivoglio (1443–1508, *signore* from 1463), the city was nonetheless fighting off papal claims to its territory. This state of affairs came to an abrupt end in 1506, when Pope Julius II, Giuliano della Rovere, entered the city with great pomp, forcing Giovanni to flee. Save for a brief moment in 1511—epitomized by open rebellion, during which a monumental bronze statue of the pope by Michelangelo was pulled down from over the door of the

church of San Petronio and destroyed—Bologna remained part of the Papal States until the Napoleonic era.

The course of Bolognese painting from the late fifteenth through the late sixteenth century is a fascinating one (as is the history of its sculpture). Giovanni II Bentivoglio and his family were patrons on a grand scale, although their massive palace and much of its contents were destroyed in the upheaval at the beginning of the century. They favored artists—both local ones and their peers from neighboring cities—who appealed as well to other courts, notably that at Mantua, where Isabella d'Este (1474–1539) was so influential. In the early years of papal rule, several works by Raphael—above all, the majestic *Saint Cecilia* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)—arrived in

Bologna and elsewhere in Emilia and had an immediate and far-reaching impact. Raphael's influence was so strong that an entire generation of painters has come to be called Emilian classicists, or Romanists. A school of Mannerist artists also thrived in Bologna: the reaction of the young Carracci cousins in the 1580s against the artificiality of late Mannerist painting is itself the stuff of Baroque drama.

Francesco di Marco di Giacomo Raibolini (active by 1482, d. 1517/18), known as Francesco Francia, was patronized by Giovanni II first as a goldsmith and then, for increasingly important commissions, as a painter. His earliest paintings date to about 1490, and in that decade and the next, he was probably the most sought-after artist active in the city. Enthusiasm for his carefully crafted, generally placid images has waxed and waned over time. The ambivalence of the reaction to his art is already reflected in Vasari's biography of Francia as it appeared most fully in the edition of 1568. On the one hand, Vasari admires Francia's paintings and writes, for example, of a *Nativity* that "the invention and the coloring are worthy of nothing but praise." Even more significantly, in the important theoretical preface to the third part of Vasari's *Lives*, the author singles out Francia, along with Perugino, as the important bridge between the correct but hard "second style" of painting (exemplified by an artist like Andrea Mantegna) and the profound and fully mature art of the "third style," that of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. For Vasari, Francia's work had a "certain resolute spirit" and "sweet harmony of coloring . . . at the sight of which people ran like madmen to this new and more lifelike beauty. . . ."

On the other hand, Vasari ends Francia's life with a tale that emphasizes his limitations. Raphael, with whom Vasari says Francia had been in friendly correspondence, asked the Bolognese artist to install his great painting *Saint Cecilia* in the church of San Giovanni in Monte. When the crate was opened, Francia looked, "half dead with terror at the beauty of the picture," and went home and died of grief, acknowledging that Raphael (and all he repre-

sented) had far surpassed him. This anecdote, almost certainly apocryphal—not least because Francia had seen other works by Raphael already—nonetheless expresses Vasari's opinion that Francia's style had indeed been quickly surpassed. Michelangelo is said to have expressed a similar opinion, rather more harshly. To the modern viewer, Francia's approach to painting does, in fact, represent a fascinating moment just at the crux of something new and more modern.

The Metropolitan has an important group of works by Francia, including an altarpiece, a portrait, and some devotional works. *Saint Roch* (dated 1502; fig. 27) is an imposing altarpiece on panel made for the church within the complex of the Arciconfraternità ed Ospedale di Santa Maria della Morte in Bologna, an important confraternity and hospital. As the name of the confraternity implies, its members visited prisoners condemned to death. Most Italian cities had such an organization, which often commissioned appropriate—and intriguing—works of art. Here, Saint Roch, the intercessor against the plague, is shown touching the sore on his thigh, with God the Father above and an extensive landscape beyond. The painting hung in the chapel dedicated to the saint; the church also housed some of his relics. That there was a connection perceived between the confraternity's role and the intercessory power of the saint is confirmed by a 1576 decree of Pope Gregory XIII: he reiterated the members' right to release a condemned prisoner each year on Roch's saint day, August 16.

Saint Roch was a highly regarded work in its own time, as the number of paintings based on it attests, and then again in the nineteenth century in England, where it was included in the 1857 Manchester exhibition "Art Treasures of the United Kingdom." Nonetheless, in 1905 a critic could write of it that although technically

27. Francesco Francia (Francesco di Marco di Giacomo Raibolini; Bolognese, active by 1482, d. 1517/18). *Saint Roch*, 1502. Oil on wood, 85¼ × 59¾ in. (216.5 × 150.8 cm). Signed and dated (lower left): FRACIA AVRIFABER/MCCCCCII. Gift of George R. Hann, 1965 (65.220.1)





28. Perugino (Pietro di Cristoforo Vannucci; Umbrian, active by 1469, d. 1523). *Madonna in Glory with Saints*, ca. 1500. Oil on wood, 130 × 104¼ in. (330 × 265 cm). Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. Photograph: Copyright Scala / Art Resource, N.Y.

29. Francesco Francia. *Federigo Gonzaga* (1500–1540), 1510. Oil on wood, transferred from wood to canvas and again to wood, overall 18⅞ × 14 in. (47.9 × 35.6 cm). Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.638).

Francia's *Federigo Gonzaga* made a great splash when it reemerged from obscurity and was identified, in London, at the beginning of the twentieth century. It had been saved from the destruction by fire of much of the collection of Prince Jérôme Bonaparte in Paris in 1871. Then, as one author put it, "after rusticing in the Western Shires [of England], it finally emerged into publicity and recognition at an exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club." The painting was sold by Joseph Duveen to the great New York collector Benjamin Altman and came to the Metropolitan Museum following his death in 1913.

impeccable, it was *poco simpatica*, not very likable, because it was both overly complicated in its forms and yet somehow empty. It is interesting to observe the ways in which Francia had deliberately moved away from the style of his earliest works—linear and calligraphic, rather tensely expressive, and clearly based on Ferrarese examples—to the smoother, blander style he developed around the turn of the century and for which he became known. This shift must have been motivated, in part, by the example of the Umbrian artist Perugino, with whom Vasari links him and who sent a major altarpiece, *Madonna in Glory with Saints* (fig. 28), to Bologna about 1499–1500. The figure of Saint Roch, with its gentle contrapposto, rather timid gestures, and eyes rolled upward,

is inspired by the saints in Perugino's altarpiece. The deeply receding landscape may also be, although Francia has punctuated his with rock formations and lively details of buildings, riders, and fences. One can sense immediately the "sweet harmony" that Vasari felt so characterized his pictures. Francia's success in the city with this style was considerable, but new commissions in Bologna about 1500 were also extended to artists whose work was considerably tougher and less suave. The great Florentine Filippino Lippi painted an altarpiece for San Domenico, and artists fleeing Milan after the arrival of the French also briefly contributed to the Bolognese scene. Boltraffio painted one of his most inventive and Leonardesque works for a Bolognese patron; the so-called Pala Casio

(Musée du Louvre, Paris) was commissioned by the poet Girolamo Casio and hung in the church of Santa Maria della Misericordia.

Francia's portrait of Federigo II Gonzaga (1500–1540) as a boy is, for its historical resonance, one of the most interesting Renaissance paintings in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 29). Painted in 1510, it depicts the young son of Francesco II Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este, rulers of the state of Mantua. The *marchesa* Isabella, one

of the most renowned patrons of the time, had long had dealings with artists in Bologna through ties to her sister Lucrezia d'Este, married to Giovanni II's son Annibale Bentivoglio, and with humanists such as Girolamo Casio. Both assisted in her negotiations with Francia as she first explored the possibility that he might provide a painting for her splendid *camerino*—literally “small room”—in the ducal palace in Mantua and then commissioned this special portrait.



In the midst of the War of the League of Cambrai, in the summer of 1510, the ten-year-old Federigo was being sent to Rome as hostage for his father, who had been taken prisoner by the Venetians. Isabella, intent on securing a portrait of the boy to tide her over during his absence, asked Francia to do it during Federigo's short stay in Bologna. A sketch was made, about which Isabella's agent wrote that "it would be impossible for anything to be more like him." But the completion of the portrait was held up by Francia's commitment to paint elaborate caparisons for Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino; the duke temporarily released him from this obligation so that he might satisfy Isabella. This he did, sending the painting to Mantua on August 10—some twelve days after it was begun. Isabella was delighted: she said that nothing finer could possibly have been done in such a short time, and she felt sure that in this portrait Francia had been keen to "demonstrate the perfection of his art."

Isabella found one slight defect, however, and her finickiness about it almost derailed her plan to have the portrait by her side while Federigo was in Rome. She found the hair slightly too blond and sent the painting back from Mantua to Bologna for an adjustment. Gathered there on their way to Rome, as luck would have it, were her husband—now liberated—the pope, and numerous cardinals. Francia showed them the painting, which they admired enormously. It was then taken to Rome—rather than returned to Isabella—by a courtier in rather mysterious circumstances. Her friend Casio wrote a letter trying to explain the events to the *marchesa*, and reported that Francia, who had apparently been asked to paint a replica to send to Mantua, would not do so for "all the gold in the world." Finally, after a furious letter from Isabella, the portrait was brought back to Bologna and then sent on to Isabella. Isabella was so pleased with Francia's painting that she had him paint her own portrait soon thereafter, while continuing to urge him to paint a narrative picture for her *camerino*. Correspondence from Francia, and between Isabella and

Casio, shows that the artist meant to begin on this more demanding project sometime after Christmas of 1510, but it never came to fruition.

The object of these high-level negotiations is a jewel-like portrayal of the youth. The format is one commonly used by the artist—the bust-length figure is set behind a parapet, with one hand visible and a sweeping landscape behind. Given the time constraints under which he was working, Francia wisely kept the depiction rather simple: there are bold contrasts between the boy's dark costume, the green of the landscape and foliage, and the blue of the far distance. The artist, originally trained as a goldsmith, has captured the gleam of the boy's gold necklace and the hilt of his sword. Most remarkably, however, the artist has captured the tender expressiveness of the boy's face.

Francia was justly famous for his devotional paintings of the Madonna and child, sometimes shown with other saints—images that come close to those of Giovanni Bellini in terms of sheer beauty. Two examples in the Museum's collection (figs. 30, 31) must have been much admired, as numerous other versions and variants of them are known. Although such devotional works are rarely dated, the *Madonna and Child* is generally thought to be of about 1495–1500 and the *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Jerome* to be some years later. The former is exceptional for its beautiful state of preservation. This quality is particularly striking in the modeling of the Christ child, whose soft flesh is convincingly rounded and whose weight rests firmly on the ledge. Equally well preserved are the shadows of the Madonna's face—around her proper right cheek, under her lips, and around her

30. Francesco Francia. *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1495–1500. Oil on wood, 24 × 18 1/8 in. (61 × 46 cm). Gift of Lewis C. Ledyard III, Mrs. Victor Onet, and Mrs. T. F. Turner, in memory of Lewis C. Ledyard, 1982 (1982.448)

The popularity of the image is reflected in the number of replicas—some of them of a high quality and probably by Francia—both with the Madonna and child alone and with the addition of a saint or of angels to the side.





eyes—and the deeply saturated colors of her gown and veil. The *Madonna and Child with Saints* is notable as well for the sharply observed figure of Saint Jerome at the right (Berenson thought it might be a portrait of a contemporary) and for the wonderful landscape, with its line of trees reflected in a lake. It seems fitting to end a discussion of Francia's work with a quotation from the great nineteenth-century connoisseurs Crowe and Cavalcaselle, who deeply admired the Bolognese artist's paintings of about 1500: "This... is also the time when Francia's impersonations display additional repose and noble sentiment, when to power he unites exceeding harmony, when his hand acquires a cunning hitherto unattained, especially in the skill with which half-tint is used and subtle glazes are applied, when a better sense of atmosphere is conveyed, when modelling and contrasts of light and shade yield their truest and best results."



One of the finest women artists of the Renaissance was Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), the daughter of the prominent Bolognese painter Prospero Fontana (1512–1597). Carefully educated and trained in her father's studio, Lavinia Fontana enjoyed enormous success both as a portraitist (a traditional role for a woman in the visual arts) and as a thoughtful painter of altarpieces, which were much in demand. She worked for the great families of Bologna, especially that of Pope Gregory XIII (r. 1572–85), originally Ugo Boncompagni. In fact, Carlo Cesare Malvasia, the seventeenth-century biographer of Bolognese artists, wrote

of Fontana that she was "painter to Pope Gregory XIII, and the entire B[u]oncompagni family, who honored her always, showered benefits on her, protected her." Fontana was also a great favorite of the city's noblewomen, who—Malvasia again tells us—respected and loved her; they considered themselves fortunate to participate in social events with her and prized her portraits. Although the better part of her career was spent in Bologna, she also worked in Rome, first during the pontificate of Sixtus V (r. 1585–90), and while there she even received a commission from the Spanish king, Philip II. The last years of her life, from 1604 to 1614, were spent in Rome as well. During this period—when she continued to produce major altarpieces, not all of them, however, reviewed enthusiastically—she would nevertheless have been a great inspiration to the young Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1651/53), who began her career in her father's workshop about 1610.

The Metropolitan owns one of the most refined portraits attributed to Lavinia Fontana, a miniature painted on copper (fig. 32). A seated prelate, wearing a *berretta a corni* and ecclesiastical robes, is shown half-length, holding an open book. Although the identity of the sitter is unknown, many of Fontana's other portraits are documented, and she had numerous connections with clerics and various humanists and authors. For example, she painted Carlo Sigonio, a historian from Modena, three times in the late 1570s; one of these works was, like the Metropolitan's painting, *un ovato di rame*, a copper oval. She used the same specialized technique for her *Self-Portrait in a Study* of 1579 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), at the request of the patron, the Spanish theologian Alfonso Chacón (or Ciaccono), resident in Rome. Correspondence between Fontana and Chacón shows that he wished to have this painting "accompany that of Sophonisba," referring to a work already in his collection by the somewhat older and equally well-known woman artist from Cremona, Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1532–1625), who did several self-portrait miniatures on copper.

31. Francesco Francia. *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Jerome*, ca. 1500–1510. Oil on wood, overall 29½ × 22¾ in. (74.9 × 56.8 cm). Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.100.3)

This composition was also extremely popular: there are five known replicas, as well as other paintings in which most of the composition is retained, with one or two figures modified.

Although undated, our portrait miniature appears stylistically to be rather later than the portrait of Carlo Sigonio now in Modena (Museo Civico di Storia ed Arte Medioevale e Moderna), which has a rather hard, linear quality very like the work of Fontana's father and teacher. The softer, painterly quality of the Metropolitan's portrait miniature, with its subtle

observation, was almost certainly inspired by the Carracci, who burst on the scene in Bologna in the 1580s. This shift in Fontana's style—leading to a greater *soavità*, or delicacy, as it has been described with admiration—is seen in her paintings beginning in the later 1580s and especially into the 1590s.



32. Attributed to Lavinia Fontana (Bolognese, 1552–1614). *Portrait of a Prelate*, possibly 1580s. Oil on copper, diam. 5½ in. (14 cm). Bequest of Millie Bruhl Fredrick, 1962 (62.122.141)

An inscription in ink on the back of the copper almost certainly refers to the sitter, but now it is, unfortunately, abraded and indecipherable.

Ferrara

The small city of Ferrara, in the low-lying, fertile plain of the Po Valley to the northeast of Bologna, was a crucible of Renaissance thought and art. Throughout the fifteenth century, its rulers, the Este family, commissioned works from the greatest contemporary painters—Jacopo Bellini, Andrea Mantegna, Rogier van der Weyden—and fostered a brilliant school of

local painters, headed by Cosimo Tura and Ercole de' Roberti. This patronage continued into the sixteenth century under Dukes Alfonso I d'Este (1476–1534) and Ercole II d'Este (1508–1559). Both were deeply involved in the decoration of their private chambers in the great *castello* that dominates the center of the city and in the building and decoration of beloved

villas in the countryside. Indeed, Alfonso (Isabella d'Este's brother) furnished one of the most famous rooms of the Renaissance, his *camerino d'alabastro*, with great paintings by Giovanni Bellini and Titian, including *The Feast of the Gods* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) and *Bacchus and Ariadne* (The National Gallery, London).

Many stories were told of Alfonso's love of the arts (not to mention his love of arms and armor: it is said that it was he who melted down Michelangelo's bronze statue of the hated Julius II, mentioned previously, in Bologna and transformed it into a cannon nicknamed "La Giulia"). The most amusing, and revealing, of these anecdotes regards his visit to the Sistine Chapel, where, in 1512, he climbed on the scaffolding to see Michelangelo at work and would not leave until he had forced the artist to promise to do a painting for him: "The Lord Duke remained up there with Michelangelo, for he could not see enough of those figures, he flattered him copiously, and in the end his Lordship requested that he should make him a painting; and he made him discuss it, he offered money, and extracted a promise to do it."

Alfonso's court artist, who worked for him—and was a cordial companion to him—from 1514 until his death, was the gifted Giovanni de Lutero (1486?–1542), known as Dosso Dossi. Although Dosso painted many altarpieces and devotional pictures, his role as court artist allowed him to stray from the more traditional sorts of Renaissance painting into a poetic world. This world was inspired by, and ran parallel to, that of the Ferrarese poet Ludovico Ariosto, whose *Orlando furioso* (1516/32) was one of the most widely read books of the century. In his biography of Dosso, Vasari links the painter and the poet: "At almost the same time that Heaven bestowed on Ferrara and the world the divine poet Ariosto, the painter Dosso was born in the same city." Ariosto's epic poem is full of enchantment and heroism, all set within evocatively described landscapes, such as this, in canto 1: "At last she came to a pleasant grove whose trees gently rustled in a delicious breeze;

two limpid brooks murmured close by so that the grass was ever fresh and tender; the quiet waters, breaking as they flowed softly over the little pebbles sounded musically. . . . Close by she noticed a beautiful thicket of flowering hawthorn and red roses mirrored in the limpid tippling water and sheltered from the sun by tall shady oaks" (1:35, 37). The quotation from Ariosto can serve as an introduction to Dosso's *Three Ages of Man* (fig. 33), one of the most remarkable landscapes of the early cinquecento, painted in Ferrara in about 1515.

The actual subject of the painting has been a matter of some debate, and its current title derives from the three pairs of figures—two children, two young adults, and two older men—which may be symbolic of the three stages of our lives. This interpretation is questionable on two counts. First, that the boys seem to be spying on the amorous couple (who also must contend with the goats pressing in against them) implies a narrative unified in time, rather than completely separate vignettes. Then, technical evidence shows that the old men were painted over the already completed vegetation and thus may have been afterthoughts. In any case, the subject seems incidental, as the thrust of the painting is clearly as a pastoral idyll, with the fashionably dressed lovers set within a luxuriant landscape, vibrant with light and fresh, green foliage. Although the landscape was probably derived, in part, from Venetian examples, the painterliness and brilliant coloring are unique to Dosso. The artist was considered a master at the evocative depiction of nature, and Vasari wrote that he was the greatest of all landscape painters in northern Italy (Vasari used the topographical term Lombardy). Another contemporary, the historian Paolo Giovio, discussed this aspect of Dosso's work even more specifically, and within a classical context. Giovio makes a distinction between Dosso's "proper works" (*justis operibus*)—that is, those with serious subjects—and his landscapes, which he called *parerga*, embellishments meant to delight and refresh, without any deeper purpose. As Giovio knew, such an approach had a direct





33. Dosso Dossi (Giovanni de Lutero; Ferrarese, active by 1512, d. 1542). *The Three Ages of Man*, ca. 1515. Oil on canvas, $30\frac{1}{2} \times 44$ in. (77.5×111.8 cm). Maria De Witt Jesup Fund, 1926 (26. 83)

Because this image, with its prominent landscape, is so unusual, it has sometimes been suggested that the canvas is a fragment of one that was originally larger and would have included more figures. However, careful examination of the edges of the canvas has shown that only the right edge has any significant loss, perhaps about $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches (8 cm), and that therefore the painting is basically complete and intact as it stands.



34. Garofalo (Benvenuto Tisi; Ferrarese, 1476 (?)–1559). *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Reviving a Child*. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, 13 × 23¾ in. (33 × 65.4 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.24)



35. Garofalo. *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Reviving the Birds*. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, 12⅞ × 23¾ in. (32.7 × 66 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.23)

precedent in the work of an ancient Roman artist, Studius, as described by Pliny, which added to its cachet. Dosso and his patrons, Alfonso above all, would have been aware of, and have appreciated, this classical parallel; they turned to other classical texts when devising programs of paintings within the *castello*. The Metropolitan could scarcely own a painting by Dosso that better expressed the classically inspired, but poetically shaped, art of Ferrara during the age of Alfonso I.

Dosso worked alongside a number of gifted painters. From 1513 he collaborated on a spectacular altarpiece for the high altar of the Ferrarese church of Sant'Andrea with Benvenuto Tisi (1481–1559), known as Garofalo, a slightly older and more established artist. Unlike Dosso's, Garofalo's painting was rather insistently classical; he was inspired first by Francia and other

artists in Bologna, and then by Raphael. His *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Reviving a Child* and *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Reviving the Birds* (figs. 34, 35) were part of the decoration of a chapel dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the Cappella Muzzarelli, in the same church as Garofalo and Dosso's great collaborative altarpiece. Joined with two others, *The Mass of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara) and *The Miracle of Bread Converted into Roses* (lost and replaced with a replica in the 18th century), they probably formed a predella, the lowest element of an altarpiece. Early sources suggest that above them, in an arrangement sometimes to be found in northern Italy, were a statue of the saint and, to the left and right, paintings of Saint John the Baptist and Michael the Archangel. The church was suppressed in the Napoleonic period, and the elements of the altarpiece were scattered. Metropolitan Museum curator Keith Christiansen has suggested that a marble sculpture, probably by Alfonso Lombardi (ca. 1497–1537), was its centerpiece (fig. 36).

The narratives in the Metropolitan's collection depict two of many miracles—three hundred by some counts—said to have been performed by Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (1245–1306). These feats were first compiled in a life of the saint written by Pietro di Monterrubiano in about 1326, long before Nicholas's canonization in 1446 but during the preliminary gathering of relevant information about him. In one, Nicholas—shown in the black-belted habit worn by Augustinians—intercedes for a family whose child has died before being baptized. In the other, he is shown looking older and wearing white, in bed with an illness. A strict vegetarian, Nicholas ponders what to do when a dish of cooked partridges is sent to him by one of his followers. He makes a sign of the cross over the plate and the birds fly away, thus saving him from offending the man who offered them.

The subjects of these works were very carefully selected to represent the saint's life. Nicholas led an ascetic existence with a group of strict Augustinians known as the Eremiti in the Marchigian city of Tolentino. When testimony



36. Attributed to Alfonso Lombardi (Ferrarese, ca. 1497–1537). *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino*. Marble. Casa Romei, Ferrara



about him was being gathered in 1325–26, many eyewitnesses offered examples of his sanctity and self-purification. One, for example, told of how he had tried to get Nicholas to relax his strict food restrictions while ill, probably the basis of the scene described above. Following Nicholas's death, hundreds flocked to his tomb, and many posthumous miracles were recorded there.

The scenes of the predella reflect the three most significant aspects of Nicholas's spirituality and powers as a thaumaturge. In the scene now in Ferrara, he is shown as a youth about to have a vision of Christ during mass—an expression of his profound and visionary connection with God. The scene with the partridges that miraculously fly from his plate reflects instead his enormous reputation for asceticism and purity, as well as his strong aversion to giving offense. The third painting, in which he intercedes for an unbaptized baby, stands for all those miracles that worshippers hoped saints

37. L'Ortolano (Giovanni Battista Benvenuti; Ferrarese, active by 1512, d. after 1527). *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, before 1572. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (49.2 × 73 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.95.296)

might perform for them. Five general groups of such miracles have been categorized, one being release from the perils of nature—of which infant mortality was an all too frequent example.

The beauty of these paintings grows on the viewer. Roberto Longhi once wrote (of another Ferrarese artist) that one is assisted in appreciating the classicism of his painting by the inclusion of many naturalistic details, and this observation is appropriate here as well. In *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Reviving the Birds*, the spacious but sober room is described in considerable detail: we see the bottle glass in the window; a window seat; simple stools and a table, with glassware set on it; a heavy carved

wood bed. In both New York works, the idealized figures, with their carefully conceived gestures and harmonious arrangement, are indebted to central Italian art (Garofalo made two trips to Rome). At the same time, the light-filled landscape at the left of the scene in which the saint revives the unbaptized child shows Garofalo's affinities with Venetian painting and, especially, with Dosso Dossi. The altarpiece is undocumented, and the paintings are sometimes dated to about 1520, when Garofalo was first influenced by Roman painting, or some years later, to about 1534.

Another artist who worked alongside Garofalo was Giovanni Battista Benvenuti (active by 1512, d. after 1527), known as L'Ortolano. Indeed, the connection between the two is so close that *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 37), now universally accepted as a work by Ortolano,

was for many years considered an early work by Garofalo by such distinguished connoisseurs as Giovanni Morelli and Berenson. The principal elements of the composition are identical to those found, on a larger scale, in an altarpiece Ortolano painted in 1527 for the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, Ferrara, *The Nativity with Saints John the Baptist, Francis, and Mary Magdalen* (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome). In that work, the saints that have been added to the composition are more monumental and classical than the original figures, suggesting that the altarpiece is the later in date. The *Adoration* is a characteristic and attractive work by the artist, with the bright colors and carefully spaced figures he preferred. As in so many Ferrarese paintings, the landscape is enchanting, with its mountains "rising like teeth from the plain," as they were once described.

Parma

A small and somewhat sleepy city, Parma leapt to artistic prominence during the lifetimes of Antonio Allegri (active by 1514, d. 1534), called Correggio, and Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola (1503–1540), called Parmigianino. Indeed, Correggio transformed the very appearance of the city with his astounding frescoes in the domes of the cathedral and the church of San Giovanni Evangelista. His influence on his contemporaries and on later painting can scarcely be calculated. Vasari notes that a Ferrarese artist and near-contemporary of Correggio's, Girolamo da Carpi, traveled from town to town in the region because "he had heard that there were some works by... Correggio," and many later artists were to make similar pilgrimages—among them Ludovico and Annibale Carracci. Vasari even claimed that Correggio "was the first to work in the modern manner in Lombardy" (as he called this entire region of Italy). However, his praise for northern Italian artists was never wholehearted, and he also wrote (almost certainly mistakenly, and perhaps knowingly so) that

Correggio's education was incomplete because he had not traveled to Rome and therefore had not seen "the best of the modern."

The Metropolitan Museum's large altarpiece *Saints Peter, Martha, Mary Magdalen, and Leonard* (fig. 38) is an important example of the artist's early work. It was painted while he was still living in his hometown of Correggio (from which his name, obviously, derives), to the east of Parma. The town's cultural life was greatly enlivened at this time by the presence of the notable poet Veronica Gambara, who was married to Prince Giberto da Correggio and whose small but sophisticated court was linked to other, larger centers—for example, that of Isabella d'Este in Mantua (the two women corresponded about Correggio's art). This painting was made for a local patron, Melchiorre Fassi, and until 1690 it hung in his chapel in the hospital church of Santa Maria Verberator, usually known as Santa Maria della Misericordia, in Correggio.

It is fascinating to observe how the early history of the painting and its date have been

confused, rather than elucidated, by its rather abundant documentation. This confusion is the result of the restless testamentary desires of the patron, Fassi, who made three wills—one in 1517, one in 1528, and one in 1538—each differing substantially from the one before, especially as regards bequests to churches for chapels and burial rights. In the first, he expressed a wish to be buried in the church of San Francesco, while making a gift of land to the Misericordia, earnings from which were to be used to maintain his altar in the latter church. In a note at the end of this will—the basis of much of the discussion of Correggio's altarpiece and its date—Fassi also names the church of San Quirino as a legatee, asking that a chapel with an altarpiece including Saints Martha, Leonard, Mary Magdalen, and Peter be granted to him in return for his bequest. We know that San Quirino was being renovated at the time, however, which may have influenced his 1528 decision to shift his legacy to San Domenico, with the same stipulation for an altarpiece with the four saints, but now including the Virgin as well. In neither case is an artist for the altarpiece named. The Misericordia was still a recipient of a bequest in the 1528 document, and masses were to be said at his altar; Fassi demonstrated his devotion to the church and hospital by directing several possible future gifts there as well. Finally, in 1538, he asked to be buried to the left of his own altar dedicated to Saint Martha in the Misericordia and made the church and hospital his residuary legatee.

These contradictory wishes lead to the following questions: Is the altarpiece by Correggio that is now in the Metropolitan Museum the one that Fassi so ardently requested in his various wills? If so, when was it painted and for which church? Given the unique conjunction of these particular saints in an altarpiece made for the small town of Correggio, it must have been commissioned by Fassi. However, upon reflection, it seems probable that ours is not the painting being discussed in the wills. After all, the final testament was put into effect only upon Fassi's death (and Correggio

predeceased him); neither the 1517 nor the 1528 version was legally binding. This realization lends weight to the suggestion made by a number of past authors that Correggio's painting always hung in Santa Maria della Misericordia (where it was seen later in the century) at Fassi's altar dedicated to Saint Martha. The painting that Fassi wished to have made upon his death, as stipulated in 1517 and 1528, must have been a second, separate altarpiece dedicated to the same saints.

Indeed, once we are freed from the constraints imposed by the dates of the wills, it is clear that *The Four Saints* (as it is sometimes called) was one of Correggio's first major works, in a career that began around 1510. It cannot have been painted after 1517, when he probably made a life-altering trip to Rome that was immediately reflected in his art, and when he began to embark on the great commissions in Parma that made his reputation. Instead, it must have been painted sometime between 1514 and 1516, when he was digesting and synthesizing his artistic experiences in northern Italy. This matter of dating is not a purely academic point, but rather one that brings us up close to the creative development of a young genius, reaching out from his very small-town beginnings.

The painting is most closely related in style to another altarpiece, the dazzling *Madonna of Saint Francis* (fig. 39), the contract for which dates to the summer of 1514. Its Virgin, seated on an elevated *all'antica* throne with her arm outstretched and her hand sharply foreshortened, was manifestly influenced by one of Andrea Mantegna's great altarpieces, *The Madonna della Vittoria* (1495–96; Musée du

38. Correggio (Antonio Allegri; Parmese, active by 1514, d. 1534). *Saints Peter, Martha, Mary Magdalen, and Leonard*, ca. 1514–16. Oil on canvas, 87¼ × 63¾ in. (221.6 × 161.9 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1912 (12.211)

The saints can be identified by their attributes: from the left, Saint Peter holding the keys; Saint Martha with the aspergillum used for sprinkling the dragon she tamed with holy water; Mary Magdalen with an ointment jar; and Leonard, patron saint of prisoners, with fetters.





39. Correggio. *Madonna and Child with Saints Francis, Anthony of Padua, Catherine of Siena, and John the Baptist*, 1514. Oil on panel, 117.7 × 96 5/8 in. (299 × 245.5 cm). Gemäldegalerie, Dresden. Photograph: Copyright Erich Lessing / Art Resource, N.Y.

Louvre, Paris), which Correggio would have known in Mantua, due north of Correggio. The setting of Correggio's altarpiece, however, with its receding line of classical columns and landscape vista beyond, probably reflects his familiarity with works by Venetian artists, such as Giovanni Bellini. These elements combined to produce an altarpiece that is, in its composition, rather traditional.

The Four Saints, on the other hand, is anything but traditional. Correggio struggled with his patron's wish to represent the four saints without any central figure around which to organize them. Standing loosely in a semicircle,

each is absorbed in his or her own thoughts; at the left, Peter's and Martha's introspective qualities are especially compelling. Mary Magdalen, with her shadowed eyes and slight smile, is indebted to Leonardo, whose art Correggio also encountered at this time. Indeed, in this painting, Correggio cast his eyes westward, toward Milan and, above all, toward Leonardo. The saints' reflective attitudes come from this source, as does the very subtle play of light over the figures. So, too, I believe, does the extraordinary setting of deep forest behind the clearing in which the saints stand. Perhaps because the greens and browns of the foliage

have darkened over time, recent authors have not admired this highly unusual setting sufficiently. But earlier it was described as “one of those miracles of silver and green and brown which Correggio delighted to perform,” and the appearance of a woodpecker in the branches—just its red plumage visible now—was often noted. Leaves, branches, and rocks are closely observed and naturalistic, but they bond together to form an almost architectural setting. This combination of naturalism and underlying structure in landscape is very like Leonardo’s approach to the rock formations in *The Virgin of the Rocks*; the rather mysterious quality that such a setting brings to the painting is equally Leonardesque. Thus, in the conception of the two works by Correggio now in New York and Dresden, which are very close in date, we see the artist scanning his horizon to the east and the west to understand the best in modern painting. Which was painted first? There, disagreement runs deep, and the question remains open.

The New York altarpiece entered a private collection in the late eighteenth century and belonged to the Ashburton family in England in the nineteenth century (it is sometimes known as the Ashburton altarpiece). In 1908 Roger Fry wrote to the curator in the Metropolitan’s Department of European Paintings about its possible acquisition, in a letter that perfectly encapsulates both the brilliance and the weakness of the painting. “It is a great altarpiece,” he wrote, “one of the largest he ever did. . . . The colour is extremely beautiful and the handling has all Correggio’s mystery and magic. . . . On the other hand, Correggio had here a problem which was not perfectly suited to his temperament, and a certain displeasure, which one experiences at first sight of the picture, is, I think, due to that. He had to treat four saints in an altarpiece and was bound to keep something of a hieratic symmetry which was not natural to his personal method of conception. He has managed to solve it with extraordinary ingenuity so as to keep the hieratic symmetry and yet give to each figure a subtle movement in keeping with his more emotional feeling for character.”

The last painting to be discussed in this publication, a sketch of the *Annunciation* attributed to Parmigianino, is in many ways also the most puzzling (fig. 40). Parmigianino (known by this name after he began to work outside his native Parma) is often considered Correggio’s artistic heir, although in his maturity he moved in quite a different direction. Vasari, who was drawn to his work, said that it excelled his compatriot’s in “grace, adornment, and beauty of manner.” Indeed, Parmigianino was one of the great practitioners of the style known as Mannerism. In 1524 he had embarked on a major career in Rome that was tragically cut short by the sack of the city by imperial troops in 1527. From 1527 to 1539 he lived first in Bologna and then again in Parma, leaving behind a number of altarpieces and other paintings, as well as a great, unfinished project—the decoration of the apse and vault of the church of Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma.

Parmigianino had enormous influence over a number of local artists, including his relative Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli (ca. 1505–1569). The two were together in Viadana, Bedoli’s hometown, in 1521–22, and Bedoli’s style was strongly shaped by that of his cousin. He even went so far as to use drawings by Parmigianino as the basis of his own work. About 1539 Bedoli painted an *Annunciation* (fig. 41) for the church of Santa Maria Annunciata in Viadana. This altarpiece directly relates to the smaller sketch that had entered the Spencer Collection at Althorp by 1742 and was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum in 1982. In both nocturnal scenes, the Virgin is shown kneeling before an unusual bronze lectern, shaped like a boy and seen from the rear, with a canopied bed behind her. The archangel Gabriel flies in from the left with a lily in his outstretched right hand. The interior is fitfully lit by a candle and by sacred light that seems to emanate from the dove above Gabriel’s head.

In the 1742 Althorp inventory, the sketch was referred to as “The Salutation of Parmigianino.” It escaped scholarly notice for over two centuries; but in a 1974 publication about the Spencer Collection, the author related it to Bedoli’s altarpiece, and it was subsequently



catalogued as a reduced replica by that artist. It was Keith Christiansen who seriously reconsidered the sketch's eighteenth-century attribution to Parmigianino and suggested that its character and quality argue against its being by Bedoli and instead for its being a preparatory *modello* by Parmigianino later used by Bedoli for the preparation of the Viadana altarpiece. Christiansen's argument is built around a close reading of the discrepancies between the sketch and the altarpiece and their respective X radiographs. The panel of the sketch was roughly prepared, and throughout it is mostly thinly painted, in swiftly applied, separate brushstrokes, with great verve and spontaneity. Some of the contours, such as the fingers

of the angel's left hand, seem to have first been quickly drawn or brushed in with black ink or paint. Many small pentimenti, or changes, are visible with the naked eye, and X radiographs have revealed others, such as in the dove's wings and the cloud behind the angel's head (see fig. 42).

As befits a major commission, the altarpiece is far more finished and its surface less rough and spontaneous. However, its differences from the sketch move well beyond those to be expected because of the difference in function of the two works. As Christiansen pointed out, the introduction of a tiled floor in the altarpiece has not resulted in a more persuasively suggestive interior space. Indeed, many of the

OPPOSITE

40. Attributed to Parmigianino (Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola; Parmese, 1503–1540). *The Annunciation*. Oil on wood, $33\frac{3}{8} \times 23\frac{1}{8}$ in. (84.8 × 58.7 cm). Purchase, Gwynne Andrews Fund, James S. Deely Gift, special funds, and other gifts and bequests, by exchange, 1982 (1982.319)

41. Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli (Parmese, ca. 1505–ca. 1569). *The Annunciation*, ca. 1539. Oil on canvas, $89 \times 59\frac{7}{8}$ in. (226 × 152 cm). Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples



forms—notably, the dove and Gabriel’s left arm—have been redrawn so that they seem parallel to the picture plane, and numerous lesser elements are similarly planar in appearance, leading to an overall flatness of effect. Beautiful elements painted with a shimmering, loose touch in the sketch—above all, the *sgabellino* on which the Virgin’s workbasket rests—are transformed in the most mundane fashion possible in the altarpiece. Likewise, the Virgin’s diaphanous gown becomes flatter and harder in Bedoli’s finished painting. Finally, the vigorous, sure application of paint seen in the X radiograph of the sketch is very different indeed from the rather dull handling visible in the Bedoli, where there were no noticeable changes made in the process of painting.

These disparities in approach and facture strongly suggest that the two paintings are by different artists. The question remains whether the Metropolitan’s *Annunciation* is, in fact, a preliminary sketch by Parmigianino, used by Bedoli as the basis of another work; or whether it is, rather, by a third artist, reacting to the altarpiece. There is even the possibility that both sketch and altarpiece are based on a now lost work by Parmigianino.

At the current stage in our knowledge, it is difficult to cut through this complicated knot. Several factors are at work in favor of the attribution to Parmigianino. The brilliantly sure handling and inventiveness seen in the sketch, especially in details such as the unusual lectern, with its flicker of silhouetting light, and the Virgin’s hair ornament, make it clear the painting is by a gifted artist. The way that this artist was thinking as he worked on the panel—making changes, resolving issues of space and light—suggests as well that the composition was being invented, rather than replicated. We know that Parmigianino painted *modelli*, as there are references to them in the inventory of a collection formed by his patron, Francesco Baiardo. Finally, a recently published, monochromatic sketch of the *Entombment* also attributed with good reason to Parmigianino (Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin), principally drawn with a brush in black ink



42. Attributed to Parmigianino. *Annunciation*. Detail of X radiograph, showing Gabriel’s torso and head, and the dove above. The X radiograph is notable for the quickness and sureness of handling of the paint that it reveals. A number of changes between the underlayer and final layer of the paint’s surface are visible in this detail: in the dove’s left wing and in the swirling, cloudlike strokes over the angel’s head. These passages demonstrate that the artist was changing his mind about elements of the picture as he was painting and make it unlikely that he was strictly copying an existing work.

with white heightening, resembles the visible drawn areas of the Metropolitan’s *Annunciation*.

Despite this array of evidence, the attribution has not gained wide acceptance, and several scholars have proposed artists of subsequent generations and from various places. Those proposed range from the Bolognese artists Prospero Fontana (1512–1597), Lavinia’s father, and Giovanni Andrea Donducci (1575–1655), known as Mastelletta, to northern European artists active in Italy, such as the Flemish painter Joss van Winghe (ca. 1544–1603). The suggestions for a later date are inspired by elements of the painting’s appearance: the elaboration of the surfaces and forms, Gabriel’s exceedingly unreal proportions, and the awkward articulation of his body.

These characteristics could point to a later moment in Mannerist painting. So far none of the other proposed attributions has found a consensus, although the idea that the sketch may have been painted by a Flemish artist active in Parma is a fascinating one. Thus, the author-

ship of this intriguing and quite beautiful sketch is still unresolved. It remains important as a testament to the impact of Parmigianino's art, with its *grazia* and sophistication, into the next generation and well beyond the borders of his native region. ✱

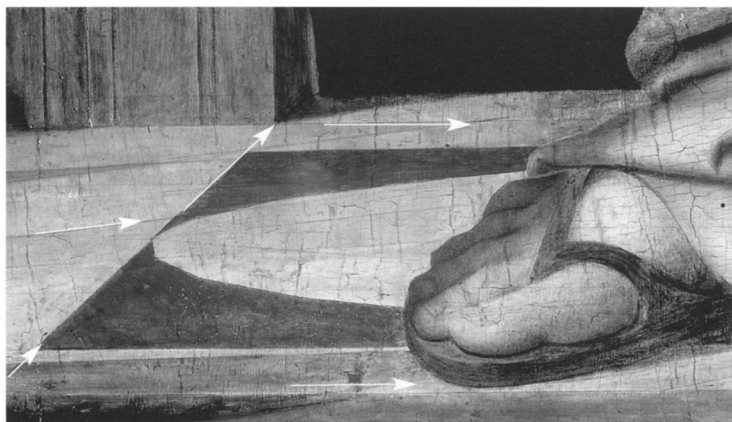
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NOTES

- p. 9 *well into the next century* For an introduction to the issue of copying the Cambrai Madonna in Flemish art, see the entry on Dieric Bouts's *Virgin and Child* by M[ary] S[prinson] d[e] J[esus] in Maryan W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen, eds., *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (New York, 1998), pp. 103–4. Keith Christiansen's essay in the same catalogue, "The View from Italy" (pp. 39–61), provides an overview of the importance of Flemish painting to fifteenth-century Italian artists.
- p. 11 *"repose of the Virgin's life"* Roger Fry, "Exhibition of Old Masters at the Grafton Galleries," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 20 (1911–12), p. 77.
- p. 13 *God in human form* David Alan Brown, in his *Andrea Solario* (Milan, 1987), p. 238, analyzes the architecture of *Christ Blessing* in terms of its funerary associations and compares it with related designs by Bramantino.
- p. 14 *Marco d'Oggiono and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio* Leonardo's complaint about Salai is in MS C, fol. 15r, in the Institut de France, Paris.
- p. 14 *"miraculous anatomist's touch"* For an English translation of the Longhi quotation, see Pietro Marani, "The Question of Leonardo's Bottega: Practices and the Transmission of Leonardo's Ideas on Art and Painting," in *The Legacy of Leonardo: Painters in Lombardy, 1490–1530*, ed. Francesco Porzio (Milan, 1998), p. 10.
- p. 16 *utmost precision and care* The elaborate jewelry of the period in Milan is discussed by Paola Venturelli in several articles and books, including *Gioielli e Gioiellieri Milanesi: Storia, arte, moda, 1450–1630* (Milan, 1996) and "I gioielli di Salomè," *Achademia Leonardi Vinci* 10 (1997), pp. 202–7.
- p. 16 *to the New Testament age of grace* A good introduction to the issues surrounding the figure of Salome can be found in Victoria S. Reed, "Rogier van der Weyden's *Saint John Triptych* for Miraflores and a Reconsideration of Salome," *Oud-Holland* 115, no. 1 (2001–2), pp. 1–14, esp. pp. 6–8.
- p. 16 *during these exact years* Paola Venturelli notes Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari's recognition of a connection between the Amboise family and its role in the order of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem with the popularity of the theme of Salome and the head of John the Baptist in "I gioielli di Salomè," p. 204, n. 25.
- p. 16 *current in his milieu* For the "laughing Pomona" described by Lomazza, see Angela Ottino della Chiesa, *The Complete Paintings of Leonardo da Vinci* (New York, 1967), p. 112, no. 65.
- p. 19 *mythology and Roman history* See Pietro Marani, "Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, called Giampietrino," in *The Legacy of Leonardo*, pp. 275–301; and Franco Moro, "Divinità femminili del Giampietrino," *Achademia Leonardi Vinci* 6 (1993), pp. 90–94.
- p. 23 *i precedenti di Caravaggio* (Caravaggio's predecessors) Roberto Longhi discussed the influence of Brescian painting on later Lombard art, and on Caravaggio in particular, in a number of articles, most importantly "Cose bresciane del Cinquecento," *L'Arte* 20 (1917), pp. 99–114, reprinted in *Opere complete di Roberto Longhi*, vol. 1, *Scritti giovanili, 1912–1922*, pt. 1 (Florence, 1961), pp. 327–43; and "Quesiti caravaggeschi," pt. 2, "I precedenti," *Pinacotheca* 5–6 (1928–29), pp. 258–320, reprinted in *Opere complete*, vol. 4, *Me pinxit e quesiti caravaggeschi, 1928–1934* (Florence, 1968), pp. 82–143.
- p. 26 *city of Brescia or its territory* Alessandro Nova, *Girolamo Romanino* (Turin, 1994), pp. 308–9.
- p. 26 *church of San Domenico Maggiore* Keith Christiansen in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Recent Acquisitions: A Selection, 1989–1990*, p. 37.
- p. 27 *contrast of light and shadow* J[oseph] A[rcher] Crowe and G[iovanni] B[attista] Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Tancred Borenius (London, 1912), vol. 3, p. 300.
- p. 30 *one of its principal contributions* The development of religious reform groups in Brescia, and Moretto's affiliation with them, has been explored in detail by Valerio Guazzoni in *Moretto: Il tema sacro* (Brescia, 1981); in "De potestate Pontificis: Riflessi tridentini nell'opera tarda del Moretto," in *Alessandro Bonvicino: Il Moretto*, exh. cat., Monastero di Santa Giulia, Brescia (Brescia, 1988), pp. 264–73; and in "Temi religiosi e contenuti devozionali," in *Pittura del Cinquecento a Brescia* (Milan, 1986), pp. 21–31.
- p. 30 *decided against the purchase* Charles Eastlake's comments are from his unpublished notebook for 1862, photographed in the archives of the Department of European Paintings, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

- p. 34 *compliment from the Venetian* Carlo Ridolfi, *Delle Maraviglie dell'Arte* . . . (Venice, 1648), p. 131.
- p. 36 *"Convent of St. Anna at Albino. . ."* Lionello Venturi, *Italian Paintings in America*, trans. Countess van den Heuvel and Charles Marriott, vol. 3 (New York, 1933), plate 537.
- p. 36 *where Bonghi served as rector from 1552 to 1553* The early literature, in which the sitter and the author of the book were identified, is summarized in Federico Zeri, with Elizabeth E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 4, *North Italian School* (New York, 1986), pp. 46–47.
- p. 36 *dated paintings from that moment* See Peter Humfrey, *Giovanni Battista Moroni, Renaissance Portraitist*, exh. cat., Kimbell Art Museum (Forth Worth, 2002), cat. no. 8, p. 69.
- p. 40 *emphasizes his limitations* For Vasari's biography of Francia, see Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 578, 582, 620.
- p. 40 *rather more harshly* For Michelangelo's critical remarks about Francia, see Vasari's biography of the former in *Lives of the Painters*, vol. 2, p. 664.
- p. 42 *yet somehow empty* See Arduino Colasanti, "Una tavola di Francesco Francia," *Rassegna d'Arte* 5 (1905), p. 189.
- p. 43 *commissioned this special portrait* For Isabella's commission, see especially the remarkable book by Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, 1474–1539: A Study of the Renaissance* (New York, 1915), pp. 379–81. The letters are published in full in Emilio Negro and Nicosetta Roio, *Francesco Francia e la sua scuola* (Mantua, 1998), pp. 116–18.
- p. 47 *"their truest and best results"* Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in North Italy*, vol. 2, p. 279.
- p. 47 *"showered benefits on her, protected her"* For the 1678 quotation from Carlo Cesare Malvasia, see Vera Fortunati, ed., *Lavinia Fontana, 1552–1614*, exh. cat. (Bologna, 1994), p. 32. For the various portraits on copper, see Vera Fortunati Pietrantonio, "Lavinia Fontana," in *Pittura bolognese del '500*, vol. 2 (Bologna, 1986), p. 728.
- p. 49 *"a promise to do it"* For Alfonso's patronage of the arts, see Andrea Bayer, "Dosso's Public: The Este Court at Ferrara," in *Dosso Dossi: Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara*, exh. cat. (Ferrara and New York, 1998–99), pp. 27–49. In the same catalogue, Dosso Dossi's *Three Ages of Man* is catalogued by Peter Humfrey on pp. 110–13.
- p. 53 *paintings of Saint John the Baptist and Michael the Archangel* See Zeri, *Italian Paintings, North Italian School*, pp. 23–25, for information on the altarpiece.
- p. 54 *all too frequent example* For information on Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and his miracles, see Roberto Tollo and Elena Bisacci, eds., *San Nicola da Tolentino e le Marche: Culto e arte* (Tolentino, 1999).
- p. 55 *"the best of the modern"* Vasari's remarks on Girolamo da Carpi are in that artist's *Life*, vol. 2, p. 452; his discussion of Correggio and Rome in his *Life of Correggio*, vol. 1, p. 646.
- p. 56 *his residuary legatee* Melchior Fassi's wills are published in Cecil Gould, *The Paintings of Correggio* (London, 1976), pp. 177–80, and their implications are discussed by the same author in *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci: Emilian Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C., New York, and Bologna, 1986), p. 98. See also David Ekserdjian, *Correggio* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 52–57.
- p. 59 *"delighted to perform"* A. Edith Hewett, "Two Pictures from the Ashburton Collection; A Portrait of Eleonora of Spain attributed to Jean Clouet," *The Burlington Magazine* 12, no. 59 (February 1908), p. 303.
- p. 59 *"emotional feeling for character"* Roger Fry's letter to Bryson Burroughs is in Denys Sutton, ed., *Letters of Roger Fry* (New York, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 295–96.
- p. 61 *preparation of the Viadana altarpiece* Keith Christiansen in *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci*, pp. 174–76; the Bedoli altarpiece appears in the same exhibition with an entry by Lucia Fornari Schianchi, pp. 70–72.
- p. 63 *quite beautiful sketch is still unresolved* Dissenting views about the attribution to Parmigianino include S. J. Freedberg, "Parmigianino problems in the exhibition (and related matters)" in *Emilian Painting of the 16th and 17th Centuries: A Symposium* [CASVA, Washington, D.C.] (Bologna, 1987), pp. 44–46 (as by Bedoli); Nicole Dacos, "La tappa emiliana dei pittori fiamminghi e qualche inedito di Joss van Winghe," in *Lelio Orsi e la cultura del suo tempo*, ed. Jadranka Bentini (Bologna, 1990), pp. 35–40 (as by the Flemish artist Joss van Winghe); Anna Coliva, "Gli affreschi dei palazzi di Poli e di Bolsena: Prospero Fontana nell'ambito delle committenze farnesiane," *Bollettino d'Arte*, nos. 80–81 (July–October 1993), pp. 52–53 (as by the Bolognese Prospero Fontana); and Maria Cristina Chiusa, *Parmigianino* (Milan, 2001), p. 212 (as possibly by the Bolognese artist Andrea Donducci, "Il Mastelletta").



Infrared photograph of Solario's *Christ Blessing* reveals a network of drawn lines in the architectural portion of the image; other lines were incised into the gesso and can be seen in a raking light. Together, they indicate the perspectival grid of orthogonals, and of lines parallel to the picture plane, that the artist drew in order to create a convincing pictorial space and to measure the positions of the architectural elements.

