Chapter 4

The Cartoon

Far from being outmoded, the cartoon was a mainstay of the Early Baroque. The cartoon was prominently used by the Carracci in their revival of grand fresco painting along the lines of Raphael and the High Renaissance, but it was also used obsessively by Barocci, for even his oil altarpieces. Cartoons were also significant for Barocci because he utilized them as a vehicle to return to another High Renaissance tool that had fallen out of favor, the auxiliary cartoon.

Barocci would have first had to use cartoons during his few years of fresco painting in Rome, but even after returning to Urbino and abandoning fresco as a medium, he devised a novel potential for the old form of drawing.[237] All of Barocci's cartoons are undamaged by transfer, meaning that he used 'substitute cartoons.' While substitute cartoons are more common in wall painting, such stylus-incised substitute cartoons are described by Vasari and Borghini.[238] The cartoon is placed over another sheet of paper with the back rubbed with charcoal. The design is then incised from the original leaving the charcoal outlines on the painting (or equally importantly another "auxiliary" drawing).

There are cartoons extant for just eleven of Barocci's works, but it is likely that he used one for every large commission. A typical example of the utilization of the cartoon is evident for the *Visitation* in the Chiesa Nuova **(Fig. 30)**, cited previously, or the *Madonna del Popolo*, in the Uffizi (**Fig. 53**). Neither are complete. The odds are against the preservation of these cartoons: they are composed of a number of pieces of paper (to reach the size of the altarpiece) and when separated, might not be of an impressive aesthetic quality and, hence, be less likely to survive. However, almost Barocci's entire procedure presumes the existence of absolute measures of the final work and corresponding cartoon.

One may go further to affirm that the cartoon evidences a consistent approach to altarpiece painting, where a monumental size is generally to be found. If one compares the just cited cartoon of the *Popolo* with that of the *Visitation* at the same scale **(Fig. 53)** - that is, as if they were placed next to one another - one can see a consistent size of depicted protagonists that fueled Barocci's imagination from one painting to the next, as he worked on varying the interactions of Christ, Mary and other saints in a number of contexts.

LIST OF EXTANT CARTOONS

1. Two fragments for the Urbino *Madonna of Saint Simon* (Rome, Istituto Centrale per la Grafica).[239]
2. Three fragments from the cartoon for the Perugia *Deposition* in Chicago (Art

[237] Barocci's frescoes in the Sala and Casino of Pius IV show incision marks, as pointed out to me by Dott. Giovanni Cecchini of the Vatican Museum.
[238] Vasari (1568/1966), 1:134; Borghini (1584/1967), 173. Transfer to substitute cartoons by pin-pricking is instead described by Armenini (1586/1977), 103-104; c.f., Bambach (2003), 285-6.
[239] Verstegen (2003).

Institute), Vienna (Albertina), and Urbania (Museo Civico, missing).[240]

3. Two fragments from the cartoon for the Uffizi *Madonna del Popolo* in Milan (Ambrosiana 4393) and a French, private collection.[241]
4. Two fragments from the cartoon for the ruined Bywell Hall *Noli me tangere* in an Oslo, private collection.[242]
5. Half-cartoon for the Chiesa Nuova *Visitation* (Uffizi 1784).[243]
6. Almost-complete cartoon for the Borghese *Flight of Aeneas from Troy* (Louvre, 35774).[244]
7. Almost-complete cartoon for the Louvre *Circumcision* (Uffizi 446).[245]
8. Full cartoon from the Urbino *Last Supper* (Uffizi 91458).[246]
9. cartoon for the Vatican Beata Michelina (Casa Castelbarco Albani).[247]
10. Full cartoon for the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro *Madonna della Culla* (Casa Castelbarco Albani).[248]
11. Full cartoon for the unfinished Chantilly *Christ Taking Leave of the Virgin* (Uffizi 1785).[249]

In addition, the Uffizi possesses a cartoon fragment that stylistically relates to the early *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (Duomo, Urbino).[250] While the two designs do not match - the Virgin and Child - it can be confirmed that they are to the same scale and the cartoon in question could easily have served as an earlier ideation of the altarpiece project.

The survival of these cartoons confirms the general close similarity to Barocci's earlier compositional drawings. Because of Barocci's obsession with scale, there is no question that the artist relies reliably on the cartoon for all of his commissions. In any case, the ubiquity of cartoons is also confirmed by their number in the *Minuta* of his studio at his death.[251] These cartoons should be noted for not only their significant number but also their sometimes-experimental appearance, including local color, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Barocci's adherence to a technique more popular from the High Renaissance

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[240] Chicago inv. 22.5406, 29.4 x 23.9 cm; Emiliani (1985), 1:66, fig. 102; Emiliani (2008), 1:196-7, fig. 22.11.
Vienna inv. 2287, 30.1 x 24.2 cm; Emiliani (1985), 1:68, fig. 105; Emiliani (2008), 1:199, fig. 22.15.
Urbania inv. 206 2, 32.4 x 25.6 cm; Bianchi (1959), fig. 22; not in Emiliani (1985); Emiliani (2008), 1:198, fig. 22.14.

[241] Ambrosiana 4393, 44 x 34.2 cm; Olsen (1962), 168; Bora (1978).
French private collection, 149.5 by 110.5 cm; Rosenberg (1981); Bambach (2015). The squaring on these two drawings matches and when overlaid on the *Madonna del Popolo* can be seen to constitute a single grid.

[242] Madsen (1959): 273-77, figs. 26 and 27.

[243] Uffizi inv. 1784, 106.3 x 130.0 cm; Emiliani (1985), 2:222, fig. 456, (2008), 2:46, fig. 45.17; Mann and Bohn (2012), 203, fig. 70.

[244] Louvre inv. 35774, 148.0 x 190.0 cm; Emiliani (1985), 2:231, fig. 477, (2008), 2:61, fig. 46.1.

[245] Uffizi inv. 91450, 230 x 252.5 cm; Olsen (1962), no. 43; Emiliani (1985), 2:253, fig. 526; (2008), 2:95, fig. 49.4; Ekserdjian in Mann (2018), 168, fig. 9.5.

[246] Uffizi inv. 91458, 230.0 x 294.0 cm; Emiliani (1985), 2:252, figs. 713 and 729; (2008), 2:218, fig. 66.4.

[247] Castelbarco Albani, dimensions unknown; Olsen (1962), no. 63; Pillsbury (1976), 63-4, fig. 38.

[248] Castelbarco Albani, 115.0 x 82.0 cm; Emiliani (1985), 2:422, fig. 931; (2008), 2:355, fig. 87.3.

[249] Uffizi inv. 1785, 186.6 x 161.5 cm; Emiliani (1985), 2:413, fig. 910; (2008), 2:344, fig. 85.2.

[250] Uffizi 1786 E, 121.7 x 89.3 cm; not in Emiliani (1985); Petrioli Tofani (1987), 2:735.

[251] Calzini (1913); Mann (2018).

illustrates his respect for artistic tradition, in addition to his overriding reliance on some absolute fixed standard as he continued his exhaustive drawing process. Demonstrably, to be sure, there are lots of *pentimenti* on these cartoons, but these result from Barocci's perfectionism, and not from his overwhelming reliance on the overall stability that the cartoon affords. John Shearman pointed to the irony that the obsession with successfully achieved naturalistic effects caused Barocci's figures to look mannered and stylized when his use of the stylus for transfer caused "the liquid profiles and the melting faceted surfaces of Barocci's forms."[252] What initially appears to be a stultifying practice, turns out to have begun for a means of strict control.

As a rule, the cartoon is an enlargement from the *modello*. However, as already pointed out, Barocci begins with the final dimensions of the altarpiece or painting (to which the cartoon need not coincide, as in the case of partial cartoons that omit parts of the final work), which determines the scale of the reduced model, and from which he can return back to the cartoon. Accordingly, in the example from chapter 2, the Edinburgh *modello* from the Chiesa Nuova Visitation and its companion cartoon in the Uffizi **(Figs. 29 & 30)**, Barocci scaled down from the projected canvas to 1:5, and back up to full size.

One can note the clear conformity between the two studies. In general, the poses are more or less unchanged. In particular, the pose of the maid at the right is the same, and would be changed as Barocci moved to the final picture, turning her body away from the viewer. If the *modello* gives one, preliminary version of the composition - a temporarily satisfactory account of the composition and the overall massing of figures - the cartoon allows for a more realistic assessment of these same solutions at full scale.

The materials are charcoal, black and white chalk, on a compound piece of heavier paper. As Carmen Bambach points out, Barocci used the neutral brown tone of the paper as a middle tone, and worked the cartoon roughly to organize the values from a distance:

> In drawing the cartoon, Barocci adjusted the quality of the design and his technique so that it could be viewed from a considerable distance, creating dynamic visual effects with contrasts in his handling of the charcoal and chalk. Passages of intense lustre and *sfumato* in the modelling...alternate with areas of expressive unfinish, aggressive hatching with diagonal strokes, while the more sketchily reinforced outlines of the figures pulsate with energy and movement...In many passages, he applied the charcoal and chalk in a staccato of broad strokes with parallel hatching, often leaving these unblended; for the most part, however, he stumped the charcoal and black chalk in the shadows, probably blending with his fingers or a soft wool cloth to unify tone.[253]

If the *modello* was the preview of the whole at a manageable size to gather all the details together, the cartoon sacrificed detail for the facticity of the actual size of the work, *grande quanto l'opera*.

The existence of the cartoons made every sort of reuse possible, from copies, to head studies, to reused portions of earlier altarpieces. For his very earliest works in the 1560s and 1570s Barocci appears to have poured all his invention into these works, but

[252] Shearman (1976),54.
[253] Bambach (2015), 166.

he did not yet think of repeating figures. Barocci was trying to win his reputation, which he successfully accomplished first in Rome with his frescoes in the Casino of Pius IV, later with his monumental altarpiece of the *Deposition* for the Duomo of Perugia (1569), and finally with the *Madonna del Popolo* (1579) for Arezzo. By this time, Barocci was in his late forties and the reuse of cartoons points to an important fact: given his traditional working procedure based on the cartoon, it is the way that the Barocci deals with his fame. However, the idea no doubt came to him in replicating his own pictures for a demand. The early *Rest after the Flight from Egypt* was made in three versions (lost, Piobbico, Santo Stefano; Vatican, Galleria Vaticana). Significantly, in one of the versions, the composition was slightly changed, making the new work into a distinctly new version.

The very first reused figure in Barocci's repertoire comes from the preparatory drawings for the *Martyrdom of Saint Vitalis* (1583, Brera). Earlier in his career, for the *Madonna del Popolo,* Barocci had thought about a gesturing figure to guide the viewer into the picture showing an intercession by the Virgin. At the same time, the Virgin holds a child who reflects back to us the didactic point. Barocci was clearly happy with this figural arrangement, and accordingly chose it again for the *Martyrdom of S. Vitalis*; it is more literally lifted from the previous painting at the same scale (**Fig. 54**). This work was intended for the Cassinese Benedictines in Ravenna, far from Arezzo where the first picture was installed and raises questions about originality and convention in the Renaissance. However, the juxtaposition of the later woman and child over that of the earlier *Popolo* illustrate slight differences, but largely the image is derived from this earlier composition – and at the same scale.

Analogous to the similar compositions for the *Rest on the Return from Egypt,* two similar altarpieces, the *Noli me tangere* (ruined, Bywell Hall, England) and the *Christ Appearing to the Magdalene* (Munich, Pinakothek) also utilized similar formats. There has been much controversy over which came first, but the Munich version appears to be earlier, with the second a more easily identifiable iconography. While working with the same two figures (and probably some of the same cartoons), Barocci made the Christ figure lean back more emphatically and the Magdalene lean forward.

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Not surprisingly, Caravaggio, Reni, Rubens and countless others traced paintings to make new versions.[254] Therefore, the Baroque, committed to the naturalistic relation of religious events for the sake of believability, nevertheless paradoxically could repeatedly rely on stock figures and solutions that proved to be remarkably successful. Barocci made a further, remarkable, use of the cartoon in its literal recycling for other commissions. This practice is detailed in the last chapter but is worth mentioning here because Barocci's practice of thinking in terms of full-size parts is founded on the cartoon, which literally suggested the recombination of similar sized painted figures in new compositions **(Fig. 53)**.

For the current discussion, more illuminating are the shortcomings that the full-size of the cartoon brought to light, causing Barocci to rethink different figures slightly.

[254] On Reni, see Pepper (1999); on Rubens, see Wadum (1996), 393-395.

He adjusted the figures through a series of new reduced size drawings, but larger than the *modello*. The extant drawings suggest that Barocci routinely produced a series of mini-cartoons that could even result in completed color *bozzetti*.

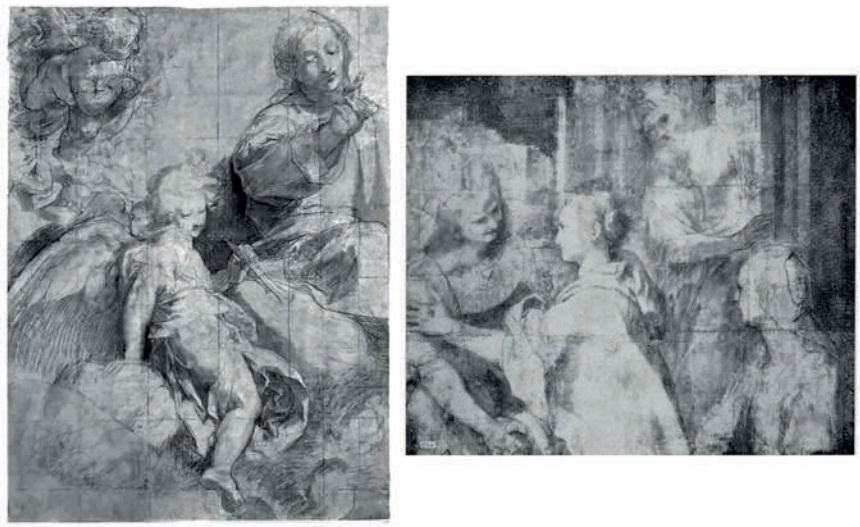

Fig. 53
Absolute scale comparison of the cartoons for the *Madonna del Popolo* and the *Visitation*

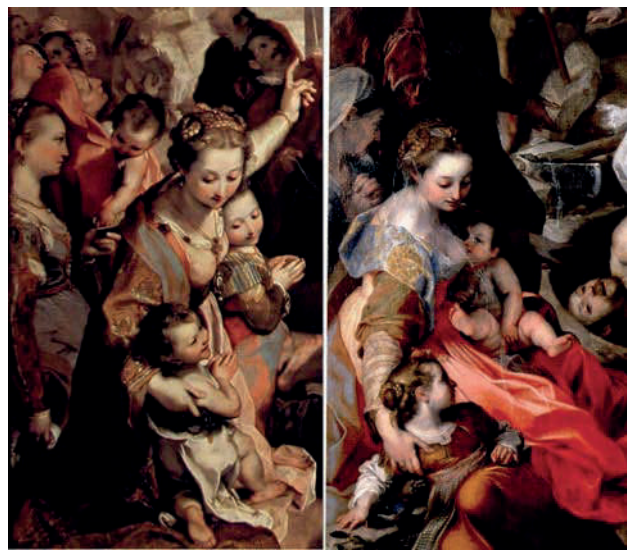

Fig. 54
Absolute scale comparison of *Madonna del Popolo* (detail, left) and Federico Barocci, *Martyrdom of St. Vitalis* (detail, right)