



12.50  
 Raphael, *The School of Athens*, 1510–11. Fresco. Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican

considered and then abandoned. The powerful female figures that in Raphael personify the branches of knowledge follow Michelangelo's prophets and sibyls in their heroic proportions. Between the personifications is a series of symbolic stories and figures, each of which corresponds to the two flanking areas of knowledge: for instance, Urania, the Muse of Astronomy, relates to both Poetry and to Philosophy (which includes all of what are now called the sciences); Adam and Eve stand between Theology and Law, since the story of Adam and Eve concerns the operation of Divine Justice.

A caption (*titulus*) defines Philosophy as CAUSARUM COGNITIO ("the knowledge of causes"). In the great lunette below known as *The School of Athens* (fig. 12.50), all of the great philosophers of antiquity gather in a grand vaulted space that probably reflects current projects for St. Peter's. Raphael did more here than simply paint a group portrait of famous people from the past: the composition is a poetic invention that stays true to the principles laid down by Alberti, through which Raphael aimed at nothing less than the representation of Philosophy itself through depicted human action. The work asks beholders to "read" it, recognizing each figure not only from conventional attributes but also from his char-

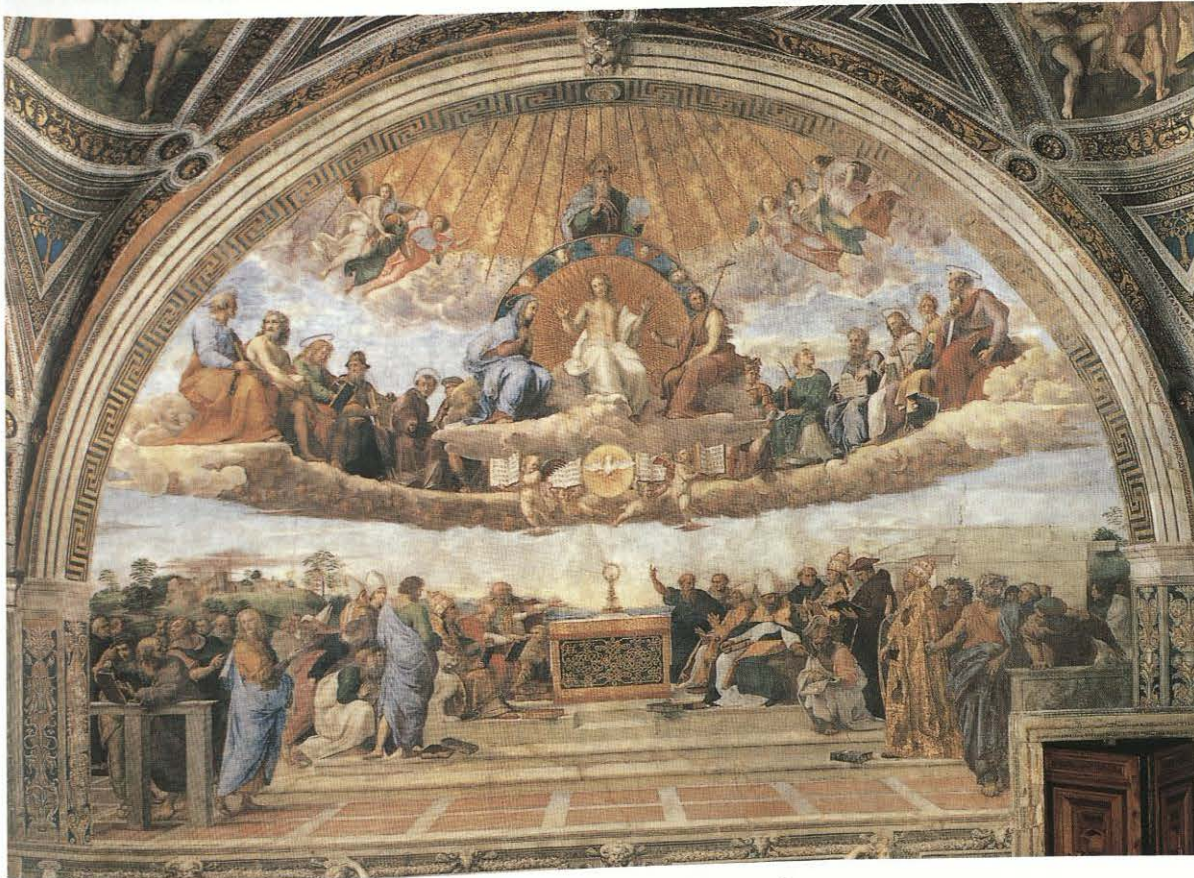
acter and his gestures. The only inscriptions are on the books held by the central figures, which serve to identify them as Plato (with his *Timaeus*) and Aristotle (with his *Ethics*). The pair are presented as the greatest of all philosophers, but also as the founders of two diverging philosophical traditions. Plato (429–347 BCE), who points to the sky, is the idealist, positing truth and reality not in the perishable material forms of nature but in the timeless, immaterial world of Ideas. His pupil Aristotle (384–322 BCE), who gestures toward the ground, inquires instead into the nature of physical reality and the world of human life and society. Aristotle had been the single most influential thinker in the universities of Europe since the 1200s, when his works were rediscovered in the West: his writings provided the fundamental texts on the study of the human mind and its capacity to know, on the natural world, and on politics and morality, as well as the basic methods of demonstrating and proving an argument. In the fifteenth century, the newly available texts and translations of Plato, edited by Greek and Italian scholars, led to disputes between self-appointed followers of the two philosophers. More recently, however, some humanist thinkers in circles close to the papal court had claimed that it was possible to reconcile the thought of Plato and



Aristotle despite their considerable differences in method and in the questions that engaged them. The principle of harmonizing differences is the generating conception of Raphael's fresco. The different schools of philosophy organized around Plato on one side and Aristotle on the other – schools that represent the widest variety of ancient cultures then known – manifest variety and difference on the individual level but together correspond to a great three-dimensional unity.

On Aristotle's side are the ancient practitioners of practical mathematics and astronomy: Ptolemy (foreground right) holds a terrestrial globe and wears a crown. (The ancient astronomer was often confused with an Egyptian king of the same name.) He is paired with the Persian prophet Zoroaster, who holds a celestial globe. Euclid appears here in the person of Bramante, who demonstrates with his compasses a theorem for a group of excited students. The young man in the black hat looking out of the fresco is Raphael himself, standing beside a figure identifiable as the Lombard artist Sodoma, who had also worked in the room: Raphael wants us to understand that painting, as a form of knowledge comprising the mathematics of perspective and the study of nature, can itself be classed as a form of philosophy. Among the philosophers on the opposite side is Pythagoras, who taught his students about the hidden mathematical ratios that organized both the motions of the planets and the notes of the musical scale. As Pythagoras writes in a large book,

the turbaned Arab philosopher and astronomer Averroes looks over his shoulder. Closer to the center of the picture is the brooding figure of Heraclitus, who held that the only reality in the universe is its process of constant change and transformation, and that all being is unstable and passes away. Raphael is generally believed to have represented Heraclitus in the person of Michelangelo, not just portraying his physical features but also imitating the style the older artist employed for the prophets and sibyls of the Sistine Ceiling. With characteristic wit, the figure's pose resembles that of the prophet Isaiah, but whereas Isaiah lifts his head from his hand with a flash of inspired energy, no such epiphany has come to the gloomy philosopher. He is also one of the few characters in the scene who interacts with no one: if Raphael, pairing himself with Sodoma, implied that his work was necessarily collaborative, he shows Michelangelo as an artist who thinks, and works, in near isolation. The portrait, seemingly painted after the rest of the fresco was complete, and certainly at a point when Raphael had finally had a chance to study what Michelangelo had been producing a few rooms away, created the indelible image of that artist as "il penseroso," the thinker. Standing to his right is Parmenides, the opponent of Heraclitus, who argued the case for stability and constancy of substance as opposed to endless transformation. Just as Raphael has portrayed Heraclitus using the style of Michelangelo, so now he models Parmenides on the figure of Leda



12.51

Raphael, *Disputa*, 1508–09.Fresco. Stanza della  
Segnatura, Vatican



(see figs. 12.15–12.16), recently invented by Michelangelo's celebrated rival Leonardo.

The slightly earlier fresco (1508 or 1509) of Theology on the opposite wall of the Stanza is sometimes called the *Disputa* (fig. 12.51), or “disputation,” since some early writers believed that it depicted a debate about the nature of the Eucharist. Although there was certainly no lack of disputation about the Eucharist in the years when Raphael was painting, the postures suggesting lively intellectual exchange probably indicate Theology in general, conceived as a great collective seeking of knowledge under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, depicted above. Whereas the architecture of *The School of Athens* evoked the nave of a great basilica, the space here is more like a vast apse: though a hill in the distance suggests an outdoor setting, the pavement, steps, and altar below rather reconstitute the ceremonial focal point in every church, and the rows of clouds and the golden beams above curve to form a colossal semi-dome, as if the world were shaping itself to welcome God's presence. On axis with the Eucharist, God's miraculous manifestation on Earth, are the three persons of the Trinity. While Christ displays his wounds, the Holy Spirit once again functions as the principle of divine wisdom: accompanying the symbolic dove are the books of the four Gospels, directly inspired by God. To either side of Christ appear St. John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, along with an entire semicircular tier of saints and prophets. Below, an energetic group of popes, cardinals, bishops, and members of various religious orders express the wonder that leads to contemplation and enlightenment. At the edges of the crowd,

12.52

Raphael, *Parnassus*,  
1510–11. Fresco. Stanza  
della Segnatura, Vatican



heretics and dissenters turn away with their books, leaning into the space of the room itself, as a blond youth and a bearded patriarch gently direct them back toward the altar.

Having translated the abstractions of philosophy and theology into visible form in these two paintings Raphael then tackled poetry. Here, he might have found himself on more familiar territory, since the Urbino court would have instilled in Raphael the humanist commonplace that there was a deep affinity between poetry and painting: both poets and artists communicate through images, whether descriptive or metaphoric. The wall this time presented more of a challenge, however, for Raphael had to paint around an existing window. In the *Parnassus* (fig. 12.52) he addressed the problem by using a hill as his setting, following the curve of the lunette and placing figures above and to the sides of the hole in the middle (which itself provided a view onto a real hill in the distance). Once again, Raphael composed with portraits, leaving it to the viewer to work out the principles of association linking them to each other and to a central guiding presence – in this case, the god Apollo, the patron not only of music and poetry but of inspiration and prophecy. Apollo in turn looks up at the oculus in the ceiling above where Poetry appears as a winged divinity with the caption NUMINE AFFLATUR – “inspired [or ‘inflated’] by the Divine.” As Michelangelo had done with his sibyls, Raphael indicates the numen, or the presence of the divine, with an effect of breath or spirit, a movement of air that ruffles the drapery of the Muses around Apollo. On the hill toward the left and in blue toga-like drapery, close to the divine sources of poetic vision, is the Greek poet Homer, whose blind but ecstatic features are modeled on the *Laocoön* (see fig. 12.48). Behind him, in green, is Homer's most important imitator, the ancient Roman poet Virgil, who in turn looks back to Dante, in red, the “modern” poet who took Virgil as his guide. Further down the slopes on this side, in a pointedly less lofty position, are the poets of lyric and amorous verse: the ancient Roman poet Ovid, in a flame-colored toga; Daphnis, the mythical inventor of pastoral, who points to the laurel, symbol and reward of poetry in general (his own name means “laurel”); Petrarch, the great modern poet who celebrated the poet's laurels and his own love Laura, in three-quarter profile; the bearded Theocritus; and the female poet Sappho.

On the other side of the window is the aged figure of Hesiod, the Greek shepherd poet who wrote of the nature of the gods. Hesiod's gesture of pointing into the room would have had a particular significance to its original primary occupant, since a passage in this poet's *Theogony* (II:29–35) appeared to prophesy the future greatness of Julius II: “so spoke great Zeus's ready-speaking daugh-





ters, and they plucked a staff, a branch of luxuriant laurel, a marvel, and gave it to me; and they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed ones who always are, but always to sing of themselves first and last. But what is this to me, about an oak and a rock?" The stone is a familiar sign for Peter, the first Pope, whose name meant "rock"; the oak (*rovere* in Italian) is the emblem of the family (Della Rovere) of Julius II.

## Venice

Pope Julius II cultivated diplomatic ties with the great powers across the Alps, in part because his nearer neighbors were more worrisome. In 1508, he entered into an alliance with the Holy Roman Empire, France, and other powers, known as the League of Cambrai, which through open warfare would succeed in curtailing Venetian influence in the peninsula. Venice's own ambitions very much correspond with the portrayal of the city by Jacopo Barbari (c. 1440–before 1516; fig. 12.53). This colossal woodcut celebrates the city's status as the center of an empire founded on trade and the domination of the sea. The sea god Neptune assures that nature itself protects the destiny of Venice – he bears an inscription declaring "I Neptune reside here, smoothing the waters at this port," to which Mercury answers, "I Mercury shine

favorably on this above all other trading centers," thus dignifying the sources of Venice's power. In its quality and scale – it was produced from six blocks on six sheets of paper and measures four by nine feet – it constitutes a Venetian equivalent to the other monumental projects of the decade in Rome or Florence. The *View of Venice* also marks the beginning of a gradual shift in the mechanism of print production. Whereas earlier printmakers like Mantegna and Pollaiuolo had initiated their own projects, Barbari's woodcut originated as a private commercial venture by the printer-publisher Anton Kolb. Kolb justified his request for a government "privilege" (an early form of copyright) by maintaining that the print served "principally for the glory of this illustrious city of Venice."

What is most remarkable about the image is that it is a bird's-eye view, showing the city as it might look from an imaginary point in the sky. The exchange of looks between the gods Mercury above and Neptune below enhances the viewer's sense of being physically located above the city, even of an ability to move through space as he scans the winding streets, canals, gardens, and squares. The minute precision in the rendering of buildings, public spaces, trees, and ships gives the impression of a completely faithful portrait, promising that the prints could serve as a map. In fact, the *View of Venice* combines the mathematical techniques of map-making, still in its infancy in these years, with those of painting in perspective. Barbari used the measurements

12.53

Jacopo Barbari, *View of Venice*, 1500. Woodcut, 4'4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 9'2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" (1.34 x 2.81 m). Museo Correr, Venice







provided by a team of surveyors, while also making drawings from a number of elevated positions in the city, notably the campanile of San Marco. The overall coherence, however, is a synthesis of Barbari's, produced by intuitive as much as by empirical means: he exaggerated the scale of certain elements, such as the two central islands, and diminished others, to demonstrate their relative importance. Because the image was composed from multiple views, the angle of vision sometimes shifts – compare the receding perspective of the Piazza San Marco with the almost overhead view of the area below the Rialto bridge on the sheet above.

In the years Barbari was producing his woodcuts, Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430–1516) continued to dominate the painting profession in Venice. He held a prestigious state appointment as painter of the Hall of the Grand Council, and he ran the large workshop in which the major figures of a new generation would be trained: Giorgione, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Titian. The San Zaccaria altarpiece of 1505 (fig. 12.54), a work Bellini painted in his mid seventies, shows the culmination of a lifetime's investigation into the properties of light and its effects on colored surfaces. The spatial illusion and psychological impact of the world represented here make it seem continuous with our own: the architecture that houses the Virgin and saints appears to extend the architecture of the frame; the saturated red of St. Jerome's robe indicates a light falling with full intensity, whereas St. Peter's yellow mantle is revealed through illumination reflected from other surfaces. Bellini works with naturalistic effects not for their own sake but to evoke the sacred as a mood or an atmosphere that extends itself to the world beyond the painting through the sensory and emotional engagement of the beholder. This is a mirage-like place of mystical stasis and near silence: the figures seem absorbed in meditation to the degree that all motion has been suspended, and the delicacy with which the angel plays its *lira da braccio* beckons the viewer, as if, in approaching, he might actually be able to hear the music.

### Foreigners in the City

Some of the younger artists who trained under Bellini were just beginning to set up independent workshops in the 1500s, years when Venice was an international crossroads for different traditions of painting and printmaking. These younger painters would have been aware that, in addition to Bellini, two of the world's most famous artists were briefly present in their city during the 1500s: Leonardo passed through in 1500 as a consultant to the government on military matters, while Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) spent 1505 and 1506 there as an agent for a German trading company. Nothing from Leonar-

do's hand can be securely associated with his Venetian sojourn, but Dürer, in the course of his stay, produced a major altarpiece.

Even before coming south, Dürer was already an artist of considerable reputation in Italy, where his engravings and woodcuts (including the *Apocalypse* series; see fig. 11.13) were known to artists and collectors. Vasari reports that one of the reasons that Dürer came to Venice was to seek redress against the printmaker Marcantonio Raimondi, who had been making pirated copies of his engravings. The episode is a major event in the history of “intellectual property.” At the time Dürer traveled south, it had never occurred to legal authorities that an artist's work might in some way belong to him. Copyright law did not then exist; publishers of books and prints, like Anton Kolb, were the only ones who could obtain a “privilege,” or sole right of production, for a

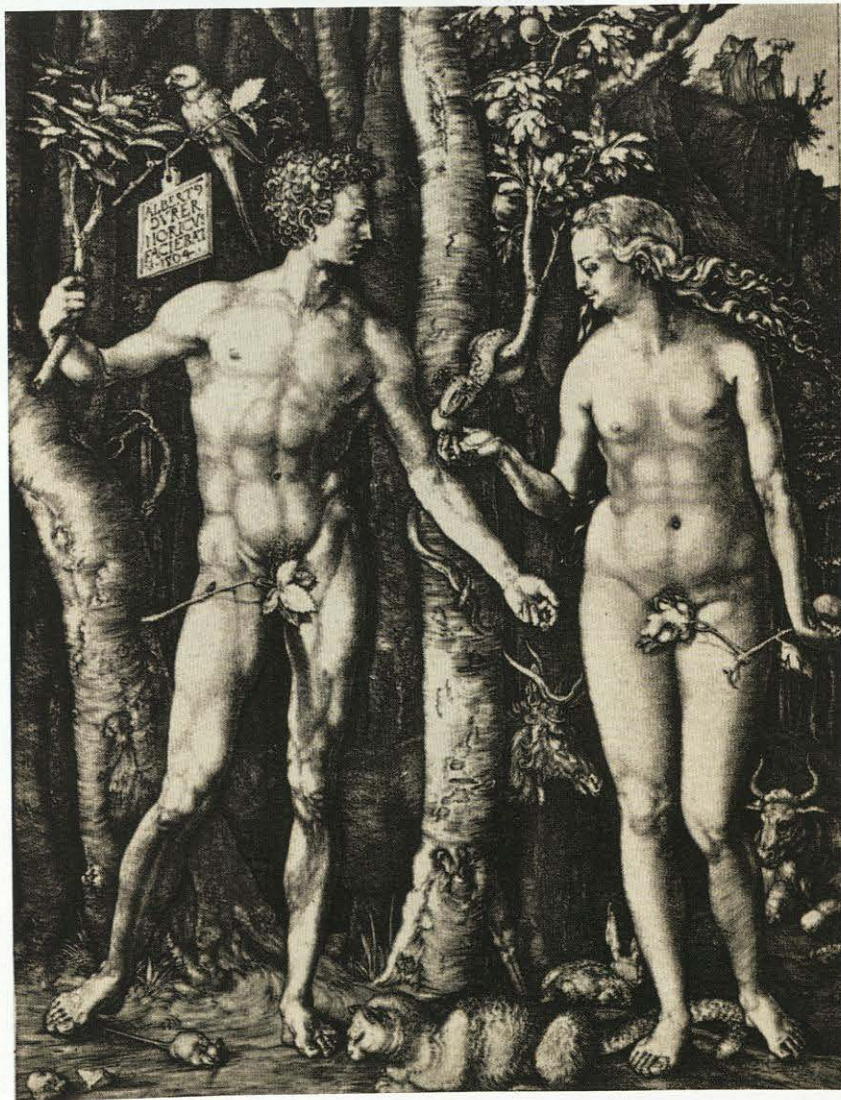
OPPOSITE

12.54

Giovanni Bellini, *Virgin and Child with Saints Peter, Catherine, Lucy and Jerome*, 1505. Oil on canvas, transferred from panel, 16'5 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 7'9" (5 x 2.4 m). San Zaccaria, Venice

12.55

Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1504. Engraving, 10 x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (25.2 x 19.4 cm). British Museum, London





12.56  
 Albrecht Dürer, *Feast of the  
 Rose Garlands*, 1506. Oil  
 on panel, 5'3¼" x 6'4¼"  
 (1.62 x 1.95 m). Národní  
 Galerie, Prague



limited period. Dürer, though, won his case, obtaining a ruling whereby his own prints would be distinguishable from those of his copyists: Marcantonio was permitted to make his own versions, but not to reproduce Dürer's distinctive monogram, which now had the status of a trademark. At least in theory, customers would now be certain they were acquiring an authentic print from the hand of Dürer.

Dürer's 1505 visit to Venice was by no means his first exposure to Italian art. He may have made an earlier trip south. He was familiar, even in Germany, with the engravings of Mantegna, and in 1500 he had made the acquaintance of de' Barbari, then working in Nuremberg. According to Dürer's own account, Jacopo had shown him how to use Vitruvian proportions to draw human figures: the engraved *Adam and Eve* of 1504 (fig. 12.55) was Dürer's attempt to render the human body according to this idealized system of measurement, with the implication that only before the Fall, in bodies God himself had made, would such perfect proportions have been found in man and woman. In Germany, the print would cer-

tainly have looked Italianate; Italians like Michelangelo, on the other hand, found it labored. After arriving in Venice, Dürer changed his mind about what could be learned from Italy, and wrote to a friend at home that he now realized there were better painters than Jacopo de' Barbari. In particular, he was impressed by Giovanni Bellini, whom he befriended. Dürer's letters also suggest that he had begun to worry that his insufficient knowledge of antiquity would limit the international appeal of his works, though this did not prevent him from issuing a painted challenge to the other artists in the city.

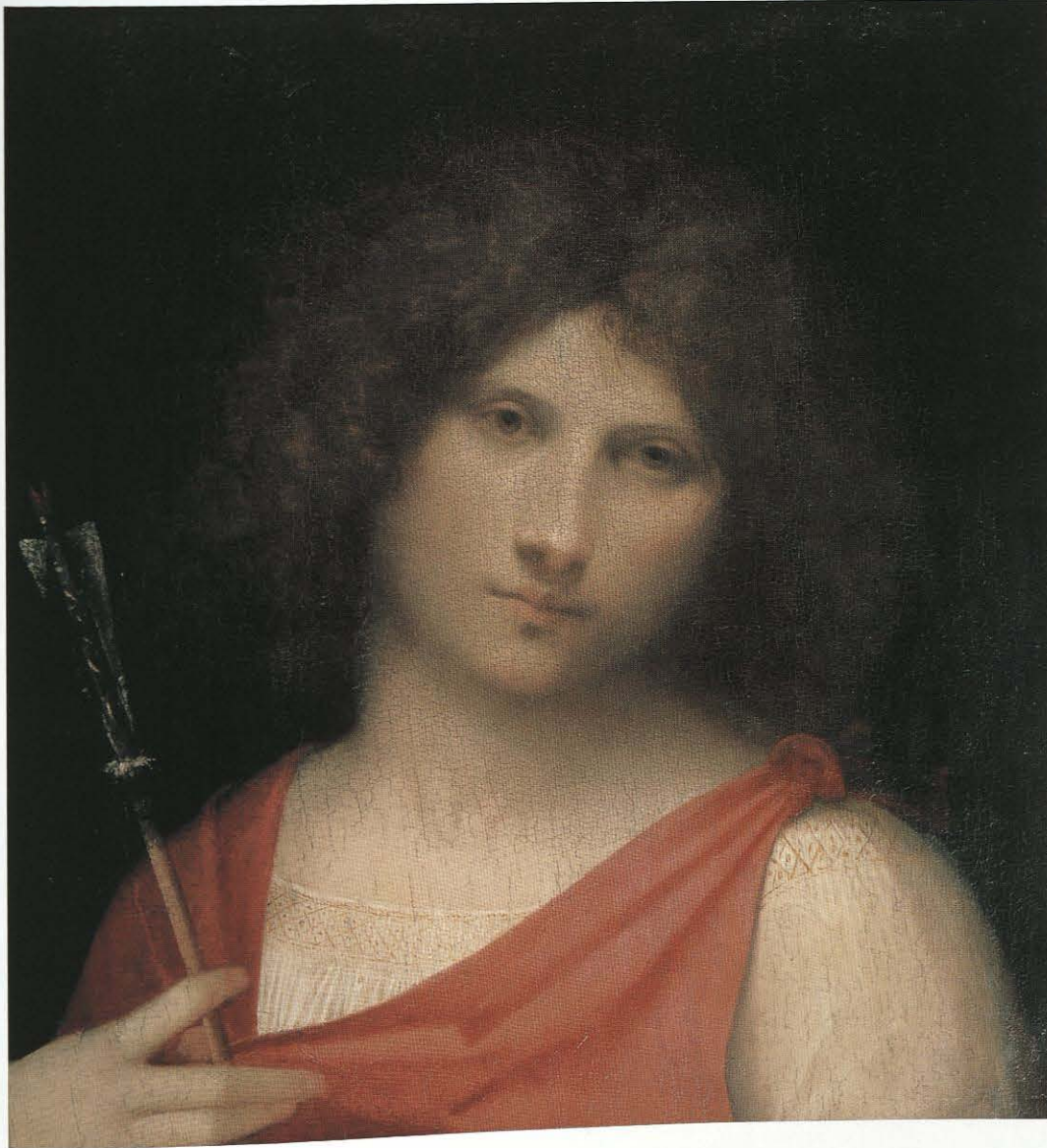
This was the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* of 1506 (fig. 12.56), which Dürer produced for a highly visible location in San Bartolomeo al Rialto, a church that served the local German community. The altarpiece demonstrated the principles of painting that pertained north of the Alps, while also showing that Dürer could outdo the Venetians in all the artistic qualities at which they excelled: the handling of color and light, the rendering of landscape. As Dürer himself wrote in 1506: "My picture... is well painted and beautifully colored.... I have stopped



the mouths of all the painters who used to say that I was good at engraving, but as to painting I did not know how to handle my colors. Now everyone says that better coloring they have never seen.” Other evidence indicates that Dürer did not lack for resistance in the artistic community: the city fined him in 1506 for practicing painting without a license from the local guild.

By presenting the Virgin and Child enthroned in outdoor light, Dürer was seeking comparison with Bellini’s *San Zaccaria* altarpiece (see fig. 12.54), which he had studied closely. The arrangement of colors across the surface, the figure of the musician angel, even the two flanking trees all correspond to elements in Bellini’s painting. Yet Dürer does not pursue Bellini’s spatial effects, the sense of figures detached from each other in a continuous volume of light and air. The picture is packed; bustling

interaction replaces the static detachment of Bellini’s composition. Dürer re-imagines the traditional formula of enthroned Madonna with votive portraits as an action or performance. While two cherubim crown the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, she and the Christ Child, along with angels and St. Dominic, distribute rose garlands to the kneeling figures around the throne: these appear to be portraits, perhaps of confraternity members, but only two are clearly identifiable. In the place of honor to the Virgin’s right, Pope Julius II receives a rose crown from Christ, while the Virgin wreathes the splendidly attired Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian. Contemporary relations between the empire and the papacy stand behind this unusual imagery. The emperor’s political successes had led to considerable speculation that he would soon descend on Rome to receive the imperial crown from

**12.57**

Giorgione, *Boy with an Arrow*, c. 1506. Oil on panel, 18<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (48 x 42 cm). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



OPPOSITE

12.58

Giorgione, *The Tempest*,  
c. 1509. Oil on canvas, 31 1/4  
x 28 3/4" (79.5 x 73 cm).  
Galleria dell'Accademia,  
Venice

Julius II; Dürer hoped to join the emperor's party from Venice. In the event, this never occurred, but Dürer's altarpiece offered an optimistic vision of a unified Christendom, one that the League of Cambrai would soon shatter. Dürer himself appears in the picture as a witness to the history he was making sacred: he stands to the far right, before an Alpine landscape, holding a scroll bearing his name and the implausible assertion that he had completed the altarpiece in five months. This invited viewers to marvel all the more at the quality of labor-intensive detail, the meticulously described fabrics, furs, jewels, and flowers.

### Giorgione and the Young Titian

It is by no means clear that Leonardo had allowed Venetian artists to see any of his works during his brief visit to the city. Nevertheless, one of the younger artists from the Bellini studio was working by the middle of the decade in a radical new style that later sixteenth-century viewers, such as Vasari, saw as a response to his influence. Giorgione (c. 1477/8–1510) eschewed Leonardo's practice of making serial preliminary studies, then building up paintings over strong underdrawing, preferring instead to compose with pure tone directly on the surface of the painting. Still, works like his *Boy with an Arrow* (fig. 12.57) from around 1506 recall Leonardo's practice of immersing human figures in transparent shadow from which their features seem gradually to emerge into the light. Just as the *Mona Lisa* (see fig. 12.17) is no conventional portrait, so Giorgione's image seems unlikely to depict an actual person, though it follows the conventions of portraiture. The work could best be described as a poetic idea, but one with a rich and alluring ambiguity that challenges the spectator to participate in making meaning more than any written poem of the period could. Who is this boy? Does the arrow signal that he is the pagan god Cupid, or does it mean that he is merely like Cupid, a non-divine being who also gives rise to the emotions of love?

The Venetian poet and scholar Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) in just these years reported that Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione's probable teacher, had come to insist that pictorial inventions could not simply be dictated by patrons, but had to be "suited to the painter's own imagination." Bellini, Bembo wrote, expected "always to wander as he pleased in his paintings." No disciple internalized this idea of painting more than Giorgione, who in the few years before his premature death produced a series of pictures not dedicated to prayer, commemoration, or propaganda, but simply intended for acquisition and display in Venetian private homes, where they could be exhibited alongside ancient bronzes or marble sculptures and

admired as examples of the virtuosity of a great painter. Works like *Boy with a Flute* and the so-called *Tempest* did more than simply define the category "modern art." In the lush landscape of *The Tempest* (fig. 12.58), where lightning, rolling clouds, and the density of the atmosphere signal the onset of a storm, a male wanderer comes upon a semi-nude woman who nurses a child by a spring. What we are given resembles the beginning of a story, and we are invited to complete it. But what narrative or body of ideas could lead to this strange association of elements?

For some viewers, the work needed to be no more than a landscape – or, as one early witness called it, a "little landscape on canvas with a storm, with the gypsy and the soldier." As the depiction of a meteorological event, unprecedented in its rendering of rolling clouds, fitful sunlight, and even the particular visibility of air thick with moisture, it is understandable why the storm might have been singled out as a principal point of interest. But the original owner of the painting, Gabriele Vendramin (1484–1552), a man of learning from a noble family, was interested in paintings with philosophical subject matter that he could keep by him in his *studiolo* and throughout his house. Vendramin might have ascribed philosophical significance to the suggestive juxtaposition of vulnerable and exposed human beings and the unleashing of nature's fury – this was a major theme of the epic philosophical poem *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius. In describing a natural world without divine agency, Lucretius had sought to explain the causes behind a range of physical phenomena, from weather and climate to human sensory perception. Superstitious human beings might regard such natural occurrences as thunder and lightning as actions of angry gods, he wrote, but the true philosopher understood these as the movement of atomic particles, and therefore as nothing to be feared. Lucretius celebrated the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BCE), who was the first to "wander" in search of the true causes of things, and to liberate mankind from superstitious fears of the gods. If Vendramin found that the painting alluded to Lucretius, he would have understood that it was more than an illustration: Giorgione has taken pains to locate his scene in the contemporary world, dressing his male figure in the particolored hose of a contemporary Venetian libertine, and adding the coat of arms of a city in the Venetian territory over the city gate. The subject of the painting thus becomes the modern philosopher's contemplation of nature and the natural condition of man, undeterred by the storm and the gathering darkness: these in themselves may have recalled the troubles of Venice plunged into a war with the major powers of Europe, and the necessary philosophical outlook needed to confront them.







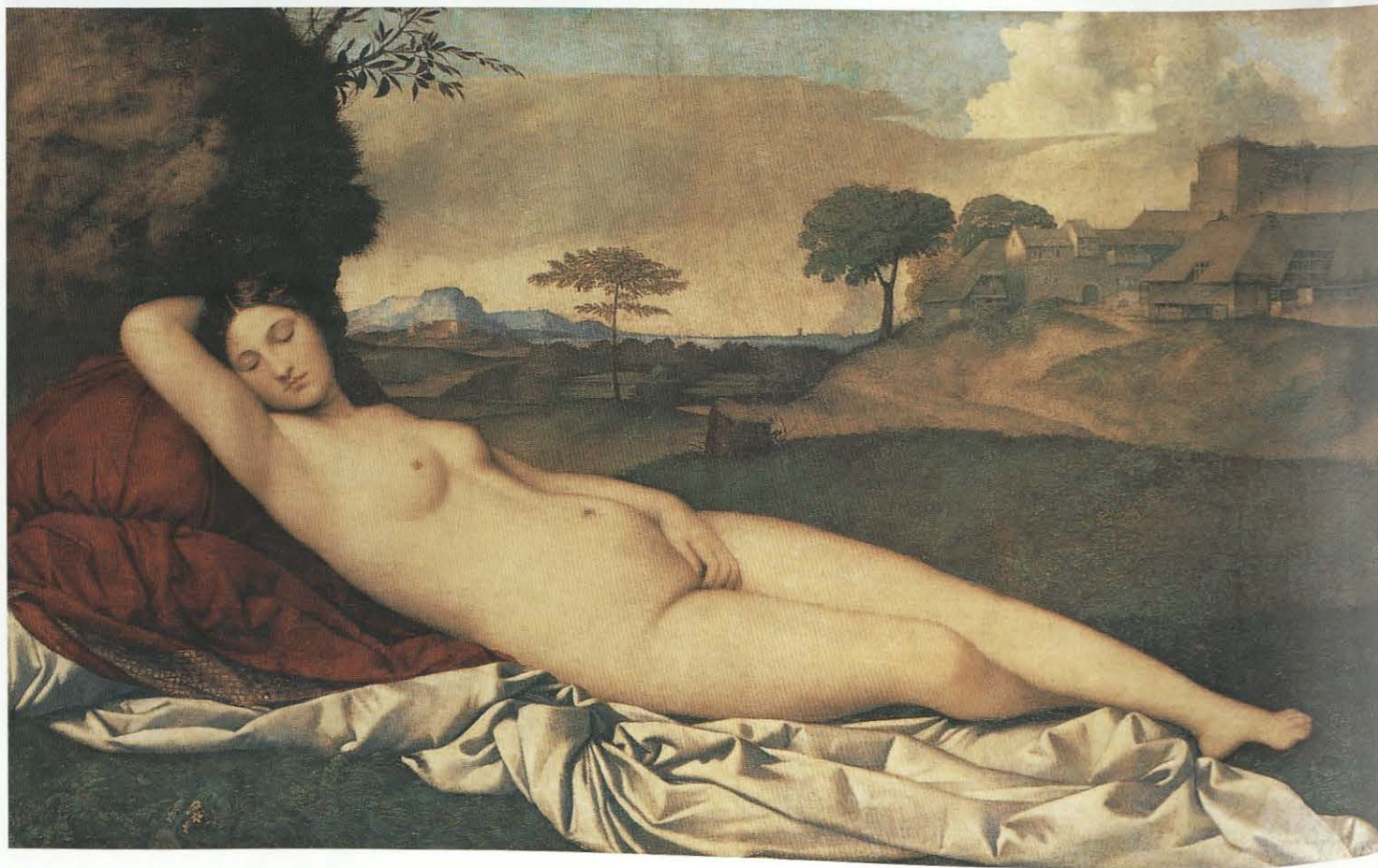
Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (fig. 12.59), made for the Venetian official Girolamo Marcello, is a kind of picture that we have seen before (see figs. 9.25 and 11.4): a mythology with the ancient goddess of love and fertility as its protagonist. Her identity would initially have been clearer, since her son Cupid originally appeared in her company (that area of the canvas, heavily damaged, was painted over in 1837). What is more unusual, however, is the emphasis on a single nude figure, who dominates the painting, and the prominence of the landscape setting. As with *The Tempest*, Giorgione wants the viewer to reflect on the relation between the body (in this case, the body of a figure who stands for human sexuality itself) and the natural world: the curves of the figure's limbs, torso, and breasts echo the gentle rolling hills of the landscape. Even a viewer who was not learned in philosophy might be moved to reflect on the nature of human beings as part of a wider continuum of physical life in the natural world. Through the senses, one comes not only to know the world but also to feel oneself as part of the world. Readers of Lucretius, Virgil, or the fourteenth-century Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio would remember that these poets had invoked Venus to refer to the power of visual attraction and compulsion that led living things

to reproduce. Just as Giovanni Bellini used landscape and atmosphere to draw his viewers toward a state of imaginary participation in the contemplative world of his saints and Madonnas, so Giorgione now offers a parallel experience, one pursued by secular philosophers and poets, and no less dignified.

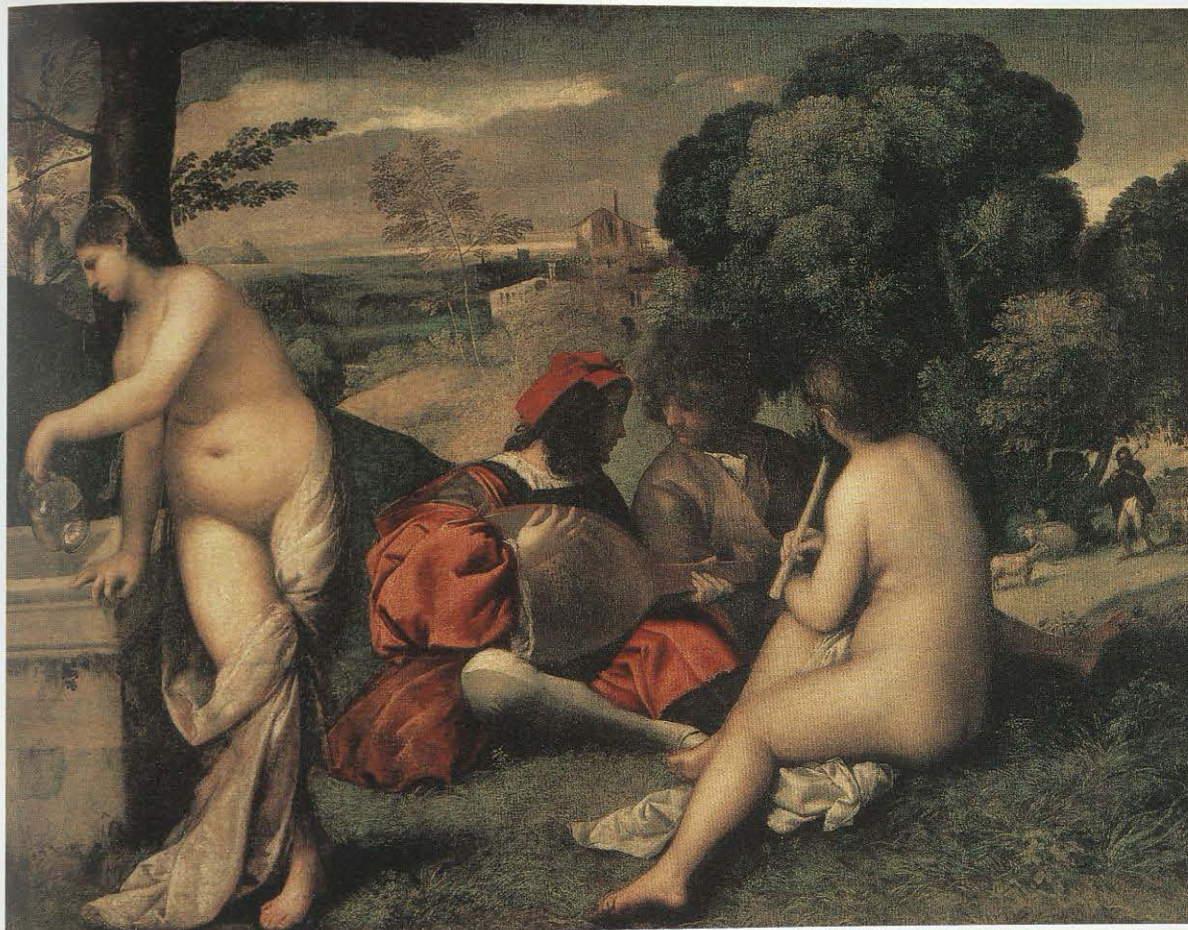
Little is known about Giorgione himself, beyond the fact that he received a commission to fresco the facade of the warehouse-office complex of the German community in Venice in 1506, and that he had died by 1510. Around that time, another artist produced a work that seems to be an attempt to continue Giorgione's specialization in sensuous and ambiguously evocative secular subjects. The so-called *Pastoral Concert* (fig. 12.60) has often been attributed to Giorgione, but most art historians now regard it as an early work by Titian (1488/90–1576), the painter who would dominate the profession in Venice for the next sixty years. It was Titian, in fact, who had probably completed the *Sleeping Venus*, and the *Concert* shows us that Titian now saw himself as both the heir and interpreter of Giorgione's pictorial experiments. Like *The Tempest*, the *Concert* responds to the recent vogue for landscapes with figures – both paintings juxtapose naked females with clothed males, and the seated female is a

## 12.59

Giorgione and Titian?,  
*Sleeping Venus*, c. 1510. Oil  
on canvas, 42<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 69" (1.1  
x 1.75 m). Gemäldegalerie  
Alte Meister, Dresden







12.60

Titian, *Pastoral Concert*,  
c. 1510. Oil on canvas,  
approx. 3'7" x 4'6" (1.09 x  
1.37 m). Musée du Louvre,  
Paris

variation on the woman in *The Tempest*, in a similar pose but viewed from a different point of view. The technique of rendering the softness of flesh by constructing figures in light and dark tones directly on the canvas itself is also similar to the method Giorgione used. By comparison with Leonardo or Dürer, whose *Leda* (see figs. 12.15–12.16) and *Adam and Eve* (see fig. 12.55) demonstrate the study of anatomy or ideal proportion, Titian merely suggests the structure of the body. Arranged in the foreground plane like Giorgione's *Venus*, the two nudes appeal to the sense of touch as well as sight. The landscape, with its grassy slopes and patches of alluring shade, has a density and sense of substance that is reinforced by the thickness of the paint, the visibility of brushstrokes, and of the canvas support.

Who are these figures? What is their relation to the men, who do not seem to register their existence? Titian assigned the men themselves social identities: the lute player is an affluent city dweller, whereas his singing companion wears the coarser clothing and unkempt hairstyle of a farmer or a shepherd. (A shepherd appears with his flock on the same diagonal recession into the pictorial space.) This suggests that the painting should be understood in a literary context: the presence of shepherd musicians immediately evokes the classical and modern tradition of the "pastoral," a genre of poetry

that celebrated the escapist or therapeutic pleasures of the countryside. It is a predominantly male world, where women are generally evoked as absent love interests, as Muses or as nymphs – natural spirits of the trees or the fountains. Titian here is composing a pastoral in paint, rather than illustrating a particular text, and already in his lifetime, contemporaries referred to works like this as *poesie*, "pieces of poetry."

We have already seen these mythological symbols of poetry (the Muses, the fountain), which appeared in Raphael's contemporary painting of *Parnassus* (see fig. 12.52), but the tone of Titian's work is very different: it is more intimate and even more modern. It seems more concerned to produce an alternative to the classical tradition than to proclaim continuity with it, which is the point of Raphael's gathering of ancient and modern poets, all garlanded with laurel. Titian here is working out the principles of Venetian painting as it would come to be understood later in the century – as a rival tradition to that of Florence and Rome, characterized by a greater immediacy of appeal to the senses, as well as a certain elusiveness that demanded the active imaginative involvement of the spectator.





AND SAR FLO FAB

AD SYMMY  
REGNA TRC  
NV DEPLR  
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# 13

1510—1520

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## 13

1510–1520

*The Workshop and the “School”***Raphael and His Team 1512–20****The Villa Chigi**

13.1  
Raphael, *Galatea*, 1512.  
Fresco. Villa Farnesina  
(formerly Villa Chigi),  
Rome

In 1512, having completed work on the Stanza della Segnatura murals in the Vatican (see figs. 12.49–12.52), Raphael undertook a series of other fresco projects for the papacy and for other prominent Roman clients. For the entrance loggia to a suburban villa owned by the fab-



ulously wealthy papal banker Agostino Chigi, he painted *Galatea*, a sea nymph whom the Roman poet Ovid had celebrated for her beauty, her coldness, and her speed (fig. 13.1). Raphael cleverly re-imagined Galatea as a sibling to Botticelli's *Venus* (see fig. 9.25), tearing across the ocean on a chariot drawn by dolphins, chastely wrapped in a grand red drapery as other maritime lovers frolic about her. Raphael gives her the serpentine pose of Leonardo's *Leda* (see figs. 12.15–12.16), but accentuates the contrary arrangement of head, hips, and shoulders to suggest a graceful rotation of the figure. He also shows us why she is turning: Galatea has heard the serenade of the monstrous one-eyed giant Polyphemus – depicted in an adjacent bay by the Venetian Sebastiano del Piombo (c. 1485–1547) – whom she will proceed to ridicule for his clumsy ways (the circle of cupids tells us that she is, in any case, in love with someone else, the shepherd Acis). The sophisticated society that frequented Chigi's villa – where the banker kept his mistress – would have grasped the point that success in love depended on facility of speech and manners.

In 1513 Raphael designed and decorated a burial chapel for Chigi in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo (fig. 13.2). The chapel is one of the most lavish ever commissioned by a private patron: it takes the form of a domed Greek cross, thus making reference to the centralized plans for New St. Peter's, albeit on a vastly reduced scale. The coffered dome (with a pseudo-oculus) alludes to the Pantheon. Colored marble and mosaic sheathe the rest of the interior. Raphael himself in this case acted principally as an architect, coordinating a team of craftsmen working in different media: he designed the mosaics in the dome of God and the eight spheres of heaven (fig. 13.3), a series of bronze reliefs depicting Gospel scenes, the bronze and marble tombs, marble sculptures of prophets, and an altarpiece. Raphael's coordinating of all parts of the design ran counter to standard practice, whereby patrons would enter into independent contracts with different individuals and workshops for different components of related projects; at St. Peter's, such an approach had led to tension between Michelangelo and Bramante over the design and siting of Pope Julius II's tomb. In the Chigi Chapel, Raphael's approach had the advantage of allowing



RIGHT

13.2

Raphael, Chigi Chapel,  
begun 1513. Santa Maria  
del Popolo, Rome. Interior.  
The chapel was completed  
after Raphael's death  
and modified in the  
next century.



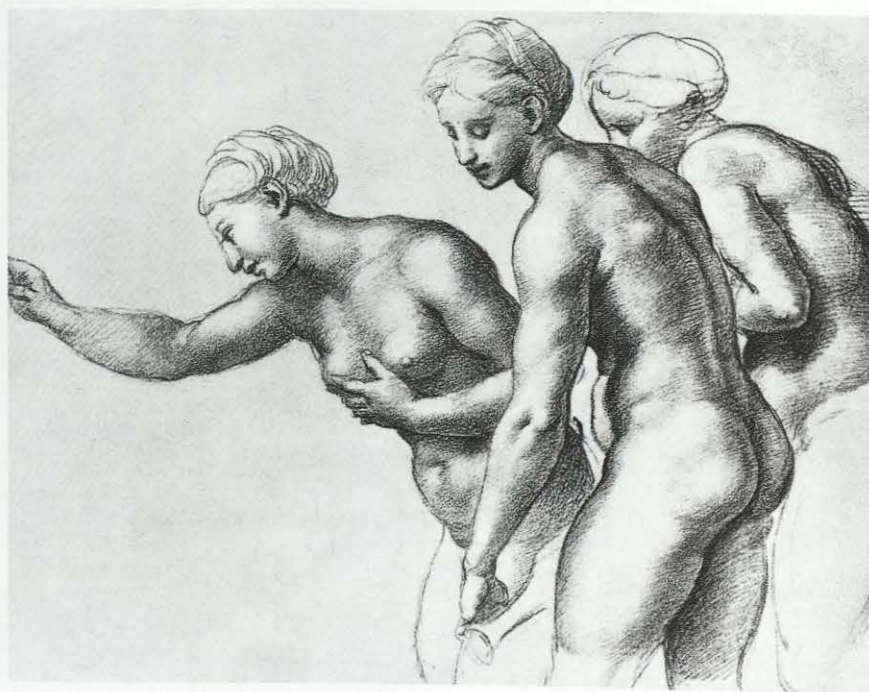
BELOW

13.3

Raphael, Chigi Chapel,  
begun 1513. Santa Maria  
del Popolo, Rome. View  
into dome.







assistants to carry on work even after the master's death in 1520, though it was Raphael's sometime rival Sebastiano del Piombo who ended up executing the altarpiece showing the Birth of the Virgin, probably to a new design, and two of the prophets would not see completion until the seventeenth century.

Toward the end of his short career a few years later, Raphael returned to the Villa Chigi to paint another mythological love story in the vault of a garden loggia, one based on the legend of the beautiful mortal Psyche, her love for the god Cupid, and the jealousy of his mother, Venus (fig. 13.4). Here, Raphael's conceit was to limit the episodes he showed on the ceiling to those that take place in the heavenly realm of the gods. The viewer looks up at a series of alluring and statuesque nudes depicted from below, at a flock of Cupids whose evident theft of the weapons of the gods demonstrates the universal dominion of love whether in heaven or on Earth, and at two monumental relief-like compositions, presented as illusionistic tapestries showing the story's happy ending: Cupid's appeal to the gods to allow him to marry Psyche, along with the marriage feast itself. Although the painted portions of Raphael's *Galatea* were largely a solo performance, the artist could rely in the Loggia of Psyche on the services of a large workshop of talented younger painters. As in the Chigi Chapel, his involvement was largely as designer, providing studies in red chalk for individual figures and a few compositional studies. These drawings, such as the *Three Graces* (fig. 13.5) now in Windsor Castle, show Raphael abstracting and refining individual human figures, giving them the smooth surface and near geometric body parts of ancient sculpture. What they do not show is the overall composition of the vault, perhaps because Raphael could by now count on his principal assistants to finalize the composition. Nor did he design the borders of flowers, fruit, and birds, since he had several painters working under him who excelled at this kind of naturalism. In the final decade of his career, "Raphael" is very much a composite entity, produced from the collective efforts of highly skilled collaborators who pursued a seamlessness in the final product and a common stylistic ideal.

TOP LEFT

**13-4**  
Raphael, Loggia of Psyche,  
1517. Fresco, Villa Farnesina  
(formerly Villa Chigi),  
Rome

LEFT

**13-5**  
Raphael, study for Loggia  
of Psyche: *The Three  
Graces*, 1517. Red chalk,  
8 x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (20.3 x 25.8 cm).  
Royal Library, Windsor





### Later Frescoes in the Vatican Stanze

Trumping all of his other works in Rome, at least in scale, were Raphael's decorations for the Vatican palace. By 1512 at the latest, he was at work on another papal audience chamber, the one now called the Stanza d'Eliodoro (Room of Heliodorus; fig. 13.6) after the mural in which “a horse with a terrible rider” and “two other young men beautiful and strong” (2 Macabees 3) defend a priest from the pagan commander Heliodorus, who had been sent to gather treasures from the Temple of Jerusalem. By contrast to the Stanza della Segnatura (see figs. 12.49–12.52), all the scenes in this room show subjects from history, in which miraculous interventions sanction the authority of the Roman Church. Like the pictures on two of the other walls, the *Expulsion of Heliodorus* includes the anachronistic presence of the Pope himself, here observing the events from atop a litter in the left foreground, with Raphael as one of the litter bearers. This suggests that the selection of the rarely depicted subject depended on Julius II's own personal circumstances. In

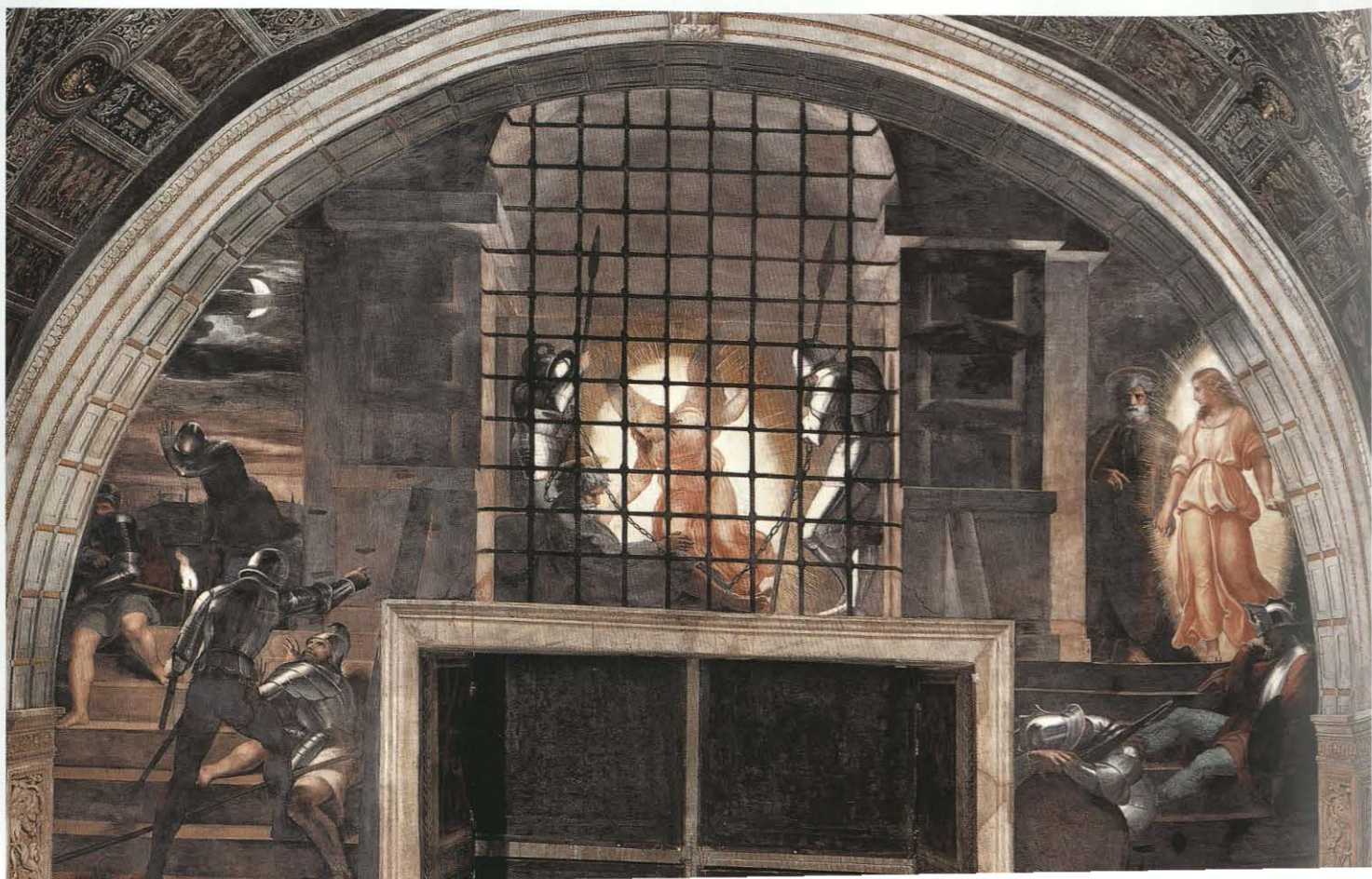
fact, the Pope was at war in 1512 with France, whose king Louis XII had forbidden the payment of taxes to Rome, cynically remarking that the Pope used the income for “wars proceeding only from arrogance and a desire to dominate.” The papal court consequently regarded the king as a modern-day Heliodorus. The frescoes, for their part, present him as a villain who deprives the priesthood of revenue that should go to widows, orphans, and other needy people (represented in the fresco by the group of mainly women and children to the left). All point to the career of the Pope who commissioned the cycle.

The lunette over the window on the adjacent wall, the *Mass at Bolsena* (fig. 13.7), centers on a consecrated wafer that bled when a German priest had expressed doubt about the doctrine of transubstantiation (the Catholic belief that during the Mass the host actually became the physical body of Christ, rather than just symbolizing it). The event had taken place in a small town called Bolsena more than two centuries earlier, but Raphael added a portrait of Pope Julius to this scene, too, kneeling opposite the priest and watching intently;

### 13.6

Stanza d'Eliodoro, with Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus* and *Mass at Bolsena*. Vatican









during his military campaigns in 1506, Julius had venerated a bloodstained cloth preserved in the cathedral of Orvieto as a relic of the event. His focused concentration, along with the chronological distance of what he sees, allows the impression that the whole history has been called forth from the Pope's own meditations on it. In the right foreground, reinforcing the temporal discrepancy of the scene, is a group of Swiss Guards (protectors of the Pope), whose organization had only recently come into existence.

On the window wall opposite the *Mass at Bolsena*, Raphael produced a stunning *chiaroscuro* scene, *The Deliverance of St. Peter* (fig. 13.8). Like his predecessors, Raphael painted his frescoes directly into the wet *intonaco*, and as we saw with Fra Angelico (see fig. 6.8), it could be tempting for painters working in this way to exploit the whiteness of the plaster within the pictorial composition. What Raphael demonstrated was that the fresco painter did not need to restrict himself to the highest of tonal keys. The overall field in this mural is a deep gray, the few bright parts being those in which an angel brings his own illumination: at the center, the angel appears in a vision to the imprisoned Peter – every Pope's archetype – and the light he radiates reflects off the armor of sleeping guards. On the right, the pair reappear, now walking from confinement past other dozers. If Raphael's earlier scenes had shown his willingness to

amplify historical relationships by conjoining in the same scene characters who lived at different times, now he returns to the kind of continuous narrative that Lorenzo Ghiberti and Masaccio had favored, but that more recent mural painters had on the whole abandoned, with architecture dividing not just space but time.

In 1513, before Raphael could complete the decorations for the Stanza d'Eliodoro, Pope Julius II died. He was succeeded by Giovanni de' Medici, a son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who took the name Leo X on his election. The change in regime is registered in the fourth wall Raphael painted for the room, which returns to the military theme of the *Heliodorus* episode, now showing Peter and Paul, the patron saints of Rome, appearing in the sky and repelling Attila the Hun, who had tried to invade the Italian peninsula in 452 CE (fig. 13.9). If the angels on the *Heliodorus* wall seem to have been called down by the prayers of the priest in the middle distance, here the saints enforce the gesture of benediction by the Pope on horseback at the left: Leo X, shown as his namesake Leo I, Attila's adversary.

By the measure set in the Sistine Chapel and the Stanza della Segnatura, the Stanza d'Eliodoro was finished in record time, and Leo X immediately assigned Raphael the decorations for yet another room in the same suite, colloquially called the Stanza dell'Incendio (Room of the Fire), after the scene of the Fire in the Borgo that

ABOVE

13.9

Raphael, *The Meeting of Attila and Leo the Great at the River Mincio*, 1514. Fresco. Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican

OPPOSITE, ABOVE

13.7

Raphael, *The Mass at Bolsena*, 1512. Fresco. Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican

OPPOSITE, BELOW

13.8

Raphael, *The Deliverance of St. Peter*, 1513–14. Fresco. Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican



13.10

Raphael, *The Fire in the Borgo*, 1514. Fresco. Sala dell'Incendio, Vatican



decorated one of its walls (fig. 13.10). The scale of these projects alone points to a shift in the way that the popes were approaching decorative ensembles. When, several decades earlier, Sixtus IV had determined to add frescoes to a room, he assembled a team of painters to carry out the assignment. They worked side by side, and each painter was responsible for his own individual picture. Raphael's rooms certainly had no fewer laborers at work on them, but the difference was that these men now all worked for a single individual. One of the most distinctive aspects of Raphael's operations in Rome was his reconception of the scale on which a workshop could function. The extensive use of highly detailed preliminary drawings, including full-scale cartoons, made collective participation possible in the execution of the mural.

### Printmaking and Tapestries

Raphael's detailed drawings in this collaborative environment also allowed him to control the design of works in media he was himself not capable of executing. These included prints, where Raphael's chief partner was the young Bolognese engraver Marcantonio Raimondi. Raimondi, whom we encountered plagiarizing Albrecht Dürer in Venice (see p. 363), had also spent time in Florence before arriving in Rome at the beginning of the decade, and he and Raphael quickly developed a mutually beneficial relationship. We have seen that printmaking appealed

to painters because the reproducible image enlarged their reputation and provided a tool for artistic training and study; Raphael had studied the prints of Mantegna and adapted them in his earlier works. Raimondi's engravings, similarly to Mantegna's, were done for a market rather than on commission, and they allowed Raphael to design subjects, including secular subjects, that he otherwise had few opportunities to tackle. Although it is likely that Mantegna had also employed an engraver to make his plates, the identity at issue in the finished product was that of the painter alone. In the case of Raimondi, by contrast, some of the prints now bore the engraver's monogram as well as Raphael's name. The printmaker would win no less credit than the designer for particularly successful or admired plates, and Raimondi could turn to Raphael to supply him with original ideas for new works. Raphael also encouraged Raimondi to help disseminate his inventions to a mass audience. In some cases, as with the *Parnassus* wall of the Stanza della Segnatura (see fig. 12.52), this involved circulating an alternative version of an entire composition (fig. 13.11). In others, Raimondi extracted individual figures. His *Apollo* (fig. 13.12), for example, is based on the figure that appears in the niche in the left background of Raphael's *School of Athens* (see fig. 12.50). One who did not know the original fresco could be forgiven for thinking that the print was a record not of a painting but of an actual sculpture. Later in the century, Raimondi's engravings would serve as models for sculptors themselves.



Another major area of collaboration was tapestry. In 1515, Leo X commissioned Raphael to design a series of these to hang in the lowest zone of the Sistine Chapel. The room's decoration by that point comprised the chronological narrative that ran from the ceiling downward, with Michelangelo's scenes from Genesis succeeded by prophets and sibyls, followed by the cycles featuring Christ and Moses that Sixtus IV had commissioned. Leo decided to continue the pattern, now focusing on the lives of Peter and Paul, Rome's patron saints. Using the Acts of the Apostles as a primary textual source, Raphael and his assistants prepared ten enormous drawings, each done in gouache on sheets of paper that had been glued together to form massive supports measuring ten by sixteen feet. These were then sent north to Brussels, where Pieter van Aelst, Europe's best tapestry maker, executed the large hangings to ship back to Rome. Because tapestries are woven from the back, Raphael had to envision each of his designs in reverse. His experience with print-making may have helped with this, since there, too, the printing of the plate reverses the image engraved on it. By contrast to his print designs, however, the tapestry cartoons had to indicate color no less than contour – though the tapestry maker also reserved the right to alter them,

adjusting for greater clarity and contrast, and choosing from among the actual range of hues at his disposal.

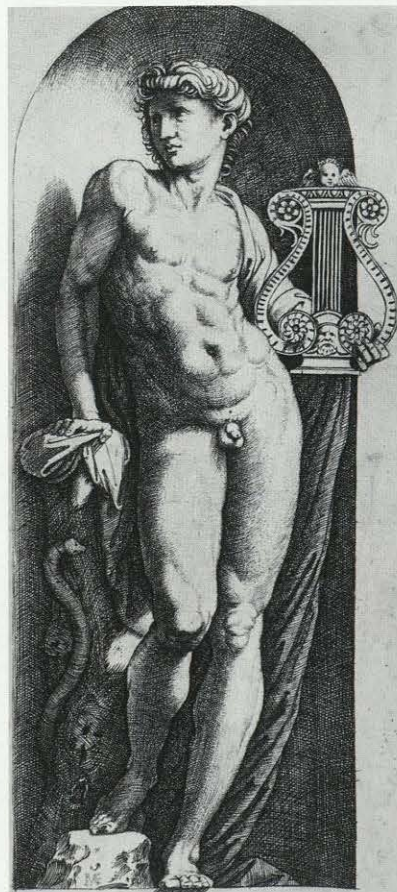
In his mural paintings, Raphael generally divided the viewer's attention among figures disposed across the picture surface. He organized each of the tapestry scenes, however, around an individual identified by his gesture as a speaker. *The Miraculous Draft of Fishes*, for example, shows the episode from Luke 5:1–11 in which Christ tells Peter (aka Simon), James, John, and their partners, who had fished all night but caught nothing, to recast their nets (figs. 13.13–13.14). Finding that they could now pull in so many fish that their boats almost sank, the laborers turned in astonishment to Christ, who said: “Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” The three then left their boats to become Christ's followers. *The Healing of the Lame Man* (fig. 13.15) shows a later episode (Acts 3:1–8) with two of the same characters, when Peter and John encounter the title character at the gate of a temple. When the man asks for alms, Peter replies: “Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk.” Raphael's scene collapses Peter's utterance, indicated by his raised left hand, with the text's next lines, which describe how Peter took the man by the hand and



ABOVE

13.11

Marcantonio Raimondi  
after Raphael, *Parnassus*,  
c. 1514–20. Engraving, 14  
x 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (35.8 x 47.2 cm).  
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund,  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.



RIGHT

13.12

Marcantonio Raimondi  
after Raphael, *Apollo*,  
1512–15. Engraving, 8 x  
3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (20.5 x 9.4 cm). ETH  
Print Collection, Zürich







lifted him to his feet, his disability now gone. In both scenes, the words that Christ and his representatives speak accompany wondrous acts, and listeners respond with astonishment. Whereas the Sistine Chapel ceiling Michelangelo had completed just a few years earlier had more to do with theological dogma, especially that of the Incarnation and of prophetic inspiration, the tapestries seem more directly related to *preaching per se*, Christ's and the Apostles' performances setting the ineffable model for the clergy expected to deliver powerful sermons in the chapel itself.

### Sculpture and Architecture

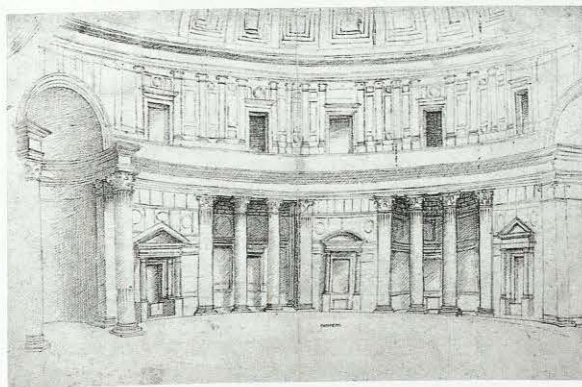
The spiral columns that mark the gate in Raphael's tapestry of *The Healing of the Lame Man* divide the space in a way that recalls the Sistine Chapel's earlier murals (see fig. 10.24), but they also make a more specific historical reference to the spiral columns thought to have ornamented the temple that King Solomon had built in Jerusalem, and to have been incorporated in the by now partially demolished fourth-century basilica of St. Peter's. Raphael here has treated the columns as authoritative works of ancient art and models for his own practice: the cavorting putti carved into the columns' surfaces inspired his own running little boys, with their un-childlike musculature. Raphael's awareness of and interest in ancient sculpture and architecture, moreover, was not limited to what he put in his pictures. In this period, he made careful drawings of Trajan's column, the Pantheon (fig. 13.16), and other Roman monuments, and he refers to the study of such buildings in his most famous piece of writing, a letter he co-authored with Baldassare Castiglione, author of *The Book of the Courtier*, and sent to Pope Leo X in 1517. In the letter, Raphael wrote of having acquired "at least some knowledge of ancient architecture," and went on to lament that architecture's destruction, laying blame for this on earlier popes as much as on the invading armies that his Vatican frescoes depicted. The letter refers to a map Raphael had begun to make of the ancient city, showing all of its lost edifices, and its last pages aim to characterize the difference between "Greek" (i.e. ancient) and "Gothic" (i.e. medieval) architecture. As he was writing the letter, he was collaborating on a new edition of Vitruvius (see p. 201), and this project, no less than the buildings he depicted in paint, placed Raphael among the earliest Renaissance artists to think through systematically the use of architectural orders.

Raphael's large studio allowed him to *practice* architecture as well; indeed, one might even say that he organized that studio more on the model of the master builder than on that of the traditional painter. Significantly, his undertakings as an architect and as a figural

artist coincided on many of the same sites: for Agostino Chigi's villa, he not only painted the *Galatea* (see fig. 13.1) but also designed a set of stables, and the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo included marble sculptures, painting, pyramidal tombs, and a coffered dome with mosaics (see figs. 13.2–13.3). Bramante had recommended that, on his death, Raphael be named chief architect of St. Peter's, and the Pope followed this advice, giving the painter the new charge in April 1516. Characteristically, Raphael opted to work on this project with a partner, and up until his death, he and the professional architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger together oversaw construction. Scholars generally agree that Raphael's vision for the building is best captured in a later print by Sebastiano Serlio (1475–c. 1554), which shows a boxy form comprising an ambulatory with columns and a series of interlocking Greek crosses (fig. 13.17); it follows what may have been Bramante's intention of extending a nave to the east, toward the city. Work began during Raphael's lifetime on the south *tribuna*, or transept arm, though nothing built there under his supervision lasted beyond mid century.

Among Raphael's surviving buildings is one that he designed in Florence for Giannozzo Pandolfini, the Bishop of Troia, in 1514 (fig. 13.20). This is usually referred to as the Pandolfini Palace, though the family's primary residence was in the center of the city, and Raphael's building, on what was then the edge of town, shows more formal and conceptual affinity to Chigi's suburban Roman villa. The facade pushes the rustication that the Medici had made the hallmark of noble Florentine architecture (see fig. 6.20) to the corners of the main block (**quoins**), favoring a plainer, Roman look with bold but carefully proportioned windows and an elegant inscription wrapping around the frieze. The alternating pediment form is adapted from the tabernacles inside the Pantheon.

More influential was the palace Raphael designed in Rome for the papal notary Giovanni Battista Branconio d'Aquila (completed in 1520), which was demolished in



OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT

13.13

Raphael, tapestry cartoon for *The Miraculous Draft of Fishes*, 1515. Bodycolor on paper, mounted on canvas, 11'10" x 13'2" (3.6 x 4 m). Victoria and Albert Museum, London

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT

13.14

Pieter van Aelst after Raphael, *The Miraculous Draft of Fishes*. Tapestry in silk and wool, with silver-gilt threads, overall 15'11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 14'5 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (4.9 x 4.41 m). Pinacoteca, Vatican

OPPOSITE, BELOW

13.15

Raphael, tapestry cartoon for *The Healing of the Lame Man*, 1515–16. Bodycolor on paper, mounted on canvas, 11'3" x 17'7" (3.4 x 5.4 m). Victoria and Albert Museum, London

13.16

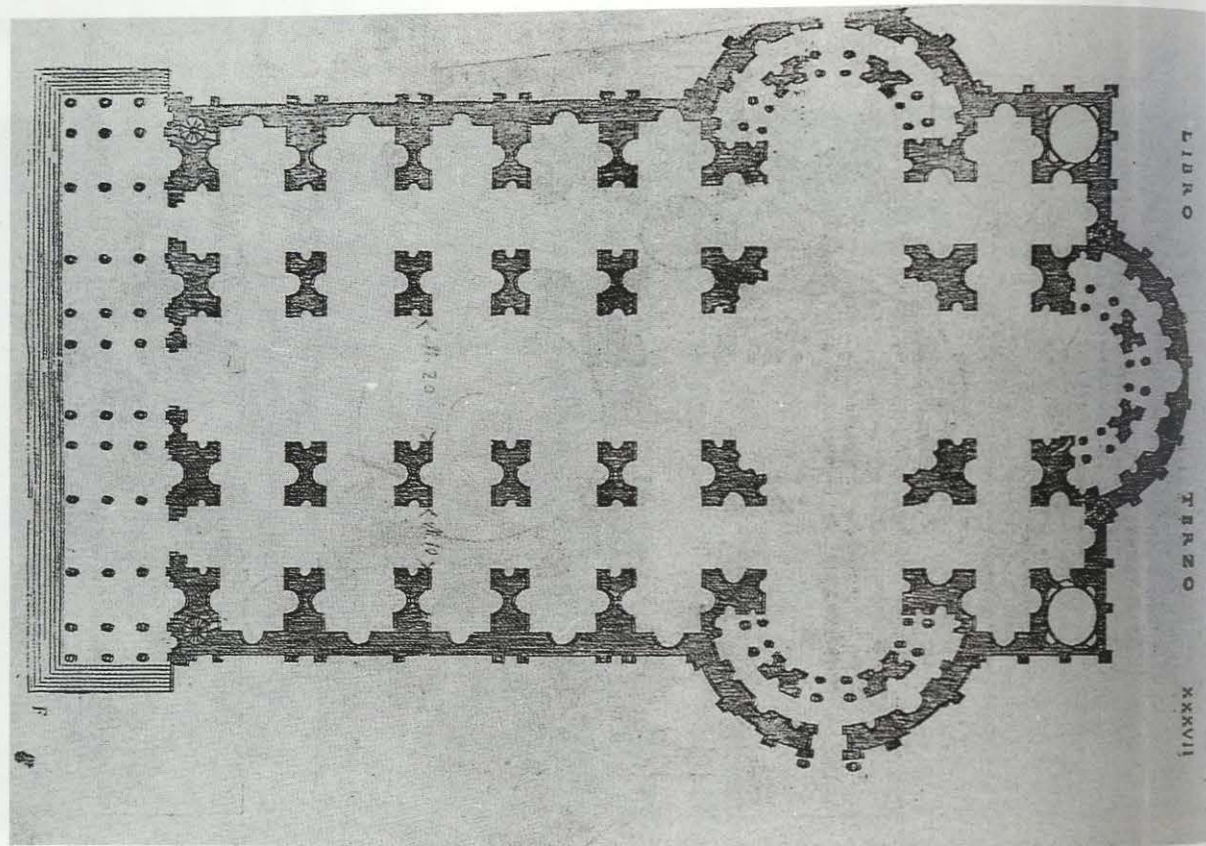
Raphael, study of the interior of the Pantheon, c. 1509. Pen and ink, 11 x 16" (27.8 x 40.6 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence



RIGHT

13.17

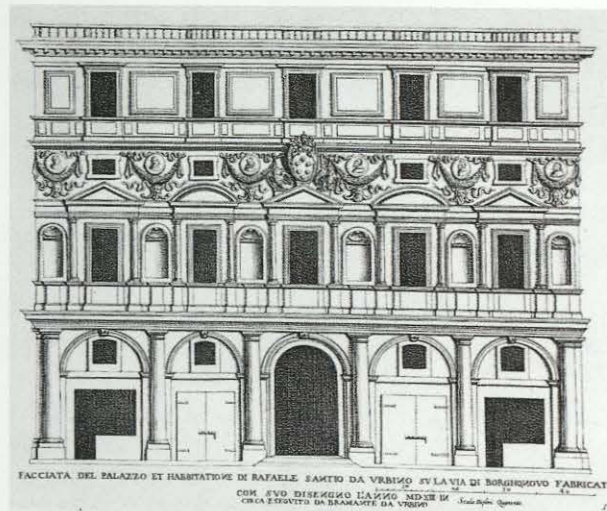
Sebastiano Serlio, plan of St. Peter's. Woodcut, 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (34.9 x 24.8 cm). *Il terzo libro d'architettura* (Venice, 1540), p. 37



RIGHT, CENTER

13.18

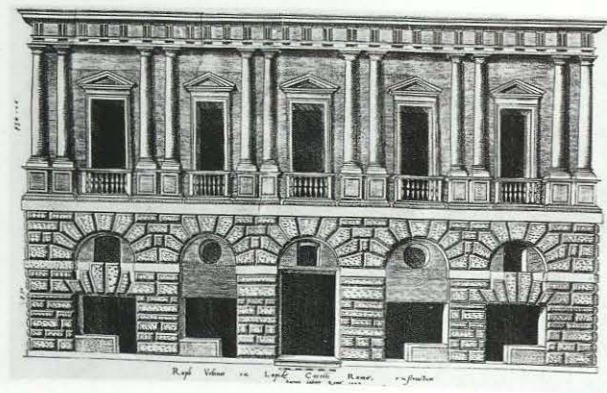
Raphael, Palazzo Branconio d'Aquila. Engraving, 1655, by Pietro Ferrerio



RIGHT, BELOW

13.19

Bramante, Palazzo Caprini in Rome. Engraving by Antonio Lafreri



OPPOSITE

13.20

Giovanni Francesco and Bastiano da Sangallo (from Raphael's design), Palazzo Pandolfini, c. 1520. Florence

1665 (fig. 13.18). The painter-architect modeled this palace on Bramante's nearby Palazzo Caprini (fig. 13.19), which Raphael then owned, but took a very different approach to the architecture. Bramante had used heavy rusticated blocks and the classical Doric order to express both the principles of load and support and the progress in refinement from street level to *piano nobile*. Although Bramante's columns had no real structural function (they were molded from *stucco*, a durable mixture of lime, water, and sand), they were aligned with the main supporting sections of wall. Raphael seems to have deliberately undermined these principles: he moved the Doric order to the lowest level and visually aligned each column not with another vertical supporting element but with a niche over a projecting pedestal – effectively an architectural void. In the *piano nobile*, he employed a diminished Ionic order that framed the windows and created an alternating rhythm with the Doric below. The *piano nobile* has no entablature; rather, the sections above the windows were filled with a riot of *stucco* swags and medallions. The third storey was a stripped-down, compressed version of the second. Raphael treated the architectural orders here, in sum, not to indicate the bearing of weight but to decorate surfaces. The architectural elements became a language more than a structural necessity, and Raphael's vocabulary is always ancient.

Raphael's most admired villa is the one he designed in 1518 for Pope Leo's cousin Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, just to the north of the Vatican. Now known as the Villa



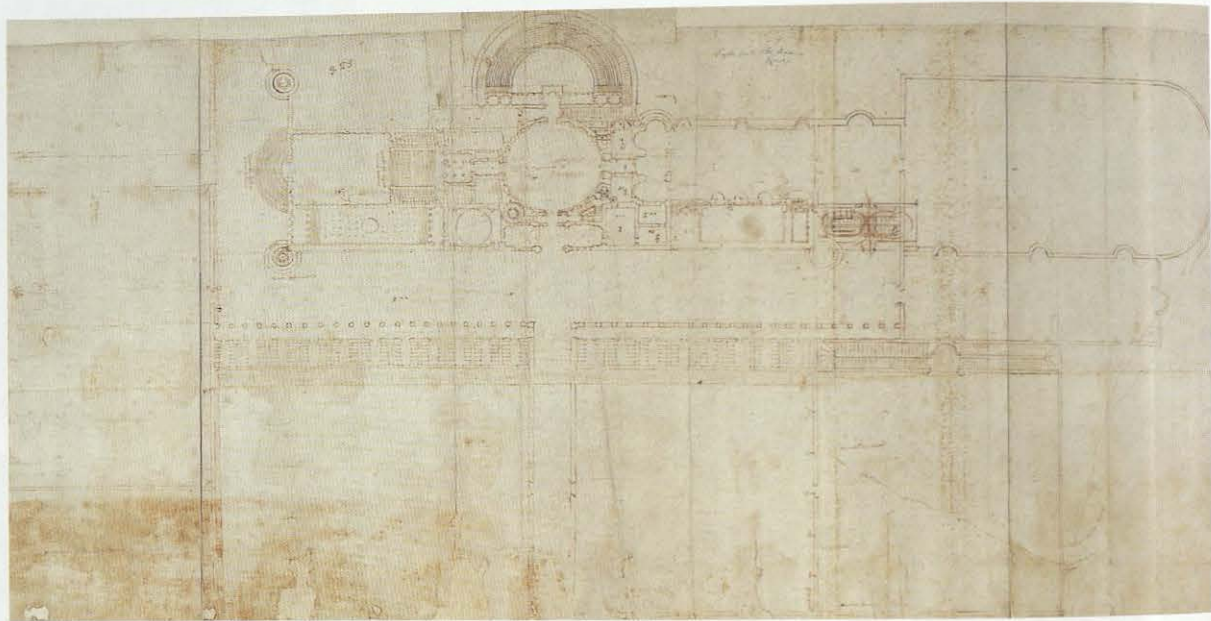


ANDREAS PANDOLENIUS EPS TROJANVS  
LEONIS X ET CLEM



13.21

Gianfrancesco da Sangallo the Younger, after Raphael, plan for the Villa Madama (drawing). Pen and brown ink on paper. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Uffizi Gallery, Florence



13.22

Raphael, Villa Madama, 1515–21, Rome. Courtyard



Madama, it was built into the hill, high enough to provide views, but low enough to allow water to flow into it for various purposes. Though the cardinal's family would typically have come to the relatively isolated residence from the city to the south, Raphael oriented the building to the north-east, aligning it with a bridge that crossed the Tiber and protecting the living areas from direct exposure to the summer sun. The main block of the building centered on a round courtyard set into a square perim-

eter of rooms (figs. 13.21–13.22). Flanking this were to be two wings, the dominant elements of which were likewise courtyards. Though large parts of the space served to house the cardinal, his guests, and his staff, some of its most notable features were conceived to encourage conversation. For the winter months, there was to be a circular room in the eastern corner of the building, glassed in all around, allowing a panoramic view out onto the city. In a letter describing the villa, Raphael referred to the



room with a term he took from a description of a Roman villa by the Roman writer Pliny the Younger (c. 61–c. 112 CE), calling it a *diaeta* (little apartment) and explaining that it was to serve as place for residents of the villa to meet and talk; they would be kept warm by the sun passing across the windows over the course of the day. For the summer months, a loggia in another part of the building served as a second *diaeta*. Facing north-west so as to remain shady throughout the day, this looked onto an enclosed, terraced garden. In another corner of the garden, neighboring a fish pond, was an area for outdoor dining.

Raphael's Plinian vocabulary suggests that he was consciously modeling the villa on ancient forms. In designing the project, though, Raphael did not just look to the surviving remnants of ancient residences, but also used the commission to bring together what he knew about a range of ancient constructions. The villa was to include a number of fountains, for example, as well as an elaborate bath complex: its sequence of spaces was to comprise changing rooms, an open space for applying oil, a sauna, one room with hot and one with warm water, and a third with a cold pool, large enough for swimming. The villa was also to feature a grand semi-circular theater, complete with actors' dressing rooms and an orchestra space. This was the most elevated part of the complex, and following the examples of Roman theaters that Raphael could have seen in the vicinity, it would have provided the audience with a view out over the landscape, closed off with scenery only when necessary for acoustical reasons during performances.

These elements give a sense of the villa's grandeur; so does Raphael's specification that those entering it would pass between stables housing four hundred horses. The whole enterprise was envisioned on a scale that evokes the papal projects of the previous decade, and like them, it was never completed as its patron and architect intended. Raphael, the mastermind behind the villa, could never have conceived it as he did had it not been for his close contact with the city's expert antiquarians and for the extensive help of his artistic team. Tellingly, the drawn plans that constitute the best records of Raphael's changing vision for the complex come from the hands of collaborators like Giovanfrancesco and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger rather than from Raphael himself. The decoration of the interior fell almost entirely to Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine, inheritors of Raphael's Vatican projects. They filled the vault of the loggia with stuccoes and paintings of stories from Ovid, inspired by the ancient Roman decorations of the “Golden House” (see p. 300).

## Altarpieces

Collaborations of this kind allowed Raphael to preserve time for the kinds of more public commission that would enhance his reputation as a painter, especially altarpieces.

13.23

Raphael, Villa Madama, loggia, begun 1516







13-24

Raphael, *Madonna of Foligno*, 1511-12.

Tempera and oil on

panel, transferred

to canvas, 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x

6'6" (3.08 x 1.98 m).

Pinacoteca, Vatican



Among the first of these that he undertook in Rome was one he painted in 1511–12 for the high altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli but which was subsequently taken to Foligno, the home town of its patron, Sigismondo de' Conti – the papal secretary and humanist we encountered in the last chapter (see p. 344) as a defender of the demolition of Old St. Peter's. The *Madonna of Foligno* (fig. 13.24) gives an imaginative new kind of form to the traditional theme of Virgin and saints as heavenly intercessors for the devout. The lion peeking out at the lower right identifies the standing saint as Jerome; he presents the picture's kneeling patron to the Virgin. Opposite this group kneels St. Francis, the patron of the order whose church the altarpiece was to grace, while John the Baptist addresses the viewers who stand before the painting, directing them to look where the picture's occupants do. An angel in the foreground holds a tablet that was presumably intended to bear an inscription recording the circumstances in which the painting was made. (The meteorite that falls in the background landscape may also recall an event of special significance for the patron.) And the Virgin herself, meanwhile, appears as a vision, surrounded by clouds that condense into a throne and a company of angels. Her position may be a nod to the painting's intended site, a church dedicated to the “Virgin of the Altar of Heaven,” but it is also a remarkable variation on the conventions of the *sacra conversazione*. Like the analogous characters in most central Italian paintings done after the time of Fra Angelico, those who act as intercessors between the beholder and the Virgin both occupy her space and stand apart from it. In Raphael's picture, the Virgin seems so close that those in the lower part of the painting could reach out and touch her; at the same time, the painting's implication that she is but a vision of those blessed enough to see her suggests that she is not physically present at all, that we are not even really seeing her so much as we are seeing what the intercessory figures see. The viewer's access to the Virgin depends on them to an unprecedented degree.

Raphael developed a variation on these themes two years later, in 1513–14, when he painted a canvas now known as the *Sistine Madonna* (fig. 13.25) for the high altar of a church dedicated to St. Sixtus in Piacenza, near Milan. The number of characters this time has been reduced, and the painting includes full-length figures only of Sixtus, of St. Barbara (identifiable from a glimpse of a tower, her attribute, behind her right shoulder), and of the Virgin and Child. With no patron to depict, Raphael could build the painting around the relationship between the central characters in the picture and the worshipers he expected to stand or kneel before it in the church. As in the *Madonna of Foligno*, there is the suggestion that the Virgin we see is a vision, this time a vision of Sixtus. And the Sixtus in



this painting – whose features are close to those of Pope Julius II – seems able not only to offer the churchgoer a glimpse of the apparition that he sees, but also to cross the threshold of the image itself. Raphael insistently, even redundantly, calls attention to that threshold and its violation by including curtains that seem to have been drawn back “in front of” the painting; Sixtus's robe, which casts a shadow on the clouds behind, implying an exterior light source; the ledge that constitutes the bottom edge of the picture, on which the saint's tiara sits and on which two angels lean. The boundary between the viewer and the Virgin and Child in this instance is permeable, and the viewer's advocates – Sixtus and the angels – will cross it on his or her behalf.

Raphael's last altarpiece, *The Transfiguration* (fig. 13.26), was commissioned in 1516 by Giulio de' Medici, the

### 13.25

Raphael, *Sistine Madonna*,  
1513–14. Canvas, 8'8½"  
x 6'5" (2.7 x 1.9 m).  
Gemäldegalerie Alte  
Meister, Dresden





13.26  
Raphael, *The Transfiguration*, 1518–20.  
Oil on panel, 13'4" x 11'7/4"  
(4.05 x 3.52 m). Pinacoteca,  
Vatican

same cardinal for whom the artist was designing the Villa Madama (see figs. 13.22–13.23). Intended for the cathedral of Narbonne in France, where Giulio was archbishop, the painting shows two narrative episodes that the Gospels imply took place simultaneously. The upper half, which gives the painting its traditional name, shows Christ's Transfiguration, when, having accompanied Jesus up a mountain, Peter, James, and John watch as "his garments became shining and exceedingly white as snow.... And there appeared to them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.... And there was a cloud overshadowing them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is my most beloved son; hear ye him." (Mark 9:1–6.)

The accounts of the event in Matthew, Mark, and Luke all go on to recount that when the four descended the mountain, they learned that in Jesus's absence a man had brought his demonically possessed son to the remaining Apostles, asking them to cure him; with Jesus gone, they could not do it. The father must be the man in green at the lower right of Raphael's painting, holding the half-naked boy with rolling eyes to whom the surrounding crowd reacts with such distress. The painting, which counterposes the Transfiguration itself with the story of the possessed boy, is constructed around a series of antitheses: as light, "white as snow," radiates above, the lower scene is unusually dark and shadowy; as God lifts and speaks through Christ, a demonic force twists the young lunatic, whose eyes roll toward the Savior above; as the group above moves into a symmetrical, iconic arrangement, centering on the figure of the divine son, the despairing group below forms a circle with nothing but empty darkness in the middle. It is a powerful imagining of the difference between the presence and absence of Christ in the world, and even between the heavenly promise greeting believers and the haunted Underworld that awaits others. That is the reason, no doubt, that when Raphael died in 1520, it was this painting that was placed above his body during its official viewing.

#### Raphael, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Michelangelo

The unusual composition of *The Transfiguration* may have had an additional motivation as well, for Raphael executed the painting in rivalry with another artist, the Venetian Sebastiano del Piombo (who we noted was also to paint the altarpiece for the Chigi Chapel; see fig. 13.2). Cardinal Giulio had commissioned Sebastiano to paint an altarpiece, also for Narbonne, of similar scale and format to Raphael's, *The Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 13.27). Sebastiano, as was expected, displayed his command of the atmospheric Venetian landscape and lighting effects he had acquired in the circle of Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione; he also had help from Michelangelo, who provided drawings for some of the figures. The lower (godless) half of Raphael's panel in particular seems intended to compete with Sebastiano's, in its dramatic *chiaroscuro* effects and even in its theme: Sebastiano's shows Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, and in St. Mark's account of the possessed boy, Christ's eventual expulsion of the demon actually kills the child, at which point "Jesus, taking him by the hand, lifted him up; and he arose." Given Raphael's status in Rome by this point, he would hardly have worried about Sebastiano as a challenger, but Michelangelo was another story, and the most Michelangelesque part of Sebastiano's design is the muscular Lazarus, who resembles an ancient ath-





13.27  
 Sebastiano del Piombo,  
*The Raising of Lazarus*,  
 1517–19. Oil on canvas  
 (transferred from wood),  
 12'6" x 9'6" (3.81 x 2.9 m).  
 National Gallery, London

lete more than a wasted corpse. In context, the contorted, insane semi-nude in Raphael's painting begins to look like a parody of one of Michelangelo's stylistic hallmarks – the vigorously moving “inspired” (or in this case possessed) youthful male figure.

By 1520, Sebastiano was completing a chapel decoration at Rome's San Pietro in Montorio that included a mural altarpiece of the *Flagellation of Christ* and, in the dome above, a *Transfiguration* (fig. 13.28). The patron, a Florentine merchant named Pierfrancesco Borgherini, encouraged the participation of Michelangelo, who provided designs before leaving for Florence in 1516 and continued to send these at Sebastiano's request: his

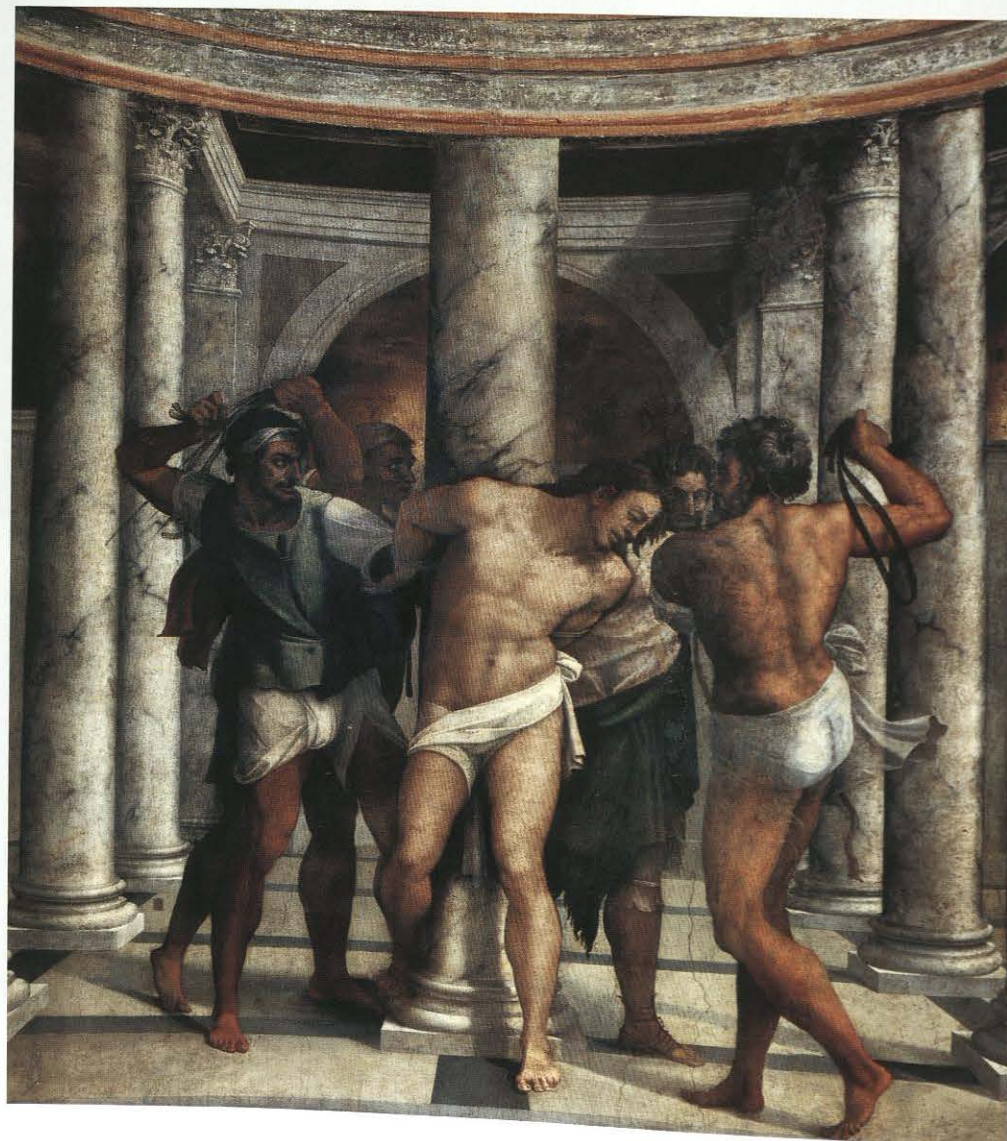
involvement is conspicuous in the heroic musculature of Christ and the vigorous turning poses of the tormentors. Early sixteenth-century viewers admired the work for its joint authorship, for its realization of Michelangelo's idea in an innovative Venetian technique. We have seen in the case of Leonardo how working in an oil-based medium on a wall surface could lead to unsatisfactory results (see fig. 11.46). Yet Sebastiano by now had discovered a method of painting in oil on stone and plaster, enabling a richness of color and a tonal unity beyond the reach of previous mural painting: the gleam of the golden dome in the background of the *Flagellation* (see fig. 13.29) invites comparison with Bellini's altarpieces. It is hard not to see the



13.28  
Sebastiano del Piombo,  
*Transfiguration of Christ*,  
1516. Fresco. Borgherini  
Chapel, San Pietro in  
Montorio, Rome



13.29  
Sebastiano del Piombo,  
*Flagellation of Christ*,  
1519–20. Fresco. Borgherini  
Chapel, San Pietro in  
Montorio, Rome





*Transfiguration* above as a rejoinder to Raphael – instead of a serene and radiant Christ raised in the air, Sebastiano and his collaborator produced a standing figure with boldly foreshortened arms, gazing rapturously upward as Moses and Elijah descend in postures of characteristic Michelangelesque difficulty.

### Raphael and the Portrait

The other type of painted work to which Raphael continued to devote himself in these years was the portrait. In 1518 he produced a group portrait showing Leo X seated with two of the Medici cardinals, his cousins Giulio de' Medici (the patron we have been following) and Luigi de' Rossi (fig. 13.30); the Pope handles a magnifying glass and looks up from perusing an illuminated Bible, open at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John – the Pope's namesake (he was born Giovanni de' Medici). An exquisitely painted gold and silver bell bears the Medici coat of arms. The portrait thus refers both to Leo's priestly leadership of the Church and to his leadership of the Medici family, while also characterizing him as a person of refined and luxurious tastes. Here, the human being and the spiritual office coincide in a single person. Raphael's portrait was sent to Florence in 1518 and displayed in the Palazzo Medici when Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino, married a French royal princess; during the ceremony, it functioned as a surrogate for the Pope himself. The painting's extraordinary vivacity would have let it play that role especially well: Raphael's management of light effects continues the explorations of luminosity and shadow in the Stanza d'Eliodoro (see fig. 13.6). Of greater importance for its initial audience, however, was the way the work enhanced the status of two members of the Medici family whose legitimacy was questionable, despite official recognition by the Pope himself.

Though Michelangelo used assistants, he preferred to be thought of as a man who worked alone, cultivating a reputation as being inimitable in his display of the difficulties of art and his awesome grandeur (“*terribilità*”). The unusual history of Raphael's portrait, by contrast, illustrates the various ways in which his art emerged as a “collective” creation. Giulio Romano (c. 1499–1546) later claimed that he had worked on the painting in Raphael's studio. When in 1524 the Duke of Mantua asked the Medici to give him the portrait as a gift, the Florentine Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531) made a copy, counterfeiting Raphael's manner so well that the Medici passed it off successfully as the original – and Giulio himself took it for the original when he saw it in Mantua. Vasari, who tells this story, had studied in Sarto's workshop, and claims that he proved otherwise by showing Giulio Andrea's secret mark of authorship.



Raphael painted friends and collaborators as well as patrons, using the genre of the portrait not just to create occasions to chat with the cardinals and popes who commissioned career-making works from him but also to record and even to convey more personal affections. Raphael specialized, in fact, in the new sub-genre of the “friendship portrait,” a single image showing two (male) friends together. An early example is the c. 1516 canvas of Andrea Navagero and Agostino Beazzano (fig. 13.31), two poets Raphael painted for their mutual friend, the scholar, poet, and cardinal Pietro Bembo. The arrangement of the figures, with bodies oriented toward one another but heads turned toward the viewer, recalls that of the Doni portraits Raphael had painted in the previous decade (see figs. 12.19–12.20). It is as though he has put two men in the positions of the spouses, then removed the frames that separated them.

The portrait as surrogate presence is an important consideration here as well. Hanging on Bembo's wall, the painting would have compensated for the absence of Raphael himself no less than the men it showed, and it is

### 13.30

Raphael, *Portrait of Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi*, 1513. Oil on panel, 61 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 46 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (155.2 x 118.9 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence



not surprising that the artist played a more direct part in his second experiment with this format (fig. 13.32). This one, as we know from the inscription on a later print, shows Raphael himself as a standing bearded man of about thirty-five. The seated man at the center of the picture, who turns back to look up at Raphael, has never been identified – one whimsical legend, based on nothing but the fact that the man wears a sword, suggests that he was Raphael’s fencing master. What can be said is that it was someone to whom Raphael had the closest of ties, for the painter places one hand on the man’s shoulder and the other on his waist. The man’s gesture, directed out of the painting like that of St. Sixtus in Raphael’s contemporary altarpiece (see fig. 13.25), may indicate that this picture, too, once addressed a third member in a circle of intimates. Or perhaps it invites another reading: Raphael would have used a mirror to generate his own self-portrait, and his friend’s gesture may therefore be drawing his attention to the importance of self-scrutiny. This could refer to the philosophical maxim “Know Yourself,” which was sometimes inscribed on mirror frames,

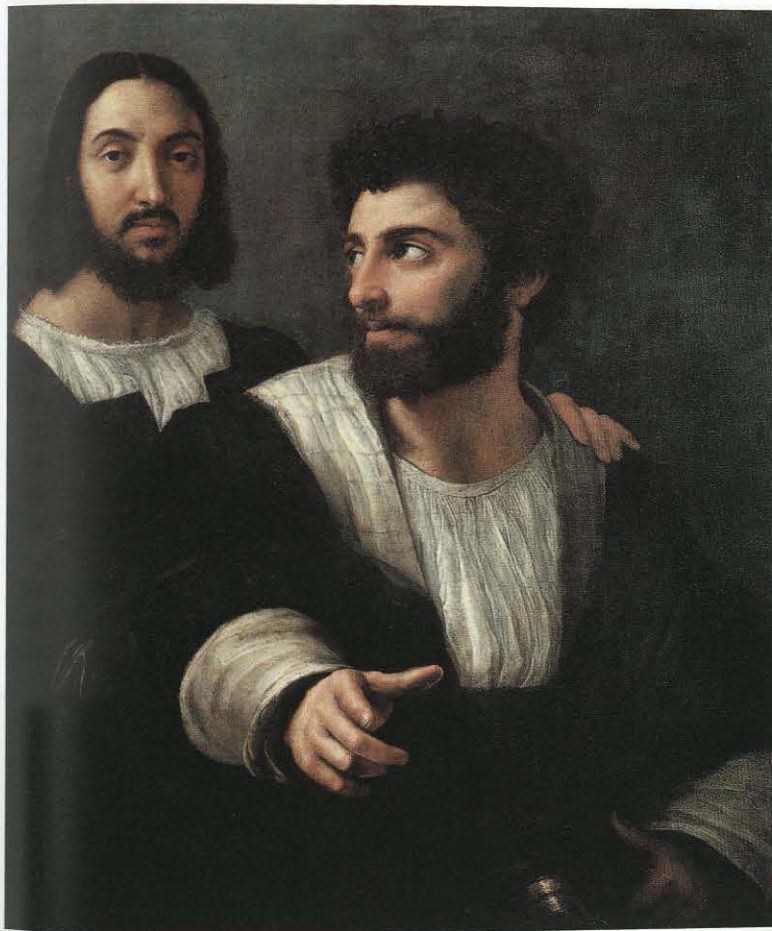
yet also to the prudent control of one’s appearance that was essential to surviving in courtly society. Portraits like these serve as testaments to Raphael’s sociability. They give at least a glimpse of a personality alongside of whom both scholars and other artists gladly worked. In fact, Raphael’s more personal relationships and professional collaborations were not as distinct from one another as we might expect.

A late portrait shows a woman with a nearly bared torso drawing a transparent veil across her stomach (fig. 13.33). The arrangement of the two arms evokes a *pudica* (“modesty”) gesture from ancient statuary, but since these arms hide nothing more than the gauzy drapery, this does less to indicate modesty than to compare the woman’s beauty to the Venus with which such gestures were associated. Most viewers have taken the armband bearing Raphael’s name to imply that the sitter was, in one way or another, the artist’s possession; in the nineteenth century, a myth arose that she was the daughter of a baker (a “Fornarina”) whom the painter had taken as a mistress. Such stories encour-

**13.31**  
Raphael, *Portrait of Andrea Navagero and Agostino Beazzano*, c. 1516. Oil on canvas, 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 43<sup>6</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (77 x 111 cm). Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome



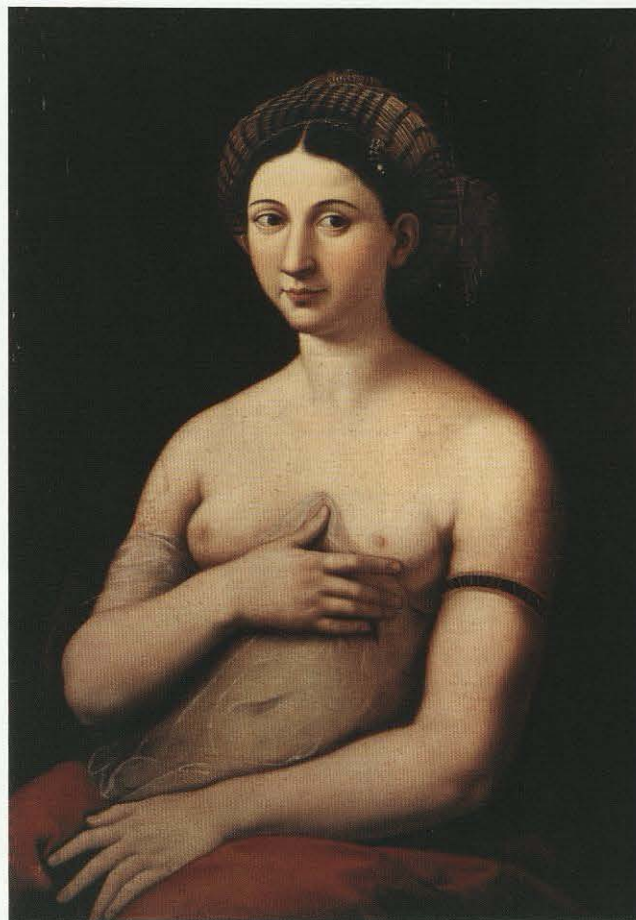




age us to view this as the most intimate of images, yet recent scholars have observed that many passages in the picture are closer stylistically to Giulio Romano than to Raphael. It may be that this, too, was a collaborative work, that even the pictures that came to look private and personal were, in the studio of Raphael, an opportunity to cultivate and disseminate a shared ideal of pictorial beauty.

### Michelangelo's Sculptures for the Julius Tomb

Raphael seems to have been well disposed toward working with others, even if the kinds of collaborations into which he entered after his move to Rome were to a large extent necessitated by the scale of the popes' ambitions. Such ambitions consumed the attention of Michelangelo as well, and he was an artist much less temperamentally inclined to participate in or even oversee a team of the kind Raphael tended to assemble. Michelangelo's own way of handling papal projects in these years only throws into relief how distinctive Raphael's enterprise was.



In the last chapter we noted that Michelangelo had been brought to Rome in the first place so that he could work on a massive tomb for Pope Julius II. Now, with the painting of the Sistine Chapel ceiling complete and the other Vatican murals in the capable hands of Raphael and company, Michelangelo was put back to work on the tomb's sculptures. A group of drawings appears to record this phase of the project, the features of which correspond to later descriptions by Vasari and by the rival biographer Ascanio Condivi. Around the bottom storey there was to be a series of niches with statues in them: a design in Berlin shows winged female Victories, each with one arm raised, standing in triumph over a recumbent body (fig. 13.34). Flanking the niches are herms, to each of which was bound a nude male slave or prisoner. Unifying this whole story was a cornice, above which were larger, seated figures: Moses, St. Paul, and allegories of the Active and Contemplative Life, each flanked by what appear to be bound putti. In the center, on a giant bier, was an effigy of the Pope; above him, the Virgin and Child. Both Vasari and Condivi suggest that the tomb would have included other figures, ornaments, and reliefs as well.

ABOVE LEFT

13-32

Raphael, *Self-Portrait with his "Fencing Master,"* c. 1518. Oil on panel, 39 x 32½" (99 x 83 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris

ABOVE RIGHT

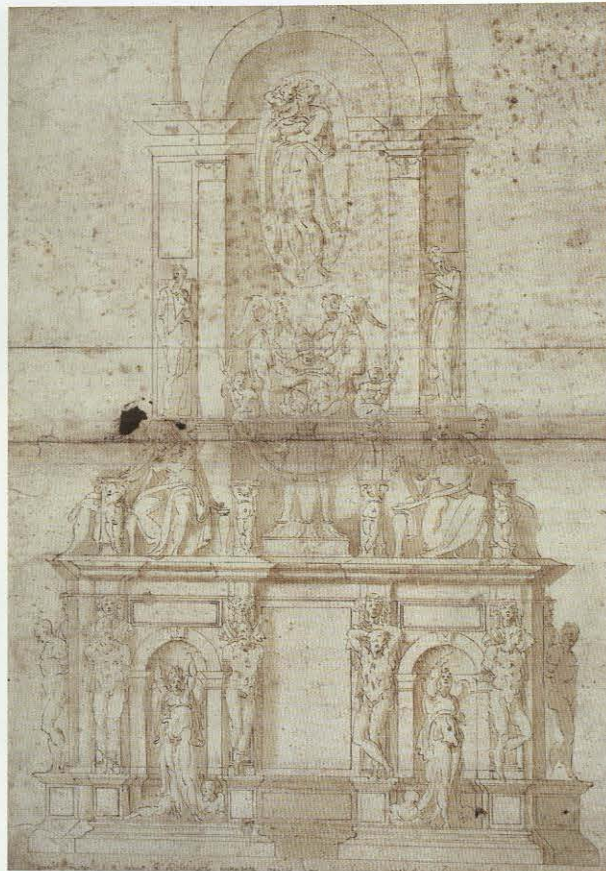
13-33

Raphael and Giulio Romano, *"La Fornarina,"* c. 1518. Oil on panel, 33½ x 23½" (85 x 60 cm). Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Barberini, Rome



## 13-34

Follower of Michelangelo,  
study for the Julius Tomb.  
22<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (56.8 x 38.6  
cm). Kupferstichkabinett,  
Berlin



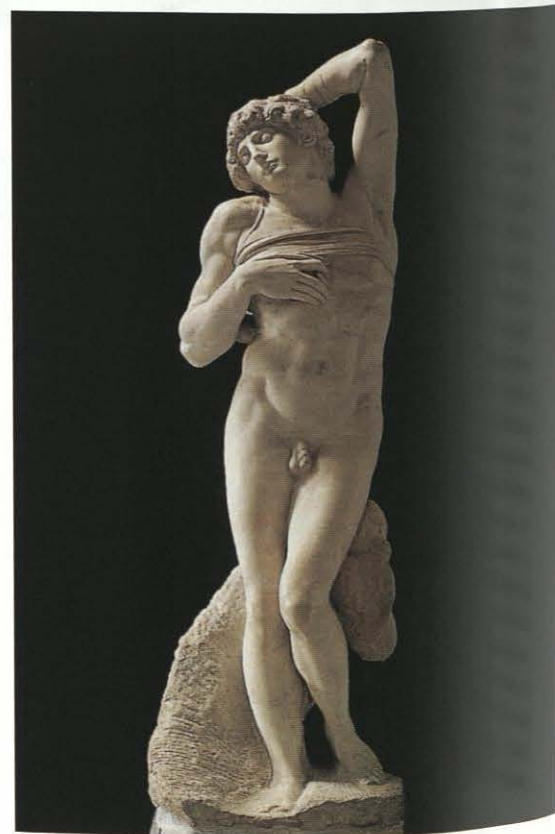
## 13-35

Michelangelo, *Dying Slave*,  
1513–16. Marble, height  
7'6" (2.28 m). Musée du  
Louvre, Paris

Julius's death in 1513 saved Michelangelo from actually having to carry out the gargantuan amount of carving that designs like this promised, but the Pope's heirs did commit the sculptor to complete something, and a contract from the same year allowed for a slightly reduced plan: rather than a free-standing structure, Michelangelo would be permitted to make a wall tomb. This eliminated one whole side of the monument, though what remained still went far beyond the wall tombs of the Quattrocento: the contract called for a structure that would project some twenty-five feet out in space. It was with this in mind that Michelangelo went to work. In what would prove to be characteristic of him, he avoided setting the chisel to the portrait that had been the defining feature of every earlier tomb. Instead, he worked on two of the prisoners from the lower zone. These gave him the opportunity to continue exploring the motif that had most occupied him on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, that of the nude male body. Vasari maintained that the prisoners represented "provinces subjugated by that Pontiff and rendered obedient to the Apostolic Church," but the often more reliable Condivi writes that they rather "represented the liberal arts, such as painting, sculpture, and architecture, each with its attributes so that it could easily be recognized for what it was, signifying thereby that all the artistic vir-

tues were prisoners of death together with Pope Julius, as they would never find another to favor and foster them as he did." The idea of surrounding the dead Pope with the arts he had patronized is one that Michelangelo would certainly have known from Pollaiuolo's Sixtus IV tomb (see fig. 10.25), and one prisoner, which centuries later came to be called the *Dying Slave*, includes a half-carved attribute at the figure's feet: a monkey, probably a reference to the expression "art, the ape of nature" (*ars simia natura*).

Michelangelo does not make interpretation particularly easy, however. If the *Dying Slave* (fig. 13.35) had been installed on the tomb as projected in the 1513 drawing, its lone attribute would have been difficult to read, and would hardly have seemed decisive in the context of the larger series of figures. Here as elsewhere, the artist developed open-ended, multivalent figures that lent themselves to competing interpretations of the kind Condivi and Vasari would later exemplify, as well as to more private and self-referential meanings. Working his way into the tomb project, in fact, Michelangelo not only selected the parts of it that were most consistent with his developing artistic interests, but also focused on aspects of it that, like David's confrontation with the giant a decade earlier (see fig. 12.3), allowed him to reflect on his own art. The most prominent of the *Dying Slave*'s ligatures is a cloth that wraps around his chest. Raised just







colossal undertakings required the coordinated labor of an army, Michelangelo wanted his sculptures to be seen as the result of more laborious and solitary work. The *non-finito* (unfinished) portions may or may not represent what Michelangelo intended as a final state, but they in any event evidence a non-collaboration that distinguished him from his Roman contemporaries. In the end, he would have imitators, but no disciples.

The single most spectacular figure Michelangelo produced for the tomb was his colossal *Moses* (fig. 13.37). This occupies a plain pedestal, and the absence of impediments like a chair arm or back allows the figure to command the surrounding space. Though Moses is seated, the pose, with the left leg stepping back to press against the most distant corner of the block, evokes the stride of an ancient athlete. Under his right arm Moses holds the Tablets of the Law, while his massive hands finger the strands of a seemingly endless beard. The scowling face,



enough to expose his left breast, it draws attention to the flesh revealed beneath as much as it suggests bondage, advertising Michelangelo's command of the nude but also evoking the process of sculpting a figure, which involves the removal of outer layers of the stone block to unveil the body inside. That the second of the three figures Michelangelo carved showed another slave – also in the Louvre, and now commonly called the *Rebellious Slave* (fig. 13.36) – suggests that the theme of imprisonment especially interested him. In the case of this second figure, Michelangelo not only broke off work before polishing the face and working the hair of the figure, but also left a shell of barely carved marble that extends more than halfway up its body, enclosing its backside. Already in the Renaissance, viewers were tempted to see these works of Michelangelo not just as statues that he had not had time to complete, but as works whose unfinished state itself carried meaning. The earlier *Pietà* (see fig. 11.51), after all, had been signed “the Florentine Michelangelo Buonarroti was making this;” the jarring contrasts between the marks of the claw chisel and the sheen of the polished surface, no less than the binding theme and the monkey's explicit reference to the arts, point less to the Pope the statue was to serve than to the act of making itself. Whereas early commentators recognized that Raphael's

13.36

Michelangelo, *Rebellious Slave*, c. 1513–16 (?).  
Marble, height: 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
(2.16 m). Musée du  
Louvre, Paris

13.37

Michelangelo, *Moses*,  
c. 1515. Marble, height  
7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (2.36 m). San Pietro  
in Vincoli, Rome



**13.38**  
 Michelangelo, Raffaello  
 da Montelupo, and others,  
 tomb of Pope Julius II  
 (as ultimately installed),  
 1542–45. San Pietro in  
 Vincoli, Rome



like that of Michelangelo's *David* (see fig. 12.3), implies the presence of something else in the figure's space, and early art historians (along with Sigmund Freud) fantasized that this Moses was looking wrathfully at the idolaters dancing around the golden calf as described in Exodus 32. The age, scale, pose, and high finish of the sculpture contrast starkly with the two slaves, yet Michelangelo's interests in those two figures carry over unmistakably here. The material that wraps Moses's feet – is it cloth? the leather straps of sandals? – constitutes just one of the binding motifs that appear here, too, from the cinched garment below his right knee to the curious strap that wraps his left shoulder. The arrangement of the drapery, meanwhile, piled so as to expose the figure's leg, echoes the denuding of the body that the *Dying Slave* (see fig. 13.35), too, dramatized. The impression the statue gives is that Michelangelo was using the assignment to pursue his own interests as much as he was responding to a patron's requirements.

Michelangelo seems to have worked on these figures for over three years. Finally, in 1516, probably recognizing how unreasonable the scale of the assignment still was, Julius's heirs drew up a new contract that reduced the already revised tomb project by nearly two-thirds. Even this, though, was optimistic. Michelangelo did little fur-

ther with the sculptures, and by 1518 he was in Florence. Charged by the new Pope, Leo X, with adding a facade to the church of San Lorenzo, Michelangelo was unable to work on the tomb. A complicated series of subsequent negotiations resulted in the Slaves being dropped from the tomb program altogether; Michelangelo gave the two he had carved in Rome to a friend, who in turn gave them to King Francis I of France. The *Moses*, once intended to be part of a series of relatively marginal adornments to the tomb's second storey, became its centerpiece, placed on axis with the reclining portrait of Julius and flanked by smaller figurations of the Active and Contemplative Life, in the persons of the Old Testament exemplars Rachel and Leah. As with the paintings Sixtus IV had commissioned for the Sistine several decades earlier, the ancient priest and lawgiver Moses would become a double for the Pope himself. Little of the tomb as it was finally installed in San Pietro in Vincoli in the 1540s (fig. 13.38) is by Michelangelo himself, and the monument's disjunctions in style and scale, its gathering of figures that do not really belong together, in the end present a bathetic deflation of what might have been the greatest tomb of the modern age. Eschewing Raphael's workshop model in pursuit of individual, more personally meaningful subjects ultimately determined not just the look but also the fate of Michelangelo's sculpture.

## The Florentine “Schools”

### The School of San Marco: Fra Bartolomeo and Mariotto Albertinelli

Elsewhere in Italy, there was not yet anything quite comparable to Rome, with its top-down coordination of artists undertaking vast works involving the widest variety of media. Still, the associations into which an artist did or did not enter could be decisive for his formation. Benvenuto Cellini, as we have seen, referred to the artists studying the cartoons for the Great Council Hall in Florence as a “scuola” or “school,” and Leonardo da Vinci was at the center of an informal group of literati he or others referred to as an “academy.” These were concepts that pushed education beyond the traditional idea of the workshop apprenticeship.

One of the city's major collaborative enterprises was based in the monastery of San Marco, where Fra Bartolomeo oversaw a team of assistants and also worked in partnership with the master painter Mariotto Albertinelli (1474–1515). The painters' 1512 *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine* (fig. 13.38), produced as an altarpiece for the church of San Marco, illustrates their complicated relationship to recent local developments. On the

OPPOSITE

**13.39**  
 Fra Bartolomeo and  
 Mariotto Albertinelli,  
*Mystic Marriage of St.  
 Catherine* (Pitti altarpiece),  
 1512. Panel, 11'8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 8'9"  
 (3.56 x 2.7 m). Galleria  
 Palatina, Palazzo Pitti,  
 Florence









13.40  
Fra Bartolomeo, *Virgin of Mercy*, 1515. Oil on canvas, Museo di Villa Guinigi, Lucca

one hand, few contemporaries so unreservedly embraced Leonardo's *sfumato* and his pursuit of tonal unity. Here the brown undertones with which Leonardo characteristically began pervade the whole picture. Bartolomeo and Albertinelli restricted their palette to the most basic range of hues, then blended these with whites and blacks, sacrificing coloristic intensity in favor of dramatic *chiaroscuro* effects. The painters' "sculptural" approach, with its emphasis not just on coherence but also on a sense of volume and relief, is evident especially in the canopy miraculously borne over the Virgin by muscu-

lar nude angels in virtuoso foreshortening. Yet even as these figures' dynamic poses and idealized anatomy leave no doubt that Bartolomeo and Albertinelli were aware of modern art in Rome, they avoid the complexity of altarpiece design as it was developing in the hands of Raphael and Sebastiano. The painters have transformed the episode of the Mystic Marriage, when St. Catherine (the woman in white and black Dominican garb at center left) had a vision of receiving a ring from Christ, into a conventional *sacra conversazione*, as though to ensure that it would work as an altarpiece and a focus of devotional meditation. Though assembling a painting with more than twenty characters, they pursued compositional clarity through a rigorous symmetry whereby every figure on the left has a partner, in something close to the reverse pose, on the right. To minimize distraction from the Virgin, Child, and Dominican saint at the center, finally, Bartolomeo and Albertinelli gave most of the remaining gathering a generic quality. We might recognize St. Dominic's lily or St. Paul's sword, but little individualizes the others in the group.

It is this caution that has stood out most to recent writers on the "School of San Marco," and Bartolomeo in particular. He is the rare artist about whom we can say something fairly concrete when it comes to his religious life, and writers have consequently been tempted to see his orderly, simplified compositions as the natural product of an adherent to the dour Girolamo Savonarola (see chapter 11). The devices Bartolomeo adopted from Leonardo and Michelangelo, however, give his figures a surprisingly sculptural presence, as though the goal of devotional painting were to create a literal "object" of devotion. And Bartolomeo pushed his art still further along these lines when he painted for clients outside of Florence, indicating that the apparent conservatism of his Florentine works was a response to the expectations of a clientele used to Perugino and early Raphael. His 1515 *Virgin of Mercy* (fig. 13.40), painted in the service of a fellow friar for a chapel in the church of San Romano in Lucca, is in some ways even more restricted in its colors, more ascetic-looking, more bound by an all-pervasive *sfumatura*. Yet the rigorous symmetry of the composition focuses attention on the powerful and dramatically gesturing Virgin, who, protecting a congregation that extends not just beside and before but also *behind* her, comes to seem almost like a cult statue, a figure one could look upon from all sides.

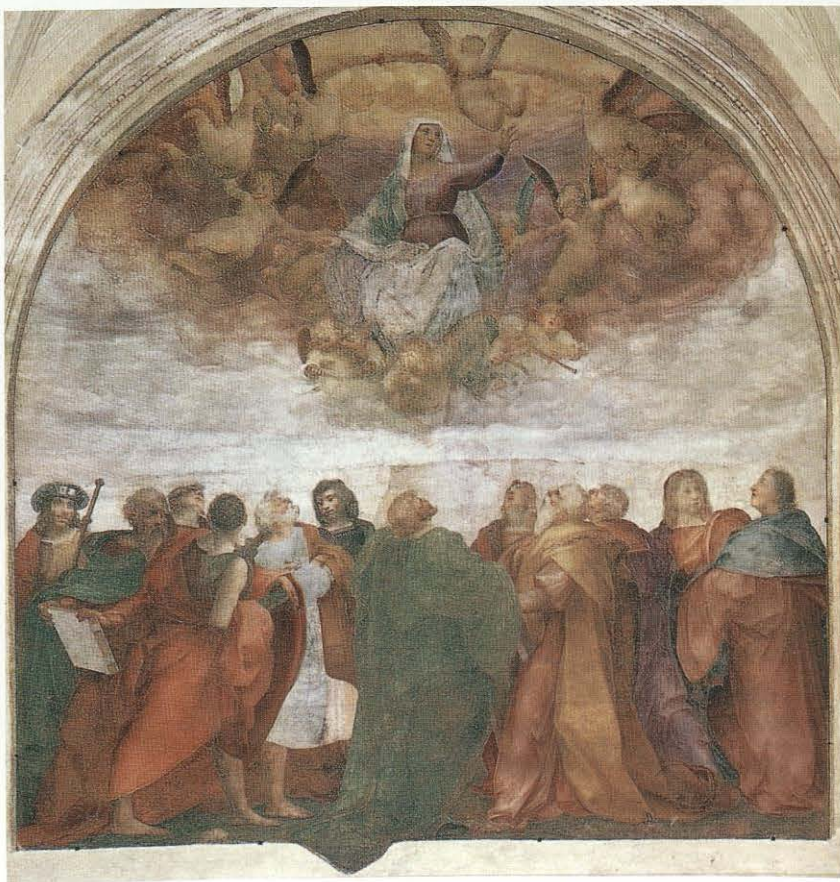
#### The School of the Annunziata: Andrea del Sarto, Jacopo Pontormo, Rosso Fiorentino

The rival "school" in Florence in these years formed just about a block away from San Marco, when the three



painters who would establish the most important local early sixteenth-century idiom worked side by side in the Chiostro de' Voti (Cloister of the Vows), the atrium that introduced the church of the Santissima Annunziata. The leader here was the son of a tailor who went by the nickname Andrea del Sarto (see p. 391). He had copied the works made for the Great Council Hall and he must have known the early paintings of Raphael, too, since his first pictures include Madonnas in that manner. (Later, as we have seen, Sarto would also copy Raphael's portrait of Pope Leo with his cardinal nephews; see fig. 13.30), demonstrating that he, the city's senior painter, commanded Raphael's manner.) Assisting Sarto were Jacopo Pontormo (1494–1557) and Giovanni Battista di Jacopo (1494–1540), called "Rosso Fiorentino" (literally, "the red-headed Florentine"); the two are sometimes referred to as Sarto's "students," but they were only eight years his junior. Pontormo seems to have joined up with Sarto after working briefly with a series of other older painters, which suggests that he sought him out after experiencing dissatisfaction elsewhere. Vasari says similarly of Rosso that he drew after Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* cartoon (see fig. 12.12), but that he "would study art with but few masters, having a certain opinion of his own that conflicted with their manners." The trio, in other words, were opinionated men who seem to have found an affinity with one another; though each was in charge of his own painting for the cloister, what they made there was in dialogue with one another.

The paintings themselves, frescoes showing scenes from the life of the Virgin, could never be mistaken as works of the same hand. Sarto's 1514 *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 13.41), unlike the murals of Pontormo and Rosso, sets its figures in a deep, perspectively defined space. Arrayed across the foreground are attendants to Mary's mother Anne, a figure, as we have seen, of particular devotion in Florence. Anne's melancholic husband Joachim, excluded from the rest of the group, leans on a ledge at the back, and a doorway opens onto yet another room beyond. The rather old-fashioned arrangement comes across as a rejection of Rosso's probably slightly earlier



RIGHT, ABOVE

13.41

Andrea del Sarto, *Birth of the Virgin*, 1514. Fresco. Atrium, Santissima Annunziata, Florence

RIGHT, BELOW

13.42

Rosso Fiorentino, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 1513–14. Fresco. Atrium, Santissima Annunziata, Florence

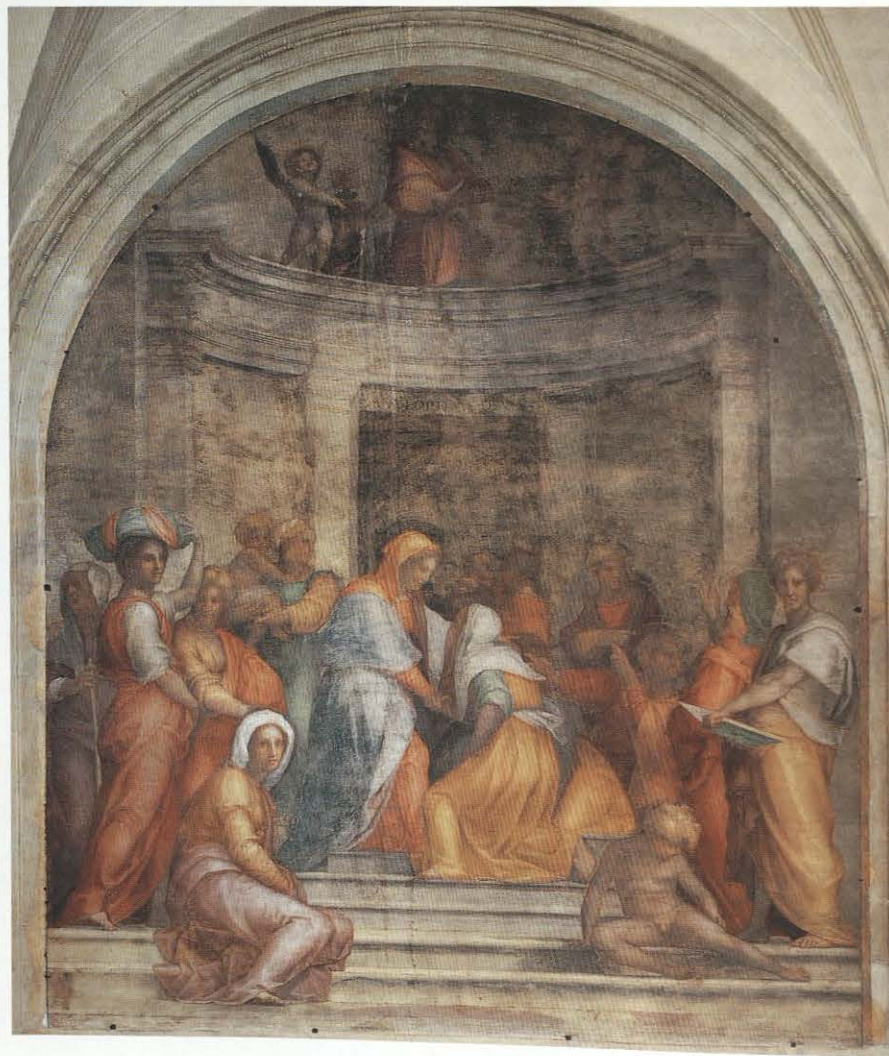


*Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 13.42), which has almost no space at all, jamming a frieze of comically grotesque figures right up against the picture plane and separating them with near blankness from the vision they see above of the Virgin ascending, uncorrupted and undying, into heaven. Pontormo's *Visitation* (fig. 13.43), probably not completed until 1516, is something of a compromise between the two. He preserves Rosso's monumentality and even translates his contemporary's foreshortened heavenly oculus, recapturing it as a curved architrave. Like Sarto's, though, his space is resolutely architectural, but with the aim of opening it up to the spectator. Pontormo has several characters respond to the presence of the viewer, and, perhaps noticing how the drapery of Rosso's central character comes right out of the picture, he defines the bottom edge of his own fresco with a staircase that seems to invite the viewer to climb right in. More strikingly, he includes several characters who seem to have little connection with the Gospel story of the Visitation, and who do little more than draw atten-

tion to the artist's command of beauty and his inventive power. The little boy seated on the stairs, for example, is an animated and ornamental descendant of the putti in Donatello's *Cantoria* (see fig. 5.20). Such figures appear almost like a signature of Pontormo, Sarto, and Rosso in these years.

For all of their differences, the painters shared a radical approach to color, one that abandoned both Leonardo's unifying *chiaroscuro* and the more luminescent palette of their Quattrocento predecessors. Given Sarto's family background, it may not be surprising that textiles play such a vital role in the paintings of his circle. In all three frescoes, draperies serve as elemental units, and not only their hues but also their juxtaposition is often surprising: Pontormo, for example, works with unexpected sequences of orange, purple, and green. In all three paintings, the colors, limited in number, repeat across the picture plane, to the extent that naturalism seems subordinated to an almost abstract composition. Rosso's draperies are completely out of scale with the

**13-43**  
Pontormo, *Visitation*,  
1514–16. Fresco. Atrium,  
Santissima Annunziata,  
Florence







bodies implied by the figures' heads, and Sarto paints a doorframe and bowl the same lavender as one midwife's dress, balancing the design rather than trying to describe specific materials.

Color would continue to occupy the three after they separated, as they moved on to different projects. Sarto's later works of the decade were perhaps the most subtle. In his *Madonna of the Harpies* from 1516 (fig. 13.44), he seems to start with one of Fra Bartolomeo's symmetric, sculptural, *sfumato*-laden compositions (see fig. 13.40) and then to animate his characters with thorough infusions of color. This is especially the case with the Virgin, whose pose and whose placement on what appears to be a marble pedestal – the monstrous ornaments of which give the painting its conventional title – make her look more like a statue miraculously coming to life than like the regal human being at the center of the conventional *sacra conversazione*. (Sarto's studio in Florence was next door to that of the sculptor Jacopo Sansovino, who sometimes produced wax models for Sarto to paint after.) The smoke that appears to enter the painting from some

unspecified external source likewise nods to Bartolomeo's *sfumatura*, while also evoking the honorific acts one might perform before an image, such as the burning of incense. It is as though color itself has given the figure the capacity to respond, enlivened, to the presence of a reverential viewer. For Sarto, unlike Leonardo and Bartolomeo, color was a means rather than an impediment to pictorial unity. Mysterious blue tinges in the lower part of St. Francis's robe and in the drapery over St. John's shoulder pick up the hue from Mary's drapery; this repetition binds the painting together, reining in the character of John in particular, whose intense orange and lavender garb might otherwise leap off the surface. In this respect, Sarto's mature approach to color could not have been more different from the experiments Rosso would undertake, the most dramatic of which was the *Deposition* he painted in Volterra around 1521 (fig. 13.45). Here, overscaled draperies of the kind he used in his *Assumption* (see fig. 13.42) incorporate abrupt shifts in hue or tone that make it difficult to read them as objects at all. The colors obey no rationalized lighting system, and their



ABOVE LEFT

13-44

Andrea del Sarto, *Madonna of the Harpies*, 1516. Oil on panel, 6'8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5'10" (2.07 x 1.78 m). Uffizi Gallery, Florence

ABOVE RIGHT

13-45

Rosso Fiorentino, *Deposition*, c. 1521. Oil on panel, 12'4" x 6'5" (3.75 x 1.96 m). Pinacoteca, Volterra



concentration at the edges of the picture pulls the composition apart rather than bringing it together, as though they embody in themselves the trauma that the death of Christ has inflicted.

Later sixteenth-century viewers would forget that Pontormo, Rosso, and Sarto had started in much the same place. Seeing the direction in which the disciples of Sarto – not just Pontormo, Rosso, and their own students, but also later painters like Giorgio Vasari and Francesco Salviati – had taken painting, these viewers would point to Sarto’s misunderstood example as the key to the “naturalistic” principles that later painters had lost. To a certain extent, though, the goal of finding an individual style that differed from that of one’s immediate contemporaries was a consequence of the competitive practice encouraged by projects like the Annunziata cloister. Florentine patrons took pleasure in recognizing that the contemporaneous paintings next to one another in a public space were the products of related but distinct hands. This particular kind of variety, by contrast, did not appeal to the popes, who preferred the unified style

of the Vatican *stanze*. Raphael and Michelangelo’s Roman patrons sought the monumentality that came with unifying a program under a single vision.

## Titian and the Camerino of Alfonso d’Este

Collaborative and competitive enterprises of the kind we have been looking at did not always require artists to work in the same physical place. Around the time that Sarto and his young colleagues were painting in the Annunziata in Florence, Duke Alfonso d’Este was attempting to adorn the rooms he used as a meditative retreat in his palace in Ferrara with a small collection of pictures, representing the leading “schools” of Florence, Venice, and Rome as well as his home city. The idea for such a collection had come from his sister Isabella’s particularly splendid study and collecting space, and Alfonso began by borrowing one of her key advisors, the humanist and art theorist Mario Equicola.

### 13.46

Giovanni Bellini, *The Feast of the Gods*, 1514 (landscape repainted by Titian in 1529). Oil on canvas, 5'7" x 6'2" (1.7 x 1.88 m). Widener Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.







By 1514, Alfonso had achieved something even his sister had not. As we saw in the previous chapter (see p. 366), the poet Pietro Bembo had explained Giovanni Bellini's reluctance to paint for Isabella d'Este by reporting that the artist did not like to take on subjects dictated by others, preferring to follow his imagination. For Alfonso's Camerino, however, Bellini had agreed to paint a subject that Equicola had drawn from Ovid's *Fasti*, "The Feast of the Gods." The literary episode itself is a raucous one: the fertility god Priapus attempts to rape the sleeping nymph Lotis, who is awakened by the braying of Silenus's ass just in time to save herself. Bellini's picture (fig. 13.46), classical but rustic, organized as a frieze that reads from right to left, might well be compared to Botticelli's *Primavera* (see fig. 9.23), but there is a surprising quietness to Bellini's treatment: his nymph is still sleeping, his ass has not yet brayed, and there are few hints of the revelry one might expect in characters who, like these, have devoted the day to drinking. This may seem characteristic of the Venetian manner of the early sixteenth century, the kind of painting one would expect from the circle that had produced the *Pastoral Concert* (see fig. 12.60) a couple of years before. The reflective tone, though, is also appropriate to a study setting, with a hush that politely avoids distracting Alfonso from his reading.

Bellini's picture was to inaugurate a series of six paintings for the Camerino, sometimes called "Bacchanals" since they are all connected to themes of wine and love – and, more broadly, to a philosophical interest in human instinct and bodily sensation. A telling signal of the room's priorities is the frieze that the local painter Dosso Dossi (c. 1490–1542) installed over the Bacchanals, *The Sicilian Games* (fig. 13.47). Though the frieze paintings might first appear to be decorative landscapes with figures, closer inspection reveals that they depict episodes from Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid*. There is a certain witty irony in the diminution of epic, the most important of poetic genres, to the marginal idiom of a landscape border, while fables of drunkenness, revelry, and love are enlarged to an heroic



scale. The disjunction emphasized that the Camerino was a space for the duke to withdraw from the world of politics and warfare to that of leisure and sensory delight.

Dosso also painted a *Bacchanal with Vulcan* for the main series, but that picture has been lost. So, too, was the cartoon that Raphael sent from Rome in 1517, after agreeing to paint a *Triumph of Bacchus*, then stalling for several years. The cartoon became the basis for a painting by the little-known artist Pellegrino da San Daniele (1467–1547) – it too, lost, though the composition comes down to us through the later version made by the Ferrarese painter Garofalo. In Florence, Fra Bartolomeo had accepted a commission to paint a *Worship of Venus* (fig. 13.48), but died in 1517 before he could deliver the picture.

### Titian's Bacchanals

With the death of Fra Bartolomeo, Duke Alfonso turned not to another Florentine but to Titian (1488/90–1576),

TOP

13.47

Dosso Dossi, *The Sicilian Games*, c. 1520. Oil on canvas, 23" x 5'6 1/4" (58.5 x 167.5 cm). Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

ABOVE

13.48

Fra Bartolomeo, study for *The Worship of Venus*. Black chalk on paper, 8 x 11 3/8" (20.5 x 28.8 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence



## THE ORIGIN OF THE GHETTO

Histories of how Italian cities developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tend to focus on the introduction of straight streets and orderly squares, but Renaissance urbanism had a darker side as well. In 1516, the Venetian Senate compelled the city's Jews to live in an area called the Ghetto Nuovo after a former foundry. (The word *ghetto* derives from the verb *gettare*, “to cast.”) The new Jewish Ghetto had guarded gates, which were opened at sunrise and closed at sunset each day; Christians could only enter during daylight, and Jews exiting the ghetto had to wear a special hat. Even inside the ghetto, activities were regulated. There as elsewhere in the city, Jews could deal in *strazzaria* (second-hand goods) and could practice the suspect profession of moneylending, but they were not allowed to teach or learn traditional crafts. If they needed, say, a decorative or ceremonial object in precious metal, they had to buy it from a Christian shop or import it from outside the city.

Other laws prohibited Jews from owning real estate, but these were unevenly enforced, and residents of the ghetto exploited loopholes. Permitted to make improvements to their residences, many added new storeys to existing buildings. This made the most of the zone's confined space, but it also gave residents de facto ownership of at least some structures. The ground or first floor tended to be the most important in other Venetian buildings, but that was not always so in the ghetto, and some of the new upper storeys were used as synagogues. Though the confinement laws ended in the late eighteenth

century, the result of these strategies is still visible, and buildings in the former ghetto are on the whole taller than those elsewhere in the city.

Italian cities generally built churches for maximum visibility, placing them strategically at the end of major streets, opening squares in front of them, raising bell towers high into the air. Where the ghetto was concerned, however, Venice sought just the opposite. When the ghetto was expanded in 1541, roughly doubling in size, one of its new edges bordered the Fondamento della Pescaria, a route used to transport the sacrament from churches to the homes of ailing Christians. Worried that Jews would mock or somehow contaminate the holy wafer, a committee recommended the bricking up of windows and balconies that looked onto that quay. At other times over the course of the century, the city considered building high walls to prevent even visual contact between the Jews inside the ghetto and the Christians outside it. Though this was not carried through, the discussions demonstrate how fears of the sort that Paolo Uccello rendered in his Urbino predella could have consequences even for city planning (see figs. 9.4–9.5).

In the later sixteenth century, other Italian cities began to follow Venice's practices. Pope Paul IV's 1555 bull *Cum nimis absurdum* not only legislated a closed, gated ghetto for Jews in Rome but also similar spaces in all papal cities. And because of this history, the word “ghetto” still today refers to the regions of a city where ethnic minorities predominantly reside.

then in his late twenties. The Venetian artist was at that moment in the process of completing what would be his greatest altarpiece of the decade, an *Assumption of the Virgin* for the Venetian church of the Frari (fig. 13.49). In comparison to Rosso's nearly contemporary painting of the same subject in Florence (see fig. 13.42), or Fra Bar-

tolomeo's Council Chamber altarpiece (see fig. 12.10), which it resembles in some respects, Titian's work is more compositionally dynamic, more heroic in its treatment of the human figure, richer and more unified in color. The clouds and angels that accompany Mary extend the arc at the top of the altar frame into a nearly perfect circle.



at the center of which is the Virgin's head. This suggests an awareness of the central Italian convention of associating the Virgin with the *tondo* form, but it also evokes the plan of the apse end of the church for which the picture was made. What most foreshadows the way Titian would depart from Bellini's earlier models in his work for Alfonso, though, is the disposition of the characters at the bottom of the painting. Titian's Apostles do not, like Rosso's, gaze sedately up at what is transpiring above; rather, they reach toward, pray to, and apparently even debate about what they see. They are engaged intercessors acting on behalf of contemporary worshipers, just as the Virgin herself asks the God she sees above her to be merciful to the people in her charge.

The Frari painting delayed Titian's fulfillment of the Camerino assignment, which he delivered only in 1519. The painting he finally sent (fig. 13.50), like Bellini's (see fig. 13.46), was based on a classical text, though the text in this case, from *Imagines* (Pictures) by the ancient Greek author Philostratus, itself described an imaginary painting. If the context of the Camerino was a competitive one, then, Titian's own competition was threefold: he would have had a mind not only to the Venetian and Florentine masters of the previous generation, but also to the best evidence available of how the ancients themselves imagined the painter's art. The picture Philostratus described contained *erotes* (literally, "loves," or cupids) collecting apples in baskets, and the signature details from the ancient text all make their appearance in Titian: jeweled baskets, blue wings, cupids that fly to pluck apples from branches, other cupids that play with a hare. Fra Bartolomeo's surviving compositional drawing (see fig. 13.48) shows a gathering of cupids around a statue of Venus on a column, highly reminiscent of his *Virgin of Mercy* (see fig. 13.40) or Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies* (see fig. 13.44). Where Titian shifts the emphasis is in the adult figures on the right. These are the nymphs who, in Philostratus's text, proclaim a silver mirror, gilded sandal, and golden brooches hung at a shrine to Aphrodite (Venus) to be their gifts to her, while *erotes* "bring first-fruits of the apples, and gathering around pray to her that their orchard may prosper." The shrine itself was one element that Philostratus did not describe, but Titian follows Bartolomeo by embodying it as a towering statue, to whom the nymphs and the *erotes* make offerings. Like Bartolomeo, Titian thought of the ancients themselves as the progenitors of the sacred image. The devotion that motivates Titian's scene is devotion around and for an artwork, and the composition, now with a decentralized divine figure who nevertheless addresses the beholder, anticipates the innovations Titian would introduce into the altarpiece shortly thereafter.



13-49

Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 1516. Oil on panel, 22'8½" x 11'10". (6.9 x 3.6 m). Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice

BELOW

13-50

Titian, *Worship of Venus*, 1516. Oil on canvas, 5'7¾" x 5'9" (1.72 x 1.75 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid







At the same time, the stark contrast between the cool statue and the animated flesh-and-blood characters allows Titian to mark a difference both from a tradition like Rome's, which would make statuary the basis for modern painting, and from the legacy of Bellini, with its staid, placid protagonists. When Duke Alfonso gave Titian the opportunity to paint two more works for the Camerino in the early 1520s, the artist would amplify Bellini's coloristic intensity and add to it a figural dynamism that was all but unknown in Venice. The *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (fig. 13.51) alludes directly to Bellini's earlier invention for the rooms, with its sleeping nymph anchoring the lower right corner. Here, though, there is no peace: Titian foreshortens the characters on the ground, projecting them dramatically forward in space, and those above whirl in dance. In the *Bacchus and Ariadne* (fig. 13.52), Titian places the wine god in the iconic central position, designating him as the elevated star of a triumphal procession, then gives him the least god-like action imaginable, of hurling himself over the side of his chariot. His turned head and rotated left leg, together with the

ABOVE

**13.51**

Titian, *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1523–24. Canvas, 5'9" x 6'4" (1.75 x 1.93 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid

RIGHT

**13.52**

Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1522–24. Oil on canvas, 5'9" x 6'3" (1.72 x 1.88 m). National Gallery, London







13-53

Titian, *Man with a Blue Sleeve*, c. 1510. Oil on canvas, 32 x 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (81.2 x 66.3 cm). National Gallery, London

empty air beneath his right foot, raise doubts about how this patron of drunkenness will land (as well as fears for the innocent dog below). The pose of Bacchus's beloved, shown on the left, is the absolute antithesis to his own, and the stark contrast promises no happy resolution to the scene: in the end, Ariadne will be turned into the constellation known as Corona, which already appears in the sky above her. This is a painting with none of Bellini's hush. Still, appropriately for a space of study and recreation, the painting displays the marvels of art and nature. Alfonso himself owned cheetahs, exotic animals that he used for hunting, and the satyr with the snakes alludes to the most spectacular of recent archaeological finds, the *Laocoön* in the Vatican (see fig. 12.48). What must most have astonished viewers, though, was the color, for Titian painted almost half the canvas, six feet on a side, in ultramarine, the most intense and expensive pigment on the Venetian market. One might compare the effect to Titian's aggressive use of blue in a c. 1511 portrait, in which a still unidentified sitter presses an arm wrapped in padded blue satin, virtually the only color in the picture, out into our space (fig. 13.53).

With Titian in the end having taken over three of the commissions for the Camerino and with the works that actually did get carried out by other artists now lost, the series looks much more homogeneous than it was initially intended to be. Perhaps Titian, feeling himself to be an understudy now permitted to collaborate and compete with more established elders, aspired to a commanding court position that was closer to what Raphael had achieved in Rome. Then again, the patron, too, may in the end have appreciated the attractions of a series that seemed to feature one hand above all, for Duke Alfonso ultimately had Titian partially repaint Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (see fig. 13.46), adding the verdant background and the deep blue sky we now see. The changes bring the earliest picture in the series closer to the images with which Titian completed it. Ultimately, no other individual contribution to Alfonso's Camerino emerged as a strong individual alternative to Titian, and a century later, artists as different as Peter Paul Rubens and Nicolas Poussin would take the pictures he produced as basic models in forging their own individual styles.







# 14

1520—1530  
*The Loss of the Center*

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## 14

1520–1530

*The Loss of the Center*

The 1520s saw the rise of a generation of artists whose training took place in the shadow of Leonardo, Bramante, Raphael – all of them dead by the beginning of the decade – and Michelangelo. Continuing what those figures had begun was a daunting challenge, and it raised the stakes of what it meant to become an artist. Rivalry and the emulation of powerful forerunners gave artists an increasing critical sophistication and self-consciousness. They reflected on and quarreled about questions of imitation and originality, of the relative value of taking nature as their model or grounding art in an abstract ideal of beauty that nature could never achieve by itself. A term that recurs in discussions of art from the 1520s onward is *maniera*. The word (the root of which is *mano*, or “hand”) can be translated straightforwardly as “style.” Viewers understood all of the major artists to have cultivated an individual *maniera* that other artists, especially those who were more junior or less gifted, could take up. Yet *maniera* also had another meaning: “stylishness” or “extreme refinement,” which stood as one of the chief goals of art in Rome after the death of Raphael. Because of the preoccupation with *maniera* in both senses, some more recent writers have applied the term “Mannerism” to Italian artists who followed Raphael and Michelangelo. If we use this label today, we must do so with extreme caution: first, artists preoccupied with *maniera* did not employ a single style or set of characteristics, or even a common aesthetic attitude: we could associate the idea with painters as different as Jacopo Pontormo and Giulio Romano. Second, the term “Mannerist” originated as a pejorative label, intended to convey a negative judgment about this entire generation. The scholars who invented the category regarded art after Raphael as a decline into bad taste or the perversion of an original standard of perfection. The English word “mannerism” predominantly means “affectation,” and to call a certain art “Mannerist” can simply mean that it looks “affected” – though this is to apply a historically inappropriate standard of judgment.

Art-historical debates about Mannerism have often focused on the art of the most cosmopolitan locales: especially Rome, but also Florence and Venice. Yet part of what makes the 1520s distinctive is the renewed importance of the other regions. If, from 1505 to 1520, St. Peter’s and the Vatican made Rome seem like the center of Italy’s

artistic culture, this was no longer the case. In part that was a consequence of new challenges to Rome’s political and spiritual centrality. In 1517, the German friar Martin Luther had published his famous ninety-five theses attacking the Pope’s sale of indulgences and the use of the income from them to support the building of St. Peter’s. After three years of indecision Pope Leo X formally condemned Luther, but the protests this occasioned in the north only revealed the extent of the reformer’s support and the widespread hostility toward the papacy. When Leo died in 1521, the College of Cardinals elected as his successor an austere Dutch theologian, who took the name Adrian VI. Adrian, the only Renaissance Pope to have come from northern Europe, had served as tutor to the young prince who would become the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1530. The new Pope found that Leo X’s extravagances had hopelessly bankrupted the Church. Though later papal apologists blamed him for it, he broke ranks with his predecessors in his realistic assessment of the papacy’s financial state and his attempt to curb expenditures. Only in 1523, when Adrian’s death led to the election of a second Medici Pope, Clement VII, did artists again see hope for the sort of patronage that had been possible in the previous two decades. Clement was none other than Cardinal Giulio, who had commissioned the lavish Villa Madama (see figs. 13.22–13.23) from Raphael. Even this promise of better times to come, however, would be short lived.

Further contributing to Rome’s diminished status was the disappearance of its two leading artists. Raphael had died in 1520 at the youthful age of thirty-seven. Michelangelo had, since 1516, been in Florence, working on the church of San Lorenzo. When Clement ascended the papal throne, he ordered Michelangelo to stay there, making Medici family tombs. With Rome no longer functioning as center of gravity, a number of the best artists simply chose to work elsewhere. Vasari tells us that Pietro Bembo, Leo X’s secretary, had pressed Titian to come from Venice to Rome, and that he had declined. The great Lombard painter Correggio seems to have accepted commissions only in Parma and neighboring towns, while among the other northerners, Pordenone and Lorenzo Lotto worked largely in Lombardy, the Veneto, and the Marches; Dosso Dossi in Ferrara, Pesaro,





and Trent. In Rome, the artistic community organized itself into factions that laid claim to the heritage of Raphael and Michelangelo, yet Correggio, Pordenone, Lotto, and Dossi did not claim any allegiance to either Florence or Rome.

### The *Sala di Costantino*

The followers of Michelangelo were most often Florentine expatriates who had come south to Rome hoping to benefit from the two Medici papacies. The followers of Raphael, by contrast, were the surviving members of

his own studio. Giulio Romano (c. 1499–1546) and Gian Francesco Penni kept the Raphael workshop going, executing paintings commissioned before the painter's death and marketing themselves as his living legacy. Giulio in particular would provide the standard of what it meant to paint like Raphael for much of the rest of the century.

The most important project Giulio completed before Federico Gonzaga lured him from Rome to Mantua in 1524 was the *Sala di Costantino* (fig. 14.1), or the Hall of the Pontiffs, the culminating room in the papal suite that Raphael and his workshop had been decorating for more than ten years. The painting of this room had begun in 1519, the year before Raphael died, and it continued until

#### 14.1

Giulio Romano, *Sala di Costantino*, 1519–24.

Vatican Palace. The vault of the room was constructed and decorated in the 1580s.





14.2  
Giulio Romano, *Vision of Constantine*, 1519–24.  
Fresco. Sala di Costantino,  
Vatican Palace

Adrian VI suspended work in 1522. By this time, Giulio Romano and his team had completed two of the four large narrative scenes, working from a series of designs prepared or at least approved by Raphael. In 1523 Sebastiano del Piombo, making a rival bid as representative of the absent Michelangelo, tried to have himself appointed to complete the room. His ultimate decision to reappoint Raphael's team may have been a practical one, but it does suggest that the Pope was interested in proclaiming continuity with the reign of Leo X, resuming the projects begun by his Medici predecessor.

The spacious hall served as an anteroom to the papal apartment: it provided for papal audiences and for the briefing of ambassadors. Its overtly propagandistic program reflects its function as a place where the Pope confronted and addressed the other powers of Europe. The scheme established earlier by Raphael consisted of portraits of the first eight popes, all of them saints, beginning with St. Peter. Pope Clement I bears the features of Leo X (fig. 14.2, right), thus stressing the theme of descent to the point of rendering the modern papacy almost identical with the first successors of Christ. The popes are surrounded by a bureaucratic profusion of allegorical figures, identified by labels but also by more arcane symbolic devices: Eternity holds a pen and a phoenix, Comity (the virtue of "mildness") appears with a lamb. The arrangement is highly reminiscent of Michelangelo's prophets on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (see fig. 12.31). Repeated Medici devices like the diamond ring and the yoke with the motto SOAVE (alluding to the scriptural

text "My yoke is gentle") assume an almost mystical importance.

Raphael's project of 1519 centered on the history of Constantine, the first Christian emperor. The four scenes were to show his Conversion (fig. 14.2), the victory over his rival Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and two others concerning a "presentation of prisoners" and the miraculous healing of the emperor before his conversion. When the team headed by Giulio returned to the room in 1522, the Pope had them drop the latter two in favor of the *Baptism of Constantine by Pope Silvester* and the *Donation of Constantine* (fig. 14.3). Rather than merely celebrating Constantine as champion and defender of Christendom, the room would now insist on imperial subordination to papal authority. The change in program came about because of escalating tensions between papacy and empire over the Luther controversy, and because Luther's followers had begun to employ a new ideological weapon: Lorenzo Valla's exposé of the *Donation of Constantine* (see p. 176). Ulrich von Hutten, a supporter of Luther, had reprinted Valla's text in 1518, 1519, and 1520, alleging in the last edition that the treatise offered support for Luther's attacks. The frescoes, in response, not only insist on the supremacy of the Pope over a conquering emperor, but also imply that papal authority derives from a divine dispensation that supersedes human knowledge and historical evidence.

The two scenes completed in the first campaign present the story of Constantine as a moment of harmony between the Roman and Christian worlds. The



story is conceived in epic terms, seeking to dazzle the viewer with its profusion of antiquarian detail and its virtuosic illusionism. The narrative scenes of human history are shown as fictive tapestries, thus as less permanent and less “real” than the robust and vigorous enthroned popes that appear between them (Peter is flanked by personifications of the Church and Eternity). At the same time, the apparent tapestries recalled the actual ones that Raphael had produced, the true prestige objects from Leo X’s court. As with real tapestries, the function of the frescoes is to provide a decorative overall covering for a large area of wall surface, favoring a profusion of figures and of ornamental detail across the picture plane. Giulio also enriched the tapestry aesthetic by evoking ancient Roman reliefs. While Raphael’s designs had employed perspectival effects, the reference to relief enabled an emphasis on the three-dimensionality of figures through modeling and strong outlines (see fig. 13.13).

The scenes are dense with quotations from monumental carvings still visible in the city. The battle scenes on the Columns of Trajan and of Marcus Aurelius provided the models for the *Battle of the Milvian Bridge*. The *Vision of Constantine* adapted a well-known relief showing the emperor Marcus Aurelius addressing his troops, which had been re-incorporated in the Arch of Constantine. Raphael knew the relief to be a surviving earlier

work that the Christian emperor had incorporated into his arch: in his letter to Leo X, Raphael distinguished between the sculptures made specially for this arch, “which are quite ridiculous, without any sense of art or good design,” and “the spoils of Trajan and Antoninus Pius, [which] are most excellent, and perfect in style.” He translated the prototype with the emperor raised above the listening soldiers into a scene of miraculous revelation, where Constantine, before the fateful battle, sees a Cross with the message “Under this sign will you have victory.” The landscape offers a panorama of the ancient city, restoring monuments such as the Castel Sant’Angelo (initially built in the second century CE as a mausoleum for Emperor Hadrian) to their ancient form.

Throughout the frescoes, the painters aimed to show their wit. Whatever their seriousness of theme and purpose, the paintings also resemble a courtly entertainment aimed at producing pleasure and pleasurable horror. Virtuoso illusionism coexists with the insistence that everything is art: in the Milvian Bridge scene we are looking not at a battle, but at a painting of a tapestry after a relief of a battle (see fig. 14.1). The tumult of the conflict, with its severed hands and limbs, is a carefully choreographed set of variations on a fairly limited number of warrior figures. The pattern of internal near-repetitions produces a consciously contrived effect, enhanced by the crystal-like

## 14.3

Giulio Romano, *Donation of Constantine*, 1519–24.

Fresco. Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace





## 14.4

Giulio Romano, *Virgin and Child with Saints* (Pala Fugger), 1522–24. Oil on panel, 6'6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 8'8" (2 x 2.64 m). Santa Maria dell'Anima, Rome



surface of the river, which registers none of the turbulent action within it. In the *Vision of Constantine*, the sublimity of the emperor's conversion contrasts with the laughing dwarf who casts a sidelong glance out into the room; he is the only figure attempting to make a connection with the viewer. The later scenes, perhaps reflecting the Pope's sense of urgency in his struggle with secular powers, aim emphatically at persuasive engagement with the visitor to the room (see fig. 14.3). More figures solicit the viewer, and there are more explicit allusions to the contemporary world. As in previous papal commissions, Rome's recognizable topography and the early Christian buildings of the city provide historical support for ideological claims. St. Peter's is clearly the setting for the Donation, enacted by a kneeling Constantine in the presence of contemporary representatives of the Christian powers of Europe.

## Rome after Raphael: Making a Reputation

### Giulio Romano

In working on such projects as the Hall of Constantine, Giulio Romano acquired an unrivaled knowledge of Roman topography and art that would ensure his considerable future success. He was also an active collector: in 1520, when the pursuit of ancient sculptures among the elites of Italy was becoming ever more competitive, Giulio was able to purchase part of the extensive antiquities collection of Giovanni Ciampolini. When Giulio finally left Rome to work for the Gonzaga of Mantua in 1524, he could claim to be transporting a vital part of



“Rome” – now meaning the heritage of Raphael as well as of antiquity – to a provincial city that had long styled itself as a “new Rome.”

Giulio’s altarpieces reveal an adaptation of the same principles to the demands of a traditional Christian format: whatever their liturgical or devotional theme, his religious works always in some way introduce the subject of Rome. An example is the altarpiece he painted for the German and Dutch community church of Santa Maria dell’Anima (1522–23), to which Adrian VI belonged (fig. 14.4). The patrons here were the Fuggers of Augsburg, the richest merchant bankers in Europe. It is Giulio’s first wholly independent altarpiece commission, yet it elaborately proclaims its continuity with the late Virgin and Child paintings of Raphael. With their flickering highlights and deep shadows, the figures of the Virgin, Child, St. John, and angels resemble marble sculpture viewed by candlelight in a dark church. Where Quattrocento paintings would have relied on architectural divisions to establish hierarchies, here the warmer and more saturated colors of St. James, St. Mark, and St. Peter place them in a different order of reality from that of the Virgin, who gleams like polished marble. While the figure of the Virgin unfolds itself outward, emphasizing the relief-like character of the surface, the three saints and St. Mark’s lion establish a semicircular formation around her, giving the entire group an almost architectural aspect. The arrangement echoes a theme established by the magnificent ruins of a circular-plan structure in the background, which evokes ancient Roman temples dedicated to virgin goddesses such as Vesta or Minerva Medica. Adorning the temple are fragments of stucco relief, reminiscent of Nero’s Golden House (see p. 300) and broken sculptures in niches. In a mundane intrusion very typical of Giulio, a majestic elderly woman appears at a doorway, apparently engaged in feeding chickens. We might take the Virgin’s appearance against such a background to signal the triumph of the true faith over paganism, but the picture equally represents the renewal of pagan art and culture in its re-dedication to Christian ends. The temple stands as a metaphor for the Virgin, yet she is not fully aligned with it: the axis of the circular temple (and of the painting) bisects her body between her right breast and her left knee; her upper body forms an alternative off-center axis, and it is around this that the alternative “structure” formed by the saints appears to rotate. The instability creates the kind of dynamic tension and visual interest that would become a defining element of the art of Giulio’s generation. In this case, the suggestion that the spiritual center does not fully coincide with the fabric of Rome itself also enriches the meaning of the work, revealing an ambivalence about Rome’s pagan heritage that had shadowed Renaissance art since the previous century.

### Parmigianino

Giulio’s departure for Mantua in 1524 meant Raphael now had no clear single successor in Rome. A few painters, looking from outside at the city and its new pontiff, seem to have seen the situation as an opportunity such as had not existed for decades. One of these was Francesco Mazzola, known as “Parmigianino” (1503–1540) after his home town of Parma, who arrived in Rome the year Giulio left and sought immediately to win the attention of Clement VII with his utterly unconventional *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (fig. 14.5). The twenty-one-year-old painter used a curved panel to reinforce his illusionistic rendering of mirror distortion. The portrait offers a witty twist on the commonplace that painting is a “mirror of Nature.” So it might be, Parmigianino’s portrait seems to claim, but in “reflecting” nature, painting also transforms it into something that nature could not produce by itself – something stranger, rarer, and more beautiful. The painting gives particular prominence to the artist’s hand, the sign of his artistic identity, and its elongation – both monstrous and graceful – exhibits the exquisite exaggerations that would be the trademark of the painter’s “manner.”

Contemporaries hailed the new arrival as a “second Raphael,” and Pope Clement initially considered him for the completion of the Hall of the Pontiffs. Parmigianino approached each project through a lengthy process of

#### 14.5

Parmigianino, *Self-Portrait*,  
c. 1522. Oil on convex  
panel, diameter 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (24.7  
cm). Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna





## 14.6

Parmigianino, *Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist and St. Jerome* (Bufalini altarpiece), 1527. Oil on panel, 11'3" x 5'11 1/4" (3.43 x 1.52 m). National Gallery, London



experimental drawing – those for the Vatican project survive – and it may have been this that taxed the patience of his patron, persuading the Pope to transfer the project to Giulio. Parmigianino's slowness of approach, together with the local domination that Perino del Vaga, Polidoro da Caravaggio, and other Raphael pupils exercised, precluded the artist from receiving any significant work until 1526, when the widow Maria Bufalini commissioned an altarpiece for her husband's funerary chapel at San Salvatore in Lauro (fig. 14.6). The contract specified a Virgin

with the Christ child in her arms, along with St. John the Baptist and St. Jerome; apparently the patron expected a rather conventional *sacra conversazione*. For the work that was supposed finally to launch his career in Rome, Parmigianino made a typically extensive series of preparatory designs, exploring widely different possibilities, until he arrived at a solution that fulfilled the terms of the contract in the most surprising way, essentially inventing an entirely new subject. Without any iconographic or theological precedent, and largely through a process of experimental drawing, he transformed the vision of St. John the Evangelist, who wrote in the book of Revelations of a "woman clothed with the sun and moon," into an ecstatic dream of St. Jerome, who sleeps in an abandoned posture in a grassy glade. The child, no longer an infant cradled by the Virgin, seems to levitate between her legs. John the Baptist, another hermit saint whose camel-hair tunic has here been accessorized with a luxurious leopard-skin mantle, dominates the foreground. His extraordinary pose shows the deliberate primacy of art over nature in Parmigianino's work: John faces the viewer, yet his shoulders swivel backward so that he can point to the subject of his prophecies: "Behold the lamb of God."

Parmigianino conceived the work to demonstrate his knowledge and thorough command of recent art: the child standing between the Virgin's legs recalls Michelangelo's *Virgin and Child in Bruges* (see fig. 12.8), while the gesticulating saint is a delicately slender descendent of Michelangelo's male nudes. The Virgin enthroned on the moon recalls Raphael's *Madonna of Foligno*, which also featured a gesturing St. John (see fig. 13.24). At the same time, the work competes with Giulio's *Santa Maria dell'Anima* altarpiece (see fig. 14.4), especially in the dramatic lighting of the Virgin, her gracefully elongated proportions, and her placement above the other figures. Like Giulio, Parmigianino has identified the Virgin with the perfect geometry of the circle: the segment of half moon completes the curved top of the panel. Yet for an ambitious outsider to the Roman and Florentine traditions, mere assimilation was not enough: he sought to bring a more intense emotional tenor to the Roman altarpiece. Giulio's saints are decorously pious in their veneration of the Virgin; Parmigianino's are in states of visionary ecstasy. The emphasis on superhuman bodily beauty raises the specter of the erotic: the Virgin and Child seem not that far away from a Venus and Cupid, especially with the Virgin's demure downcast eyes and the mischievous and seductive glance of the child. Parmigianino reconceived the coexistence of the Christian and pagan as an equivalence between awakened devotional contemplation and the arousal of human desire.

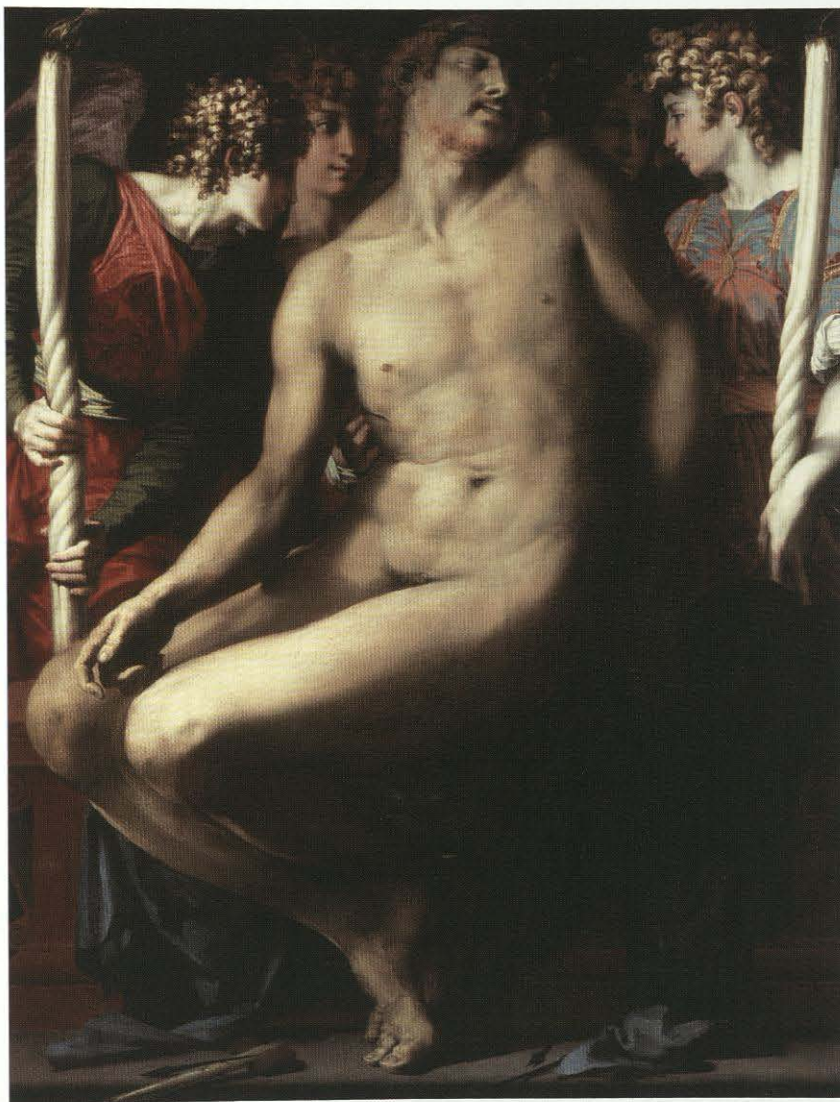


## Rosso Fiorentino

Parmigianino's calculations and inventions bear comparison to those of Rosso (1494–1540), another outsider who moved to Rome the year Giulio left. The young Florentine made a strong impression on contemporaries, who recorded (often disapprovingly) his opinions about art. Not only did Rosso insult the Raphael faction by criticizing the master's work, but he also offended Michelangelo, declaring on seeing the Sistine Chapel that he himself would never work in such a manner (*maniera*). Rosso's first major Roman assignment was a fresco project in Santa Maria della Pace with scenes from Genesis, and like Parmigianino's first commission, it appears to have gone badly. His friend Benvenuto Cellini reports that he had personally to protect Rosso when the Raphael followers attempted to murder him, and to lend Rosso money when the unsuccessful artist was reduced to near-starvation. Finally, at some point between 1525 and 1527 a fellow Florentine, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, bishop of Sansepolcro, commissioned a *Dead Christ with Angels* (fig. 14.7). The work was probably intended to serve as an altarpiece in a church in Tornabuoni's diocese: the subject of Christ at the tomb had long been a civic emblem of Sansepolcro.

The painting attests to Rosso's intensive study of Michelangelo. The main figure of the dead Christ, which shows the artist's knowledge of the nude male figures on the Sistine Ceiling, responds more directly to the *Pietà* in St. Peter's (see fig. 11.51), especially to its qualities of irony and paradox. Although it evokes the dead Christ in Michelangelo's sculpture, the body in Rosso's painting appears mysteriously alive. The figure is beautiful and serene, even though Christ has been killed by slow mutilation. Although strongly corporeal and intensely developed in illusionistic relief – the legs appear to project from the picture plane – the placement of the body in space is difficult to grasp. Rosso recognizes no distinction between the requirements of a devotional image and the pursuit of a sensual and artificial beauty that exceeds the limits of the natural.

The theme of the *Pietà*, whether with the Virgin or with angels, posed a particular challenge for Renaissance artists, especially with regard to determining the appropriate emotional tone. The artist had to acknowledge the mortal suffering of Christ in the Passion, yet also convey the momentous significance of Christ's death – a significance that lay in the mystery of the Eucharist, not the Passion. Only when we draw close to Rosso's work do we realize that the angels are meditating on his wounds, hidden in the shadows that shroud portions of the limbs and torso. The mood seems more one of rapture than of tragedy or even sorrow, and the viewer would be forgiven for concluding that what the angels really contemplate



is Christ's physical beauty. The intense and paradoxical illusionism of the figure, his physical emergence at the altar table, would have reinforced the belief in Christ's "real presence" in the bread consecrated during the Mass, a doctrine by now under attack from various reformed Christian sects, which in the wake of Luther had modified the doctrine or rejected it outright.

## The Allure of Printmaking

Like Parmigianino's altarpiece (which Maria Bufalini's family had taken to Città di Castello in northern Umbria), Rosso's work was never delivered. And in the end, the most significant completed works associated with both artists' Roman period were not paintings but prints. Raphael's death had also affected the market for engravings in Rome, since the painter had helped establish a system

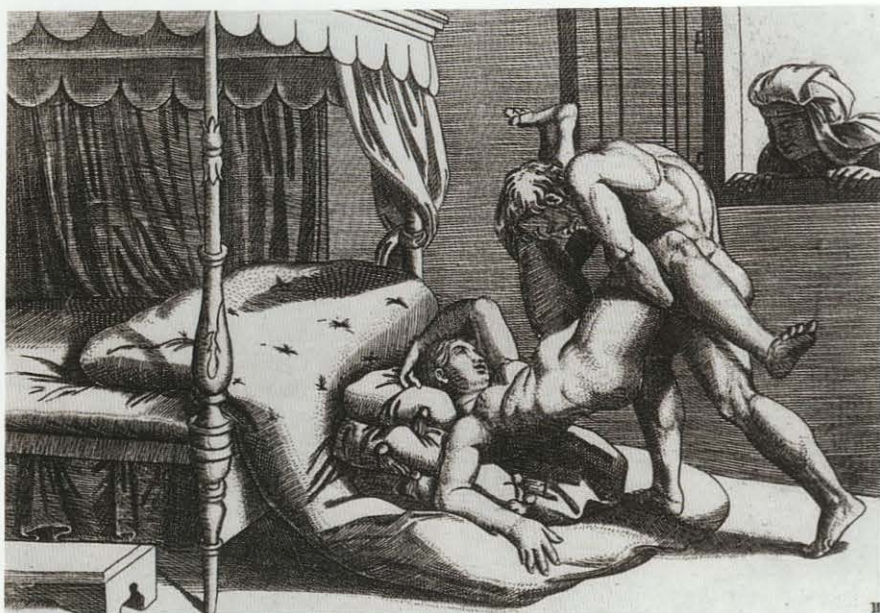
14.7

Rosso Fiorentino, *Angel Pietà (Dead Christ with Angels)*, completed 1527.

Oil on panel, 52½ x 41" (133.5 x 104.1 cm).

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





ABOVE

14.8

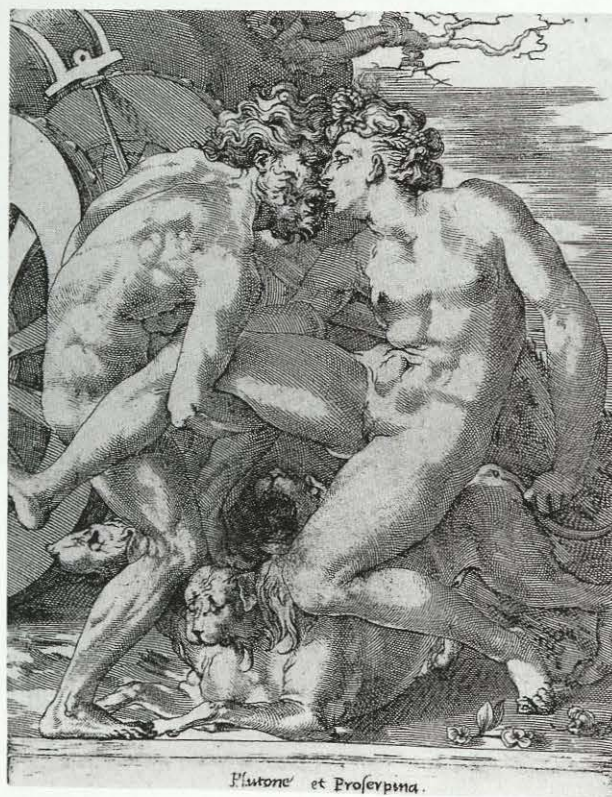
Anonymous sixteenth-century printmaker, woodcut copy after Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving after Giulio Romano's lost drawing, scene from the series *I Modi*.

RIGHT

14.9

Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio after Rosso, *Pluto and Proserpina*, 1525?

Engraving, 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (17.5 x 13.3 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna



by which painters would supply professional printmakers with ideas and designs. Raphael's own engraver, Marcantonio Raimondi, remained active, but he was now joined by Agostino dei Musi, Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, and Marco Dente, among others. Rosso and Parmigianino, together with the Raphael followers Perino del Vaga and Polidoro da Caravaggio, all earned incomes by providing

drawings to engravers, usually with a publisher acting as a go-between.

The few prints generally associated with Parmigianino in Rome were, with one possible exception, of religious subjects; Rosso, by contrast, designed no fewer than thirty-one engravings in the 1520s, all of them on mythological or poetic subjects. Rosso's distinctive path illustrates the unusual opportunities printmaking allowed. As they had for Andrea Mantegna (see fig. 10.8), mythological prints allowed the artist to demonstrate his originality, since there was no well-established visual tradition for the material he depicted, but they also let him show his command of a modern Roman style that claimed to ground itself in the study of antiquity. Designers were also coming to realize that a more flexible decorum governed poetic and mythological subjects executed in a cheaper and more ephemeral medium, and by Rosso's day printmakers were producing outright erotica. The earliest known post-classical pornographic images – that is, mass-produced, sexually explicit pictures made for the open market – can be traced back to Giulio Romano and Marcantonio Raimondi. Shortly before Giulio left Rome in 1524, Marcantonio issued a series of engravings depicting couples engaging in a variety of sexual acts, based on a set of Giulio drawings called *I Modi* (*The Positions*) that had been circulating privately (fig. 14.8). In response to the publication, the Roman authorities clapped Marcantonio in jail, confiscated his plates, and destroyed as many copies of the prints as they could seize. Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio's series called the *Loves of the Gods*, to which Rosso, Perino, and Polidoro all contributed, probably aimed at the same market, but it is more soft-core and legitimated by the mythological subject. The series must have been at least as appealing for its humor – even the gods are subject to the sometimes humiliating passions of love – as for its prurient subject matter. Rosso's *Pluto and Proserpina* (fig. 14.9) seems to poke fun at the elevated claims made for Michelangelo's art: the male and female figures locked in the throes of passion are based on two of the (male) *ignudi* from the Sistine Ceiling. Far more disturbing is the print known as *The Fury*, a nightmarish image of an emaciated, castrated madman riding on the back of a monster in a dark wood, and wielding a human skull (fig. 14.10). Rosso appears to have based his figure on a desiccated body, probably of the kind used to teach anatomy to medical students. Yet he has raised the cadaver to frenetic life, placed him in a pose similar to the *Laocoön* (see fig. 12.48) and, once again, recalled the animated *ignudi* of the Sistine Ceiling. Rosso here caricatures Michelangelo and the art of antiquity, but he also plays off the conceit that art has the power to make dead things come to life, a frequent theme in the praise of the “divine” Michelangelo. The print may have responded to,





complete, with the idea that an assistant could see to the finishing touches. Sebastiano del Piombo reported that the task greatly exceeded the assistant's capabilities: "I must tell you that he has ruined everything, above all the right foot...and he has also ruined the fingers of the hands, chiefly the one that holds the cross.... They don't appear to be works of marble, and look rather like the product of a pastry-maker." The remark may reinforce the impression that the only authentic "Michelangelo" works – by contrast to those of "Raphael" – were the ones he produced by his own hand. Especially in Florence, however, Michelangelo often resorted to such a division of labor, and the figure was warmly received by the patrons, who declined his offer to carve another. All sixteenth-century commentators praised it, and even Sebastiano conceded that "the knees alone are worth all of Rome."

The figure presently stands exposed on a high base, and can be seen from all sides. This was not how the

LEFT

14.10

Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio  
after Rosso, *Fury*, 1525?  
Engraving, 9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
(24.5 x 18.2 cm). British  
Museum, London

BELOW

14.11

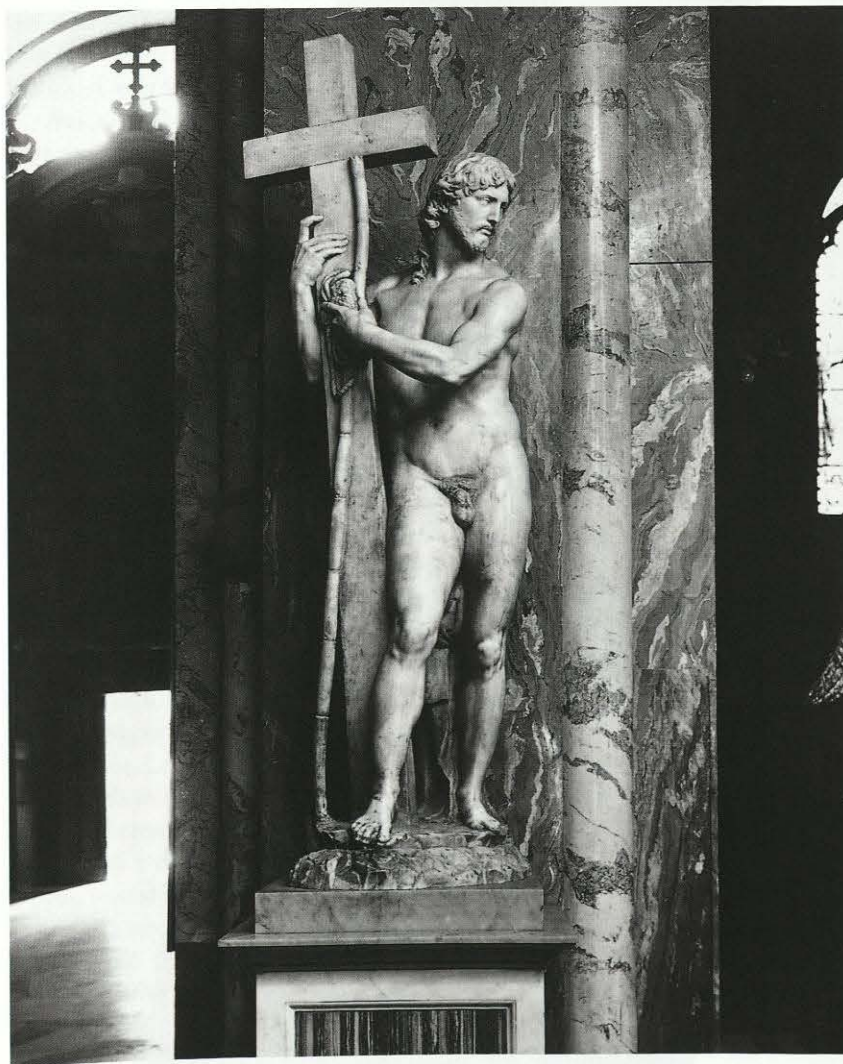
Michelangelo, *Risen Christ*,  
1519–21. Height 6'8"  
(2.05 m). Santa Maria  
sopra Minerva, Rome

and it certainly fed, the popular perception that the study of anatomy, so central to Michelangelo's art, was a ghoulish and necromantic enterprise. (Leonardo's anatomical researches in the Vatican had been terminated in 1516 after a workshop assistant accused him of sorcery.)

## Florence

### Michelangelo's Return to Sculpture

Though based in Florence, Michelangelo was hardly removed from the conditions of patronage that surrounded the Pope. Even while away from Rome, he continued working first for Leo and then for Clement on Medici commissions, and the heirs of Julius II, who had yet to receive the promised figures for their tomb (see fig. 13.38), competed for his time. Among the few works Michelangelo actually sent from Florence to Rome in the 1520s was the *Risen Christ*, a marble completed in 1521 and erected in the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (fig. 14.11). The figure had been commissioned seven years earlier by two brothers of the Vari family and by Bernardo Cencio, a canon of St. Peter's. Michelangelo had had to abandon a first version because of a flaw in the block of marble. He made a second attempt in Florence in 1519–21, and dispatched it to Rome before it was





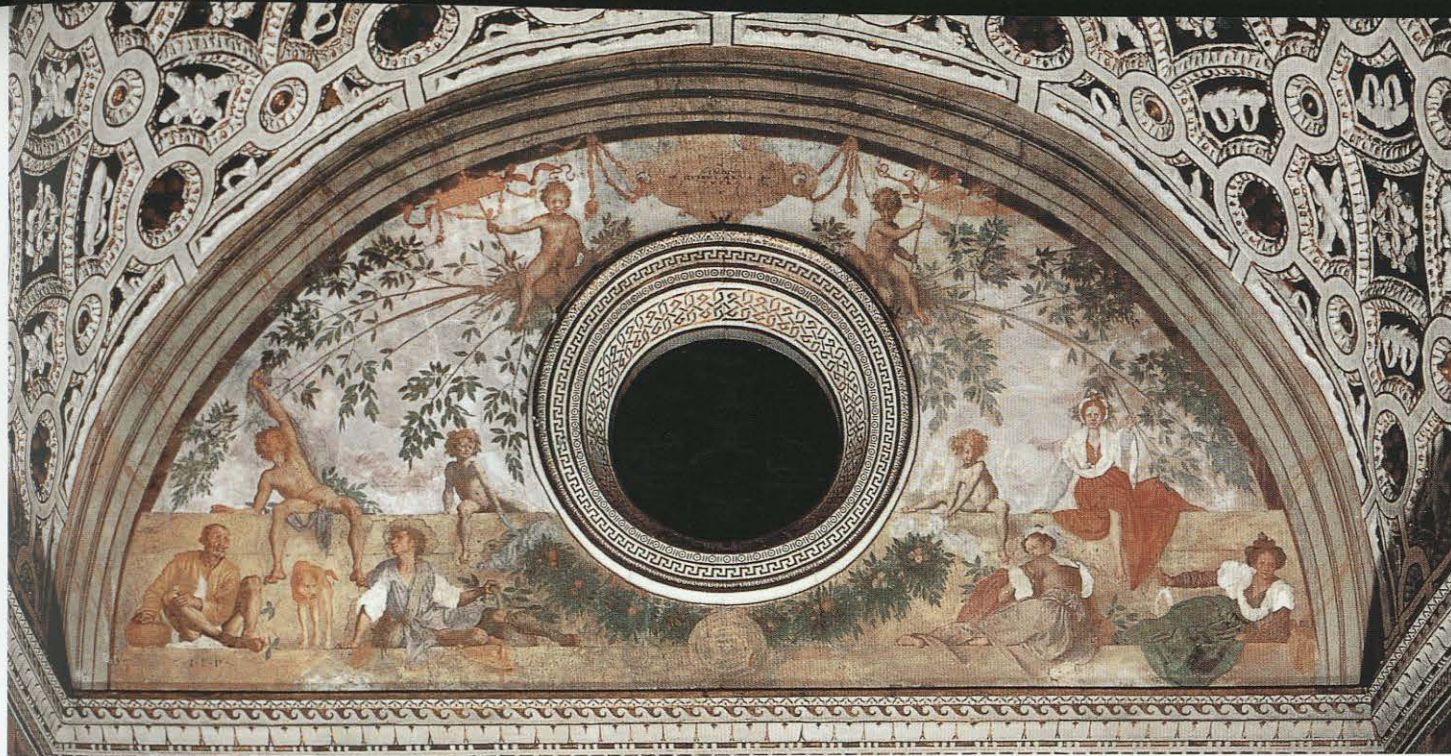


statue was intended to be viewed, nor how it was originally placed: Michelangelo conceived the *Risen Christ* for a shallow niche. From the right, the viewer sees the swivelling of the figure's neck, shoulder, and hips around the vertical axis. From the left, the figure becomes more planar, more similar to the face of the cross he directs at us. This point of view makes the swing of Christ's hip more evident, and also reveals the other instruments of his Passion: the rope that bound him, the vinegar-soaked sponge he was given in his thirst, the reed (here regularly notched to emphasize the sculpture's proportions) with which he was beaten.

The 1514 contract for the *Christ* specified a nude figure, something rare in Christian art and unprecedented in a work of this scale and prominence. The statue would surely have reminded contemporaries of the naked gods in ancient sculptures, and that may have been the point. The new Pope Adrian VI would refer to such images as "idols of the pagans," yet like the nudes in the Sistine Chapel, the *Risen Christ* announced that the perfect naked human form was now no longer the exclusive preserve of the pre-Christian world: in this case, the nudity itself celebrates Christ, who by his incarnation raised the human body from its fallen and sinful condition. Such beliefs may have been widespread among the cultivated members of the clergy and curia in the 1500s, even if they were destined to be of short duration. By 1600, when the figure was illustrated in Girolamo Francini's guidebook to Rome, it had been modestly covered with a drapery. While the figure was displayed in its original uncensored state for much of the late twentieth century, in 2000 one of its seventeenth-century coverings was restored so as not to offend pilgrims visiting Rome for the Holy Year. This is one work by Michelangelo that has resisted full assimilation by the category "art" and retains its function as church furnishing.

Roughly in the same years, Michelangelo was working on figures where the demands of beauty were taking precedence over the normal constraints of human anatomy. In the unfinished *Victory*, an oak-garlanded youth forces a bearded figure into a posture of agonized submission beneath him (fig. 14.12). Whereas the older victim is shown under extreme constraint, the youth twists himself into an extraordinary yet effortless pose. His chin, right shoulder, right hand, and left knee establish an axis around which the body forms a dynamic spiral. The face, however, is placid except for a glimmer of heroic (or despotic) satisfaction. The title *Victory* was bestowed by Vasari, who took the work from Michelangelo's studio after his death and installed it in the Great Council Chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio, incorporating it into a new post-Republican program that celebrated the military triumphs of Florence's current autocrat. What would Michelangelo himself have understood the group





to depict? Although the subject originated in a design for the tomb of Julius II, where it was allegedly to show either the subjection of personified cities captured by the Pope or Virtue triumphing over Vice, Michelangelo produced a more general and personal meditation. The paradoxical linking of ideal beauty with violent physical force is characteristic of Michelangelo's love poetry, which he began writing in just these years, and which frequently describes the power of the beloved's beauty to bind, enslave, or annihilate the beloved. Michelangelo may also have wished to show his artistic mastery of the body in the most difficult poses and actions through an allegory of domination. If, as it appears, the bearded man is a self-portrait of Michelangelo, then he could even represent the artist "mastered" or possessed by his own ability to create beauty. It is as if the experience of inspiration had come to seem sinister and even demonic. The compacted richness of meaning guaranteed the group a long afterlife in the sculpture of the later sixteenth century, especially outside of Rome.

#### Pontormo

Working at San Lorenzo, Michelangelo was a magnet for the city's young and ambitious artists, notably Jacopo Pontormo. Michelangelo more than once collaborated with the younger painter by providing him with drawings; Pontormo often worked in a style that represented his own very personal interpretation of the new Roman manner. In the princely villa of the Medici at Poggio a Caiano, employed by the future Pope Clement VII, Pontormo completed the so-called *Vertumnus and Pomona* in 1521 (fig. 14.13). The painting knowingly refers to the Roman *maniera* of Michelangelo, especially in the poses

of its athletic male nudes, but it deliberately avoids the epic and solemn character of the Sistine frescoes, as well as the ceiling's superhuman anatomies. Inspired energy has given way to a relaxed hedonism. Vasari reports that the fresco depicted a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* concerning the Roman nature god Vertumnus, who disguised himself as an old woman so as to get closer to Pomona, goddess of gardens. Certainly the women in the picture, who cast bemused looks in our direction, invite speculation on their identities, though the real subject of the painting is *villagiatura*, the simple summer lifestyle of the country retreat. Befitting the rustic setting, the male figures here are suntanned farm workers resting in the noonday heat, and their female counterparts wear contemporary clothing.

Florentines liked to believe that they shared the practice of *villagiatura* with the ancient Romans. This implied a repeating cycle of time, which was becoming an important theme in the dynastic symbolism of the Medici family. The motto GLOVIS inscribed beneath the scene is a rebus-like reversal of the Italian "Si volge": "It (i.e. time) turns (back)." Some of the figures clutch the branches of a laurel tree, from which one or two limbs are missing; one of the girls has a pruning hook. As early as the 1480s, Lorenzo de' Medici had adopted the pruned laurel with new green shoots springing forth as a symbol of renewal, the return of the Golden Age. His heirs had added a motto from Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI:143), "uno avulso, non deficit altera" ("as soon as one is torn away, another takes its place"). The specific reference here is probably to recent catastrophic deaths in the Medici family – Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, in 1516, and Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, in 1519, both of whom Michelangelo himself would soon portray. The accent on youth,

ABOVE

14.13

Jacopo Pontormo,  
*Vertumnus and Pomona*,  
c. 1520–21. Fresco. Villa  
Medici, Poggio a Caiano

OPPOSITE

14.12

Michelangelo, *Victory*,  
c. 1530. Marble, height  
8'6" (2.61 m). Salone di  
Cinquecento, Palazzo dei  
Priori, Florence





**14.14**  
Capponi Chapel, with  
paintings (fresco and panel)  
by Jacopo Pontormo,  
1525–28. Santa Felicita,  
Florence

sexuality, and the fertility of the laurel promises the inevitable continuation of the Medici lineage and its power over the city. Another line from Virgil displayed in the fresco, “studium quibus arva tueri” (“whose care it is to look after our fields”), referred in *Georgics* (I:21), its original context, to the gods of nature, whom the fresco conceivably depicts. Here, however, the more obvious allusion is to the Medici and their “care” of Florence, suggesting that the rustics are but a guise for past and future Medici “immortals.”

In 1525–28 Pontormo painted a chapel newly acquired by the papal banker Ludovico di Gino Capponi in the church of Santa Felicita (figs. 14.14–14.15). The chapel, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi in the previous century, was dedicated to the Annunciation, and Pontormo depicts this subject on the counterfacade of the building, on either side of a stained-glass window

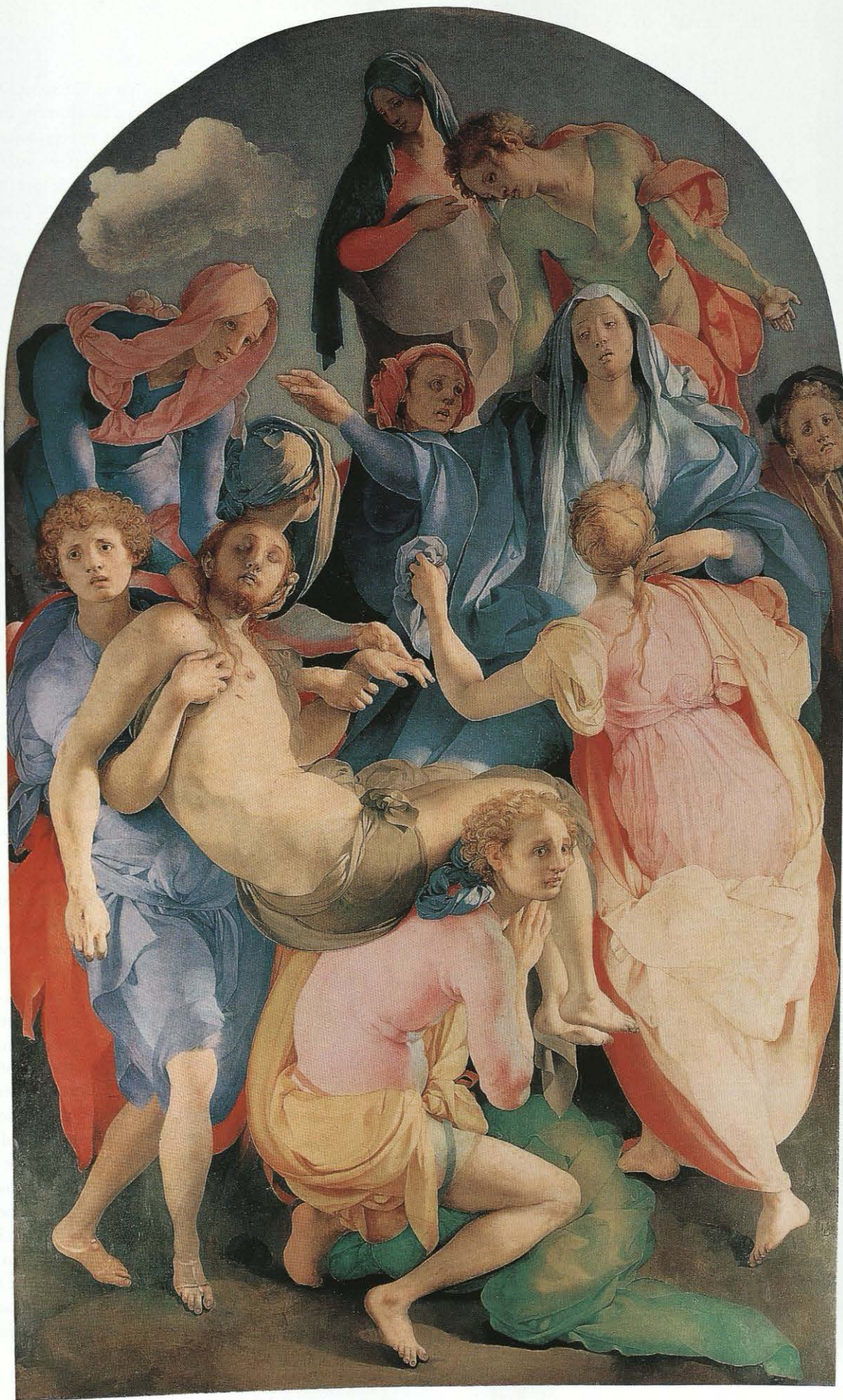
by Guillaume de Marcillat showing the *Entombment*. Unusually, the altarpiece does not follow the chapel's dedication, focusing instead on Christ's Passion, and in the most unconventional way. A drawing indicates that Pontormo originally conceived his composition as a *Deposition*, but in the finished work, the Cross, originally to be visible in the upper left, has disappeared. The carrying of Christ's body rather suggests an *Entombment*, but no tomb is visible, and the stained-glass window would in any case have made such a picture redundant. Pontormo's painting can be best understood as an unconventional treatment of the Pietà theme: it includes the sorrowing Virgin and the serene body of Christ, both highly reminiscent of Michelangelo's sculpture for St. Peter's in Rome (see fig. 11.51): the boyish creatures who carry the body are probably angels, like the attendants Rosso added to his own *Angel Pietà* (see fig. 14.7). Christ's body seems to present no burden, and the angels themselves, on tiptoe, appear weightless. Yet if Pontormo's and Rosso's pictures include comparable protagonists, Pontormo's departs from all earlier tradition in dramatizing the static and iconic theme, imagining the never previously depicted action of the dead Christ borne away from the Virgin. Like the works of Michelangelo and Rosso, Pontormo's *Pietà* subdues any references to Christ's suffering and to the violence of the Passion. The mourning figures show an appropriate degree of sorrow, but this is a vision of unearthly and uplifting beauty, designed to reassure the viewer of Christ's victory over death, fulfilling the promise of the joyous *Annunciation* nearby. Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven would have been anticipated by the original decoration of the dome, in which the figure of God the Father looked down upon the event.

Beauty, even a beauty achieved by self-consciously artificial means, here provided a fully adequate vehicle for religious meaning. Pontormo has dispensed with many standard components of the Florentine Renaissance picture, in the interests of an intricately balanced formal design. The rules of perspective have been suspended. Overlapping figures form an interwoven pattern without any regard for their logical position in space, and the proportions of limbs and torsos have been arbitrarily elongated. Gravity exerts little force: bodies seem to float upward through space. The colors consist almost entirely of blues and pinks, with a few passages in green, yellow, and orange. The palette is in the highest of keys, the *chiaroscuro* Leonardo had introduced to Florence just a few decades earlier now entirely rejected. Pontormo takes his cue once more from the luminous and variegated Sistine Ceiling; he thinks of color as a decorative and artificial addition to a wall rather than as a natural aspect of forms themselves.



14-15

Jacopo Pontormo, *Pietà*  
(*Entombment*), 1525–28.  
Oil on panel, 10'3/4" x  
6'3/4" (3.13 x 1.92 m).  
Capponi Chapel, Santa  
Felicita, Florence



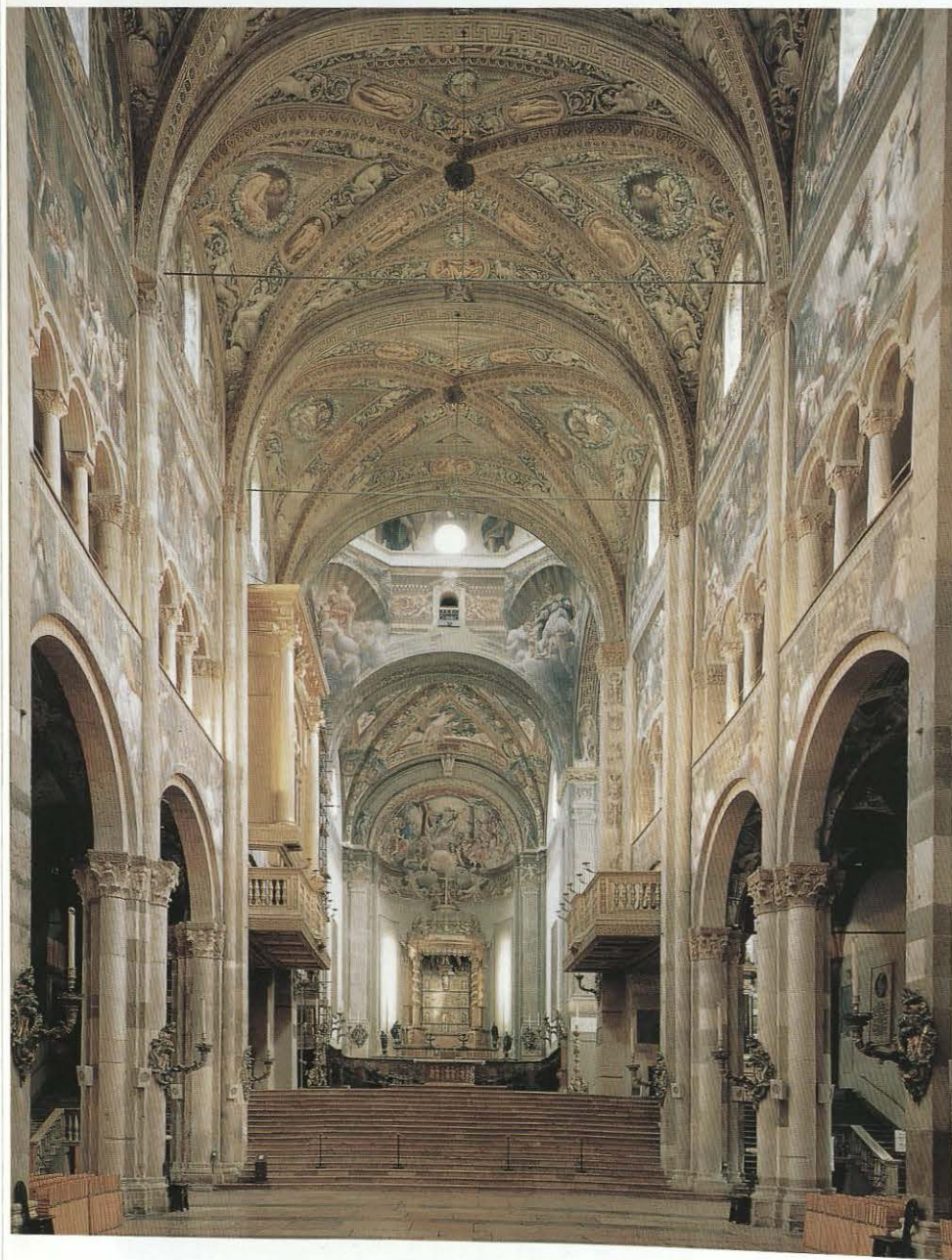


## Lombardy and Venice

### Correggio in Parma Cathedral

Florence since 1512 had been ruled as a possession of the Medici papacy: it was in essence a province of Rome through most of the 1520s, as the very presence there of Michelangelo attested. In far-flung centers of the peninsula, too, the power and authority of Rome was a major concern. In 1521 the city of Parma in Lombardy, under French occupation for several years, returned to the rule of the Church. The following year, the canons of Parma Cathedral hired the painter Antonio Allegri (now bet-

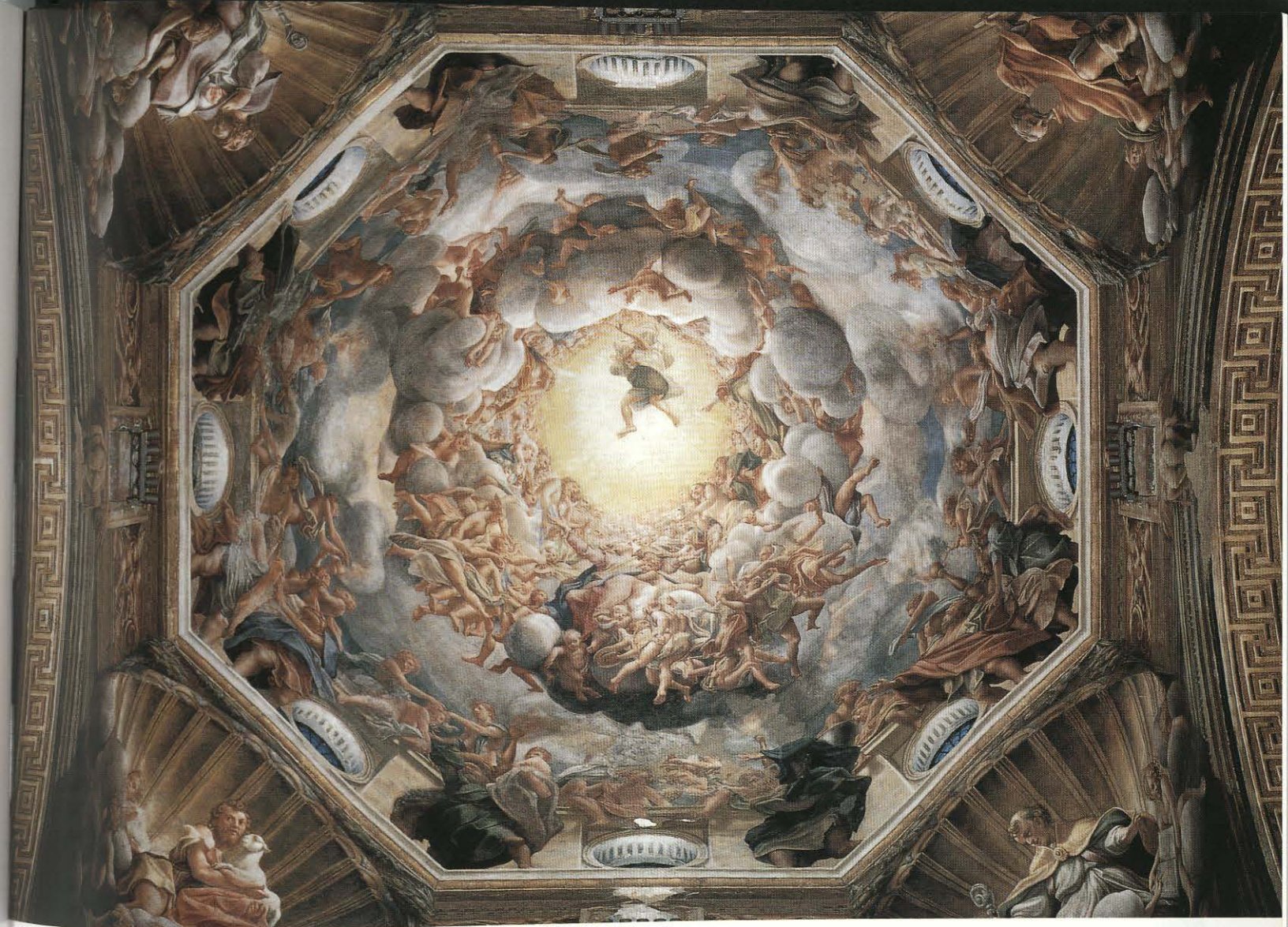
14.16  
Nave, Parma Cathedral,  
with dome fresco by  
Correggio, *Assumption of  
the Virgin*, 1522–28



ter known as Correggio, after his birthplace) to decorate the cathedral dome with a fresco of the *Assumption of the Virgin*. Correggio was already an artist of some distinction, having worked for noble and monastic patrons in and around the cities of Correggio, Mantua, Modena, and Parma over the previous two decades. Despite his association with patrons interested in reform, Correggio's paintings in the cathedral served the interests of ecclesiastical authority at its most conservative and traditional. The very subject of the Assumption, and Correggio's lavishly triumphal treatment of it, is a glorification of the church and a celebration of Parma's return to papal rule (figs. 14.16–14.18). Like the *Coronation of the Virgin*, the Assumption relates fundamentally to the idea of a “marriage” between Christ and the Virgin, understood symbolically as the loving union of Christ in heaven with his Church on earth. This is the drama that unfolds in Correggio's dome fresco. From directly underneath, the fresco looks strangely off-center (see fig. 14.17); it is difficult to take in. This is because it was designed to be seen gradually, with the experience of the moving observer in mind. Entering the cathedral, we are first aware of a blaze of light at the far end of the nave (see fig. 14.16); advancing toward it, we soon discern the figures of two of Parma's patron saints, St. Hilary and St. John the Baptist. We then see colossal figures of Apostles, apparently standing on the actual parapet of the cathedral, and responding with intense emotion to the spectacle overhead (see fig. 14.18). As we advance further, the ascending figure of the Virgin comes into view, surging upward with the support of golden heavenly clouds and smiling angels. Adam and Eve along with other Old Testament figures appear next, and finally the beardless and youthful Christ becomes visible as we reach the stairs.

The idea of Rome as center certainly affected Correggio's conception of the great fresco. In particular, it demanded that the painter consider his own relationship to the papal projects of Michelangelo and Raphael. At the same time, however, Correggio had grander ambitions: his great fresco would be no mere provincial homage to the art of the Roman Renaissance. He saw himself as the bearer of a tradition that was not that of Rome and Florence, nor for that matter of Venice, but which was rooted in the achievements of other north Italian artists, like Andrea Mantegna. From the study of Mantegna, whose sons Correggio befriended in Mantua, he learned the technique of foreshortening figures as if viewed from below – the device of *sotto in sù* composition visible in Mantegna's frescoes (see fig. 7.22) in Padua and in the *Camera Picta* (see fig. 8.19) in Mantua. Equally important was the north Italian work of Leonardo da Vinci, above all that artist's attention to





ABOVE

14.17

Correggio, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 1522–28. Fresco. Parma Cathedral

RIGHT

14.18

Correggio, *Assumption of the Virgin* (detail), 1522–28. Parma Cathedral





## 14.19

Correggio, *Virgin and Child with St. Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome*, 1528. Oil on panel, 7'8½" x 4'7½" (2.35 x 1.41 m). Galleria Nazionale, Parma

the expression of figures and his technique of *sfumato* modeling, which imparted such delicacy of texture to flesh and draperies. Correggio went far beyond Leonardesque *sfumato*, however, in his use of color for decorative and expressive ends. He sought to adopt the rich hues of Perugino and his north Italian peers Francesco Francia and Lorenzo Costa, while simultaneously pursuing, like Leonardo, a much greater effect of unity, in his case by bathing his figures and their setting in a golden light. In the cities of the Po valley Correggio quietly created a revolution that would polarize artistic theory and practice in later generations.

Did Correggio ever travel to Rome? His very partisan followers, like Ludovico Carracci at the end of the



century, would deny that he did or that he had any need to, as if Correggio's art was an autonomous product of "Lombard" soil. Although there were major paintings by Raphael in nearby Piacenza and in Bologna, Correggio's painting shows a knowledge of Roman Renaissance art that he could not have obtained at a distance through prints and drawings, or by studying local examples. Parma's political connection to Rome would itself have encouraged Correggio to conceive his treatment of the *Assumption* as a response to the Sistine Chapel, which was also dedicated to the Assumption and displayed the subject in a fresco by Perugino on the altar wall. The Sistine served more as a stimulus, however, than as a source of borrowed form. Early project drawings for the Apostles standing on the parapet of the dome show that Correggio originally intended to paint seated figures on thrones, on either side of the round windows, in a manner reminiscent of the Sistine prophets and sibyls. In the end, though, Correggio sought to go beyond Michelangelo, having figures overlap the real architecture and treating them consistently as if viewed from below. The athletic and nearly nude angels arranged in concentric rings above, or accompanying the patron saints in the pendentives underneath, are pre-adolescent versions of Michelangelo's heroic nudes. Most astonishing is the Virgin herself. Correggio's virtuoso foreshortening invites comparison with Michelangelo's *Jonah* (see fig. 12.39), on the vault just above Perugino's old-fashioned *Assumption* fresco, yet no artist in Florence or Rome would have contemplated such a radical rethinking of the Virgin Mary's image, truncating her body to the point of near-caricature. Nor would they have shown Christ as Correggio does, hurtling through space as if he has leapt from the apex of the dome, with his garment rising around his hips. While most of Correggio's angels are modestly draped, one or two glaringly splay their naked legs in the direction of the viewer. Modern writers, indeed, have often wondered how Correggio got away with this, especially given the scandal that broke when Michelangelo used similar devices in his Sistine *Last Judgment* a decade later. Conservative as Correggio's patrons may have been, it appears that they had fewer preconceptions than the Florentines and Romans about how sacred figures in the "modern" style ought to look.

The official meaning of the fresco is the triumph of the Church, and its role as the mediator of salvation: there is no redemption without the clergy, the Virgin, and the saints. The fresco, in other words, defends theological positions that were now under attack from Luther and other reformers. But Correggio allows an involvement that opens the possibility of other kinds of understanding. The ecstatically ascending Virgin anticipates the



lay viewer's own bodily resurrection and ascension into Heaven; the Virgin's passionate impending union with Christ raises the possibility that the viewer's relation can be equally direct, emotional, and unmediated.

### Correggio and Lorenzo Lotto: Altarpieces

The same emotional tenor characterizes Correggio's altarpieces, among them the *Virgin and Child with St. Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome* (fig. 14.19). The work was commissioned by a lady of Parma, Briseide Colla Bergonzi, and installed in the church of St. Anthony Abbot in Parma in 1528. The humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1466/9–1536), whose works were popular in the social circles to which Bergonzi and other Correggio patrons belonged, had written in his book *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (*Weapon of the Christian Knight*) of the necessity of devotion shaped by both learning and piety. The good Christian should study the scriptures and the writings of the saints and Church fathers, but should also recognize the role of the emotions in awakening the conscience and achieving a state of joyous humility in relation to the divine. In Correggio's painting the gaunt figure of the scholar-saint Jerome devoutly offers his translation of the Bible to the Christ child, with the assistance of an angel who seems to recite the words of the text. With the Virgin smilingly looking on, the Christ child reaches for the book – thus accepting his own destiny, while caressing the hair of Mary Magdalene, who passionately kisses his feet. Unlike the Virgin and Child images of Giulio Romano (see fig. 14.4) and Parmigianino (see fig. 14.6), where the Virgin is a remote otherworldly object of veneration, the emphasis is on the intense rapport between the figures, expressed through sight and through touch. Both the lion and a little angel look out toward the spectator, and the angel smells the fragrant ointment in the Magdalene's jar, as if inviting the beholders to project themselves into the sensual experience described here. The saints traditionally signify mediation and intercession; here, however, they stand in for the possibility of a more direct and immediate experience of divinity.

Correggio may have known the paintings of Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1480–1556), an older Venetian artist who also pursued an itinerant career. He had worked in the Stanza della Segnatura with Raphael, executing a fresco on the Jurisprudence wall, but afterward he remained further north in the smaller centers of the Veneto, Lombardy, and the Marches. Lotto was capable of painting in a range of styles, depending on the requirements of a given commission, but at times his atmospheric play of reflected light, his soft shadows, and his directness come close to Correggio's. His altarpiece for the Franciscan church of San Bernardino in Bergamo, *Virgin and Child with Saints*



(fig. 14.20), signed and dated 1521, creates an almost overwhelming sense that the painting is aware of the viewer. An angel dressed in a burnt-orange vestment looks up suddenly, turning away from his writing as if distracted at our approach. Above, the Virgin in shimmering scarlet leans forward with her palm outstretched, as if beckoning us to come nearer. The soaring angels who support her canopy seem to draw the great billowing cloth over our heads, recalling the traditional theme of the "Virgin of Mercy," where the Virgin shelters a community beneath her cloak. Lotto painted the work for a confraternity, and the engulfing impact of the canopy would have created a sense both that the Virgin protected its members and that they participated in a special way in the devotion shown to her. Lotto's color is highly untypical of Venetian, Roman, or even Florentine painting: he favors decorative contrasts of flowery pinks and lime greens, oranges and purples. The grandeur of design reflects his experience of Rome and direct acquaintance with Raphael's work. At the same time, his figures reject the ideal and superhuman types by now common in that tradition. Lotto seems

**14.20**  
Lorenzo Lotto, *Virgin and Child with Saints* (San Bernardino altarpiece), 1521. Oil on canvas, 9'5" x 8'9½" (2.87 x 2.68 m). San Bernardino in Pignolo, Bergamo





14.21  
Lorenzo Lotto, *St. Nicholas  
in Glory with St. John the  
Baptist and St. Lucy*, 1527–  
29. Oil on canvas, 10'11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
x 6'2" (3.35 x 1.88 m). Santa  
Maria del Carmine, Venice

deliberately to have conceived his protagonists as everyday characters lacking in aristocratic sophistication and grace: Bernardino ogles the child, while the angel's bare foot juts awkwardly off the marble step.

The San Bernardino altarpiece may show a sophisticated artist promoting a new conception of "popular" devotion, though other altarpieces introduce more refined and idealized human types. For a merchant confraternity at the Carmelite Church in Venice, Lotto executed a *St. Nicholas in Glory with St. John the Baptist and St. Lucy* in 1527–29 (fig. 14.21). The composition, with its ideally beautiful figures, remind us that Lotto had worked in the same room as Raphael's *Disputa* (see fig. 12.51) twenty years before, yet the rich color has little to do with the Raphael school or indeed with any other contemporary painter in Venice: it has more affinity with Correggio and the younger artists working to the west, in the cities of Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. The atmospheric landscape with its clouds looming over a harbor is closely modeled on a painting of the *Drowning of Pharaoh's Armies in the Red Sea* by Jan Van Scorel, a Dutch artist who had come to Italy and enjoyed the favor of Pope Adrian VI. Here again, by drawing on a Netherlandish example, Lotto challenges the dominant tradition of modern Venetian painting, that of Giorgione and Titian. This may have cost him: the critic Ludovico Dolce, one of Titian's admirers, later ridiculed the Carmelite altarpiece, citing it as "a very notable example of a bad use of color."

#### Lorenzo Lotto as a Portraitist

One of Lotto's most inventive portraits is that of Andrea Odoni (fig. 14.23), made in 1527 for Odoni, a rich Venetian government official and art collector. Possibly conversing about a collection of Roman sculpture and other objects, he proffers a small statuette of Diana of Ephesus, the many-breasted divinity understood in the Renaissance to personify Nature; with his other hand, he points to his chest and clutches a small gold cross (now difficult to see). Lotto's Odoni seems to direct an answer to those who condemned the acquisition of ancient sculpture as idolatrous and wasteful. (Adrian VI, in fact, was only one of many who thought so, and not all of them were clerics.) Through the contemplation of art, the painting implies, a collector learns something of his own nature as a human being motivated by pleasure and feeling. At the same time, the sculptures that surround Odoni seem humorously alive: a head of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius nuzzles a headless Venus, while a urinating Hercules seems to have eroded the leg of a bathing goddess on the shelf beyond. Themes like this had no parallel in Venice or Rome, but again



correspond with the interests of artists and patrons west of the Veneto: Parmigianino, around 1523, produced a portrait of a collector vividly characterized not only by his nervous physiognomy but by his sculptures, coins, and books (fig. 14.22).

#### Titian: Two Altarpieces

Two of Titian's most important altarpieces from the 1520s bring out the differences between his practice and Lotto's. He completed his 1522 *Resurrection* for the church of Santi Nazaro e Celso in Brescia, a Lombard town not far from Bergamo (fig. 14.24). The patron was the bishop of Brescia, Altobello Averoldi: he had been an insider at the papal court in Rome and from 1516 to 1523 had served as the Pope's legate to the city of Venice, where he kept elite intellectual company. The altarpiece, in which Averoldi appears as a donor, would have served as a proxy in his absence. The picture adopts the very traditional format of the polyptych, now almost obsolete, but the individual panels also demonstrate the patron's cosmopolitan taste and cultural milieu. The central one is a kind of "nocturne," or night scene (Giorgione was famous for



**14.22**  
Parmigianino, *Man  
with a Book*, c. 1523.  
Oil on panel, 35<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
(89.5 x 63.8 cm). National  
Gallery, London



**14.23**  
Lorenzo Lotto, *Andrea  
Odoni*, 1527. Oil on canvas,  
3'3<sup>4</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 3'8<sup>8</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (1.01 x  
1.14 m). Hampton Court  
Palace, Surrey



painting these, although none of his have survived). A radiant and triumphant Christ commands the attention of the viewer, like that of the two soldiers in near darkness against the dawn sky, made visible only through light reflected in their armor. To the left, one of the soldier saints Nazzaro and Celso presents Averoldi to Christ, while the opposite panel features the martyred soldier St. Sebastian, with St. Roch far in the background. Titian made the figure of Sebastian a particular focus of his own calculated self-promotion. The saint balances his right leg on a toppled column, signed TICIANUS FACIEBAT M. D. XXII. The gesture of an angel in the background, engaged in tending St. Roch, seems to point to the signature, and when Titian showed off this canvas in his

studio, he declared that it was alone worth the price set for the entire altarpiece. Reports reached Duke Alfonso d'Este of Ferrara, who was impatiently awaiting the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (see fig. 13.51), and only when he was persuaded that the Papal Legate would be offended did he desist in his efforts to buy the *St. Sebastian* portion of the altarpiece for himself.

In form, the *St. Sebastian* simultaneously evokes one of the dying youths in the ancient *Laocoön* group (see fig. 12.48) and Michelangelo's recently executed *Slaves* (see figs. 13.35–13.36) for the tomb of Julius II. Titian is asking sophisticated viewers like Averoldi, who would notice the references, to reflect on the superior capacity of painting to produce the effects associated with sculpture, and to

14.24  
Titian, *Resurrection of Christ with Saints George, Nazzaro, Celso and Sebastian* (Averoldi polyptych), 1522. Oil on panel. Santi Nazaro e Celso, Brescia





excel sculpture in depicting the vividness and pathos of the naked body. The figure of Christ in the central panel, similarly, alludes to Laocoön himself. Wittily, Titian has taken a figure identified with agony and turned it into its opposite – one who has overcome physical suffering and even death. Titian certainly knew the *Laocoön* through the circulation of drawings and miniature copies; later in life, he would design his own print caricaturing the sculpture. His knowledge of the *Slaves* is less easily accounted for, but indicates that an artist's awareness of famous inventions in centers he is not known to have visited should not be underestimated.

In 1526 Titian completed his second great altarpiece for the church of the Frari in Venice, the work that goes furthest in defining the Venetian altarpiece in terms of its differences from those in Florence and Rome (as well as Parma and Bergamo). The painting, for the family chapel of Jacopo Pesaro, combines the votive portrait – a type associated with military leaders (see for example fig. 7.18), where the donor and the Virgin or patron saint confront each other on a horizontal axis – with the vertical hierarchy of the *sacra conversazione* (fig. 14.25). The result is a strikingly de-centered design, restructuring the connection between figures within the altarpiece and their relation to the viewer. Like Correggio, Titian here considers the placement of the work in its spatial context and the encounter with the beholder. Knowing that it would be installed in the left-hand aisle of the church, he orientated the Virgin at an oblique angle, so that the “correct” perspective would be that of the approaching worshiper up the aisle from that direction. Viewed from directly in front, the altarpiece loses some of its dynamism, though from this point of view, significantly, the composition also reorganizes itself around St. Peter, whom Titian placed on the central axis of the painting. In this position, he appears even to control and mediate access to the Virgin Mary. Peter represents the Church, and especially in Venice he denotes the relation between the Church and the Venetian state. This would have been significant to Pesaro, who in 1502 had led the forces of the Church in a successful campaign against the Turks in the Ionian Sea. Pesaro himself, in fact, is shown with George (the soldier-saint who here holds the banner of the Church) and a Turkish prisoner. Titian's purpose in this commission is thus very different from that of Lotto in Bergamo, Pontormo in Florence, Correggio in Parma, or Parmigianino in Rome. He has created a monumental image of an ideal political order dominated by the papacy. Titian evokes the majesty of the state with the lofty space and colossal columns that dominate the composition, towering over the human figures in an unprecedented manner. The picture might even be oppressive, were it not for the presence of St. Francis, who, with Christ, is the only figure to show emotion.



## 14.25

Titian, *Virgin and Child with Saints Peter, George, and Francis* (Pesaro altarpiece), 1526. Oil on canvas, 16'1" x 8'10" (4.9 x 2.7 m). Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice

The theme of devotion introduced by Francis arises from the fact that a confraternity dedicated to the Immaculate Conception used the altar on its particular feast day, but devotional concerns are really secondary to the political and ceremonial aspect.

## Pordenone in Cremona Cathedral

Like Lotto, the Friulian artist Giovanni Antonio de Sacchis, generally known as Pordenone (c. 1484–1539) after his birthplace, established his reputation by working in the smaller cities and religious foundations of Lombardy and the Veneto. Within a few years, Venice itself would regard him as a serious challenge to the supremacy of Titian. Pordenone's most impressive paintings are a 1520–21 cycle of frescoes on the Passion of Christ at Cremona Cathedral, continuing a program that local painters had begun in 1515 (figs. 14.26–14.28). Pordenone's work stands in marked contrast with that of his predecessors, and signals the emergence of a new element in Italian art.

Whereas Michelangelo, Pontormo, and Rosso rendered the imagery of the suffering Christ with a certain optimism and with an insistence on the superhuman beauty of the incarnate god, Pordenone ignored all Italian precedent, seeking to shock spectators with the pain, cruelty, and horror of the event. Rather than looking south



to Rome or east to Venice, Pordenone paid closer attention to northern European art, where violent and bloody depictions of Christ's suffering and death were more typical. Albrecht Dürer's printed Passions, which are fairly restrained by northern standards, had made such imagery fairly well known in Italy. (Pontormo made use of them in a Passion series at the Certosa di Galuzzo near Florence in the mid 1520s.) In general, though, Italian spectators found the all too human vulnerability of Christ in

northern Passions hard to stomach. In 1517, a cardinal's secretary, Antonio de' Beatis, described large carved crucifixions by the roadside in southern Austria, noting that to him they inspired "far more terror than devotion."

The narrative in Pordenone's frescoes lurches along with tumultuous energy. Christ seems anything but divine, while his tormentors – some of them dressed in the armor, feathered hats, and particolored hose of contemporary mercenaries – are possessed by a sadis-

## 14.26

Pordenone, *Scenes from the Passion of Christ*, 1520–21:  
*Christ before Pilate*. Fresco.  
Cremona Cathedral



## 14.27

Pordenone, *Scenes from the Passion of Christ*, 1520–21:  
*Christ Nailed to the Cross*. Fresco.  
Cremona Cathedral







14.28

Pordenone, *Scenes from the Passion of Christ*, 1520–21:  
*The Crucifixion*. Fresco.  
 Cremona Cathedral

tic hatred. (Such figures would have resonated for the Cremonese, who had lived under nearly a decade of occupation first by Venice and then by invading French armies.) Each scene introduces new episodes of violence: in *Christ before Pilate* a soldier on a rearing horse charges the crowd, while in the scene of *Christ Nailed to the Cross* a murderous brawl breaks out. The broad, muscular bodies may reflect some knowledge of Michelangelo, but Pordenone exaggerates the type to near caricature in order to emphasize the gross physicality and crudeness of the soldiers. Where he does deploy the hallmarks of narrative painting in the modern manner, he develops them to hyperbole. Astonishing foreshortenings constantly break the plane of the wall: the Cross to which Christ is being nailed seems to thrust into the nave of the church, and it appears that only the nail being hammered into his hand keeps Christ himself from slipping into the viewer's space. A prophet leans urgently forth to point to the place where Christ's feet will be nailed, which is already pierced and stained with blood. In the gigantic fresco over the main entrance to the cathedral, it is the soldiers and their horses who dominate the composition, displacing the crucified Christ from his traditional position on a central axis. As a result, those leaving the cathedral are confronted with the powerful, pointing figure of the pagan centurion who, according to the Gospel of St. Matthew, converted at the moment of Christ's

death and announced "Truly this was the Son of God." The image thus urges the viewer to acknowledge the divinity of Christ: the vigorous posture of the good thief to Christ's right, no less than the rapt expressions of several other soldiers, underscores the theme of "turning to Christ" ("conversion" comes from the Latin *convertere*, "to turn toward"). To the right, the image takes up the idea of conversion explicitly, showing a group of turbaned figures who listen to a sermon preached by a tonsured figure resembling a friar. Titian, we have seen, would allude to the conversion of the Ottomans in his slightly later Pesaro altarpiece, but Pordenone's fresco shows conversion to be an urgent and uncompleted process.

### The Sack of Rome in 1527

Warfare in northern Italy would worsen and become more widespread in the 1520s, with terrible consequences for its leading powers. Desiring to establish a territorial bridge between his German and Spanish possessions, the young Holy Roman Emperor Charles V invaded the French-occupied territories of the north-west in 1521 and won a massive victory at Pavia in 1525, capturing King Francis I. Pope Clement VII had initially supported the emperor — he had been elected as Charles's candidate — but he now grew anxious at the prospect of the extension



FAR RIGHT

14.29

Benedetto da Rovezzano, fragment of the tomb of St. Giovanni Gualberto, 1505–15 (damaged by imperial troops, 1530). Marble, 28 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 37" (72 x 94 cm). Museo di Andrea del Sarto, Florence

of imperial power in Italy. In 1526, Clement deserted the imperial alliance and joined with France in the League of Cognac. Charles's attempt to chastise the papacy would have a horrifying outcome. In the winter of 1526 he dispatched a company of German mercenaries, many of them Lutherans, across the Alps under the command of Georg Frundsberg. Although the princes of Mantua and Ferrara were officially bound in allegiance to the papacy, they quietly supported the imperial advance. For a time, Frundsberg met resistance from the armies of the papal alliance, commanded by the Duke of Urbino, and from the effective Medici warlord known as Giovanni delle Bande Nere. With the death of Giovanni near Mantua, however, there was little to stop the imperial forces. Bent on vengeance and plunder, and with the avowed aim of hanging the Pope, they reached Rome in May of 1527.

Here are the events as reported by a soldier with the imperial forces:

On the 6th of May we took Rome by storm, killed 6,000 men, plundered the houses, carried off what we found in churches and elsewhere, and finally set fire to a good portion of the town. A strange life indeed! We tore up, destroyed the deeds of copyists, the records, letters and documents of the Papal court. The Pope fled to Castel Sant'Angelo with his bodyguard, the cardinals, bishops, and members of the Curia who had escaped the massacre. For three weeks we laid siege until, forced by hunger, he had to surrender the castle.... Inside, we found Pope Clement with twelve cardinals in a storeroom. The pope had to sign the surrender treaty that the secretary read to him. They all bemoaned themselves piteously and wept a lot. So here we are, all of us rich. Less than two months after we occupied Rome 5,000 of our men had died of the plague, for the corpses remained unburied. In July, half dead, we left the city to find cleaner air.... In September, back in Rome, we pillaged the city more thoroughly and found great hidden treasures. We remained billeted there for another six months.

Of Rome's 54,000 inhabitants, at least 10,000 died and an estimated 10,000 more became refugees. The engraver Marco Dente was among the dead; Marcantonio Raimondi, captured by the Spanish, survived, though he was reduced to poverty thereafter, and was apparently so traumatized by the events that he never made another print. Toward the end of the year, Emperor Charles V and Pope Clement VII, both of whom needed to resort to face-saving measures, rapidly concluded a peace. Charles agreed to receive the imperial crown from the Pope's own hands, but in order that this would not appear as a sub-



mission by the actual victor, the coronation would not be held in Rome but in Bologna, and only in 1530.

The effects of the Sack, coming on the heels of the religious crisis that began in 1517, were crushing, and partisans on both sides struggled to give meaning to the events. The Este and Gonzaga promoted the idea that the Church, in its decadence, had brought the wrath of God upon itself. In a similar spirit, many Florentines regarded the Sack as a defeat of the Medici, as if the prophecies of Savonarola had been fulfilled. In a euphoric final resurgence of Republicanism, the city exiled the remaining Medici, reconvened the council of 500, and declared Christ once again the "true Lord and King" of Florence. Then the city prepared itself for the inevitable retaliation – the massed imperial and papal forces that laid siege to Florence beginning in 1529. Michelangelo supervised the erection of new bastions and earthworks, which held the city for several months, until starvation and disease led to its surrender and the demise of the Last Republic. Andrea del Sarto was among the thousands – amounting to one third of the city's population – who died. The invading troops vandalized artworks, sometimes in pointed ways: discovering Benedetto da Rovezzano's tomb of St. Giovanni Guadalberto, for example, at the unprotected monastery of San Salvi on the periphery of the city, they left most of the sculpture intact, but cut off the heads of the two monks in the foreground (fig. 14.29). Pontormo produced a portrait that stands as a poignant testimony to a transformation in traditional values occasioned by the crisis: the sixteen-year-old halberdier Francesco Guardi posing in front of one of the new defensive earthworks in the outfit of a citizen army that had reached the unprecedented decision of putting weapons in the hands of its own youth (fig. 14.30). The boy's militant bearing and the exaggerated masculinity of his sword and codpiece stand in dramatic tension with his youthful countenance, which registers a character still unformed.



The decimation of the artistic and intellectual culture of Rome had consequences for other centers as well. Among the city's refugees were its major artists, including the printmakers Caraglio and Musi and the sculptor Jacopo Sansovino, all of whom went to Venice. Rosso wandered in central Italy before finding his way to Venice as well; there some of his well-connected former acquaintances arranged for his departure for France, where he would spend his final lucrative and productive years in the service of King Francis I. He would soon be joined by the painter-stuccadore Primaticcio and the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, and these three, with their witty responses to the modern *maniera* of Rome and Florence, would come to define "modern Italian art" beyond the Alps.

Parmigianino went to Bologna, where in 1530 he would make a portrait of the emperor himself. Probably both in need of income and removed from the professional engraving network that had provided some support in Rome, he taught himself a printmaking technique that had first been explored in Germany at the beginning of the century: etching. The method required less specialized training than woodblock cutting or engraving but more technical expertise: the etcher would use a stylus to scratch a design into a wax or resin ground that had been applied to a copper plate, then cover the plate in acid, which would "bite" the design into the metal. Prints could be pulled from the plate that resulted.

Parmigianino was the first artist in Europe who, despite having completed no apprenticeship with a metal-smith or professional printmaker, nevertheless attempted to execute his own printing plates, and the example he set caught on rapidly, especially in Bologna itself, where most of the major painters through the rest of the century would themselves experiment with etching. Earlier printmakers who tried etching had abandoned the medium, but Parmigianino helped establish it as the premier form of intaglio throughout the continent. The most obvious outcome of the Sack to those who witnessed it would certainly have been the massive destruction it occasioned, but one collateral effect was the ensured success of an entirely new way of making art. The temporary eclipse of Rome and Florence resulted in the spread of the modern Roman and Florentine manner, both by forcing the migration of artists to other cities, and by encouraging the European-wide dissemination of images produced in that manner, in multiple, on paper.



ABOVE  
**14.30**  
 Pontormo, *Francesco Guardi as a Halberdier*, 1529. Oil on panel, transferred to canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (92 x 72 cm). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

RIGHT  
**14.31**  
 Parmigianino, *The Resurrection*, c. 1527–30. Etching and drypoint, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (21.1 x 13.6 cm). British Museum, London









# 1530—1540

## *Dynasty and Myth*

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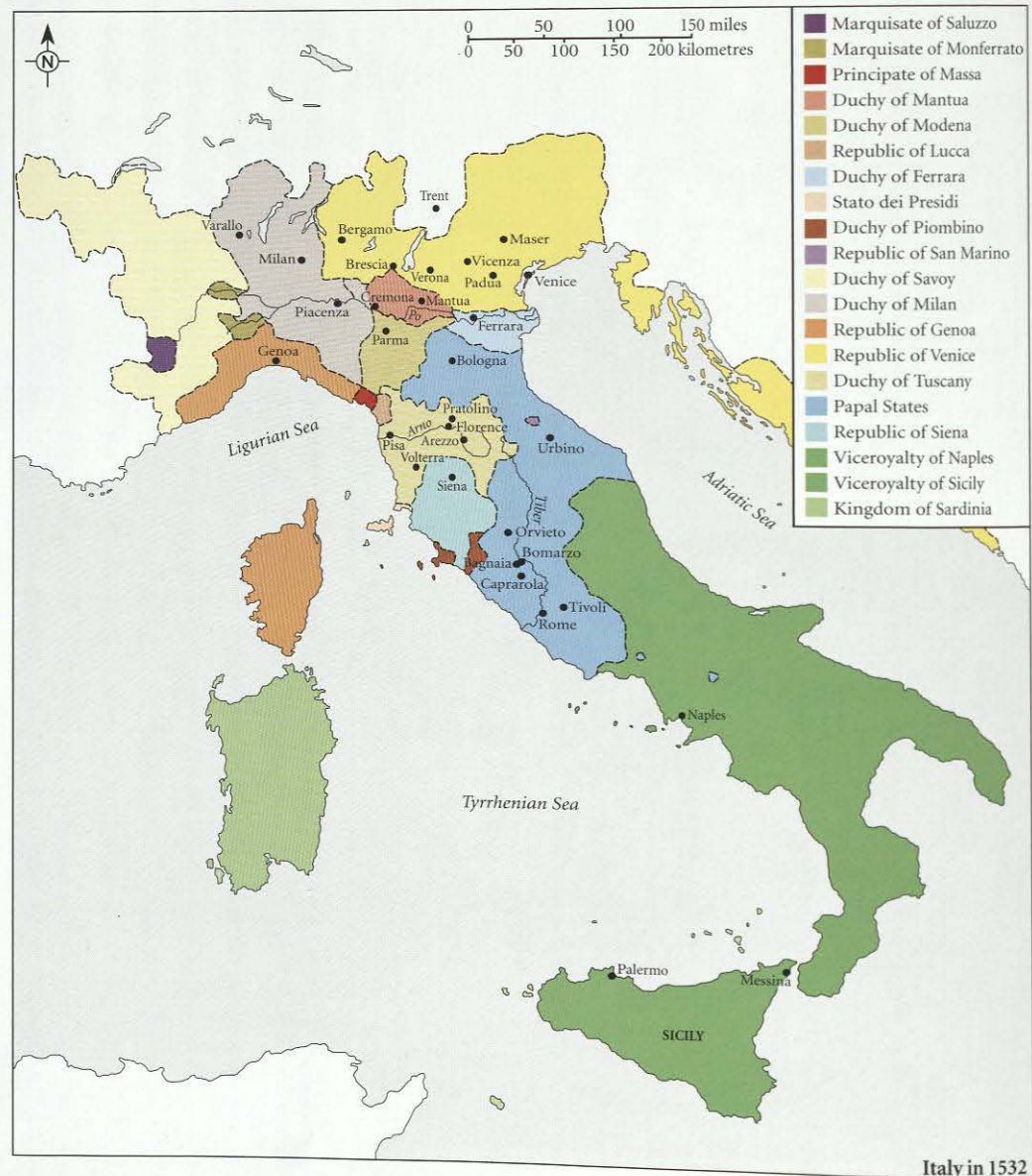


# 15

## 1530–1540 *Dynasty and Myth*

The Sack of Rome in 1527 transformed the artistic geography of the Italian peninsula, not only compelling artists to move between cities, but also affecting the political circumstances in which they now found themselves. Some regions, including Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples, had been under Spanish control for decades. But after 1527, Spanish power extended through most of northern Italy. As families that were allied with the Spanish Crown stabilized local dominion, new networks of exchange opened, and cities and courts expanded diplomatic ties with the

Holy Roman Empire. Rulers of various satellite territories, well aware of what their counterparts were doing, competed to promote their own realms as cultural centers and attempted to bring established artists and writers into their ranks. The works they sought frequently featured mythological imagery, so much so that the visual language derived from ancient Roman poetry became the common tongue of the court network. We can see how this happened by comparing patronage at a few of the most important centers.







### The Della Rovere in Urbino

Since the days of the Montefeltro rulers, the little dukedom of Urbino had lost much of its status. In the 1510s, control of the city shifted back and forth between the Medici and the Della Rovere families, and in 1524, Pesaro replaced it as the administrative center of the duchy. Through most of the following decade, Urbino was nominally ruled by Francesco Maria della Rovere (r. 1508–38), though the duke, a *condottiere* in the employ of Venice, spent much of his time on the road. Francesco Maria was a loyal partisan of Charles V, and he traveled to Bologna in 1530 to attend the Holy Roman Emperor's coronation, to Naples in 1535 to inspect Charles's fortifications, and to France in 1537 as a military ally, before dying, poisoned, in 1538.

As a patron, Francesco Maria is most important for his support of Titian. This suggests an allegiance of taste as well as politics. The duke would have known of the artist at least from the previous decade, when Titian painted Francesco Maria's brother-in-law, the Duke of Mantua. It was only after 1533, however, when Charles V officially recognized Titian's services to the imperial family by bestowing on him a knighthood, that Francesco Maria followed suit and commissioned works from the artist. For the emperor, Titian had primarily made portraits, and for Francesco Maria he did the same. A 1536 canvas shows the duke armed to the hilt, in breastplate



and gauntlets, sword at his side (fig. 15.1). Even his neck is covered with a gorget, as if he has just removed the helm, set to one side, in order to reveal his identity. Titian here pushes oil's capacity to depict particular materials, advertising his ability to capture different qualities of luminosity, from the glint of steel to the soft sheen of the velvet behind this. Adding to the technical difficulty of the painting, he dramatically foreshortens Francesco Maria's right arm and hand, which thrust a baton toward the viewer, rotating it to expose the insignia marking the duke's command of Venetian troops. It is as if the viewer, too, is expected to submit to the Republic, though the picture also reminds us that this mercenary does not serve Venice alone: two other batons, leaning against the wall in the back right, bear the papal keys and the Florentine lily, while an oak branch marks Francesco Maria's Della Rovere lineage. The exchange between the commander and his beholder is intensified by the interior setting. A drawing by Titian of the duke in the same pose suggests that the artist may originally have painted a full-length portrait. The painting in the Uffizi may derive from that, or may even constitute a copy of an earlier, now lost version; what the physical condition of the picture does confirm is that it was at some point enlarged so that it could serve as a pendant to a portrait Titian made in the same years of Duke Francesco Maria's wife, Eleonora Gonzaga (fig. 15.2).

ABOVE LEFT

15.1

Titian, *Francesco Maria della Rovere*, 1536. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 40" (114 x 103 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence

ABOVE RIGHT

15.2

Titian, *Eleonora Gonzaga della Rovere*, 1538. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (114 x 102.2 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence



## 15.3

Titian, *The Venus of Urbino*,  
1538. Oil on canvas, 47 x  
65" (119 x 165 cm). Uffizi  
Gallery, Florence



Like her husband, Eleonora is shown in what must have counted among the finest costumes she owned, in this case the sort of black dress that Spanish tastes had helped make fashionable throughout Italy in the 1530s. Its gold bows echo the golden ornaments on Francesco's armor, while the plush green tablecloth complements the backdrop of the other picture. The links between the pictures make all the more poignant the reminders of the soldier's frequent absence, precisely for occasions when he would be called upon to wear his armor. The clock before the window seems to underscore the waits that Eleonora faced while her husband was away; the sleeping dog was conventionally associated with loyalty and devotion. (The dog here is a type of spaniel, a word that both in English and Italian means "Spanish.")

The most important of Titian's paintings to enter Della Rovere hands is the one that has come down to posterity under the title *The Venus of Urbino* (fig. 15.3). Just who, if anyone, commissioned it is unclear, though a letter that Francesco Maria's son, Guidobaldo, wrote to his mother indicates that the canvas was in Titian's studio shortly before the duke's death in 1538, and that Guidobaldo desperately wanted to own it. (His mother initially refused to buy it for him.) The picture itself offers hints that the artist had his work for Francesco Maria in mind when he painted it. The woman depicted appears to be the same one who features in another painting owned by the duke's father, which Francesco referred to in a letter

as "that portrait of that woman in the blue dress [Titian's "La Bella," now in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence]." And the spaniel from the portrait of Francesco Maria's wife is back as well (see fig. 15.2), now at the foot of the bed. Yet these connections only tinge the *Venus* with a kind of irony. Eleonora's green tablecloth appears to have been hung up behind the nude figure, accentuating the reds in the upholstery, the flowers, her blushing cheek, and her lips. The sleeping dog that seemed an unambiguous emblem of fidelity in the marital portrait now offers a furry double both to the recumbent woman's long brushed hair and to what she covers with her hand. Even the idea of waiting in the portrait of Eleonora has been inverted to humorous effect, as Venus gazes in anticipation at the beholder. Through variations in brushwork, no less than color, Titian insists on the tactility of the items in the foreground, the smooth sheets folding where her weight presses against them. Everything about the picture invites touch. The limits of the body are marked by a seemingly continuous, gently curving brown contour, as if Titian finished the work by dragging his brush along her form, putting the entirety of his technique in the service of rendering flesh.

And what of the title? Guidobaldo referred to the picture's protagonist only as "the nude woman." It was Vasari who first called her "Venus," thirty years after the painting's completion. Certainly, the painting is reminiscent of Giorgione's *Venus* (see fig. 12.59), which Titian



himself had worked on. It also adopts something like the “*pudica*” (literally, “modest”) gesture known from standing ancient statues of Venus. In this case, though, even that is ambiguous, and her address is more one of invitation than of modesty. The setting is insistently contemporary, a palace interior with modern tapestries on the wall. In the background, two women, whose costume suggests that they are domestic servants, collect a gown from (or prepare to deposit it into) a *cassone*. Descriptions of private collections, such as Andrea Odoni’s in Venice (see fig. 14.23), indicate that paintings of the nude were often kept in bedchambers, exactly the kind of room we see in the painting itself. Even though the model may have been recognizable as a kind of “trademark” of Titian himself, it is likely that the painting was not intended as a portrait, but that its subject is human sensation – especially the erotic sensations of sight and touch.

## The Gonzaga in Mantua

### Palazzo del Tè

Mantua had been ruled since 1519 by Federico II Gonzaga, the son of Francesco II Gonzaga and Isabella d’Este, and the brother of the Eleonora depicted by Titian (see fig. 15.2). As Pope Clement VII’s official standard-bearer and with troops at his disposal, Federico had been in a position to stop the Spanish march on Rome in 1527, but had declined to do so. His brother Ferrante, moreover, was a *condottiere* who had participated in the Sack. When Charles V entered Mantua in triumph three years later, Federico, long an ally of the emperor, secured not only the hand of his daughter, Julia of Aragon, but also

the title of duke, and with this a hereditary dynasty. The marriage was short-lived, but Federico’s ties to Charles significantly shaped his most important works of patronage in the 1530s.

As a child, Federico had been a hostage at the papal court in Rome during the very years when Michelangelo was painting the Sistine Chapel and Raphael the Stanza della Segnatura, and the experience had left a deep impression. In 1524, upon the completion of the most important projects Raphael had left unfinished at his death in 1520, Federico persuaded Giulio Romano to move to Mantua. The appeal for Giulio must have been the role Federico promised to assign him, and from the late 1520s on, he not only worked as a painter and designer but also oversaw much of the architecture and urban planning undertaken in the city. In 1526, he was elevated to the nobility.

The most remarkable of Giulio’s projects was the Palazzo del Tè (literally, “T Palace”), named after its location, an island at the outskirts of town, and built on the site of the marquess’s former stables (fig. 15.4). The idea for its basic form and position derived from recent Roman buildings: Antonio Chigi’s villa (see figs. 13.2–13.3) on the edge of that city would have been the most famous new work of architecture completed during Federico’s years in the city, and Giulio himself had provided decorations for Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici’s villa. Both of these buildings employed engaged pilasters against plain expanses of colored *stucco*, suggesting that the villa was an opportunity to show off its designer’s command of the classical orders. Coming from Rome to a small town, Giulio does not seem to have felt the normalizing pressures of the major centers. And both he and his patron must have had an interest in demonstrating that although the artist had learned the architectural principles of Vitruvius from



15.4  
Giulio Romano, Palazzo  
del Tè, Mantua. View from  
the southeast





ABOVE

**15.5**

Giulio Romano, loggia,  
Palazzo del Tè, Mantua,  
1524–43

RIGHT

**15.6**

Giulio Romano, courtyard  
of the Palazzo del Tè,  
Mantua, 1527–34





Raphael, he was not simply a passive imitator either of the ancients or of his master.

On the north, east, and west facades of the main palace block, Giulio overlaid colossal Doric pilasters onto a horizontal expanse of rusticated wall (see fig. 15.4). The massive unworked blocks used for the keystones above the windows and main portal, however, are incongruous with the columns that flank them and actually overrun the string course above. By contrast to buildings in the tradition of the Medici Palace in Florence (see figs. 6.1, 6.20, 6.22), or Raphael's much richer Palazzo Branconio in Rome (see fig. 13.18), which showed a progressive refinement up through the facade, and where there was even a sense that things above held things below in check – here two systems, one rougher, and one more regularized and refined, struggle for dominance. In the atrium (fig. 15.5), columns seem themselves to be growing, overflowing the rings that should establish their diameter both at the base and at the crown, their surfaces encrusted with

what looks to be living incrustation. In the courtyard (fig. 15.6), the combination of classical order and rustication returns, as does the tension between them. The *timpana* over the windows appear underscaled for the keystones they contain, and their sloping sides fail quite to meet at the top, a reminder of Giulio's design process, in which he joined unlike elements together. In the frieze, triglyphs that do not have columns beneath them slip downward. This is a knowing reference to the fact that, in their origins, triglyphs were markers of structure, the segment of the architrave that aligned with the building's supports. It also gives the impression, though, that the whole composition might collapse.

All of this, it turns out, is a fiction. The lands around Mantua provided little usable stone of any size, so Giulio ended up building nearly the entire palace from brick, covering it with *stucco* and shaping this into his rustication, columns, friezes, and so forth. The ornaments, nevertheless, lend the building a dynamism and even

## 15.7

Giulio Romano, Sala dei Cavalli, Palazzo del Tè, Mantua, 1528–30









a narrative element, a sense of conflict consistent with Giulio's pictorial interests. It is an insistently Roman composition in the tradition of Bramante and Raphael, yet it is also difficult to imagine any Roman who had received his basic training in architecture rather than in the figural arts putting a palace together in quite this way.

In part, Giulio may simply be responding to the building's function, as a place of leisure, by approaching its design with wit. He brings the same kind of humor into his painted interiors, where, for example, in the Sala dei Cavalli (fig. 15.7) a giant fresco comprising illusory pilasters, statues of ancient deities, busts, and bronze reliefs of the Labors of Hercules is completed with a row of horses, apparently standing in the room, on a parapet, in front of windows onto the surrounding painted landscape. Whether they are an allusion to the stables the palace replaced or a reminder of the status that horse-ownership conferred, the horses' only connection to the rest of the decoration is that they, like the people portrayed in the busts, are actually portraits: their names are recorded below.

The room where the imagery most directly picks up the themes from the courtyard architecture, however, is the Sala dei Giganti (fig. 15.8). Here, Giulio stuccoed the space in such a way that in the upper zone the corners disappear and the ceiling becomes a dome. Then, in an illusionistic tour de force that shows his awareness of northern Italian painters like Mantegna and Correggio, he painted a temple and baldachin, seen from below, beyond a bank of clouds. The central position and the effect of the foreshortening evoke the lanterns at the apex of church domes: it is as though Giulio has decided to do a pagan version of Correggio's Parma Cathedral frescoes (see figs. 14.17–14.19), with the difference that the virtual world this time would extend right down to the floor of the room. According to Vasari, that floor originally consisted of sharp stones set on edge, exactly what Giulio painted at the bottom of the walls, so that there was no distinction between the real and illusionistic space even at foot level.

The scenes on the walls derive from Ovid's account of how a race of giants attempted to build a mountain, climb into the heavens, and overthrow the gods. Giulio shows their defeat by Jupiter, who stands at the center of a fearful Pantheon and hurls down thunderbolts handed to him by his wife Juno, toppling the giants' construction and crushing them under what they had made. Remarkably, the giants' "mountain" here includes not just oversized stones – of the sort Giulio himself used around windows and doors on the facade of the palace – but also columns. These are giants who, like Giulio's fellow Romanists, seem to have studied their Vitruvius. The viewer is thus asked to compare the giants' hubristic architecture

to the building in which he or she stands, but to what end? Is this just a visual joke on the part of the architect, making the creation of his building into an epic subject? Vasari, who saw the paintings in the company of Giulio himself shortly after their completion, asserted that the artist painted what he did simply "to show what he was worth." Still, it is difficult to ignore the political content of the motifs. Mount Olympus was one of Federico's personal emblems, so the choice of subjects would suggest his presence is implied in the ceiling of the room. Yet the program is equally flattering to Charles V, who had used the motif of Jupiter slaying the giants on one of his portrait medals; Federico received the emperor at the Palazzo del Tè both in 1530 and in 1532, and he would have been looking to impress his patron. Then there is the possibility that the true subject of the room is the Roman scene as it looked from Mantua while the building was under way. The humorous treatment of the colossal forms, the smashing of grotesquely large, excessively muscled male bodies, could well have come across as a parody of Michelangelo and the gargantuan forms favored by his followers. After all, the decoration of the Palazzo del Tè started in 1527, the year of the Sack of Rome.

### Correggio's Mythologies

The imperial sympathies of Federico II Gonzaga certainly played into the other major set of mythological pictures he commissioned in the same years, this time from Correggio (1489–1534). The series, completed in the early 1530s, consisted of four paintings, all on canvas, depicting Jupiter's encounters with four mortals: the beautiful Leda, seduced by Jupiter in the form of a swan; the princess Danaë, whose chamber Jupiter entered in the form of a shower of gold; the Trojan prince Ganymede (fig. 15.10), snatched away to Olympus by Jupiter transformed into an eagle; and Io (fig. 15.9), embraced by the king of the gods in the form of a cloud. The paintings eventually entered the collection of the emperor, probably having been offered as a gift by Federico himself, and they may even have been made for that purpose. As a group, they show no less a debt to Giorgione's *Venus* (see fig. 12.59) than Titian's *Venus* did (see fig. 15.3), for all but the *Danaë* place nudes in landscape settings. Both Giorgione and Titian, however, had isolated their goddesses, allowing the viewer the fantasy of a private encounter, while Correggio's scenes are considerably more explicit, in every case showing his characters in the midst of an erotic or even a sexual act. Correggio was certainly aware that Giulio's reputation in part rested on his production of erotica: one room in the Palazzo del Tè offered Federico and his guests a dazzlingly elaborate and strikingly lewd reworking of the story of Psyche, a bathetic

### OPPOSITE

#### 15.8

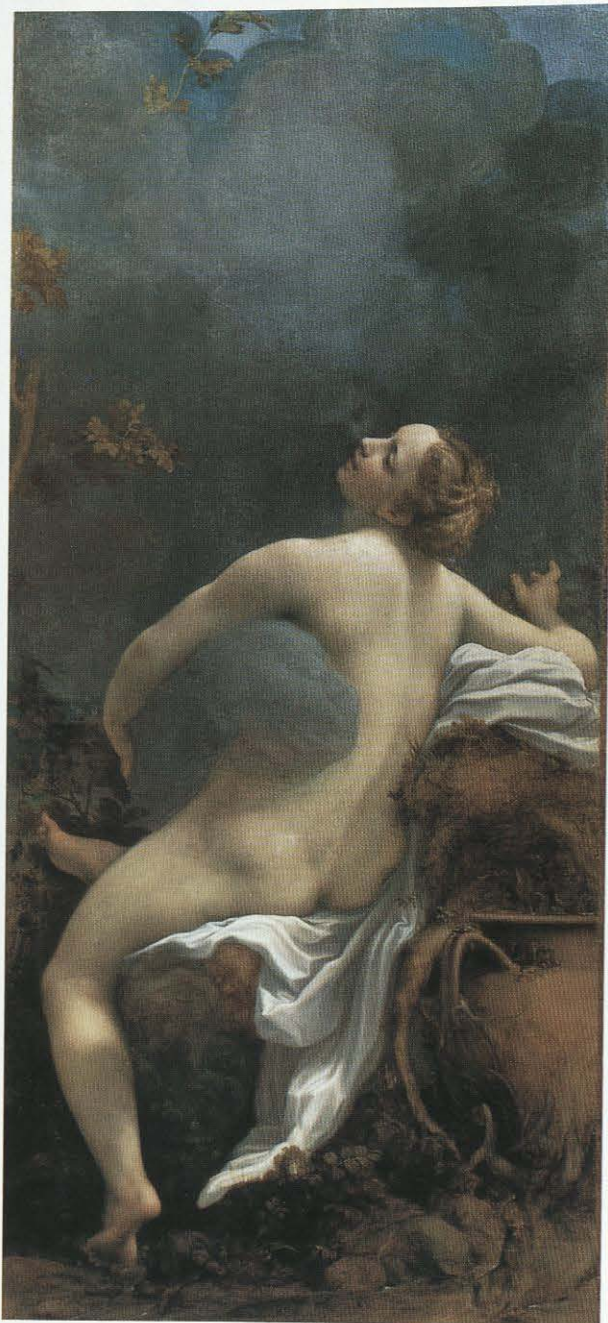
Giulio Romano, Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo del Tè, Mantua, 1528–30. The room's other walls show the giants' architecture to include colossal columns and motifs that resemble those from the palace's own garden facade.



RIGHT

**15.9**

Correggio, *Jupiter and Io*,  
c. 1530. Oil on canvas, 64½  
x 27¾" (163.8 x 70.5 cm).  
Kunsthistorisches Museum,  
Vienna



FAR RIGHT

**15.10**

Correggio, *Abduction of  
Ganymede*, c. 1530. Oil on  
canvas, 64½ x 28" (164 x  
71 cm). Kunsthistorisches  
Museum, Vienna



emulation of Raphael's paintings for Agostino Chigi (see fig. 13.4). Correggio, no less than Giulio, seems to be thinking about "positions" as much as poses, yet he avoids the statuesque anatomies and cool colors of the Roman school; his figures display soft, creamy flesh rather than muscle and bone structure, and Correggio shrouds them in a haze of muted color, reflected light and delicate shadow. Giulio may have satirized the *gravitas* and the hard-edge anatomies that these earlier painters, working for the Pope, had pursued, but Correggio rejects that tradition altogether.

To respond to Giulio in this way was to acknowledge the Roman painter's role at the Gonzaga court. Correggio sought to rival him by confronting the eroticism for which Giulio was notorious. At the same time, the paintings Correggio supplied are not a complete departure from his religious works of the previous decade. The *Virgin and Child with St. Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome* (see fig. 14.19) had already represented access to Christ as a kind of ecstasy, conveyed through an experience of touch. And the clouds and light in the dome of Parma Cathedral had framed the *Assumption of the Virgin* as a mystical



vision, one offered both to the Apostles standing on the parapet and to the churchgoer looking up from the pavement below (see fig. 14.17). The Gonzaga series, like these religious episodes, imagines unions with the divine, and the appeal of having Correggio paint them was the prospect of turning the visual language he had developed in a sacred context to an unexpectedly profane use. This is especially apparent in the *Jupiter and Io* (see fig. 15.9), in which the king of the gods descends earthward, like Christ in the Parma Cathedral fresco but here transformed into a cloud. The spectacular effect Correggio achieves in both paintings, of angels fading into air, or of a moist, bluish-gray vapor enveloping the nude Io, condensing into the face that kisses her and the arm that touches her contrastingly warm, soft skin, represents a stunning reinterpretation of the *sfumatura* technique that Leonardo had popularized in Lombardy and the Veneto. Whereas Leonardo used *sfumatura* primarily for naturalistic ends, aiming to reproduce, in paint, the conditions of seeing, Correggio isolates it as a device, putting it directly on display. The gauzy look to all the paintings in the Gonzaga series not only creates the atmosphere an artist would witness in deep outdoor vistas, but also suggests the dream-like world in which humans and gods can meet. Perhaps most importantly, it lends the women and the boy whom Jupiter seduces

or abducts a physical tenderness – we see why it is that the king of the gods fell for them.

## The Medici in Florence

### Michelangelo's New Sacristy

In the years Correggio was establishing the foundations for a decisive refutation of Michelangelo's pictorial manner, Michelangelo himself had largely turned from painting back to sculpture, and in addition had begun to establish himself as an architect. And the most unusual dynastic memorial of the century is the funerary chapel he created for the Medici in Florence (fig. 15.11). The structure was part of the extensive additions to the church of San Lorenzo that Pope Clement VII had ordered in 1519; Michelangelo had worked primarily on this project for fifteen years.

The chapel was built from the ground up to the north of the transept. In design and function, it was conceived as a pendant to Filippo Brunelleschi's sacristy from the previous century (see fig. 4.11), and it thus came to be known as the "New Sacristy" (and Brunelleschi's thereafter as the "Old Sacristy"). Both spaces would have provided chambers for the robing of priests cel-



15.11  
Michelangelo, New Sacristy  
(also known as the Medici  
Chapel), 1519–34. San  
Lorenzo, Florence



celebrating Mass in the main church; both also served as Medici family burial sites with private family altars. Still, Michelangelo's design conspicuously departs from the model established by Brunelleschi: though Michelangelo restricted his palette to his predecessor's muted grays and whites, he worked not only with the soft dark stone known as *pietra serena* and beloved by Florentines, but also with bright, sumptuous Carrara marble. Whereas Brunelleschi had articulated his dome with simple ribs, a decoration much like that he employed on the exterior of Florence Cathedral, Michelangelo's is coffered, in imitation of the Pantheon in Rome, and recalls Raphael's

## 15.12

Michelangelo, tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, 1524–34. Marble, height of central figure 5'11" (1.81 m). New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence



miniature imitation of the Pantheon in the Chigi Chapel (see fig. 13.2). Michelangelo also created a loftier space, inserting an extra storey between the pendentives and the lower zones. At one point, he planned for pictorial ornament in the dome and other areas, an idea that would have given his sacristy, like Brunelleschi's, some areas of color. A never-executed fresco was to show Christ's Resurrection, a theme obviously befitting the function of the space.

The most extraordinary portion of Michelangelo's design, however, is the lowest storey, which replaces all the walls with blind doors and empty tabernacle niches that jostle each other in the bays between the Corinthian pilasters. Only two of the eight doorways actually provide access elsewhere, a feature that adds to the deliberate sense of confusion and ambiguity. Like Bramante at St. Peter's in Rome, Michelangelo has shifted architecture from a problem of decorated surfaces to one of molded spaces. The heavily pedimented niches seem to press down on the doors beneath them, creating a sense of dynamic collision never before sought in the Renaissance revival of the classical past. In their bizarre mutation of classical pediments and pilasters, these elements completely defy the new preoccupation, common among interpreters of Vitruvius, with rules and archeological verification.

A permanent endowment was to ensure that the New Sacristy would serve as a place of perpetual prayer for deceased members of the line of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Though the two portraits ostensibly show Giuliano (*d.* 1516), son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo (*d.* 1519), son of the Magnificent's brother Giuliano, the sepulchers entomb both the younger princes and their fathers. For a time, Michelangelo had contemplated a single, free-standing monument that would include portraits, statues of the Virgin and Child, and other decorations. As installed in the mid 1540s, though, a decade after Michelangelo's departure from the city, the chapel followed his later plan for paired wall tombs, with the Virgin and the Medici saints Cosmas and Damian forming a separate altarpiece for the chapel.

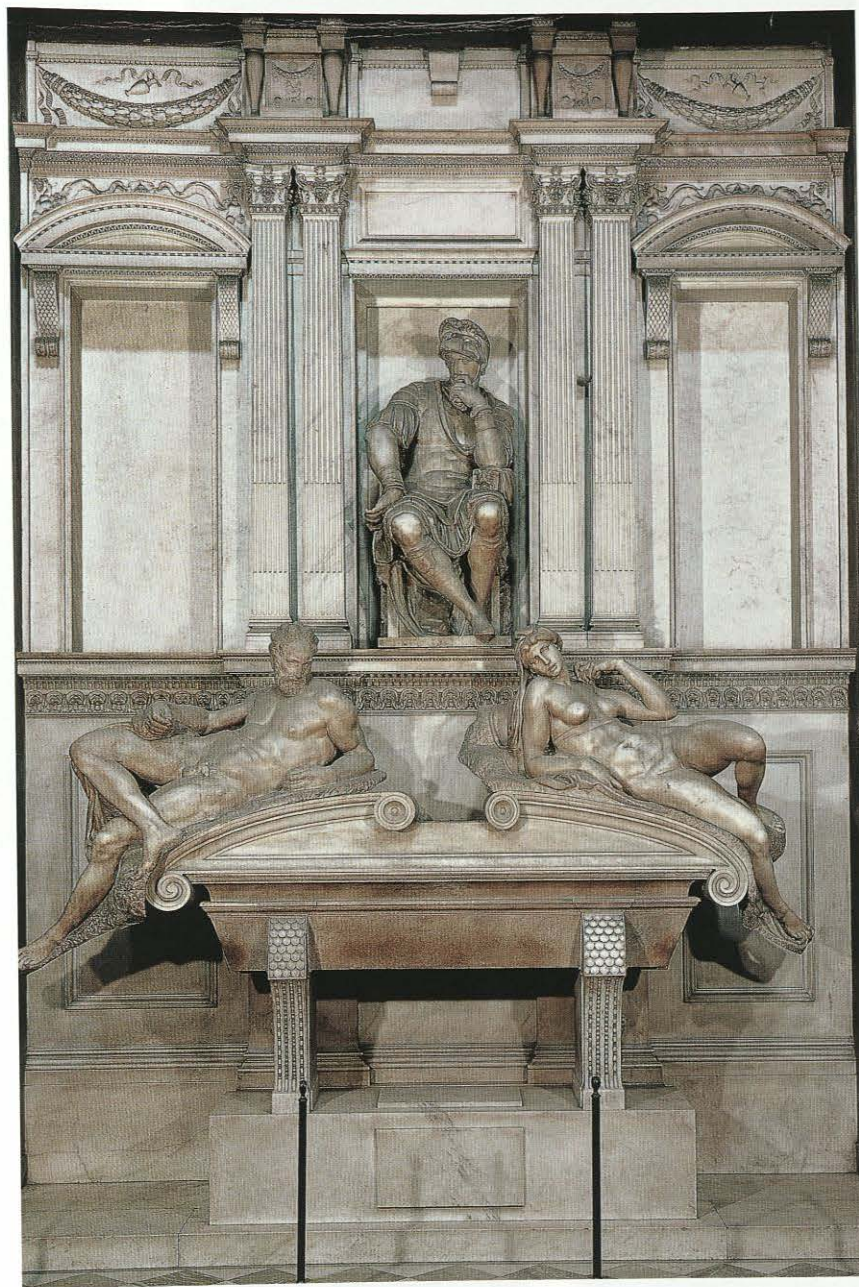
In his conception of the chapel, Michelangelo drew on the metaphorical possibilities of sculpture and architecture to produce a visual and spatial poem on the theme of death, the afterlife, purgatory, and redemption. The best-known and most spectacular aspects of the complex are the two wall tombs (figs. 15.12–15.13). Both lifesize portraits, enthroned in shallow niches, look toward the altarpiece group of the Virgin and Child; on the sarcophagi beneath them appear allegorical figures representing Dawn and Dusk (below Lorenzo) and Night and Day (below Giuliano). The most finished are the two



melancholy female figures of Night and Dawn. Intentionally or not, the lack of finish in the two male figures, Day and Dusk, enhances their vigor; Day shows, characteristically, how Michelangelo would come close to completing his stomachs and backs before working on heads, as if fragments like the Belvedere Torso (see fig. 12.44) had taught him that these, rather than faces or hands, were the body's most expressive parts. Michelangelo planned pairs of river gods for the floor on either side of the sarcophagi, which would have enclosed the composition in a more stable pyramidal form. With these elements gone, the massive marble figures threaten to slide off their consoles, which magnifies the unsettling qualities already present in the design.

Both of the portrayed men had been granted ducal titles before their deaths – Giuliano had been given the dukedom of Nemours in France, Lorenzo the dukedom of Urbino, following the brief expulsion of the Della Rovere. Curiously, the tomb imagery makes no reference to their ducal rank; in fact, the portrayal of Lorenzo and Giuliano as generals seems to celebrate them for their republican rather than princely offices. (Lorenzo held the old Florentine office of captain general, and Giuliano held a similar rank in Rome.) The lack of reference to ducal status may be a result of the tombs' unfinished state, which also may explain the surprising lack of Medici coats of arms or indeed of any epitaphs: there is not even an inscription designating which duke is which, and Michelangelo was candid about the fact that both "portrait" sculptures were ideal conceptions that bore no resemblance to the men that they stood for, stating that in centuries to come no one would know (or care) what they looked like.

Michelangelo's remark implies that he took his own art to be far more important than the two Medici, whose careers he would hardly have regarded as illustrious. Yet there is also a sense that reputation and glory themselves might in the end be an illusion produced by art, charging the entire monument with irony as a dynastic commemoration – the tombs, after all, are also a memorial to dynastic extinction, the end of the principal Medici line. The theme of falsehood and illusion abounds in the chapel's imagery. Under the arm of Night appears a sinister mask, with the eyes of a human skull behind its eye sockets; masks were, by 1520, common symbols of dreams, phantasms, and empty appearances. They are a fitting attribute of Night, but their appearance is not confined to this figure. Chattering masks, endlessly varied in form, abound in the architectural friezes and capitals, even on the cuirasses worn by the captains. Lorenzo's helmet is itself a fantastic canine mask, and a bat-like face appears on the money box in his hand (another less than glamorous allusion to the foundations of Medici glory).



The classic function of marble sculptures was to ensure the endurance of memory through time, to embody the immortality that comes with posthumous reputation. Michelangelo has added a disquieting twist, however, where lifelike stone figures now come to suggest petrification or paralysis. Lorenzo and Giuliano appear tortuously confined by their niches; the Times of Day strain fitfully or resign themselves to a state of inertia or unconsciousness. Michelangelo explained the significance of these figures in some verses he composed while designing the tombs, a striking indication that poetry was part of his creative process as a sculptor:

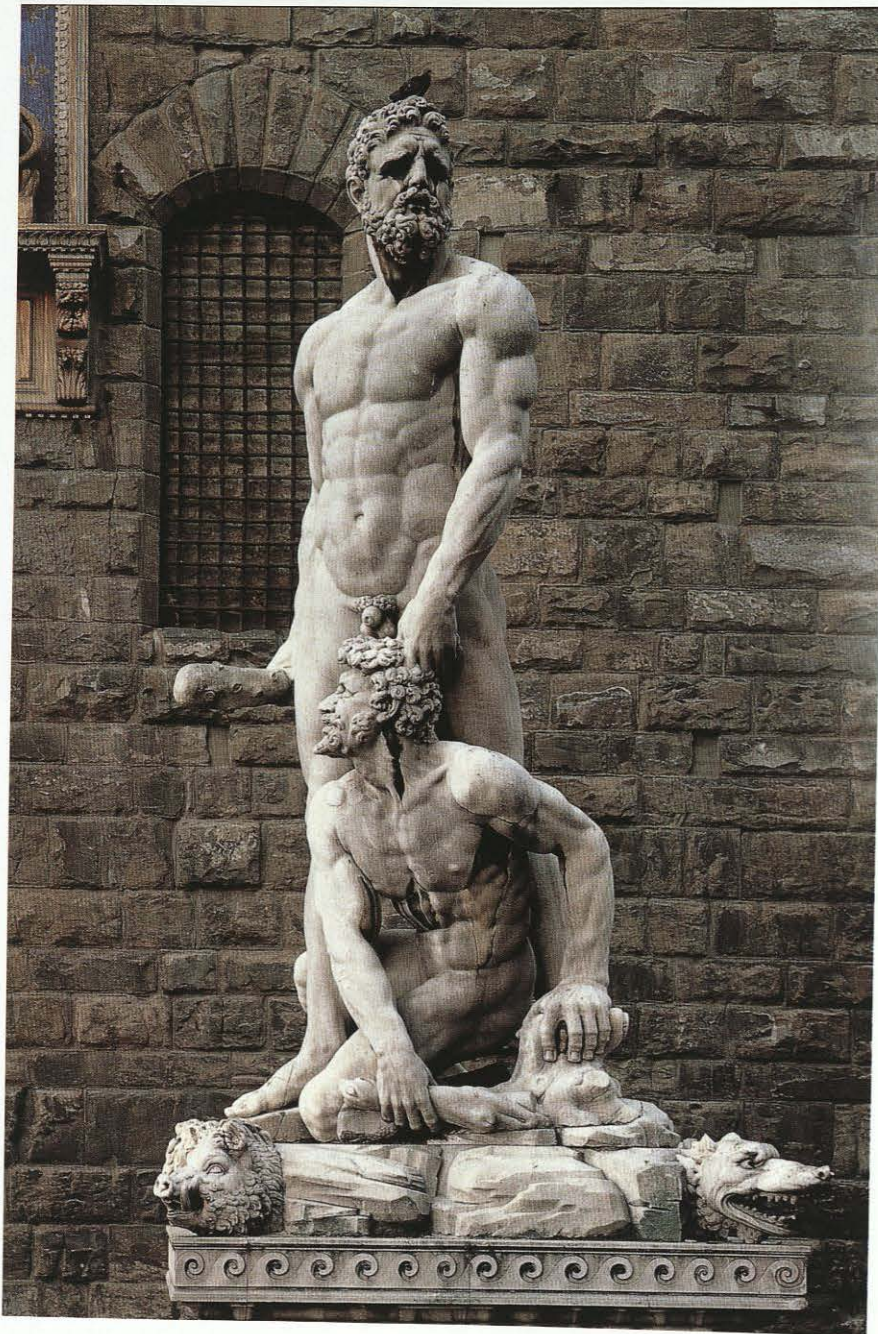
**15-13**  
Michelangelo, tomb  
of Lorenzo de' Medici,  
1521–34. Marble, height  
of central figure 5'10"  
(1.78 m). New Sacristy, San  
Lorenzo, Florence



Day and Night speak – we with our swift course have brought the Duke Giuliano to Death. It is just that he, the Duke, takes revenge as he does for this, and the revenge is this, that, as we have killed him, he, dead, has taken the light from us, and with his closed eyes has locked ours shut, which no longer shine on earth. What then would he have done with us while alive?

**15.14**  
Baccio Bandinelli, *Hercules and Cacus*, 1525–34.  
Marble, height c. 16'3"  
(4.96 m). Piazza della  
Signoria, Florence

The tragic languishing of the Times of Day is a result of the fact that they represent the personal, allotted time of Giuliano and Lorenzo, consigned to immobility by



their deaths. Their blindness, an absence of light resulting from the fact that they are days without sunrises and sunsets, is underscored by the fact that none of the figures, including the captains, has drilled pupils. Giuliano and Lorenzo look toward the Virgin – but can they really see her? She certainly does not look toward them, and the Christ child turns away, as if the nursing she proffers is for him alone. The Medici, Michelangelo implies, do not yet have the beatific vision of the blessed in Paradise, and will only attain this through a period of endless waiting in Purgatory, and through the perpetual prayers of the living.

Michelangelo later underscored the political implications of the allegories, the times that “killed” the Medici in a much-celebrated verse on the figure of Night:

Dear to me is sleep, dearer still being made of stone,  
while harm and shame last;  
not to see, not to hear, to me is a great boon;  
so do not waken me, ah, speak but softly.

It is rare indeed for a Renaissance artist to write of the “shame” of the people he devoted fifteen years of his life to immortalizing. But Michelangelo had gladly helped the city defend itself against Pope Clement’s invading armies in 1529, and he had watched with dismay as the emperor then helped Clement to install his illegitimate son Alessandro as a hereditary Duke of Florence. Like others still alive in the city after the siege, Michelangelo was faced with a dispiriting dilemma: to work for the family now in power, or to leave. He made several trips to Rome in the early 1530s, but when Clement died in 1534, the artist decided just to stay there, and he never again set foot in Florence.

### The Image of the Autocrat

Michelangelo’s absence from Florence may have had the most significant impact on the city’s sculpture, since it was on sculptural projects that he had mostly been engaged. Among the first public monuments to go up under Duke Alessandro was Baccio Bandinelli’s (c. 1493–1560) *Hercules and Cacus* (fig. 15.14). It was Clement VII who had initially conceived the work, and Bandinelli had begun work on it as early as 1525, but when the Medici fled the city two years later, he joined them. The block at that point went to Michelangelo, who reconceived the composition as a *Samson Slaying Two Philistines*. When the Medici returned to the city in 1530, they brought Bandinelli with them; he regained control of the marble, and returned to his earlier plan. The final pair, completed the year Michelangelo left town, showed Cacus – an evil giant and cattle thief – enslaved by the semi-divine musclem.





It was placed to the right of the entrance to Florence's city hall, and thus became a permanent pendant to Michelangelo's *David* (see fig. 12.3). The patron's intention, no doubt, was to neutralize the *David's* republican associations; the earlier statue was famous enough that it could not simply be moved or destroyed, but perhaps company would dilute its message. Bandinelli himself, put in the awkward position of distracting the attention of a hostile audience from Michelangelo's icon, did what he could to imitate his predecessor, giving his figure a similar scowl and trying to show that he, too, had studied human anatomy. Vasari writes that, once the statue was in place, Bandinelli even went back and retouched it, giving the figures' physique yet more definition. The comparison with Michelangelo could not favor him, though, and contemporaries responded with scorn. Some attached poems to the work itself, disparaging Bandinelli, his marble, and, by implication, his patron. Later, his rival Benvenuto Cellini would rehearse all the criticisms leveled at the time: if Hercules's hair were removed, viewers commented, there would not be enough head left to contain a brain; the hero is not paying attention to what he is doing; the muscles seem to have been studied not after a man but a sack of melons; the whole statue seems to be keeling forward.

More successful, or at least more beautiful, were works that Alessandro commissioned for private contexts. Around 1534, the duke had Pontormo (1494–1557), the most resolutely Florentine of artists, make a large portrait showing the prince himself as a draftsman (fig. 15.15). Here Alessandro appears in a wood-paneled space, with a door, slightly ajar, behind him. A figure that originally stood outside, looking in, was in the end deleted, but the arrangement nevertheless gives the sense that we are seeing the duke in a state of seclusion, free of the pomp and circumstance associated with his public persona. The profile of a woman that his sitter draws was the sort of thing that Michelangelo and his followers could make from memory or fantasy. If the idea of the painting is that Alessandro's drawing originated the same way, it would add to the impression that the duke is alone in this space. An almost exactly contemporary portrait by Vasari (fig. 15.16) shows Alessandro in armor, the skyline of the city he ruled as conqueror behind him. Pontormo's portrait, by contrast, suggests the duke's wish to be perceived differently – and not to be too readily regarded as an armed warlord in the mold of Titian's Francesco Maria della Rovere (see fig. 15.1). This may just have been a matter of audience: Alessandro gave the finished picture to a lady friend, Taddea Malaspina, and he may have

ABOVE LEFT

15.15

Pontormo, *Alessandro de' Medici*, c. 1534. Oil on panel, 39<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 32<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (101.2 x 81.9 cm). John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art

ABOVE RIGHT

15.16

Giorgio Vasari, *Alessandro de' Medici*, 1534. Oil on panel, 61<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 44<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" (157 x 114 cm). Uffizi Gallery, Florence





**15.17**  
Michelangelo, *Brutus*,  
c. 1540. Marble, height 29"  
(74 cm). Museo Nazionale  
del Bargello, Florence

wanted her in particular to see him as a cultivated man committed to the pursuit of beauty rather than blood. If this is the case, though, the picture inadvertently plays into the reputation that was ultimately the cause of the duke's demise: his notoriety for dalliances around the city. In 1537, knowing Alessandro's reputation as a womanizer, his cousin Lorenzino promised the duke a liaison with his sister Laudomia, and then had Alessandro murdered when he appeared.

In a letter, Lorenzino expressed his hope that the assassination of the first tyrant to rule Florence since the Middle Ages would lead to the re-establishment of the Republic. His hopes were shared by a number of exiles, including Michelangelo, who celebrated the occasion by carving a marble bust of the ancient tyrannicide Brutus (fig. 15.17). To their chagrin, Charles V engineered the appointment of a Medici successor, Cosimo I, who oversaw Alessandro's burial in Michelangelo's New Sacristy and then had his henchmen murder Lorenzino. Some passages in the bust featured Michelangelo's char-

BELOW

**15.18**

Rendering by Mark Tucker of the original composition of Agnolo Bronzino, *Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus*, based on analysis by infra-red reflectography and X-radiography.

OPPOSITE

**15.19**

Agnolo Bronzino, *Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus*, c. 1538. Oil on panel, 36 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (93.7 x 76.4 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art



acteristic rough-hewn surfaces, but when Cosimo's son Francesco later succeeded in acquiring it, he treated its non-finish as symbolic, adding an inscription that read: "While the sculptor was creating the portrait of Brutus in marble, he became aware of his offense and ceased to work on it."

Cosimo, who came to power as an obscure eighteen-year-old, was a far more skilled ruler than his predecessor had been, and by the time he handed off ducal authority to his son Francesco in the 1560s, he had consolidated control of the city and of a new Grand Duchy of Tuscany. He also thought more carefully than his predecessor had about the image of himself that he wished to promote, even to semi-private audiences. From Pontormo's best student, Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572), he commissioned a portrait (fig. 15.19) even more unusual than Alessandro's (see fig. 15.15). In its original form, known from x-rays, the painting showed the duke in the guise of Orpheus, playing a lyre for the three-headed dog Cerberus that guarded the gates of Hades (fig. 15.18). This







was an allusion to the ancient story of the Greek hero's descent into the Underworld to retrieve his lover Eurydice; at the sound of Orpheus's music, in the ancient poet Virgil's words, "Cerberus stood agape and his triple jaws forgot to bark." In the end, Bronzino made several significant adjustments to the composition, presumably at the duke's instruction. He eliminated the snarling mouth of Cerberus's rightmost head, making the beast completely placid before an Orpheus who no longer plays the lyre. This essentially shifted the scene from the present to the past tense: we see a hero who has *already* pacified his foe. Bronzino also underscored that the painting was no mere romance, especially by his elimination of the strap that originally covered Orpheus's left shoulder and the red garment that originally wrapped around his left thigh. The changes left the portrayed figure nearly nude, facilitating comparison with the work that served as the source for his pose, the Belvedere Torso in Rome (*see* fig. 12.44). Antiquarians in Bronzino's day generally regarded the torso as a depiction of Hercules, which suggests a second mythological type to which the duke wished to be compared. If the Orpheus conceit made Cosimo the new face of Florentine art, the Hercules conceit insisted that this was by no means at the expense of force, a point

**15.20**  
Baccio Bandinelli, study for a statue of Andrea Doria as Neptune, c. 1528. Pen and ink, 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (42.5 x 27.5 cm). British Museum, London. The 1529 contract for the statue changed the material from bronze to marble, and in 1538 the project was abandoned altogether.



emphasized by the phallic repositioning of the bow in the final work.

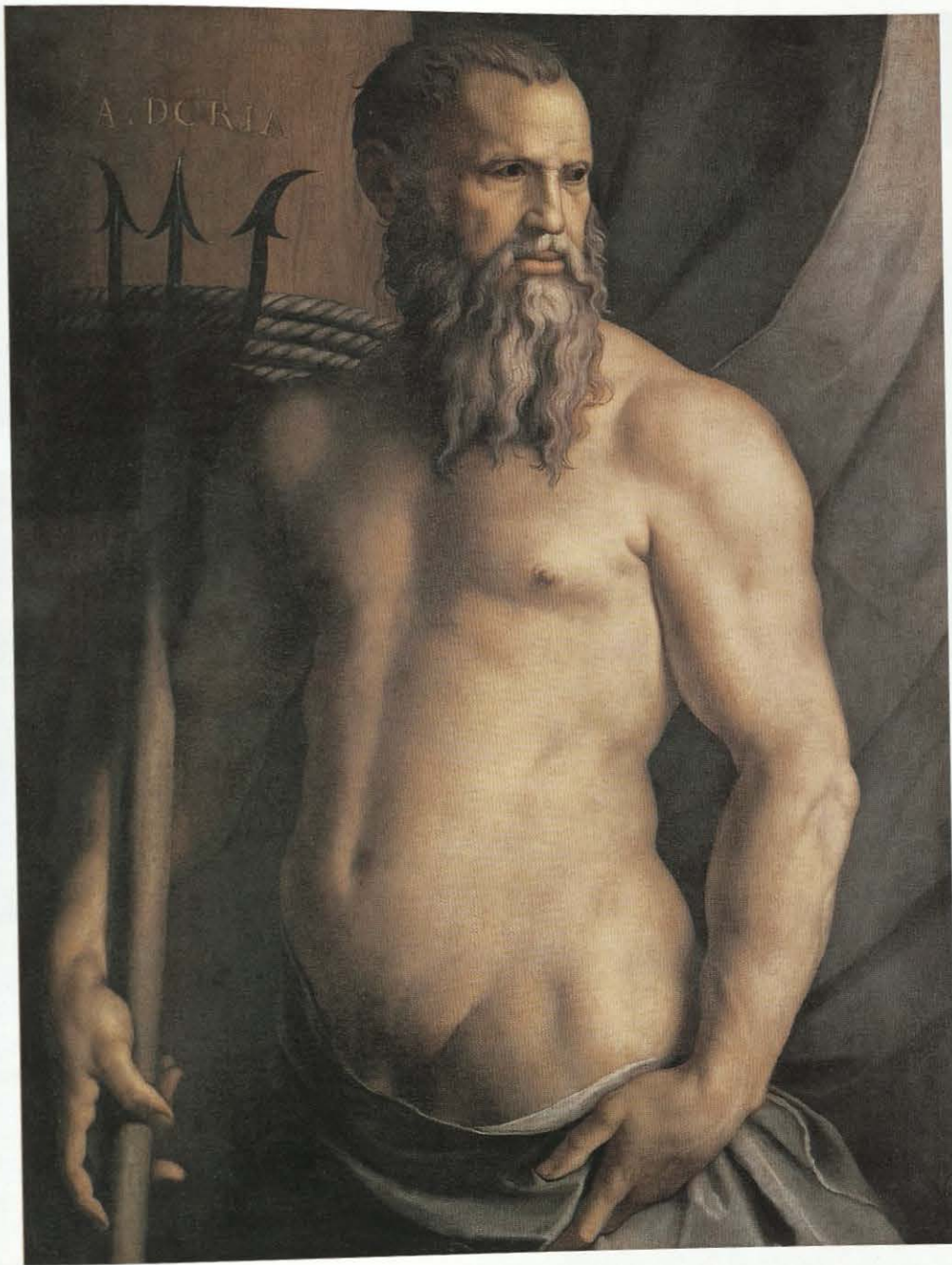
## Andrea Doria in Genoa

During the conflicts that culminated in the Sack of Rome, the naval commander Andrea Doria had been in the employ of Pope Clement VII, and as late as 1528 he was allied with anti-Spanish forces. In the summer of that year, however, he came to an accord with Charles V, who in exchange helped install him as the head of a newly constituted Genoese republic. Ostensibly, the city would have an elected government, but Doria himself would serve as "censor" for life. He remained the dominant figure in the city for the next three decades.

Court patrons in cities to the east had chosen not to rely entirely on local talent, but rather to bring in artists like Titian and Correggio who had established reputations in other centers. Doria did the same, turning to Rome (Perino del Vaga), Venice (Pordenone), and Siena (Domenico Beccafumi), but especially to Florence. One of his first major commissions went to Baccio Bandinelli, who in 1528 began designing a bronze statue of a semi-nude Doria for the square in front of the city's cathedral (*fig. 15.20*). The conception is remarkable in its pretensions: whereas ancient emperors had ordered up statues deifying themselves, modern rulers rarely followed this particular example, at least not so explicitly. The *Hercules and Cacus* that Bandinelli had made for Alessandro de' Medici in Florence (*see* *fig. 15.14*), by comparison, alluded to the duke's position of power, but neither Alessandro nor any other mid sixteenth-century ruler of that city would have displayed a portrait of himself in a public place, let alone a portrait of himself as a god.

Bandinelli's statue was not a one-off experiment; it inspired a second commission involving the Florentine Bronzino, who sometime in the late 1530s or shortly thereafter painted a slightly more subtle variation on Bandinelli's theme (*fig. 15.21*). The exact origins of the painting are unclear: its earliest documented owner was the humanist Paolo Giovio, and he may have received it from Cosimo I himself. In the picture as Bronzino left it, Doria stood against a ship's mast, wrapping a sail around his waist and holding an oar in his right hand. In its original form, that is, the painting took over Bandinelli's nudity, but eliminated all explicit reference to Neptune; the exaggerated musculature may have led viewers to suspect that they were seeing a pagan deity rather than a living mortal, but there was nothing in the picture itself to indicate that the depicted man was anyone other than Doria, and Bronzino even included his name in the scene, fictionally





15.21

Agnolo Bronzino, *Andrea Doria as Neptune*, late 1530s or early 1540s. Oil on canvas (transferred from panel), 45 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (115 x 53 cm). Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

inscribed in the depicted wood. In some ways, Bronzino's conception seems closer to Titian's *Venus* (see fig. 15.3) than to Bronzino's own *Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus* (see fig. 15.19), and if Vasari's confident naming of the nude woman in Titian's painting suggests how unaccustomed viewers were to seeing their contemporaries portrayed in this way, the subsequent history of Bronzino's *Doria* allows a similar inference. Sometime after Doria's death, and long after the image left Bronzino's hands, the oar was repainted and transformed into a trident. This eliminated the reference to Doria's role in

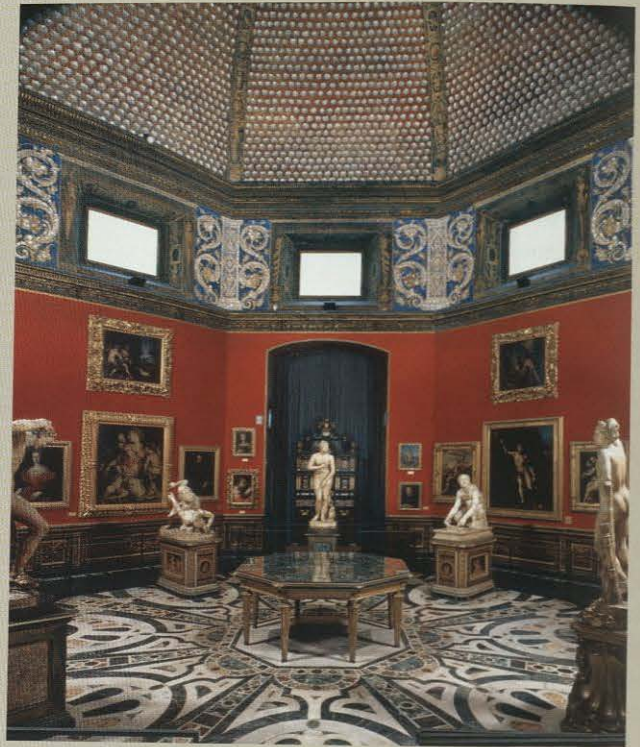
directing his fleet, but it also rationalized the picture's most unsettling elements, including its glimpse of his genitals. If the original version allowed the conclusion that it was *just Doria* we were seeing, posing with the mundane instruments of his occupation yet bizarrely eroticized in his semi-exposure, this reading was now closed off. The picture would show nothing other than Neptune, the god who controlled the sea, there to serve as a sign of, or analogy to, Doria's potency as a commander.



## THE FIRST MUSEUMS

The modern museum has a twofold Renaissance origin. On the one hand, it lies in the intimate spaces of collecting and display to be found in the palaces of the elite, where valuable paintings, sculptures, drawings, and other works acquired the status of objects of knowledge. On the other, it lies in the great assemblages of classical statuary and inscriptions that had been accumulated at sites in Rome: the grouping of the equestrian statue of “Constantine” (Marcus Aurelius; *see* fig. 5.15), the bronze “Lupa” (she-wolf), the *Spinario* (*see* fig. 2.12), and fragments of a colossal statue at the Vatican, symbolically expressed the descent of imperial to papal Rome. Other ancient works were preserved at the Capitol, the site of the city of Rome’s municipal government: in 1471, Sixtus IV transferred the Lupa and the *Spinario* there as a gift to the Roman people, and in 1538 Paul III followed with the transfer of the equestrian statue. We have seen that the Vatican Belvedere built by Donato Bramante was also conceived as a dignified architectural setting for the Belvedere Torso, the *Laocoön*, the “Apollo Belvedere,” and other celebrated works. Meanwhile, cardinals and Roman aristocratic families created their own independent outdoor ensembles of ancient sculpture. In 1523 the Venetian cardinal Domenico Grimani recalled the donations of Sixtus and Paul III by giving his much-admired collection of ancient marbles and Flemish pictures to the city of Venice, where they were finally housed in the San Marco library after 1586 following additional gifts from the Grimani family. In Mantua, where the *studiolo* and *camerini* of Isabella d’Este were preserved and displayed to privileged visitors, the Gonzaga rulers had by 1580 constructed a large ceremonial space, referred to as a gallery, for their magnificent collection of antique sculpture.

The word *museo* (“museum,” i.e. “place for the Muses”) was first used in its modern sense when the physician and historian Paolo Giovio bestowed it on his villa by Lake Como, where from 1536 he assembled a collection of portraits of famous writers, warriors, and statesmen, and dedicated it “to public enjoyment” – although access would have been limited to literate people bearing letters of introduction. Giovio’s collection (now long dispersed and lost) was also distinguished



by its global and universal aspect: an array of historical curiosities included precious metal and ceramic objects, costumes, weapons, and a Koran obtained as spoils during Charles V’s war on Tunis in 1535; Giovio also owned several objects from the New World.

The “museum” (also called a “theater”) housed in the family palace of the Bolognese professor of Natural History Ulisse Aldrovandi had a very different emphasis, although a comparable level of ambition: Aldrovandi sought from the 1550s to assemble an encyclopedic collection of plants, animals, and minerals, essentially turning Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* into an actual three-dimensional display – and challenging the authority of the ancient writer in the process. What Aldrovandi could not acquire in the form of actual specimens he substituted with artistic renderings, notably by the Florentine Jacopo Ligozzi. Aldrovandi’s “theater of nature” was accessible to students and learned people, and was regarded as a place for research; it functioned as



OPPOSITE PAGE

15.22

Bernardo Buontalenti,  
Tribuna of the Uffizi,  
completed 1584, here  
shown with the Medici  
*Venus* and other works

RIGHT

15.23

Hall of Maps, 1563–65.  
Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.  
Paintings on the cabinet  
doors showed the regions  
from which the valuable  
objects inside had come.



a support for other enterprises, such as a botanical garden and a multi-volume encyclopedia to be authored by the naturalist himself (it was only partly published after his death). Many elite visitors came as tourists, in search of an experience of wonder or marvel: the museum could boast an “authentic” winged dragon captured in 1572, as well as basilisks and hydras fashioned from rays and other creatures, which Aldrovandi displayed as instances of the collaboration of nature and human art, and as a way of making sense of the passages regarding these monsters in Pliny.

Aldrovandi maintained close relations with the Medici in Florence, whose collecting ambitions were global in their aspiration and outdid those of all other princes of the time. The grandest enterprise of any princely collector, and the nucleus of the great museum housed to this day in the Uffizi, was the construction by Bernardo Buontalenti of the octagonal room known as the Tribuna, completed in 1584, in which the most

valuable Medici possessions were displayed (fig. 15.22): semi-precious stone vases, coins and gems, and small paintings were shown in specially designed cabinets; ancient and modern bronze statues and marbles were arranged on shelves and pedestals. An English visitor in 1594 reported seeing a nail half turned into gold by an alchemist, a clock of amber, stones called bezoars that could counter the effects of poison, and “a little mountain of pearls, wrought together by Duke Francis,” among other wonders. While Duke Cosimo’s Hall of Maps (fig. 15.23) and his son’s *studiolo* had maintained a principle of organization founded on place of origin, the Tribuna of the Uffizi seems to have *naturalia* and works of art displayed with no principle other than the infinite variety of nature and of human ingenuity. Wonder and spectacle – and the power of those who could command these – were the primary concern.



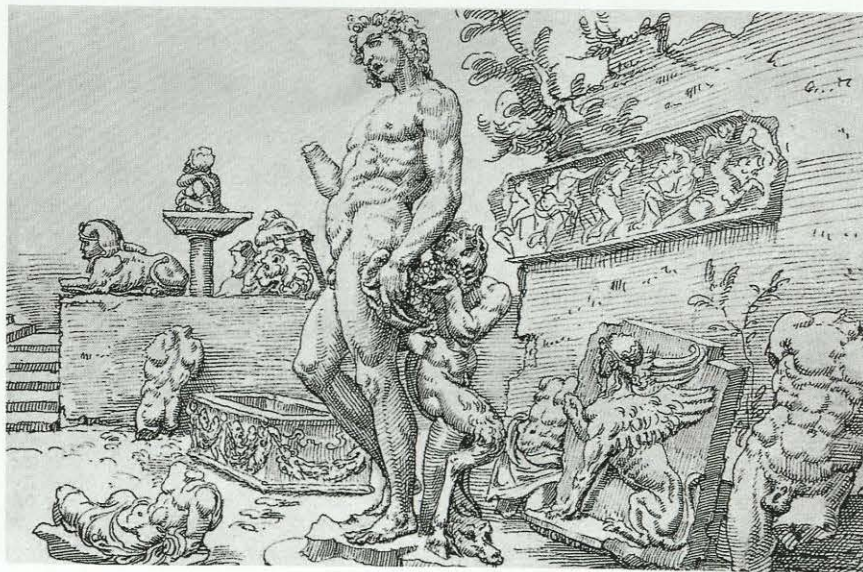
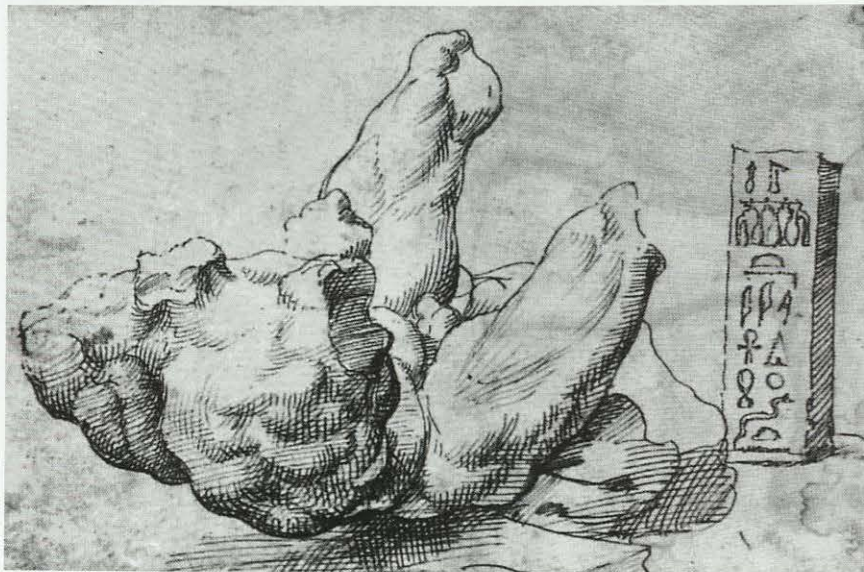
## Rome under the Farnese

In the 1530s, Rome must have been a fairly desolate place. This is the impression, at least, offered in a series of drawings by the Netherlandish painter Maerten van Heemskerck (1498–1574). Heemskerck was part of a growing stream of northerners who came to Rome with the aim of studying its antiquities. Unlike most of his compatriots, however, he made this trip not during the years of his apprenticeship but in his mid thirties, when he was already a fully formed artist. And by contrast to most other drawings of antiquities in these years, Heemskerck's seem to offer not just records of anatomy or gesture, documents that could later be drawn upon to stock paintings with figures, but also a kind of commen-

BELOW

15.24

Maerten van Heemskerck,  
*Belvedere Torso*, 1532–  
36/37. Pen and ink on  
paper. Kupferstichkabinett,  
Staatliche Museen, Berlin



tary on the condition of the works he encountered. He shows the Belvedere Torso (see fig. 12.44), for example, with its legs pointing up in the air, as if it has been toppled from a pedestal (fig. 15.24). A piece of obelisk behind it draws attention to what is missing from the original statue, no less than what is there. Similarly, Heemskerck places Michelangelo's *Bacchus* (see fig. 11.50), shown damaged, in the company of other broken bodies, framing a wrist mysteriously missing its hand against the empty sky (fig. 15.25). The idea here may just be that Michelangelo's statues are themselves like antiquities in their beauty and authority, but the drawing also suggests that modern works, no less than ancient ones, had fallen into a state of decay. Heemskerck was not above exaggerating for dramatic effect; however, a still-visible repair indicates that this is likely the state in which the work was to be encountered in those years.

Most impressive are Heemskerck's images of architecture. His sketchbooks devoted pages to the ancient Colosseum and the Septizonium, standard subjects for visiting draftsmen, but he also made a series of views of St. Peter's. A sheet now in Berlin is typical (fig. 15.26). At the left, the remains of Emperor Constantine's basilica still stand; they are the closest thing to an intact building in the landscape. Closer to the center, in the background, rises the Vatican Obelisk, a monument that had occupied the site since antiquity. Towering above everything, though, is the structure of the new basilica on the right, captured at the point at which work had broken off in the 1520s. Walls are incomplete and in places apparently crumbling, there is no roof, and plants appear to grow on every horizontal surface, as if to indicate that no workman has been here in years. The image makes the building a testament to the ambition of the project, one that was too grand, it would seem, to actually finish. Yet it is also an ironic inversion, since here it is the antiquities that have been preserved and the modern works that have been consumed by time. It is difficult not to see in the sheet a reflection on the 1527 Sack of Rome and its aftermath, as if the invasion of the city had not just interrupted but actually destroyed the very papal undertaking that had spurred the Reformation in the north and turned European sentiment so sharply against Rome.

The drawing was done from a vantage point to the north of the site, looking south. If, as it would appear, it was done on location, Heemskerck must have been standing somewhere in the Vatican complex. This gives particular resonance to the project the Pope himself was undertaking just a few feet away, perhaps at the very time Heemskerck was recording his impressions. In 1534, Clement VII asked Michelangelo to begin conceiving a new mural for the Sistine Chapel. It was to go on the altar wall, replacing Perugino's *Assumption of the Virgin*,





the frescoed altarpiece still in situ. One of the earliest references to the work indicates that the subject was to be a “Resurrection.” Does this mean that Michelangelo was planning a *Resurrection of Christ*, the subject of a series of drawings he had made in recent years and one he had also been contemplating for the New Sacristy? Or was it rather to be a resurrection of the dead, along the lines of what Luca Signorelli had painted in Orvieto (see fig. 11.27)? Either way, the theme would have had a civic no less than a devotional reference: having witnessed Rome’s near devastation, Clement envisioned its recovery.

### Urbanism under Paul III

Before Michelangelo so much as picked up a brush for the new mural, Pope Clement died. His successor was Alessandro Farnese, the bishop of Ostia, who took the name Paul III on his election. Paul was the descendant of an ancient Roman family, the first in over a century to place one of its own on the papal throne, and he was not about to let his best artists work in places other than his home city. He summoned Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1484–1546) and Baldassare Peruzzi (1481–1537), and had the two architects redesign a number of Roman streets and squares, cutting through private properties as necessary to provide beautiful processional routes and impress visitors. In the area of the Campus Martius, where earlier sixteenth-century popes had carved out a trident of streets leading from the Porta del Popolo toward the center, Paul added an east–west counterpart, later called “Via Condotti” after the water conduits that ran beneath it. This connected the Pincian Hill and the precinct around Santa Trinità to the River Tiber. Further south, close to where Julius II had introduced the Via Giulia, Paul opened up other avenues; in this case, the choice of routes related to the position of the Farnese family’s colossal palace, which was itself expanded toward the river. In the space where the new streets converged, to the north of this building, Paul opened up a large piazza. All of this made the palace itself, on which

Sangallo had been working for decades, look all the more monumental, though the architect had other reasons to be interested in the neighborhood as well: in 1535, while engaged in this work, he also began building his own house in the Via Giulia.

Paul III’s urbanism did not just consist in demolitions and street improvements. Perhaps his most important urbanistic act was his 1538 transfer of the *Marcus Aurelius*, the city’s greatest surviving bronze antiquity, from a site near the Lateran (the city’s cathedral and the second major papal residence) to the Capitoline Hill. Paul had spent part of his youth in the household of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and the move indicates his love of antiquities: he would, by the time of his death in 1549, own one of the most impressive private collections of statuary, cameos, engraved gems, and other precious objects ever assembled. Giving such prominence to a militaristic image of an emperor announced the Pope’s own cultivation of an imperial alliance. In fact, transfer of the statue came just two years after an elaborate triumphal entry that Paul had hosted for Charles V. The plan for the Campidoglio also aimed to re-associate the papacy, and the new Farnese Pope in particular, with the ancient heart of the city. Just as the statue was being moved, Paul was beginning to acquire vineyards on the Palatine across the forum, assembling what would eventually become a sprawling villa estate.

The Campidoglio project, for its part, was the start of a redevelopment of the site that Michelangelo was overseeing, though work on this was slow, and by the end of the decade it would still have been the statue that most dramatically marked the transformation. Where Paul was really focusing his artists’ attention through the 1530s was on St. Peter’s and the Vatican. Sangallo the Younger and Peruzzi had been Raphael’s successors as supervisors for the building of St. Peter’s, and the Pope had them return to the project. Sangallo, who remained architect in chief until his death in 1546, oversaw the raising of the floor of the basilica. His chief accomplishment, though, was the preparation of a wooden model for the whole structure (fig. 15.27). This sprawling design attempted a compromise between a centralized and a longitudinal solution. He conceived the domed section of the basilica and the facade as separate structures, connected by a kind of corridor. The facade features colossal towers and a great benediction loggia equal in height to the main entrance. The whole reads as three separate entities, with the repeated motif of a pediment on engaged columns in the second storey serving as a unifying device. The same motif reappears in the projecting corner pavilions between the apses, intended to house sacristies. The main body of the church combines features from the Pantheon and, especially in the curving ends of the transepts

### 15.26

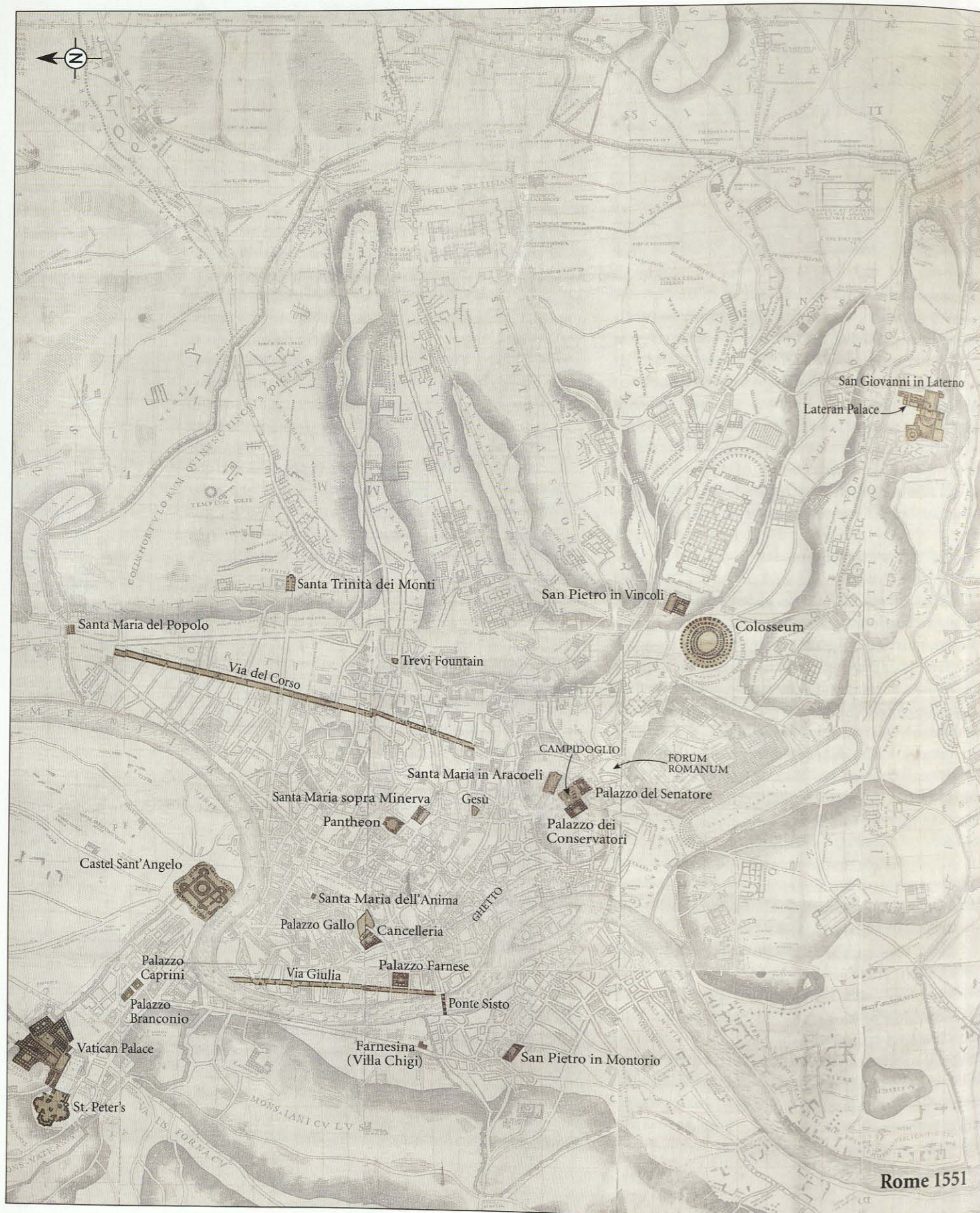
Maerten van Heemskerck,  
*New St. Peter’s under  
construction, view from  
the North East*, c. 1535.  
Pen and ink on paper,  
5 x 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>” (12.8 x 20 cm).  
Kupferstichkabinett,  
Staatliche Museen, Berlin

### OPPOSITE, BOTTOM

### 15.25

Maerten van Heemskerck,  
*Jacopo Galli’s Garden in  
Rome*, c. 1532–35. Pen  
and ink on paper, first  
volume of Heemskerck’s  
Sketchbook, folio 72r.  
Kupferstichkabinett,  
Staatliche Museen, Berlin









and choir, the Colosseum. In its horizontality, the two-storey-with-mezzanine design of the exterior suggests a palace extended to gargantuan proportions. The strongly compartmentalized effect of the plan reinforced the composite impression of the model's exterior. It comprises a nave, major and minor aisles, the domed crossing and minor domed spaces in the crossing arms, and ambulatories. Such a division of space reflects an aesthetic of complexity and enrichment reminiscent of the Villa Madama (see fig. 13.21), showing that Sangallo saw himself as a follower of Raphael, and that Paul III was seeking to revive the architectural grandeur of the era of Julius II and Leo X in the aftermath of the Sack.

### Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*

Even as Sangallo worked on the basilica of St. Peter's, he oversaw the expansion of the palaces next door, adding a new throne room (the Sala Regia) and a new chapel (the Cappella Paolina.) And just as Pope Paul had continued his predecessor's sponsorship of Sangallo at St. Peter's, so did he reinvigorate Clement's project for a new Michelangelo painting in the Sistine Chapel. The subject was now, definitively, the *Last Judgment* (fig. 15.29). In the final fresco, completed in 1541, Michelangelo confined the "Resurrection" proper to the lower left, where skeletons come up out of the earth to dress themselves in perfect new bodies before ascending to heaven. Above, some of the blessed rise by what looks like an ecstatic levitation, others apparently through physical work and with help from others. Higher up still, the blessed gather, though just who and what this gathering involved must have surprised the fresco's early viewers. John the Baptist, rather than displaying the emaciation one might expect from a life in the desert followed by imprisonment (see fig. 11.15), is a massive, Herculean creature, matched in size only by St. Peter, directly opposite him. Many other characters are simply unidentifiable, for just as Michelangelo had done in the Medici Chapel, where he suppressed the

attributes of every personification except that of Night (see figs. 15.11–15.13), so does he here tell us the identities of only some of the saints. Even making sense of Christ was no easy matter. For one thing, this beardless Apollonian man did not *look* like Christ. And just what was he doing? Was he enthroned, having finally taken his position as King of Heaven, or was he striding menacingly toward those who would end up in hell? Traditionally, the Christ of the *Last Judgment* raised his right hand and lowered his left, causing the elevation of the saved and the fall of the damned, and in Michelangelo, too, the right is raised and the left lowered. Here, though, the address of the two hands seems reversed, as though the right were directed to sinners and the left (the "sinister" hand) to the saved. At the same time, the arrangement seems designed to draw attention to Christ's stigmata, the left hand not only showing off its own wound but also pointing to that in Christ's side, reminding the devout that it was through Christ's death that they received eternal life. It is as though the painter was trying to capture as many aspects as he could of Christ's role in human salvation and to do so by relying on pose alone, taking his investment in the signifying power of the human body and its gestures to the limit.

Michelangelo's treatment of the wall amounts to an almost complete overthrow of Leon Battista Alberti's idea of the painting as "window." Rather than giving us an opening into a perspectively defined space, where things diminish the more they recede from view, the *Last Judgment* consists of an even blue ground in front of which figures and objects project. Though the tones used to represent the distant figures in heaven and hell are darker, and though clouds seem to rise behind both the landscape at the lower left and the River Styx at the lower right, the picture is largely empty of atmospheric effects. Rather than trying to dissolve the wall into illusion, Michelangelo picks up on the actual architecture of the chapel, following its three storeys across the composition as if to show that the scene is taking place *within* rather than *beyond* the room. Presence, not space, is what Michelangelo is after here, and he augmented the effect by having the wall prepared in such a way that it physically cants forward, leaning over the visitor who looks up at its spectacle.

The central theme of the picture, the mechanics of resurrection and salvation, must have worried not just Pope Paul but also the artist himself, and Michelangelo's poems in these years are preoccupied with the topic. He even seems to have depicted himself as the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew, dangling below and to the right of Christ, over hell: the grotesque form recalls both the distorted self-portrait that Michelangelo drew in the margin of his sonnet the last time he had painted in the Sistine

LEFT

15.27

Antonio da Sangallo  
the Younger, model for  
St. Peter's, 1539–46. Wood.  
Museo Petriano, Vatican

OPPOSITE

Using Leonardo Bufalini's engraving of 1551 (here ghosted) as a base, this map shows some of the major sites of artistic activity in the first half of the Cinquecento.









15.29  
Michelangelo, *The Last Judgment* (detail): *Minos and Charon*. Fresco. Sistine Chapel altar wall, Vatican

Chapel and the skins he wrote about removing from his sculptures (see fig. 12.30), strewing their dust on the workshop floor as he revealed the perfected beings inside. Perfected beings, for their part, are here in abundance, most of them nude or nearly nude, demonstrations of what Michelangelo had acquired in years of studying classical antiquities. The fresco gives the impression that Michelangelo by now felt that the world of Paradise could only be conveyed with the most beautiful forms history had left, and it is easy to imagine that Paul himself shared Michelangelo's sensibility. To others, though, the whole picture smacked too uncompromisingly of paganism.

Vasari reports that one of the Pope's secretaries, seeing the fresco in an unfinished state, complained that its congregation of naked bodies was more appropriate to a bathhouse than to a chapel. Michelangelo responded by painting the official into the picture at bottom right as Minos (fig. 15.29), the judge of the dead in both Virgil's and Dante's poems. In writing this, Vasari must have been thinking about a figure Michelangelo included at the lower right, coiled in a serpent that feeds on his genitals. The story and the corresponding motif may be more remarkable for what they show about Michelangelo's understanding of his overall project than for their demonstration of his spite. Dante, whose works Michelangelo is said to have known by heart, had populated his *Inferno* with actual characters from local history, as if the inspired poet had privileged access to the fate of mortals in the afterlife, and Michelangelo comes close here to making similar claims for himself. Contemporaries repeatedly associated Michelangelo's skills as a painter with the exercise of judgment: painting the wall, it must have been tempting to think of his own compositional choices, saving or damning this or that character, an analogy to Christ's own central act.

Equally significant is the fact that Minos was a pagan character, an appropriate denizen of hell, perhaps, but potentially troubling since his presence was not justified either by the Book of Revelations or by earlier depictions of the scene. The idea of an artist avenging himself in painting in this way harkens back to a work described by the ancient satirist Lucian, a painted allegory of slander that featured the ass-eared judge Midas in the role of the villain. At least in this figure, then, Michelangelo seems to have been invoking a classical literary comparison. And Minos was not alone. The damned in Michelangelo's fresco reach hell by crossing a river in a boat conducted by a monstrous oarsman; in the world of Michelangelo's painting, that is, there is a River Styx and a ferryman Charon, again familiar figures to any reader of Virgil or Dante (*Inferno* 3:82–84), but largely foreign to the Christian visual tradition. Depictions of hell had always been the place where artists let their imaginations run wild, and Michelangelo seems to have regarded this area of the wall as one where he was free not just to compose but to invent. It cannot be accidental that the artist Benvenuto Cellini, who wished to model himself on the older master, wrote later that while Michelangelo was toiling on the fresco, he himself was lying in bed, gravely ill. On the verge of death, Cellini had a dream of "a terrible old man who wanted to drag me by force into a very large boat of his." One bystander, Cellini's assistant, tried to chase the vision away. Another remarked: "The poor fellow raves, and there are but a few hours left for him." A third simply commented: "He has read Dante, and from his great weakness there has come upon him this rambling." Scenes like those Michelangelo showed could look like a dream, evidence of a kind of erudition that would fit uneasily in an increasingly conservative Church, or even of madness.

OPPOSITE  
15.28  
Michelangelo, *The Last Judgment*, 1534–41. Fresco. Sistine Chapel altar wall, Vatican







# 16

1540—1550  
*Literate Art*

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# 16

1540–1550

## Literate Art

### The Painting of History

We might expect that artists coming onto the scene at mid century continued to feel overwhelmed by what their predecessors had accomplished. Vasari, however, gives us a somewhat different picture in the book of artists' lives he published in 1550. It was a blessing, he wrote, to be able to study the work of Rosso Fiorentino, Sebastiano del Piombo, Giulio Romano, and Perino del Vaga – all painters who died in the 1540s – for that quartet had “rendered art so perfect and easy...that whereas before our masters took six years to make a single painting, now in a single year they make six.” The comment, sounding so strange to us today, shows how much things had changed in a few short years. It is difficult to imagine any artist at the beginning of the sixteenth century, or for that matter any artist from the 1520s, suggesting that art had recently reached a state of perfection: for Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Giovanni Bellini, Titian, and others, all ideas were still provisional, and all faced strong contention from the alternatives their rivals were offering. Nor is it conceivable that any of these earlier painters would have said art was “easy.”

Vasari's assertions about his fellow moderns and their relationship to the immediate past, nevertheless, were not entirely eccentric. Many of the writer's contemporaries thought that art had reached a stage where

demonstrations of learning, mastery of the immediate past, mattered more than experimentation and novelty. Through the 1540s, moreover, numerous artists did in fact treat facility and speed as virtues – a true departure from the tradition this book has been following. Michelangelo's example may have helped generate both the demand for large-scale fresco cycles and the desire among artists to undertake these, but he would have been baffled by Vasari's celebration of productivity per se as a serious goal. The single painting that Michelangelo had just completed in the Sistine Chapel, the *Last Judgment*, in fact took him not six years but seven, and as we have seen, ease had no place there. The effort that the figures in the picture exert can stand as emblems for all parties involved: the figures were difficult to make and difficult to understand, and they required real tolerance from their patron, Pope Paul III.

Michelangelo was Vasari's hero, and the writer followed the comments quoted above with a celebration of the divine artist who “transcends all.” Still, the story of monumental wall painting in the 1540s is to an extent the story of artists moving away from the example of Michelangelo, toward something that, while rich and abundant, was not always so challenging. Few artists from this moment would have worked like Leonardo, meditating at length before each brushstroke. Commanding the painterly tricks not only of Michelangelo himself but also of Raphael, Giulio Romano, and the other muralists Vasari singled out was sufficient for the followers of such men to address their primary task, that of covering large expanses of wall wittily but also efficiently. Those who wished to think *seriously* about what Michelangelo represented, however, faced real perils. A telling case is that of the Florentine Pontormo (1494–1557), who in 1546 began a radically unconventional *Last Judgment* with Old Testament scenes, largely without assistance, in the basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence (fig. 16.1). The endless project cost him his once stellar reputation; critics condemned the work, and it was eventually partially destroyed and partially covered over. Vasari, writing on the fresco, expressed only bafflement: “although I am a painter, I myself do not understand it, and so I am determined to leave all who may see it to form their own judgment.” Condemning Pontormo among other things for spend-

#### 16.1

Jacopo Pontormo, study for the Deluge Fresco for San Lorenzo (detail), c. 1546. Red chalk, whole sheet 16½ x 8½" (41.9 x 21.6 cm). Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Uffizi Gallery, Florence





ing eleven years on the painting is of a piece with Vasari's boast about the major mural cycle he himself began in 1546, for a hall in the Roman Chancellery (fig. 16.2): he covered all the assigned walls in one hundred days. "It shows," Michelangelo reportedly sniffed, but Vasari's path was now the road to success.

### Facility and Grace: Salviati and Bronzino at the Medici Court

One painter who puts the pictorial values Vasari espoused in a better light is the Florentine Francesco Rossi, who came to be called "Salviati" (1510–1563). Francesco had an unusually varied artistic formation, training first in a goldsmith's studio and then in the workshops of the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli and the painter Andrea del Sarto. Following these apprenticeships, Francesco came to the attention of a Florentine cardinal named Giovanni Salviati, who invited the young artist to join his household in Rome. The relationship in this case went beyond the normal protocols of courtliness; the cardinal seems to have welcomed Francesco into his family, and the artist went so far as to adopt his patron's last name.

Giovanni helped connect Francesco with a Salviati relative, Cosimo I, the new Duke of Florence. And between 1543 and 1545, after a series of travels, Francesco



16.2

Giorgio Vasari, *Life of Paul III* (detail): *Paul III Directing the Construction of St Peter's*, 1544. Fresco. Sala dei Cento Giorni, Cancelleria, Rome

frescoed a large wall in a corner room of Florence's Palazzo dei Priori, a building Cosimo had appropriated as the new ducal palace (fig. 16.3). The subject, the *Life of Furius Camillus*, derived from the accounts by the ancient historians Plutarch and Livy of a legendary general of the Roman Republic. On the left, Camillus makes a triumphal entry into a city that the background architecture identifies as Rome. Four white horses, marching in lock step, draw a chariot, beside which walk bent, bound prisoners, while a group of priests leads the way. The scene

16.3

Francesco Salviati, *Life of Furius Camillus*, 1543–45. Fresco. Sala dell'Udienza, Palazzo dei Priori, Florence





16.4  
Chapel of Eleonora di  
Toledo, 1540–45, Palazzo  
dei Priori, Florence.  
Frescoes and altarpiece by  
Agnolo Bronzino



16.5  
Agnolo Bronzino, *Moses at  
the Red Sea*. Fresco. Chapel  
of Eleonora di Toledo,  
Palazzo dei Priori, Florence





on the right collapses two episodes: the attempt on the part of the Gauls to cheat Camillus out of the gold tribute they owed him and his subsequent retaliatory attack. The busy, almost chaotic paintings require the viewer not only to identify a relatively obscure story, but also mentally to disentangle the complex ornament: both scenes unfold behind a fictive architectural opening, defined by the Corinthian pilasters that bracket them. Even as this illustrates Salviati's familiarity with Alberti's metaphor of the window and his command of perspective, however, a grisaille allegory of Peace burning weapons overruns the center of the space, projecting forward into the room like a sculptural relief. Overlapping this, in turn, is a full-color garland of fruit that runs down into the lower zone of the wall, drawing attention to the additional combinations of illusory sculptures, garlands, marble panels, and bronzes accumulated there. Nor has the artist used these divisions to separate things present from things past, history from fiction: an allegorical yet seemingly alive personification of Fame crowns the triumphant general, and behind the chariot, looking back over his shoulder and out at the viewer, Salviati has added a portrait of himself, as though he were a witness to the narrative he has conjured.

These were the first major murals added to a public space in the Palazzo since Leonardo and Michelangelo had broken off work almost four decades earlier, and they illustrate how much painting in the city had changed. Whereas once the city hall had brought two new and ultimately incompatible approaches to painting into confrontation with one another, now Salviati offered a kind of synthesis. Overall, the painting treats a subject reminiscent of Andrea Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar* (see figs.10.1–10.3) in the epic antiquarian mode of Raphael and Giulio Romano, adopting their shifting levels of reality and combination of allegories and historical personalities. Within this, however, Salviati incorporated Michelangelo's powerful sense of relief and emphatic line and even Leonardo's soft *sfumato* modeling (especially in the grisaille figures) – as though there were no disharmony between any of these competing interests. The painting is a “collection,” both in style and in subject matter, much of which amounts to a profusion of elaborately crafted objects in the form of spoils, armor, and trophies.

Salviati's approach is quite different in all of these respects from that taken by older Florentine painters like Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572), who in the same years and in the same building decorated a small private chapel for Cosimo's wife, Eleonora of Toledo (fig. 16.4). On the walls and in the vault, Bronzino, like Salviati, framed narrative elements with illusory shifts of medium, including stone architecture, bronze relief, and, in the ceiling, garlands of fruit. Yet where Salviati accumulated such motifs



to give an impression of copiousness, Bronzino clarified boundaries. The garlands, in his case, largely stay compartmentalized, and the cloths in the pendentives, while overlapping the architectural moldings, do not invade the space of the sacred narratives. Salviati delighted in displaying his ability to render horses, Leonardo's vehicle of tour de force painting. Although a scene like *Moses at the Red Sea* (fig. 16.5) provided every opportunity for similar showpieces, however, Bronzino illustrates only a couple of horses' heads, and places these in the middle ground, concentrating all of his attention on the figures. This allowed him to paint his human bodies at a larger scale than Salviati's; though the space assigned to Bronzino was considerably more intimate than the one in which Salviati worked, it paradoxically achieves a greater monumentality. Where Salviati, who had been to Venice and who particularly admired Mantegna, embraced the chance to incorporate hills and ruins in the distance, Bronzino followed Michelangelo in providing only the most token rendering of landscape: the sea that consumes the Pharaoh's men is strangely calm and flat, and on the shores there is not a plant to be seen. Both artists aligned themselves with Michelangelo in employing crisp, hard colors, but whereas Salviati then individualized the details of ornament that cover every surface, Bronzino aimed instead for clarity and immediate legibility. In his picture, the figures themselves are the primary ornaments: nude youths and women with marvelous hairstyles who adopt varied, sophisticated poses constantly challenge and engage the eye.

In his *Brazen Serpent* (fig. 16.6), as the Medici courtiers who had access to the space would have recognized, Bronzino paid conscious homage to one of the

## 16.6

Agnolo Bronzino, *The Brazen Serpent*. Fresco. Chapel of Eleonora di Toledo, Palazzo dei Priori, Florence





16.7  
Agnolo Bronzino, chapel of  
Eleonora di Toledo, *Pietà*,  
1545. Oil on panel, 8'9½" x  
5'8" (2.68 x 1.73 m). Musée  
des Beaux-Arts, Besançon

spandrels in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel vault. If Salviati, importing a cosmopolitan attitude back to provincial Florence, sought to show his understanding of a wide range of masters and styles, Bronzino here insists that there is only one elder who really matters: Michelangelo, the greatest painter Florence had produced. Though Bronzino idolized Michelangelo, however, what he made of the now absent master's example depended on the conventions of literary imitation. Bronzino would have thought through his painting in the manner that contemporary writers thought through their verse, evoking a well-known precedent, then ingeniously transforming and reworking its language or images. Bronzino, a poet himself, was adept in the imitation of Petrarch, who had long been the single most authoritative model for Ital-

ian poetry, even more than the great Dante. Imitators of Petrarch sought a purity of form and a delicacy of language; although they wrote about the pains of love or bereavement, "Petrarchists" tended to curtail anything that smacked of harshness in the words or violent passion in the sentiment.

Michelangelo's painting, like his difficult verse, could be deliberately rough in its tone, expressing a complex emotional intensity. It is noteworthy, then, that Bronzino's response to Michelangelo in the Chapel of Eleonora suggests an intention to refine its model: his ivory-skinned and golden-haired figures are more slender and – despite the horror of the subjects – more delicate in their movements and attitudes. This suggests that Bronzino deliberately cultivated "Petrarchan" values in his painterly as well as his poetic practice, and that he resisted qualities in Michelangelo's art – Titanic bodies in energetic and sometimes violent motion – that were not compatible with his pursuit of elegant and fluid design. This was a way of bringing back Michelangelo from Rome to Florence, "translating" the older artist into an idiom more compatible with the Florentine poetry and painting of the generation of Bronzino, and indeed of Cosimo I.

Bronzino painted the chapel's altarpiece on canvas and attached it to the wall, as if to dispel any idea that this, like the devices with which he surrounded it, belonged to any fiction (fig. 16.7). The crowding and especially the man (or angel?) who prepares to lift the body of Christ recalls the Capponi altarpiece of Bronzino's teacher Pontormo (see fig. 14.15), but the central point of reference is the sculpted *Pietà* that Michelangelo had made for St. Peter's (see fig. 11.51). As we have seen, some viewers of that work accused Michelangelo of confusing the relationship between Virgin and Christ by making her appear younger than her son. Bronzino "corrected" this, showing an older mother whose veil now suggests the garments contemporary women wore in mourning, and shrouding the whole scene in a somber darkness. As though to demonstrate that he could equally match Michelangelo in beauty, though, Bronzino also depicted the Virgin a second time, immediately to this picture's right, now in her youthful Annunciate form.

#### The Monumental Fresco in Rome: Perino del Vaga

Salviati's approach to the large-scale mural, with its multiple levels of reality and its rich ornament, differed from the characteristically Florentine manner that Bronzino represented in the 1540s, but it had much more in common with contemporary painting in Rome. Best among the artists who responded to the precedent of the Vatican's Hall of Constantine was Perino del





16.8

Perino del Vaga, frescoes in  
the Sala Paolina, 1545–48.  
Castel Sant'Angelo, Vatican

Vaga (1501–1547), who had been born in Florence but had trained in Rome under Raphael. In 1545–48, Perino produced a spectacular adaptation of the “epic” manner in the Sala Paolina (fig. 16.8), the papal apartment of Paul III Farnese in the Castel Sant’Angelo. The Sala functioned less as a private refuge than as a stateroom, and the cycle celebrates the undying power of the Pope and his family through the figure of the second-century CE Roman Emperor Hadrian and the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great (r. 336–23 BCE). Hadrian, among the most admired of the Roman emperors, had built the Castel Sant’Angelo as a colossal mausoleum for himself; Perino portrayed him full length on one wall of the room, along with an inscription celebrating how his “successor,” Paul III, “transformed the monument of the deified

Hadrian into a high Godly palace.” Alexander the Great was the namesake of Paul III, who had gone by his baptismal name Alessandro until his election.

Eleven panels of simulated bronze relief told the emperor’s story in an extravagantly Michelangelesque style, with robust figures wearing exotic antique armor. Nude angels – languid versions of the Sistine Chapel *ignudi* – lounge before the reliefs. Facing the portrait of Hadrian is a dynamic image of the Archangel St. Michael, for whom the Castel had been named following his apparition there during a plague. Connoisseurs like the Farnese would have recognized Perino’s figure as a variation on a *St. Michael* by Raphael; it had been sent to France, although copies of the cartoon remained in Rome. What is surprising is the relatively marginal presence of the



**16.9**  
 Michelangelo, *The Fall of Phaeton*, 1533. Black chalk on paper, 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (41.3 x 23.4 cm). Royal Library, Windsor

Pope's Biblical counterpart, St. Paul, in the decoration: only six scenes of his life appear, at a much-reduced scale in the vault of the room. Equally unexpected is the far greater prominence of pagan gods and goddesses, including Venus and Cupid near the image of Hadrian, along with allegorical figures. The Farnese prided themselves on their local ancestry, and the patron here must have thought of Venus not just as the goddess of love but also as the mother of the Romans: Hadrian had propagated her cult and founded the temple of Venus and Rome on Rome's "birthday," 21 April. The decorations remind the viewer of the history of the place, from mausoleum to angelic bastion to papal residence, and insert the Farnese into the longest of histories. Perino's manner, itself unmistakably a continuation of past practices, suited the assignment perfectly, and his team maintained a tone of levity throughout: in one vignette, a pair of baboons nonchalantly eats grapes; elsewhere, a page ceremoniously draws back a curtain from a fictitious doorway.

Perino's brief was to paint history – that of the Pope's ancient namesake, along with the historic Roman site and its memories of Hadrian and the angelic apparition. Yet the artist shared with his courtly audience the expectation that history was a form of literature, and that it could be dressed up with all the elaborate machinery of epic poetry: allegories, mythological figures, episodes of sheer dazzling virtuosity for its own sake.

### Michelangelo's Gift Drawings and the *Pietà*

Bronzino's altarpiece had responded to one of Michelangelo's most youthful sculptures, the *Pietà*, a marble that dated to the previous century. Bronzino might well have known, however, that the theme had become newly topical to the older artist in just these years.

Over the previous decade, while at work on the *Last Judgment*, Michelangelo had increasingly occupied himself with a new category of artwork: the "gift drawing." Produced on paper, such objects demanded far less time than a painting or sculpture and cost nearly nothing to produce. Michelangelo could make them outside the context of his large commissions, choosing subjects that appealed to him personally and then presenting them to friends.

Italians had been using drawings as gifts at least from the time that Gentile Bellini presented to the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II one of the books of designs that his father Jacopo had produced. Leonardo is documented as having given a drawing as a gift; Raphael and Dürer had exchanged drawings as examples of their work; and other artists must have done the same. As early as



the 1510s, as we saw with Sebastiano del Piombo (see fig. 13.27), Michelangelo was giving colleagues from outside his workshop designs that they could use as the basis of paintings. By the 1530s, however, the artist was beginning to see a different potential in both the format and the practice. In that period, he gave several drawings to the young Roman nobleman Tommaso Cavalieri, to whom he had formed a deep emotional attachment and whom he had been giving lessons in drawing. These included a chalk on paper depiction of *The Fall of Phaeton* (fig. 16.9), a boy who overzealously attempted to drive the chariot of Apollo, his father, and whom Jupiter consequently struck down with a bolt of lightning. The theme is literary insofar as it comes from poetry (in this case Ovid), but the drawing also represents the suffering mood that typified a certain kind of verse: the dozens of poems Michelangelo wrote to Cavalieri turn on the experience of burning, of being reduced to smoke and dust, of facing weapons that heaven destined to bring about his death, of vainly longing to fly – all on account of love.



“How can it be,” he laments in one, “that if fire by its nature ascends to the heavens, to its proper sphere, and I am turned to fire, that it does not carry me upward along with it?” In a real sense, Michelangelo’s drawings from this period, done on pages that also contain his words, are poems; the artist has made the Roman poet Horace’s notion of *ut pictura poesis* (“as is painting, so is poetry”) mean something new.

In the late 1530s, Michelangelo had also become closely attached to Vittoria Colonna, the widowed grand-

daughter of the Duke of Urbino. Colonna, a celebrated poet herself, belonged to a group of nobles and clerics interested in Church reform; she and Michelangelo would meet in Rome to discuss their respective arts, but also more weighty and controversial spiritual matters concerning the role of Christ in obtaining human salvation. Some members of their circle believed that faith alone, not prayer and good works, would redeem the soul because of the grace Christ’s sacrifice had obtained for all humanity. This idea seems to have lain behind the



**16.10**

Michelangelo, *Pietà for Vittoria Colonna*, c. 1540.

Black chalk on paper,  
11½ x 7½" (29 x 19 cm).  
Isabella Stewart Gardner  
Museum, Boston





ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT  
**16.11** and **16.12**  
 Michelangelo, *Pietà*,  
 c. 1547–55. Marble,  
 height 7'8" (2.33 m).  
 Museo dell'Opera del  
 Duomo, Florence

unusual *Pietà* Michelangelo drew for her around 1540 (fig. 16.10). His dead Christ, having been removed from the Cross, collapses between the Virgin's legs while two small wingless angels suspend his arms. The composition suggests a birth as well as a death, reminding the viewer why the Virgin suffered more intensely and before all others at his passing, the loss of the son made from her own flesh. Christ's downwardly turned arms adopt the form of a yoke, suggesting the Evangelist Matthew's metaphor for Christian faith: "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." The Virgin's upturned arms, meanwhile, turn her into a kind of double of Christ himself, an example of the *compassio* we first encountered with Fra Angelico. The words running up the base of the Cross – "you don't know how much blood it costs" – come from Dante. They alert us to the fact that here again the artist is attempting to generate a visual equivalent to poetry, in this case one that could both answer the poems Vittoria Colonna had given him and acknowledge her particular identification with Mary.

This new preoccupation with the meanings of Christ's death remained with Michelangelo through the decade, and when, in the late 1540s, he began contemplating an appropriate decoration for his own projected tomb in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, he began carving a new marble on the same theme (figs. 16.11–16.12). Since completing his first marble *Pietà* some four decades earlier (see fig. 11.51), Michelangelo's understanding of the antique and the challenges it presented to the Christian artist had changed. He would now double the number of figures he aimed to extract from the block, so as to exceed by one the number in the famous ancient *Laocoön* (see fig. 12.48). (Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* had reported that the team of artists who had carved this had used only a single block; Michelangelo would have known the report to be false, but the idea of the multigure monolith lingered as a challenge.) To the standard figures of the Virgin and Christ, consequently, Michelangelo now added two others, one female and



one male. These probably represent Mary Magdalene, the exemplary repentant sinner whom Christ saved from perdition, and Nicodemus, a Pharisee who secretly followed Christ – though both identifications have been questioned. Sixteenth-century representations of Nicodemus are nearly indistinguishable from those of Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man who gave his tomb to Christ, and the latter subject would have been especially appropriate given the purpose for which Michelangelo made the statue. Nicodemus, on the other hand, had by 1550 come to personify Christians who secretly adhered to unorthodox doctrines, and Michelangelo's earlier association with Vittoria Colonna and other reformers could well have attracted him to such a character. The face he gave this man is a self-portrait.

In his earlier marble *Pietà* (see fig. 11.51), Michelangelo had arranged his figures so that the Virgin was on axis with the beholder who stood before the work; she offered the primary point of identification, summoning the onlooker to share her sorrow. Now, by contrast, Michelangelo rotated the Virgin forty-five degrees. Those approaching the sculpture from the left, as one would when proceeding through the nave of the church, would have found her crouching behind the body, which twists so as to display its wounded left hand, right foot, and side to the viewer. This arrangement, like the *Pietà* for Vittoria Colonna a decade before (see fig. 16.10), expresses a new spirituality that centered on the idea of Christ's sacrifice (rather than good human works) as the basic condition for salvation, and essentially shifted the emphasis in the *Pietà* from the Virgin's experience to Christ's gift. The view from the front, by contrast, gave Nicodemus the more active part, though this view also alerts us that the statue today is not as Michelangelo actually left it. A later follower re-carved the Magdalene, leaving a figure both smaller and more polished than the others. More curiously, Christ lacks a left leg, and Vasari tells us that this is because the sculptor himself smashed to pieces the leg he had carved. Michelangelo's composition had slung the leg across the lap of the Virgin, an arrangement no doubt intended to realize the intense proximity that makes the *Pietà*'s theme of loss and separation so touching. The pose, however, would also have recalled the convention used recently by artists to depict sexual partners. (The Rosso and Caraglio print of *Pluto and Proserpina*, itself a response to Michelangelo's Sistine *ignudi*, is one example he would certainly have known; see fig. 14.9.) In this case, the experimentalism that led Michelangelo repeatedly to draw on pagan motifs when rethinking sacred themes seems to have gone too far. He had pushed a mode of symbolic and corporeal expression derived from antiquity beyond what even he recognized as the limits of Christian acceptability.

## The Rise of Vernacular Art Theory

Michelangelo's second marble *Pietà* shows the degree to which standards of artistic virtuosity had escalated over the last half century: no previous sculptor had managed to conceive and execute a work with four full-length figures in a single piece of marble. The composition itself drew attention to the accomplishment, pressing the characters together so that the viewer would immediately recognize the fact that the sculpture was monolithic. Counting among the few marbles Michelangelo carved in the period, it conveys the idea of sculpture that he captured in the opening stanzas of his most famous poem:

The greatest artist does not have any concept that a single piece of marble does not circumscribe within its excess, and only the hand that obeys the intellect can arrive at that. The evil that I flee and the good to which I aspire, gracious, noble and divine lady, lie hidden in you in just this way; but that I may not live hereafter, my art goes contrary to the effect I desire.

Michelangelo had probably written the poem for Vittoria Colonna at the beginning of the decade, but it circulated more broadly, and contemporaries regarded it as a major statement of art theory. They would not have found it unusual that Michelangelo chose to convey his thoughts about sculpture in verse. This expressed the principle of *ut pictura poesis*, it matched a seriousness of thought to the most elevated mode of writing, and it allowed Michelangelo to build the kinds of comparisons he cared most about – in this case, the likeness between the difficult process of extracting a sculpture from a stone block and that of drawing favor from a beloved.

The other major voices on the arts in these years also wrote in forms we might today consider eccentric. Bronzino, the painter of Eleonora of Toledo's elegant chapel in Florence (see figs. 16.4–16.7), composed numerous poems, some of them turning on vulgar witticisms and adopting a knowingly “low” style. The Venetians Paolo Pino and Lodovico Dolce wrote treatises about painting in the form of imaginary conversations. In Florence, the most important figure in the development of art theory was the poet and philosopher Benedetto Varchi (1502/3–1565), and his most significant statements on the arts took a form he called “lessons” or “readings,” by which he meant commentaries on poems written by others.

Varchi had come of age during the time of the Republic, and when the Medici regained control of the city in 1529, he had been among those who resisted them, going so far as to carry arms against them in battle. In 1543, however, Duke Cosimo persuaded him to



return to Florence, where he received a salary for writing Florentine history and where he became closely involved with the city's recently founded literary academy. Cosimo wished the academy to devote itself to the perfection of a Tuscan language exemplified by the poets Petrarch and Boccaccio. (The academicians admired Dante, the model so important for Michelangelo, for his thought, but regarded his language as ungainly and unsuitable for imitation). At least initially, however, the institution welcomed the membership of artists as well as of professional writers; it provided a forum for discussing the means and goals of painting and sculpture, and its members translated and commented on seminal texts as well as writing new works themselves.

These years saw the first publication in Italian of Alberti's *On Painting* (1547) and *On Architecture* (1550). In 1550, Vasari also published his first edition of the *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors*, a monumental history of art from the early

fourteenth century to his own day, centering on Florence and Rome. The new interest in writing about art was not limited to Florence, though even elsewhere, writers seemed to respond especially to Florentine practice. In Venice, Pino's dialogue on painting pitted a representative of the Florentine tradition against a local. In Rome, the most important tract on sacred images came in 1552 from the Dominican theologian and long-time Florence resident Ambrogio Catarino.

In Florence itself, the new literature arose as part of a new absolutist politics, one intended to promote the arts of Cosimo's court as uncommonly sophisticated and self-aware. Varchi distributed not only the Michelangelo poem and his own Aristotelian interpretation of it, but also a series of letters he had solicited from contemporaries comparing the merits of painting and sculpture. And this only encouraged the literary aspirations of his contemporaries, especially those like Bronzino and the goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini, who were friendly with him and attracted to the new academy.

Such pursuits shed light on Bronzino's pictorial interests as well, especially as witnessed in the *Allegory* now in London (fig. 16.13). Venus occupies most of the panel; central and mostly frontal, her format evokes recent Pietà imagery, though the activity she provokes is far from sacred. With her right arm she directs an arrow stolen from Cupid's quiver at her son, who caresses her head and nipple and kisses her while provocatively turning his backside to us. A younger Cupid-like figure, personifying Play (*Gioco*), steps toward the couple and smiles, preparing to strew blossoms, not noticing that he has stepped on the spiky tail of the girl-monster lurking in the shadow. To the far left, an ashen man, identified by some scholars as a syphilitic, screams, tying the sufferings caused by love to the most vicious of contemporary scourges. At the top, the old figure of Time holds a kind of curtain; he stands opposite Oblivion (missing the back of her head, where Renaissance writers believed memories to be stored). Are these two collaborating, covering up the whole seductive but ultimately unpleasant scene? Or are they, too, at odds with one another, Time exposing the inevitably painful outcome of the experiences that lovers tend to (or try to) forget?

The picture, which combines classical characters and invented personifications, represents the kind of poetic invention that artists had been making in Florence since the time of Botticelli. Just as contemporary poets began their inventions by working variations on the sonnets of Petrarch, so Bronzino here in a self-consciously analogous sense imitates a design by Michelangelo realized in paint by Bronzino's teacher Pontormo, the *Venus and Cupid* from 1532–34 (fig. 16.14). Bronzino has taken up the incestuously kissing nudes and the masks that signify

## 16.13

Agnolo Bronzino, *Allegory*, c. 1545. Oil on panel, 57 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 46" (146.1 x 116.8 cm). National Gallery, London







**16.14**  
Pontormo after  
Michelangelo, *Venus and  
Cupid*, 1532–34. Oil on  
canvas, 4'2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 6'5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
(1.28 x 1.97 m). Galleria  
dell'Accademia, Florence

false dreams and delusions, but the tone in his *Allegory* is different: its dark humor and pessimistic view of the coy artifice, cosmetic disguise, and merciless punishments that characterized courtly life would especially have appealed to a man like Varchi. It is not surprising that Bronzino had painted nothing like this in earlier decades. Cosimo sent the painting as a gift to King Francis I of France, a gesture that may itself have involved a joke, since syphilis was known in Italy as the “French disease” (and in France as the “Italian disease”).

## Italians Abroad: Fontainebleau

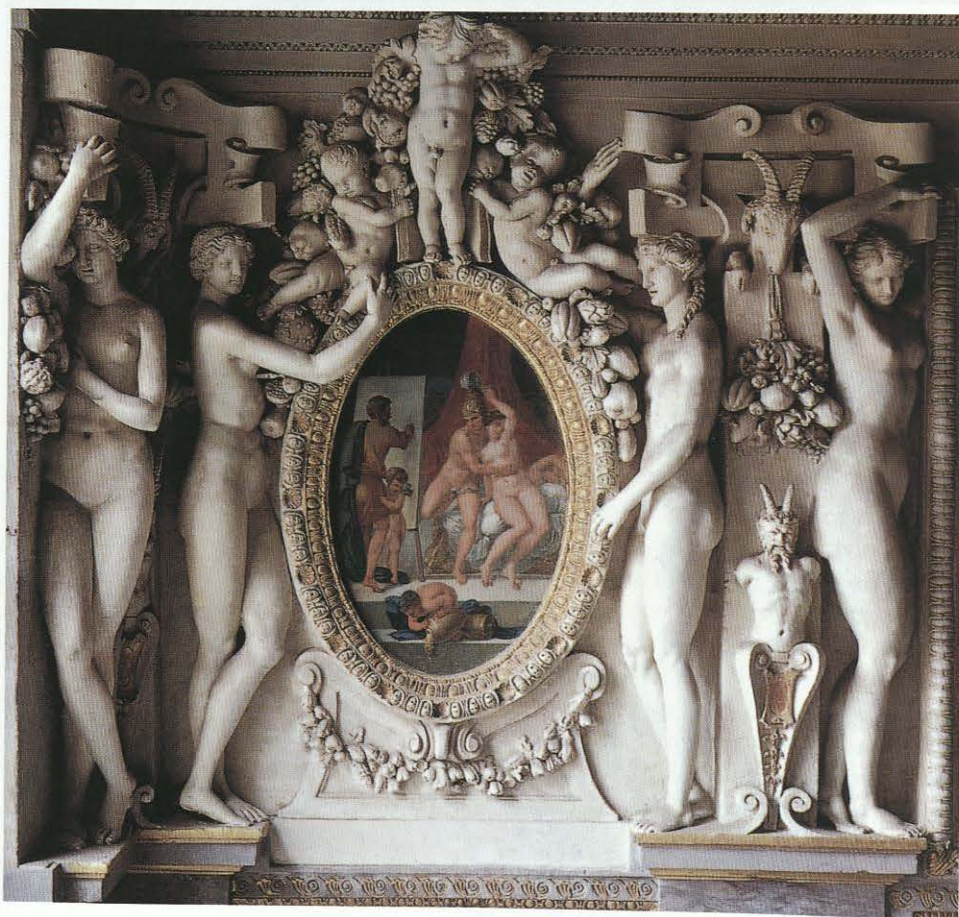
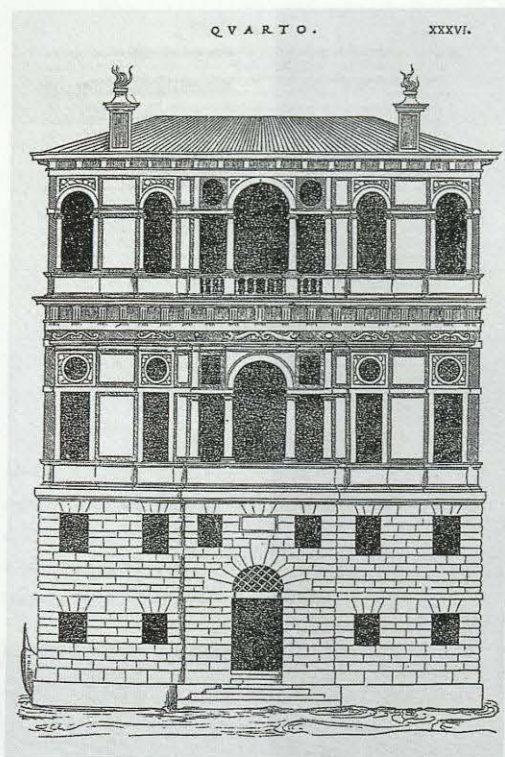
By the time Bronzino completed his *Allegory*, around 1545, the French court at Fontainebleau had become one of the continent’s major centers of modern Italian art, more important than most cities in Italy itself. Francis I (1494–1547) had succeeded to the throne in 1515, and almost from the beginning he demonstrated his cosmopolitan interests, persuading Leonardo da Vinci to move permanently to his court in 1516, and Andrea del Sarto to spend a period there two years later. However, after his defeat in 1525 at Pavia in northern Italy by Spanish imperial forces, which led to a humiliating period as a prisoner of war, Francis withdrew to a small town on the outskirts of Paris and devoted himself to a

major building campaign. His court architect Gilles Le Breton helped him dramatically expand and restructure an older royal residence, and the king began to invite prominent Italians to help decorate it. The timing of the project coincided with the collapse of Roman patronage after the 1527 Sack; a number of Italian artists, faced with the choice of working for a small local court or for a foreign king, saw the move to France as a newly exciting prospect.

Sebastiano Serlio (1475–c. 1554), who had dedicated his 1540 book on antiquities to King Francis, accepted an invitation the following year to move to Fontainebleau, where he was given charge over the architecture of the residence. While in France, Serlio pioneered what would come to be known as the “rustic style,” a mode that assembled roughly worked materials into seemingly organic, living structures. Serlio also used his court position to publish a series of books on architecture (figs. 16.15–16.16), including an updated take on Vitruvian principles, a lengthy reconsideration of perspective, a full accounting (and depiction) of the architectural orders, and a discourse on theatrical set designs. In addition, he wrote a book, published posthumously, on domestic architecture, his principal focus while in France.

Serlio had appeared one year too late to work with Rosso Fiorentino, a painter whom he probably knew from their time together in Rome in the 1520s, and who had





ABOVE LEFT

16.15

Sebastiano Serlio, elevation of a palace. Woodcut. *Il quarto libro d'architettura* (Venice, 1537), 256r.

ABOVE RIGHT

16.16

Sebastiano Serlio, stage design for a tragic scene. Woodcut. *Il secondo libro d'architettura* (Paris, 1545), 45v.

LEFT

16.17

Francesco Primaticcio, *Alexander and Campaspe*, c. 1541–45. Fresco, with framing *stucco* figures. Room of the Duchesse d'Estampes, Château of Fontainebleau