The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin | WINTER 2005

GOING FOR BAROQUE

Bringing 17th-Century Masters to the Met

Keith Christiansen

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

THIS PUBLICATION WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF THE LILA ACHESON WALLACE FUND FOR THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART ESTABLISHED BY THE COFOUNDER OF *Reader's Digest.*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
Winter 2005
Volume LXII, Number 3
(ISSN 0026-1521)

 Published quarterly. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and Additional Mailing Offices. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* is provided as a benefit to Museum members and is available by subscription. Subscriptions $25.00 a year. Single copies $8.95. Four weeks' notice required for change of address. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028-0198. Back issues available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. Volumes I–XXXVII (1905–1942) available as clothbound reprint set or as individual yearly volumes from Ayer Company Publishers Inc., 50 Northwestern Drive #10, Salem, N.H. 03079, or from the Museum, Box 700, Middle Village, N.Y. 11379.

General Manager of Publications
JOHN P. O'NEILL
Editor in Chief of the Bulletin
JOAN HOLT
Production
PETER ANTONY
Design
ANTONY DROBINSKI

Museum photography by Teresa Christiansen and Juan Trujillo, The Photograph Studio, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

FRONT COVER: Detail of *Samson Captured by the Philistines,* by Guercino (p. 37)

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Detail of *The Coronation of the Virgin,* by Annibale Carracci (p. 27)

INSIDE BACK COVER: Detail of *Marcantonio Pasqualini (1614–1691) Crowned by Apollo,* by Andrea Sacchi (p. 46)

BACK COVER: Detail of *The Holy Family with Saints Anne and Catherine of Alexandria,* by Jusepe de Ribera (p. 10)

THIS *Bulletin*, the first of 2005, marks the beginning of the centennial year of the magazine. It has come a long way. According to its founding statement, published in November 1905, the *Bulletin*'s scope was "a humble one . . . not intended to be a rival to any existing art publication" or to "consciously trespass on the sphere of any art critic." It aimed simply to be a "ready means of communication" between the Metropolitan and its members. The statement noted that "many of our citizens, who are familiar with the great museums abroad, are quite ignorant of their Museum at home . . . it will not be the fault of the Bulletin if that condition continues."

To be published quarterly, under the direction of the Museum secretary, the *Bulletin* would list new acquisitions, with illustrations "whenever practicable," and serve as a "full information bureau," including notices of gallery rearrangements and changes in rules. "It will be sent to all members . . . without extra charge. It will not be voluminous." Striking a contemporary chord, the statement commented that "our members are most of them busy people, already overwhelmed with overmuch printed material. . . . The Bulletin will contain just the number of pages be they more or less, which are necessary to give the information required, and there it will end, even if the last page be not filled out."

By January 1906 the *Bulletin* had "found so hearty an appreciation" that the Museum decided to publish it bimonthly, with a yearly subscription price of fifty cents and single copies offered for ten cents. Only a month later the Trustees announced that it would be issued monthly, as there was so much to communicate—this being a period of a prodigious increase in our holdings—that a quarterly would "approach magazine bulk." Nonetheless, in 1942 a new monthly series, in a magazine format, was inaugurated in which pages almost wholly devoted to listing and describing recent acquisitions gave way to more general, short, informative articles featuring Museum objects. In 1972 the *Bulletin* changed again to a quarterly devoted to a single topic inspired by works in the collections. Larger and liberally illustrated in color, it would still be sent free to members, but could also be sold at the Museum to generate additional revenue. The new look proved a success. A growing membership and abundant subscriptions have pushed the circulation beyond 110,000. It has become a well-respected art magazine in its own right, while not trespassing, as far as I know, on "the sphere of any art critic."

Through the years many staff members have guided the course of the *Bulletin*. I wish to mention here the important contribution made by Bradford D. Kelleher, a mainstay of Museum retail operations and publishing since 1949 and now a valued consultant. Today the high standards and fine quality of this publication are maintained by John P. O'Neill and our Editorial Department, particularly the *Bulletin*'s editor in chief, Joan Holt, who works closely with Chief Production Manager Peter Antony. Ultimately, however, the success of the *Bulletin* is due to the enthusiastic support of our members, without whom we simply could not publish it.

This issue is devoted to Baroque painting, which has been represented in the Museum since 1903 but, as Jayne Wrightsman Curator Keith Christiansen points out, has been acquired only randomly until fairly recently. The collection still lacks many outstanding names, such as Orazio Gentileschi and Pietro da Cortona, but boasts works by Caravaggio, Guercino, Guido Reni, and Ribera. Fortunately, it is a field in which purchases can still be made. We hope, with luck and support from collectors, someday to bring it up to the level of our great holdings of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish works. In his illuminating and lively commentary, Christiansen provides keys to understanding Baroque paintings, explains the impact of changing taste on their fortunes, and explores their rich heritage and dramatic subjects.

Philippe de Montebello
Director

GOING FOR BAROQUE
Into the Bin

You can still come upon prints or sepia-toned photographs of these once-celebrated landmarks of art history in musty shops with "Antiques" optimistically displayed in peeling gold above a dirty plateglass window, but to find them you must put up with the scent of moldy paper and tomcat, as well as the inevitable clutter. Your goal will be a bin holding cardboard-mounted photographs and yellowed prints, records of a forgotten moment in taste. If luck is with you, the photo or print will be in its original dark-stained oak frame—the discarded decoration of a nineteenth-century study, stairwell, or sitting room. In one image (fig. 1) a noble and demure Madonna, cradling an athletically proportioned infant, stares out from her elevated position on a bank of clouds, her robes gently billowing. These sacred figures are attended by a bearded pope who, kneeling, gestures outward, and a richly garbed female saint together with two impish cherubs who lean thoughtfully on a fictive ledge. In another (fig. 2) a procession of beautiful women, light of foot and hand in hand, accompanies

1.
The corner of a connoisseur of the old school, with vintage photographs of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (ca. 1513–14), now in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden; his *Madonna della Seggiola* (ca. 1513–14), in the Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; and, behind this picture, Poussin's *Inspiration of the Poet* (ca. 1630–32), in the Musée du Louvre, Paris; together with a miniature set of the tragedies of Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803)

2.
Raphael Morghen (Italian, Naples, 1758– Florence, 1833), after Guido Reni
Aurora with Apollo and the Hours, 1788
Engraving, plate 36¼ x 20⅝ in. (92.1 x 51.8 cm)
Gift of J. A. Morgan, 1923 (23.106.48)

a radiant figure of Apollo seated on his chariot drawn by nobly proportioned pintos across a golden sky. This glorious entourage is preceded by an angelically graceful woman, her head turned back, her arms outspread, soaring above a seascape. Although these subjects were created at a century's remove from each other, the photographs or prints of them were occasionally hung as pendants in the same room as emblems of artistic perfection.

It has been quite a while since Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, the jewel of the old-master collection in Dresden, and Guido Reni's frescoed *Aurora* in the Casino Rospigliosi Pallavicini in Rome have occupied such exalted positions in the popular imagination. Indeed, if ever we needed to be reminded that artistic greatness is subject to the vagaries of taste, the critical fortunes of these two sublime works of art would suffice. Not that they lack their admirers; it is their popularity—not their status among scholars—that has been eclipsed. Where reproductions of them once hung are now found brightly colored, framed posters of water lilies and haystacks made gauzy by the lavender light of the setting sun, or oversize sunflowers with tormented petals and windswept wheat fields ominously punctuated by twisted cypress trees—works that evoke places of retreat.

A cultural divide has opened, and those signal works of a shared artistic heritage now seem to many as remote as a Chola bronze of a dancing Shiva. Their choreographed gestures and expressions, their aloof bearing, and their abstract beauty belong to the formal language of another epoch—one so embalmed in artifice as to seem irrelevant today. I have been told that, on visiting a splendid exhibition of seventeenth-century Italian paintings in a major American museum, a world-wise trustee took the curator aside and murmured confidentially into his ear, "Don't take offense, but these are just the sort of paintings people fear they'll see in a museum." We are very far from the raptures felt by Stendhal—as avid a lover of painting (and of music) as he was a great novelist—in the presence of such works. What writer today would take his inspiration from a Madonna by Raphael in creating the heroine of a novel, as Balzac did in the case of *Ursule Mirouët*?

How do we bridge this divide and enter—not with apprehension but with a sense of anticipation—those once-hallowed sanctuaries of the grand manner, of which Raphael and Guido Reni were only two of the presiding deities?

We Like What We Know

In 1786, the thirty-seven-year-old Johann Wolfgang von Goethe decided to abandon his post at the Weimar court and set out on his first trip to Italy—his life's dream. He did so better prepared than most of us today. Quite apart from being the celebrated author of the epistolary novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* Goethe was a dedicated student of Greek art and culture. For him the past was not a closed book, and his desire to penetrate the secret of Greek art was well within his intellectual grasp. The Renaissance, too, had long been within his purview through engravings of the most famous compositions, and his memory bank was well stocked with images—above all with the frescoes of Raphael and the architecture of Palladio, those twin pillars of cultivated taste in the late eighteenth century.

He had been in Rome two weeks when, on a November day, he made his way across the Ponte Sisto to the Villa Farnesina, along the Tiber. His goal was the frescoes by Raphael illustrating the story of Psyche on the vault of the loggia built in the sixteenth century for the Sienese banker Agostino Chigi. Goethe's rooms in Weimar had been decorated with colored reproductions of these famous works and, understandably, he responded to them with enthusiasm. "These paintings are like friends with whom one has long been acquainted through correspondence and now sees face to face for the first time." Yet his capacious memory was to prove of little use when it came to what, for him, were the less familiar monuments of Baroque art with subjects drawn from Catholic hagiography. A month earlier, in Bologna—the birthplace of Ludovico, Agostino, and Annibale Carracci, of Guido Reni, and of Domenichino—he had found himself at a loss, and on the evening of October 19, he noted his perplexities in his journal.

"I have spent the day well just looking and looking. It is the same in art as in life. The deeper one penetrates, the broader grows the view. In the sky of art countless new stars keep appearing, the Carracci, Guido [Reni], Domenichino, and they puzzle me. To enjoy these children of a later, happier period properly would require a knowledge and a competence of judgment which I lack and which can only be acquired gradually."

What bothered Goethe was not so much the style of the paintings and the conventions of representation they embodied—after all, with the sole exception of Ludovico Carracci, each of these outstanding artists had based his work on a detailed study of classical sculpture and of Raphael. No. It was that the subjects—drawn from the lives of the saints—seemed so foreign to his classically trained mind and Protestant faith. "The main obstacle to understanding these painters," he declared, "is their absurd subjects, which drive me mad, though I would like to admire and love them. It is as if the sons of gods had married the daughters of men and begotten of them a variety of monsters. It is always the same, even with a genius like Guido [Reni]. You find yourself in the dissecting room, at the foot of the gallows, on the edge of the corpse pit. His heroes always suffer and never act. Never an interest in everyday life, always the expectation of something fantastic about to appear from outside. The figures are either of criminals or lunatics, except when, as a last resource, the painter introduces a nude boy or a pretty girl into the crowd of spectators or treats the saintly heroes as if they were mannequins, draping them in cloaks arranged in beautiful folds. That is no way to convey an idea of human beings."

How strange that the very pictorial conventions Goethe admired in the work of Raphael should have irritated him when applied to timeworn subjects with which, by his upbringing,

3.
Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (Italian, Rome, 1708–1787)
Portrait of a Young Man, ca. 1760–65
Oil on canvas, 97⅛ x 69¼ in. (246.7 x 175.9 cm)
Inscribed (on books): ROMA / AN:E MO:; VITE DE / PITTORI; ODISSEA / DI / OMERO / T:II: (Rome . . . ; Lives of the Painters; Odyssey of Homer, Volume 2)
Rogers Fund, 1903 (03.37.1)

he was not familiar. And then, there was the sensual beauty and high-blown rhetoric that an artist such as Guido Reni brought to his altarpieces. Goethe recognized he was going to have to put some effort into these pictures in order to begin to understand what their creators intended. It took, perhaps, a jolt of the unfamiliar to make him realize how much of his taste was merely conditioned response.

The part played by reproductions—and guidebooks—in sustaining the reputations of artists and shaping our responses to their works would make an interesting study. Readers of E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View,* published in 1908, will remember what fun he had with the cult of art and the necessary assistance of guidebooks (such as the infamous Baedeker, which constituted every tourist's *vade mecum*). On her first trip to Florence, Lucy Honeychurch sets out, guidebook in hand, to visit the great thirteenth-century Franciscan church of Santa Croce, where she anticipates seeing the frescoes by Giotto and experiencing those "tactile values" about which Bernard Berenson, the most influential writer on Italian art at the time, had written. Her companion, the liberated Miss Lavish, urges her to abandon the book. "Tut, tut! Miss Lucy! I hope we shall soon emancipate you from Baedeker. He does but touch the surface of things. As to the true Italy—he does not even dream of it. The true Italy is only to be found by patient observation."

Far more illustrious and better informed people than Lucy Honeychurch have depended on guidebooks to direct them to the great works of art. By the eighteenth century visitors on the grand tour could turn to a work such as Roisecco's *Roma Antica e Moderna* (perhaps the guidebook displayed in Pompeo Batoni's *Portrait of a Young Man* [fig. 3]) or Mariano Vasi's *Itinerario . . . di Roma*. Both provided ample information on the major sights, whether a classical sculpture in the Albani collection or Raphael's fresco of the prophet Isaiah in the church of Sant'Agostino. When, in 1858, Nathaniel Hawthorne made his first visit to Italy, it was with one of *Murray's Handbooks* as his companion (citations here are from the *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* [1867] and *Handbook of Rome and Its Environs* [1869]). Of

course, like Goethe, he was already familiar with a number of masterpieces from his collection of reproductions. In Florence he looked forward to seeing Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair* (the *Madonna della Seggiola*, illustrated in fig. 1) in the Palazzo Pitti. Hawthorne noted that he was "familiar with it in a hundred engravings and copies and therefore it shone upon me with a familiar beauty, though infinitely more divine than I had ever seen it before." Yet Hawthorne was wise enough to realize that his responses were to some degree conditioned by just this familiarity. And how could anyone resist the effusive praise heaped on the picture by *Murray's*, which described it as "the sweetest of all [Raphael's] Madonnas, if not the grandest. Nature, unsophisticated nature, reigns triumphant through this work, highly sought for, highly felt, and most agreeably rendered." Hawthorne thus qualified the pleasure he thought he was taking with the observation that "we can never feel sure that we are not bamboozling ourselves in such matters." Only someone with strong convictions could sweep aside what appeared to be the verdict of posterity.

The person who did just that was the young writer, critic, naturalist, and future social reformer John Ruskin. On his own (but not without his *Murray's*) in Florence in 1845, he visited the church of Santa Maria Novella, where he fell under the spell of three small works by Fra Angelico—"as near heaven as human hand or mind will ever, or can ever go," he wrote to his father. Angelico's combination of saintly life and devout style of painting had already attracted the attention of a number of artists and critics, and Ruskin's response was perhaps not as spontaneous as he imagined. It did, however, cause him to look at the work of more familiar artists with different eyes. Only seven years before, Raphael and Reni still stood high in his estimate. "Tell me," he wrote in an essay of 1838 dealing with music and painting, "who has most forcibly affected your feelings, most mightily governed your thoughts—Handel, with his *Te Deum*, or Guido [Reni], with his Crucifixion." But now, in the light of the purity of Angelico's art, Raphael's paintings seemed to him inappropriately "sensual." A month later in Bologna, he declared in a letter to his mother, "I have been a long time hesitating, but I have given [Raphael] up today." To his father he sent a copy of his new hierarchy of European painters; in the bottommost class—the "School of Errors and vices"—were Raphael, the Carracci, and Guido Reni. We may smile at this youthful iconoclasm (he was twenty-six), but Ruskin's eloquence was intoxicating, and through his voluminous writings yielded almost unimaginable results.

Informed opinion of the work of the Carracci, Guido Reni, and Domenichino—to cite only the most admired of the founders of Baroque painting—turned from guarded appreciation to positive revulsion. Visiting the Pinacoteca of Bologna in 1873, Henry James—whose views of art are inseparable from those of Ruskin—found himself "scowling at Guido and Domenichino." (How amusing that this most self-consciously formal of writers chastised Domenichino for his lack of spontaneity: "The great thing in art is charm, and the great thing in charm is spontaneity.") And, like Ruskin, he was perfectly willing to write off Raphael—or at least the mature Raphael that had been the fountainhead of painting for two and a half centuries. "If there were some time to be a weeding out of the world's possessions, the best works of the early Florentines [i.e., of the fifteenth century] will certainly be counted among the flowers," he writes in *Italian Hours* (1909). "Heaven forbid we should be narrowed down to a cruel choice; but if it came to a question of keeping or losing between half-a-dozen Raphaels and half-a-dozen things it would be a joy to pick out at the Academy [the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence housing Gothic painting], I fear that, for myself, the memory of [Raphael's] *Transfiguration*, or indeed of the other Roman relics of the painter, wouldn't save the Raphaels."

Soon it became a badge of superiority to cavalierly dismiss the work of just about every Italian painter born after Raphael and Michelangelo. Bernard Berenson ended his 1907 critical essay on northern Italian painting with the observation that "although in the last three and a half centuries [Italy] has brought forth thousands of clever and even delightful painters, she has failed to produce a single great artist"; and by 1913 the Baedeker guide to northern Italy warned its readers that "the visitor imbued with the modern taste for the period of the Renaissance will find little attraction in the Bolognese works of the 17th century, which form the chief boast of [the Bologna Pinacoteca]."

Ruskin did not restrict his views to essays and books. He lobbied museums and, in particular, publicly criticized the purchasing policies of London's National Gallery. So it is not surprising that in 1857 he was asked to appear before the National Gallery Site Commission. He was interviewed about a wide range of topics: should sculpture and painting be shown in the same museum (yes); should pictures be glazed (yes); how should galleries be hung (with pictures at one level and on line); etc. The eye-opener for the commission must have come in answer to the following question: "You have much to do with the education of the working classes in Art. As far as you are able to tell us, what is your experience with regard to their liking and disliking in Art—do comparatively uneducated persons prefer the Art up to the time of Raphael, or down from the time of Raphael?—we will take the Bolognese School, or the early Florentine School—which do you think a working man would feel the greatest interest in looking at?" "I cannot tell you," quipped Ruskin, "because my working men would not be allowed to look at a Bolognese picture."

What about today, more than two centuries after Baroque painting lost its prestige? Initially, it fell from favor because of its lack of conformity to the aesthetic and moral imperatives of Neoclassical painting (the prophet of Neoclassicism, the German art historian Johann Winkelmann, first used the term "baroque" to condemn what he saw as its excesses and deformities); and following Courbet's realist revolution in the 1850s, it was perceived to lack engagement with everyday life (the lens of nineteenth-century realism still conditions our responses to Caravaggio).

The early twentieth century saw a revival of interest by a coterie of scholars who realized that there must be something to those deities of the past. They became the champions of the Baroque, and it is through their work and the research of their successors that, bit by bit, the language of Italian Baroque painting has been recovered. To appreciate the odds against them, we may recall that even an independently minded critic of the caliber of Roger Fry (1866–1934), the British apostle of modernism, had too pure, too formalist a view of art to tolerate (let alone appreciate) the visual complexity, overt expressiveness, and sheer facility of Baroque painters (in his modernist lexicon, facility signified facile). Someone who preferred African masks to Greek sculpture and early Chinese vases to Greek pots was unlikely to be sympathetic to the classical tradition that is the basis of both Raphael and Reni. Yet, as with a number of other critics, his curiosity was piqued: "I like to assert my claim—as far as I know a well-founded one—to have been the first modern English writer on art to turn a friendly, inquiring gaze towards the masters of the Seicento, whose names still re-echoed, but with a dying sound, at the end of the last century," he wrote in 1926. Predictably, he came away disillusioned when he found that their artistic credo was not his. He convinced himself that his prejudices were grounded in aesthetic truths, but we recognize the mantra: the Carracci are pedantic academics, Caravaggio a brilliant charlatan (Fry cleverly compared his paintings to the movies), and their art in general too anecdotal to be taken seriously. As for the religious expression of painters such as Guido Reni and Carlo Dolci, it was shameless sentimentality.

(Fry, raised a Quaker, should perhaps have examined the anti-Catholic roots of this view, just as we must be aware of the degree to which the notion of kitsch has shaped our response to Baroque imagery.) The fear of philistinism also played its part. For who would wish to champion Reni when an artist of the caliber of the German Expressionist Emil Nolde was advocating the study of non-European art, especially that of "primitive people," and declared, "We do not care for Raphael, and the sculptures of the so-called Classical periods leave us cool"?

But signs that times have changed have become ever more evident. Caravaggio and Bernini are cult figures (though Frank Stella's infatuation with Caravaggio in the 1980s was, indicatively, coupled with a thoroughly dismissive attitude toward Annibale Carracci). More and more visitors to Rome find themselves dazzled rather than disgusted by the great feats of illusionism on the ceilings of palaces and churches—scenes in which real architecture is magically extended and figures hurtle about unencumbered by gravity or spill into the viewer's space. Have their minds been opened to the rhythmic flux and polyphony of Baroque painting by the gestural work of the postwar Abstract Expressionists or the bombastic Pop imagery of an artist such as James Rosenquist? Is this attraction simply a reaction to our culture's embrace of everything from primitivism to rank commercialism? Or are we now prepared to admit that these forms of artistic accomplishment and cultural sophistication are not, after all, despicable? It really makes little difference what draws us to this exuberant period, so full of surprises and fascinating detours and contradictions, so long as we are careful not to allow our appreciation to be limited by our contemporary experience: to like only what we know.

The Beginnings

GIVEN THE STATE OF AFFAIRS outlined above, it is hardly surprising that no real effort was made by the Metropolitan to collect Baroque paintings until relatively recently. In 1940, when the first catalogue of Italian paintings was published, the Museum owned only a few examples. Many proved not to be by the artists to whom they were ascribed; most were minor. The single great exception was one of the Museum's true masterpieces, Ribera's *The Holy Family with Saints Anne and Catherine of Alexandria* (fig. 4), acquired from the Earl of Harewood in 1934. Ribera is usually thought of as a Spanish painter, but he came to Italy as a teenager and spent almost his entire working career in Naples. There was also Salvator Rosa's haunting *Self-Portrait* (fig. 5), bequeathed to the Metropolitan in 1921, in which the artist depicted himself (or, it has been suggested by others, his friend the poet Giovanni Battista Ricciardi) against a moonlit sky as a Stoic philosopher, pondering the vanities of life as he inscribes a skull. Not only is it a haunting work, it wonderfully embodies the elevated notion of the painter as poet and philosopher aspired to by some of the greatest seventeenth-century artists. In addition, the Museum owned a large canvas of *The Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 6) by the leading Neapolitan painter of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Francesco Solimena. Remarkably, given the lack of interest in works of this sort, it was acquired in 1906—though as the work of Luca Giordano (fig. 7).

Only in 1952, with the acquisition of Caravaggio's *Musicians* (fig. 12), was a serious start made toward rectifying what had been a fairly serendipitous approach to collecting. Almost three-fourths of the pictures that currently hang in the galleries of seventeenth-century Italian

4. *(opposite)*
Jusepe de Ribera
(Spanish, 1591–1652)
The Holy Family with Saints Anne and Catherine of Alexandria, 1648
Oil on canvas, 82½ x 60¾ in. (209.6 x 154.3 cm)
Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1934 (34.73)

5.
Salvator Rosa (Italian, Naples, 1615–1673)
Self-Portrait, ca. 1648
Oil on canvas, 39 x 31¼ in. (99.1 x 79.4 cm)
Bequest of Mary L. Harrison, 1921 (21.105)

6.
Francesco Solimena (Italian, Naples, 1657–1747)
The Birth of the Virgin, ca. 1690
Oil on canvas, 80½ x 67¼ in. (204.5 x 170.8 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1906 (07.66)

7. *(opposite)*
Luca Giordano (Italian, Naples, 1632–1705)
The Annunciation, 1672
Oil on canvas, 93⅛ x 66⅞ in. (236.5 x 169.9 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1973
(1973.311.2)

8.
Pier Francesco Mola (North Italian, 1612–1666)
The Rest on the Flight into Egypt, ca. 1645–47
Oil on copper, 9 x 11 in. (22.9 x 27.9 cm)
Wrightsman Fund, 1993 (1993.20)

9.
Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri; Italian, Bologna, 1581–1641)
Landscape with Moses and the Burning Bush, ca. 1610–12
Oil on copper, 17¾ x 13⅜ in. (45.1 x 34 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1976 (1976.155.2)

painting have been acquired since 1970. Fine though these are—and the collection includes an enviable number of real masterpieces—they can hardly claim to represent the richness of the period. And, of course, to experience the brilliance of those frescoed ceilings and domes that are the glory of Baroque illusionism it is still necessary to visit Rome, Bologna, and Naples. Nonetheless, the Metropolitan's holdings do give the neophyte a sampling of the pleasures in store, and offer rewards as well for the initiate. The collection includes works by a significant number of the premier players: Caravaggio, Annibale and Ludovico Carracci, Guercino, Guido Reni, Ribera, and a host of only slightly lesser talents. Some of these paintings elucidate the issues of naturalism, expression, and the nature of representation so central to Baroque painting. Others are bravado demonstrations of artistic virtuosity (fig. 7) or explore on a diminutive scale an aesthetic of jewel-like perfection (figs. 8, 9). Some (figs. 10, 11) exemplify the special qualities of a particular region, for in painting as in food Italy is incomparably varied. This publication focuses on a selection of works in an effort to examine some of the themes and ideas that informed the world of Baroque artists, particularly in Bologna, Rome, and Naples.

10.
Giulio Cesare Procaccini
(Italian, Milan, 1574–1625)
Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Dominic and Angels, 1612
Oil on canvas, 101⅛ x 56⅜ in. (256.9 x 143.2 cm)
Purchase, Enid A. Haupt Gift, 1979 (1979.209)

11.
Domenico Guidobono (Italian, Genoa, 1668–1746)
An Allegory, ca. 1720
Oil on canvas, 56¾ x 92¼ in. (144.1 x 234.3 cm)
Purchase, R. A. Farnsworth Gift, Gwynne Andrews, Charles B. Curtis, Rogers, Marquand, The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment, and Victor Wilbour Memorial Funds, 1970 (1970.261)

12. *(opposite)*
Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi; Italian, Lombardy, 1571–1610)
The Musicians, ca. 1595
Oil on canvas, 36¼ x 46⅝ in. (92.1 x 118.4 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1952 (52.81)

Setting the Scene

Let us start with three key paintings, all carried out in the sixteenth century, between about 1582 and 1595, but crucial to the revolution on which Baroque art is based: Caravaggio's *Musicians* (fig. 12), Annibale Carracci's *Two Children Teasing a Cat* (fig. 13), and Ludovico Carracci's *Lamentation* (fig. 19). Each has been conceived within the broad framework of naturalism, but the results are as diverse as the aims of the artist and the subjects they treat. Caravaggio's painting is an allegory of music, but an allegory presented in the guise of a genre painting. A winged Cupid is shown gathering grapes at the left of the composition. The figures are based on posed models (the man with a cornetto who looks out at us is almost certainly a self-portrait done with the aid of a mirror). The frisson felt by cultivated seventeenth-century viewers when they studied a work such as this one derived precisely from the unorthodox combination of the abstract world of allegory, normally dished up with a strong dose of Raphaelesque idealization, and the world of contemporary musical practice.

13.
Annibale Carracci
(Italian, Bologna,
1560–1609)
Two Children Teasing a Cat, ca. 1590
Oil on canvas, 26 x 35 in.
(66 x 88 cm)
Purchase, Gwynne
Andrews Fund, and
Bequests of Collis P.
Huntington and Ogden
Mills, by exchange, 1994
(1994.142)

14.
Caravaggio
The Lute Player,
ca. 1597
Oil on canvas, 40¼ x
51⅛ in. (102.2 x 129.9 cm)
Private collection, on loan
to The Metropolitan
Museum of Art

We happen to know that the person for whom this picture was created, Caravaggio's first great patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, was a music lover who had a resident male soprano in his employ and who sponsored musical entertainments for his fellow ecclesiastics. (The soprano, a Spaniard named Pedro Montoya, seems to be depicted in another musical allegory by Caravaggio, also done for Del Monte [fig. 14].) Del Monte was a connoisseur of painting (Cesare Ripa's manual of iconography was dedicated to him in 1593, and in 1596 he served as protector of the painters' academy in Rome). Like many collectors of the day, he espoused a broader view of art—he later promoted the career of Andrea Sacchi, a confirmed classicist—and one of the attractions of Caravaggio was the way the Lombard artist used his radical naturalism to give highbrow subjects a lowbrow edge, for naturalism was, by and large, thought to be suitable for only lowlife scenes—paintings of Gypsy fortune-tellers, for example. (Del Monte owned a much-admired picture of this subject by Caravaggio.) The identification of a style appropriate to specific kinds of subjects fell under the rubric of decorum.

We do not have to look far to uncover the artifice embedded in Caravaggio's *Musicians*. The compressed figural composition recalls Roman marble reliefs, but the artist has taken considerable pains to activate the fictive space by the prominently placed, foreshortened violin and open book of music—an obvious solicitation to the viewer. There is also an emphasis on contrasting a front-viewed figure, frozen in the act of tuning his lute, with a back-viewed one, whose uncovered shoulder provides the opportunity to introduce a sensuous line of intense beauty. It is a work predicated on the much-vaunted notion of artistic contrast, and we would do the picture an injustice to think of it exclusively as an audacious experiment in naturalism, though it is certainly that as well.

Annibale's painting of *Two Children Teasing a Cat* seems, at first sight, to eschew this self-conscious juggling of artistic ideas. It is precisely the kind of picture for which a naturalistic style would have been thought appropriate. Yet it is no more a straightforward depiction of a real-life scene than is Caravaggio's. The action portrayed is perfectly believable, and the two children—perhaps a brother and his little sister—may even have posed for Annibale, who would have drawn their features in chalk or, slightly less likely, in a rapid-fire oil sketch. (As demonstrated by a drawing in the Metropolitan of a mother drying linen before a hearth [fig. 15], both Annibale and his cousin Ludovico were keen observers of everyday life, but their responses were most frequently recorded in the private, informal, and speedy medium of pen and ink with wash.) The act of teasing a cat with a crayfish was surely meant to convey a moral lesson, in the vein of a popular proverb, and Annibale situated the painting within a well-known northern Italian tradition canonized in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, a copy of which the Carracci owned. The moral lesson was the equivalent of our admonishment about the dangers of playing with fire and brought the picture into line with the kinds of works approved by the reforming cardinal-archbishop of Bologna, Gabriele Paleotti, who had reservations about art that did not have an uplifting, moral function. By conspicuously placing the girl's hand on the ledge in front of the orange tabby, Annibale suggests that the outcome of teasing the cat will be someone getting scratched, thereby turning the girl's delight to tears.

In conceiving the painting Annibale doubtless had in mind a celebrated work by the sixteenth-century woman artist Sofonisba Anguissola of Cremona (fig. 16). Vasari tells us that Michelangelo was shown a drawing by Sofonisba of a child laughing. He admired it, but he suggested that it would be even more difficult—and thus praiseworthy—to show a child crying. (The concept of difficulty—*difficoltà*—was central to Renaissance aesthetics.) Sofonisba's response was to draw one of her young sisters offering her infant brother the dubious

15.
Annibale Carracci
A Domestic Scene,
ca. 1582–84
Pen and black ink, gray and brown wash, 11⅜ x 9⅛ in. (29 x 23.3 cm)
Purchase, Mrs. Vincent Astor and Mrs. Charles Payson Gift, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, and Rogers Fund, 1972 (1972.133.2)

delights of a basket of crayfish, one of which has, predictably, fastened its pincers on the boy's finger. The girl laughs, the boy cries. The drawing was clearly intended to respond to Michelangelo's challenge, but it did so by adding a further layer, for it includes both a crying and a laughing figure, thus giving brilliant demonstration of Sofonisba's mastery of contrasting physiognomic expressions. It is also anecdotal on the most engaging level. Small wonder that the drawing was sent to Duke Cosimo de' Medici in Florence for his admiration.

There can be little question that Sofonisba's drawing provided Annibale with his point of departure and that this relationship was meant to increase its interest. In fact, the Farnese family—patrons of Annibale—owned a version of his painting as well as Sofonisba's drawing. Annibale wanted something more, however, than the depiction of an action frozen in time. He shows us the moments before the child is scratched, thereby embedding in his work a concept of time—of a narrative that unfolds in front of us and in which the conclusion is implied rather than depicted. The viewer for which it was destined was obviously expected to be sophisticated and doubtless would also have admired the way Annibale employed a rapid, informal manner of painting to enhance the impression of spontaneity. The highlights of the girl's sleeve are painted wet into wet, the red ribbon in her hair suggested rather than described in detail, and the cat is brushed in so thinly as to appear almost unfinished. By comparison, Caravaggio's work looks both staged and frozen, which reminds us of the degree to which an impression of spontaneity is a calculated narrative strategy: Annibale has appropriated the studio practice of the oil sketch and combined it with the rich brushwork he learned from Venetian painting to create a picture at once seemingly spontaneous and finished.

Caravaggio's and Annibale's pictures both involve secular themes, for which the implementation of naturalism was less problematic—at least in the minds of late-sixteenth-century critics. By 1590 or so—the date he painted *Two Children Teasing a Cat*—Annibale would not have considered employing such a naturalistic mode in a religious painting. He had, so to speak, "been there and done that" a decade earlier and gotten mightily burned by both critics

16. *(opposite)*
Sofonisba Anguissola (Italian, Cremona, ca. 1532–Palermo, 1625)
Boy Bitten by a Crayfish, ca. 1554
Black chalk and charcoal on brown paper, 12⅝ x 14¼ in. (32.2 x 37.5 cm)
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples
Photograph: Fototeca–Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Napoletana

and artists, who had declared the practice of painting directly from posed models in an unpolished, sketchlike style suitable for the workshop but not for public display in a church. As his later pictures testify, Annibale never abandoned the practice of sketching from models, but this method became only one element in a more complex, elevated visual language.

Caravaggio had a similar experience in Rome with his first altarpieces, some of which were rejected and had to be replaced. Such was the case with his celebrated *Death of the Virgin* (fig. 17), for which was substituted a work by Carlo Saraceni (fig. 18). A variety of factors entered into the rejection—theological subtleties that went well beyond the issue of artistic style, though that, too, played a part. Caravaggio had shown the Virgin dead rather than "in transit" from her earthly to heavenly life, as the contract had required. It was a theological point that may well have escaped Caravaggio, as it did Carlo Saraceni, who had to modify his

17.
Caravaggio
Death of the Virgin, 1605–6
Oil on canvas, 144 x 96 in. (369 x 243.8 cm)
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Photograph: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

18.
Carlo Saraceni (Italian, Venice, 1579?–1620)
Death of the Virgin, ca. 1612
Oil on canvas, 120⅛ x 91 in. (305.1 x 231.1 cm)
Richard L. Feigen, New York, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art

own painting by showing the Virgin with eyes open rather than closed and head raised rather than laid back (remnants of his first version are visible on the surface of the picture). Ultimately, he was required to paint an entirely new version—the third, if we count Caravaggio's—in which the Virgin is shown awake, with hands clasped, about to be welcomed into heaven by a group of angels (the third version was accepted and is in situ in Santa Maria della Scala in Rome). Such were the pitfalls a painter risked as he negotiated the terrain of public religious art at a time when the Catholic Church was promoting painting as a means of communication for the worshiper rather than as an occasion for artistic expression.

Within this context Ludovico Carracci's *Lamentation* is of exceptional interest. It was painted about 1580–82—more than a decade before we have anything from the hand of Caravaggio—and it dates from the early years of the Carracci cousins' concerted attempts to reform painting; to redirect it from the extreme stylizations of Mannerism back to the study of nature and the art of the great masters of the High Renaissance. We can demonstrate how Ludovico went about his task: a drawing for the figure of Christ exists—whether by Annibale or Ludovico is not altogether clear (fig. 20). It was obviously done in the studio from a young model posed on a piece of cloth draped over boxes that permitted his legs to be arranged in the appropriate position. The drawing is taken from an angle other than the one in the painting, suggesting that another drawing was made from a viewpoint more to the right. In all likelihood a number of artists worked from the same model simultaneously, each from a slightly different angle—a practice we associate with drawing academies. Part of the Carracci reform of painting was the promotion of drawing the nude. We might imagine this drawing as having been done by the young Annibale, while that of his older cousin Ludovico is lost, for Annibale—the more audacious artist of the two—seems, in general, to have preferred angles that required greater foreshortening (and greater *difficoltà*). Be that as it may, Ludovico did not merely copy the pose onto his canvas. Rather, he incorporated into the painting a series of observations deriving from his study of the model. The play of light across the head and crown of thorns is especially remarkable. Such details are indications of a new manner of visualizing the subject, for Ludovico imagined with almost graphic intensity how Christ's broken body might have appeared when taken down from the cross, and he did not flinch at showing the left arm as though dislocated from the shoulder and the right hand mangled. Only in the painting do we begin to understand why the boxes beneath the model were arranged the way they were: among the most expressive elements in the picture is the high arc of Christ's chest, which has the effect of a great orchestral chord in the midst of a complex movement.

Ludovico's *Lamentation* was an extremely experimental picture, created more in the spirit of pictorial reform than of reigning Mannerist conventions. Nonetheless, the figures of the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, two holy women, and Saint John seem almost to have wandered into the painting from another, earlier era. True, the Virgin Mary is shown as an aged woman, her ashen features and limp hand meant to affirm her role as a participant in Christ's Passion (note the brilliant contrast of the Virgin's hand with Christ's and the way the Virgin's pallor echoes Christ's). Similarly, the face of Saint John is beautifully modeled in a shaft of light—the same light that falls across Christ's body. But these figures do not have the weight or individuality of the Christ. The Magdalen, with her pursed lips and luxuriant hair, owes more to pictorial conventions than to any notion of reality. Moreover, the grouping of these figures is curiously flat, and Christ's very real-seeming body reads almost as an insertion into what had started as an altogether less original work. Few paintings serve as a more eloquent testament to the experimental nature of early Baroque naturalism and the audacity necessary to introduce it into a religious image. It takes little away from Ludovico to point out that this picture

19.
Ludovico Carracci (Italian, Bologna, 1555–1619)
The Lamentation, ca. 1580–82
Oil on canvas, 37½ x 68 in. (95.3 x 172.7 cm)
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace and The Annenberg Foundation Gifts; Harris Brisbane Dick, Rogers, and Gwynne Andrews Funds; Pat and John Rosenwald, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Fisch, and Jon and Barbara Landau Gifts; Gift of Mortimer D. Sackler, Theresa Sackler and Family; and Victor Wilbour Memorial, Marquand, The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment, and Charles B. Curtis Funds, 2000 (2000.68)

20.
Annibale Carracci (?)
Study of a Posed Figure, ca. 1580–82
Black chalk on paper, 7⅜ x 10¼ in. (18.6 x 26 cm)
Private collection

21.
Federico Barocci (Italian, Marches, 1535?–1612)
Saint Francis, ca. 1600–1605
Oil on canvas, 30⅞ x 35⅝ in. (78.4 x 90.5 cm)
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift and 2002 Benefit Fund, 2003 (2003.281)

22.
Federico Barocci
Head of a Bearded Man Looking to Lower Left
(study for *The Entombment* of 1579–82)
Oil on paper, laid down on canvas, 15¼ x 10¾ in. (38.7 x 27.3 cm)
Harry J. Sperling Fund, 1976 (1976.87.1)

was destined for private, not public, display—we know the collector for whom it was painted—and that it was done on a canvas made up of old table linens stitched together. In its own way the picture is as experimental as Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon,* except that it is moving toward, not away from, naturalism.

In 2003 one more painting was added to this small group of works that comprise an introductory chapter to Baroque painting (fig. 21). Its author, Federico Barocci, belonged to an earlier generation, that of Paolo Veronese, not of the Carracci and Caravaggio. But to a remarkable degree his paintings forecast the future. His great altarpiece in the cathedral of Perugia showing the *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 23) combines a fervent emotionalism with figures obviously based on life studies (fig. 22). The composition has been conceived with figures shown in unstable poses to emphasize an action unfolding before our eyes. Light, falling in an irregular fashion that illuminates some areas while leaving others in shadow, and fluttering drapery enhance the quality of agitation. Barocci was less concerned with a formalist statement about style than with establishing a dramatic pitch and through it precipitating an emotional, as well as an aesthetic, response, in the viewer. Remarkably, the altarpiece was painted between 1567 and 1569—more than a decade before the first works by the Carracci. There really was nothing like it.

Barocci was a maddeningly slow worker, taking years to complete an altarpiece, and his paintings are consequently extremely rare. For this reason he is little known today outside scholarly circles. Not so during his lifetime, when invitations to become court painter poured in from Florence, Madrid, and Prague. He preferred to remain in his native Urbino. He enjoyed a special relationship with his ruler, Francesco Maria della Rovere, who was sometimes called upon to negotiate contracts. When Barocci's altarpiece of the *Madonna del Popolo* (Uffizi, Florence) was sent to Arezzo in 1579, it created a stir among Florentine artists. In 1583, when he sent an altarpiece to Ravenna, the Carracci were quick to make a trip to study it. We are told that for three days people lined up to view his *Visitation* when it was installed in Santa Maria in Vallicella, Rome, in 1586. His works were admired by the Carracci, Rubens, Guido Reni, and Bernini, and no aspiring collection of Baroque art would be complete without something from his hand. Thus, the Metropolitan's acquisition of a late work showing *Saint Francis*—the only finished work by Barocci in America—is reason for rejoicing. It seems to have been painted in the first decade of the seventeenth century, conceivably for a Franciscan friend (Barocci had close attachments to the Franciscans throughout his career and was buried in the church of San Francesco in Urbino). One day its early history will doubtless come to light—there is a faint inventory number painted in the lower right-hand corner—but for now the picture can be traced back only as far as the nineteenth century, when it was in the Santangelo collection in Naples.

23.
Federico Barocci
Descent from the Cross, 1567–69
Oil on canvas, 160 x 91⅜ in. (412 x 232 cm)
Cathedral of Perugia
Photograph: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

What makes this painting so remarkable is the way it impresses itself on the imagination as the transcription of something experienced. The head was obviously studied from life—indeed, Barocci was among the first artists to make oil sketches of heads in preparation for his paintings (fig. 22)—and the watery highlights in the eyes add a special poignancy. The still life of the open devotional book and the crucifix no less than the rose leaves at the upper right mediate between the viewer's space and that of the saint, whose left hand, conspicuously pierced with the nail of his stigmata (a detail based on thirteenth-century literary sources), extends outward as though to break through the picture plane. For those who know the mountainous region of the Marches around Urbino, the landscape will seem hauntingly familiar: Barocci must have made a drawing from a particular locale. And then there is the way light has been used to orchestrate the various elements, as it delicately plays on the cross and illuminates Saint Francis's head and left hand while the right hand is enshrouded in shadow. The landscape is still enveloped in the darkness before dawn, as, we are told in early Franciscan sources, it was on a September morning in 1224 when Francis had a vision of a seraph on Mount Alverna and received the stigmata. Each feature of the painting—the cross, the book open to the Lord's Prayer, the saint's rapt expression, the grotto and landscape—was meant to suggest the saint's retreat, his devotional exercises, and his stigmatization—but without, however, illustrating any particular narrative moment. The picture is a meditation on Saint Francis and gives palpable form to the practice of meditational recollection. So powerful is Barocci's evocation that we do not need a deep knowledge of the saint's biography to connect with the emotional tenor of the painting.

Toward a Poetics of Painting

DIFFERENT THOUGH THEY ARE from one another, Caravaggio's *Musicians*, Annibale's *Two Children Teasing a Cat*, Ludovico's *Lamentation*, and Barocci's *Saint Francis* all employ naturalistic effects to break down the idealizing vocabulary of so much High Renaissance and Mannerist art. But they also reaffirm a poetics of painting, disavowing mere representation and embracing the world of ideas. How this new balance between these two imperatives might be achieved was much debated; the most extreme position was taken by the theorist-antiquarian Giovan Pietro Bellori (1613–1696), whose heroes were Annibale Carracci, Domenichino, and Poussin (Bellori may have studied painting with Domenichino and was a friend

of Poussin in Rome). Of Annibale Carracci's great frescoed vault in the Farnese palace in Rome—one of the reference points of later classicizing artists—Bellori wrote, "We must note that the images require an attentive and ingenious viewer whose judgment resides not in his or her eyes but in the intellect. Certainly the mind will not be content with what it takes in at a glance. Rather, it will remain to understand that mute eloquence of colors, since painting possesses such power that it is not confined to the eyes but through contemplation diffuses through the mind." Bellori's exalted vision of painting left little room for mere naturalism or for pictures purporting to represent everyday life; he never mentions Annibale's genre subjects—as though they might detract from Annibale's stature as a serious artist. What he admired were those works Annibale conceived in a grander, more elevated style—pictures like Annibale's noble *Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 24).

The Coronation of the Virgin does not speak the language of everyday life, let alone of the street. Instead, it adopts the classical cadence of Raphael (note the linking of figures by gesture and pose) and the nobility of Roman sculpture (exemplified by the head of God the Father, which is based on a bust of Jupiter), and it reinvigorates this legacy with a northern Italian

24.
Annibale Carracci
The Coronation of the Virgin, ca. 1595
Oil on canvas, 46⅜ x 55⅝ in. (117.8 x 141.3 cm)
Purchase, Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), by exchange, and Dr. and Mrs. Manuel Porter and sons Gift, in honor of Mrs. Sarah Porter, 1971 (1971.155)

25.
Domenichino
The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia, 1612–14
(fragment of full-scale cartoon for fresco in the Polet Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome; two other fragments are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris)
Charcoal, heightened with white chalk, on faded gray blue paper; traces of squaring grids in charcoal; outlines pricked for transfer, 67¾ x 59⅝ in. (172.2 x 151.3 cm)
Wrightsman Fund, 1998 (1998.211)

sensibility for color and light (note especially the figures dappled in light at the bottom). It was this kind of carefully formulated, learned style that Bellori prized.

It is difficult today to fully appreciate the heights this style could scale. Fortunately, a few years ago the Metropolitan was able to acquire a large fragment of the cartoon (fig. 25), pounced for transfer, for one of the great masterpieces of classical painting in the tradition of Raphael, Domenichino's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, part of a fresco cycle in a chapel of the French national church in Rome, San Luigi dei Francesi. Today, in their rush to view Caravaggio's celebrated canvases of *The Calling of Saint Matthew* and *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* in the same church, tourists cannot be bothered to give time to Domenichino's cycle. How the great have fallen! Bellori considered *Saint Cecilia* a paradigm of classical painting and declared (with little exaggeration) that "however famous it may be, its reputation is surpassed when seen." The following passage from Charlotte Eaton's guidebook to Rome, published in 1860, gives some idea of how an earlier generation responded to the scene shown in the Metropolitan's cartoon: "... hand pressed on her bosom, her dying eyes raised to heaven, the saint is breathing her last; while female forms, of exquisite beauty and innocence, are kneeling around, or bending over her ... lovely children ... by contrast heighten, yet relieve, the deep pathos of the scene."

Domenichino was once observed by Annibale preparing for a picture by assuming the pose and attitude of the figure he wished to depict, and a process of profound empathy informs all of his compositions. Bellori summed up Domenichino's achievement by noting that "while other artists may exult in their facility, grace, color and other praiseworthy aspects of painting, to him belonged the greater glory of describing dispositions and giving color to life." It goes without saying that this was done by embracing the visual language of Raphael and the formal gestures of classical rhetoric—by finding an accord between an inherited classical past and a lived-in present.

A somewhat less austere approach to painting than that of Bellori was taken by two of the leading poets of the day, Giovan Battista Marino and Gaspare Murtola. Both admired painting and saw in it something inherently similar to their poetry, with its conspicuous use of

irony and clever wordplay. For example, in a poem relating to a celebrated picture by Titian of Mary Magdalen, Marino wrote: "But Nature and truth must cede to the fictions of the intelligent artificer, who takes that beauty that he has in his mind and soul and makes it live in his paintings." The irony Marino addresses here has to do with the very nature of creativity: the way an abstract notion of beauty, a product of the artist's imagination, is endowed through his brush with such lifelike power that even nature must surrender to it. To no less a degree, Murtola recognized in Caravaggio's naturalistic portrayals of lowlife themes a play on the idea of painting as a poetic fiction: "I don't know who is the greater magician," he wrote of a depiction of a Gypsy fortune-teller, "the woman who dissembles, or you who have painted her. . . . You have painted her so that she seems alive; so that living and breathing others believe her." In other words, realism itself is merely a poetic ploy.

But perhaps nowhere are the implications of these conceits as revealing as in the case of Marino's homage to one of the very greatest masterpieces of the age, Guido Reni's sublime

26.
Guido Reni (Italian, Bologna, 1575–1642)
The Massacre of the Innocents, 1611
Oil on canvas, 105 x 67 in. (268 x 170 cm)
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna
Photograph: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

Massacre of the Innocents (fig. 26), painted in 1611 as an altarpiece for the church of San Domenico and now one of the glories of the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna. Its subject is a gruesome one: the carrying out of Herod's command to execute all male babies under the age of two—an unsuccessful attempt on Herod's part to kill the infant Jesus. Marino's poem touches on some of the key contradictions of artistic representation—contradictions discussed by Aristotle in his *Poetics,* which left a strong mark on Renaissance and Baroque aesthetics and are even worth reflecting upon when standing before a key work of modernism such as Picasso's *Guernica*. How is it that works with bloody themes can give pleasure, and how can we reconcile employing a beautiful style in representing a horrendous subject? In the course of his poem Marino unveils the principle of contradiction as the very basis of a poetics of painting. "What are you doing, Guido, what are you doing? Does the hand that paints angelic forms now treat bloody deeds? Don't you see that by the very act of bringing the blood-drenched flock of children back to life you deal them a second death? Oh sweet artificer, with pitying cruelty you surely know that even tragic fate can become a precious object, and horror often goes hand in hand with delight."

27.
Guido Reni
Charity, ca. 1628-29
Oil on canvas, 54 x 41¾ in. (137.2 x 106 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1974 (1974.348)

In the *Poetics* Aristotle defined tragedy as "a representation of an action," and he noted that the responses of fear and pity should result less from the subject than from "the arrangement of the incidents." The telling of a story and the creation of compelling characters is what matters. Indicative of his great artistry, Reni avoided sensationalist effects and a crassly realistic style. He engages us not by astonishing us with acts of wanton brutality and bloodletting—in fact there are but two dagger-wielding men—but by directing attention to the mothers. Some flee, some try to fend off an attack, and one, with clasped hands and her head raised toward heaven, grieves over the death of her two children piled in the left foreground. Rarely has the principle of balanced contrasts been put to better effect: in the trio of figures at the right, one looks back in horror as she runs with her child, who is innocently unaware of the threat, while the face of the third is contorted with anguish. We cannot help but admire the beauty with which Reni has staged this horrific scene and depicted the various figures. His artistry transforms the terrible incident into an aesthetic experience that is comprehended by the intellect. It is in this sense that the event is revivified by his brush.

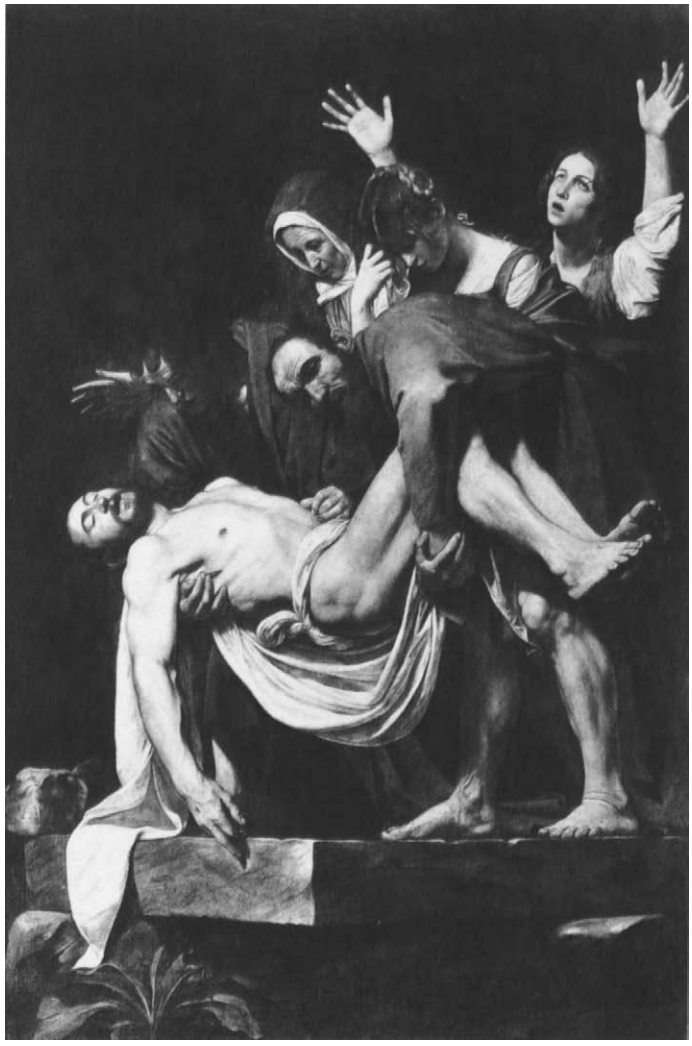
Reni's creative process was anything but spontaneous. In arriving at his solution, he took inspiration from a celebrated engraving designed by Raphael, while the head of the grieving mother is based on a much-admired classical statue in Rome of Niobe mourning the death of her children. In these works he found a model for transforming the raw data of the biblical text into something recognizably artistic.

The Metropolitan does not and almost certainly will never own any work by Reni of the narrative sophistication of his *Massacre of the Innocents*—a picture that Poussin studied with profit and that in every way marks an inspired work of deeply poetic character. However, the Museum's glorious painting of *Charity* (fig. 27) is based on some of the same principles of contrast combined with an elevated sense of beauty. According to the standard handbook on iconography written by Cesare Ripa, the personification of charity should be shown as "a woman dressed in red . . . [who] holds in her left arm a child who she nurses while two others play at her feet. . . . The three children demonstrate that although Charity is a single virtue, its powers are trebled, since without [charity] faith and hope are nothing." Reni endows this symbolic conceit with exquisite verisimilitude, showing Charity as a beautiful woman with three children, each posed and complexioned to express degrees of contentment: one gestures imploringly toward his mother's breast, the other suckles vigorously, and the third, satiated, sleeps contentedly. The picture, which was owned by the princes of

Liechtenstein, is usually dated to the late 1620s and marks Reni's adoption of a paler, blonder palette: one emphasizing refinement over vigor and elegance over naturalistic effects. It is a work that embodies the abstracting idea of grace—*grazia*—for which Reni's works were uniquely prized, earning him the epithet of *divino*. "That which caused people to admire [the ancient painter] Apelles," wrote Bellori, "was the grace that he instilled in his figures.... That which in our days turns the eyes and voices of men to marvel and celebrate the name of Guido [Reni] was certainly the beauty, companion of grace, with which, tempering his colors, he made himself superior to everyone, constraining fame, with its prizes and honors, to follow him. Guido carried within his noble genius a mind directed upwards to beauty...." Who would guess that the author of this refined painting had, in his youth, so successfully imitated Caravaggio's realist style that the temperamental Lombard accosted him in a street in Rome and threatened him. To which Reni, in his incomparable fashion, responded that he had come to Rome to serve the papal court and to paint, not to duel, and that he was the first to admit his inferiority to any other artist.

Today it is difficult to comprehend that the outward appearance and behavior of an artist were viewed as a reflection of genius, but such was the case. Although an inveterate gambler and lacking an intellectual bent, Reni nonetheless possessed a keen awareness of his own stature. We are told that he never allowed himself to be seen painting without being formally dressed and that, when visited by a prospective client, he was always careful to hide anything that might suggest the mechanical side of painting. What marveled his many visitors—and no art lover who stopped in Bologna during his lifetime passed up the opportunity to see him—was the way seemingly divine forms took shape on the canvas. Bellori affirms that what truly stupefied them was the beautiful expression he gave to heads, such as that of Charity. It must have been quite a performance, and without Reni's example our own modern sense of innate genius would be incomplete.

Caravaggio cultivated a very different image (he liked playing the part of the anti-establishment bully), and he worked in a style that seems to us at the opposite pole from Reni's; but, as we have seen, he, too, maintained an open dialogue—or rather a dialectic—with the legacy of the past and the issue of artistic invention. He may have declared that it was as difficult to depict a vase of flowers as it was a figure, thus promoting painting as mimesis over painting as fiction, but it was in the grand tradition of figure painting that he wished to leave his mark. Although he sometimes appropriated his compositional models from the work of Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian, by restaging them with live models posed in the studio, he transgressed their very idealizing premise and suggested a direct link with the everyday world. If an uneducated public applauded his pictures for their lifelikeness—as a contemporary biographer reports—sophisticated collectors admired them for the way they reformulated canonical models of the High Renaissance. It was in the very act of transgression that Caravaggio secured the admiration of the cognoscenti. Moreover, when it came to a subject as demanding as *The Entombment* (fig. 28), which had a long history of representation, it clearly would not suffice merely to stage the event as though it were some sort of *tableau vivant*. Seduced by the realism of the figure types, we are perhaps disinclined to recognize the rhetorical artifices conveying emotion: the raised arms of the Magdalen and her rolled-back eyes, the outspread arms of the Virgin, the hanging arm of the dead Christ, beautifully calculated to brush against the tomb cover and thus invade the viewer's space, and the figure of Joseph of Arimathea, who turns to address the viewer and solicit empathetic participation in this tragic scene. Each of these details, no less than the friezelike composition and the arrangement of the figures along a descending curve, reveals an artist who learned from the legacy of Raphael



28.
Caravaggio
The Entombment, 1602–4 (3?)
Oil on canvas, 117 x 79⅞ in.
(300 x 203 cm)
Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums
Photograph: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

and Michelangelo. The formal language is especially evident if this picture is compared with Ludovico Carracci's *Lamentation,* painted some twenty years earlier.

Caravaggio may not have embraced the classical-idealizing bias later promoted by Bellori, but in his late paintings he moved far from the kind of naturalistic premise that characterized his first altarpieces in Rome. His remarkable transformation is poignantly exemplified in a painting that the Metropolitan acquired eight years ago (fig. 29). Illustrating the biblical narrative of Saint Peter denying Christ, it is a picture in which the dialectic between naturalism and idealism, mimesis and fiction is inflected in a very different way from that in the artist's more familiar paintings in Roman churches. Gone is the emphasis on meticulously described surfaces or figures rendered with a palpable fleshiness. The fire, in front of which the Bible tells us Peter warmed his feet when accused by three passersby of being an apostle of Christ, is alluded to by a horizontal beam, some loosely brushed flames, and shooting sparks. The drama is reduced to the three essential characters: a maid, her face part in light, part in shadow, who points with both hands to Peter; a soldier, his shadowed face silhouetted against the maid, who points with one gauntleted hand; and Peter, his face and hands fully lit, striking an emphatic attitude of denial with both hands. Three pointing hands, Peter's three denials. The power of the picture derives from the way Caravaggio masterfully condensed the narrative elements, organizing them according to a tight geometric structure and stressing gesture and

29.
Caravaggio
The Denial of Saint Peter, 1610
Oil on canvas, 37 x 49⅜ in. (94 x 125.4 cm)
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1997 (1997.167)

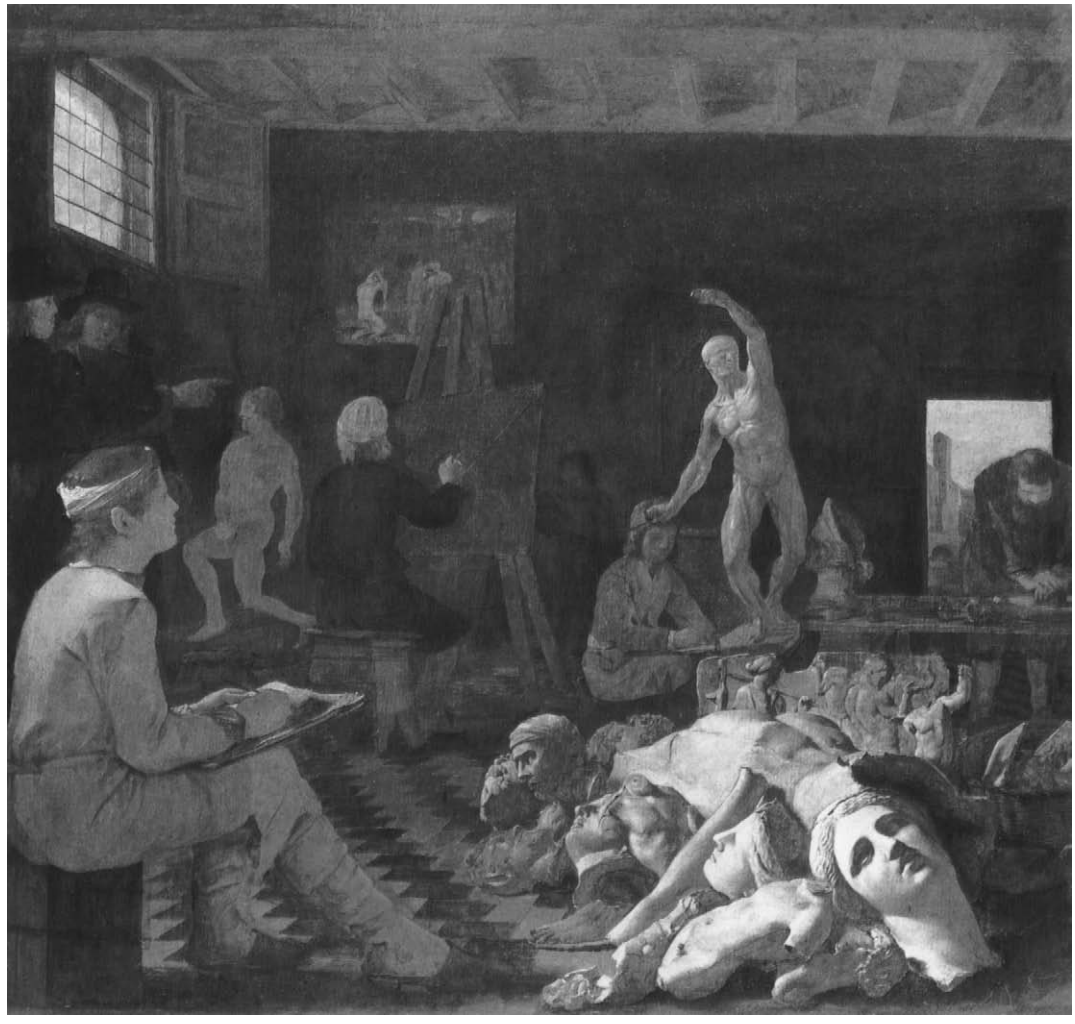
facial expression. Peter's face, with its weary eyes and forehead corrugated with a combination of anger and self-recrimination, is as memorable as any by the mature Rembrandt. The one detail used to transpose this biblical scene to the present is the soldier's helmet, based on an actual example—a studio prop also used by Caravaggio's Neapolitan follower Carracciolo; one very similar, though altered, is in the Bargello in Florence (fig. 30).

Unlike Caravaggio's Roman paintings, the effects of this picture are created by an extraordinarily abbreviated brushwork, and it is this that gives the painting the haunting quality of something experienced rather than observed. Caravaggio's *Denial of Saint Peter* bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the divisions commonly made between realists and idealists are, to some extent, misleading, for the aim of Caravaggio was not the replication of surface appearances but the probing of the deeper human significance of the action portrayed. His means of achieving this are gesture, expression, and dramatic use of light.

The early history of this marvelous picture is to some extent hypothetical. Caravaggio fled Rome in 1606 after murdering a tennis opponent in a street brawl. He went first to Naples, then to Malta, then to Sicily, then back to Naples, where he hoped for word of a papal pardon for his crime. He was hardly short of commissions, and the rapidity with which he filled them is astonishing. The Metropolitan's work was most likely painted in Naples in the last months—possibly weeks—of Caravaggio's life. Whether it was intended for his Roman patron Scipione Borghese and given by the latter to Paolo Savelli as a favor for services

30.
Helmet
Venetian, late 15th century
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence
Photograph: Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.

rendered or whether Paolo Savelli acquired it directly from the artist or possibly on the open market after the artist's death cannot be said, but the picture is listed in a Savelli inventory in 1624. We lose track of it after 1650; three hundred years later, following World War II, it reemerged on the Neapolitan art market. Caravaggio's late works were then still underappreciated: what people admired were his Roman pictures with their naturalistic edge. In any event, the painting was ascribed to the Caravaggio follower Bartolomeo Manfredi. It was with the publication in 1980 of documents concerning a stylistically related picture showing the martyrdom of Saint Ursula that its place in Caravaggio's career became clear. That painting, too, had been ascribed to Manfredi, but the documents proved beyond question that it was painted by Caravaggio in the spring of 1610 (he died that July). *The Denial of Saint Peter* was almost certainly painted about the same time. Thus it became possible to understand the radical direction Caravaggio's art took in the years following his flight from Rome. For one thing, he no longer painted exclusively from posed models. Rather, he had built up a repertory of figure types that he introduced into his



31.
Michael Sweerts (Flemish, Brussels, 1618–1664)
An Artist's Studio, ca. 1650
Oil on canvas, 28 x 29⅛ in. (71 x 74 cm)
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

pictures as the subject demanded. They were encapsulations of his observations as an artist and as a person who had experienced more of life than most men. Though not based on the ideal types promoted by Raphael and found in Greek and Roman statuary, and though dismissive of conventional notions of beauty, these works nonetheless aspired to universality.

By the mid-seventeenth century classicism and naturalism were not so much competing systems as alternatives that artists juggled as they attempted to define their own identities in a highly competitive world. Nowhere do we come closer to the ways these various ideas were translated into workshop practice than in a painting by the Fleming Michael Sweerts of the artist's studio (fig. 31). Sweerts, who worked in Rome from 1646 to as late as 1655, excelled at genre painting and adopted a naturalistic style, but one constantly informed by the example of High Renaissance and classical art. In his studio we see, in the left background, an artist in front of an easel painting directly from a model, who is lit by a high-placed window. This is precisely the technique Caravaggio is reported to have used. Farther to the right a young man—perhaps an apprentice—draws not from a model but from a life-size anatomical figure displaying the system of male musculature. The presumption is that this kind of study would be applied to painting from nature: that knowledge and observation inform one another. In the left foreground is another youth drawing, and in front of him a pile of plaster casts of ancient statues. Among those that can be identified is the bust of Niobe that Reni so admired. In front of the door a man grinds pigments (something Reni would not have permitted visitors to see); it is an open studio, frequented by interested collectors. As though to explain how all this study comes together in a finished work, Sweerts shows on the back wall one of his canvases of men wrestling, ostensibly a scene from everyday life but one in which the poses and gestures of the figures have been taken from classical prototypes. Certainly this image is a far cry from Bellori's notion of high style, but it exemplifies the ways in which seventeenth-century poetics came to inform even paintings of common amusements.

32.
Gian Lorenzo Bernini
(Italian, Rome,
1598–1680)
Apollo and Daphne,
1622–25
Marble, h. 95⅝ in.
(243 cm)
Galleria Borghese, Rome
Photograph: Scala/Art
Resource, N.Y.

Art Celebrating Genius

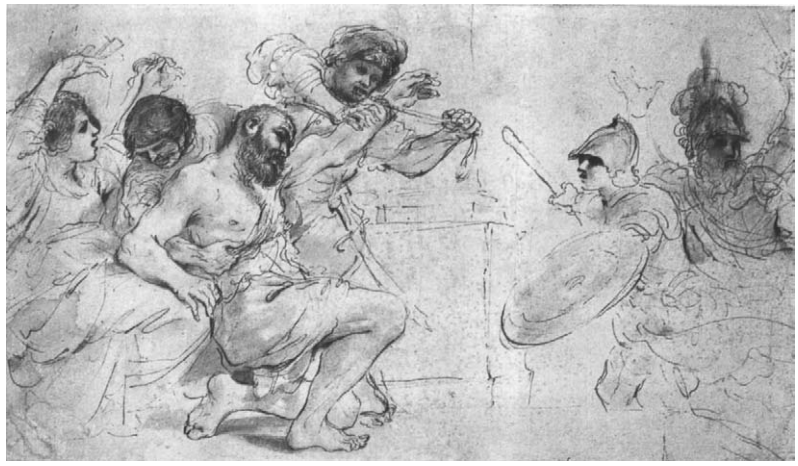
The baroque artist cultivated an image as a kind of magician or alchemist, taking ordinary materials from nature to create a compelling universe of his own. We need look no further than Bernini's ability to capture in cold marble the moment when Daphne, fleeing Apollo's embrace, is transformed into a laurel tree (fig. 32). The sculptor is here competing—impossibly, we might have thought—with the descriptive subtleties of his literary source, the Roman poet Ovid. Bernini defies the very properties of his material by showing

33.
Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri; Italian, Ferrara, 1591–1666)
Samson Captured by the Philistines, 1619
Oil on canvas, 75¼ x 93¼ in. (191.1 x 236.9 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1984 (1984.459.2)

leaves quivering in the breeze and Daphne's hair and Apollo's drapery billowing out around and behind them. Moreover, Bernini has chosen to represent a moment of transition, when Daphne, not yet aware of the transformation and fearing she will be captured, cries out, while Apollo's face registers surprise, even as his body continues to hurtle forward. And what a brilliant idea to place Apollo's left hand so that it embraces not Daphne's warm, yielding flesh but the coarse bark that encases her! To no less a degree than in some of Caravaggio's early astonishing displays of naturalistic painting, this is a work in which virtuosity becomes a narrative device. Before this celebrated sculpture in the Borghese Gallery countless visitors have stood in awe, which is one of the responses Baroque artists sought to inspire in their audiences.

Guercino's approach to narration was similarly ingenious and can be seen at its best in the magnificent *Samson Captured by the Philistines* (fig. 33), a keystone of the Metropolitan's collection. It was one of three pictures painted in 1619 for Cardinal Jacopo Serra, the papal legate to Ferrara—near Guercino's hometown of Cento. Serra was a lover of painting and in Rome had actively promoted the career of Peter Paul Rubens. His taste for dramatically lit, vibrant painting must have attracted him to Guercino's art, and he showed his admiration by immediately commissioning further works from the artist, whom he knighted. As in the case

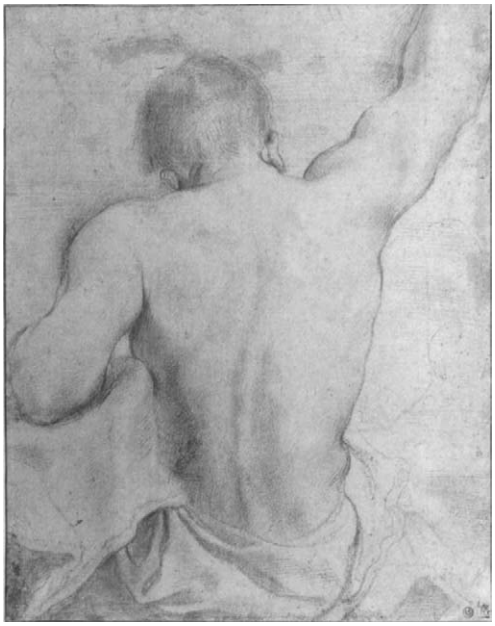
34.
Guercino
Study for *Samson Captured by the Philistines*, 1619
Uffizi, Florence



35.
Guercino
Study for *Samson Captured by the Philistines*, 1619
Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 9⅜ x 16¼ in. (23.7 x 41.2 cm).
Teylers Museum, Haarlem

of Reni's *Massacre of the Innocents,* a violent subject has been chosen. Samson's lover, the deceitful Philistine Delilah, has coaxed from him the secret of his strength—his long hair. While the Jewish hero sleeps in her lap, she cuts his hair and then signals Philistine soldiers to rush in, bind, and blind Samson. Through a series of drawings we can follow Guercino's evolving ideas about treating this moral tale of strength humbled by the wiles of a woman. In one (identified by Nicholas Turner) Samson is shown frontally, sprawled on the ground and struggling like some biblical Laocoön between Delilah and his captors (fig. 34). In another the shorn Samson is bound by a man and woman, while Delilah delightedly displays the scissors and hair that have deprived him of his strength to the soldiers arriving at the right (fig. 35). Then the artist had the brilliant idea of turning Samson away from the viewer and making his futile attempts to free himself the vortex of the composition (fig. 33). The rippling muscles of Samson's back and the desperate action of his feet and hands communicate his distress. In a fashion that would have met with Aristotle's approval, the horrifying act of piercing Samson's eyes is alluded to rather than described. We experience the drama through the expressions and actions of Samson's captors. In arriving at this solution, which transforms a potentially merely gory subject into one that gives enormous aesthetic satisfaction, Guercino may well have recalled a story told by the ancient writers Pliny and Quintillian. It seems that the painter Timantheus of Cyprus won universal praise for a picture showing Iphigenia about to be sacrificed. The artist, having exhausted his powers of invention portraying the sorrow of those in attendance, suggested the overwhelming grief of Iphigenia's father by depicting him with his head covered, leaving the viewer to imagine what was not portrayed. This is exactly what Guercino has done, and it may be that he expected his knowledgeable patron to recognize the interpolation of an idea tracing its origins to ancient practice. We need think only of

36.
Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669)
Blinding of Samson, 1636
Oil on canvas, 92⅞ x 117 in. (236 x 302 cm)
Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main
Photograph: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, N.Y.



37.
Guercino
Back of a Man, Seated, Stripped to the Waist, ca. 1619
Red chalk, stumped, heightened with white on beige paper, 13¼ x 10⅝ in. (33.5 x 27 cm)
Institut Néerlandais, Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt Collection, Paris

Rembrandt's intentionally revolting treatment of the same theme (fig. 36), painted in 1636, to understand how important Aristotelian notions are to the character of Italian Baroque painting. Rembrandt devised his painting as a broadside on the issue of decorum, and it is fascinating to watch how, with maturity, he turned away from this sort of pre-Hollywood sensationalism.

For Guercino's picture to work, the back of Samson had to be painted with complete conviction, and it is not surprising that a study by Guercino has survived showing a male model viewed from the back with his head down, one arm raised and the other pushing against a cloth-covered box that will become Delilah's lap (fig. 37). It is the same technique Ludovico Carracci used in painting *The Lamentation*.

The opposite approach was taken by Mattia Preti in 1663 in his grand canvas of *Pilate Washing His Hands* (fig. 38), in which attention is focused on Pilate's face as he looks out at the viewer through a proscenium-like framework. He has, in a sense, painted the viewer into the picture and uses the back-viewed, half-length soldier in the right foreground as a further means of binding the pictorial fiction with our experience of it. We are asked to judge Pilate's attempt to exonerate himself of having condemned Christ to death. Ingeniously, Christ and the crowd of onlookers become a footnote to this study of guilt. Preti was younger than Guercino and southern Italian rather than Emilian, but he knew Guercino's paintings both in Rome and in Emilia-Romagna (in 1651 he worked in Modena, north of Bologna). In 1662, for the Sicilian nobleman Don Antonio

38. *(opposite)*
Mattia Preti (Italian, Naples, 1613–1699)
Pilate Washing His Hands, 1663
Oil on canvas, 81⅛ x 72¾ in. (206.1 x 184.8 cm)
Purchase, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan and Bequest of Helena W. Charlton, by exchange, Gwynne Andrews, Marquand, Rogers, Victor Wilbour Memorial, and The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Funds, and funds given or bequeathed by friends of the Museum, 1978 (1978.402)

39.
Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
Aristotle with a Bust of Homer, 1653
Oil on canvas, 56½ x 53¼ in. (143.5 x 136.5 cm)
Purchase, special contributions and funds given or bequeathed by friends of the Museum, 1961 (61.198)

Ruffo, he painted a half-length figure as a pendant to one by Guercino and another by Rembrandt. Guercino's and Preti's paintings are lost, but Rembrandt's is the *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer* (fig. 39). It was possibly Preti's knowledge of this picture that inspired the remarkable approach he took to the theme, concentrating attention on the face of the protagonist, and that determined him to offer the *Pilate Washing His Hands* to Ruffo, who, however, did not purchase it.

Both Guercino's and Preti's canvases employ another artistic strategy to engage the viewer, and that is the intentional display of the action of the paintbrush to enhance the impression of movement and spontaneity. As we have seen in the case of Annibale Carracci's *Two Children Teasing a Cat*, this sort of loose, vigorous brushwork was associated with Venetian painting, and in the sixteenth century it had left a strong impression on the Tuscan-born artist-biographer Giorgio Vasari when he visited Titian's studio. "It is certainly true," Vasari wrote, "that [Titian's] method of working in these last works is very different from the one he employed as a young man. While his early works are executed with a certain finesse and

40.
Domenico Fetti (Italian, Rome, 1588/89–1623)
The Parable of the Mote and the Beam, ca. 1619
Oil on wood, 24⅛ x 17⅜ in. (61.3 x 44.1 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1991 (1991.153)

incredible care, and are made to be seen both from close up and from a distance, his last works are executed with such large and bold brushstrokes and in such broad outlines that they cannot be seen from close up but appear perfect from a distance. . . . And this technique, carried out in this way, is full of good judgment, beautiful and stupendous, because it makes the pictures not only seem alive but to have been executed with great skill concealing labor." In an age that prized facility, this sort of brushwork was bound to be admired, so that what some critics had previously thought of as mere daubs, or *macchie*, became appreciated as a primary means of expression. "Painters use this word [*macchia*] to explain the quality of various drawings, and sometimes also paintings, made with extraordinary facility . . . so that it almost appears to be made by itself and not by the hand of the artist," wrote Filippo Baldinucci in his dictionary of the art of design published in Florence in 1681. One of the early masters of this technique in seventeenth-century Italy was the Roman-born Domenico Fetti, who gives remarkable testimony to his skill in *The Parable of the Mote and the Beam* (fig. 40)—one of a cycle illustrating Christ's parables and intended for a room in the ducal palace of Mantua.

The Artist as Poet

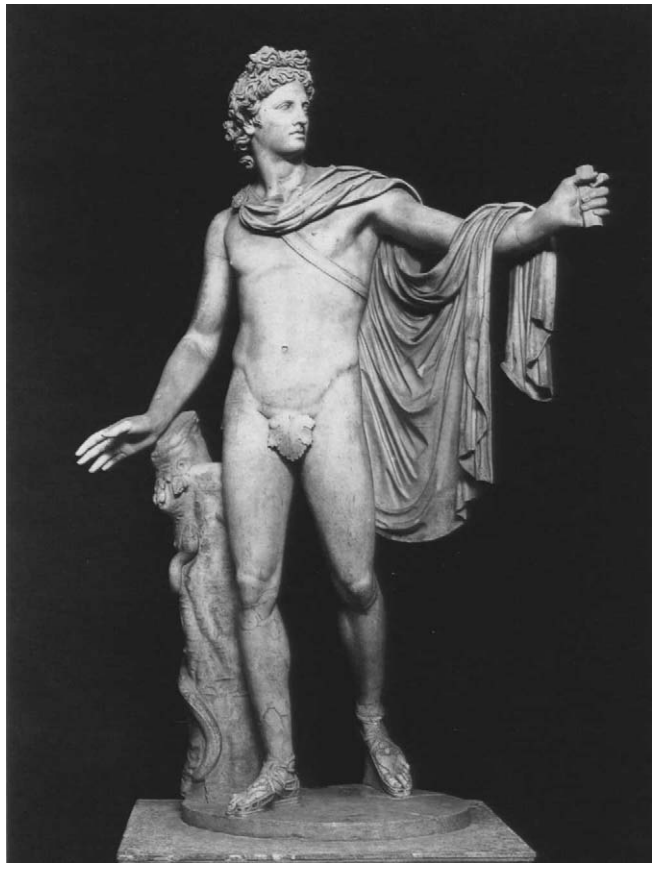
THE POSSIBILITY THAT PAINTING might actively compete with poetry had been one of the motivating forces of Renaissance art. As we have seen, Baroque painters elaborated upon this idea in many ways, appropriating the literary forms of irony and simile as well as the orator's use of rhetorical gesture and expression to underscore meaning and convey emotion. Never were these elements brought so effectively into play as when the subject was taken from a famous literary source. Such is the case with Salvator Rosa's splendid *Dream of Aeneas* (fig. 41), based on Virgil's *Aeneid* (8. 26–34). Following his long wanderings, Aeneas at last landed in Latium and, "his whole heart distracted by the horrors of war, sank down on the river bank under heaven's chill height, and only at a late hour allowed rest to spread over his limbs. And there appeared to him the God of the place, old Tiber himself, who arose from his pleasant stream amid his poplar-leaves. A fine linen clothed him in grey raiment, and shady reeds covered his hair. Then he spoke to Aeneas, and assuaged all his care with his words: . . . 'This spot shall be the place for your city [Rome].' " Rosa was less interested in creating an illustration to Virgil's text than in using his brush to paint the visual equivalent of the poet's evocative lines. There is the moonlit sky, its silvery light reflected in Aeneas's armor; the warrior, who has set aside his helmet and sword and, exhausted, sunk into a deep sleep, his hand shielding his face from the jagged edges of the stone he uses as a pillow; and the river god, his ancient face framed by long reeds, the linen cloth wrapped around his loins trailing off in the evening breeze. This is a picture that is poetic both in its literary source and in its approach. An etching by Rosa of the same subject (fig. 42) shows the river god seated on an urn, above Aeneas, with his hand raised in a gesture intended to indicate the site of the future city. The etching communicates in a clearer fashion the fact that the god is addressing Aeneas, but the solution in the painting, which brings the two figures closer together in a more intimate colloquy, with the god inclined toward Aeneas, is the more memorable—and poetic—solution. That Rosa showed himself so remarkably responsive to the phrase "allowed rest to spread over his limbs" *(dedit per membra quietem)* should not surprise us,

41.
Salvator Rosa
The Dream of Aeneas,
ca. 1663–66
Oil on canvas, 77½ x
47½ in. (196.9 x 120.7 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1965
(65.118)

42.
Salvator Rosa
The Dream of Aeneas, ca. 1663–64
Etching with drypoint, sheet 13¼ x 9 1/16 in. (34.9 x 23 cm)
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917 (1750.17.–85)

for Rosa was himself a poet, as well as an actor and philosopher. Notoriously proud and combative, and dismissive of the normal process of patronage that governed the lives of artists, he had a keen sense of his own genius and of the place inspiration plays in creativity. His personality comes through clearly in a remarkable letter he wrote in 1666 to Don Antonio Ruffo—the Sicilian collector for whom, as we have seen, Rembrandt, Guercino, and Mattia Preti had worked (as had Artemisia Gentileschi, among others). Rosa had promised to work for Ruffo, but he alerted the nobleman that "I do not paint to enrich myself, but purely for my own satisfaction, [so that] it is necessary to allow me to be carried away by the transports of enthusiasm and use my brushes only when I feel myself rapt." *The Dream of Aeneas* suggests that a probable catalyst for this creative spirit was provided by the reading of poetry.

It is not possible in this publication to discuss all of the paintings in the collection. One high point—taking a very different tack on the issue of creativity and inspiration—is Andrea Sacchi's astonishing portrait of the male soprano Marcantonio Pasqualini (fig. 43). Sacchi is highly unlikely to win a popularity contest in today's world, when prose imitates colloquial speech, poetry has abandoned the structure of verse and rhyme, and angst or a political agenda rather than poetic theory is deemed the mainspring of art. In seventeenth-century terms this picture, which dates from 1641, is an unqualified masterpiece. Bellori described it as "not a simple portrait but a most beautiful conceit, [Sacchi] having shown [Pasqualini] in the costume of a shepherd with Apollo, who crowns him. He places his hands on a spinet . . . and



44.
Apollo Belvedere
Roman copy after Hellenistic original, ca. 350–330 B.C.
Marble, 88¼ in. (224 cm)
Museo Pio Clementia, Vatican Museums
Photograph: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

while playing he turns to display his face, most beautifully painted from life. . . . On the ground lies a bound satyr, to signify his competition and punishment." As this description implies, the picture is as much an allegory as a portrait. The intent was to celebrate Pasqualini's status as one of the preeminent singers at the court of the Barberini family in Rome (Rosa wrote a scathing poem about the popularity of such singers and of their generous remuneration for performances).

Pasqualini had appeared in a number of Barberini-sponsored operas, including a five-hour spectacle for which Bernini designed *intermedi* (interact entertainments) and others for which Sacchi designed the sets. The costume Pasqualini wears in this picture would be appropriate either for a shepherd or—in view of the leopard pelt—the character of Bacchus. However, Pasqualini is shown as though giving a solo performance, accompanying himself on a keyed harp (a clavicytherium); perhaps it is one of his own compositions. Apollo defeated Marsyas in a musical competition by accompanying himself on the lyre, and the laurel wreath he suspends over Pasqualini's head doubtless suggests that Marcantonio has accomplished what Marsyas could not do (and for which he was punished by being flayed). Apollo's pose is based on the celebrated *Apollo Belvedere* (fig. 44), but we know that Sacchi drew the figure from a handsomely proportioned model whose features he then smoothed out to Apollonian perfection (fig. 45). He used a coarser brush to give Pasqualini's clothes a richly textured appearance. The contrasting of smooth and rough painting techniques was a method of underscoring the ways the mythic past has been combined with the tactile present,

43. *(opposite)*
Andrea Sacchi (Italian, Rome, 1599–1661)
Marcantonio Pasqualini (1614–1691) Crowned by Apollo, 1641
Oil on canvas, 96 x 76½ in. (243.8 x 194.3 cm)
Purchase, Enid A. Haupt Gift and Gwynne Andrews Fund, 1981 (1981.317)

45.
Andrea Sacchi
Study for *Marcantonio Pasqualini Crowned by Apollo*, 1641
Reddish brown chalk on paper, 10½ x 11¼ in. (26.7 x 28.6 cm)
Purchase, Guy Wildenstein Gift, 2003 (2003.109)

and it also establishes an Olympian hierarchy: the idealized Apollo occupying the highest rung and the half-animal Marsyas, the lowest. The picture is, in other words, one that expects from the viewer an engaged intellect. Moreover, it is one that contains beautiful passages of painting and commands attention by the nobility of its invention—however overdone we may find the compliment paid to Pasqualini (full-length portraiture was generally reserved for persons of high social status or people holding high-ranking positions). It should perhaps come as no surprise that the patron of this extraordinary work may have been Pasqualini himself. Vanity has always played an important part in sponsoring the arts, and it was certainly key to the promotion of countless careers in the seventeenth century. Seldom has flattery and artistic talent come together in quite such a self-congratulatory way.

Additional Sources for Quotes

Bellori, Giovan Pietro. *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672). Ed. Evelina Borea. Turin, 1976.

Berenson, Bernard. *North Italian Painters of the Renaissance*. New York, 1907.

Blewitt, Octavian. *A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy*. 7th ed. London: John Murray, 1867.

Fry, Roger. "The Seicento." In Roger Fry, *Transformations*, pp. 95–124. New York, 1927.

Goethe, J. W. von. *Italian Journey, 1786–1788*. Trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer. Harmondsworth, 1970.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Passages from the French and Italian Note-books*. 2 vols. Boston, 1884.

James, Henry. *Italian Hours*. Ed. John Auchard. Harmondsworth, 1995.

Marino, Giambattista. *La Galeria*. In Giambattista Marino, *Opere*. Ed. Alberto Asor Rosa. Milan, 1967.

Murtola, Gaspare. *Rime*. Venice, 1603; reprinted in Gian Alberto dell'Acqua, *Il Caravaggio e le sue grandi opere da San Luigi dei Francesi*, p. 164. Milan, 1971.

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia,* Padua 1611. New York, 1976.

Ruskin, John. *The Works of John Ruskin*. Ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn. Vol. 1. London, 1903.

Vasari, Giorgio. *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*. Ed. Gaetano Milanesi. 9 vols. 1878–85; reprint, Florence, 1906.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. Trans. W. F. Jackson Knight. Penguin Classics, 1969.