

# The Involuntary Self-Portrait

Automimesis and Self-Referentiality  
in the Art Literature of the Italian Renaissance

Moritz Lampe



Lampe || The Involuntary Self-Portrait



Moritz Lampe

# The Involuntary Self-Portrait

Automimesis and Self-Referentiality  
in the Art Literature of the Italian Renaissance

The publication of this book was made possible by the Open Access Publishing Fund of the University of Leipzig.

### **Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>



This book is published under the Creative Commons Attribution License CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.



The electronic open access version of this work is permanently available at <https://www.arthistoricum.net> (Open Access).

urn: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-ahn-artbook-923-9  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.923>

Published by

Heidelberg University/Heidelberg University Library 2022  
arthistoricum.net – Specialised Information Service Art · Photography · Design  
Grabengasse 1, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany  
<https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/en/imprint>

Text © Moritz Lampe 2022

Layout/Typesetting: text plus form, Dresden

Set in Linux Libertine and Linux Biolinum

Cover illustration: Giorgio Vasari, Apelles and the Cobbler, 1569–1573, Florence, Casa Vasari, © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Studio Rabatti-Domingie, 2008

ISBN 978-3-98501-106-3 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978-3-98501-105-6 (PDF)

Meinen Eltern Brigitte und Gerd





# Contents

## Acknowledgements 9

## Introduction 11

### 1 Early Beginnings 23

1.1 Automimesis in the Greek Theatre 23 || 1.2 *A Man's Speech is Just Like his Life* 27

### 2 Differences in Style 31

2.1 The Painter's Workshop in Humanist Writing 35 || 2.2 The Discovery of the Individual *maniera* 38 || 2.3 *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* 43 || 2.4 The Appreciation of Personal Style 67 || 2.5 Metaphors of Artistic Progress 86

### 3 Selective Imitation and Repetition 93

3.1 Art Historiography in Quattrocento Florence 95 || 3.2 *Varietas* as Category of the Humanist Art Critic 98 || 3.3 Medieval Artists and the Animal Instinct 101 || 3.4 Perugino as Negative Example 104 || 3.5 Michelangelo and the Female Body 110 || 3.6 Human Variety and the Effects of Love 126

### 4 Giorgio Vasari's *Vite* and Automimesis 143

4.1 Art History and Biography 145 || 4.2 The Artwork as a Reflection of the Artist's Mind 150 || 4.3 Rhetorical Strategies for the Description of Style 157 || 4.4 Physiognomic Theory 161 || 4.5 Artistic Procreativity 167 || 4.6 Michelangelo's Mouse. Who is an Artist? 174

### 5 Artistic Strategies Against Automimesis 189

5.1 Fighting One's Own Inclinations 189 || 5.2 Artistic Narcissism 198 || 5.3 Apelles and the Use of Collective Intelligence 202 || 5.4 The Use of Mirrors and Time 208

- 6 The Harmonisation of the Arts** 217
- 6.1 Benvenuto Cellini's Self-Portrait as an Eloquent Artist 217 ||
- 6.2 Vincenzo Borghini's *Selva di notizie* 221 || 6.3 Ethical and Intellectual Qualities of the Artist 224 || 6.4 Rationalizing Mimesis: The Accademia del Disegno 232 || 6.5 The Death of the Sculptor Perillus 236
- 7 Art and Artist in the Age of the Counter-Reformation** 243
- 7.1 The Ideal of the *artefice cristiano* 243 || 7.2 Characteristics of Religious Paintings 249 || 7.3 Francesco Bocchi and the *immagine miracolosa* 251 || 7.4 The Afterlife of *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* 255
- Conclusion** 263
- List of Illustrations and Copyright Remarks** 269
- Bibliography** 273
- Primary Sources 273 || Secondary Sources 277
- Index of Names** 293

# Acknowledgements

This book is the revised version of my dissertation thesis, which was defended at the Università degli Studi in Florence in April 2015 and until now only accessible via the national libraries in Florence and Rome.

There are many people to whom I owe my appreciation and gratitude for having contributed, in one way or another, to this publication. First of all, I would like to thank my tutor at the University of Florence, Antonio Pinelli, for his interest in the research topic and for his valuable comments during the drafting of the text. My gratefulness goes also to my tutor Frank Zöllner of the Universität Leipzig, who encouraged me to undertake this research. Furthermore, I'm particularly indebted to the entire Dipartimento di Storia delle Arti e dello Spettacolo at the University of Florence, represented by Maria Grazia Messina and Sara Mamone, which provided me with a generous grant, allowing me to take advantage of Florence's rich cultural heritage. Another generous financial support of the University of Florence also gave me the opportunity to visit the Warburg Institute in London. Among the scholars whom I met at the Warburg I would like to mention Thomas Frangenberg, Sietske Fransen, Jennifer Sliwka, and François Quiviger. In addition to the open shelves with obscure literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, their thoughtful comments and joyful company were of great help.

An additional grant from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) enabled me to study at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut and special thanks go to the directors of the institute, Alessandro Nova and Gerhard Wolf, for their friendly hospitality. At the Kunsthistorisches Institut I was fortunate not only to benefit from lively excursions in the surroundings of Florence but also to meet many scholars who were interested in my topic. Above all, I owe my gratitude to Marco Collareta, Wolf Dietrich Löhr, Jana Graul, Fabian Jonietz, and David Young Kim for their useful suggestions. Ermanna Panizon, Alberto Saviello, Mandy Richter, Valentina Frascarolo, Giampaolo Distefano, Laura Fenelli, Alessandra Malquori, Henrike Eibelshäuser, Marion Heisterberg, and Pavla Langer are also among the scholars and friends I met in Via Giuseppe Giusti. Both for your willingness to comment on my drafts and for your kind-hearted presence and moral support, I owe you so much. The team from arthis-

toricum and Gunther Gebhard guided me thoughtfully through the publication process and made many useful suggestions; Kristina Mayberry took great care of the English manuscript and fixed the more embarrassing mistakes.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Brigitte and Gerd, my sisters Franziska and Anna-Bigna, and, first and foremost, Beatrice most sincerely for their loving support. Without you, this work would not have been possible.

Leipzig, im April 2022

# Introduction

The modern understanding of the individual is usually associated with independence, self-consciousness, and the right to self-realization, of which following one's own personal inclinations and interests are important facets.<sup>1</sup> Renaissance Italy, and particularly Florence, is traditionally thought to have prepared the social, political, and economic grounds for the rise of modern individualism. The historian Jacob Burckhardt expressed this view most famously in his *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* in 1860. According to Burckhardt, in the Middle Ages man was conscious of himself only insofar as being a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation, whereas Renaissance Italy gave birth to a new kind of man, who "became a spiritual individual and recognized himself as such."<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that Burckhardt's assumptions have been severely criticized since at least the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To say that the individual was discovered during a circumscribed area of space and time not only leads to historical simplifications by ignoring other places and periods, but also demonstrates a lack of interest in the prevailing continuities between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. As has been shown by recent scholarship, there was little the Florentines of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries feared more than a self-sufficient life devoid of any social interactions or institutional affiliations. Rather they considered themselves as weak and fragile beings whose identities resulted from their place in networks and social groups.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Cfr. Borsche 1976.

2 Burckhardt 1860, p. 131: "Im Mittelalter lagen die beiden Seiten des Bewußtseins – nach der Welt hin und nach dem Innern des Menschen selbst – wie unter einem gemeinsamen Schleier träumend oder halbwach. Der Schleier war gewoben aus Glauben, Kindesbefangenheit und Wahn; durch ihn hindurchgesehen erschienen Welt und Geschichte wundersam gefärbt, der Mensch aber erkannte sich nur als Race, Volk, Partei, Corporation, Familie oder sonst in irgend einer Form des Allgemeinen. In Italien zuerst verweht dieser Schleier in die Lüfte; es erwacht eine objective Betrachtung und Behandlung des Staates und der sämmtlichen Dinge dieser Welt überhaupt; daneben aber erhebt sich mit voller Macht das Subjective; der Mensch wird geistiges Individuum und erkennt sich als solches."

3 Connell 2002, p. 5.

Nevertheless, Burckhardt's important study pointed to a series of events and phenomena that continue to shape our modern understanding of the rise of the individual as a historical figure. The large amount of biographical writing produced during the Quattro- and Cinquecento, including pen portraits of historical rulers as well as biographies of contemporary statesmen, poets, and musicians, proves that there was an increasing interest in the individual. This radical shift of attention was mirrored by the visual arts. Portraits were no longer a privilege of rulers and saints but became fashionable amongst wealthy merchants and famous humanists as well. Focused on individual likenesses, these paintings, busts, or statues were not only careful studies in physiognomy; they showed an equal interest in the representation of the sitter's spiritual state of mind.<sup>4</sup> The substantial changes in the appreciation of individual character and personality also had consequences for the psycho-social dynamics of that time. While the dominant models for conduct and behaviour were traditionally provided by a theological interpretation of man and nature, Renaissance humanism contemplated individual forms of expression and fostered self-fashioning.<sup>5</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's famous speech in *De dignitate hominis* (1486) can be seen as a paradigmatic shift towards an emancipation from religious patterns of understanding that led to an increase in individual autonomy. Though still within a religious framework, Mirandola suggested that when creating man, God said to Adam, "we have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer."<sup>6</sup>

Amongst the individuals who proudly shaped their own beings and fashioned themselves in their preferred forms, the artists of Renaissance Italy figured prominently. Although the notion of an anonymous and impersonal art of the Middle Ages has long been discarded as superficial and indiscriminating,<sup>7</sup> it is only during the Quattrocento that we begin to encounter signs of a new quality of artistic self-consciousness. Painters and sculptors were not only eager to develop innovative methods and genres of pictorial representation, including the use of linear perspective and autonomous self-portraits, but they also began to reflect on

---

4 For the rise of the Renaissance portrait see Christiansen/Rubin/Weppelmann 2011.

5 The term "self-fashioning", coined by Stephen Greenblatt, describes the increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable artful process during the 16th century (Greenblatt 1980, p. 2). Initially applied to the analysis of literary works, the term made its appearance in several other academic disciplines and is now considered to be a pervasive facet of Renaissance culture.

6 Mirandola (1956), p. 7.

7 For the self-representations of artists during the Middle Ages see Legner 2009.

their inner selves and included witty allusions to the process of artistic creation in their works. Further, they published letters, poems, or entire treatises on art and wrote biographies of artists. Rather than being concerned with technical questions, these writings were often philosophical and introspective studies which examined the precepts and limits of an aesthetic imitation of nature. As part of a process of awareness-raising and upward mobility, artists established pictorial principles and provided orientation, as well as aiming at a social re-evaluation of painting and sculpture, which were still looked down on as belonging to the mechanical arts, which relied on physical rather than intellectual effort.<sup>8</sup>

## Survey of Literature

Due to its character as historical and personal evidence, the pictorial and textual production of Renaissance artists has been frequently referred to when treating the rise of the modern, self-conscious individual. One of the oldest and most enduring fields of study is understandably concerned with self-portraiture.<sup>9</sup> In recent decades, research has contributed to a broader understanding of the development of this genre and focussed particularly on the artists' capacity to constantly stage and alter their identities.<sup>10</sup> Joanna Woods-Marsden's study on Renaissance self-portraiture and the visual construction of identity is an excellent work on this topic.<sup>11</sup> Many studies have also analysed the participant self-portrait, or the artists' depictions of their own likenesses within history paintings, often referred to as crypto-portraits.<sup>12</sup> Another area of equal importance in recent studies is that of the origin and development of hand drawing.<sup>13</sup> Since drawings are sometimes un-

---

8 The same applied to treatises on art that were written by humanists. Much less interested in practical questions, they were particularly concerned with theoretical issues and established a form of art criticism that was highly indebted to the works of Aristotle and Horace. The treatises on the art of poetry of the ancient philosophers being the only extensive works on artistic subjects which had survived from antiquity, they provided an important blueprint for Renaissance art theory. Cfr. Lee 1940, pp. 199 ff.

9 For self-portraiture see Marschke 1998, Pfisterer/von Rosen 2005, Calabrese 2006, and Hall 2014.

10 For a critical discussion of the various concepts of artistic self-referentiality see Pietrass 2012, pp. 22–25.

11 Woods-Marsden 1998.

12 Roesler-Friedenthal 1996, Mai 2002, and Horký 2003, for embedded self-portraits in Renaissance Italy see Rejaie 2006.

13 Rosand 2002, pp. 61–111, and Löhr 2008.

derstood as an immediate expression of the painter's personality, the discussion of Quattro- and Cinquecento drawings and the theory of *disegno* have proved to be an important facet of the interpretation of the artist's individual ideas and inclinations.<sup>14</sup> The renewed interest in the study of the history of personal style can be seen as a consequence of these investigations. In contrast to many academics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, who evaluated styles according to a system of different classes, recent scholarship has emphasized the influence of humanist writing on the perception of artistic distinctiveness and has been pre-eminently interested in a social history of style.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, many authors have drawn attention to the recurrent, often hidden references to classical topoi of artistic self-referentiality in paintings. By alluding to witty anecdotes from Pliny's *Historia naturalis* or by depicting their famous predecessors, the artists aimed at social self-promotion as well as demonstrating an increasing awareness of the mimetic marvels of their art.<sup>16</sup> The use of signatures has also been discussed in this context.<sup>17</sup> As has been repeatedly shown, many Renaissance artworks can in fact be taken as examples of an unfolding of artistic self-reflexivity, insofar as the paintings themselves began to comment on the art of pictorial representation.<sup>18</sup>

The art literature of the Renaissance was analysed thoroughly, too. Many authors have underlined the importance of self-reflexive and autobiographical writing for the configuration of the modern artist.<sup>19</sup> Artists' biographies and treatises,<sup>20</sup> foremost of which is Giorgio Vasari's seminal *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori*,<sup>21</sup> received particular philological attention.<sup>22</sup> Rather than

---

14 For *disegno* theory see Kemp 1974, Williams 1997, pp. 29–72, and Schulze Altcapenberg/Thimann 2007.

15 For a discussion of the intellectual history of personal style see for example Sohm 2001 and Pfisterer 2002.

16 Illuminating examples are provided by Winner 1992, Asemissen/Schweikhart 1994, Horký 2002, and Christadler 2007.

17 For a general discussion of artists' signatures see Burg 2007, Gludovatz 2011 and Karnatz/Kirchberger 2019; for two particular examples Periti 2004 and Hegener 2006.

18 For the so-called metapainting see Stoichiță 1998, von Rosen 2001 and Bokody/Nagel 2020.

19 A pioneering work is von Schlosser 1924; for further references see Schweikhart 1998.

20 For critical editions of art treatises from the 16<sup>th</sup> century see, for example, the invaluable work of Paola Barocchi, the *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento* (1960–1962), the *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento* (1971–1977), and her editions of Vasari's *Vita di Michelangelo* (1962) and of Vasari's entire *Vite* (1966–1997).

21 A good introduction to the genesis of Vasari's *Vite* is provided by Pozzi/Mattioda 2006 and Ruffini 2011. For particular studies on Vasari's *Vite*, see the excellent volumes by Burzer/Feser/Davis/Nova 2010 and Agosti/Ginzburg/Nova 2013. For early research on Vasari's *Vite* see Kallab 1908.

22 Pfisterer/Seidel 2003.



being merely accurate descriptions of the history of art or the impartial account of an artist's life, art literature was also indebted to rhetorical structures and stylistic means (from antiquity and the Middle Ages) that were inherited and enriched by Renaissance authors, often driven by personal interests.<sup>23</sup> The use of recurrent narrative patterns and anecdotal stereotypes was a typical element of Renaissance art literature. In this regard, the aforementioned studies followed the influential works *Legend, myth and magic in the image of the artist* by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz and *Born under Saturn: the character and conduct of artists* by Rudolf and Margot Wittkower.<sup>24</sup> Recent scholarship has reinvigorated the efforts to analyse the language and vocabulary of Renaissance art literature, contributing to a broader understanding of its theoretical concepts.<sup>25</sup> Large editorial projects on Vasari's *Vite*,<sup>26</sup> Giovan Pietro Bellori's *Vite*,<sup>27</sup> Joachim von Sandrart's *Teutsche Academie*,<sup>28</sup> and Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice*<sup>29</sup> have not only shown the enduring persistence of narrative models, but have also helped us to critically re-evaluate our contemporary understanding of the rise of the individual. In fact, many myths and tales that were shaped in the early modern period still continue to affect our modern ideas on the autonomy of the artist.

---

23 Rhein 2008, Steinemann 2006, Dubus 2011, Bättschmann/Weddigen 2013, and Farago 2009.

24 Kris/Kurz 1934, and Wittkower/Wittkower 1963.

25 The key terminology of Renaissance Art Theory is discussed by Feser/Nova 2001. For an expanded version see also Burioni 2010. For an analysis of the impact and afterlife of Vasari and his terminology see Jonietz/Nova 2016.

26 The translation of Vasari's *Vite* into German, enriched with a critical commentary, has been coordinated by Alessandro Nova and published by the Wagenbach-Verlag, Berlin from 2004–2015.

27 The editorial project on Bellori's *Vite de' pittori scultori ed architetti moderni* (1672) is located at the University of Mainz and supervised by Elisabeth Oy-Marra.

28 Sandrart's work has been published in a commented online edition by Thomas Kirchner, Alessandro Nova, Carsten Blüm, Anna Schreurs, and Thorsten Wübbena in the years 2008–2012. It is accessible via <http://ta.sandrart.net>.

29 The commented translation of Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice* (1678) is coordinated by Elizabeth Cropper, Charles Demspey, Lorenzo Pericolo, and Giovanna Perini at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

## Approach and Methodology

At this point, it might prove useful to define the core elements of the present study and examine its methodological aims and limits. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the literary motif of a similarity between the artist and his artwork in the art literature of the Italian Renaissance – that is, the notion that painters and sculptors were increasingly identified with specific characteristics of their works (and *vice versa*). By analysing the way in which artists and humanists looked at paintings and sculptures and established rhetorical means for the description of art, the study aims at a better understanding of what precisely was at stake when Renaissance men discussed artistic distinctiveness and individuality. The study will therefore not only discuss the increasing autonomy of the artist, but also focus on examples in which artistic forms of self-referentiality were harshly attacked and criticized. It will be shown that the process of artistic emancipation was not as continuous and linear as is sometimes suggested by the literature. As its empirical basis, the study considers printed treatises and biographies, as well as poems, letters, and unpublished manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> and (mainly) the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, the discussion of selected paintings, prints, and sculptures will show that artists used their works to make witty remarks on art-theoretical discourses.

When discussing the literary motif of a similarity between artist and artwork, one of the methodological problems that suddenly appears is related to language. The broad spectrum of meanings that are associated with a term like similarity makes it seem reasonable to take a look at how it was used in Renaissance thought. As has been stressed by Michel Foucault, the 16<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by a system of knowledge that was based on different concepts of resemblance, including analogy, sympathy, and *convenientia*.<sup>30</sup> These different forms of resemblance or *similitudo* (as Renaissance humanists put it) provided an important model of interpretation for the endless phenomena of nature and led people to compare one thing to another.<sup>31</sup> The phenomenon of automimesis as expressed in the Florentine proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* (every painter paints himself) is a good example of the application of these patterns of understanding.<sup>32</sup> Due to its semantic flexibility, the proverb was frequently used by Quattro- and Cinque-

---

30 Foucault 1974, pp. 46–56, 82–89. For a critical discussion of Foucault's description of concepts of resemblance in the Renaissance see Otto 1992.

31 Cfr. Endres 2012.

32 For the history of the proverb see the main articles by Kemp 1976 and Zöllner 1992. For further references see Chapters 2.2 and 7.4.

cento authors; it could address many different issues, ranging from the personal style of a painter to the pictorial representation of his individual ideas, the involuntary reproduction of his own physical features in his works, or the production of self-portraits. As has been underlined by recent studies, similarity and resemblance were fluid, not static, concepts for the description of the world of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

Despite, or rather because of, its obvious ambiguity, the literary motif of a similarity between artist and artwork was frequently voiced in the art literature of the Renaissance, either explicitly or in the form of hidden allusions. Its volatile and adaptive character made it the ideal blueprint for metaphors and anecdotes that play on the equation and interchangeability of painter and painting. The present study is therefore not only an account of the literary variety of the art theory of the Renaissance, but is also meant to broaden our perspective on the history of what has recently been labelled as autopoiesis. Originally, the term was presented by the neurobiologist Humberto Maturana to draw attention to the defining features of living systems, i.e., their circular, self-referential organization or autonomy. According to Maturana, there is no separation between producer and product: the being and doing of an autopoietic unity are inseparable and this symmetry constitutes their specific type of organization.<sup>34</sup> Maturana's studies on autopoiesis were later adopted by sociologists, who fostered the idea of social constructivism and described the existing reality as the mere imagination of the individual.<sup>35</sup> Media theory<sup>36</sup> and, more recently, art history have implemented similar theories and stressed the importance of cognitive processes for the perception and creation of images, paintings, or other visual devices.<sup>37</sup> In fact, automimesis in art can be seen as an early example of these models of self-referentiality. As a kind of unwitting self-portraiture, it was often understood as a phenomenon which escaped the will of the artist. Even if artists wanted to control their artistic creations, they could not help but involuntarily express themselves in their works. During the course of the Cinquecento, this form of autopoiesis was subject to a fundamental change in attitude and can thus be interpreted as an

---

33 Cfr. Kohl/Gaier/Saviello 2012.

34 Maturana/Varela 1987, p. 56.

35 The social systems theory of Niklas Luhmann (see, for example, Luhmann 1987) is probably the most famous example of the use of autopoietic models.

36 For constructivism in media studies see Schmidt 1994.

37 Neurobiological interpretations of art have been put forward by Onians 1998 and Onians 2007. The importance of neurons which mirror the feelings and behaviour of a reality observed by an individual has been stressed by Freedberg 2007. For similar observations with regard to portraiture see Gombrich 1972.

indicator of a paradigmatic shift towards individualism in art: whereas Leonardo condemned unwitting forms of personal expression as a lack of *imitatio naturae*, later authors stressed the positive facets of an art that mirrored the individuality of the artist.

The present study was begun with the intention of providing a catalogue of the topos of automimesis and self-referentiality in the European art literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, primarily concentrating on Italy, the Netherlands, and France. As the quantity of historical sources rose and time went by, I decided to focus solely on the art literature of the Italian Renaissance. Not only does the art theory of Italy provide a vitally important idea of the contemporary discourses on character and personality, it also contains many important themes *in nuce* that only came to be extensively discussed in later centuries, such as physiognomic theory in the art literature of 18<sup>th</sup>-century France.<sup>38</sup> This new distribution of time and attention allowed me to address the inconsistent yet progressive process of artistic self-emancipation more thoroughly by considering a greater number of writings that were circulating in print or manuscript form on the Italian peninsula.

## Chapter Structure

In line with the methodological problems and questions discussed above, this book discusses the problem of unwitting self-portraiture in seven chapters, which will follow a roughly chronological order. Chapter One is devoted to sources of classical antiquity and discusses early examples of the equation of artist and artwork – or rather, the equation of playwright and theatre play. Aristophanes provides the first aesthetic theory influenced by this idea: a beautiful poet will compose beautiful poems and an unattractive poet will compose unattractive poems. Following this notion, the Roman orators postulated a similar relationship between a man and his work: “As the character is, such is the speech.”

Chapter Two discusses the discovery of individual expression in Renaissance painting. At first considered a lack of *imitatio naturae*, the style or *maniera* of a painter became increasingly important during the Cinquecento and was understood as a reflection of his distinct personality. Whereas many painters of the 15<sup>th</sup> century were bound to imitate the style of one master, the art theorists of the Cinquecento invited painters to develop their own taste, interests, and style by

---

38 For physiognomic theory in the art literature of 18th century art see Kirchner 1991.

choosing from multiple sources. The previously mentioned proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* provides an indication of this paradigm shift during the Renaissance. Based on Aristotelian and Thomistic principles of self-reproduction, the saying points to the accelerating process of artistic emancipation and indicates the increasing appreciation of individual expression.

Chapter Three explores the presumed downsides of individual style: monotony, repetitiveness, and routine. Although artists were urged to vary their figures according to the principle of *varietà*, many painters still used a standardized vocabulary of forms. Leon Battista Alberti was a fervent persecutor of repetitive patterns and associated monotonous paintings with the art of the Middle Ages. Later authors accused painters who re-used cartoons or re-cycled compositions for their commissions of lacking intelligence and creativity. Particularly in the field of portraiture, where individual likeness was crucial, physiognomic homogeneity was therefore seen as a major defect for a painter. On the other hand, these repetitive forms of expression served as an individual mark that underlined the *ingegno* of an artist and showed his ability to choose from a great variety of objects. In this regard, Vincenzo Danti interpreted Michelangelo's female figures not as uniform repetitions, but as the result of a synthesized process of selection resulting in ideal beauty.

Chapter Four focusses on the motif of similarity between artist and artwork in Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*. As is shown by many of Vasari's biographies of artists, the personality and life of a painter was often equated with his work. Be it Parri Spinelli's figures, which resembled his character, Andrea del Sarto's frescoes, which expressed his timidity, or Topolino's small statues, which mirrored the size of his body, the interchangeability of artist and artwork was a recurrent feature in the description of the lives of the artists. By analysing Vasari's dependence upon physiognomic and procreative theory when treating the works of an artist, the chapter aims at a better understanding of his artistic ideals. Rather than simply following their natural inclinations, Vasari's artists had to control themselves and cope with certain standards of social behaviour and artistic universality.

Chapter Five is concerned with artistic strategies against excessive self-indulgence and self-referentiality. As can be shown by Daniele da Volterra's stucco reliefs in the Orsini chapel, the artists of the Renaissance were aware of their individual inclinations and developed mechanisms against repetitive patterns or compositional errors which resulted from their personal preferences. In particular, the natural affection and love for their creations made a critical approach to their works difficult. By relying on the advice of learned friends, by referring to proportion theory, or by inverting their perception through the use of mirrors, painters and sculptors trained their artistic judgement and established rational methods for the creation and evaluation of works of art.

Chapter Six discusses the art theory of Vincenzo Borghini. As *luogotenente* of the newly founded Accademia del disegno and an important advisor to Vasari, his conception of the relationship between artist and artwork was crucial for the artists of Florence. In his *Selva di notizie* he argued in favour of a strict discrimination between the artist's individual inclinations and his duties as a craftsman: rather than expressing personal interests in his works, an artist should concentrate on the interests of his commissioners and patrons. Examining Borghini's argument with the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, the chapter shows how the Florentine academy re-structured the production of art by stressing the importance of productivity, discipline, and obedience.

The last chapter, Chapter Seven, traces how the ideal of the *artefice cristiano* influenced the equation of artist and artwork. Whereas Borghini aimed at a separation of product and producer, the art theory of the Counter-Reformation tended to promote the similarity of artist and artwork: religious painters were considered a necessary prerequisite for the production of religious paintings. Authors like Giovanni Andrea Gilio and Gabriele Paleotti promoted an authoritarian model of the arts that was in accordance with the persuasive aims of the Catholic Church: only if endowed with a deep faith and a thorough understanding of the Christian mysteries might an artist be able to create effective religious art. Although the rise of the *artefice cristiano* thus actually caused the suppression of individual means of expression, it nevertheless established the union of image and artist officially for the first time.

Clearly, the goal of the present study is not to provide a complete history of automimesis in the art literature of the Renaissance. It would be impossible to collect and discuss all of the instances that refer to a similarity of artist and artwork in treatises, letters, and poems, which would in any case devolve into a monotonous catalogue of ekphrastic descriptions and character portraits. Instead, the dissertation's aim is to concentrate on the inherent antagonisms between individual forms of expression and the predominant rules (both socially and culturally constructed) that lie at the very core of Renaissance aesthetics. Out of the many possible ways of looking at this theme, I have chosen to focus on some particularly illustrative examples and case studies that exemplify the limits of artistic freedom in the form of contradictions between thesis and antithesis.

Although all the chapters of this thesis discuss different aspects of artistic self-referentiality, they have one thing in common. Each chapter shows that the most prominent artists strove for autonomy and demonstrated a craving for personal expression. The way in which art theorists responded to this demand not only gives us an impression of how artistic subjectivity was legitimized during the Renaissance, but also demonstrates that this process is still ongoing today. As has been argued by Jürgen Habermas, the concept of modernity consists of the

“relentless development of the objectivating sciences, of the universalistic foundations of morality and law, and of autonomous art, all in accord with their own immanent logic.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Habermas 1997, p. 45.





# 1 Early Beginnings

The idea of a close interrelationship between a person and the things the person produces is one of the most enduring beliefs throughout the history of western culture. Accordingly, the first occurrences of the conception that a work is considered the image of its maker, that a phenomenon is similar to its cause, or that every agent performs its acts in a corresponding way, can be found in Greek philosophy. In a cultural environment where the human being was closely interconnected with the surrounding forces of nature, the presumed principles of its agency and effect were often applied to mankind itself. Conceptualized as an ongoing, mainly repetitive, and circular process, earthly matters assured the future existence of the world and included the identical self-reproduction of its different species, as well as the self-reproduction of human society and its cultural achievements. Self-similarity was therefore considered the underlying power of the whole of living nature.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Automimesis in the Greek Theatre

Thus, it comes as no surprise that one of the first aesthetic theories in history, expressed by the Athenian playwright Aristophanes (c. 446–c. 386 BCE), is based on the presumption of a close resemblance between the producer and its product. Concerned with the mysterious mechanisms of poetic inspiration and authorship, Aristophanes explores this relationship extensively in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, datable to 411 BCE. This successful theatre piece recounts the story of the poet Euripides, infamous for his misogynistic plays and in danger because angry women are conspiring against him. To protect his life and reputation, Euripides compels his relative Mnesilochus to disguise himself as a woman and intervene in his favour during a meeting of the women. The comical effects of the play con-

---

1 Rosemann 1996, p. 36.

sist mainly of mistaken gender identities, typical of early Greek comedies that often refer to social and anatomical differences between the sexes.<sup>2</sup> But the opening scene of the play, the earliest example of an automimetic art theory, is less ordinary and worth a closer look.<sup>3</sup>

Before forcing his relative to join the women's meeting, Euripides had tried to convince the beardless and good-looking poet Agathon to disguise himself as a woman. When he and Mnesilochus arrive at the poet's house, Agathon is composing a female choir for his next theatre piece. Shown as an effeminate man, dressed in beautiful long garments, and singing with a female voice, Agathon represents a passionate author who tries to capture the subject matter of his plays as closely as possible. In fact, he completely identifies with the feminine role that he is creating. Because of Agathon's appearance, Mnesilochus shows pure bewilderment and questions the sexual identity of the poet. But Agathon explains his appearance by saying that as an author he has to create female roles:

"I choose my dress to suit my poesy.  
A poet, sir, must needs adapt his ways  
To the high thoughts which animate his soul.  
And when he sings of women, he assumes  
A woman's garb, and dons a woman's habits. [...]  
But when he sings of men, his whole appearance  
Conforms to man. What nature gives us not,  
The human soul aspires to imitate [μίμησις]."<sup>4</sup>

Agathon's affirmations are interesting in many ways. First of all, they seem to contradict the popular beliefs about poetic inspiration in classical antiquity. Without help from the heavenly muses who animate his mind and soul, a poet was infertile and therefore unable to create works of art. Rather than the author himself, divine powers were held responsible for the form and content of a piece or poem, and only the union of female inspiration and male authorship assured the coming into being of a tragedy or comedy.<sup>5</sup> Plato describes this process repeatedly and speaks

---

2 Stehle 2002.

3 Cantarella 1967, p. 7. Raffaele Cantarella was one of the first authors to discuss Aristophanes' theory of mimesis. Further analysis is provided by Hansen 1976, Muecke 1982, Stohn 1993, and Stehle 2002.

4 Aristophanes (1924), p. 145. For an extensive commentary and the greek original cfr. Austin/Olson 2004. Aristophanes is one of the first authors to use a verb of the *mi-meisthai*-group in the context of poetic production. To my knowledge, the Agathon scene is thus the first case of an automimetic art theory. Cfr. Sörbom 1966, p. 41, 78.

5 Cfr. Tigerstedt 1970.

of the poetic furor or the madness of the muses as a necessary condition: “Poets compose their beautiful poems not by skill but because they are inspired and possessed.” (*Ion*, 532a ff.) In fact, at the beginning of the scene, Euripides and Mnesilochus are told by Agathon’s servant that he is composing his play in the presence of the muses<sup>6</sup> and the poet himself speaks of the “high thoughts which animate his soul”. But rather than listening to the muses, Agathon participates in this process of creation by singing and dressing like a woman. It is the inner agency of his own body that serves as a means of his poetic production, not the power of divine inspiration. By making himself similar to the objects of his representations, Agathon is able to surpass the limits of heavenly inspiration. However, Agathon’s mimetic strategy is not comparable to the modern notion of autonomous art. The rules and conventions of Greek theatre were highly codified and the characters of the plays often stereotypical. Actors had to choose from a limited set of roles and had to wear masks, the so-called *prosopa*, from which the Latin noun *persona* derives.<sup>7</sup> Uncontrolled artistic inventiveness was therefore neither necessary nor welcome: The poet had to stick to certain prototypes, models, and narrative patterns that were known to the public. Indeed, Agathon’s model of imitation was highly limited. Mnesilochus reveals the mimetic shortcomings of this strategy when he asks Agathon to compose a drama with satyrs or deities.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, if we want to understand Agathon’s statement, we have to reconsider the witty and self-referential character of the play. Rather than presenting an elaborate theory of imitation, Aristophanes seems to make fun of a poetic theory that was introduced by the historical poet Euripides (on which the role Euripides in Aristophanes’ play is based) some years before the *Thesmophoriazusae* were brought onto the stage for the first time. In the *Suppliant women*, first performed in 423 BCE, Euripides writes that there must be some sort of similarity between the mental state of the poet and the piece that he composes:

“The speaker who wants to be persuasive must be cheerful, just as the poet must compose in joy the songs he composes. If that is not the case with him, he cannot give pleasure to others if he himself is suffering: that is not the way of things.”<sup>9</sup>

---

6 Aristophanes (1924), p. 135: “Allow not a word from your lips to be heard. For the Muses are here, and are making their odes in my Master’s abodes.”

7 Weihe 2004, pp. 27 f.

8 Aristophanes (1924), p. 135. Mnesilochus’ punchline is best rendered in the Italian translation by Dario Del Corno: “Dunque, quando fai un dramma con i satiri, chiama me: mi metto dietro di te, duro come un palo, e lavoro anch’io.” A few lines later Mnesilochus repeats his critique by asking Agathon how he manages to imitate deities.

9 Euripides (1998), p. 33–34. David Leitao’s translation pays better attention to the biological analogies used by Euripides: “Whenever the composer of hymns gives birth to

Euripides' remarks show that the control of the poet's emotions was important, because they could influence the quality of his works, making them a mirror of his personality. This theory of autopoietic expression was relatively rare in the fifth century BCE, but became commonplace in later centuries.<sup>10</sup> As has been suggested by David Leitao,<sup>11</sup> Euripides' ideas might have been the actual cause for Aristophanes to write the role of Mnesilochus. By deriding Agathon's mimetic strategy, Aristophanes derides the unusual mimetic concepts of Euripides. Such a reading would not only confirm the effeminacy of the historical Agathon, who was famous for being pretentious and beautiful,<sup>12</sup> but also confirm the meta-discourses and cross-references that occur throughout the entire work of Aristophanes.

But Aristophanes' prologue to the *Thesmophoriazuae* is interesting in another way, too. Resuming his discussion with Mnesilochus, Agathon continues to explain the cause for his strategy of imitation:

"Besides, a poet never should be rough,  
Or harsh, or rugged. Witness to my words  
Anacreon, Alcaeus, Ibycus,  
Who when they filtered and diluted song,  
Wore soft Ionian manners and attire.  
And Phrynichus, perhaps you have seen him, sir.  
How fair he was, and beautifully dressed;  
Therefore his plays were beautifully fair.  
For as the Worker, so the Work will be."<sup>13</sup>

By describing the physical qualities and moral manners of famous poets, Agathon underlines the importance that was given to the appearance of a writer. Because his exterior was interpreted as a manifestation of his interior, it could serve as an explanatory model for his plays. The legendary beauty of the tragedian Phrynichus is therefore linked to the excellence of his theatre plays.<sup>14</sup> The nature or

---

songs, he must be in a good mood to give birth. If he does not feel this way, he would not be able to give pleasure to others, because he is suffering in his own mind."

10 Cfr. Horace (1942), pp. 459–461: "If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself"/"si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi." For a discussion of the impact of Horace's *Ars poetica* cfr. Rudd 1976, pp. 170–181.

11 Leitao 2012, p. 124.

12 Cfr. Plato, *Symposium*, 175e, 194ab.

13 Aristophanes (1924), p. 145–147.

14 It was also common practice to base an author's biography on events that took place in his fictitious plays. For some examples of the interchangeability of poetry and poet regarding Aristophanes and others see Lefkowitz 1978, p. 464 and Chapter 4.1.

*physis* of the poet determined the character of his plays: "For as the Worker, so the Work will be." Mnesilochus, who is following Agathon's monologue attentively, acknowledges this law of similarity by giving other examples: "Then that is why harsh Philocles writes harshly, And that is why vile Xenocles writes vilely, And cold Theognis writes such frigid plays."<sup>15</sup> As has been rightly observed by modern commentators of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, Agathon is referring to two different models of imitation in his statements, seemingly without noting their contradictions.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, we have Agathon's strategy for writing female roles by dressing like a woman. He tries to make himself womanlike by copying the formal habit and appearance of a female; he uses the technique of *mimesis* to imitate something that is alien to his own nature. On the other hand, Agathon argues that a poet can not escape his own nature. If Phrynichus had to write a disappointing piece, he would not be able to do so because of the dominant predisposition of his nature; he cannot help but write beautiful plays, just as cold Theognis writes frigid plays. These contradictions can be explained by the nature of Aristophanes' work. Rather than producing a systematic treatise on poetics, he was probably more concerned with the entertainment of his audience and thus draws on ideas that were fashionable during his time.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2 *A Man's Speech is Just Like his Life*

The idea of a close interrelationship between a person and the things the person produces, as expressed in Aristophanes' automimetic theory, was not limited just to the world of the classical theatre. It conditioned the use and understanding of ancient rhetoric in later centuries as well. Even though rhetoric were considered an art form which allowed the speaker to adapt his speeches according to his persuasive aims,<sup>18</sup> the personality of famous rhetors was often classified according to the quality and nature of their speeches. Regardless of the actual function of a delivered speech, its content was frequently associated with the speaking person and led to the notion that a man's speech resembled his character – whether the decorum or appropriateness of a situation suggested a certain kind of speech or not.

---

15 Aristophanes (1924), p. 147..

16 Cfr. Stohn 1993, p. 199–200, Stehle 2002, p. 381, n. 42.

17 Austin/Olson 2004, p. 105.

18 Norden 1898, vol. 1, p. 12.

Echoing Plato's observation on the relationship between speech and soul,<sup>19</sup> Isocrates is one of the many authors who discuss the connection between moral virtues and manners of speaking, claiming that the better the technical qualities of a speech, the better the ethical qualities of the speaker. Although he was aware of an abuse of rhetoric means and methods, he considered eloquence to be a picture of the person's soul. Several collections of proverbs seem to confirm that this interrelatedness was common opinion. Menander's mottoes include the notion, "The speech represents the character of the speaker". In another collection we can read, "As the character is, such is the speech", and Dionysius of Halicarnassus states in a similar way that, "It is a true and general opinion that words are the images of the soul."<sup>20</sup>

The Roman orators did not hesitate to integrate these notions into their own writings. Aelius Aristides<sup>21</sup> and Cicero<sup>22</sup> confide in the authority of the ancient authors when they cite the Greek proverb or refer to the above cited example of Socrates. In his *De oratore* Cicero goes so far as to suggest some sort of mimicking: Because the audience is more likely to be convinced if the character of a speaker is similar to his speech, it might prove useful to imitate the features of a good and eloquent orator.<sup>23</sup> Quintilian associated good manners and oratory skills so profoundly that he identified an orator as *vir bonus* and believed in a similarity of life and speech: "For a man's character is generally revealed and the secrets of his

---

19 Plato (1914–1935), vol 5, p. 255: "And what of the manner of the diction, and the speech?" said I. 'Do they not follow and conform to the disposition of the soul?' 'Of course.' 'And all the rest to the diction?' 'Yes.' 'Good speech, then, good accord, and good grace, and good rhythm wait upon good disposition, not that weakness of head which we euphemistically style goodness of heart, but the truly good and fair disposition of the character and the mind.' 'By all means,' he said." (*Republic*, 400d–e).

20 For these and several other examples see Müller 1981, p. 11ff.

21 Aristides (1973), vol. 1, p. 518: "The product of oratory is the correct use of the mind, and not only the presentation of oneself doing what is necessary, but also persuading others to do what is necessary, and in sum it is a royal thing. No different from this argument is the proverb which says: 'As the character is, such is the speech.' And the reverse is also true. Thus truth is on our side through our arguments, moreover through the reasoning which prompts them, and through the evidence of the facts and of the most distinguished poets, and through the proof of proverbial wisdom." (*In Defence of Oratory*, II, 133d).

22 Cicero (1971), p. 472: "Sic enim princeps ille philosophiae disserebat, qualis cuiusque animi adfectus esset, talem esse hominem, qualis autem homo ipse esset, talem esse orationem; orationi autem facta similia, factis vitam. Adfectus autem animi in bono viro laudabilis." (*Tusculanarum Disputationum*, V, XVI, 47).

23 Cfr. Lee 1940, p. 218.

heart are laid bare by his manner of speaking, and there is good ground for the Greek aphorism that “as a man lives, so will he speak.”<sup>24</sup>

Seneca the Younger gives the topos a certain twist when he discusses the supposed identity of moral excellence and eloquence in his *Epistulae morales*. Whereas the previous sources discussed the connection between eloquence and ethical virtues, Seneca is mainly interested in the correlation of lack of eloquence and bad habits:

“Man’s speech is just like his life.’ Exactly as each individual man’s actions seem to speak, so people’s style of speaking often reproduces the general character of the time, if the morale of the public has relaxed and has given itself over to effeminacy. [...] A man’s ability [*ingenio*] cannot possibly be of one sort and his soul [*animo*] of another. If his soul be wholesome, well-ordered, serious, and restrained, his ability also is sound and sober. Conversely, when the one degenerates, the other is also contaminated.”<sup>25</sup>

Seneca’s telling example is that of Maecenas, the Roman tycoon and famous patron of the arts. His decadent style of life, his sloppy dress, and the flagrancy of his entourage are not only believed to be a reflection of his soul, but also understood as a sign of the missing morals of his time. Maecenas thus represents the exact opposite of Quintilian’s model of the perfect orator. Just as eloquence is an indicator for ethical virtues, lack of eloquence is a sign for the *vir malus*. By citing lengthy passages from Maecenas’ discourses, Seneca is therefore able to evoke a physical and moral pen portrait of Maecenas.<sup>26</sup>

---

24 Quintilian (1920–1922), vol. 4, p. 173: “Profert enim mores plerumque oratio et animi secreta detegit. Nec sine causa Graeci prodiderunt, ut vivat, quemque etiam dicere.” (*Institutio oratoria*, XI, I, 30).

25 Seneca (1917–1925), vol. 3, p. 305. The Latin expression which turned into a proverb goes, “Talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita.” (*Epistulae morales*, CXIV). For a discussion of Seneca’s notion in art history see also Gombrich 1999, pp. 242–243 and Kemp 1992a, p. 18.

26 Seneca (1917–1925), vol. 3, p. 305: “Can you not at once imagine, on reading through these words, that this was the man who always paraded through the city with a flowing tunic? [...] These words of his, put together so faultily, thrown off so carelessly, and arranged in such marked contrast to the usual practice, declare that the character of their writer was equally unusual, unsound, and eccentric. [...] For it is evident that he was not really gentle, but effeminate, as is proved by his misleading word-order, his inverted expressions, and the surprising thoughts which frequently contain something great, but in finding expression have become nerveless. One would say that his head was turned by too great success. This fault is due sometimes to the man, and sometimes to his epoch.” (*Epistulae morales*, CXIV). It is interesting to note that Seneca uses the same technique as Aristophanes to discredit an author by describing him as effeminate. Just as Agathon’s female garments are used to allude to his character, the descrip-

The same methods of character recognition seem to have been applied to the visual arts. When the stoic Chrysippus of Soli saw a beautiful statue, he immediately became interested in the sculptor as a person as well: “[...] when beholding a beautiful statue made of bronze, we suddenly wish to know the name of the artist, because matter does not forge into form by its own.”<sup>27</sup> A similar view was expressed by the Hellenistic philosopher Philo of Alexandria. Highly influenced by the writings of Plato and critically concerned with the use of images, he admired the beauty of a statue not so much because it might represent a divinity, but because it reflected the qualities of the artist.<sup>28</sup> He states that every creation bears a resemblance to its creator. Just as the earth with its different forms of animals, plants, and landscapes can be seen as a manifestation of God, the work of a carpenter or a painter mirrors the character of the artisan:

“It has invariably happened that the works which they have made have been, in some degree, the proofs of the character of the workmen; for who is there who, when he looks upon statues or pictures, does not at once form an idea of the statuary or painter himself? And who, when he beholds a garment, or a ship, or a house, does not in a moment conceive a notion of the weaver, or shipbuilder, or architect, who has made them?”<sup>29</sup>

Even though the example of the artist is merely used as a *tertium comparationis* to illustrate the ubiquitous presence of God, Philo’s critical concerns about religious idolatry tell us something about the appreciation of artworks. Rather than containing something of the nature of the represented figure, a statue or painting contains something of the nature of the craftsman – who, of course, can be admired. In another interesting passage contained in *On Drunkenness*, he writes that the statues of the sculptor Phidias were always recognizable, regardless of the material of his works or the knowledge of the beholder:

“They say that Phidias, the celebrated statuary, made statues of brass, and of ivory, and of gold, and of other different materials, and that in all these works he displayed one and the same art, so that not only good judges, but even those who had no pretensions to the title, recognized the artist from his works.”<sup>30</sup>

---

tion of Maecenas’s robe is used to point to his moral vices. For the dress as a metaphor for style in ancient rhetorics cfr. Müller 1981, p. 52–84.

27 For this example see also Pekáry 2002, p. 63.

28 Pekáry 2002, p. 162.

29 Philo of Alexandria (1993), vol. 3, p. 112 (*De specialibus legibus*, IV).

30 Philo of Alexandria (1993), vol. 1, p. 283 (*On Drunkenness*, XXII).



## 2 Differences in Style

When Philo of Alexandria recognized the character of an artist from his works, he was probably alluding to a feature that nowadays is commonly referred to as personal style. During the Renaissance, the style or *maniera* of a painter became increasingly important and was understood as a reflection of his distinct personality. Whereas many painters of the 15<sup>th</sup> century were bound to imitate the style of one master, the art theorists of the Cinquecento invited painters to develop their own taste, interests, and style by choosing from multiple sources. The following chapter, by discussing the history of the increasing appreciation of personal style in the course of the Quattro- and Cinquecento, shows that Renaissance authors relied partly on concepts that were coined during antiquity.

For a thorough understanding for the meaning and transmission of style, it is thus necessary to understand the methods of training and education in Renaissance painters' workshops. The young apprentice, not older than twelve or thirteen, was introduced to the workshop of his master not only by learning about the preparation of cartoons, canvasses, and colours, but also by copying drawings.<sup>1</sup> These drawings, made by the teacher himself, often represented his condensed stylistic vocabulary, which had grown over the years and consisted of various, often schematic, representations of the human body and its single components. These drawings and designs often served as a fundamental framework for further explorations in the illustration of mankind and were often reutilized for the composition of new paintings or frescoes. In contrast to our modern understanding of artistic originality, this practice, at least in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was not judged as a sign of repetition or creative weakness but understood as a manifestation of the artist's distinct nature.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these patterns and prototypes were indispensable for helping organize the working routines of the workshop, often consisting of numerous pupils. By frequently re-drawing the models of their master, the apprentices not only got used to the proportions of a human body but also developed a drawing technique that was similar to his master's. The result was a

---

1 See for instance the contracts and letters of painters published by Gilbert 1980.

2 For the Renaissance understanding of originality see Cole 1995.

homogeneous style that was hardly distinguishable from the hand of their master. Considering the large and time-consuming commissions that certain workshops were expected to accomplish in a short amount of time, an almost identical style was necessary if a figure had to be painted by more than one person. A methodical division of labour allowed the execution of large-scale frescoes by assigning different figures or body parts to different pupils without risking inconsistencies.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the close companionship of the pupils under the guidance of an experienced master was believed to contribute to their moral qualities and social habits. This was of paramount importance if we think of the familiar structure of apprenticeships, where a pupil was often made part of the artist's household.<sup>4</sup> By giving advice and establishing rules that were particularly important when working at the courts or in a sacral environment, the teacher also influenced his pupils ethically.<sup>5</sup>

Not surprisingly, the teaching methods in a painter's workshop coincided with the general ideas on the cultivation of the young that were fashionable during the Renaissance. The birth of a human being was seen as a gift of mother Nature, who equipped the single individual with particular physical attributes and mental inclinations, whereas the shaping and refinement of moral characteristics and technical skills resulted from the long process of socialisation and education. In the Renaissance with its penchant for abundant allegories, this process was frequently illustrated by personifications of the raw and fertile Nature and her counterpart, the refined mother who provided nourishment.<sup>6</sup> A rectangular engraving from a series of allegories by the Netherlandish printmaker Philips Galle, entitled, *Man is born naked* (1563), demonstrates the different features that were associated with these opposing forces of human nature (Fig. 1). On the left, it depicts Nature as a primordial force. Modelled upon the ancient, many-breasted goddess Diana Ephesia and accompanied by wild animals, she emerges from a forest and holds a naked newborn in her hands. On the right side of the engraving we can see a clothed female figure, the mother, who receives the newborn, and her attendant, probably a wetnurse. Their civilized appearance is not only characterized by their elaborate garments but also by the surrounding landscape that contrasts with the

---

3 For the practice of copying drawings and styles see Wackernagel 1938, pp. 308–337, Cole 1983, pp. 30–34, Thomas 1995, pp. 213–255, and Bambach 1999.

4 The painter Francesco Squarçione, for instance, adopted several of his pupils, and Jacopo Tatti took the surname *Sansovino* in veneration of his master Andrea Sansovino; cfr. Gilbert 1980, p. 33.

5 The master is therefore some sort of *scienziato* who is able to reproduce and perpetuate his art by teaching it. Cfr. Summers 1987, p. 280 and Jacobs 1994, p. 84.

6 For the iconography of allegories of Nature in Renaissance Italy see Kemp 1973 and Modersohn 1994.



Figure 1 Philips Galle, *Man is born Naked*, 1563, London, British Museum

forest. Other sheets from this series of engravings show how this process of civilization continues and differentiates humans from the rest of the natural world, as the human species learns to walk and eventually starts to understand and use the different arts.<sup>7</sup>

Allegories like this marked the pedagogic impetus during the entire Renaissance and were repeatedly used in various writings on the education of children.<sup>8</sup> Although their main contributors were gendered as female, the importance of paternal inheritance was not undermined by these biological metaphors. It was frequently the male peasant who worked the fertile but fallow soil of mother Nature and assured the harvesting of plentiful crops. One of the most influential treatises on the refinement of habits and manners of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Baldassare Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*, exploits this figure of the caring farmer by com-

7 For the Renaissance understanding of nature and its representations see also Park 2004, esp. pp. 64 ff.

8 For the education in Renaissance Italy see Garin 1958.

paring his work to the impact of a good education. Just as an agrarian was held responsible for the prosperity and growth of his plants, a good teacher had to take care of his pupils by imparting his knowledge and virtues, thus creating “frutti felici”.<sup>9</sup> According to Castiglione, this was a development that requested the participation of the apprentice as well. Only through the continuous process of cultivation and the rejection of evil might the pupil become as distinguished as his instructor.<sup>10</sup> It was therefore necessary that he resembled his master in all essential regards and showed himself eager to imitate: “Chi adunque vorrà esser bon discipulo, oltre al far le cose bene, sempre ha da metter ogni diligenza per assigliarsi al maestro e, se possibil fosse, trasformarsi in lui.”<sup>11</sup> If we turn to the art literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we notice that the same metaphor of fortunate fruit was employed by the Venetian painter Paolo Pino. When he discusses the formation of the apprentice in the last chapter of his *Dialogo di pittura* (1548), he advises the master to lovingly care for his students. Just as Nature makes sure that there are plenty of new plants by generating offshoots that are similar to itself and thus contributes to the preservation of the species, the painter should impart his art and virtues to others (“insegnare ad altrui l’arte e virtù sua”).<sup>12</sup>

---

9 Castiglione 1528 (1998), p. 369: “Però, come nell’altre arti, così ancora nelle virtù è necessario aver maestro, il qual con dottrina e boni ricordi susciti e risvegli in noi quelle virtù morali, delle quai avemo il seme incluso e sepolto nell’anima, e come bono agricoltore le coltivi e loro apra la via, levandoci d’intorno le spine e ’l loglio degli appetiti, i quali spesso tanto adombrano e soffocan gli animi nostri, che fiorir non gli lassano, né produr quei felici frutti, che soli si dovriano desiderar che nascessero nei cori umani.”

10 Castiglione 1528 (1998), p. 38 “[...] la natura in ogni cosa ha insito quello occulto seme, che porge una certa forza e proprietà del suo principio a tutto quello che da esso deriva ed a sé lo fa simile; come non solamente vedemo nelle razze de’ cavalli e d’altri animali, ma ancor negli alberi, i rampolli dei quali quasi sempre s’assimigliano al tronco; e se qualche volta degenerano, procede dal mal agricoltore. E così intervien degli omini, i quali, se di bona crianza sono coltivati, quasi sempre son simili a quelli d’onde procedono e spesso migliorano; ma se manca loro chi gli curi bene, divengono come selvatichi, né mai si maturano.”

11 Castiglione 1528 (1998), p. 58.

12 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 138: “Sia questo nostro pittore tanto circospetto et integro in ciascuna parte necessaria all’arte nostra, che merti esser nomato maestro, come pien di magistero e come quello che può perfettamente insegnare ad altrui l’arte e virtù sua. E s’avvenisse che ne fusse richiesto come maestro, se conoscerà il discepolo ben disposto e ch’abbi dell’ingenuo, lo debbi accettare e con amore istruirlo ne l’arte, imitando la natura, la quale non solo pone cura in conservare la già perfetta pianta, ma anco le fa produrre e nodrire delli rampolli, acciò, educati dalla virtù della pianta, quelli conservino la specie e rendi[no] il medemo frutto.”

## 2.1 The Painter's Workshop in Humanist Writing

Although professionally more interested in texts, humanists were aware of these habits of the painters as well. They referred to the workshop of painters occasionally when they needed to illustrate their own methods of instruction, comparing the act of copying drawings to the act of imitating literary models. For instance, when discussing how a boy should be taught to write in a good style, the humanist Gasparino Barzizza reminds his readers of the workshop of a painter where the pupils are compelled to imitate the sketches of their master.<sup>13</sup> The same comparison is made by Leonardo Bruni, who wants the translator of a literary text to be immersed in the original author in exactly the way an artist copies a painting of another painter.<sup>14</sup> Both authors derived their ideas about the dissemination of ethical virtues and skills from ancient rhetoric where the education of the intellectual progeny was considered one of the important tasks of an orator. By imitating various styles and modes of writing from famous authors, the pupil had to acquire a certain set of qualifications that allowed him to become a good rhetor. It was the duty of the instructor to ensure the wellbeing of his students by having them consort with him and choose works that corresponded to his individual nature and predispositions.<sup>15</sup> As a result, it was seldom the case that an apprentice developed a style that was completely independent from the manners of his master. Quite the contrary: it was not only fashionable to imitate the habits of famous rhetors but also common to stick to the style of one's teacher. The close relationship between master and apprentice established a sort of rhetorical school that assured the longevity of characteristic verbal patterns.

When Marsilio Ficino referred to the painter's workshop to illustrate the ideals of humanist teaching, he did so by using similar tropes. In a letter to his friend Pierfilippo Della Corgna, an erudite humanist and doctor of the laws who taught at the universities of Perugia and Ferrara, he compared Della Corgna's

---

13 As cited in Baxandall 1971, p. 65: "For myself, I would have done what good painters practise towards those who are learning from them; when the apprentices are to be instructed by their masters before having achieved a thorough grasp of the method of painting, the painters follow the practice of giving them a number of fine drawings and pictures as models of the art, and through these they can be brought to make a certain amount of progress even by themselves."

14 As cited in Baxandall 1971, p. 25: "As those who are painting after the model of one picture a second picture take over from their model the figure, posture, movement, and and form of the whole body, and study not what they themselves might do but but rather what the other painter did: so too in translation the good translator will with all his reason, sensibility, and purpose change and in a measure transform himself into the original author of the text."

15 For the teaching of rhetorics in antiquity see Leeman 1963.

teaching methods with the practice of painters. Just as a master paints himself in his apprentices, Pierfilippo would paint himself in his pupil Francesco Soderini.<sup>16</sup> The letter, probably written in march 1474 and circulating in various copies at the court of the Medici before being published in 1495,<sup>17</sup> starts off with an abstract description of a perfect solicitor whose virtues are symbolized by the different members and organs of the body. His *anima* (soul) represents the worship of God, his *spiritus* (spirit) is a sign of his preoccupation with the country, and his *oculi linguaque* (eyes and tongue) stand for scholarliness. It is Ficino's explicit aim to paint his idea of the best solicitor possible; he wants his reader to see the true effigy of the perfect man of law. In the second part of his letter, Ficino illustrates this idea by referring to Della Corgna's pupil Francesco Soderini. According to Ficino, Della Corgna had realized the perfect idea of a solicitor in his pupil by following the custom of painters to paint themselves in their pupils: "Petrusphillipus dum pictorum more se ipsam in Francisco Soderino eius discipulo pinget, idea ipsius reipsa veram similitudinem assequetur." (Pierfilippo will paint himself in his pupil Francesco Soderini in the manner of painters, and thus will execute a faithful image of the idea of himself in reality.)<sup>18</sup>

In his letter Ficino is mainly interested in praising his friend Pierfilippo della Corgna by complimenting him on his pupil Francesco Soderini, the future arch-

---

16 Ficino 1495, fol. 26v.

17 Ficino's collection of letters to important philosophers and humanists from the years 1457–1476 was well known at the court of the Medici. After the *editio princeps* of 1495 in Latin, Felice Figliucci published a *volgare* translation in Venice in 1546 where we find the same letter in vol. 1 on fol. 80r.: "Voi desiderate, com' io penso, veder un'effigie e una Idea d'un legittimo legista. O che bello et che nobile spettacolo è egli? L'anima di questa effigie è il culto di Iddio; lo spirito è la cura de le leggi de la prima; il cerebro, è un giudicio vero e acuto, gli occhi e la lingua, la dottrina; il petto una tenace memoria; il cuore, una retta e giusta volontà; le mani, gli effetti de la retta volontà; li piedi, la perseveranza. Il corpo tutto è la equità e la gravità. Ma a che cerco io con parole formare l'Idea d'un perfetto legista? M. Pierfilippo mentre che a usanza di pittore se stesso dipinge in Francesco Soderino suo discepolo, consegue la vera similianza di questa Idea." We also dispose of a manuscript in *volgare* by Ficino himself (Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Casanat. 1297). For the important tradition of writing letters in Renaissance Italy see Clough 1976 and Najemy 1993, pp. 18 ff. Cfr. also Ficino (1975 ff.), vol. 1, pp. 19–24.

18 Ficino 1495, fol 26v.: "Desideras arbitror legitimi iurisconsulti effigiem & indolem in-tueri, o quam pulchrum spectaculum, quam mirabile, huius anima est Dei cultus, spiritus patriae legis cura, cerebrum, iudicium perspicax, oculi linguaque doctrina. Pectus memoria tenax. Cor recta voluntas. Manus recte voluntatis effectus. Pedes perseverantia. Totum aequitas atque gravitas. Sed quod ego verbis iurisconsulti ideam effingo Petrusphillipus dum pictorum more se ipsam in Francisco Soderino eius discipulo pinget, idea ipsius reipsa veram similitudinem assequetur."

bishop of Volterra and ambassador of Pope Sixtus IV. But the way in which he illustrates the abstract transmission of ethical virtues from one person to another with an example from the art of painting also tells us something about the perception of artworks in 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence. It is interesting to note that Ficino speaks of the *mos pictorum*; rather than referring to a single artist, he describes a custom that is common to all painters when he uses the plural form of *pictor*. This custom is said to arise from the fact that all painters tend to paint themselves, *se ipsam pingere*, in their pupils. That Ficino draws heavily on concepts that were important for the artists of the Renaissance is also shown by the second half of the sentence. When he speaks of an *idea* that becomes manifest in something alien to itself, he not only evokes Plato's theory of forms but seems to allude to the process of artistic creation as well. The mental image, conceived in the mind of the sculptor or painter, was the prerequisite for every work of art, which could transform into matter only subsequently. This notion was well known since the times of Dante<sup>19</sup> and later found its most prominent articulation in Vasari's definition of *disegno*.<sup>20</sup> In his *Teologia platonica* (1482), Ficino himself put it this way: "A form firstly exists in the artist's mind, secondly in the tools that he wields, and thirdly in the material thus formed."<sup>21</sup> And in another paragraph of the same work, he explicitly draws on the similarities between the character of an artist and the character of his works:

"A painter too uses his brush as an instrument to trace some form on the wall: the form resembles not the brush but rather his soul, which first conceived it within itself and afterwards brought it forth. Both in nature and in art, therefore, the form of the work refers to the form of the agent."<sup>22</sup>

19 Dante (1988), p. 505 ff.: "poi chi pingere figura, / se non può esser lei, non la può porre. (...) nullo dipintore potrebbe porre alcuna figura, se intenzionalmente non si facesse prima tale, quale la figura esser dee." (*Convivio*, IV, III, 52–53 and IV, X, 11)

20 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, pp. 168 f.: "Perché il disegno, padre delle tre arti nostre architettura, scultura e pittura, procedendo dall'intelletto cava di molte cose un giudizio universale simile a una forma ovvero idea di tutte le cose della natura [...], e perché da questa cognizione nasce un certo concetto e giudizio, che si forma nella mente quella tal cosa che poi espressa con le mani si chiama disegno, si può concludere che esso disegno altro non sia che una apparente espressione e dichiarazione del concetto che si ha nell'animo, e di quello che altri si è nella mente imaginato e fabricato nell'idea." For a discussion of the term *disegno* see also Kemp 1974.

21 Ficino 1482 (2001–2006), vol. 3, pp. 145 f. (*Teologia platonica*, X, IV).

22 Ficino 1482 (2001–2006), vol. 3, pp. 145 f. (*Teologia platonica*, X, IV). Cfr. also Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, 1576, p. 229 as cited in Gombrich 1945, p. 59: "In paintings and buildings the wisdom and skill of the artist shines forth. Moreover, we can see in them the attitude and the image, as it were, of his mind; for in these works the mind ex-

Of course, Ficino's letter is full of references to classical antiquity, too. His conception of the human body is determined by physiognomic theory, and his text is probably modelled upon Seneca, who wrote a very similar epistle in which he imagines contemplating the soul of a just man.<sup>23</sup> More importantly, he seems to be paraphrasing Plotinus's *Enneads*, who (citing Plato) discussed the intellectual relationship between a distinguished man and a promising youth in very similar terms: "A worthy man, perceiving in a youth the character of virtue, is agreeably impressed, because he observes that the youth harmonizes with the true type of virtue which he bears within himself."<sup>24</sup> But aside from his classical allusions, Ficino inserts contemporary observations on the art of painting, an art that had only recently begun to interest the circles of humanists and scholars who dominated the intellectual climate of Florence.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 The Discovery of the Individual *maniera*

The great attention which was paid to the copying practices of the young artists indicates an awareness of different stylistic modes and patterns. Only against a cultural background interested in the diversity of human expression was it necessary to ensure the conformity of a pupil's technique to the prevailing stylistic vocabulary of his teacher. Although the Middle Ages discerned occasionally between epochs and schools of painting as well, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century this awareness increased exponentially and emphasized the achievements of the individual artist.<sup>26</sup>

One indicator of the changing attention paid to the individual differences between painters can be found in the complaints that were made by the widow of Augusto Beccaria to the Duke of Milan in 1476. Disappointed by stylistic inconsistencies in a *Life of Christ* that were made by the painters Bonifazio da Cremona, Vincenzo Foppa and Jacopino Zainario, she asked the artists to revise their work: "We say to you and desire that you take care of it according to your obligation, by arranging that the painting is not done by so many hands as it would seem to

---

presses and reflects itself not otherwise than a mirror reflects the face of a man who looks into it. To the greatest degree the mind reveals itself in speeches, songs and skillful harmonies. In these the whole disposition and will of the mind becomes manifest."

23 Seneca (1917–1925), vol. 3, p. 306 (*Epistulae morales*, CXV, 3–4).

24 As cited in Norton 1995, p. 136 (*Enneads*, I, 6, 3).

25 Cfr. Baxandall 1971, pp. 51 ff.

26 See Pfisterer 2002, pp. 40–79 for detailed analysis of this paradigmatic shift.



be done, so as to make the work unharmonious [disforma].”<sup>27</sup> That the beholder of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was increasingly good at distinguishing the hands of painters is documented in a similar court case in Padua in 1456. When asked if he could tell which parts of a fresco were painted by Andrea Mantegna, the painter Pietro da Milano was able to indicate the corresponding sections without difficulty. Although the judges were skeptical in the beginning, they seem to have been persuaded by Pietro’s assertion that an experienced painter is able to recognize the hand of a good master.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the first treatise of the early modern age on painting confirms that painters stood in the forefront when it came to discriminating the ways in which a work was done. They used a specific language to indicate these stylistic differences, too. Cennino Cennini’s *Libro dell’arte*, probably composed around the year 1390, gives us one of the most intriguing examples of how artists understood the adoption of a certain style or manner. When discussing the education of the apprentice, he recommends that the young artist follow one master, preferably the best in town, as a model for style. By doing so he would be embraced by that master’s stylistic manner:

“Ma per consiglio io ti do: guarda di pigliare sempre il migliore, e quello che ha maggior fama; e, seguitando di dì in dì, contra natura sarà che a te non venga preso di suo’ maniera e di suo’ aria; perocché se ti muovi a ritrarre oggi di questo maestro, domani di quello, né maniera dell’uno né maniera dell’altro non n’arai, e verrai per forza fantastichetto, per amor che ciascuna maniera ti straccerà la mente.”<sup>29</sup>

The terms that are used by Cennini to indicate individual style are *maniera* and *aria*. As has been shown by Marco Treves, the most common meaning of the word *maniera* in Renaissance Italy is the manner, custom, or fashion in which a work is done, a person behaves, or a problem is solved. Etymologically, it derives from the Latin *mos* or *modus*. Thus, in the context of the workshop, *maniera* came in handy to denote the individual style of an artist or the manner of working of an entire nation or of an age.<sup>30</sup> *Aria*, on the other hand, was a term that was specifically related to the facial features of a painted figure. Linguistically, it has strong ties with the ancient *pneuma* or *spiritus* and roughly translates as *air* or *breath*. However, it also had a broad spectrum of meanings that were connected to the ephemeral ex-

---

27 Kemp 1987, p. 6.

28 Warnke 1982, p. 56: “Et quia inter pictores semper cognoscitur manu cuius sit aliqua pictura, maxime quando est manu alicuius sollempnis magister.”

29 Cennini (1859), pp. 16 f.

30 Treves 1941, p. 69.

pressions of the soul which were believed to manifest themselves primarily in a person's physiognomy.<sup>31</sup> A good example of the term's use in the 14<sup>th</sup> century can be found in a letter from Petrarch to Boccaccio. When writing about the imitation of literary models in 1366, Petrarch recommends that an adaptation should resemble its model as a son resembles his father. Between father and son – although very dissimilar in person – exists a certain shadow of similarity that is most visible in the face and in the eyes, which the painters nowadays would call an *aer* (“*pictores nostri aerem vocant*”).<sup>32</sup> According to Petrarch this *aer* constitutes the difference between an exact, identical copy of a model and a work of art that reflects the inner qualities of the painter or poet. Moreover, as David Summers has argued, *aria* had strong ethical connotations and was correlated with the character and moral virtues of a painter.<sup>33</sup>

Although *aria* had a more than slightly different meaning from *maniera*, both were used to indicate the same phenomenon. When an anonymous agent reported to the Duke of Milan in 1490 on the painters Botticelli, Filippino, Perugino, and Ghirlandaio, he could easily differentiate their styles by naming them *aria virile*, *aria dolce* or *aria angelica*.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Lorenzo Ghiberti uses *maniera* to discern the ancient style of the Greeks, the *maniera greca*, from the modern *maniera* that was represented by Giotto.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, as is shown by Francisco de Hollanda's *Dialogos*, composed around 1538, both terms could be used simultaneously as well.<sup>36</sup> But because of its philological perspicuity and its deeper roots in the everyday language of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, *maniera* became the term that was most widely used to indicate stylistic differences during the following centuries. In Vasari's *Vite* from 1568 it is employed well over 1,300 times, outnumbering the use of *aria* by far even if we ignore the semantic ambiguity of the latter.<sup>37</sup>

---

31 Summers 1987, p. 120.

32 As cited in Summers 1987, p. 121: “While there is often a great difference in particular features in them, there is a certain shadow, what our painters call an ‘air’, which is the most visible in the face and in the eyes, which makes the similarity. The moment the son is seen, he reminds us of the father, although if the matter is reduced to measurement, everything would be different; but there is something mysterious, I know not what, that has this power.” (*Familiaria*, XXIII) For a discussion of Petrarch's letter and its implications for the early modern beliefs on similarity and dissimilarity see Endres 2012, pp. 55–58.

33 Summers 1989, p. 26.

34 See Gilbert 1980, p. 139.

35 Ghiberti (1998), p. 83.

36 De Hollanda 1538 (1899), p. 123.

37 Sohm 1999, p. 104.

Surprisingly, its close relation to the world of the mechanical arts did not prevent the term *maniera* from denoting individual inventiveness and imagination. Traditionally understood as a handicraft, painting was believed to be manually concerned with the simple reproduction of patterns or the representation of a limited set of subjects. It was an art that was mainly associated with the use of the hand, not with the use of the mind. However, *maniera* came to be strongly related to the intellectual capacities of a painter as well. One of the first examples that deals with the reciprocal connection of the personal style of a painter and his inventions can be found in a treatise on architecture. Around 1458, the architect and art theorist Antonio Averlino (better known under the name Filarete), when discussing the different styles of writing, painting, and building, argues that every individual is equipped with a personal *maniera*. Just as God is able to build a great variety of different objects, so too the products of man are dissimilar from each other and distinguishable by their style:

“[...] come colui che scrive o uno che dipigne, fa che le sue lettere si conoscono, e così colui che dipigne, la sua maniera delle figure si cognosce, e così d’ogni facultà si cognosce lo stile di ciascheduno.”<sup>38</sup>

What interests Filarete here is the individual capacity of each painter or writer, not their dependence on the preexistent models of divine creation. In other passages of his treatise he relates this capacity to the so-called *fantasia*, a part of the human mind that was concerned with imagination. Belonging to the first of the three ventricles of the human brain, *fantasia* was responsible for creating new images by referring to the sensory organs or by re-organizing information

---

38 Filarete (1972), vol. 1, pp. 27f.: “Si che credo che Idio, come che mostrò nella generazione umana e anche nelli animali brutti questa varietà e dissimiglianza per dimostrare la sua grande potenza e sapienza, e anche, com’io ho detto, per più bellezza, e così ha concesso allo ingegno umano, messo che l’uomo non sa da che si venga, che non sia fatto ancora uno edificio che totalmente sia fatto proprio uno come un altro. Volse adunque Idio che l’uomo, come che in forma la immagine sua fece a sua similitudine, così partecipasse in fare qualche cosa a sua similitudine mediante lo intelletto che gli concesse [...] come colui che scrive o uno che dipigne, fa che le sue lettere si conoscono, e così colui che dipigne, la sua maniera delle figure si cognosce, e così d’ogni facultà si cognosce lo stile di ciascheduno; ma questa è altra pratica, nonostante che ognuno pure divaria o tanto o quanto, benché si conosca essere fatta per una mano. Ho veduto io dipintore e intagliatore ritrarre teste, e massime dell’antidetto illustrissimo Signore duca Francesco Sforza, del quale varie teste furono ritratte, perché era degna e formosa; più d’una da ciascheduno bene l’appropriarono alla sua e somigliarono, e niente di meno c’era differenza.” For a discussion of this passage see Tigler 1963, pp. 82–85 and Pfisterer 2002, pp. 75f.

that was stored in the *memoria*, the last of the cerebral ventricles. But as an all-pervasive factor, embracing every facet of the conception of a work, *fantasia* was closely correlated with the manual expression of the painter as well.<sup>39</sup>

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, discussions of how the hand of a painter related to the different faculties of his mind were usually influenced by the Latin nouns *ars* and *ingenium*. Derived from the Roman rhetors, the first term indicated the technical skills that had to be learnt, whereas the latter signified the individual, innate talents of a pupil. Only a well-balanced combination of both assured the young orator a promising career in the civic administration. The same was believed to be true for the Renaissance artist. Besides his capacity to apply the rules of perspective and proportion, to engage in the preparation of pigments, or to practice in drawing the phenomena of nature, his talent constituted at least half of his artistic makeup. As an indispensable component of his mental and physical disposition, the *ingenium* was responsible for the individual character of an artist and the originality of his works. However, precisely because of its strong impact on the imaginative capabilities of an artist, it had to be controlled by the regulative and objective principles that were established by the *ars*.<sup>40</sup>

Cennino Cennini was well aware of the close connections between the mind and the manual dexterity of a painter. When discussing the different arts that were invented after the original sin of mankind, he defines the art of painting as being constituted by *hoperazione di mano* and *fantasia*. His worthy translation of the Italian terms *arte* and *ingenio* leads us directly to the painter's workshop, where the mental activities of the artist were closely connected with the exhausting physical activities of his body. Cennini could thus rely on a rich tradition of ancient and medieval authors who were concerned with the functions of the human hand. Be it Anaxagoras, Aristotle, or Vincent of Beauvais, the hand was often interpreted as an intellectual tool reflecting the cerebral capacities of an individual.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the mind was believed to possess a direct and privileged channel of communication with the hand. Summarizing the scholastic discussions in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Albertus Magnus was therefore convinced of an inextricable link between the mental motions and the corresponding manual movements of a

---

39 Kemp 1977, pp. 369 f.

40 To prevent the artist from losing himself in his own mind, Leon Battista Alberti therefore strongly suggested that one study and learn from nature. Alberti (2002), p. 156: "Ma per non perdere studio e fatica si vuole fuggire quella consuetudine d'alcuni sciocchi, i quali presuntuosi di suo ingegno, senza avere essempla alcuno dalla natura quale con occhi o mente seguano, studiano da sé a sé acquistare lode di dipignere. Questi non imparano dipignere bene, ma assuefanno sé a' suoi errori."

41 See Löhr 2008, p. 154.

person.<sup>42</sup> The distinction between the style or *maniera* of a painter and the products of his mind, his *fantasie* or *invenzioni*, is therefore unlikely to have been the main interest of the Renaissance beholder. The more the painters were engaged in inventing new compositions and iconographies instead of copying established visual traditions, the more their style was associated with the minds of the painters themselves. Michelangelo, whose style and works represented the peak of artistic excellence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, gives us a good example of this doctrine when he underscores the primacy of the intellect in the process of artistic creation in one of his famous sonnets: “solo a quello arriva la man che ubbidisce all’intelletto.”<sup>43</sup> However, the attempt to hide the physically laborious part of the painter’s practice by emphasizing the use of his mind is also a result of his pursuit of social emancipation. By this means the artist could veer away from the *artes mechanicae*, traditionally concerned with manual activities, and strive for the *artes liberales*, the socially elevated disciplines that were more related to the expressions of the mind.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.3 *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the hitherto discussed examples of artistic distinctiveness, mostly verbalized in a humanistic or artistic context, had transformed into the widely-accepted notion that “every painter paints himself.”<sup>45</sup> In a similar form, already used in a letter by Marsilio Ficino (see Chapter 2.1), the dictum

---

42 As cited in Löhr 2008, p. 172: “Dicendum, quod manus appropriantur homini, quia manus est tamquam organum intellectus, quo homo maxime exsequitur, quod intellectus capit, quia sicut homo per intellectum potest in omnia intelligibilia, sic per manus potest in omnia operabilia. Et sicut per intellectum habet quasi potentiam infinitam homo, quia non potest tot intelligere, quin plura adhuc possit intelligere, sic et per manus non potest tot operari, quin adhuc plura possit, si ratio adveniat. Et licet omnia membra oboediant intellectui et rationi, nullum tamen ita sicut manus. Unde cum aliquis intendit exprimere, quod intime intelligit, vis potest manus retinere, quia ita multum oboedit manus intellectui, quod naturaliter intendit opere manifestare, quod interius concipitur in animo.” (*De animalibus*, XIV). A similar view is expressed in Alberti (2002), pp. 160f.: “E l’ingegno mosso e riscaldato per essercitazione molto si rende pronto ed espedito al lavoro; e quella mano seguita velocissimo, quale sia da certa ragione d’ingegno ben guidata.”

43 Michelangelo (1967), p. 161.

44 For this shift see for instance Sohm 1999 and Boschloo 2008.

45 For the vast literature on this proverb see at least Kemp 1976, Chastel 1959, p. 102–105, D’Angelo 1991, Zöllner 1992, Pfisterer 1996, p. 137–138, Plackinger 2016, p. 167–176.

soon turned into a proverb which appeared in various contexts. As a popularized synthesis of the complex interaction between the artist's *ars* and *ingenium*, it described the simple fact that a painter was believed to manifest himself in his works. But the way in which this manifestation occurred, i.e., the exact meaning of the expression, was often subject to change.

One of the reasons for the ambiguity of the dictum lies in its semantic flexibility. The reflexive pronoun *sé* allowed its commentators to associate various aspects of the individuality of an artist with his work, whereas the noun *pittore* and the verb *dipingere* had a narrower spectrum of denotations.<sup>46</sup> As a semiotic placeholder, the pronoun could thus be used to indicate the artist's character and soul, his style or manner of working, or even his physical features. In short: The saying *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* assumed different forms and meanings: it figured as a proverb, was used as a metaphor, or appeared in the form of an aphorism. Eventually it turned into a topos, a literary commonplace, that was used in a stereotypical yet telling way when treating the life and work of artists in early modern biographies.

The success and longevity of the notion derived partly from its deep roots in ancient philosophy, since one of its most enduring beliefs was that there is a close resemblance between a cause and its effect. Plato and Aristotle had already discussed the matter, with the latter repeatedly referring to it in both his *Generation of animals* and his *Metaphysics*. Although he thought the same principles were valid for artificial production as well (the world of the so-called *techne*), his most telling example is the act of procreation by which the father generates offspring that are similar to himself; a principle that future commentators of Aristotle's works often summarized in the formula *Homo hominem generat*.<sup>47</sup> This law of similarity, later also discussed by Avicenna,<sup>48</sup> was particularly interesting to medieval authors who were concerned with the physical manifestations of God. If it was true that every agent acts according to its own likeness, the earth and all of

---

46 See Battaglia 1960–2004, vol. 5, 512, No. 20.

47 See Rosemann 1994.

48 Avicenna (2007), p. 512: “La ragione per cui si ritiene che il figlio rimanga dopo il padre, l'edificio dopo il costruttore ed il calore dopo il fuoco è una confusione derivante dall'ignoranza della vera causa. Il costruttore, il padre ed il fuoco, infatti, non sono le vere cause della sussistenza di questi causati. Il costruttore che vi lavora, infatti, non è la causa della sussistenza dell'edificio, e nemmeno della sua esistenza. Per quanto riguarda il costruttore, il suo movimento è la causa di un certo movimento nella materia dell'edificio. Il suo stare fermo ed il suo cessare di muoversi, poi, sono la causa della fine di questo movimento. [...] È opinione comune che l'agente che produce un'esistenza simile alla propria sia più degno di avere la natura che esso conferisce e la possiede in maggior grado rispetto alle altre cose.”

its creatures must bear some resemblance to its creator. As God himself had already declared in the *Book of Genesis*, he “created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” Boethius was one of the first authors who founded his theology on this principle. By assuming a resemblance between product and producer he could read the world as being an image of God himself.<sup>49</sup> The writings of Nicholas of Cusa show us that this interpretation remained fashionable until far into the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Radicalizing the ideas of his predecessors, he imagines God the Father as an *artifex divinus* who paints himself in the vest of the phenomena of nature just because he likes seeing a true image of himself. It is through the admiration of these divine reflections that man is able to grasp the meaning of God’s various revelations about himself.<sup>50</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, the key figure of scholasticism often addressed as *doctor universalis*, was similarly interested in the generative powers of nature. Closely following Aristotle’s observations in the matter, he developed a universal theory of causation that was likewise founded on analogies. According to this theory, every cause necessarily produces an effect that – in a certain way – is similar to its cause. This simple principle finds its expression in the formula *Omne agens agit sibi simile* which frequently appears in his writings.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes he applies this principle in an inductive way: Observing the effects of a cause, he tries to establish a general rule for the law of similarity between cause and effect. As has been shown by Battista Mondin, however, his main argument evolves from a deductive perspective, starting with the cause of an effect. His conclusion is that a cause cannot produce effects of all kinds arbitrarily, but that it only and necessarily

---

49 Boethius (1918), p. 263–265: “O Thou, that dost the world in lasting order guide, / Father of heaven and earth, Who makest time swiftly slide, / And, standing still Thyself, yet fram’st all moving laws, / Who to Thy work wert moved by no external cause: / But by a sweet desire, where envy hath no place, / Thy goodness moving Thee to give each thing his grace, / Thou dost all creatures’ forms from highest patterns take, / From Thy fair mind the world fair like Thyself doth make. / Thus Thou perfect the whole perfect each part dost frame.” (*De consolazione philosophiae*, III, IX, 8). For a reference to this passage during the exequie of Michelangelo cfr. Saviello 2012, pp. 231 f.

50 Nicholas of Cusa (1985), p. 735: “You created as if you were a painter who mixes different colors in order, at length, to be able to paint himself – to the end that he may have an image of himself wherein he himself may take delight and his artistry may find rest. Although the divine painter is one and is not multipliable, he can nevertheless be multiplied in the way in which this is possible: viz., in a very close likeness. However, he makes many figures, because the likeness of his infinite power can be unfolded in the most perfect way only in many figures” (*De visione dei*, XXV, 111). For the concept of the *deus artifex* see Kris/Kurz 1934, pp. 60 ff. For the idea of the world as a self-portrait of God in Ficino’s works see Beierwaltes 1980.

51 Mondin 1960.

produces effects according to its own nature: i.e., the nature of the effect is pre-contained in the nature of the cause.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore the cause is not only a simple external condition of the effect, but it vitally partakes in the process of the genesis of the effect by transmitting something of itself.<sup>53</sup> But it is also clear from Aquinas' argumentation that no effect can ever be the totally adequate image of its cause. Just as a father and his son share a resemblance without being entirely alike, the relationship between cause and effect consists of similarity, not identity.<sup>54</sup> In addition to this example, Aquinas gives many others, including one addressing an artist, and one addressing God. Both causes imprint their likenesses in matter: the artist when realizing a drawing on paper, God when creating the earth and its various creatures. Especially in the case of God, this likeness is merely a rough approximation: His own being infinite, the limited number of objects in the world would only give us a very vague idea of his likeness.<sup>55</sup>

That the scholastic dictum *Omne agens agit sibi simile* was eventually transformed into the popular saying *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* was probably due to the friar Girolamo Savonarola.<sup>56</sup> As a Dominican he was not only acquainted with the work of Thomas Aquinas, but bound to preach in the vernacular language as well. His numerous sermons, often delivered in Santa Maria del Fiore, the main church of Florence, repeatedly referred to the fathers of ancient wisdom and transformed their writings into popular content.<sup>57</sup> Because of his great popularity, Savonarola's erudite and often aggressive lectures were very well attended and

---

52 For the principle of analogy in Aquinas cfr. Mondin 2002, pp. 250–256.

53 Thomas Aquinas (1984), p. 157: "For fire heats not inasmuch as it is actually bright, but inasmuch as it is actually hot. It is for this reason that every agent produces an effect similar to itself."

54 Mondin 2002, p. 254.

55 See Thomas Aquinas (1975), p. 45: "Since every agent intends to introduce its likeness into its effect, in the measure that its effect can receive it, the agent does this the more perfectly as it is the more perfect itself; obviously, the hotter a thing is, the hotter its effect, and the better the craftsman, the more perfectly does he put into matter the form of his art. Now, God is the most perfect agent. It was His prerogative, therefore, to induce His likeness into created things most perfectly, to a degree consonant with the nature of created being. But created things cannot attain to a perfect likeness to God according to only one species of creature. For, since the cause transcends the effect, that which is in the cause, simply and unitedly, exists in the effect in composite and multiple fashion – unless the effect attain to the species of the cause; which cannot be said in this case, because no creature can be equal to God. The presence of multiplicity and variety among created things was therefore necessary that a perfect likeness to God be found in them according to their manner of being."

56 For the similarity of *Omne agens agit sibi simile* and *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* see also Pfisterer 2001, p. 327.

57 Cfr. Lesnick 1989.



even maintained in written records before being published in comprehensive volumes. In one of these preachings, given in the Lenten season of 1495, he explains the creation of man in God's image by referring to the hitherto discussed principles of causation:

“Poi dicevano questi filosofi [i.e., the ancient philosophers] che omne agens facit sibi simile, idest che ogni agente fa lo effecto simile a se secondo quella forma mediante la quale opera, verbigratia, il fuoco scalda questo legno, et fallo ad se simile, perche è caldo lui, lo edificatore edifica la casa et falla simile a se, non simile a se che lui sia casa, ma simile a la idea che se haveva prima facta nel intellecto, et perho dissi secondo la forma con la quale opera. Dio ha facto l'huomo simile a se, non che Dio habi corpo, ma secondo la idea che hebe nela mente, cosi s'intende.”<sup>58</sup>

Both examples, that of the fire that extends its virtues by producing more fire and that of the architect who builds the house according to his mental design, are very conventional; they had been in use since the time of Aristotle. Even in the following year Savonarola had contented himself with the traditional forms of explanation by giving the examples of a human who begets another human or of a horse that begets another horse.<sup>59</sup> However, in a later sermon that he delivered in Santa Maria del Fiore, his approach to the scholastic formula displays a somewhat more open attitude. In February of 1497, when criticizing Plato's and Aristotle's conception of God as being more concerned with the world of ideas than with terrestrial problems, he gives the formula a particular twist by using an entirely new example:

“Omne agens agit in quantum est in actu: & inquanto uno e piu formale e piu activo & lo acto dice perfectione & la materia imperfectione. Essendo Dio adunque acto puro e tutto perfectione: ergo è la prima cosa bonta. [...] E si dice che ogni pittore dipinge se medesimo. Non dipinge gia se inquanto huomo: perche fa delle imagini di leoni cavalli huomini & donne che non sono se: ma dipinge se inquanto dipintore: idest secondo il suo concepto. Et benche siano diverse phantasie: & figure de dipintori che dipingono:

58 Savonarola 1513, p. 50.

59 Savonarola (1962), vol. 1, p. 193–194: “Nelle cose naturali l'omo genera l'altro omo, el cavallo l'altro cavallo, la vite l'altra vite, e ogni cosa genera e fa simile a sé, e nessuna cosa estende la sua virtù fori della sua specie, se non in quelle cose che Dio vuole mostrare miracolo. Nelle cose dove Dio monstra miracolo, Lui estende la sua virtù dentro a quelle; nel foco dello Inferno Lui vi estende dentro la sua virtù, onde opera miracolosamente nelli spiriti. Nella virga di Aron, quando la fiori, Dio estese la sua virtù là dentro. El simile adunque, nelle cose naturali, produce e genera uno altro simile. Così nelle cose spirituali serva Dio questo medesimo ordine.”

tamen sono tutte secondo il concepto suo: cosi li philosophi perche erono superbi: de-  
 scripsono idio per modi altieri & gonfiati: & cosi come loro non si degnavano di ab-  
 bassarsi per la excellentia che gli pareva essere sapienti: dissono anche che Dio non  
 si abbasava alle cose humane: perché se si fussi mescolato in queste cose humane, pa-  
 reva loro vile.”<sup>60</sup>

Probably inspired by the flourishing workshops of the Florentine painters, he no longer refers to the builder who builds a house to demonstrate the validity of the principle *Omne agens agit sibi simile*. Instead, he uses the example of the painter who realizes a design according to his own ideas to show that the ancient philosophers were similarly painting themselves when imagining an indifferent God. His example is not only a harsh criticism of the philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle, but also gives us an explicit definition of what was meant when painters were said to paint themselves. Rather than a reproduction of their physical likeness in the form of a self-portrait, Savonarola thought of the incorporeal conceptions and ideas of their minds. Just as God is manifest in terrestrial matters without being identical to them, the artist also expresses himself when painting figures other than the human body. The term *concepto*, by which Savonarola addresses this capacity of the painter, was frequently used in artistic contexts and can be understood as a close relative of the more philosophical term *idea*. As an innate quality of the painter’s personal disposition, the *concepto* or *conchetto* describes the individual preferences of his mind that manifest themselves in the great variety of things produced by the painter who had become a godlike *artifex divinus*.<sup>61</sup> In painting various *phantasie* and *figure* the artists could rely on the authority of one of the most prolific authors in 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Only a few years before Savonarola delivered his sermon, Angelo Poliziano had claimed the right to express himself independently of the restrictive patterns of literary expression, represented by the writings of Cicero.<sup>62</sup> By gradually assuming a social status similar to the writers of the Renaissance, the painters of Florence demanded the same rights. This fact was known to Savonarola, infamous for his concerns about the increasing amount of licentious and self-indulgent paintings.<sup>63</sup>

60 Savonarola 1517, fol. 71v.

61 Cfr. Zöllner 1992, p. 143.

62 As cited in Godman 1998, p. 46: “Non exprimis (inquit aliquis) Ciceronem’. Quid tum? Non enim sum Cicero, me tamen (ut opinor) exprimo.” (“You do not write like Cicero, someone says. So what? I am not Cicero. Yet i do manage to express myself, I think.”) Poliziano’s urge for an individual style was expressed in a letter to Paolo Cortesi, datable in the years 1480–1490 and discussing the following of literary models.

63 Cfr. Steinberg 1977, esp. pp. 58 ff.

## Leonardo da Vinci and Paolo Pino on Automimesis

At approximately the same time that Savonarola observed a similarity between the painter and the concepts of his mind, Leonardo was equally interested in the relationship between a painter and his paintings.<sup>64</sup> In various passages of his vast corpus of manuscripts, he articulates his conviction that painters tend to paint figures which resemble themselves; like Savonarola, he relies partly on Aristotelian and Thomistic principles of causation to explain this phenomenon. His observations about the so-called automimesis, covering a period of time that ranges from the early 1490s up to the 1510s, were later published in the *Trattato della pittura*, a treatise on painting which influenced the entire field of European art theory.

Leonardo labeled the tendency of painters to produce unwitting self-portraits as their greatest defect.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to Savonarola, he understood this inclination of the artists not as an expression of their ideas or *concetti* but in a literal sense as a reflection of their own physical features. As he states in his writings, a painter with clumsy hands will paint similar hands in his works and any part of his body will resonate in the features of his figures.<sup>66</sup> According to Leonardo, this is especially apparent in the *aria* of a painting: The physiognomy of the painter reveals itself in the facial expressions of his figures, resulting in a great number of identical faces.<sup>67</sup> In short, every facet of a painting reflects the shortcomings or virtues of the external appearance of its painter. Furthermore, Leonardo extended his theory to include personality traits of the painter as well: the whole attitude and character of the painter are echoed in the gestures and movements of his pictorial compositions. If the painter were quick-witted, his figures would be of a similar

---

64 Leonardo's thoughts on automimesis have been thoroughly examined by Gombrich 1954, Kemp 1976, Zöllner 1992, Laurenza 2001, pp. 111–126, Zöllner 2005, and Zöllner 2009.

65 Leonardo (1995), p. 75.

66 Leonardo (1995), p. 74: "Dell'inganno che si riceve nel giudizio delle membra. Quel pittore che avrà goffe mani, le farà simili nelle sue opere, e così gl'interverrà in qualunque membro, se il lungo studio non glielo vieta. Adunque tu, pittore, guarda bene quella parte che hai più brutta nella tua persona, ed a quella col tuo studio fa buon riparo; imperocché se sarai bestiale, le tue figure parranno il simile, e senza ingegno, e similmente ogni parte di buono e di tristo che hai in te si dimostrerà in parte nelle tue figure."

67 Leonardo (1995), p. 109: "Del diversificare le arie de' volti nelle istorie. Comune difetto è ne' dipintori italici il riconoscersi l'aria e figura dell'operatore, mediante le molte figure da lui dipinte; onde, per fuggire tale errore, non sieno fatte, né replicate mai, né tutto, né parte delle figure, che un volto si veda nell'altro nell'istoria."

demeanour; if the painter were pious, his figures, with their short necks, would have a similar shape; and if he were maniacal, his paintings with their disoriented figures, would demonstrate a comparable quality.<sup>68</sup>

But Leonardo did not limit his studies of the matter to empirical observations alone. On the contrary, his scientific approach to the phenomenon resulted in a highly consistent theory which described involuntary self-portraiture as a complex interaction between the painter's soul, judgement, and body. The main points of his tripartite theory may be summarized briefly.

1) The soul is the governor of the body. As stated by Leonardo, the soul forms the human body by determining its growth and development according to its own likeness.<sup>69</sup> The external appearance of every single individual – its proportions, posture, and physiognomy – is therefore a mere manifestation of the incorporeal qualities of the soul. Far from being original, this theory was common knowledge during the Renaissance and had primarily been developed by Aristotle. In both his *De anima*<sup>70</sup> and his *Physiognomonica*<sup>71</sup>, he relies on the idea of the generative powers of the soul, in the latter work by interpreting physical features as a sign of certain ethical predispositions of the soul. In the Middle Ages, Albertus Magnus confirmed these assumptions in his influential *De animalibus*. When discussing the question whether a man's members are created successively or all at once, he links the diversity of the human body to the qualities of its individual soul: "Each member of an organic and animate body has an essential sharing with the soul,

---

68 Leonardo (1995), p. 75: "Del massimo difetto de' pittori. Sommo difetto è de' pittori replicare i medesimi moti e medesimi volti e maniere di panni di una medesima istoria, e fare la maggior parte de' volti che somigliano al loro maestro, la qual cosa mi ha molte volte dato ammirazione perché ne ho conosciuto alcuni che in tutte le loro figure pareva si fossero ritratti al naturale; ed in quelle si vede gli atti e i modi del loro fattore, e s'egli è pronto nel parlare e ne' moti, le sue figure sono il simile in prontitudine; e se il maestro è divoto, il simile paiono le figure co' loro colli torti; e se il maestro è da poco, le sue figure paiono la pigrizia ritratta al naturale; e se il maestro è sproporzionato, le figure sue son simili; e s'egli è pazzo, nelle sue istorie si dimostra largamente, le quali sono nemiche di conclusione, e non stanno attente alle loro operazioni, anzi, chi guarda in qua, chi in là come se sognassero: e così segue ciascun accidente in pittura il proprio accidente del pittore."

69 Leonardo (1995), p. 76.

70 Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 3, p. 69 (*De anima*, 412a21). For a discussion of the impact of *De anima* on the Cinquecento cfr. Salatowsky 2006, p. 157 and pp. 185–195.

71 The authorship of the *Physiognomonica* was not questioned until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and even today the discussion about whether Aristotle is to be identified as its author is not yet concluded, see Vogt 1999.

since one of the powers of the soul is its substantial form.”<sup>72</sup> Similar notions can be found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who condensed the scholastic presumptions in the long-lasting formula *Anima forma corporis*.<sup>73</sup>

Although familiar with Latin sources, Leonardo probably derived his ideas from Hieronymo Manfredi’s seminal *Liber de homine*, also known as *Libro del perché*.<sup>74</sup> Written in the vernacular and printed in 1474, it represents a simplified collection of Aristotelian and neoplatonic beliefs regarding the mysteries of the human body and was frequently republished in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. When Manfredi discusses the power of the soul under the title “Perche le passion de l’animo son casione de indure diversi accidenti et infirmità nei corpi”, he confirms its importance as a governor of the body:

“La maiestà divina ha posto l’anima, che è cosa immateriale, nei corpi a governare una cosa materiale. Halli dato uno instrumento obediente et ordinato a quella, mediante il quale lei habbia a regnere e governare il corpo e produca le operatione debite in esso. [...] Ne obsta che l’anima immateriale e questi spiriti siano corpi materiali, perché egli hanno una certa proprietà e qualità occulta e convenientia con l’anima, per comandamento de Dio ad obedirla e di movere in ciascun verso o luoco dove a lei piace. Unde noi vedemo che l’anima move un braccio in suxo mediante il spirito che è in esso brazo e move l’altro in zoso mediante il spirito che è in quello.”<sup>75</sup>

---

72 Albertus Magnus (1999), vol. 2, pp. 1179, 1408 (*De Animalibus*, XVI, 8). In his treatise *De anima* (see for instance II, I, 3 and II, IV, 12) Albertus is similarly interested in the question.

73 Thomas Aquinas (1984), p. 63: “And thus it follows that when the body is separated from the soul, the latter loses its individuation. In that case the soul could not subsist of itself nor be a particular thing. On the other hand, if the soul is individuated by itself, it is either a form in its entirety (simplex) or is something composed of matter and form. If it is a form in its entirety, it follows that one individuated soul could differ from another only according to form. But difference in form causes difference in species. Hence it would follow that the souls of different men are specifically diverse; and if the soul is the form of the body, men differ specifically among themselves, because each and every thing derives its species from its proper form. On the other hand, if the soul is composed of matter and form, it would be impossible for the soul as a whole to be the form of the body, for the matter of a thing never has the nature of a form.” For a summary of the medieval discussion of body and soul cfr. Miteva 2012 and specifically in connection to Leonardo Baader 2006, p. 118.

74 For a further discussion of Manfredi and authors such as Avicenna and Galen in relation to Leonardo see Laurenza 2001, pp. 103–110.

75 Manfredi 1474 (1988), pp. 170–171 (*De homine*, I, VII, 1).

As we shall see in the following sections, this power of the soul to move the different members of the human body was of utmost significance to Leonardo's theory of automimesis.

2) Judgement is a part of the soul. Leonardo believed the faculty of judgement, the *giudizio*, to be a part of the individual soul, residing in the central ventricle of the human brain. Data received through the sensory organs are first analysed in the *imprensiva* and then passed to the *senso comune*, the second ventricle, where it is valued and classified according to the individual's judgement. Depending on the given importance, the data are eventually stored in the last ventricle, the *memoria*. Because Leonardo considered judgement to be the central unit of artistic invention, this was of no small consequence for him. According to his theory, a painter is tempted to admire figures that resemble himself precisely because of his innate predilection for forms that correspond to his own soul,<sup>76</sup> a principle that Renaissance humanists described as *convenientia* or *aedequatio*.<sup>77</sup>

3) Judgement determines the movements of the hand. Leonardo thought the soul to be connected to the body by means of the *spirito*, an ethereal substance believed to consist of the most refined parts of the blood and to pervade the entire human body. Because nerves, muscles, and bones underly its powers, the soul is in full possession of the mental and physical properties of a person. Further, just as described by Manfredi in his *Liber de homine*, the spiritual movements of the soul are able to reposition the members of its body, moving the painter's hand here

---

76 Leonardo (1995), p. 77: "[...] perché l'anima, maestra del tuo corpo, è quella che è il tuo proprio giudizio, e volentieri si diletta nelle opere simili a quella che essa operò nel comporre del suo corpo: e di qui nasce che non è sì brutta figura di femmina, che non trovi qualche amante, se già non fosse mostruosa." Cfr. Kemp 1976, p. 315.

77 This principle, also apparent in the proverb *Ogni simile appetisce il suo simile*, is already described in the *Rhetoric* by Aristotle, which was published in *volgare* in Florence in 1549. Aristotle (1549), p. 63: "Et perche egli è piacevole tutto quello, che è naturale, essendo le cose dei parenti naturali inverso l'un dell'altro, però tutte le parentele, & tutte le similitudini ci dan' piacere il piu delle volte, sicome fa l'huomo all'altro huomo, & il cavallo al cavallo, & il giovane al giovane; La onde è il Proverbio Che il simile appetisce il simile. Et che al simile il simile sempre è amico. Et che la fiera conosce la fiera. Et che la cornacchia sta con la cornacchia, & altre cose simiglianti. Ma perche tutto quello, che ci è simile, & che ci è congiunto per parentado, ci arreca piacere, essendo queste due conditioni in ciaschedun' huomo, massimamente inverso di se medesimo, per necessità si conchiude, che tutti gli huomini sieno di loro stessi amatori ò piu, ò meno, perche le cose dette disopra sono massimamente in se stesso. Et perche chiascheduno ama se medesimo, però tutte le cose, che da noi stessi dependono, di necessità ci arcan' piacere, come sono l'attioni, & i ragionamenti."

and there. By doing so, the soul reproduces the patterns and forms that are most convenient, i.e., most identical, to itself, and patterns that are in accordance with its judgement will be stored in the easily accessible *memoria*.<sup>78</sup>

Having thoroughly analysed the causes of its coming into being, Leonardo was also able to propose a remedy for automimesis. His advice to the painters, articulated in his *Trattato della pittura*, aimed at manipulating or training the painter's faculty of judgement. Through the continuous examination of figures that were commonly believed to be beautiful, it was possible to overwrite the preexistent, individual preferences.<sup>79</sup>

Obviously, this practice was only necessary for those painters who did not conform to the contemporary ideals of beauty. According to Leonardo's theory of the soul, a painter with disproportionate members would only paint misfigured paintings, whereas a beautiful artist would produce beautiful and harmonious works of art. The first step of his therapy against involuntary self-portraiture consisted therefore of the advice to refer to certain prototypes with good proportions when composing paintings. Used as exemplary models, they help the painter overcome his habit of reproducing figures similar to himself. In a second step, the painter can compare his own body to the proportions of the exemplary model. By noting differences and gaining a more conscious perception of his own corporeal shortcomings, the artist becomes more attentive when imitating his own features involuntarily in his works.<sup>80</sup> According to Leonardo, the same method should be applied to guarantee a great variety of physiognomies. By choosing *arie* from

---

78 Leonardo (1995), p. 76: “[...] mi pare che sia da giudicare che quell’anima che regge e governa ciascun corpo si è quella che fa il nostro giudizio innanzi sia il proprio giudizio nostro. Adunque essa ha condotto tutta la figura dell’uomo, come essa ha giudicato quello star bene, o col naso lungo, o corto, o camuso, e così gli affermò la sua altezza e figura. Ed è di tanta potenza questo tal giudizio, ch’egli muove le braccia al pittore e gli fa replicare se medesimo, parendo ad essa anima che quello sia il suo modo di figurare l’uomo, e chi non fa come lei faccia errore.” For Leonardo’s use of *memoria* see Kwakkelstein 2012, p. 175.

79 Cfr. Zöllner 1992, pp. 144 f. and Zöllner 2009, p. 54.

80 Leonardo (1995), pp. 76 f.: “Precetto, che il pittore non s’inganni nell’elezione della figura in che esso fa l’abito. Deve il pittore fare la sua figura sopra la regola d’un corpo naturale, il quale comunemente sia di proporzione laudabile; oltre di questo far misurare se medesimo e vedere in che parte la sua persona varia assai o poco da quella antedetta laudabile; e, avuta questa notizia, deve riparare con tutto il suo studio di non incorrere ne’ medesimi mancamenti nelle figure da lui operate, che nella persona sua si trovano.”

beautiful faces, the artist could avoid painting faces that are similar to his own physiognomy.<sup>81</sup>

As has been noted by Frank Zöllner, Leonardo's fight against automimesis is closely connected with his conception of painting as a scientific tool. The exact representation of natural objects demonstrates his will to establish an art that is free from individual preferences. By using mathematical methods of measuring and applying a universal canon of proportions, he abandoned subjective ideals in favor of rational criteria and objective principles. Although he was later somewhat more critical towards this mathematical approach when discussing the *ingegno* of the artist,<sup>82</sup> some of his drawings confirm his obsession with ultimately valid formulae. The most famous of these drawings is the so-called *Homo vitruvianus* (Fig. 2), a pictorial interpretation of a famous passage written by Vitruvius in his *De architectura*, the only surviving treatise on architecture from antiquity. According to the Roman architect, the proportions of a human body are most perfect if fit to both a square and a sphere.<sup>83</sup> Drawn in the years around 1490, Leonardo's study thus coincides with his theoretical consideration of unwitting self-portraiture and may well have been seen as a practical solution to the problem of automimesis. The *Homo vitruvianus* serves as an *exemplum proportionis*, allowing the painter to overcome his habit of reproducing his own corporeal faults in his paintings by constantly referring to ideal measures.<sup>84</sup>

Leonardo's ideas became important to other artists as well. As has been stated earlier, his *Trattato della pittura*, mainly compiled by Francesco Melzi, Leonardo's heir and one of his students, had a huge influence on early modern art

---

81 Leonardo (1995), p. 88: "Della elezione de' bei visi. Parmi non piccola grazia quella di quel pittore, il quale fa buone arie alle sue figure. La qual grazia chi non l'ha per natura la può pigliare per accidentale studio in questa forma. Guarda a tôrre le parti buone di molti visi belli, le quali belle parti sieno conformi più per pubblica fama che per tuo giudizio; perché ti potresti ingannare togliendo visi che avessero conformità col tuo; perché spesso pare che simili conformità ci piacciono, e se tu fossi brutto eleggeresti visi non belli, e faresti brutti visi, come molti pittori, ché spesso le figure somigliano al maestro; sicché piglia le bellezze, come ti dico, e quelle metti in mente."

82 Leonardo (1995), pp. 197f.: "Delle prime quattro parti che si richiedono alla figura. L'attitudine è la prima parte più nobile della figura; non che la buona figura dipinta in trista attitudine abbia disgrazia, ma la viva in somma bontà di bellezza perde di riputazione, quando gli atti suoi non sono accomodati all'ufficio ch'essi hanno a fare. Senza alcun dubbio essa attitudine è di maggiore speculazione che non è la bontà in sé della figura dipinta; conciossiaché tale bontà di figura si possa fare per imitazione della viva, ma il movimento di tal figura bisogna che nasca da grande discrezione d'ingegno; la seconda parte nobile è l'aver rilievo; la terza è il buon disegno; la quarta il bel colorito."

83 Vitruvius (1964), pp. 136–143 (*De architectura*, III, I, 1–7).

84 Zöllner 2009, pp. 54–57.



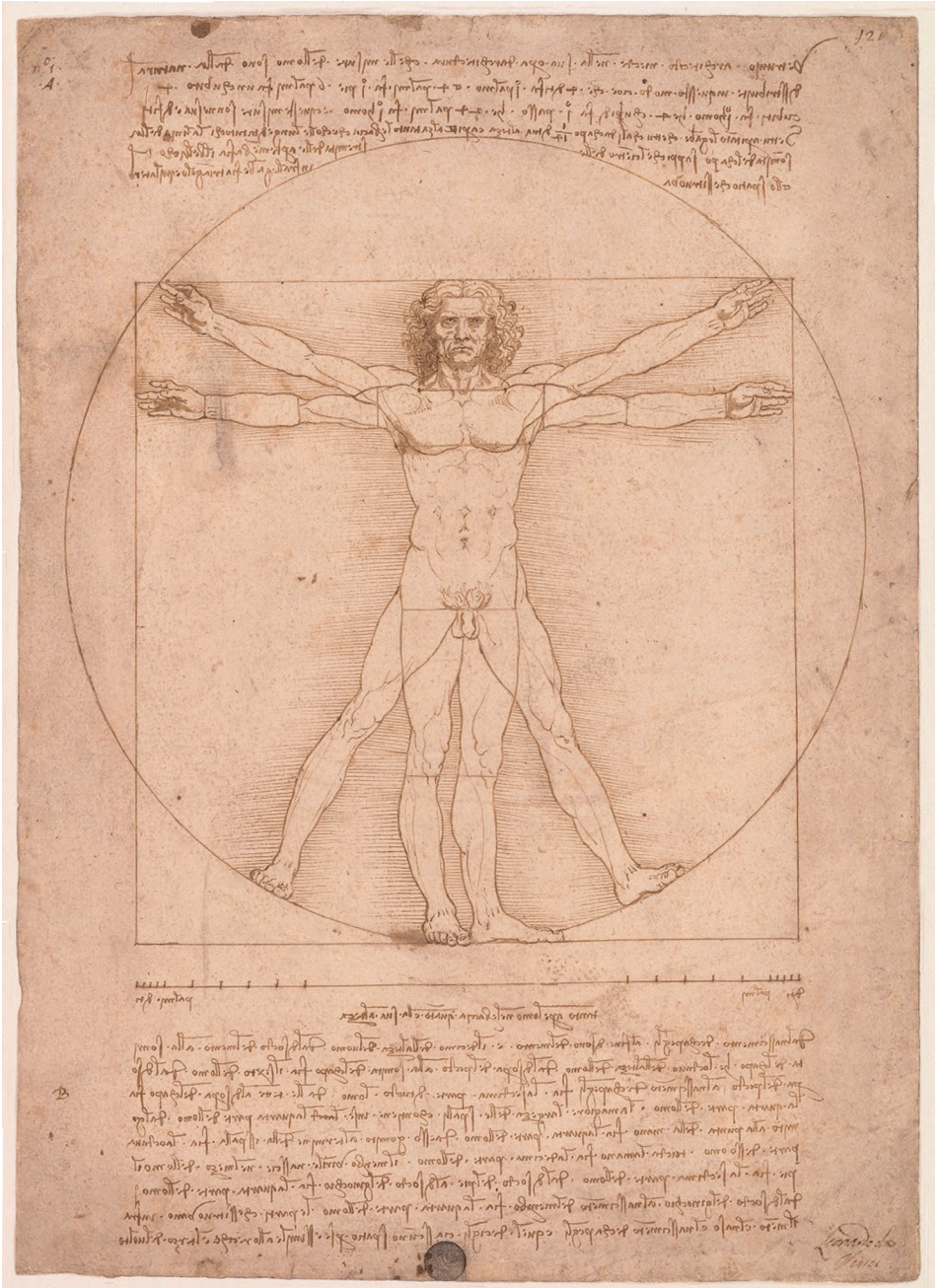


Figure 2 Leonardo da Vinci, Homo vitruvianus, ca. 1490, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia

theory. This is not only true for the time after the first edition of his treatise was printed in 1651, but also for the preceding years. Especially in the decades following Leonardo's death in 1519, his writings were paid close attention. Abridged versions of his manuscripts, as well as copies of his unfinished *Trattato della pittura*, were circulating, allowing art theorists like Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo and Raffaele Borghini to incorporate his material into their own books. And because our modern ideas of authorship only vaguely applied to the standards of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the source of their inspiration was seldomly declared.<sup>85</sup>

Paolo Pino's *Dialogo di pittura* confirms these observations about original authorship. His treatise, printed in 1548, draws heavily on ideas that bear a strong resemblance to the work of Leonardo.<sup>86</sup> Not only does the Venetian painter and art theorist despise the recurrent use of identical figures according to the widely-accepted principles of *varietà* (see Chapter 3.2),<sup>87</sup> but he also suggests a method of selective imitation to achieve a generally accepted form of beauty.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, he confirms Leonardo's singular observation that painters tend to reproduce their own physical features in their figures. Just as Leonardo did, he relies on the principle of *aedquatio* or *convenientia* to explain this phenomenon.<sup>89</sup> Because every creature will be attracted by forms similar to itself, small painters or painters with a malformed stature will repeat their own corporeal shortcomings in their paintings.<sup>90</sup> And when discussing the precepts for being a good artist in the last part of his *Dialogo*, Pino similarly addresses the *Homo vitruvianus*. As a remedy against unwitting self-portraiture it is best if the painter has Vitruvian proportions, which would allow him to paint perfect figures by simply taking himself as an example. However, as noted by Paola Barocchi,<sup>91</sup> Pino's passage on automimesis also

---

85 Farago 2009, pp. 1, 31.

86 Cfr. for other borrowings Dubus 2011, pp. 17–24.

87 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 115.

88 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), pp. 98–99.

89 Pino evokes these principles by referring to the proverb *Ogni simile appetisce il suo simile*, already cited by Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, I, XI, 26) and i.a. used by Boccaccio in his *Corbaccio*. It is also included in Orlando Pescetti's *Proverbi italiani*, published in Verona 1598. An overview of its different usages and other examples can be found in *Thesaurus proverborum medii aevi*, edited by Ricarda Liver, Berlin 1997 ff., vol. 5, pp. 39 ff.

90 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 133: "E perché si vede espresso che tutte le creature appetiscono il loro simile, non fa al preposito ch'il pittore sia di statura picciola o difforme, che potrebbe di facile incorrer nelli propii errori, dipignendo le figure nane e mostruose; et anco, molti di loro sono inconsiderati e troppo veementi. Non sia grande in estremo, assai delli quali sono sgraziati, pigri et inscipidi; ma sia il pittore nella porzione che già v'ho descritta secondo Vitruvio, ch'averà più facile adito di formare le figure perfette, traendo l'esempio di sé stesso."

91 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 426.

shows a strong dissimilarity to Leonardo's theory: Whereas the latter develops a method to overcome this vice through continuous studies, Pino is convinced of an unchangeable relationship between the painter and his figures, a belief confirmed by other paragraphs in his treatise.<sup>92</sup> Although it is difficult to determine the source of Paolo Pino's knowledge of Leonardo's thoughts, his treatise can nevertheless serve as evidence for the observation that Leonardo's written work and his anatomical drawings were perceived as a unity. By associating Leonardo's theory of automimesis with his Vitruvian studies, Pino underscored the idea that Leonardo's scientific activities reciprocally illuminated each other.

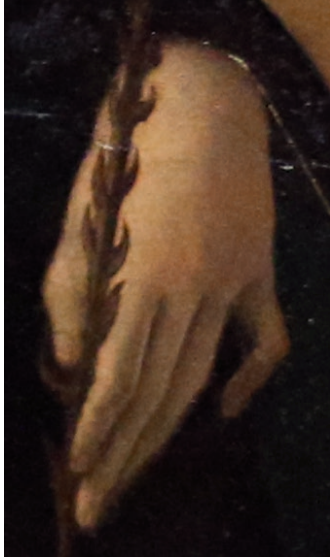
Nonetheless, Leonardo's own work was not free from frequently re-used prototypes that seem to contradict his own strategies against automimesis. Although the preparatory drawings for the *Burlington House Cartoon* and his grotesque heads demonstrate his will to escape repetitive patterns by frequently redrawing lines and thus changing the established forms of composition, many of his works do show a certain bias for a traditional artistic vocabulary.<sup>93</sup> Strong resemblances to pictorial compositions from artists such as Fra Angelico or Sandro Botticelli illustrate the fact that certain aesthetic formulae were stronger than his will to accurately imitate nature. Of course, this tendency was also due to the constant drawing practice when he was a young student in the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio. Like every other apprentice, Leonardo was not only compelled to copy famous works of art that were available to him in Florence, but also obliged to imitate the patterns and types used by his master. These studies, realized when he was of a tender age, occasionally influenced his work for the rest of his life.<sup>94</sup> This is the case, for instance, with the left hand of the archangel Gabriel in his Florentine *Annunciation*, datable to the years 1472–1473 (Fig. 3). Its elongated form, as well as the exceptional position of the little finger, closely corresponds to an ideal that was often used in compositions made by Verrocchio – for example in the so-called *Madonna di piazza*, preserved in Pistoia (Fig. 4). In addition to the use of patterns in his paintings, often recycled for economic reasons, his drawings show strong resemblances to his master's drawing technique as well. This is apparent, for example, in the studies of a child executed by Leonardo around 1506 (Fig. 5). Thirty years after he left Verrocchio's studio, his use of contours still bears strong connections to similar drawings made by his master (Fig. 6). Even if we ignore the similarity of the subject matter, the similar use of technique is espe-

---

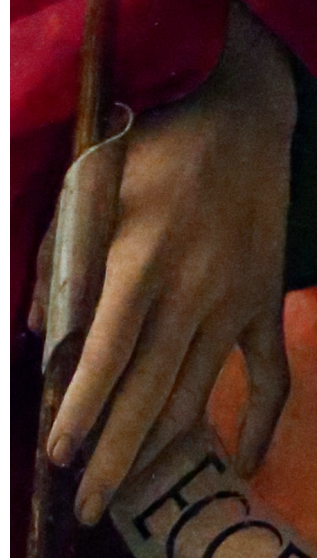
92 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 132.

93 For a discussion of Leonardo's grotesque heads in relation to his fight against automimesis cfr. Gombrich 1954 and Zöllner 1992, pp. 145–149.

94 Various examples of Leonardo's employment of traditional aesthetic formulae and patterns have been discussed by Kwakkelstein 2012.



**Figure 3** Leonardo da Vinci, *Annunciation* (detail), ca. 1472–1473, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi



**Figure 4** Andrea del Verrocchio and Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna di Piazza* (detail), ca. 1474–1486, Pistoia, Cattedrale di San Zeno



**Figure 5** Leonardo da Vinci, *Studies of an Infant*, ca. 1504–1508, Windsor, Royal Collection



Figure 6 Andrea del Verrocchio, Studies of an Infant, ca. 1470, Paris, Musée du Louvre

cially apparent in the charcoal sketch on the right of Leonardo's sheet: his use of outlines is prefigured in the concise movements of his master's pen.<sup>95</sup> Because Leonardo understands his studies to be an empirical instrument which allows him to capture all kinds of natural objects, Verrocchio's influence on his drawing pen must have been more than unsatisfactory to Leonardo. It is against the background of these inherited properties of his artistic ancestor that he consequently expressed concerns about artistic mimicry, believing that a painter should never imitate another's manner, because he will be called a grandson rather than a son of nature.<sup>96</sup>

Leonardo's re-use of patterns and ideals is not just restricted to the works of other painters; more often he turned to his own works. When composing new paintings, he frequently draws on formulae that he has developed and refined during the course of his artistic career. This practice is especially notable for the so-called nutcracker head, an idealized head of an old man with a shaved chin, strong eyebrows, and a sharp nose (Figs. 7–8).<sup>97</sup> A similar case is the head of a beautiful youth with female features, modelled upon the statue of the *David* by Verrocchio and later assuming the physiognomy of his preferred student Salai (Fig. 9). Both head types were used as basic models for his further explorations in the diversity of man, appearing in compositions such as the *Adoration of the Magi* or the *Virgin of the Rocks*. This habit of Leonardo's did not go unnoticed during his time, it was criticized by contemporaries. Gaspare Visconti, for example, a poet at the Milanese court, expressed his concerns about Leonardo's repetitive patterns in a sonnet for Bianca Maria Sforza written around 1498.<sup>98</sup>

Despite his own attentive study of nature and his theoretical remarks, Leonardo probably never intended to abandon his beloved patterns and ideals. As the condensed result of his scientific studies and drawings, they represented some

---

95 For a discussion of Leonardo's drawing practice in relation to Verrocchio cfr. Bambach 1999, pp. 82–83.

96 Leonardo (1995), p. 66: "Dell'imitare pittori. Dico ai pittori che mai nessuno deve imitare la maniera dell'altro, perché sarà detto nipote e non figliuolo della natura; perché, essendo le cose naturali in tanta larga abbondanza, piuttosto si deve ricorrere ad essa natura che ai maestri, che da quella hanno imparato. E questo dico non per quelli che desiderano mediante quella pervenire a ricchezze, ma per quelli che di tal arte desiderano fama e onore."

97 See also Clark 1939, p. 67 and Reißer 1997, pp. 286 ff.

98 As cited in Zöllner 1992, p. 147: "Un depentor fu già che non sapea desegnare altra cosa che un cupresso, per quel che Orazio nei suoi versi ha messo dove insegnar poetica intendea. Un n'hanno questi tempi che in la idea tien ferma sì la effigie di se stesso, che'altrui pinger volendo, accade spesso che non colui ma se medesimo crea. E non solo il suo volto, ch'è pur bello secondo lui, ma in l'arte sua suprema gli acti e' suoi modi forma col penello."



**Figure 7** Leonardo da Vinci, Profile Head of an Old Man (detail), ca. 1490, Windsor, Royal Collection



**Figure 8** Leonardo da Vinci, Profile Head of an Old Man (detail), ca. 1493, Windsor, Royal Collection



**Figure 9** Leonardo da Vinci, Profile Head of a Youth (detail), ca. 1511–1513, Windsor, Royal Collection

sort of an aesthetic ideal that was stored in the painter's *memoria*. It comes as no surprise, then, that he kept his drawings as vivid evidence and referred to them as his assistants and teachers ("adiutori e maestri").<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, Leonardo's theory and practice can also be seen as an urge to emancipate himself from the tradition of the medieval pattern book and its stereotypical representations. It is precisely because of this unprecedented perfection in naturalism, beauty, and expression that Vasari deemed it proper to initiate the third and last section of his *Vite*, the part dealing with the modern artists, with Leonardo.<sup>100</sup>

### The Proverb in Popular Culture

Leonardo's concerns and Savonarola's sermons were not the only reason that the scholastic principles of causation turned into the widely-used proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*. In non-art-historical writing, the proverb was mainly used in a metaphorical sense. Antonio Francesco Doni,<sup>101</sup> Matteo Franco,<sup>102</sup> and Giovan Maria Cecchi<sup>103</sup> employed it to describe the unchangeable habits of a person, interpreting it in an ethically accentuated manner. As Piero Fanfani later wrote in his *Vocabolario dell'uso toscano*, it was meant to indicate the attitude of a person who criticizes a certain behaviour although it is manifest in the criticizing person it-

99 Leonardo (1995), p. 104.

100 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 11: "Ma lo errore di costoro [the painters of the seconda età] dimostrarono poi chiaramente le opere di Lionardo da Vinci, il quale dando principio a quella terza maniera che noi vogliamo chiamare la moderna, oltre la gagliardezza e bravezza del disegno, et oltre il contraffare sottilissimamente tutte le minuzie della natura così appunto come elle sono, con buona regola, miglior ordine, retta misura, disegno perfetto e grazia divina, abbondantissimo di copie e profondissimo di arte, dette veramente alle sue figure il moto et il fiato."

101 Doni 1551, fol. 30v: "E si vuol dire che ogni pittor dipinge sè, & che ogni simile apertisce il suo simile: ma se non ci solle che ogni regola patisce eccezione; si potrebbe dire che questo huomo galante [Basilio Berta Rossa] havesse trovato il suo Genio havendo tradotta La Maccheronea in ottava rima."

102 Franco (1933), p. 24: "Sa' tu di quel ch'io ghigno? Ch'ogni pittor sempre dipigne se: peto petuzzo, or su, dividiam te."

103 Cecchi (1855), p. 167: "Questi giovani / Si voglion contrapporre a questi vecchi / Per parer savii, ma i' credo lor poco; / Perché la medicina vuol scienza / E pratica; de l' una i' non m'intendo / se è n'hanno, o no; ma quanto della pratica, / La ragion vuol che ne sia più ne' vecchi. / Basta che per parer d'assai, egli ha, / Sentendo far alberazione al polso, / Battezzatolo amore; or fa tuo conto, / Il dipintor suol dipigner sé stesso. / O guarda valent' uomo! Il mal che v' è / È non lo trova, e n'ha sognat' un altro, / Che v'è, ti so dir, presso a mille miglia. / O poveri ammalati!" A note by the editor says: "Proverbio, che parmi significhi: chi senza buon fondamento attribuisce agli altri passioni o vizii, mostra di avere egli stesso quei tali vizii o passioni."



self.<sup>104</sup> This pattern of behaviour is present in both Leonardo's and Savonarola's statements. Modern psychologists would call it projection: the accuser portrays others as he sees himself, thus giving a true image of himself just as a painter expresses himself in his works.<sup>105</sup> This popular meaning of the proverb most probably derived from a dictum that was circulating at the court of the Medici in the time of Cosimo the Elder. In fact, one of the earliest sources for the saying directly attributes it to Cosimo:

“Diceva Cosmo che si dimenticano prima cento benefici, che una ingiuria. E chi ingiuria non perdona mai. E che ogni dipintore dipigne se.”<sup>106</sup>

As Frank Zöllner has argued, Cosimo's observation “elucidates the general human inclination always to remember the bad and to forget the good.” Like the offender who is unable to forgive, it is an inevitable weakness of the human character which is again illustrated by the proverb that every painter paints himself.<sup>107</sup> By matching scholastic principles with proverbs that were popular in Florence, Savonarola might well have contributed to the divulgation of Cosimo's saying. However, it is also possible to read Cosimo's thoughts as representing three distinct and autonomous observations. Although appearing under the same paragraph, they are only loosely connected and could have been used independently. Such a reading would conform to the meaning of the proverb as illustrating the unchangeable habit of painters to re-use a certain set of drawn formulae or to employ a stereotypical manner of working. Because the common denominator of all three sentences is the human capacity to remember, Cosimo might refer to the painter's *memoria*, which is employed to re-organize patterns of creation when making new pictures.

Cosimo's dictum is passed down to us as part of a compilation of *detti piacevoli*, droll Florentine stories and anecdotes, that were collected at the court of the Medici, presumably in the years between 1477 and 1482. Once attributed to Angelo Poliziano but now believed to be from the hand of various anonymous authors, this collection was edited and enlarged by the humanist and polymath Lodovico Domenichi, who published it in 1548 under the title *Facetie et motti arguti di alcuni eccellentissimi ingegni, et nobilissimi signori*.<sup>108</sup> Because the original manu-

104 Fanfani 1863, vol. 2, p. 729: “Ogni pittore dipinge sè. Dicesi quando uno ci tratta men che bene, o giudica mal di noi, significandogli che quel difetto che ci rimprovera è l'ha lui.”

105 Sohm 2007, p. 41.

106 Domenichi 1548, fol. 20r.

107 Zöllner 1992, p. 139.

108 For a critical discussion of Poliziano's authorship see Bowen 1994.

script of this so-called *bel libretto* has been lost, Domenichi's edition is the only surviving source for the attribution of the proverb to Cosimo. Later editions from the years 1565, 1581, or 1588 not only reveal a stable interest in the genre of the joke book during the Renaissance<sup>109</sup>, but sometimes provide us with a commentary on the single *detto piacevole* from the hand of Domenichi as well. In the 1564 edition, for example, he reprints Cosimo's remarks with a significant observation of his own in italics:

“Diceva Cosmo; che si dimenticano prima cento benefici, che vna ingiuria; & chi ingiuria, non perdona mai: & che ogni dipintore dipinge se. *Intendeva per lo piu, ma non d'ogniuno.*”<sup>110</sup>

Domenichi's interesting comment shows us that he is rather more concerned with the activities of the painters than with the human capacity to recall or the ethical traits of those who insult others. By grammatically referring to the last part of the tripartite sentence, he not only underscores the increasing popularity of Cosimo's dictum but also gives us an idea of the variety of meanings associated with the proverb. Somewhere in the years between 1548 (the first edition of the *Facetie et motti*) and 1564 (the second edition cited above) Domenichi must thus have felt the urge to specify the meaning of the notion by reducing its semantic flexibility. He no longer thinks of an entirety of painters who paint themselves, but limits this habit to a smaller group of artists. This confinement gives him the opportunity to allocate an entirely new meaning to the proverb. Rather than thinking about the individual *maniera* of an artist or his personal reflection in a neoplatonic sense, which would include every painter, he seems to refer to painters who paint self-portraits. And indeed, if we look at artists who painted themselves around the 1550s, we cannot help but observe a certain relevance of this genre. Still a relatively new fashion at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the production of paintings that showed the artist's face and body had reached its first peak by the time Domenichi published the subsequent editions of his *Facetie et motti*. Compared to the few (and mainly non-autonomous) self-portraits that were painted in the time of Marsilio Ficino, this remarkable increase explains why Domenichi preferred a physiognomic interpretation of Cosimo's dictum. The habit of painters to represent themselves confidently in poses that were previously considered the privilege of an aristocratic and monetary elite must have left its mark on the perception of the proverb.<sup>111</sup>

109 See for instance Barolsky 1978, p. 18.

110 Domenichi 1564, p. 143, italics by the original author.

111 For the history of the self-portrait in Renaissance Italy see Woods-Marsden 1998.

But self-portraiture was not the only cultural phenomenon that led to Domenico's explanatory comment. Giorgio Vasari's seminal *Vite*, published two years after the first edition of the *Facetie et motti* in 1550, constitutes another source for the changing interpretation of the proverb. Apart from Vasari's continuous analogization of the artist's body, character, and work in his biographies (see Chapter 4), he also records the saying in a particularly humorous form when giving examples of Michelangelo's quick-wittedness. When he was shown a painting in which a bull was most skillfully painted, the Florentine artist is supposed to have said that every painter portrays himself well:

“Aveva non so che pittore [fatto] un'opera, dove era un bue che stava meglio delle altre cose; fu dimandato [Michelangelo] perché il pittore aveva fatto più vivo quello che l'altre cose; disse: 'Ogni pittore ritrae sé medesimo bene'.”<sup>112</sup>

Michelangelo's play on words is a typical example for his well-known use of homonyms when formulating witty yet harsh criticisms. By replacing the traditional signifier of the reflexive pronoun with the now fashionable habit of painters to paint their physical likenesses, he interprets the proverb in a literal way as unwitting self-portraiture: The dumb bull reflects the qualities of its painter. This is also shown by Michelangelo's drawing on a technical term which was used exclusively in connection with the physical appearance of a person. Whereas the verb *protrahere* (lit. to pull out, to portray) was meant to indicate the pictorial representation of one's body *and* soul, *ritrarre* was merely understood as the production of a corporeal likeness without necessarily taking note of the ethical traits of a person.<sup>113</sup> It thus represented a less distinguished form of portraiture that was likely to be associated with the depiction of impotent animals.

Georg Satzinger has shown that Michelangelo's remark was indeed more than just a witty joke.<sup>114</sup> Probably inspired by Pliny's description of a foreshortened bull from the hand of the Greek painter Pausias,<sup>115</sup> Renaissance artists began to include elaborately contorted animals in their paintings as well. Intended as a

112 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, p. 280.

113 Cfr. Weppelmann 2011, p. 64.

114 Satzinger 2003, p. 112.

115 Pliny (1938–1963), vol. 9, p. 353–355: “He [Pausias] first invented a method of painting which has afterwards been copied by many people but equalled by no one; the chief point was that although he wanted to show the long body of an ox he painted the animal facing the spectator and not standing sideways, and its great size is fully conveyed. Next, whereas all painters ordinarily execute in light colour the parts they wish to appear prominent and in dark those they wish to keep less obvious, this artist has made the whole ox of a black colour and has given substance to the shadow from the shadow

demonstration of their technical skills, these animals sometimes resembled distorted figures and were identified as a selfish form of ostentatiousness. By making fun of these accurate representations, Michelangelo underscores the principles of his own art. His representations of the human body were more concerned with the individual judgement of the artist than with the application of geometrical methods. In the eyes of the *divino artista*, imitating classical antiquity and blindly following the strict rules of perspective was thus considered to be nothing more than a laborious, hardly intelligent activity. Not surprisingly, as Vasari would have put it, the restricted capacity of the minds of artists who followed this fashion had to express themselves in the depiction of animals with the same characteristics.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, Vasari modelled Michelangelo's remark upon a famous aphorism by the Greek philosopher Xenophanes.<sup>117</sup> Concerned with the question of whether humans are able to imagine the true appearance of deities, he writes that every image of a god always bears a resemblance to its creator. Ethiopians, he says, picture their Gods as snub-nosed and black, Thracians as blue-eyed and blonde. But his most telling example is taken from the animal kingdom: if bulls or horses or lions were capable of building statues, they would make images of deities that look like bulls or horses or lions.<sup>118</sup> Later the painter Salvator Rosa would recycle this joke when criticising genre painters, whose work was traditionally held in low esteem, in his *Satire*: "Altri studiano a far sol animali e, senza mirirarsi entro a gli specchi, si ritraggono giusti e naturali."<sup>119</sup>

---

itself, with quite remarkable skill that shows the shapes standing out on a level surface and a uniform solidity on a broken ground." (*Historia naturalis*, XXXV, 126).

116 See, for example, his characterisation of the artists of the middle-ages, Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 3, p. 201: "Gli scultori che noi abbiamo chiamati vecchi ma non antichi, sbigottiti dalle molte difficoltà della arte, conducevano le figure loro sì mal composte di artificio e di bellezza, che, o di metallo o di marmo che elle si fussino, altro non erano però che tonde, sì come avevano essi ancora tondi gli spiriti e gli ingegni stupidi e grossi: e nasceva tutto da questo, che ritraendosi esprimevano se medesimi, e se medesimi assomigliavano."

117 Zöllner 2005, p. 145.

118 Xenophanes as cited in Diels 1903, p. 54: "But if bulls and horses and lions had hands and could paint, and thus create pictures such as men do, then the horses in drawing their Gods would draw horses; and bulls would give us pictures and statues of bulls; and therefore each would make their bodies of such a sort as the form they themselves have." This famous observation by Xenophanes is cited by Clement of Alexandria, who discussed it in his *Stromata*. They were first printed by P. Victorius in Florence in 1550, who used a manuscript from the 11<sup>th</sup> century that had survived in the Bibliotheca Laurenziana. Xenophanes' aphorism also features prominently in Vincenzo Cartaris' *Imagini dei Dei degli antichi*, widely read in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

119 Rosa 1664 (1995), p. 103.

## 2.4 The Appreciation of Personal Style

As has been frequently noted, the birth of the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century coincides with the rise of appreciation of individual expression in art.<sup>120</sup> Before turning to the art theory of the Cinquecento, it might thus prove useful to remember the long and winding road that painters had to travel until they were finally granted the right to develop individual forms of expression. This historical reconstruction of the process of artistic emancipation can be done by taking a look at the naive idea of authorship without an author, as articulated by Angelo Decembrio in his *De politia litteraria* through the words of his mouth-piece Leonello d'Este. Two divergent models of pictorial representation become apparent if one analyses Decembrio's acquaintance with mathematical models of imitation: On one hand, the exact reproduction of natural objects (and the exclusion of individuality); on the other, the artistic improvement of natural objects (and consequentially the appreciation of individuality).

### Art without Personal Expression

An early example of the problematic relationship between individual expression and the imitation of nature can be found in a text by the humanist Angelo Decembrio. Written shortly after 1450 at the Ferrarese court, his *De politia litteraria* shows that personal style was not always conceived as a positive facet of painting. Leonello d'Este, duke of Ferrara, is the main character in Decembrio's short discussion of artistic issues in his otherwise political treatise. Disappointed by differences between two of his portraits, made by Pisanello and Jacopo Bellini, the duke accuses the painters of having insufficient artistic skill.<sup>121</sup> In contrast to the artists of antiquity who helped each other by correcting each others' works, Pisanello and Bellini would have been motivated by rivalry, which resulted in the different renderings of his physiognomy. The one represented it as more slender, while the other captured it as paler.<sup>122</sup>

---

120 Gutkind 1938, p. 234; Chastel 1959, pp. 102–105; Klein 1961, p. 105, Arasse 1997, pp. 7–9.

121 For the competition between Pisanello and Bellini at the court of Leonello d'Este see Gramaccini 1982.

122 As cited in Baxandall 1963, p. 315: "Erat autem optima priscorum tempestate de pictoribus poetisque eadem fere laus et munificentia. Ipsi uicissim artifices opera sua demonstrantes emendabant. quos nunc mutua nouimus aemulatione lacessiri. Meministis nuper pisanum. Venetumque optimus aeuī nostri pictores in mei uultus descriptione uarie dissensisse. cum alter macilentiam candori meo uehementiorem adiecerit. alter pallidiorem tamen licet non graciliorem uultum effingeret."

Leonello's remarks on his effigies are embedded in a general discussion of the arts, in which he compares the artistic narrowness of painting to the superior mimetic powers of poetry. Whereas poets are able to generate an unlimited amount of ideas because of their individual *ingenium*, painters would be limited by the pre-existent objects of nature.<sup>123</sup> To illustrate his view that painters are bound to represent physical objects as exactly as possible, he repeatedly cites examples from classical literature. For instance, he refers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and mentions the subtlety of the net of Vulcan: A painter would never be able to represent Vulcan's net as it had been described by Ovid with words.<sup>124</sup> The distinction between the superior *ingenium* of poets on the one hand, and the inferior *ars* of artists on the other hand, constitutes the basis for Leonello's criticism of the painters working at his court. To him, the different traits of his portraits are not a demonstration of artistic inventiveness but of a lack of manual dexterity. If both artists were to imitate the same identical model, the result of their efforts must have been two identical portraits. According to Leonello this did not happen because Pisanello and Bellini were not following the example of ancient artists, who improved and corrected their works reciprocally.

It is uncertain which ancient artists Leonello meant when discussing his portraits. Michael Baxandall suggests Pliny's account of Apelles and the cobbler is a source for Angelo Decembrio's discussion of artistic improvement.<sup>125</sup> Although Pliny's anecdote does contain the theme of correction, it lacks the important theme of stylistical similarity. Another account of two artists, described in the *Bibliotheca historica* by Diodorus Siculus, seems more fitting. This work, written in the first century BCE, relates the story of two sculptors, Theodorus and Telekles. When given the task to build a statue of the God Apollo, they decided to divide their work for economic reasons. While Theodorus executed his part of the statue in Ephesos, his brother Telekles executed the other half of the statue on the island Samos. When the parts were finished and assembled, the statue of Apollo appeared perfect: Both parts fitted together so perfectly that they were thought to have been made by a single sculptor.<sup>126</sup> According to Diodorus, this was only possible because each brother applied the same system of proportions to his part.

---

123 Baxandall 1963, pp. 304–309, and Witten 2002, pp. 107–109.

124 Baxandall 1963, p. 323. The representation of Vulcan's net became one of the iconographic themes that artists of the Cinquecento used when wanting to demonstrate their equality with the *ingenium* of the poets.

125 Baxandall 1963, p. 315, referring to *Historia naturalis*, XXXV, 79–88.

126 Diodorus Siculus (1476), fol. 33: "Sculptores antiqui maxime in honore fuerunt. Teledeus ac theodorus rhici filii, a quibus samus pithii apollinis simulacrum inest sculptum. Huius statuae medietas fertur Teledei opus fuisse, reliqua pars a theodoro in epheso perfecta. His simul positus ita conveniebat totum corpus, ut ab uno artifice sculptum vi-

Rather than relying upon their sense of sight as the ancient Greeks did, they made use of measuring instruments.<sup>127</sup>

Diodorus' *Bibliotheca historica* was only in fragmentary condition when it was first translated into Latin by Poggio Bracciolini in 1449 and also shortly thereafter by Pier Candido Decembrio. The *editio princeps*, composed of the work of both authors, was published in 1472.<sup>128</sup> Angelo Decembrio probably knew of the episode of Theodorus and Telekles because of the work of his elder brother Pier Candido, but he would also have been acquainted with it through the work of Leon Battista Alberti. In Alberti's seminal *De re aedificatoria*, written at the request of Leonello d'Este between 1443 and 1453, Alberti praises the "arte et ingenio" of those sculptors who are able to create works of art that appear to have been made by one pair of hands. As an example, he referred to Diodorus and the statue of Apollo made by Theodorus and Telekles.<sup>129</sup> The same example stayed with Alberti when he wrote his *De statua* around 1450.<sup>130</sup> Without mentioning Diodorus' artists explicitly, he alludes to the brothers when illustrating the benefits of one of his inventions, the *Finitorium* (Fig. 10). This tool was employed to determine the spatial coordinates of any given object. Once a statue was measured with this instrument, its coordinates could be easily transferred to an undressed block of marble. This method came in handy when the size of a work of art had to be changed. By simply dividing or multiplying the determined coordinates, the size of a statue could be changed. Furthermore, as Alberti emphasizes, the *Finitorium* allowed artists to divide their work. Because of the statue's numerically

---

deretur." (*Bibliotheca historica*, I, 98, 5–9) The 1476 edition is based on the translations of Bracciolini and Decembrio.

127 Diodorus Siculus (1476), fol. 33: "Genus artis graecis ignotis: sed apud aegyptios erat usu cognitum. Nam soli aegyptii non oculis totius statuae compositionem metiebantur: sed dimensione ut ex variis multisque lapidibus in unum corpus ad certam mensuram redactis statua perficeretur. Res profecto miranda diversos artifices variis in locis ita in unam mensuram convenire: ut quandoque ex viginti quandoque ex quadraginta partibus unica statua componeretur. Quod in samo signum simile operi aegyptio a capite usque ad pudenda ita pari forma divisum constat ut unius opus appareat." (*Bibliotheca historica*, I, 98, 10–15).

128 Zaccaria 1956, p. 53.

129 Alberti (1966), vol. 1, p. 657: "Illud de statuis minime praetereundum censeo, quod apud Diodorum legimus: statuarios Aegyptios tantum valere solitos arte et ingenio, ut ex variis lapidibus diversis positus locis unum simulacri corpus conficerent, conventu partium adeo perfenito, ut uno loco eodem ab artifice esse perfecta videretur. Miroque hoc ex artificio celebre illud apud Samios Phitii Apollinis simulacrum extitisse praedicant, cuius media fuerit pars Thellesii opus, reliquam vero partem in Epheso Theodorus perfinierit."

130 For the dating of *De statua* cfr. Pfisterer 2003, p. 538.

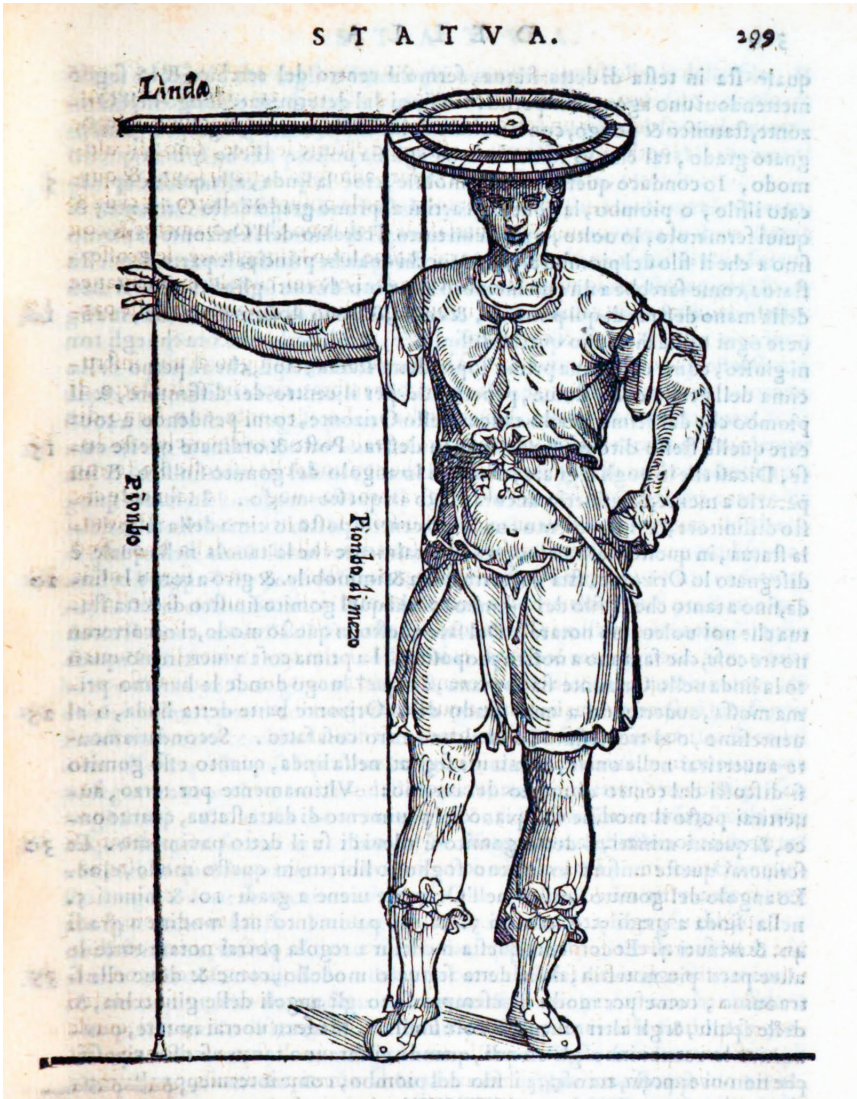


Figure 10 Illustration of the Finitorium in the 1568 Edition of Leon Battista Alberti's *Della statua*



determined proportions, one part could be executed by an artist on the Greek island Paros, whereas the other half might be finished later by another artist at Luni, a site close to Carrara:

“Et quod magis mirere, huius dimidiam ad Paron insulam, si libuerit, dimidiam vero partem alteram in Lunensibus excides atque perficies ita ut iunctiones et cohaesiones partium omnium cum totius simulacri facie conveniant exemplaribus et corresponderant.”<sup>131</sup>

By omitting Samos and Ephesos and instead referring to places that were famous for the extraction of marble in Renaissance Italy, Alberti is able to modernize the narrative used by Diodorus.<sup>132</sup> Just as the Greek historian accentuates the craftsmanship of Theodorus and Telekles by underlining their knowledge of a system of proportions, Alberti underlines the importance of measurement as a precept of artistic excellence. An artist might only be capable of producing accurate sculptures if he had taken the measures of each member. The method described by Alberti was intended to produce a perfect likeness, *similitudo*, between the model and its artificial reproduction.<sup>133</sup> His *Finitorium* can thus be seen as an example for a mechanical model of imitation. The desired likeness can only be achieved if individual differences in the perception and representation of nature are excluded by means of mathematical methods. Alberti uses the example of Theodorus and Telekles mainly to demonstrate the accuracy of his transmission technique, rather than as evidence of his personal attitude towards individual expression in art. In fact, as is shown in other parts of his treatises, he emphatically underscores the importance of the individual *ingenium* of each artist.<sup>134</sup> But to Leonello d’Este, interested in the exact reproduction of his physiognomy, the example of the two brothers may well have constituted the basis for his criticism of Pisanello and Bellini. According to the words of Angelo Decembrio, Leonello was interested in the exact imitation and reproduction of human proportions, an art free

---

131 Alberti (1998), p. 8 and p. 17. See also the *volgare* edition by Cosimo Bartoli, 1568, p. 293: “Et quel che forse tu piu ti maraviglierai, sarà, che si potrà fare la metà di questa tua statua nella Isola di Paro, tornandoti bene, & l’altra metà potrai cavare, & finire ne monti di Carrara: Talmente che i congiugnimenti, & le commettiture di tutte le parti, con tutto il corpo, & faccia della immagine, si uniranno, & corrisponderanno al vivo, o al modello, secondo il quale ella sarà stata fatta.”

132 For Diodorus in relation to Alberti see Panofsky 1921.

133 Alberti (1998), pp. 8 ff.

134 See for example the eclectic and thus individually determined method of composition illustrated by the painter Zeuxis in Alberti (1998), p. 18. Other examples for Alberti’s appreciation of individual expression can be found in his *Della pittura*.

from individual influences, which was perfectly performed by the ancient artists Theodorus and Telekles.<sup>135</sup>

It is interesting to note that Filarete came to a completely different conclusion when discussing the differences between portraits of the same person. Only a couple of years after Decembrio had written his *De politia literaria*, Filarete mentions portraits of Duke Francesco Sforza in his *Trattato*. But in contrast to Leonello, he expressed admiration for their dissimilarities. He correlated the diverging representations of the physiognomy of the Duke of Milan with the individual *maniera* of their respective painters and expressed consent for the pluralism of personal styles.<sup>136</sup> Rather than being interested in their technical skills, he was interested in the inventive talent and individual *fantasia* of each painter.<sup>137</sup>

### Unilateral and Multilateral Models of Imitation

In the course of the Cinquecento, it became increasingly important for a painter to demonstrate his artistic skills by acquiring a personal style. As a consequence, the 15<sup>th</sup> century system of education in the workshop, which aimed at a uniformity of style, was subject to change. Rather than promoting the imitation of one single

---

135 The idea of an objective art without personal style appeared repeatedly in the history of art theory and was frequently discussed in connection to the likenesses of portraits. One of its most intriguing examples can be found in Abraham Bosse's *Sentiments sur la distinction des diverses manières de peinture*. According to the French theorist, identical portraits by the hands of different painters would be possible if only the painters were taught the right methods. Bosse 1649, pp. 39f.: "Cecy soit dit pour expliquer en gros, que le Naturel estant ainsi bien Copié, il n'y auroit point tant de diverses manieres, car ainsi faisant plusieurs qui Copieroient d'apres Nature une mesme teste communement nommée Pourtrait, & d'une mesme position & distance, il arriveroit que tous ces divers Pourtraits seroient entierement semblables, & qu'on ne pourroit pas dire celuy-là est de la maniere d'un tel, ou d'un tel, & ainsi le mesme des autres Corps visibles de la Nature. Mais à cause que l'ignorance a regné en des temps parmy les Praticiens de cét Art, il est en suite arrivé que plusieurs se sont sur les Ouvrages des uns & des autres ainsi faits ou formez des diverses manieres à leur fantaisie; & comme cela ces choses ont multiplié infiniment, du moins en tres-grand nombre, & tel que d'en vouloir deduire la vingtième partie, cela feroit un monstreux volume." For similar examples cfr. Sohm 2001, pp. 20, 131, 171.

136 Filarete (1972), vol. 1, p. 28: "Ho veduto io dipintore e intagliatore ritrarre teste, e massime dell'antidetto illustrissimo Signore duca Francesco Sforza, del quale varie teste furono ritratte, perché era degna e formosa; più d'una da ciascheduno bene l'appropriarono alla sua e asomigliarono, e niente di meno c'era differenza. E così ho veduti scrittori nelle loro lettere essere qualche differenza."

137 For the use of *fantasia* in Filarete's treatise on architecture see Kemp 1977, pp. 369–372.

model, the painter was invited to engage in the imitation of many models.<sup>138</sup> As is so often seen in the art theory of the Renaissance, the discussion of advantages and disadvantages of these divergent models of imitation had its predecessor in the literary world. The famous dispute between Pietro Bembo, who was in favour of a unilateral model, and Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, who was in favour of a multilateral model, provided the art theorists of the Cinquecento with a great variety of arguments for the latter.<sup>139</sup> Answering to a letter of the influential poet Bembo in 1512, Pico maintained that a writer of Latin prose or poetry should take the best parts from each good author. By selecting and combining their best features, the poet can create something entirely new. Pico's advice was guided by the idea of an imperfect nature in which virtues were distributed unequally. Because perfection cannot be found in one single author, the poet had to reunite the dispersed goods of nature by choosing from various authorities. This eclectic method required a poet who was able to discern the good from the bad and the beautiful from the ugly. In short, his own idea of beauty was an important coefficient when choosing from literary examples. According to Pico, this idea was either pre-existent in a neoplatonic sense or derived by the author through continuous study. In any case, it was dependent on the poet's soul, which contained the perfect image of beauty – which constituted the basis for the poet's judgement. Thus, contrary to Leonardo's theory of automimesis, Pico thought it useful to grant the poet the right to choose his examples according to his own personal preferences and temperament. By combining his individual inclinations with the imitation of good authors, some sort of spontaneous amalgamation happened. The resulting works were a combination of good features, harmonized by the single spirit of the poet and transformed into an individual work of art.<sup>140</sup>

In his reply from January 1513, Bembo did not hesitate to express his objections. According to the poet, the eclectic method of selection proposed by the phi-

---

138 Various examples for the multilateral method in the art of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are discussed by Irle 1997.

139 For a discussion of the controversy between Bembo and Pico in relation to art theory cfr. Battisti 1956, Pigman 1980, pp. 20 ff., Williams 1997, pp. 76–85, and Irle 1997, pp. 176–179.

140 Pico as cited in Battisti 1956, p. 89: “Le cose di questa terra non sono completamente buone, poiché la natura genitrice elargisce i suoi doni non ad uno soltanto, ma a molti, e dà ad ogni cosa le sue peculiari virtù; se ne deduce che quel mirabile artificio oratorio, cui tu ambisci, va ricercato nella natura stessa, e specialmente nell'animo, donde direttamente discende nelle parole e nelle lettere; non in una pagina d'un qualche autore, ma in tutti, o in moltissimi autori, poiché in tutto il regno degli esseri animati, a noi visibile, sono varie e disperse le virtù delle cause efficienti, e non costrette entro uno stretto ambito: così la completa e perfetta norma dell'eloquenza non si trova in un unico autore, vertice quasi dell'umana repubblica.”

losopher Pico must lead to works that lack unity. Following a critical observation made by Horace,<sup>141</sup> Bembo does not believe in innate ideas as a source of the individual author's judgement. Just as one single building cannot represent the great variety of possible designs, one single work cannot contain all kinds of literary forms. On the contrary, such works are likely to arouse derision and contempt. To avoid unappealing works, he suggests imitating Cicero, whom he believed to be the best author. If unable to create autonomous works on their own, the poets are invited to copy from the almost perfect ancient author. According to Bembo, they should immerse themselves completely in the example and try to incorporate its characteristics into their own works.<sup>142</sup>

Pico's method, in comparison to Bembo's, was less restrictive and became the preferred model of imitation in the art theory of the Cinquecento. Not only did it allow the painter to choose from a great variety of examples, but it also incited him to develop a personal style by emancipating himself from the authority of the workshop. The great success of the idea of copying from multiple sources was also due to its roots in ancient philosophy; the gathering of ideas or styles was paralleled with the behaviour of bees which selected nectar from various flowers.<sup>143</sup> In a similar form already present in Plato's *Ion* (533e–544b), this idea of selecting the best was used by Seneca in the context of literary theory in the 84<sup>th</sup> letter to Lucillus. Following the example of the industrious bees, an author too should sift whatever he has gathered from his course of reading. Then he should blend these several flavours into one delicious compound that “even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.”<sup>144</sup> In the following passages, Seneca also illustrated this process through the activity of man's digestive organs. Although consumed food was different from man himself, it nevertheless contributed to the generation of his tissue and blood. Similar notions can be found in the introduction of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and Petrarch's *Familiaria* (XXIII, 19, 12).

---

141 For Horace's critique of eclecticism at the beginning of his *Ars poetica* see Pizzani 1998.

142 Bembo as cited in Battisti 1956, pp. 95–96: “Infatti, che ci può essere di più assurdo che voler riprodurre e contenere in una sola forma e specie di scrittura, con tutte le loro parti e membra, le forme e speci, diverse e spesso assai differente fra loro, proprie a svariati scrittori? ... Sarebbe come se tu pensassi possibile, nell'edificare un solo palazzo, riprodurre testualmente molti modelli di concezione e di esecuzione diverse. [...] L'imitare di cui noi parliamo non è che il trasferire nei propri scritti qualcosa di simile allo stile altrui, ed il possedere nello scrivere quasi lo stesso temperamento di chi ci si propone di imitare.”

143 For the metaphor of the bees in relation to the art theory of the Italian Renaissance see Quiviger 2003a.

144 Seneca (1917–1925), vol. 2, pp. 276–281 (*Epistulae morales*, LXXXIV, 5–6).

Cennino Cennini was the first painter who introduced the apian metaphor in an abridged form into art theory. His *Libro di pittura* gives us an example of the unilateral and multilateral models of imitation and thus represents an attitude that is typical of the period of transition at the end of the Trecento. When discussing the question of whether a painter should imitate a single model or many models, he advises the young apprentice to concentrate on one single painter, possibly the best one. Only after the pupil has become familiar with the *maniera* of his teacher shall he develop a style which is suitable for himself:

“Ma per consiglio io ti do: guarda di pigliare sempre il migliore, e quello che ha maggior fama; e, seguitando di di in di, contra natura sarà che a te non venga preso di suo’ maniera e di suo’ aria; perocché se ti muovi a ritrarre oggi di questo maestro, doman di quello, né maniera dell’uno né maniera dell’altro non n’arai, e verrai per forza fantastichetto, per amor che ciascuna maniera ti straccerà la mente. Ora vuo’ fare a modo di questo, doman di quello altro, e così nessuno n’arai perfetto. Se seguiti l’andar di uno per continovo uso, ben sarà lo intelletto grosso che non ne pigli qualche cibo. Poi a te intervverrà che, se punto di fantasia la natura ti arà conceduto, verrai a pigliare una maniera propria per te, e non potrà essere altro che buona; perché la mano e lo intelletto tuo, essendo sempre uso di pigliare fiori, mal saprebbe torre spina.”<sup>145</sup>

As has been noted by various authors, Cennini’s concept of imitation was subject to the idea of the superiority of the *maniera* of Giotto.<sup>146</sup> For Cennini, the godfather of Renaissance painting represented the peak of artistic perfection, just as Cicero was second to none for Bembo. By copying the paintings of Giotto, his adherents acquired a similar taste and working method which made his style a benchmark for the following generations of artists. Cennini points to the importance of this genealogical relationship when he writes that he himself was a pupil of Agnolo Gaddi, the son of Taddeo Gaddi, who was a pupil of Giotto’s.<sup>147</sup> Rather than a supporter of individual style and artistic progress, Cennini seems to have been interested in the conservative preservation of an artistic tradition. It is no coincidence, then, that his discussion of imitation seems to echo an observation

---

145 Cennini (1859), pp. 16 f.

146 Cfr. Kemp 1987, p. 3, Bolland 1996, p. 471, Brückle 2004, p. 65.

147 Cennini (1859), pp. 2 f.: “Si come piccolo membro essercitante nell’arte di dipintoria, Cennino di Drea Cennini da Colle di Valdelsa, nato, fui informato nella detta arte dodici anni da Agnolo di Taddeo da Firenze mio maestro, il quale imparò la detta arte da Taddeo suo padre; il quale suo padre fu battezzato da Giotto, e fu suo discepolo anni ventiquattro. Il quale Giotto rimutò l’arte del dipignere di greco in latino, e ridusse al moderno; ed ebbe l’arte più compiuta che avessi mai più nessuno.”

made by the Paduan humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio in 1396: “The more one follows an inferior model and departs from the best, the worse one becomes. So one should do what the painters of our own age do, who though they may look with attention at famous paintings by other artists, yet follow the models of Giotto alone.”<sup>148</sup>

Metaphors of food and flowers that had to be picked up by the artist were used by many art theorists of the Renaissance. But whereas Cennini remained skeptical about the painters’ capacity to synthesize these different flavours, the Cinquecento believed the artists were able to select and combine from various sources. Furthermore, the subject of eclectic imitation was extended to all kinds of artistic fields, including not only the style of a painter but also his *colore*, *simetria*, or *grazia*. Paolo Pino, for example, thought that the perfect form of painting was a combination of Michelangelo’s *disegno* and Titian’s use of colours.<sup>149</sup>

A similar topos was used when it came to the imitation of nature. Recorded by Cicero (*De inventione*, II,1–5) and Pliny (*Historia naturalis*, XXXV, 64), the famous story of Zeuxis and the Crotonian maidens was employed to illustrate the process of eclectic re-combination by selecting the best parts from nature. When given the task of painting an image of Helen of Troy, the painter chose the most beautiful maidens of Croton, identified their most beautiful features and recombined them in his painted figure of Helen. Although some art critics were cautious about applying this method to all kinds of artistic material,<sup>150</sup> the anecdote of Zeuxis became commonplace in the art literature of the Cinquecento.<sup>151</sup> The process of *electio* allowed artists to correct the imperfect manifestations of nature by relying on their own judgement. Guided by a superior understanding of the generative principles of nature, the resulting works of art were thought to surpass nature. In the same way in which Pico demanded an improvement in poetry through the process of literary *superatio*, the painter was invited to exceed nature through his mimetic activities. Michelangelo was understood to represent these

148 As cited in Baxandall 1971, p. 43.

149 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), pp. 126 f.: “Bronzino è un perito maestro, e mi piace molto il suo fare, e li son anco parzial per le virtù sue, ma a me più sodisfa Tiziano, e se Tiziano e Michiel Angelo fussero un corpo solo, over al disegno di Michiel Angelo aggiuntovi il colore di Tiziano, se gli potrebbe dir lo dio della pittura, sì come parimenti sono anco dèi propri, e chi tiene altra openione è eretico fetidissimo.”

150 See for instance Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, p. 249: “E guardandosi di non fare come certi pittori, che rubbano una mano del Mosè di Michel Angelo, un panno d’una stampa, un piede di Apolline, una testa di Venere, cose impossibili che convengano tutte insieme. Perché è regola certa non essere possibile che una figura fatta in un luoco ad un proposito mai più si possa fare in altro luoco per altro proposito.”

151 Detailed analyses of the anecdote regarding the imitative theories of the Italian Renaissance are provided by Sabbatino 1997 and Mansfield 2007.

principles of selection in perfect combination. It is against this background that his biographer Ascanio Condivi illustrated his capacities by referring both to the metaphor of the bees and the parallel topos of the Crotonian virgins. According to Condivi, only the synthetic activity of combining the best parts from nature, guided by the artist's individual and outstanding *ingenium*, made it possible for Michelangelo to create the most beautiful works of art.<sup>152</sup>

In his *De veri precetti della pittura*, published in 1586, Giovanni Battista Armenini expressed a very similar understanding of eclectic imitation. Whether an artist would choose from one single model or from many models, in any case he should study and imitate only the most beautiful parts.<sup>153</sup> Only through the continuous examination of the most refined works from antiquity and from contemporary artists may he develop a beautiful style, a "bella maniera". Having acquired such a style, the painter is allowed to copy from various artists, harmoniously integrating their fashion into his own works.<sup>154</sup> But as Armenini states, this method had its disadvantages. Especially when concentrating on one single model, the artist had to be cautious that his example would conform to his own inclinations. Choosing a famous painter with an artistically dissimilar disposition, would lead to disappointing results. Instead the conformity should be comparable to the similarity between a father and his son or between brothers.<sup>155</sup> Writing his

---

152 Condivi 1553, fol. 45v.: "Et che in lui non nascessin laidi pensiere, si può da questo ancho cognoscere, che egli non solamente ha amata la bellezza humana, ma universalmente ogni cosa bella, un bel cavallo, un bel cane, un bel paese, una bella pianta, una bella montagna, una bella selva, et ogni sito et cosa bella et rara nel suo genere, ammirandole con maraviglioso affetto, così il bello dalla natura scegliendo, come l'api raccolgano il mel da fiori, servendosene poi nelle sue opere. Il che sempre han fatto tutti quelli, che nella pittura hanno havuto qualche grido. Quel anticho Maestro per fare una venere, non si contentò di vedere una sola vergine, che ne volse contemplare molte, & prendendo da ciaschuna la più bella et più compiuta parte, servirsene nella sua Venere."

153 Armenini 1587 (1988), pp. 60f.: "Due sono dunque le vie per le quali la predetta maniera [i.e., la bella maniera] apprendere si può con molta fermezza: l'una è il frequente ritrarre l'opere di diversi artefici buoni; l'altra è il dare solamente opera a quelle di un solo eccellente. Ma della prima generalissima et universal regola sarà di sempre ritrarre le cose che sono più belle, più dotte e più alle buone opere de gli antichi scultori prossime [...] Vi aggiungemo di poi tutte l'opere del divin Michelangelo Buonarotti, quelle di Baccio Bandinelli e quelle di frate Guglielmo milanese [...]"

154 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 65: "Sì che si conchiude alla fine che, presa si ha la bella maniera, si può servire con facilità delle cose altrui e con poca fatica adoperarle come sue proprie, e farsi onore senza riportarne biasimo da niuno."

155 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 66: "Ma questi debbono essere tali nell'imitazione, che essi abbino similitudine con gli essempli non in una o due parti, ma in tutte, di modo che mentre cercano d'assomigliarsi in una, non discordino nell'altra, ma egualmente le considerano e l'imparino, sì che nel porle in atto poi le stiano di maniera che le sia-

chapter on beautiful style at a time when many artists were following the example of Michelangelo, Armenini's concerns were more than reasonable. The style of Michelangelo, with his use of contorted muscles and naked bodies, was frequently considered the most beautiful and difficult. As a result, his works were imitated by many, often inexperienced, artists. As Armenini observed, only a few of Michelangelo's adherents were able to capture all aspects of his work; one might concentrate on limbs, muscles, and bones, whereas another might be more concerned with his use of contours.<sup>156</sup> In short, their works were not guided by an internalized *giudizio* of nature and art, but by the admiration for the unsurpassed excellence of Michelangelo, regardless of their own individual predispositions. To overcome this deleterious habit, Armenini advised the readers of his treatise to thoroughly examine their own inclinations before choosing their style. By this means they may be able to excel, even if they are only mediocre painters.<sup>157</sup>

### Following One's Own Inclinations

The increasing popularity of eclectic imitation came with the increasing perception and appreciation of individual differences in painting. Rather than believing in one perfect form of art as represented by the works of antiquity (as was the case with Leonello d'Este) or the paintings of Giotto (as was the case with Cennini), the painters' divergent styles were viewed as a multitude of artistic voices. Of course, this did not mean that all artists were considered equal. The existence of good artists and less good artists, as well as the possibility of mastering one art and failing in another was well-known long before the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>158</sup>

---

no simile come il padre al figliuolo, e l'un fratello all'altro, et in speciale a quelli che la strada tentano et imitano di Michelangelo Buonarrotti."

156 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 67: "E per certo ch'io non so qual sia maggior pazzia che di questi tali, i quali si veggono essere così ciechi alle volte, che pongono per le loro opere delli ignudi che sono ridicolosi, a i quali li fanno i lor capi leggiadri, di poi le braccia morbide et il corpo e le rene ripiene di muscoli, et il rimanente poi si vede essere con dolcissimi contorni lasciati e con ombre leggiere."

157 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 69: "Ma io laudarò finalmente coloro che, prima esaminato bene il suo ingegno, si sapranno accomodare per una via tale che, salvo l'onore suo, li possa riuscire egualmente bene in ogni sua impresa, contentandosi di quello che mediante li loro sudori e fatiche si hanno acquistato, atteso che non patisce il cielo che da troppa copia siano toccate le cime di queste nobilissime e sopra ogni altre ingegnosisime professioni."

158 See for instance Cristoforo Landino's introduction to his commentary to Dante's *Divina commedia*, where he gives a short description of painters working in Florence at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



However, the positive perception of artistic distinctiveness, a relatively new acquisition for the Cinquecento, increased exceptionally. Baldassare Castiglione, who was well aware that his untrained courtier had to pick from various flowers to become a perfect *cortegiano*,<sup>159</sup> understood that each of the different styles of the best painters of his time represented an art *sui generis*. All the same, when discussing the styles of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and others, he still seems to be surprised by the fact that each of them could be excellent although their results varied.<sup>160</sup> His observation, modelled upon similar remarks made in antiquity,<sup>161</sup> marks an important turning point in the art literature of the Cinquecento. The idea of an absolute art, in which each artist had to strive for a certain ideal of representation regardless of his own inclinations, was soon to become a rarity.

As has been shown by Robert Klein, this process was closely related to a new understanding of the artist's judgement, the aforementioned *giudizio*. The judgement was considered a vital part of the individual soul, serving as an intermediate

---

159 Castiglione 1528 (1998), p. 58: "E quando già si sente aver fatto profitto, giova molto veder diversi omini di tal professione e governandosi con quel bon giudicio che sempre gli ha da esser guida, andar scegliendo or da un or da un altro varie cose. E come la peccchia ne' verdi prati sempre tra l'erbe va carpando i fiori, così il nostro cortegiano averà da rubare questa grazia da que' che a lui parerà che la tenghino e da ciascun quella parte che più sarà laudevole."

160 Castiglione 1528 (1998), pp. 79 f.: "Eccovi che nella pittura sono eccellentissimi Leonardo Vincio, il Mantegna, Rafaello, Michel Angelo, Georgio da Castel Franco; nientedimeno, tutti son tra sé nel far dissimili, di modo che ad alcun di loro non par che manchi cosa alcuna in quella maniera, perché si conosce ciascun nel suo stile esser perfettissimo. Il medesimo è di molti poeti greci e latini, il quali diversi nello scrivere, sono pari nella laude. Gli oratori ancor hanno avuto sempre tanta diversità tra sé, che quasi ogni età ha prodotto ed apprezzato una sorte d'oratori peculiar di quel tempo." The same statement can be found in De Hollanda 1538 (1899), p. 123, or – with regards to astral influences – in Sorte 1580 (1960–1962), pp. 299 f.: "E questa naturale Idea o vogliamo dire più tosto celeste ammaestramento, in noi da superiori corpi a questo proposito infuso, non solamente ci aiuta ad operare, ma nelle maggiori e più perfette eccellenze con imperio signoreggia; onde quella istessa libertà hanno i pittori, che si suole concedere per ordinario ai poeti, e come questi nelle invenzioni e nello stile differenti l'uno da l'altro si conoscano, così a quelli parimente avviene. E di qui è che le immagini o figure che fanno si dicono essere loro figliuoli, perciocché ritengono ordinariamente della loro Idea; e perciò nelle immagini di alcuni pittori si vede la melanconia, in alcuni altri la modestia, et in altri una certa vivacità di spiriti accompagnata da una graziosa e perfetta imitazione [...]."

161 Cicero (1942–1948), vol. 1, p. 285: "Una fingendi est ars, in qua praestantes fuerunt Myro, Polyclitus, Lysippus; qui omnes inter se dissimiles fuerunt, sed ita tamen, ut neminem sui velis esse dissimilem. Una est ars ratioque picturae, dissimilisque tamen inter se Zeuxis, Aglaophon, Apelles; neque eorum quisquam est cui quicquam in arte sua deesse videatur." (*De oratore*, III, 26).

between the mind and the senses. It was used for the immediate perception and evaluation of objects, but also understood as a rational faculty subject to intellectual activity.<sup>162</sup> Although judgement was primarily understood as an innate ideal, it was not unalterable. As has been argued by Leonardo in his analysis of automimesis, the capacity to distinguish the good from the bad can be improved by constantly referring to beautiful works of art. This normative conception of judgement changed significantly in the course of the Cinquecento, however. The judgement was gradually interpreted as the artist's own personal taste, his *gusto*, rather than as the application of universally valid rules. Accordingly, the once appreciated systems of measurement were criticized as obstacles to painters' individual expression.<sup>163</sup> Painters were invited to follow their own canon of proportions and encouraged to discard the strict rules when possible. For example, Antonio da Sangallo expressed his disapproval of Vitruvian proportions when he realized that one of his architectural projects did not conform to the traditional system of proportions. "Vitruvio è goffo" is written on the top of one of his preparatory drawings for a chimney.<sup>164</sup> A similar view was expressed by Antonio Francesco Doni, who doubted that the use of geometrical principles leads to good representations of the human body.<sup>165</sup> *Giudizio*, used in an artistic context, was thus similar to other terms like *discrezione* or *licenzia* that were employed to indicate a certain aesthetic autonomy of the artist.<sup>166</sup>

One of the first art theorists to contemplate the impact of *giudizio* in this modern sense was the Venetian poet Pietro Aretino. When he discussed the paintings of Michelangelo, rather than admiring his use of perspective and proportion, he extolled his capacity to overcome established rules using instead his own judgement.<sup>167</sup> Vasari would later enhance this interpretation when he emphasized the

---

162 Klein 1961, p. 107.

163 For the use of perspective and proportions as objective principles in the *Quattrocento* see Büttner 1998.

164 Aurenhammer 1994, p. 540.

165 Doni 1549, fol. 8r f.: "Percio che nelle figure humane nella quali consiste maggior dignità che in nessun altra figura, si vede certo che le contengono in loro innumerabili misure, che le non si possono con alcuno ordine geometrico ridurre; come si vede per ogni membro minimo che varia di punto in punto nelle sue grossezze, & larghezze: però è necessario accompagnare (per far simil corpi) la virtù del giudicio con quella gratia di che la natura ci ha fatto capaci; & questa ti credo sia una difficoltà grandissima."

166 Klein 1961, p. 108. Further analysis of the artistic judgement in the Renaissance is provided by Summers 1981, pp. 368–379, and Summers 1987. For *licenzia* see Pinelli 1993, pp. 107 f., Boschloo 2008, pp. 82–110.

167 Aretino (1957–1960), vol. 1, p. 283: "Guardate dove ha posto la pittura Michelangelo con lo smisurato de le sue figure, dipinte con la maestà del giudicio, non col meschino dell'arte."

*terribiltà* of the divine artist, who did not need any geometrical tools when composing his paintings. Rather than relying on external instruments, Michelangelo is said to have used his own eyes as the only device for measuring beauty. His universal *giudizio* was accompanied by the more specific *giudizio dell'occhio*: “Bisogna avere le seste negli occhi e non in mano, perché le mani operano e l'occhio giudica.”<sup>168</sup> Consequently, Vasari awarded Michelangelo with the quality of having judgement and taste in all things.<sup>169</sup> Another important letter by Aretino shows us that he understood judgement as a component of the artist's *ingegno* – as some sort of expression of the artist's personality, closely connected with his capacity to be aware of his own habits and inclinations.<sup>170</sup>

The increasing importance of personal judgement was a direct result of the early modern conception of individuality. Unlike in the Middle Ages, the diversity of man was no longer conceived as a deviation from an ideal, caused by the original sin of Adam and Eve,<sup>171</sup> but understood as a result of their varying temperaments based on the four humors.<sup>172</sup> The genesis of the individual was not only subject to a pre-existent soul, but was also believed to be guided by the power of astrological signs and constellations.<sup>173</sup> According to some (if not most) Renaissance humanists,<sup>174</sup> these astral influences determined not only the growth of the embryo and the disposition of its organs, but also provided the individual with a singular character.<sup>175</sup> Because of their unique dispositions, everybody was equipped with different talents and capabilities. Pierfrancesco Giambullari,

---

168 As cited by Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, pp. 520 f. (Vasari in a letter to Martino Bassi from August 1570). The same expression was used by Vasari in the second edition of the *Vite* in the life of Michelangelo.

169 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 272: “Et invero Michelagnolo collocò sempre l'amor suo a persone nobili, meritevoli e degne, ché nel vero ebbe giudizio e gusto in tutte le cose.”

170 Aretino (1957–1960), vol. 1, p. 88: “Giudicio, dico: ché l'altre cose son buone per vedere gli ingegni degli altri, onde il tuo si desta e si corregge [...]. Chi non ha giudizio non conosce se stesso, e chi non conosce se medesimo non è conosciuto d'altri, et chi non è noto da altri annulla il suo essere.”

171 Schreiner 1992.

172 For an overview of how the diversity of humans was perceived in the early modern age see Groebner 2004.

173 See Reißer 1997 and Klibansky/Panofsky/Saxl 1990 for a discussion of the influence of planets on the psychological constitution of artists.

174 A critical view regarding astral influences is expressed by Varchi in his *Generazione dei mostri*, held at the Florentine Academy in June 1543, see Varchi (1858–1859), vol. 2, pp. 284–310.

175 For a discussion of medieval ideas on the development of the embryo and its soul in relation to the planets see Burnett 1990.

whose thoughts were similar to those expressed by Giovanni Cavalcanti in the Quattrocento,<sup>176</sup> explained this astrological impact in a speech that he held in the Florentine Academy in the 1540s by referring to the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*. Just as each painter paints himself, the zodiacal signs would shape the human bodies according to their own likenesses. Signs that borrowed their names from animals were therefore less able to generate well-proportioned men than the signs with human names.<sup>177</sup> The visual blueprint for Giambullari's theory was provided by the so-called *Homo signorum*, an illustration of the human body whose members were assigned to the corresponding zodiacal signs which was frequently reprinted in books on natural philosophy, for example in Gregorius Reisch's *Margarita philosophica* from 1508 (Fig. 11).

Many art theorists followed the idea that the celestial spheres were responsible for the diversity of the artist's judgement and believed them to be accountable for the great variety of styles. The individual judgement and taste of each artist were one of the reasons why Paolo Pino thought it impossible to imagine one perfect form of art.<sup>178</sup> Of course, this did not mean that all kinds of art were understood as equally beautiful. As he explained in his treatise, he wished for the artist to be born under the best stars.<sup>179</sup> This would grant him a well-proportioned

---

176 As cited in Kemp 1987, p. 10: "Cosi sono differenti le volontà umane quanto sono differenti le influenze nelle nature delle stelle. Perchè altra volontà fu in Pippo di ser Brunellesco [Brunelleschi], che non fu in Lorenzo di Bartoluccio [Ghiberti]; ed altra fantasia fu nel maestro Gentile [da Fabriano], che non fu in Giuliano d'Arigo [Pesello]."

177 Giambullari 1551 (1881), p. 98: "Questo [i.e., the starry sky] di tante immagini adorno e di tante stelle ingemmato, ci dà le membra e la forma del corpo nostro, secondo le figure o umane o bestiali che si trovano ne' luoghi forti, quando è l'ora del conferirla. E vedesi manifestamente che i segni chiamati umani con maggior proporzione e con più leggiadria compongono le membra, che non fanno tutti quelli altri che di bestie tengono il nome, tirando sempre ciascuno il soggetto alla parte sua e formando altri alla forma di sè medesimo, come anche volgarmente dice il proverbio che ogni pittore dipinge sè stesso."

178 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 132: "Sono varii li giudicii umani, diverse le complessioni, abbiamo medesimamente l'uno dall'altro estratto l'intelletto nel gusto, la qual differenza causa che non a tutti aggradano equalmente le cose. E però chi s'applica alla grandezza delle littere, altri più sensitivi si commetton o all'onorato preggio dell'armi, alcuni più modesti si vestono di religione. È ben vero ch'a tal varietà concorre l'influsso delle stelle, le quali inseriscono in noi la propietà della lor natura (come vogliono gli astronomi)."

179 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 133: "E questa [la buona disposizione naturale] vien infusa in noi da alcune congionzioni de' più begnigni pianeti, o nella nostra generazione over nella natività; e di questi sarà il nostro pittore, acciò che più facilmente divenghi nella perfezzion dell'arte."

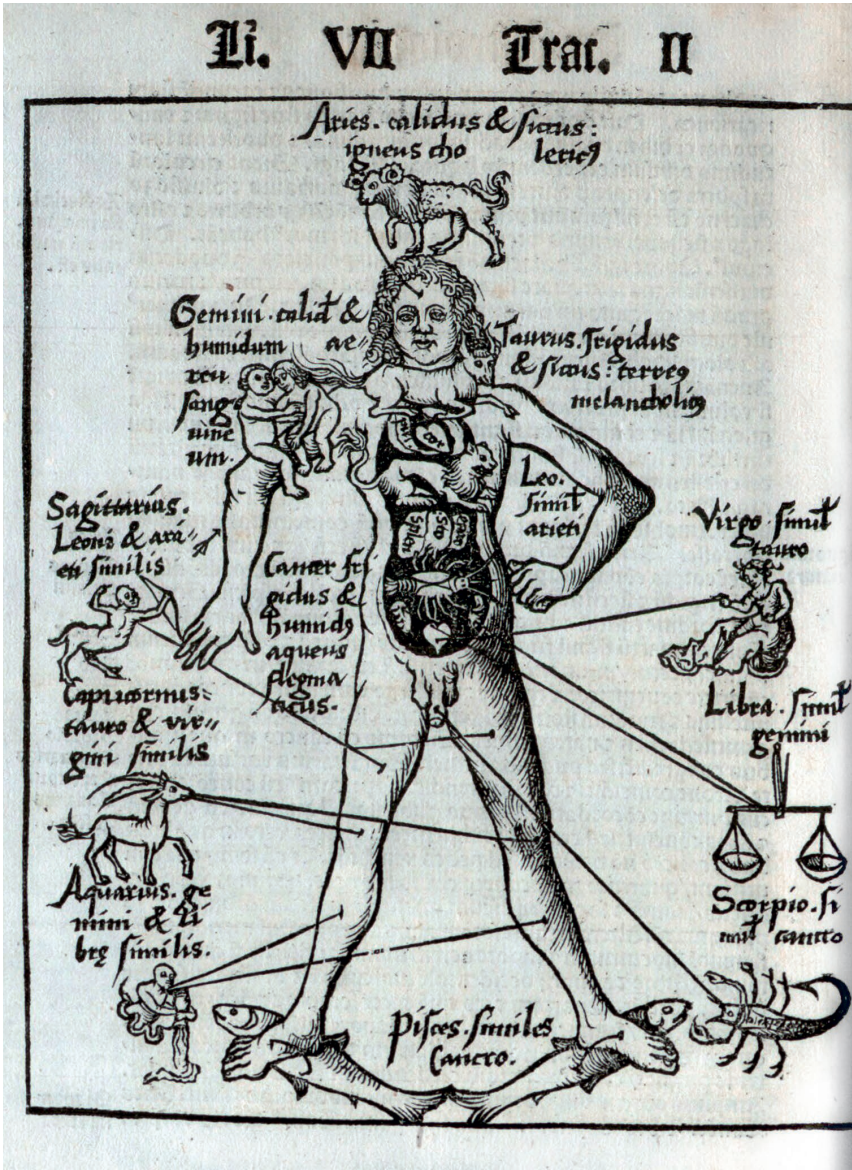


Figure 11 Illustration of the Human Body and its Relation to Zodiacal Signs in the 1508 Edition of Gregorius Reisch's *Margarita philosophica*

body as well as the possibility of painting perfect figures.<sup>180</sup> A similar view was expressed by another Venetian art theorist. Lodovico Dolce appreciated the fact that the complexions and temperaments of the painters, which were caused by the influence of the stars, were different, because as a result they produced a great variety of styles.<sup>181</sup> In contrast to the ideas held by many authors of the Quattrocento, these new ideas granted painters the right to follow their own innate inclinations. As the artist's judgement was increasingly associated with taste, and taste was a prerequisite for style, the paintings of a painter were progressively understood as a reflection of his character.<sup>182</sup> Rather than sticking to established rules and artistic prototypes, they were encouraged to examine their own predispositions and interests.

Much like Armenini, who was especially interested in the imitation of antique works,<sup>183</sup> Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo provides good examples for this paradigm shift in his treatises, the *Trattato dell'arte della pittura* (1584) and the *Idea del tempio della pittura* (1590). Written towards the end of the Cinquecento, they show that his thoughts on the education and training of the artist reflected the changed attitude towards individual expression in painting. He understood the individual style of an artist as a direct articulation of his temperament, a compound of the four elements that was fashioned by the planets according to the time and place of his birth. Since there were only seven planets, Lomazzo designated seven artists who represented the corresponding ideals in painting. Michelangelo, for example, whose art displays a natural preference for muscles and proportions, was associated with Saturn – whereas Raphael, probably because of his predilection for female features, was believed to be born under the influence of Venus. Other components, such as the impact of guardian animals or metals, served Lomazzo

---

180 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 133: “Non sia grande in estremo, assai delli quali sono sgraziati, pigri et incipidi; ma sia il pittore nella porzione che già v’ho descritta secondo Vitruvio, ch’averà più facile adito di formare le figure perfette, traendo l’esempio di sé stesso.”

181 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 186: “E benché il pervenire alla perfezione della eccellenza della pittura, alla quale fa mestiere di tante cose, sia impresa malagevole e faticosa, e grazia dalla liberalità de’ cieli conceduta a pochi (che nel vero bisogna che il pittore, così bene come il poeta, nasca e sia figliuolo della natura), non è da credere (come toccai da prima) che ci sia una sola forma del perfetto dipingere; anzi, perché le complessioni degli uomini e gli umori sono diversi, così ne nascono diverse maniere e ciascuno segue quella a cui è inchinato naturalmente. Di qui ne nacquero pittori diversi: alcuni piacevoli, altri terribili, altri vaghi et altri ripieni di grandezza e di maestà; come vediamo medesimamente trovarsi negl’istorici, ne’ poeti e negli oratori.”

182 Klein 1961, p. 111.

183 For Lomazzo’s model of eclecticism in comparison to Armenini see Blunt 1940, pp. 156–159.

as a means to explain the endless differences in style apparent in the use of composition, colour, or movement. In contrast to the explanatory models of the Quattrocento (mostly based on a God-given diversity of man), Lomazzo's theory of differences in style is thus a new approach towards individual expression. Or, as Martin Kemp puts it, his system is "a considerable achievement, in its own right as a functioning model for the causes and effects of individual genius."<sup>184</sup>

The new model of artistic expression had consequences for the education of the artist. Of course, the apprentice was not completely abandoned to himself and his inclinations; however, he had to follow one of the seven *governatori* of art (Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Titian, Polidoro da Caravaggio, and Andrea Mantegna). In fact, the choice of a model that was suitable for the individual characteristics of the young painter was a task of utmost importance to Lomazzo.<sup>185</sup> He was particularly aware of the long-lasting consequences for misguided students who had chosen to follow an inappropriate master. Students who had chosen the wrong model would neither be able to develop a style of their own, nor excel in the style of their master. Only knowing one's own inclinations can the painter choose the right model and become a good painter.<sup>186</sup> Through the imitation of different but adequate styles, the young and mouldable painter can build up his own individual style.<sup>187</sup> Another method to excel was to

---

184 Kemp 1987, p. 24.

185 Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, pp. 33–35: "Essendo adunque di tanto momento che 'l pittore e qualunque altro artefice conosca il suo genio, e dove più l'inclini l'attitudine e disposizione sua d'operar più facilmente e felicemente per un modo che per un altro, ha da porre ognuno in ciò somma diligenza, e, conosciuto, deve darsi ad imitar la maniera di quelli che se gli conformano, guardandosi con molta cautela di non inciampare nelle contrarie."

186 Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, p. 33: "Ma una cosa è degna d'essere avvertita, che tra quelli che et hanno saputo conoscere il natural suo talento e l'hanno poi con diligente et continuo studio coltivato, se ben con la sicura scorta dell'arte appresa sono pervenuti al colmo dell'eccellenza, nondimeo in alcuno non si scorge una medesima maniera, ma varie tutte e fra sé l'una dall'altre differenti. Il che non d'altronde nasce che dalla diversità delle maniere e delle disposizioni, le quali conoscendo ciascuno in se stesso, et a quelle accomodando l'istituzione, fanno sì che in una istessa arte si vedono uomini eccellentissimi tutti, ma fra sé però dissomiglianti, e quali in una quale in altra parte eccellente, sì come ognun può avvertire, massime nei sette lumi dell'arte. I quali nelle loro maniere sono tutti dissimil fra sé, ma tali che in quella parte, cui da natura sono stati inclinati et a cui hanno drizzato l'arte et industria loro, non è chi possa maggior eccellenza desiderare. Anzi sono eglino a così alto segno poggiati, che hano tolto ogni speranza ad altri di poter mai in quel genere aggiungerli."

187 Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, p. 27: "Ma quelli che [...] si sono dati solo all'imitazione degli altri, diversi dal genio loro, operando solamente per forza d'arte, dove prima face-

follow masters that had very similar or identical dispositions (Lomazzo's examples are Daniele da Volterra and Sebastiano del Piombo). Because their own inclinations correlated closely with the style of Michelangelo, they were able to produce excellent works of art although they followed only one model.<sup>188</sup>

## 2.5 Metaphors of Artistic Progress

Although Lomazzo's system was still based on a limited number of normative types of art, his treatment of artistic distinctiveness mirrored the idea of a vast amount of styles. Because he held the conviction that each painter had to develop his own style by matching personal inclinations with the expressive modes of his models, his treatise promotes the idea of abandoning epigonism. Similar ideas had been discussed in ancient rhetoric which viewed the repetitive imitation of one's master critically. Following only one model was considered bad practice that would lead to standstill or regression. Quintilian provided the *locus classicus* for this conception: if one only follows in the footsteps of his predecessor, one is never able to surpass him.<sup>189</sup> In a long passage in the tenth book of his *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian discussed the negative consequences of merely imitating previous authorities, saying that nothing would ever have been discovered and "we should still be sailing on rafts, and the art of painting would be restricted to tracing a line round a shadow thrown in the sunlight."<sup>190</sup>

---

vano cose degnissime di lode, perduta la prima maniera e datisi ad un'altra, sono iti di tempo in tempo facendo peggio. [...] perciocché essi stentano più mentre che, rivolti tutti ad imitar altri, niente intendono il genio proprio, onde nasce tutta la facilità e grazia de l'operare."

188 Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, p. 31. Lomazzo's advice to choose an adequate master was probably modelled on similar remarks made by Quintilian who, when discussing the qualities of a good rhetor, also includes his capacity to instruct students. Rather than teaching each pupil identical things, a good rhetor should foster the particular characteristics of his pupils. Similarly, a pupil should consider his individual dispositions as well when choosing his master. (*Institutio oratoria*, II, VIII and X, II).

189 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, X, II, 7–8. Quintilian refers here to the famous anecdote of the daughter of Butades, who is said to have invented painting by tracing the contours of her beloved one with charcoal. See also Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, XXXV, XLIII. The metaphor of the footsteps also in Horace, *Epistles*, I, XIX, 21; Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, 33.

190 Quintilian (1920–1922), vol. 4, p. 79 (*Institutio oratoria*, X, II, 10).



Quintilian's thoughts on progress had huge success in the art literature of the Renaissance where they were first introduced by Alberti's *Della pittura*.<sup>191</sup> The idea of continuous perfection of the arts was in fact a recurrent motive which served as a means of self-reassurance during the entire Renaissance. Humanists as well as artists were convinced that their accomplishments were of a superior quality when compared to those of the Middle Ages or even antiquity.<sup>192</sup> A good example is provided by Alamanno Rinuccini, who expressed admiration for the cultural achievements of his own age in a dedicatory letter of 1473. Contrary to some of his contemporaries who would rather stress the supremacy of the ancient Greeks, he thought himself happy to live amongst so many erudite and distinguished people and considered the Quattrocento an age of great sophistication in which rhetoric and arts flourished ("aetate nostra adeo excultus et expolitus est").<sup>193</sup> Frequent comparisons with the literary culture of the past led to a climate of competition and increased the longing for perfection. For example, Castiglione advised his *cortegiano* to constantly improve his capabilities in the arts of writing and speaking.<sup>194</sup> The intellectual awareness of living in a time of scientific inventions, artistic improvement, and literary progress was an all-embracing attribute of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that appealed not only to humanists, but to printmakers as well. As is shown by a preface by Francesco Marcolini da Forlì contained in a work by Francesco da Milano, he considered his system of musical notation a huge improvement over the work of his predecessor Ottaviano Petrucci, whom he deemed old-fashioned:

"Il Mondo è tenuto di grande obbligo al Fossombrone [i.e., Ottaviano Petrucci] inventore de lo stampare le intavolature ne la maniera, che si imprimino i libri. Ma nel farsi egli vecchissimo, e l'età nostra più culta [...] le cose sue son poste da parte come compo-

---

191 Alberti (2002), pp. 102f.: "Diceva Quintiliano ch'e' pittori antichi soleano circonscrivere l'ombre al sole, e così indi poi si trovò questa arte cresciuta." For a discussion of this passage cfr. Spencer 1957, p. 33.

192 For the topos of progress in art literature cfr. Gombrich 1955, Grafton 2007, Hazan 1999, and Garrard 2010, pp. 54–88.

193 As cited in Gombrich 1955, p. 306. Just as Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*, XII, X, 2–15) or later Lorenzo Valla in his *Elegantiarum latinae linguae libri sex*, Rinuccini observes a correlation between the flourishing of rhetorics and the flourishing of sculpture and painting. For this recurrent motif see Baxandall 1971, p. 118.

194 Castiglione 1528 (1998), pp. 79ff.: "E se Vergilio avesse in tutto imitato Esiodo, non gli seria passato inanzi; né Cicero a Crasso, né Ennio ai suoi antecessori [...]. E veramente gran miseria saria metter fine e non passar più avanti di quello che si abbia fatto quasi il primo che ha scritto, e disperarsi che tanti e così nobili ingegni possano mai trovar più che una forma bella di dire in quella lingua, che ad essi è propria e naturale."

sitioni lodate già. [...] Ma io, che riposo quando mi afatico in servizio de i virtuosi hò miso il piede forse più oltre, che ne le strade le quali egli si secrete fece, che non penso fosser mai calpeste d'alcuno."<sup>195</sup>

The idea of going one step further was even more immanent in art historical writing. Early accounts of Giotto describe his work in terms of light, by which the works of his teacher Cimabue were enshadowed. While this literary topos is later mirrored in the countless anecdotes of pupils who surpass their masters by effortlessly correcting their works, the great visual power of Quintilian's footsteps metaphor proved to be even more appealing. Due to its origin in the ancient poetic arts, it was able to enhance the reputation of painting according to the often reiterated maxim *Ut pictura poiesis*.<sup>196</sup> Painters and art critics, relying on Quintilian's metaphor, could claim the same principles of progress for the visual arts, which, compared to the art of writing, were still held in low esteem. Its huge success was also due to an aphorism by Michelangelo reported in an account by Vasari. When he was shown the copy of an antique sculpture by an artist who claimed to have surpassed the ancient masters, the Florentine artist is supposed to have said that, "no one who follows others can ever get in front."<sup>197</sup> It is more than probable that Michelangelo addressed his criticism to one of his opponents in Florence,<sup>198</sup> Baccio Bandinelli, who was not only a competitor when it came to commissions, but also famous for his copy of the *Laocoön Group* (Fig. 12). It was made at the request of Pope Leo X and his cousin cardinal Giulio de' Medici in 1520, and Bandinelli used only three blocks of undressed marble to create the entire sculpture and thus actually surpassed the antique original, which consisted of seven pieces.<sup>199</sup> However, this example of artistic *difficoltà* was nothing compared to the achievements Michelangelo had reached. Not only was his monumental *David* a statue without any iconic precedence, but it was also made out of one block of marble, partly bungled by prior interventions. Furthermore it was done during the early stage of Michelangelo's career before the *Laocoön Group* was unearthed in the artist's presence in 1506. It was Michelangelo who was traditionally thought to be equal if not superior to the artists of antiquity.

195 Milano 1536, fol. 1v.

196 For this dictum see Lee 1940.

197 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 280: "Domandato da uno amico suo quel che gli paresse d'uno che aveva contrafatto di marmo figure antiche de le più celebrate, vantandosi lo imitatore che di gran lunga aveva superato gli antichi, rispose: 'Chi va dietro altrui, mai non gli passa inanzi'."

198 For a discussion of this question and the many examples of the use of Michelangelo's saying, see the extensive footnote in Vasari 1550–1568 (1962), vol. 4, pp. 2098–2111.

199 Cfr. Hegener 2008, p. 257.



Figure 12 Baccio Bandinelli, Laocoön and his Sons, 1520, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

This competitive background of the saying contributed to its divulgation. Whereas Michelangelo intended it as a criticism of blind imitation of the works of antiquity, his successors also understood the saying in terms of individual style. A good example is provided by Vasari, who, in the life of Mino da Fiesole, criticized artists who were only following the style of their master: A painter can only develop an individual style if he copies from nature.<sup>200</sup> Armenini mentions the dictum when discussing whether a painter had to follow only one master or many.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, Lomazzo used it in a similar way when debating the process of growing a distinct and personal style.<sup>202</sup> The urge to understand the metaphor as an invitation to personal expression is even more apparent in the art literature of the Seicento. The development of a prospering art market, which contributed to a socially defined variety of tastes, facilitated the growth of new styles. Artists had to compete for commissioners and patrons, and thus adapted their own art to the demands of the market. But the reverse was also true: the need for social distinction led collectors to choose those artists who had a self-fashioned image.<sup>203</sup> Giovanni Battista Passeri, whose *Vite de pittori, scultori ed architetti* were written in the 1670s, reflects these changes when he underscores the importance of a personal style. Describing the life of Giovanni Miele (Jan Miel), a painter who was active in Rome from the 1630s until his death in 1656, Passeri attacks the artist

---

200 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, p. 115: “Quando gli artefici nostri non cercano altro nell’opere ch’e’ fanno che imitare la maniera del loro maestro o d’altro eccellente, del quale piaccia loro il modo dell’operare o nell’attitudini delle figure o nell’arie delle teste o nel piegheggiare de’ panni, e studiano quelle solamente, se bene col tempo e con lo studio le fanno simili, non arrivano però mai con questo solo a la perfezzione dell’arte, avvengaché manifestissimamente si vede che rare volte passa inanzi chi camina sempre dietro; perché la imitazione della natura è ferma nella maniera di quello artefice che ha fatto la lunga pratica diventare maniera, con ciò sia che l’imitazione è una ferma arte di fare apunto quel che tu fai come sta il più bello delle cose della natura, pigliandola schietta senza la maniera del tuo maestro o d’altri, i quali ancora eglino ridussono in maniera le cose che tolsono da la natura.” For this vitally important passage in Vasari see Pinelli 1993, pp. 101–103.

201 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 82: “Ma è tempo che trattiamo sopra di quelli che la buona maniera pigliar vogliono da un solo, ritraendo et immitando di lui ogni cosa, come per scopo e singularissimo essemplio loro. A questi soleva dire Michelangelo che chi andava dietro a gli altri, mai gli passava inanzi. Ma questi debbono essere tali nell’imitazione, che essi abbino similitudine con gli essempli non in una o in due parti, ma in tutte [...]”

202 Lomazzo 1584, p. 437: “Io non ho mai trovato che alcuno che abbia seguito l’orma o l’esempio di un altro, lo abbia potuto agguagliare, non che avanzare. Michelangelo ne fa fede, il quale non è mai potuto aggiungere alla bellezza del torso di Ercole di Apollonio Ateniese [...] siccome Daniello Ricciarelli, Perino del Vaga, ed altri che hanno seguito la maniera di esso Michelangelo, non hanno mai potuto agguagliar lui.”

203 For the art market in Seicento Rome see Cavazzini 2008, and Spear 1997, pp. 210–224.

for being a follower of Pieter van Laer and the circle of the so-called *bamboccianti*. Passeri considers the genre painting of these Dutch and Flemish painters a low and vulgar art, so he emphasizes the importance of copying the beauty of nature. Rather than following a customary fashion for economic reasons (Miele is said to have earned a lot of money by copying the style of the *bamboccianti*),<sup>204</sup> the artist is invited to develop his own style by referring to the works of nature.<sup>205</sup> Nature's unlimited variety provides a vast amount of forms and features, capable of satisfying the individual taste of the single artist.<sup>206</sup> If, on the contrary, the artist sticks to the habit of imitating his predecessors, he might never be able to be original: "è solito di chi siegue alcuno di non passar giammai avanti di quello."<sup>207</sup>

If Passeri was a dedicated persecutor of genre painting, Carlo Cesare Malvasia can be seen as a supporter of the style of the Carracci family. His *Felsina pittrice* (1678) is a history of the painters of Bologna and a good example of an art-related *campanilismo*. Although the art of Annibale Carracci, Lodovico Carracci, and Guido Reni represented the peak of artistic excellence to Malvasia, he was still able to accept different forms of expression because he identified the personal style of each painter as an articulation of his individual and distinct nature. In the case of Alessandro Tiarini, a Bolognese painter who died in 1668, the urge to develop an individual style is thus related to the need to surpass the pre-

---

204 Passeri 1772 (1934), p. 221: "Giovanni con quelle sue bambocciate fece qualche avanzo di moneta, e faceva vedere essere figlio di mercante, perche era molto accorto nel negoziare, includendo nelle sue vendite bazzarri, cambi e altre cabale profittevoli, et haveva gran seguito di questi negozianti delle Pitture."

205 Passeri 1772 (1934), p. 220: "Quelli sono mirabili che si fanno gl'autori della loro maniera; altri non così vivaci vedendosi illuminati da quello che si fa scorta d'un nuovo sentiero, s'adestano di farsi seguaci di quell'orme di già segnate e sanno farsi rigorosi imitatori e pare conseguiscono il merito della lode al pari di quelli che gli sono percursori, e guida."

206 Passeri 1772 (1934), p. 220: "Nella pittura ciascheduno si fa imitatore della natura per esser ella l'unico esemplare degl'oggetti de quali si prende la norma; ma perche e tanto copiosa di forme, di materie, e d'accidenti che nella sua diversità costituisce varie l'idee di chi l'imita eleggendosi ciascheduno quella parte di lei che gli è più geniale, molti che non sanno bene specchiarsi in questa per non havere pupille così ben accorte si fanno specchio di quello che altri hanno estratto dalle sue belle sembianze e vogliono che quegli gli serva d'originale esempio alla loro imitatione. È vero che un ingegno è di gran sollievo all'altro, et insieme somministrano vaghe forme per rendersi più perfetti nell'imitare, e solo Raffaello s'è reso unico perche il suo ingegno che quasi partecipava del Divino non hebbe mai tra gl'huomini chi lo pareggiasse perche non seppero mai trovare nella Natura quelle belle Idee quali era pieno il suo intelletto che lo partoriva così felicemente con tanta vivacità."

207 Passeri 1772 (1934), p. 220.

ceding masters, since artistic personality and progress are closely interrelated.<sup>208</sup> The intimate connection between the personal characteristics of an artist and his work are therefore likewise important to Malvasia. When he describes Tiarini as being melancholic and sad, he can adopt the same descriptive principles for the evaluation of Tiarini's paintings. Because every artist is accustomed to portraying himself, Tiarini loves to paint scenes of great grief and sorrow.<sup>209</sup> But the influences of the emotional status and affective behaviour of the painter were not limited to the works alone. Even the beholder, when looking at Tiarini's paintings, could feel his great sorrow. This process of affective transmission is illustrated by Malvasia with a telling example: When the Duke of Mantua was shown a painting by Tiarini with a representation of Mary at the feet of the Holy Cross, he suddenly burst into tears.<sup>210</sup> Just as Horace wanted his poet to feel grief when composing sad poems,<sup>211</sup> Malvasia invites the artist not only to identify with the subjects of his painting, but also to express his own emotions through his art. In doing so, he could rely on the work of authors of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, who had established a form of biography in which the description of the artist's character and the description of the his works' character were closely interwoven.

---

208 Malvasia 1678 (1971), p. 480: “[Alessandro Tiarini] Si vantò d’esser singolare e di battere una maniera da ogn’altra affatto diversa, condannando talvolta tanti scolari de’ Caracci, troppo di quella de’ loro maestri religiosi seguaci, e lodando perciò Guido, da essi tanto discostatosi, e con lui perciò similmente sentendo che il seguir gli altri sia un farsi ad essi secondo; anzi che *Qui alium sequitur, nihil sequatur; nihil inveniat, immo nihil querat*; soggiungendo che ciascuno ha dalla natura la sua propria maniera, la quale basta seguire e raffinare con lo studio [...]”

209 Malvasia 1678 (1971), p. 480: “Perché ogni pittore ritrae se stesso, essendo egli [Tiarini] di natura malinconico, ebbe un genio particolare alle cose meste; onde, al contrario del coreggio, che sempre ridenti, piangenti e addolorate ci fé vedere le sue figure il Tiarini, avendo in queste un particular genio e una dote singolare.”

210 Malvasia 1678 (1971), p. 480: “[...] mi raccontava che quando, prima di partire dal Duca di Mantova, gli volle offrire in dono quella Madonna lagrimante ai piè soli del supposto crocefisso Salvatore, prima che Sua Altezza la vedesse: ‘E che sì’, – gli disse – ‘Signor Alessandro, ch’io indovino che cosa è in quel quadro? Qualche figura che piange; e forse forse una Beata Vergine addolorata’; soggiogendomi poi come ammutitosi e commosso nel rimirla, presala con le sue mani, e portatala nella stanza contigua, vidde successivamente uscirne la Signora Duchessa e dirgli: ‘Che avete fatto, Signor Tiarini? Voi avete fatto piangere il Signor Duca.’”

211 Horace (1942), pp. 459–461: “If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself”/“si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.” (*Ars poetica*, 102–105) For a discussion of the impact of this concept cfr. Rudd 1976, pp. 170–181.

### 3 Selective Imitation and Repetition

As has been discussed, the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* was frequently used in the Cinquecento. Due to its semantic flexibility, it could address many different issues, ranging from the personal style of a painter to the pictorial representation of his individual ideas, the involuntary reproduction of his own physical features in his works, or the production of self-portraits. In the following pages, its meaning is discussed in relation to debates on the recurrent features and patterns in the style or *maniera* of a painter during the Renaissance. These features were not only negatively viewed as a lack of *imitatio naturae*; they could also be seen positively, when associated with the artist's ability to choose from a great variety of objects.

As has been shown by Antonio Pinelli, the term *maniera* oscillated between two opposing meanings during the Cinquecento. On the one hand, it stood for the refined imitation of nature; on the other, it signified monotony, artificiality, and affectation – caused by the excessive use of repetitive patterns. Vasari's *Vite* provides a good source for the analysis of the ambiguity of the term in the Cinquecento. Although he employed the term *maniera* to define the style of an epoch or a region (for example the “*maniera antica*” or the “*maniera tedesca*”), it was mostly used to denote the characteristics of the style of a single artist. In fact, every painter was equipped with a unique *maniera*, by which he was distinguishable from other artists. Vasari understood these individual forms of expression to be the result of the artistic process of selection or *electio*: By choosing from the most beautiful forms of nature according to their own *ingegno*, each artist created something entirely new. *Maniera* can thus be labeled as an additive element, opposing the exact reproduction of the imperfect forms of nature. It was considered by Vasari to be a major achievement of the artists of the Cinquecento. The lack of *maniera* was equivalent to the absence of ideal beauty and *disegno*, and artists were frequently criticized when showing a “*maniera cruda e affaticata*”, typical of the artists of the *prima età*. But the process of *electio*, fundamental for the development of an individual style, had its downside too. Artists who practiced *electio* excessively abandoned the essential example of nature and lost themselves in the routine of repeatedly used patterns and prototypes. In the negative sense of the term *maniera*, they worked merely according to their memory without con-

sidering the actual origins of their art. It comes as no surprise, then, that Vasari referred to their working methods derogatorily as “tirare di pratica” and “lavorare di maniera”.<sup>1</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the recognition of individual forms of artistic expression was thus closely correlated to the identification of distinct patterns and formulae. The style of a painter was not only conditioned by the use of colours, the application of light or shadow, and the composition of figures, but was also indicated by the employment of repeatedly used prototypes. Consisting of the characteristic outlines of figures, but also minor details such as the identical shapes of ears, eyes, and nostrils, these often unconsciously perceived or produced patterns were part of the individual vocabulary of an artist. Since the publication of John Shearman’s *Mannerism* in 1967, the artistic production dating from 1520 to 1600 has been labeled in accordance with these presumptions. The art of the Late Renaissance was characterized as an art that was more concerned with the refinement of aesthetic features than with the faithful representation of nature; the capricious forms and figures of such paintings were classified as *manneristic*. Derived from the Italian noun *maniera*, meaning the manner, fashion, or way in which a work is done, the adjective drew attention to the manual realization of paintings, but was also meant in the sense of *stylish style*. By demonstrating their well-bred negligence when executing their paintings, the artists of the Cinquecento gave visual expression to their *facilità* and thus adhered to the principle of *sprezzatura*, popularized by the publication of Baldassare Castiglione’s *Cortegiano* in 1528. As an aesthetic ideal that was focused on complexity rather than economy, *mannerism* or *manierismo* was characterized as a form of art that was unconfined by established rules and conventions.<sup>2</sup> The following pages try to allocate a different meaning to recurrent features in a painter’s style. Rather than being the evidence of working routines or *sprezzatura*, they can be seen as a way to demonstrate various values, ranging from a new definition of painting to a re-evaluation of the female body and to the expression of love and affection.

---

1 Pinelli 1993, pp. 94–105.

2 Shearman 1967, pp. 18 ff. See also Shearman 1963 and Freedberg 1965, who provided the initial arguments for the discussion of *mannerism* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



### 3.1 Art Historiography in Quattrocento Florence

Vasari's negative characterization of painters who worked routinely without considering nature was clearly indebted to the long-standing tradition of art historiography in Florence. By associating repetitive patterns with an art of the past, he evoked the old narrative of the medieval artist who was not capable of appreciating or capturing the beauty of nature. Florentine humanists and historiographers of the Quattrocento were particularly keen to differentiate between the art of the Middle Ages, pejoratively labeled as *maniera greca* or *bizantina*, and the art of their own, more cultured age, beginning with the works of Cimabue and Giotto. As has been shown by Carl Goldstein, the rhetorical strategy to increase the status of the resident artists by devaluing other forms of artistic expression was the result of a struggle for political autonomy and power.<sup>3</sup> Following the example of ancient epideictic oratory, the Florentine humanists praised their city's artists in panegyric terms, as one way to enhance its fame, honour, and significance. Filippo Villani's historiography *De origine civitatis Florentiae* (ca. 1381–1382), as well as Cristoforo Landino's commentary to Dante's *Divina comedia* (1481), includes not only the names of famous Florentine scholars, poets, and musicians, but also the approval of its painters. Writing on the decline of the arts after the time of Zeuxis, Phidias, and Praxiteles, Villani states that Cimabue and Giotto revived the art of painting through their faithful representations of nature.<sup>4</sup> Landino discussed the decline of the arts during the Middle Ages as a result of Italy's subjugation by foreign forces – a dark age brought to an end by the Florentine artists.<sup>5</sup> In short, by celebrating their artists as the protagonists of a new age, the humanists of Florence methodically increased the fame and fortune of their native city and republic.

The Florentine artists from the Quattrocento and Cinquecento followed these footsteps and referred to the Middle Ages, often marked as Greek or Byzantine, as an epoch devoid of any beauty. As a means of distinctive self-assurance, they em-

---

3 Goldstein 1991, pp. 641 ff.

4 As cited in Baxandall 1971, p. 146: “Michi quoque eorum exemplo fas sit hoc loco, irridendum pace dixerim, egregios pictores florentinos inserere, qui artem exanguem et pene extinctam suscitaverunt. Inter quos primus Johannes, cui cognomento Cimabue dictus est, antiquatam picturam et a nature similitudine quasi lascivam et vagantem longius arte et ingenio revocavit.”

5 Landino 1481 (2001), vol. 1, p. 241: “Ma tale arte dopo sua perfectione chome molte altre nell'italica servitù quasi si spense; et erono le pitture in quegli secoli non puncto attegiate, et senza affecto alchuno d'animo. Fu adunque el primo Ioanni fiorentino cognominato Cimabue che ritrovò e liniamenti naturali, et la vera proportione, la quale e Greci chiamano symetria, et le figure ne' superiori pictori morte fece vive et di varii gesti [...].”

phasized their own accomplishments with the intention to disparage an art that was not comparable in terms of imitation and richness in detail. When writing his *Commentarii*, the first modern treatise on the art of sculpture, Lorenzo Ghiberti obeyed this narrative principle. In the introductory chapter of his treatise, he writes that Greek artists from Byzantium re-introduced the art of painting in a rudimentary form to the peninsula,<sup>6</sup> whereas it was Giotto's privilege to bring the art to a first peak of perfection.<sup>7</sup> The art of the Middle Ages, briskly mentioned and superficially discussed, served merely as a background for the *mise-en-scène* of the outstanding artists of the Renaissance, including Ghiberti himself.

By praising the art of Giotto, humanists and artists deliberately undermined the appreciation that was still paid to Byzantine or medieval works of art in the Quattrocento. Paintings seemingly made centuries ago were considered particularly precious because of their geographical origins in a past that was imbued with saints and apostles. As a sign of authenticity, those paintings figured as worshipped icons by the hand of Saint Luke, or as *acheiropoietà*, miraculously made by the intervention of God. Highly requested and having an auratic appearance, these works of art were often the main subject of faithful devotion and popular veneration, whereas the art of Giotto was at first merely appreciated by the social elite.<sup>8</sup> An example of the *longue durée* of Greek painting in Italy can be found in the Early Christian tradition of a particular *typos* of representations of the Virgin Mary, who holds her child in her left arm while pointing with the index finger of her right hand to the Redeemer. A painting from the church of S. Niccolò del Carmine in Siena (Fig. 13), dating ca. 1280, was made in accordance with this iconographic tradition. Later copies demonstrate that the prototype and its stylistic features remained in vogue until far into the Quattrocento. Rather than being based on the Renaissance criteria of inventiveness and variety, the authority of the *maniera greca* was thus founded on the principle of unchangeable patterns and a limited iconographic programme.<sup>9</sup>

6 Ghiberti (1998), p. 83: "Cominciorono i Greci debilissimamente l'arte della pictura e con molta rozeza produssero in essa: tanto quanto gl'antichi furon periti, tanto erano in questa età grossi e rozi."

7 Ghiberti (1998), p. 84: "Arrechò l'arte nuova, lasciò la rozeza de' Greci, sormontò eccellentissimamente in Etruria.[...] Arecò l'arte naturale e la gentilezza con essa, non uscendo delle misure. Fu peritissimo in tutta l'arte, fu inventore e trovatore di tanta doctrina la quale era stata sepulta circa d'anni 600." Similarly, although somewhat briefer, Cennino Cennini made an identical observation, see Cennini (1859), p. 3: "Giotto rimutò l'arte del dipignere di greco in latino, e ridusse al moderno; ed ebbe l'arte più compiuta che avessi mai più nessuno."

8 Cfr. Larner 1971, pp. 276 f., with a discussion of Boccaccio's *Decamerone* and Petrarch's testament as examples for the humanistic veneration of Giotto's art.

9 See Belting 1990, pp. 381 f., Reisenbichler 2006, p. 78, and Cutler 1994, 351 f.



Figure 13 Unknown artist, Virgin with Child, ca. 1280, Siena, S. Niccolò del Carmine

### 3.2 *Varietas* as Category of the Humanist Art Critic

The following centuries followed a different aesthetic paradigm. Because the art was grounded in the abundant forms of nature, often symbolized by personifications of Mother Nature in the vest of the multi-breasted goddess Diana Ephesia, art theorists demanded a faithful representation of its beauty, and artists were required to capture the diversity of its various manifestations. The academic foundation of this new approach was articulated according to the ancient principles of *varietas* (variety) and first re-applied to the arts by Quattrocento humanists.<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle had already stressed the utility of variety in his *Rhetoric*.<sup>11</sup> According to the philosopher, variety was an inherent principle of nature and thought to incite pleasure amongst the members of an audience. In the rhetoric of the Roman Republic, manifoldness or *varietas* became one of the central stylistic means of decorating a speech. It served to maintain the attention of the auditors and was used to enhance the persuasive power of an argument by evoking the emotions of the public. This enhancement was either achieved by a heterogenous delivery, using various means of expression, or even by modulating the tonality of the voice. An example of the latter, the so-called *variatio pronuntiando*, is given by Cicero when he writes that a speaker should adapt his voice to the different parts of his speech: A speaker has to use different emotional tonalities to produce variety, just as a painter uses colours.<sup>12</sup> Understood as signs of the eloquence and integrity of a speaker, variety, ornament, and abundance of expression were considered as entirely positive.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, a uniform speech was criticized by the Roman orators. According to Quintilian, monotony (ὁμοειδέεια) was thus con-

10 For the concept of *varietà* in the Middle Ages see Pfisterer 2002, pp. 50 f.

11 Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 11, p. 125: “Change also is pleasant, since change is in the order of nature; for perpetual sameness creates an excess of the normal condition; whence it was said: ‘Change in all things is sweet’. This is why what we only see at intervals, whether men or things, is pleasant; for there is a change from the present, and at the same time it is rare.” (*Rhetoric*, I, XI, 20).

12 Cicero (1942–1948), vol. 1, p. 172: “Nam voces ut chordae sunt intentae quae ad quemque tactum respondeat, acuta gravis, cita tarda, magna parva, quas tamen inter omnes est suo quaque in genere mediocris; atque etiam illa sunt ab his delapsa plura genera, lene asperum, contractum diffusum, continenti spiritu intermisso, fractum scissum, flexo sono attenuatum inflatum. Nullum est enim horum generum quod non arte ac moderatione tractetur; hi sunt actori, ut pictori, expositi ad variandum colores.” (*De oratore*, III, LVII, 216).

13 A rare exception to the rule is found in Cicero *De oratore*, III, XXV, 98, where he suggests to use rhetorical ornaments cautiously to preserve the beauty of a speech for a long period. Just as the paint of a new artwork would soon lose its luminescence, the fascination of the *ornatus* might diminish rapidly (Cicero then hastens to add that even old paintings have their own charme).

sidered the indicator of a speaker's lack of judgement and intelligence. Not only did it deprive the audience of an enjoyable stimulus, but it was also believed to be very unpleasant for the mind and ears of the public.<sup>14</sup>

Leon Battista Alberti was the first to introduce the concept of *varietas* into the art literature of the Renaissance.<sup>15</sup> According to his *Della pittura*, *copia* and *varietà* (or “*copia et varietas rerum*”, as the Latin version of his treatise puts it) are elementary features of an *istoria*, a history painting. They ensure that a beholder feels pleasure and engages in the contemplation of pictorial representations.<sup>16</sup> A painting disposes of *copia* (copiousness) when it features a great number of many different objects – for example, representations of the bodies of old and young men, children, girls, and women. But Alberti mentions the depiction of hens, birds, buildings, and different landscapes as well.<sup>17</sup> By means of *varietà* (variety), the *copia* should be further diversified. It was not sufficient to represent a large number of figures; beyond that they also had to be very dissimilar. Only when the bodies are *molto dissimili*, a painting disposes of *varietà* and evokes the delight of its beholder. Alberti made this point particularly clear. He expected the painter to depict the human body in its entire diversity and demanded standing, sitting, or lying figures as well as the representation of en-face or en-profil faces. In short, no single person in a painting should ever resemble another in gesture or posture (“in niuno sia un medesimo gesto o posamento che nell’altro”).<sup>18</sup> Of course, Alberti was aware of the excessive use of *copia* and *varietà* and tried to regulate the artist's license. To escape the risk of exuberant and confusing paint-

14 Quintilian (1920–1922), vol. 3, p. 238: “Peior hac ὁμοειδεία; quae nulla varietatis gratia levat taedium atque est tota coloris unius, qua maxime prenditur carens arte orator, eaque et in sententiis et in figuris et in compositione longe non animis solum, sed etiam auribus est ingratisissima.” (*Institutio oratoria*, VIII, III).

15 For the following cfr. Gosebruch 1957, Claudia Cieri Via 1999, and Puttfarken 2006.

16 Alberti (2002), pp. 128 f.: “Come ne’ cibi e nella musica sempre la novità e abbondanza tanto piace quanto sia differente dalle cose antiche e consuete, così l’animo si diletta d’ogni copia e varietà. Per questo in pittura la copia e varietà piace.” In the Latin version, “*copia et varietas rerum*” are also briefly discussed in § 60.

17 Alberti (2002), pp. 128 f.: “Dirò io quella istoria essere copiosissima in quale a’ suoi luoghi sieno permisti vecchi, giovani, fanciulli, donne, fanciulle, fanciullini, polli, catellini, uccellini, cavalli, pecore, edifici, province, e tutte simili cose (...).”

18 Alberti (2002), pp. 128 f.: “Ma in ogni storia la varietà sempre fu ioconda, e in prima sempre fu grata quella pittura in quale sieno i corpi con suoi posari molto dissimili. Ivi adunque stieno alcuni ritti e mostrino tutta la faccia, con le mani in alto e con le dita liete, fermi in su un piè. Agli altri sia il viso contrario e le braccia remisse, coi piedi aggiunti. E così a ciascuno sia suo atto e flessione di membra: altri segga, altri si posi su un ginocchio, altri giacciano. (...) Così adunque desidero in ogni storia servarsi quanto dissi modestia e verecundia, e così sforzarsi che in niuno sia un medesimo gesto o posamento che nell’altro.”

ings, he recommended modulating the number of figures according to the superior principles of *compositio* and *decorum*.<sup>19</sup>

When writing about “*copia et varietas rerum*” in 1435, Alberti could already rely on a vast tradition of humanist art criticism. As has been shown by Michael Baxandall, many scholars of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century who were interested in rhetoric and poetry trained their verbal skills by describing works of art. Following the example of epideictic oratory, in which the principles of ekphrasis were formulated, they engaged in detailed descriptions of events, figures, and objects. The written words were meant to verbally reproduce the peculiarities of a painting as well as demonstrate the intellectual capacities of its author. This becomes clear if we look at an encomium of the painter Pisanello, written by Guarino da Verona around 1430. Praising Pisanello’s representations of varied flowers on green meadows in spring, the leafless trees in winter, or even the sweat on the brow of a labouring peasant, Guarino improved his verbal modes.<sup>20</sup> An innovative and expressive art, emancipated from the repetitive schemes of medieval painting, was thus a necessary precondition for the humanist art critic. Consequently, George of Trebizond, one of the leading humanists of Alberti’s time, considered *varietas* to be an important attribute not only of a speech, but also of paintings, buildings, and poems.<sup>21</sup>

Against this background, it is rather unlikely that Guarino and his literary contemporaries, such as Bartholomeo Fazio or Angelo Decembrio, were fascinated by pictures that had been imported from Constantinople. Schematic and repetitive representations of saints, typical for the *maniera greca*, were not an adequate vehicle for verbal expression. As has been shown by Rensselaer W. Lee and others, Alberti deliberately chose to introduce rhetorical terms to the art theory of his time.<sup>22</sup> By systematically applying them to paintings, he aimed at a re-evaluation of an art that was still considered to be part of the underrated *artes mechanicae*.<sup>23</sup>

---

19 In the Latin version of his treatise, Alberti limits the amount of figures to nine or ten. Similar suggestions were put forward by Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 116 and Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 171.

20 Baxandall 1971, pp. 92–93.

21 As cited in Baxandall 1971, p. 95: “Nam varietas non modo pictoribus, aut poetis, aut istrionibus, sed etiam cum omni in re dum apte fiat, tum maxime in oratoria facultate, et utilitatis et suavitatis videtur habere plurimum, quippe que nam et rem muniat, et delectationes videntibus afferat.”

22 For the influence of rhetorics on the art theory of the Quattrocento see Lee 1940 and Spencer 1957.

23 For Alberti’s strategy to enhance the painter’s social status see Zöllner 1997.

### 3.3 Medieval Artists and the Animal Instinct

Seen from the perspective of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the artistic fame of the Middle Ages was even worse. The advanced techniques of Renaissance painting, including the study of anatomy, the application of linear perspective, and the accurate imitation of nature, had transformed the art of the medieval painters into naive and child-like scribbles, disappointing the critical eyes of Cinquecento humanists and resulting in the loss or destruction of a great many works of the *maniera greca*.<sup>24</sup> Even Cimabue, once venerated for his accuracy and modernity, was criticized for his outlandish and peculiar style in the bright light of the new century.<sup>25</sup>

Giovanni Battista Gelli, a Florentine humanist and member of the influential Accademia degli Umidi, was particularly fascinated by the progress of the arts and had an important role in the academic construction of Cinquecento aesthetics. He followed the historical narrative of a decline of the arts after the end of the Roman empire, repeatedly underscoring the impact of Giotto and insisting on a faithful representation of nature. In a brief collection of artists' lives, presumably written in the 1540s and read by Vasari before composing his *Vite*,<sup>26</sup> Gelli criticised the medieval painters for their lack of natural imitation in remarkably harsh terms:

“Non si vedevono ancora in que' tempi altre pitture che certe fatte da alcuni Greci, le quali paion fatte tutte in sur una stampa co' piedi per lo lungho appiccati al muro et con le mani aperte e con certi visi stracicati e tondi con occhi aperti che parevono spiritati. [...] era la loro maniera più tosto un modo di coprire una tavola di colorj che di imitare le cose naturali come debbe far l'arte, e erono le loro figure quasi tutte in faccia [...] et senza dintorni che somigliassino il vero et senza rilievo alcuno, di maniera che più tosto parevano pelle d'uomini scorticati o parte di panni distesi in sur un muro, che huomini vestiti et con certi visi e occhii spalancati che parevano più tosto di mostri che di huomini.”<sup>27</sup>

24 For the use of model-book drawings, one of the causes for the presumed artistic uniformity during the Middle Ages, see Scheller 1995.

25 Cfr. Gelli 1549, p. 14: “Nella Pittura si da il vanto di essere stato il primo di haverla ritrovata a Giotto cittadin nostro Fiorentino, perche se bene dipinse molti anni innanzi a lui Cimabue suo maestro, il quale fu ancora egli di Firenze; egli seguito ancora egli quella maniera la quale era allora in uso per tutta l'Italia, chiamata Greca, per esser venuta di Grecia: la quale puo veder molto bene ognuno per molte cose che ci son di que'tempi quale ella fusse, & quanto discosto da il vero: conciosia che tutte quelle figure che facevono quegli che seguirono questo modo del fare, o, almanco le piu somiglino, o habbino aria piu tosto di molte altre cose che di huomini.”

26 Cfr. Tanturli 1976, p. 297, Sohm 2001, p. 93.

27 Gelli (1896), pp. 35–37.

As was typical for the polemical attitude of a Renaissance scholar, Gelli indulged in lively and humorous descriptions of pictorial representations that had begun to appear ridiculous since the dawn of an art based on rational principles. At the same time shocked and fascinated, he described the stylistic shortcomings of Greek painting in detail, whereas his predecessors in the Quattrocento either lacked an appropriate language to characterize the peculiarities of these works, decently maintained the *decorum*, or were simply not interested in medieval art at all. Gelli was also among the first to employ the term *maniera* negatively, when he wrote about the painters of the Middle Ages. While the term indicated the use of identical patterns and prototypes, it was applied whenever the artists ignored the primacy of nature and instead turned to their internalized habits and working routines. This is made clear by an anecdote in which Gelli emphasizes Giotto's superior knowledge of the art of painting. When looking at the drawings of the young shepherd Giotto, Cimabue is said to have suddenly noted the defects of his own art:

“[...] imperò che allora quando que' maestri di que' tempi volevano dipignere o figure o animali o altro, le facevano con quel modo e con quella maniera ne la quale eglino avevano fatto l' abito senza considerare le naturali. E però, se bene voi avvertite, voi vedrete tutte le figure di que' tempi quasi un modo medesimo o co' piedi appiccati per lo lungho al muro, o le mani aperte e tutte simigliarsi nel busto, anzj aver quasi quel medesimo, la qual cosa è drittamente contra la natura come può bene osservare ciascheduno.”<sup>28</sup>

It is no coincidence that Gelli introduced the discussion of “dipingere di maniera” in his biographical account of Giotto, the first artist to have rediscovered the imitation of nature. Compared to the works of Giotto, works representing identical figures, even replicating their clothes, arms, legs, and busts, were viewed as proof of an undeveloped art, an art which was more concerned with the duplication of existing prototypes than with faithful representation.<sup>29</sup>

However, Gelli's criticism was not only concerned with questions regarding the imitation of objects. His observations were also stimulated by a modern understanding of the process of artistic invention, closely connected with the social position of the Renaissance artist and having matured in the course of the Cinquecento. The new appreciation of this expressive means was achieved by drawing

---

28 Gelli (1896), p. 40.

29 Cfr. Summers 1978, who discusses medieval patterns of representations which continued to exist in Renaissance paintings, and Loh 2004, for a positive re-interpretation of repetitive schemes in later centuries.



a distinct line between the creations of the animal kingdom, due to instinct, and the creations of man, due to reason. Whereas animals were bound to the repetitive reproduction of identical tasks or objects – for example, the construction of spiderwebs or nests, the human mind was believed to be able to create an endless amount of various objects. Benedetto Varchi was particularly aware of the differences between these two opposing ways of creating. According to his influential *Lezzioni*, written in 1547 and published in 1550, paintings and sculptures had to be done with “vera ragione”, not by relying on one’s own instincts.<sup>30</sup> Similar notions can be found in the works of Francesco di Giorgio Martini,<sup>31</sup> Pietro Aretino,<sup>32</sup> and Gregorius Reisch, who emphasized the great flexibility of the human *fantasia* when compared to the unchangeable animal instinct in his widely read *Margarita filosofica*, first published in 1503:

“Ora perche questa potenza [fantastica] nell’uomo è ornata di ragione, per questo non necessariamente opera nel medesimo modo. Percioche alcune volte dalla compositione delle specie di diverse intentioni finge mostri, simili a i quali non mai ne vide nessuno. Nelli animali poi senza ragione è retta dell’istinto della natura, la quale è simile in tutti quelli che sono della medesima specie, però in questi non sono varie le operationi della fantasia. Vediamo, che con simile ingegno la rondine fabrica il suo nido, e l’aragna tesse la sua tela.”<sup>33</sup>

Varchi’s as well as Reisch’s observations on human reason were fundamental for the social constitution of the Renaissance artist. The painter’s inventive and intellectual capacities assured the coming into being of the great variety of pictorial

30 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 9f.: “[...] l’arte non è altro che un abito intelletivo, che fa con certa e vera ragione. [...] Dicesi ‘con vera ragione’ per due cagioni: prima, perché tutte l’arti sono infallibili, cioè non errano mai e sempre conseguiscono l’intendimento e fine loro; poi, perché mediante quelle parole ne esclude e cava l’arte colla quale i ragnateli ordiscono le loro maravigliose tele, e le rondini et altri animali fanno il nido, e molte altre cose, le quali paiono bene fatte artifiziosamente, ma nel vero non sono, perciocché, non essendo fatte per ragione ma per istinto naturale, non si possono chiamare arti veramente.”

31 Martini (1967), vol. 2, p. 505: “[...] tutti li altri animali operando naturalmente sempre ad uno modo operano, come similmente ogni irondine nidifica e similmente ogni ape ovvero aranea domifica, ma nell’intelletto umano essendo l’arte con la forza assegnata, tutte le opare sue, le quali sono infinite, infinito varia. Onde volendo esemplificare di tutti l’istrumenti che nella mente occorano, saria uno processo infinito.”

32 As cited in Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 474: “Ché invero l’arte è una nativa considerazione de l’eccellenze de la natura, la quale se ne vien con noi da le fasce; quella poi che si impara è bene arte, ma inlegitima, ché non bastarda si può dire l’usata dai ragni ne le composizioni de le tele loro [...]”

33 Reisch 1600, p. 616.

compositions, ranging from representations of apostles and saints to the depiction of dreadful monsters. Unavoidably, artists who merely engaged in the reproduction of identical subjects were labeled as unimaginative and associated with the reduced abilities and instinctive behaviour of animals.

### 3.4 Perugino as Negative Example

Of course, the habit of re-using patterns and archaic prototypes was not limited to medieval artists. Whereas apprentices were trained to copy the style and artistic vocabulary of their master, necessary for the execution of coherent large-scale commissions such as fresco cycles or altarpieces, the master himself was usually encouraged to show his *ingegno* by inventing new compositions. Terms such as *idea*, *invenzione*, or *fantasia*, frequently used in the art literature of the Renaissance, underscore the importance given to these individual forms of creativity.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, when artists recycled figures or re-used cartoons, the same principles of criticism that led to the derision of medieval painters were applied to the painters in the Cinquecento. Obviously, the effect of monotony and repetitiveness was still regarded as an artistic vice.

Pietro Perugino was probably the most prominent painter who was accused of “tirare di pratica” by art critics of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although he was a successful and sought-after artist who was commissioned to do a great many paintings at the turn of the century, his artistic fame began to decline in the following decades. This decline was probably the result of his style and working practice, which had begun to seem outdated and repetitive. One of the first authors to criticize Perugino for his lack of *ingenium* was the humanist Paolo Giovio, author of a short collection of artists’ biographies and a later contributor to Vasari’s *Vite*. After having praised the artist for the angelic features of his figures in the Vatican of Pope Sixtus IV, his discussion of the artist’s achievements took a different turn when Giovio compared Peruginos’s paintings to the works of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. Seen in the light of these artists, Perugino’s works were criticized by Giovio as monotonous and Perugino was accused of having a sterile *ingenium* which – according to our author – resulted in the re-utilization of beautiful but identical faces, features that the artist had been painting since he was a young man.<sup>35</sup>

34 Cfr. Ames-Lewis 2000, pp. 177–187, Kemp 1977, pp. 353ff., and Garrard 2010, p. 57.

35 Giovio (1971–1977), pp. 19f.: “At postquam illa perfectae artis praeclara lumina Vincius, Michael Angelus atque Raphael, ab illis saeculi tenebris repente orta, illius famam et

Giovio's characterization of Perugino, written around 1523, continued to be in vogue during the entire Cinquecento. Whereas the latter's pupil Raphael was praised for the abundance of variety,<sup>36</sup> the works of his master were discussed as an example of a stationary and regressive art. Giorgio Vasari was well aware of these shortcomings and discussed the issue of repetitive patterns in both editions of the artist's life.<sup>37</sup> Although emphatically describing the frustration felt by Perugino when being denigrated by comparison to the works of younger artists, he did not hesitate to blame him for the use of identical figures: "Aveva Pietro tanto lavorato e tanto gli abondava sempre da lavorare, che e' metteva in opera bene spesso le medesime cose; et era talmente la dottrina dell'arte sua ridotta a maniera, ch'e' faceva a tutte le figure un'aria medesima."<sup>38</sup> As shown by his remark, Vasari identified the monotony of expression in the works of Perugino as a result of his working practice. Having been a much-requested painter, Perugino had no choice but to re-utilize drawings and cartoons already employed in previous commissions in order to conclude his works in the allotted time.

In fact, Perugino was infamous among his fellow artists for this inclination. According to Vasari's accounts, many painters disapproved of Perugino precisely because of his standardized vocabulary; even Michelangelo accused him of being *goffo*, an adjective often used to characterize dull artists. His objectionable custom became publicly known after he had finished an altarpiece for the high altar of the SS. Annunziata in Florence. Commissioned by the confraternity of the Servites of Mary in the years 1505–1507, it included a painting of the *Ascension of Mary*, in which she is venerated by saints and apostles and assisted by a group of six angels, four of which are playing musical instruments (Fig. 14). On seeing the representation of Mary and her companions, the critical observers were not only reminded of similar faces used in some of his earlier works, but also astonished by Perugino's audacity in reproducing the entire compositional scheme of one of his

---

nomen admirandis operibus obruerunt, frustra Perusinus, meliora aemulando atque observando, partam dignitatem retinere conatus est, quod semper ad suos bellulos vultus, quibus iuvenis haeserat, sterilitate ingenii [rediret], sic ut prae pudore vix ignominiam animo sustineret, quando illi augustarum imaginum nudatos artus et continentis naturae potestates in multiplici rerum omnium genere stupenda varietate figurarent."

36 Cfr. Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 196: "[...] in tutte le sue opere egli [Raphael] usò una varietà tanto mirabile, che non è figura che né d'aria né di movimento si somigli, tal che in ciò non appare ombra di quello che da' pittori oggi in mala parte è chiamata maniera, cioè cattiva pratica, ove si veggono forme e volti quasi sempre simili."

37 For Vasari's life of Perugino with particular attention to stylistic features see Nelson 2004 and Hiller von Gaertringen 2011.

38 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, p. 585.



Figure 14 Pietro Perugino, *Ascension of Mary*, 1505–1507, Florence, SS. Annunziata

previous altarpieces. Indeed, the *Ascension of Mary* was a mere re-elaboration of a painting that Perugino had completed for the high altar of S. Pietro in Perugia in 1498 (Fig. 15). Representing the *Ascension of Christ*, it contained the same group of angels and disposed a similar assemblage of saints underneath the ascending Christ. Although minor details had been changed, most obviously the replacement of Christ and the substitution of Mary with the apostle Thomas, the SS. Annunziata altarpiece was a faithful repetition of this scheme and even had nearly identical measurements (218 × 333 cm vs. 216 × 280 cm).<sup>39</sup>

As has been shown by recent scholarship, Perugino was particularly trained to fulfill the demands of his commissioners, and the success of his workshop was partly based on the frequent re-employment of cartoons and compositional schemes. By merely adapting his previous compositions – slightly altering its figures by enlarging, decreasing, or inverting the cartoons – he was able to create a great number of works, characterized by a certain self-similarity.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as has been confirmed by the latest technical analysis, his workshop was acquainted to use a particular siccativo, making the oil-based pigments dry more rapidly.<sup>41</sup> Equipped with experienced assistants accustomed to the style of their master, he was thus able to work simultaneously on several projects. As Michelle O'Malley has argued, this process was innovative and creative, giving him complete control of the design of his works while allowing them to be created relatively independent by his assistants. In a time when artists earned comparatively little for their commissions, especially when working for fraternities or religious orders, this method came in handy and saved time as well as production costs.<sup>42</sup> When Vasari recounts the episode of the SS. Annunziata altarpiece, he underscores the fact that many artists censured Perugino for his re-staged work precisely because he was thought to be avaricious or believed in saving time.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, Vasari was also aware of the painter's particular artistic situation. When Perugino tried to defend himself against the accusations of the Florentine artists, he is supposed to have said that he had always used these patterns: "Io ho

---

39 For the dates, measures, and commissioners regarding Perugino's paintings see Garibaldi 1999, esp. pp. 121–124, 140 f.

40 Hiller von Gaertringen 1999, pp. 131–222.

41 O'Malley 2007, p. 682.

42 O'Malley 2007, pp. 684, 690.

43 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, p. 568: "Dicesi che quando detta opera si scoperse, fu da tutti i nuovi artefici assai biasimata, e particolarmente perché si era Pietro servito di quelle figure che altre volte era usato mettere in opera: dove tentandolo gl'amici suoi, dicevano che affaticato non s'era, e che aveva tralasciato il buon modo dell'operare o per avarizia o per non perder tempo."



Figure 15 Pietro Perugino, *Ascension of Christ*, 1495–1498, formerly Perugia, S. Pietro, today Lyon, Musée des Beaux Arts



**Figure 16** Pietro Perugino, *Ascension of Christ*, 1510, Sansepolcro, S. Giovanni Evangelista

messo in opera le figure altre volte lodate da voi e che vi sono infinitamente piaciute: se ora vi dispiacciono e non le lodate, che ne posso io?”<sup>44</sup>

Probably invented by Vasari, Perugino’s clear-sighted self-defense illuminates the specific circumstances in which the Umbrian painter was working in Florence. Surrounded by a new generation of talented and innovative artists, the works of Perugino were evaluated according to the Florentine standards of *invenzione*: Just as the medieval painters were ridiculed by the artists of the Quattrocento, Perugino became the target of mockery and derision of the ambitious artists of the Cinquecento. In fact, after he had finished the altarpiece for the confraternity of the Servites of Mary, Perugino continued to re-use his prototypes – for example, for an altarpiece that he executed for the Duomo of Sansepolcro in 1510 (Fig. 16) – but he received no more important commissions in Florence. The advanced techniques of pictorial composition and the changing taste of the public gave rise to a reconsideration of the previous artistic periods. Although even Vasari re-used cartoons in some of his works, he invited artists to conceal their recycled figures and seek the greatest *varietà*, not only within a single work (as demanded by Alberti), but also within their whole oeuvres.<sup>45</sup> The discussion of Perugino’s life at the end of the second part of the *Vite* thus served as a line of demarcation. He was depicted as an artist of humble origins who was obsessed with his material fortune and considered to be blasphemous in heavenly matters; his economic use of repetitive schemes and patterns was a sign of his avarice as well as being understood by Vasari as a stylistic outcome of his personality.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.5 Michelangelo and the Female Body

Vasari’s discussion of “tirare di pratica” changed the standards of pictorial representation in Cinquecento Florence, obliging artists to revise if not completely redo their compositions and figures constantly. According to the practice and reputation of Renaissance painters, who were used to copying and recycling their works, this change of production patterns also led to a new understanding of artistic originality. The modern conception of an artwork as an inimitable original, closely connected with its pejorative counterpart, the copy, was partly based on the principles of *varietà*, first discussed by the humanists. In describing the life of

44 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, pp. 568 f.

45 For Vasari’s re-use of drawings and cartoons in his works cfr. Nova 1992.

46 For the rhetorical structure and function of the life of Perugino see also Hiller von Gaertringen 2011.



Michelangelo, the point of culmination of Vasari's teleological *Vite*, Vasari thus points to Michelangelo's extraordinary capacities as sculptor, painter, and architect in terms of variety and copiousness. In a particularly demonstrative anecdote, Vasari notes that Michelangelo's ability to escape repetition is associated with his extremely developed faculty of *memoria* (memory).<sup>47</sup> Capable of remembering all of his works, the artist never used the same figures twice. When asked to feign the drawing of a dabbler, he simply recalled a mediocre scribble that he had once seen on a wall and faithfully reproduced it, to the astonishment of his friends.<sup>48</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that Michelangelo figured prominently amongst the young artists of Florence who accused Perugino for his repetitive patterns.

### Lodovico Dolce on Michelangelo's Nudes

Although praised by Vasari for their great variety, the works of his compatriot Michelangelo were soon to be blamed for their lack of originality as well: the *Ignudi* (1508–1512) on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and the *Giudizio universale* (1534–1541), which replaced a previous fresco by the hand of Perugino, were harshly attacked.<sup>49</sup> The criticism pointed to the indecent postures and movements of his nude figures, who showed their private parts in a Papal chapel and were thus considered a breach of *decorum* and *verisimilitudo* on the eve of the Counter-

---

47 For the contemporary understanding of *memoria*, traditionally believed to be situated after the *imprensiva* and the *sensus communis* in the third ventricle of the human brain, see Kemp 1977, p. 379. Already Leonardo, probably equipped with an eidetic memory as well, was aware of the great potentials of the painter's *memoria* for the re-combination of pictorial elements and suggested its systematical training. Leonardo (1995), p. 59: "Ancora ho provato essere di non poca utilità, quando ti trovi allo scuro nel letto, andare colla immaginativa ripetendo i lineamenti superficiali delle forme per l'addietro studiate, o altre cose notabili da sottile speculazione comprese, ed è questo proprio un atto laudabile ed utile a confermarsi le cose nella memoria."

48 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, pp. 277 f.: "È stato Michelagnolo di una tenace e profonda memoria, che nel vedere le cose altrui una sol volta l'ha ritenute sì fattamente e servitosene in una maniera che nessuno se n'è mai quasi accorto; né ha mai fatto cosa nessuna delle sue che riscontri l'una con l'altra, perché si ricordava di tutto quello che aveva fatto. Nella sua gioventù, sendo con gli amici sua pittori, giucorno una cena a chi faceva una figura che non avessi niente di disegno, che fussi goffa, simile a que' fantocci che fanno coloro che non sanno et imbrattano le mura. Qui si valse della memoria, perché ricordatosi aver visto in un muro una di queste gofferie, la fece come se l'avessi avuta dinanzi di tutto punto, e superò tutti que' pittori: cosa difficile in uno uomo tanto pieno di disegno, avvezzo a cose scelte, che ne potessi uscir netto."

49 For a summary of the discussion see Boschloo 2008, pp. 34–48.

Reformation.<sup>50</sup> Besides the widespread nudity, partly covered with painted fabric by Daniele da Volterra after Michelangelo's death in 1564, the criticism was also concerned with questions of style. The first to condemn Michelangelo's representations of the male and female nudes in these terms was the prolific Venetian writer Lodovico Dolce. In a letter to Gasparo Ballini from 1544, he acknowledges the virtuosity of the Florentine artist, but not without noting a certain identity and resemblance among his subjects. While varying in their postures, all of his figures, regardless of their age, sex, or geographical origin, are said to display the same kind of muscles, foreshortenings, and ferociousness (cfr. Fig. 17).<sup>51</sup>

In his *Dialogo della pittura* Dolce elaborated on his criticism.<sup>52</sup> Published in dialogue form in 1557, the treatise features a Florentine, Giovan Francesco Fabrini, and his counterpart, the influential poet Pietro Aretino, an old friend of Dolce's from Venice. Obviously, the latter serves as an insightful connoisseur, who introduces Fabrini to the principles of art criticism. Repeatedly rebuking the Florentine for the monotony of his arguments in favour of his compatriot (and thus accusing him of Michelangelesque behaviour),<sup>53</sup> Aretino agrees that Michelangelo is an outstanding artist, but this excellence is limited to the representation of nude muscular bodies. Compared to the variety of other artists, Michelangelo's figures were rather repetitive: "Michelagnolo è stupendo [...], ma in una maniera sola, ch'è in fare un corpo nudo muscoloso e ricercato, con iscorti e movimenti fieri, che dimostrano minutamente ogni difficoltà dell'arte. [...] Ma nelle altre maniere è non solo minore di sé stesso, ma di altri ancora; perché egli o non sa o non vuole osservar quelle diversità delle età e dei sessi. E per conchiuderla, chi vede una sola

---

50 The problem of nude figures was already mentioned by Alberti and later discussed in Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle figure sacre e profane* (1582), where Paleotti introduces the scientific concept of *verisimilitudo*, i.e., historical probability. For a thorough discussion of the representation of the nude in the art of the Cinquecento with special regards to Vasari's *Vite* see Lazzarini 2010.

51 As published in Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 5, p. 168: "Direte voi, che la varietà è negli atti, che sono tutti diversi l'uno dall'altro. Rispondo, che in questa istessa varietà v'è una medesima somiglianza di scorti, di fierezze e di muscoli. Perché allora pare a Michel Agnolo trionfar con infinito onore di Raffaello, e di tutti gli altri dipintori, quando ei mostra di essere eccellente nelle maggiori difficoltà dell'arte. Ed è vero che queste difficoltà si contengono maggiormente nel formar l'ignudi, e nel fare iscartar le figure."

52 For Dolce's treatise and his understanding of *maniera* see Rhein 2008, esp. pp. 124–128.

53 Cfr. Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 148: "ARET: È costume da fanciullo tornare a replicar molte volte una cosa. Pure vi dirò da capo, che sono stati a' nostri di alcuni pittori eguali et eziandio in qualche parte maggiori a Michelagnolo; et ora ci è Tiziano, il quale, come ho accennato, basta per quanti ci furono. FAB: Et io tornerò sempre a dirvi che Michelangelo è solo."



**Figure 17** Michelangelo Buonarroti, Last Judgement (detail), 1534–1541, Città del Vaticano, Cappella Sistina

figura di Michelagnolo, le vede tutte.”<sup>54</sup> Dolce’s discussion of Michelangelo’s style was not only directed against Vasari’s *campanilismo*, but also served to promote other artists as well.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the praise of his fellow citizen Titian, maybe an all-too-obvious example of Venetian patriotism, Dolce repeatedly mentions the works of Raphael as an exceptional example of variety: his figures never had the same faces or identical postures, and one could clearly distinguish between male and female bodies.<sup>56</sup>

### The Female Body in the Cinquecento

That Michelangelo’s figures, especially those of women, were remarkably muscular, was a phenomenon that interested contemporary beholders as well as recent scholars. His well-defined nudes were interpreted as a sign of his homosexuality<sup>57</sup> or a physical passion for the male body,<sup>58</sup> the Sistine sibyls were read as a reflection of the patriarchal culture of the Renaissance,<sup>59</sup> and the practice of assembling figures from male models was considered a possible reason for his masculine women.<sup>60</sup> In fact, the modern beholder can not help but notice a certain predilection for virile corporality in the works of Michelangelo. Although many of his early sculptures feature the traditional attributes of female beauty, i.e., delicate limbs, graceful physiognomies, and pale and soft flesh, his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel tend to represent the female body with somatic qualities conventionally used for men. Whereas the *Tondo Taddei* (Fig. 18) represents Mary according to the Christian ideals of charity, devotion, and motherhood, the figures

54 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 193.

55 As a reaction to Dolce’s criticism, Vasari attacked Venetian painters for their lack of *varietà* as well (although they might be endowed with a better *colorito*). A good example is his characterisation of the painter Battista Franco. See Vasari 1568 (1878–1885, vol. 6, pp. 580 f.: “Egli usò in quest’opera il medesimo modo di fare che nell’altre sue, perciò che fece sempre le medesime figure, le medesime effigie, i medesimi panni e le medesime membra, oltre che il colorito fu senza vaghezza alcuna et ogni cosa fatta con difficoltà e stentata.” For a discussion of this passage see Irle 1997, pp. 188 f.

56 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 196: “[...] in tutte le sue opere egli usò una varietà tanto mirabile, che non è figura che né d’aria né di movimento si somigli, tal che in ciò non appare ombra di quello che da’ pittori oggi in mala parte è chiamata maniera, cioè cattiva pratica, ove si veggono forme e volti quasi sempre simili.” For the comparison of Michelangelo and Raphael in the art literature of the Cinquecento see also Pinelli 1987.

57 Chapman 2006, p. 16.

58 Hibbard 1978, p. 151.

59 Even 1990, p. 31.

60 Saunders 1989, p. 20.



**Figure 18** Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Virgin with Child and the Infant Saint John* (Tondo Taddei), 1504–1505, London, Royal Academy

on the Sistine ceiling or the female saints of the *Giudizio universale* are partly rendered as if appertaining to a different genre. Provided with muscular arms and bodily strength, they resemble male athletes rather than reproducing the classical vocabulary of femininity. Michelangelo's depiction of the *Cumaean Sibyl* or *Saint Catherine* (Fig. 19) can serve as examples of his interest in the physique of human maleness that he repeatedly used when depicting the bodies of women. Especially if we consider their religious ranks as proto-Christian prophet and one of the important Holy Helpers, these figures seem more familiar with physically laborious duties than with the divine inspiration of their souls.

How did it come to be that Michelangelo, praised for his variety and refined imitation of nature by Vasari, repeatedly painted masculine women? As has

been shown by Yael Even and Costanza Barbieri, Michelangelo's repetitive use of muscular bodies is not only a demonstration of his individual style and interest, but should also be seen against the social background of male supremacy in a time when the female body was judged to be defective and weak.<sup>61</sup> Following Aristotle's influential verdict of the corporeal and intellectual inferiority of women in the *Generation of animals*,<sup>62</sup> many Renaissance humanists understood the coming into being of female offspring as a necessary but erroneous process.<sup>63</sup> As an incomplete version of the male's body, the female's body was considered as a procreative product which lacked perfection and maturity. In accordance with the biological assumptions of natural philosophy, Christian theology pointed not only to the corporeal defects of women, but condemned their moral shortcomings as well. The dogmatic concept of the woman as a deficient being and evil seductress was based on the biblical story of Eve and the original sin and the fall of mankind. Her disobedience served as a model to explain the moral, intellectual, and physical inferiority of the female sex. According to Isidore of Seville, the *peccatum primi hominis* transformed women into an *animal menstruale*, which ejected poisonous blood and had painful parturitions. The presumed instability of her complexion was the cause of her credulity, voluptuousness, and lack of intelligence. Berthold von Mainz, a German archbishop, argued in 1485 that they were *idiotae* or at least *indocti homines* who should never be allowed to read books.<sup>64</sup> Of course, representatives of the Catholic Church were also concerned with the qual-

---

61 Even 1990, Barbieri 2002.

62 For Aristotle's explanation of the female sex as a product of anomaly see Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 5, 767b5–15: "For even he who does not resemble his parents is already in a certain sense a monstrosity; for in these cases Nature has in a way departed from the type. The first departure indeed is that the offspring should become female instead of male; this, however, is a natural necessity. For the class of animals divided into sexes must be preserved, and as it is possible for the male sometimes not to prevail over the female in the mixture of the two elements, either through youth or age or some other such cause, it is necessary that animals should produce female young. And the monstrosity, though not necessary in regard of a final cause and an end, yet is necessary accidentally." (*De generatione animalium*, IV, III, 767b5–15).

63 A good example is Benedetto Varchi's *Generazione dei mostri*, held at the Florentine academy in 1543. Discussing the principles of human procreation, he states that not only disabled and misfigured, but also female newborns have to be called *quasi mostri*. Varchi (1858–1859), p. 306: "Mostri si chiamano ogni volta che hanno o più membra o manco membra, o membra non proporzionate e convenevoli. Quasi mostri si chiamano le femmine, dice Aristotile, benchè nel vero sono mostri necessari; e così anco quelli che non somigliano nè il padre nè la madre, o alcuno altro del parentado, nè per linea diritta, nè per linea trasversale."

64 For the fall of mankind and its effect on the perception of women in the Early Modern period see Schreiner 1992.



**Figure 19** Michelangelo Buonarroti, Last Judgement (detail), 1534–1541, Città del Vaticano, Cappella Sistina

ity of women's souls. Although both men and women were in possession of a rational soul, it was only the male body which entirely reflected the *imago Dei*, the image and likeness of God. Women, created as subordinate helpmates, possessed weak bodies, and their souls were believed to be of a similar quality.<sup>65</sup>

When Michelangelo chose to use male attributes in the depiction of women in the Sistine Chapel, he probably referred to this religious conception of female inferiority. By representing female sibyls and saints in the shape of male bodies he acknowledged their superior knowledge of divine revelation and spiritual understanding, which was reflected by their external, virile appearance.<sup>66</sup> In fact, many women of the Renaissance fashioned themselves as male and tried to improve their status by adhering to masculine norms and forms. As has been underlined by Costanza Barbieri, Italian humanists appreciated learned women who had overcome the weak condition of their sex by transforming their natural identity.<sup>67</sup> The prevailing misogyny of Renaissance Italy can thus be seen as a dominant factor which influenced the perception of female figures and their proportions.

If we take a look at art literature, the neglect of female corporality is confirmed. Since antiquity, the female body was of no particular interest to artists; proportion theory was mainly concerned with the male physique. Polycleitos' *Canon*, a now-lost treatise on proportion, merely described the ideal symmetry of a male body, probably embodied by his statue of a Spear-bearer, the so-called *Doryphoros*.<sup>68</sup> Christianity gave rise to a new ideal that was modelled upon the Greek deity Apollo.<sup>69</sup> The body of Christ showed no birthmarks or black spots, was of a well-balanced complexion, free from original sin; his ideal proportions continued to be the ultimate example for male perfection during the Cinquecento.<sup>70</sup> Artists who tried to determine the mathematical laws of divine beauty during the Renaissance were therefore mainly concerned with the proportions of men. When writing about ideal measures of a body in his *Libro di pittura* around 1400, Cennino Cennini only mentions those of the male without considering female proportions.

---

65 Barbieri 2002, pp. 115 ff.

66 Barbieri 2002, p. 118.

67 Barbieri 2002, pp. 110 f.

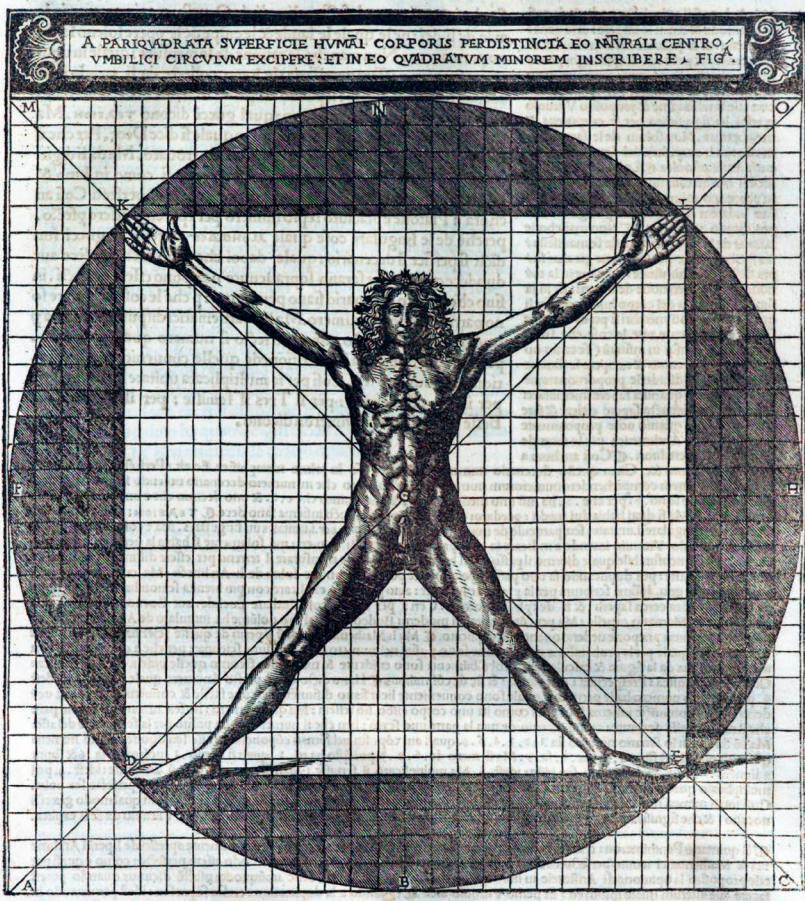
68 For Polycleitos' *Canon* see Beck/Bol/Bückling 1990. Andrea Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543) is a good example for a discussion of Policleitan (and Galenic) proportion theory in the Cinquecento. His ideas of an ideal male body are discussed by Siraisi 1994.

69 Cfr. Borinski 1914, p. 77.

70 For the body of Christ in the art of the Cinquecento see Helas 2000 and Groebner 2004. Wolf 2002, p. 292, provides examples for the discussion of Christ's perfect body in art literature.



“Quelle della femmina lascio stare, perchè non ha nessuna perfetta misura.”<sup>71</sup> Correspondingly, Paolo Pino argued that the male was the most excellent creature on earth.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the various representations of Vitruvius’s canon of proportions, featured in the widely-read treatise by Cesare Cesariano (Fig. 20), were merely fo-



**Figure 20** Illustration of the Male Body and its Proportions in the 1521 Edition of Vitruvius’ *De architectura libri decem*, edited by Cesare Cesariano

71 Cennini (1859), p. 50. For a discussion of the female body with regards to Early Modern proportion theory see Schnitzler 1992.

72 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 104: “In vero l’uomo è la più eccellente creatura tra le cose prodotte, e perciò è credibile che l’uomo traessi le cose artificiali da l’uomo, come soggetto più misterioso e più nobile.”

cussed on the male body.<sup>73</sup> In fact, it was not until Albrecht Dürer's *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion*, published in 1528, that female proportions were thoroughly discussed (Fig. 21).<sup>74</sup>

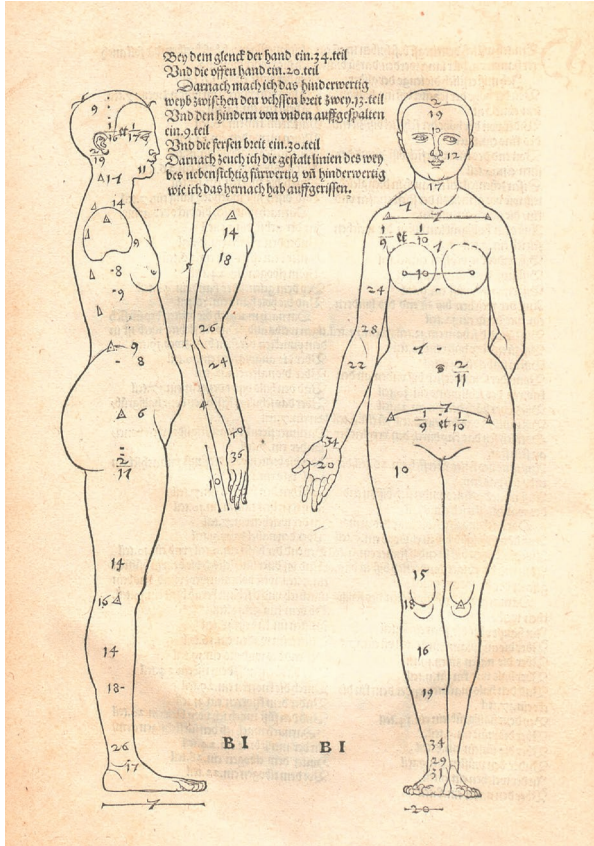


Figure 21 Illustration of the Female Body and its Proportions, from the 1528 Edition of Albrecht Dürer's *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion*

73 For the reception of Vitruvius' theory of proportion in the art literature of the Renaissance see Zöllner 1987.

74 According to Ascanio Condivi's *Vita di Michelangelo* (1553), Michelangelo criticized Dürer's proportion theory. Condivi 1553, fol. 41f.: "[Michelangelo] più volte ha avuto in animo [...] far un'opera che tratti di tutte le maniere dei moti umani e apparenze e dell'ossa, con una ingegnosa teorica per lungo uso da lui ritrovata [...]. So ben che, quando legge Alberto Duro, gli par cosa molto debole, vedendo coll'animo suo quanto questo suo concetto fusse per esser più bello e più utile in tal facultà. E, a dire il vero, Alberto non tratta se non delle misure e varietà dei corpi, di che certa regula dar non si può, formando le figure ritte come pali; quel che piu importava, degli atti e gesti umani, non ne dice parola."

Michelangelo's muscular women in the Sistine Chapel are thus not only the result of a consideration of the qualities of the female soul, but also perfectly accord with the taste for male features that was predominant in the 16<sup>th</sup> century culture of Rome and Florence. His frescoes can also be seen as a sophisticated form of self-fashioning, by which Michelangelo emulated Zeuxian principles of representation.<sup>75</sup> As was known in the Renaissance through the works of Quintilian, the ancient artist Zeuxis used to paint remarkably muscular bodies; in this he is believed to have been following the example of Homer, who represented even his female characters as being of a heroic mould.<sup>76</sup> When Alberti reported this fact, he was disparaging it, claiming that a painter should represent females in a simple and delicate way, even if Zeuxis and Homer did otherwise.<sup>77</sup> Benedetto Varchi discussed the issue merely with regards to the reciprocal fertilisation of poetry and painting, without being judgmental.<sup>78</sup> However, Vasari seems to have been of a different opinion. When comparing the artists of the *seconda età* with those of the *età moderna*, he explicitly states that the artists of the Cinquecento were able to give a superior *grassezza* (fattiness) and *carosità* (fleshiness) to their figures, especially to those of females and putti.<sup>79</sup> If we consider his immense appreciation for the frescoes of the Florentine artist, Vasari probably had Michelangelo's muscular women in mind when writing these lines.

---

75 For a similar form of self-fashioning in the Quattrocento see Gombrich 1955, who discusses Ghiberti's emulation of the ancient sculptor Lysippos.

76 Quintilian (1920–1922), vol. 4, p. 450: "Nam Zeuxis plus membris corporis dedit, id amplius atque augustius ratus atque, ut existimant, Homerum secutus, cui validissima quaeque forma etiam in feminis placet." (*Institutio oratoria*, XII, X, 5–6).

77 Alberti (2002), pp. 136 f.: "Siano alle vergini movimenti e posari ariosi, pieni di semplicità, in quali piuttosto sia dolcezza di quiete che gagliardia, bene che ad Omero, quale seguì Zeosis, piacque la forma fatticcia persino in le femine."

78 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), p. 57: "Sono ancora molte altre somiglianze fra i poeti et i pittori; et io per me, come non ho dubbio nessuno che l'essere pittore giovi grandissimamente alla poesia, così tengo per fermo che la poesia giovi infinitamente a' pittori, onde si racconta che Zeusi, che fu tanto eccellente, faceva le donne grandi e forzose, seguitando in ciò Omero; e Plinio racconta che Apelle dipinse in modo Diana fra un coro di vergini che sacrificavano, ch'egli vinse i versi d'Omero che scrivevano questo medesimo."

79 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 9: "Nel disegno non v'erano gli estremi del fine suo, perché, se bene e' facevano un braccio tondo et una gamba diritta, non era ricerca con muscoli con quella facilità graziosa e dolce che apparisce fra 'l vedi e non vedi, come fanno la carne e le cose vive; ma elle erano crude e scorticate, che faceva difficoltà agli occhi e durezza nella maniera, alla quale mancava una leggiadria di fare svelte e graziose tutte le figure, e massimamente le femmine et i putti con le membra naturali come agli uomini, ma ricoperte di quelle grassesse e carosità che non siano goffe come li naturali, ma artefciate dal disegno e dal giudizio."

### Vincenzio Danti's *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*

Vasari was not the only art theorist who defended Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel against the allegations of Lodovico Dolce.<sup>80</sup> Giovanni Andrea Gilio praised them explicitly for their great *varietà* in the depiction of movements and postures.<sup>81</sup> In general, his figures – even if of a particular masculinity for the modern beholder – were appreciated as the works of an artist who had surpassed the beauty of nature.<sup>82</sup> His superior understanding of the generative principles of nature allowed him to work according to the principles of *aemulatio* and *superatio*. By selecting, combining, or enhancing the features of nature, he adhered to an ideal of artistic production that the art literature of the Cinquecento believed to be close to the divine idea of things.<sup>83</sup>

Vincenzio Danti, a Florentine sculptor and one of Michelangelo's former disciples, discussed the principles of his master's art in a treatise that he published in 1567 in Florence. His *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni* is a thorough analysis of mimetic strategies and has been labelled as a systematic description of Michelangelo's neoplatonic poetry.<sup>84</sup> Danti's art theory mainly evolves from the discussion of two different means of pictorial representation. He discerns between the art of *ritrarre*, i.e., the representation of nature as it is, and the art of *imitare*, i.e., the representation of nature as it should be.<sup>85</sup> Whereas the former method is equivalent to the mere reproduction of nature, the latter requires the active imagination of the artist and is regarded as superior. By recognizing and amending the errors of nature, the artist demonstrates knowledge of the universal principles of generation and creates works of art that exceed the beauty of nature. This process was usually illustrated by Danti with metaphors of selection. The artist considered several beautiful models, chose their best features, and combined them

80 Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, pp. 210, 214.

81 Gilio 1564 (1960–1962), p. 54: “E questa è la meraviglia: che nissuna figura, che in questo ritratto vedete, fa quello che fa l'altra, e niuna rassimiglia a l'altra [...]”

82 Before being rebuked by the artist, Pietro Aretino praised Michelangelo for his idea of a new nature in a letter dating September 16, 1537. Aretino (1957–1960), vol. 1, pp. 64 f.: “Perciò ne le man vostre vive occulta l'idea d'una nuova natura [...]. Gran miracolo che la natura, che non può locar sì alto una cosa che voi non la ritroviato con industria, non sappia imprimere ne le opre sue la maestà che tiene in se stessa l'immensa potenza del vostro stile e del vostro scarpello, onde chi vede voi non si cura di non aver visto Fidia, Apelle e Vitruvio, i cui spiriti fūr l'ombra del vostro spirito.”

83 For Michelangelo's imitation of the principles of the *natura naturans* and the *natura naturata* see Białostocki 1963, for *aemulatio* and *superatio* Pfisterer 2002, pp. 268–280. For Michelangelo's understanding of *idea* see Panofsky 1924, pp. 64 ff.

84 Cfr. von Schlosser 1913, pp. 84 ff.

85 For a similar concept in portraiture (*protrahere* vs. *ritrarre*) see Weppelmann 2011.

in one perfect image.<sup>86</sup> Cicero (*De inventione*, II, I, 1–5), Pliny (*Historia naturalis*, XXXV, XXXVI, 64), and other ancient authors provided the *locus classicus* for this practice of amalgamation. When the famous painter Zeuxis of Heraclea was asked to paint an image of Helena for the temple of the Goddess Juno in Croton, he was puzzled by this difficult task and turned to the Crotonians for advice. After they had shown him the most beautiful virgins of their town, he chose five of these women, determined their best parts, and finally synthesized them in a painting of Helena that was highly acclaimed for its unexcelled beauty.<sup>87</sup>

The earliest depiction of this scene in the Cinquecento is a fresco by the hand of Domenico Beccafumi.<sup>88</sup> As part of a large fresco cycle, executed in the years 1519 to 1523 in the Palazzo Venturi in Siena and concerned with the representation of moral virtues, it showed the artist in front of the Crotonian virgins while depicting his image of Helena (Fig. 22).<sup>89</sup> As is stressed by an inscription to the right of Zeuxis,<sup>90</sup> his method of pictorial representation was understood as an *exemplum virtutis*. By selecting from various models, he demonstrated a superior understanding of the arts and thus of the beauty of nature.<sup>91</sup> Alberti, who had introduced the painter into art literature almost one century earlier, addressed the topic of Zeuxis in a similar way. According to his *Della pittura*, the ancient artist should serve as an example for those painters who were merely following their *ingegno* without considering the works of nature.<sup>92</sup> When Lodovico Dolce discussed the issue in 1557, he suggested the Zeuxian method as a therapy against monotony and repetition. Referring to multiple models produced by nature would ensure the painter's *varietà* and prevent him from always using the same routines.<sup>93</sup>

86 For a summary of Danti's theory see Battisti 1956, pp. 102 ff.

87 For Zeuxis in Renaissance culture see Sabbatino 1997.

88 For representations of Zeuxis in the Middle Ages see Asemissen/Schweikhart 1994, pp. 14–17.

89 Cfr. Dubus 1999, pp. 88 f.

90 "XEVSIK NON FRETVS / ARTE VERAM IMAGINEM / EXHIBERE CREDIDIT SI / VIRGINVM ELETARVM / DECOREM INTVERETVR"

91 For a thorough discussion of inscription and image see Kliemann 2006.

92 Alberti (2002), pp. 156 f.: "Zeusis, prestantissimo e fra gli altri essercitatissimo pittore, per fare una tavola qual pubblico pose nel tempio di Lucina appresso de' Crotoniati, non fidandosi pazzamente, quanto oggi ciascuno pittore, del suo ingegno, ma perché pensava non potere in uno solo corpo trovare quante bellezze egli ricercava, perché dalla natura non erano ad uno solo date, pertanto di tutta la gioventù di quella terra elesse cinque fanciulle le più belle, per torre da queste qualunque bellezza lodata in una femmina." For a similar statement in Alberti's *De statua* see Grafton 2007, p. 193.

93 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 172: "Onde abbiamo lo esempio di Zeusi, che, avendo a dipingere Elena nel tempio de' Crotoniati, elesse di vedere ignude cinque fanciulle e, to-



Figure 22 Domenico Beccafumi, *Zeuxis and the Crotonian Maidens*, 1519, Siena, Palazzo Bindi Sergardi

When Vincenzio Danti explained the art of *imitare*, he repeatedly referred to the Zeuxian method as an illustration of Michelangelo's system of pictorial invention as well. If an artist wishes to paint a perfectly beautiful and proportioned male body, he cannot expect to find it amongst the existing men. But if he considers a great quantity of men and is able to recombine their best features in one single figure as Michelangelo did, he may succeed in his task – his painting will show the body of a male in its entire beauty, which represents the unrestrained intention of nature.<sup>94</sup> In a later draft for an unfinished book of his treatise, Danti made a similar observation. Compared with an artist like Titian, who depicted all kinds of females, including less beautiful women, Michelangelo was exclusively interested in the representation of perfect figures: “La onde si vede che Titiano ha dipinto alle molte figure di femine bellissime, & alle volte non così belle, secondo, che ha havti corpi belli da ritrarre, come quello, che procedeva solo per la via del ritrarre. Et il Buonaroti, l’ha dipinte sempre, & sculpite tutte belle a un modo, perche procedeva per via della imitazione della intentione della Natura.”<sup>95</sup>

Whereas Lodovico Dolce considered Michelangelo's repetitive use of patterns of pictorial representation the result of a *maniera cattiva*, Vincenzio Danti understood it as an expression of the painter's exceptional understanding of the beauty of nature. Michelangelo painted in one single manner, *a un modo*, because he had found the perfect form.<sup>96</sup> As has been argued by Eugenio Battisti, the use of *elec-*

---

gliendo quelle parti di bello dall'una, che mancavano all'altra, ridusse la sua Elena a tanta perfezzione, che ancora ne resta viva la fama. Il che può anco servire per ammonizione alla temerità di coloro che fanno tutte le lor cose di pratica.”

94 Danti 1567 (1960–1962), pp. 239 f.: “La natura per molti accidenti non conduce quasi mai il composto e massimamente dell'uomo [...] a intera perfezzione, o almeno che abbia in sé più parti di bellezze che di bruttezze. Né io so se mai si è veduta tutta la bellezza che può avere un corpo umano ridotta compiutamente in un solo uomo; ma si può ben dire che se ne veggia in quest'uomo una parte e in quell'un'altra, e che, così, in molti uomini ella si trova interamente. Di maniera che, volendosi imitare la natura nella figura dell'uomo e non essendo quasi possibile in un solo trovare la perfetta bellezza, come s'è detto; e vedendo l'arte che in un uomo solo essa bellezza potrebbe tutta capire; cerca in questa imitazione di ridurre nel composto della sua figura tutta questa bellezza, che è sparsa in più uomini, conoscendo essa arte che la natura disidera ella ancora, come s'è detto, di condurre il composto dell'uomo in tutta perfezzione, atto a conseguire il suo fine, per lo quale diviene perfettamente bello. E questo fa l'arte per fuggire l'imperfezzioni, come ho detto, et accostarsi alle cose perfette. La qual cosa non solamente da Michelagnolo è stata conosciuta, che più d'altri ha intorno a ciò specolato, ma da infiniti altri cercata d'esequirsi nelle nostre arti [...].”

95 As cited in Daly Davis 1982, p. 65.

96 After Danti's remarks, the recognition of stylized individual patterns was soon to become an appreciated feature of painters. Paraphrasing Lodovico Dolce's verdict of Michelangelo's identical figures in a positive way, the Roman painter and art historian Giovanni Battista Passeri was full of admiration for recurrent features when writ-

*tio* in the Cinquecento was thus an artistic feature that was judged very differently and lay at the very core of mannerist aesthetics.<sup>97</sup> In this assessment, the art literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was by no means different from antiquity. Whereas Zeuxis was praised by Cicero, Quintilian, and Pliny, Aristotle harshly criticized him for his idealized representation of figures.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.6 Human Variety and the Effects of Love

As the previous chapters have shown, the artists of the Renaissance were invited to represent a great variety of figures in their works. Dissimilar and heterogeneous limbs, postures, and gestures of young and old men, women, and children were appreciated as a demonstration of artistic *difficoltà* and *varietà*.<sup>99</sup> Although the latter concept was derived from ancient rhetoric and meant to mirror the general diversity of nature, the attention paid to the variety of bodies was also the result of an increased interest in the depiction of human individuality. Compared to their medieval colleagues, humanists and art theorists of the Renaissance seem to have been astonished by the various manifestations of the human body.

Leon Battista Alberti's *De statua*, a short treatise probably written in the 1440s,<sup>100</sup> is a good example of this reaction. When discussing the art of sculpture as being based on likeness (*similitudo*), he points to the great variety which the human body displays. Corporeal features of an individual (for example, his voice, nose, or other parts of his body) will never be of an identical sort in another

---

ing his *Vite de pittori, scultori ed architetti* around 1678. Passeri 1772 (1934), p. 271: "Io non ho difficoltà, che nel vedere un opera di chi si sia pittore, si può dire d'haverle vedute tutte, perche ciascheduno fa sempre vedere se stesso nello stile, nel gusto, nel sapere, e nella risoluzione del partito che prende in esprimere quello, che rapresenta, e questo è quell'inditio, che ricevono gl'intendenti della cognitione della maniera, che di subito accusano di chi è mano quell'opera."

97 Battisti 1956, p. 104.

98 Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 11: "The tragedies of most of the moderns are characterless – a defect common among poets of all kinds, and with its counterpart in painting in Zeuxis as compared to Polygnotus; for whereas the latter is strong in character, the work of Zeuxis is devoid of it." (*Poetics*, 1450a) For a negative discussion of Zeuxis with regards to Aristotle's *Poetics* in the art literature of the Cinquecento see also Francesco Bocchi's *Discorso sopra l'eccellenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto* written in 1567 but never published. For a modern edition see Williams 1989a, esp. p. 126. Cfr. also the article by Pizzani 1998, who discusses the beginning of Horace's *Ars poetica* where selective imitation is seen very critical.

99 Cfr. Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 115.

100 For a discussion of the dating of *De statua* see Pfisterer 2003, p. 538.



person. The face (*vultus*) was granted particular attention, since the individual physiognomy – even if seen after many years – will always be unique and thus recognizable.<sup>101</sup> Filarete,<sup>102</sup> Giovanni Paolo Gallucci,<sup>103</sup> and Lodovico Dolce<sup>104</sup> discussed human variety in very similar terms: Each man possesses a different body and, even in the rare case of twins, corporeal differences are visible. Arnold Houbraken still referred to the same topos when he praised the paintings of Rembrandt for their variety in his *Groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (1718–1721).<sup>105</sup> According to natural philosophy, the different qualities of the human body were either explained by the influence of the planets, the disposition of the individual souls, or the power of God.<sup>106</sup> A different explanation was given by Giambattista della Porta in his *Miracoli e meravigliosi effetti della natura* (1560). He identified the great flexibility of the human mind as the primal cause for the great corporeal diversity. Mental images conceived during the act of procreation would alter the shape of the offspring. Compared to bodies of irrational animals, bodies of humans display therefore a greater dissimilarity.<sup>107</sup>

101 Alberti (1998), p. 6: “Possem hic de similitudinum ratione disquirere quid ita sit quod ex natura videmus eam quidem in quovis animante perpetuo solitam observare, ut eorum quodque sui generis quibusque persimillimum sit. Alia ex parte, ut aiunt, vox voci, nasus naso, et eiusmodi, in toto civium numero similis reliquorum nullus invenitur. Adde ut vultus eorum quos pueros videramus, subinde factos adolescentes cognovimus [...]”

102 Filarete (1972), vol. 1, pp. 26 f.: “Tu potresti dire: io ho veduti pure uomini che s’asomigliano uno a l’altro, come furono due ch’io vidi a Milano, li quali erano bresciani, che se vedevi l’uno vedevi l’altro. Non mi meraviglio, perché erano usciti d’una stampa, ma pure v’era qualche differenza: se none in altro, era ne’ vestimenti e nell’animo.”

103 Dürer 1591, p. 2 of the foreword: “I particolari huomini nondimeno sono fra loro si differenti di corpi, che non è possibile ritrovare duoi huomini cosi simili di faccia, non che in tutti li altri membri, che in qualche parte non siano dissimili.”

104 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 179: “Deve adunque il pittore variar teste, mani, piedi, corpi, atti e qulunque parte del corpo umano, considerando che questa è la principal meraviglia della natura: che in tante migliaia d’uomini a pena due o pochissimi si trovano, che si assomigliano tra loro in modo che non sia d’uno ad altro grandissima differenza.”

105 Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 1, pp. 257 f.: “Hy was in opzigt van de Konst ryk van gedagten, waar om men van hem niet zelden een menigte van verschillige schetzen over een zelve voorwerp ziet verbeeld, ook vol van veranderingen; zoo ten opzigt van de wezens, en wyze van staan, als in den toestel der kleedingen; waar in hy boven anderen (inzonderheid zulken, die dezelve wezens en kleedingen, even of het al tweekingen waren, in hunne werken te pas brengen) is te pryzen. Ja hy munte daar in boven allen uit: en niemant weet ik dat zoo menige verandering in afschetzungen van een en ’tzelve voorwerp gemaakt heeft [...]”

106 Cfr. Park 2004 and Groebner 2004.

107 Della Porta 1560, fol. 89v: “È molto grande la forza della imaginatione fissa, per modo che non la possiamo in tutto sapere. Quando le donne son gravide, havendo desiderio d’una cosa, quella imaginatione altera gli spiriti interiori per modo, che quella cosa

This dissimilarity becomes especially apparent in the facial features of man.<sup>108</sup> According to physiognomic theory, the face was conceived as a direct reflection of the qualities of each individual soul and thus was believed to be an indicator of the character of the human being. The art of portraiture, focused on individual likeness, was thus especially attentive to the depiction of facial features.<sup>109</sup> The depiction of the human face was therefore of particular importance to art theorists discussing *varietà*, and they expected every physiognomy to be different. A good example is provided by Giovanni Battista Gelli. Accusing the medieval painters of identical figures, he underscores the necessity to follow the example of nature, where we cannot find two identical copies.<sup>110</sup> Similarly Marcantonio Michiel, also known as Anonimo Morelliano, was displeased by two portrait paintings which closely resembled each other in the colour of the skin.<sup>111</sup> Other examples can be found in Leonardo's *Trattato della pittura*.<sup>112</sup>

---

desiderata, et fissa netta imaginativa si dipinge nel parto avenga che gli spiriti muovano il sangue, il quale opera nelle carni tenerissime della creatura, e quivi le sculpi-  
sce così in perpetuo vi rimane quel segno. Per questa cagione, i contemplatori delle  
cose, hanno cercato in che modo l'anima s' imagini e pensi, e massimamente nelle at-  
tioni principali, come è nel atto del corso, per il che havendo l'huomo molto veloce la  
imaginativa, la prontezza dell'animo, e la varietà dell'ingegno, si fanno varie imagini  
nella mente: e però nell'huomo sono più differente, che in tutti gli altri animali, aven-  
ga che gli altri havendo l'anima immobile, a loro gli è dato generare più simile nel suo  
genere." Della Porta's observations are based on Pliny's *Historia naturalis* (VII, XII, 52).  
For the greater diversity of the human body cfr. also Albertus Magnus' *De animalibus*  
(I,II,1).

108 In fact, recent genetic research has shown that the physiognomic diversity of human beings is greater than that of any other animal. Due to their dependance on social interactions, it proved useful to be able to identify other beings by their facial features. Cfr. Sheehan/Nachman 2014.

109 Cfr. Weppelmann 2011 and Posselt 2013.

110 Gelli (1896), p. 40: "Poichè in tanta moltitudine d'uomini che si sono veduti ai tempi nostri non se n'è ancora trovati mai due che si somiglino tanto che si scambiassino l'uno da l'altro: e se bene scrive di alcuni Plinio, sono stati si rari che non fanno caso, e il simile ancora dipoi fecion tutti que' maestri che seguitorno il dipignere di maniera, cio non cercorno di cavare le cose dal naturale."

111 Michiel (1888), p. 80: "Ambedoi questi ritratti hanno li campi neri, et sono in profilo et si giudicano padre et figlio, et si guardano l'un contra l'altro, ma in due però tavole, perchè par che si simigliino in le tinte delle carni. Ma al mio giudicio questa convenienza delle tinte proviene dalla maniera del maestro che faceva tutte le carni simili tra loro et che tiravano al color pallido. Sono però ditti ritratti molto vivaci, et sopra tutto finiti et hanno un lustro come se fussino a oglio, et sono opere lodevoli."

112 Leonardo (1995), p. 65: "Il pittore deve cercare d'essere universale, perchè gli manca assai dignità se fa una cosa bene e l'altra male: come molti che solo studiano nel nudo misurato e proporzionato, e non ricercano la sua varietà; perchè può un uomo essere proporzionato ed esser grosso e corto o lungo o sottile o mediocre, e chi di questa va-

## The Use of Artificial Models

Although the above-mentioned examples explain the lack of physiognomic *varietà* due to the use of a *cattiva maniera*, the similarity of painted faces was also subject to the specific working conditions of painters. As has been shown by Julius von Schlosser, many artists referred to artificial models when making their paintings or statues.<sup>113</sup> Whether small or life-sized, these models were made of wood, wax, plaster, or clay and had numerous benefits. They had been in use from the second half of the Quattrocento. Painters employed them to study proportions, the effects of light and shadow, or the appearance of draperies. According to Vasari, Piero della Francesca<sup>114</sup> and Lorenzo di Credi<sup>115</sup> were very fond of making clay models which they draped with wet or waxed cloth. In rare cases these models were also used to stage entire scenarios: before executing the final drawing, painters examined the various possibilities of a composition by moving its components to different positions.<sup>116</sup> In one chapter of his *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1586), a treatise on painting mainly concerned with practical questions, Giovanni Battista Armenini describes the fabrication and purpose of such artificial models in detail.<sup>117</sup> Similar advice was given by Bernardino Campi in his *Parere sopra la pittura* in 1584.<sup>118</sup>

---

rietà non tien conto fa sempre le sue figure in stampa, che pare che sieno tutte sorelle, la qual cosa merita grande riprensione.” Similar examples in the §§ 104, 179. For a different opinion see Armenini 1587, pp. 141 f.: “Ne qui si deve seguitar quella superstiziosa avvertenza, di non far mai l’un viso, se non ben differente dagli altri, e così degli atti vengano gli affetti, ne meno mi piace quella figura misteriosa e straordinaria che dicono si dovrebbe fare in ogni Istoria.”

113 von Schlosser 1913, pp. 111–118. See also Myssok 1999, Ames-Lewis 2000, pp. 46–57, Peppel 2008, pp. 112–130.

114 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol 2, pp. 498 f.: “Usò assai Piero di far modelli di terra, ed a quelli metter sopra panni molli con infinità di pieghe, per ritrarli e servirsene.”

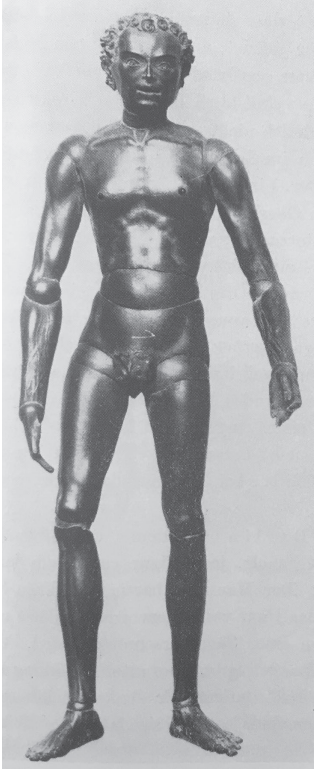
115 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol 4, p. 564: “[...] fra [i disegni fatti da Lorenzo] sono alcuni ritratti da modegli di terra, acconci sopra con panno lino incerato e con terra liquida; con tanta diligenza imitati e con tanta pazienza finiti, che non si può a pena credere, non che fare.”

116 Cfr. von Schlosser 1913, p. 115.

117 Armenini 1587, p. 94: “Alcuni [modelli] adunque si fabricano di cera, alcuni di terra, altri grandi, altri piccoli, altri vestiti, altri ignudi, & quando in piedi, & quando à sedere, & quando distesi, secondo i bisogni, gli atti, & i soggetti delle cose che essi [pittori] dipinger vogliono.”

118 Campi 1584 (1774), p. 103: “Dopo questo gli bisogna imparare ritrarre dal naturale, come farebbe far un Ritratto in ogni modo che intravenga nella Pittura, e farlo bene: e venendogli occasione di pingere un’ Istoria, gli bisogna schizzare l’invezione al miglior modo che fa, avendo però sempre la memoria ai disegni già ritratti: Poscia faccia una figura di rilievo di cera lunga un mezzo palmo, o più o meno, secondo il suo parere, in

As a versatile and valuable tool for the study of problematic aspects of a pose, jointed lay figures were also used by artists. Often made of wood, these small figures were easy to reposition and allowed multiple postures. While models made of wax or clay were mainly used to study positions or drapery, lay figures also possessed distinctive physiognomies. A jointed lay figure from ca. 1525, kept at the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck (Fig. 23), is a good ex-



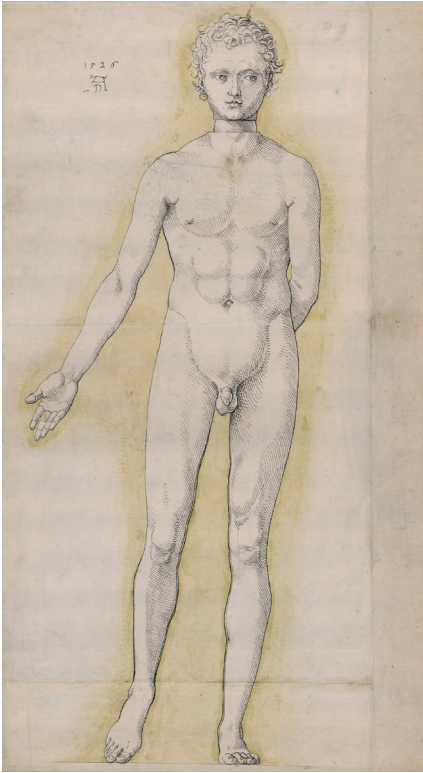
**Figure 23** Monogrammist IP, Lay Figure, 1525, Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum

ample of the minuteness and precision with which these complex models were made. Containing a mechanism of intertwined catgut strings, the figure was repositionable down to the joints of the fingers; even its eyes, nose, and hair were

---

piedi, con le gambe alquanto aperte, e con le braccia distese, tal che facilmente si possa formare col gesso, o gittarne di cera tante quante ne farà bisogno nell'Istoria." Campi's considerations were originally published as appendix to Alessandro Lamo's *Discorso intorno alla scoltura et pittura*, Cremona 1584. Campi's treatise is discussed by Nova 1992, pp. 93 ff.

carefully executed.<sup>119</sup> As can be shown by a drawing of a nude man by Albrecht Dürer (Fig. 24), painters used such lay figures not only for compositional reasons,



**Figure 24** Albrecht Dürer, Study after a Lay Figure, 1526, London, British Museum

but were also interested in the faithful reproduction of the specific details of these anatomical models. His drawing, executed in 1526, pays close attention to the artificial neck which links the head of the figure to its body and bears strong similarities to the lay figure kept in the Museum at Innsbruck. Considering the technical nature of the work (part of a series on proportion theory), Dürer's drawing is also very cautious about the facial features of his model. It is therefore likely that these figures were conceived as universal stereotypes. As condensed reflections of his stylistic vocabulary, they provided preferred features and pictorial patterns that were frequently used by the artist.<sup>120</sup>

119 Cfr. Steinitz/Wagner/Zaunschirn 1976, pp. 162 f.

120 For Dürer and the lay figure see Weixlgärtner 1903. For a discussion of several surviving lay figures and artificial models in European museums see Weixlgärtner 1954.

## The Use of Natural Models

While the use of artificial models like lay figures could lead to a lack of physiognomic variety, the same was true for natural models. For economical and practical reasons, artists often referred to models that were close at hand – for example, themselves, workshop colleagues or family members. When exercising the depiction of eyes or ears or when studying complex postures, the models served as examples for the representation of the human body.<sup>121</sup> According to Renaissance theories, these frequently drawn features were processed by the cognitive senses and finally stored in the painter's *memoria*, the last of the three cerebral ventricles of the human brain, where they were easily re-accessible for prospective projects.<sup>122</sup> Identical faces were thus a sign of a limited number of models as well as a stylistic consequence of repetitive technique. The Jesuit and mathematician Francesco Lana Terzi discussed the issue when writing on *varietà* in his *Prodromo* in 1670. According to Lana Terzi, painters unwittingly tend to re-cycle physiognomies of their relatives or of other beloved persons, because they are impressed on their minds ("imprese nell'imaginatione").<sup>123</sup> Only rarely, for example in the case of Raphael, would one see paintings in which all of the faces are dissimilar.<sup>124</sup>

Lana Terzi's observations were probably inspired by Vasari's life of Andrea del Sarto, in which Vasari provides a good example of the then contemporary ideas about the use of homogenous physiognomies. When describing Andrea's *Disputa*, a painting made for the Augustinian church of San Gallo in Florence around 1517 alluding to a theological debate, he pays particular attention to the figure of Mary

---

121 Cole/Pardo 2005, pp. 40–45.

122 For the understanding of *memoria*, traditionally believed to be situated after the *impressiva* and the *sensus communis*, see Kemp 1977, p. 379.

123 Lana Terzi 1670, pp. 136 f.: "Per tanto si deve porre gran studio in dare unione all'attione rappresentata, congiungendo con l'unità di questa la varietà de gli affetti, de gli atteggiamenti, delle posture de'scorci, e soprattutto delle fisionomie de' volti: nel che si ritrova molta difficoltà, poiche ogni pittore inclina naturalmente ad esprimere nelli personaggi quelle fisionomie, che ha piu impresse nell'imaginatione, onde è stato osservato che i volti pittoreschi tengono sempre molto della fisionomia del padre, della madre, o d'altra persona piu amata, e piu frequentemente veduta dal pittore; e rari sono que' quadri ne quali rappresentandosi molte faccie, l'una non habbia la fisionomia simile all'altra."

124 Lana Terzi 1670, p. 137: "Quindi è degno di molta lode il famosissimo Rafaello, che in tante opere ch'egli fece difficilmente si ritroverà un volto che sia simile ad un altro; per lo che gioverà tra la moltitudine della gente, andar ricercando nuove fisionomie di volti, riponendoli nell'erario della imaginatione per servirsene all'occasione, così sfuggire la somiglianza nelle sue opere; ma molto piu il sapere alterare le parti che compungono il volto umano; poiche dal variarne una sola il tutto prende una differente fisionomia."

Magdalene, depicted in the foreground on the right side of the painting (Fig. 25). According to Vasari, Andrea modelled the facial features of the saint upon his beloved wife Lucrezia del Fede. Since he had seen and drawn her many times, he carried the image of her face within his mind. Even if he were to paint other women, he could not help but to reproduce her physiognomy in every female face. “Abbasso [i.e., in the foreground of the painting] sono ginocchioni due figure: una Maddalena con bellissimi panni, il volto della quale è ritratto della moglie, perciò che non faceva aria di femine in nessun luogo che da lei non la ritraesse; se pur avveniva che da altre talora la togliesse, per l’uso del continuo vederla e per tanto averla disegnata, e, che è più, averla nell’animo impressa, veniva che quasi tutte le teste che faceva di femmine la somigliavano.”<sup>125</sup>

Rather than being a historical fact, Vasari’s account was probably a popular explanation for the lack of physiognomic *varietà* that contemporary beholders noted in many paintings. Although Andrea’s female heads show a certain preference for round and fleshy features, most apparent in his *en face* depictions of the Virgin Mary, it is difficult to connect these resembling heads to the profile view of Mary Magdalene in the *Disputa*.<sup>126</sup> Considering the sinful and libidinous past of the saint, Vasari’s venomous allusion to the artist’s wife is thus more likely to complete his moral pen portrait of Andrea del Sarto. Described as a simple and timid character, who refused a promising career at the court of Francis I in France due to the manipulative pleas of his seductive wife, Andrea did not adhere to Vasari’s ideal of an autonomous and productive painter.<sup>127</sup> Vasari’s identification of Andrea’s wife Lucrezia del Fede in the beautiful draperies of Mary Magdalene was primarily a cunning method to allude to Andrea’s ethical and stylistic shortcomings.

---

125 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 5, pp. 27f.

126 For a comparison of Andrea’s presumed portrait of his wife with several of his other figures see Di Pietro 1910, pp. 32–40.

127 Spagnolo 1998, see also the introduction to the life of Andrea del Sarto by Sabine Feser in the German edition: Giorgio Vasari, *Das Leben des Andrea del Sarto*, Berlin 2005, pp. 7–12. Of course, the divine Michelangelo did it better. When asked by a friend why he did not have a wife, the artist answered: “Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte, che m’ha fatto sempre tribolare, ed i miei figliuoli saranno le opere che lasserò.” (Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 281).



Figure 25 Andrea del Sarto, *Disputation on the Trinity*, 1517, Florence, Galleria Palatina



## The Effects of Love

Although probably fictitious, Vasari's account of Andrea del Sarto and his wife Lucrezia points nevertheless to the important issue of the effects of love on the art of painting. According to contemporary theories, affinity between two people was caused by a certain correspondence or *adaequatio* between their souls.<sup>128</sup> Similar souls tend to mingle with each other and couples were often thought to be identical either in shape or in character. Or, as Leonardo put it, "he who falls in love naturally loves things similar to himself."<sup>129</sup> Parallel to this view, which can be traced back to the Aristotelian principle of *like to like*<sup>130</sup>, natural philosophical treatises of the Cinquecento developed the idea of a slow assimilation of the lovers, in which, over the course of a relationship, an already existing similarity was reinforced, leading to the transformation of one into the other.<sup>131</sup> Such ideas were stimulated by Petrarchan poetry, in which metaphors of entwining and merging characterised the mutual desire of the sexes, but the rediscovered reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also had considerable influence. The popular collection of myths by the Roman poet, which was widely read in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, contains several episodes that describe how love can change the physical qualities of one's body. At the same time, the biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve remained influential. Its idea of the substantial likeness of man and woman,

---

128 For the following see also Lampe 2021.

129 Kemp 1976, p. 313. When writing on the intimate friendship of the painters Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino Fiorentino, Vasari made a similar observation. Since they shared the same *animo*, the intellectual part of the soul, they disposed of a identical *maniera* and used to make similar paintings. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 5, p. 143: "E tanto con frequentazione e voglia a tal cosa posero il pensiero, che unitamente presero la maniera antica, e tanto l'una simile all'altra che, sì come gl'animi loro erano d'uno istesso volere, così le mani ancora esprimevano il medesimo sapere. E benché Maturino non fosse quanto Polidoro aiutato dalla natura, poté tanto l'osservanza dello stile nella compagnia, che l'uno e l'altro pareva il medesimo, dove poneva ciascuno la mano, di componimenti, d'aria e di maniera."

130 Aristotle 1549, p. 63: "Et perche egli è piacevole tutto quello, che è naturale, essendo le cose dei parenti naturali inverso l'un dell'altro, però tutte le parentele, & tutte le similitudini ci dan' piacere il piu delle volte, sicome fa l'huomo all'altro huomo, & il cavallo al cavallo, & il giovane al giovane; La onde è il Proverbio Che il simile appetisce il simile. Et che al simile il simile sempre è amico."

131 Cfr. Betussi 1549, p. 29: "E ben sapete che l'amante nell'amato si trasforma. Onde diròvi che il bene dell'amato è più proprio suo che il suo, sì che, desiderando l'utile, il buono e 'l diletto dell'amico, il suo proprio appetisce, che il tutto è comune, essendo, come si preuppone che sia ad esser vero, l'amore reciproco, onde due che s'amano non sono più due."

created in the image of one flesh, provided a blueprint for the idea of a fundamental corporeal similarity between lovers.

In fact, some Renaissance portraits seem to allude to this idea. Looking at Andrea Mantegna's *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, which was painted in Padua shortly after his wedding in 1453, one notices at second glance the portraits of a woman and a man on the left and right edges of the picture, respectively (Fig. 26). Set off against a dark background, both are depicted in three-quarter

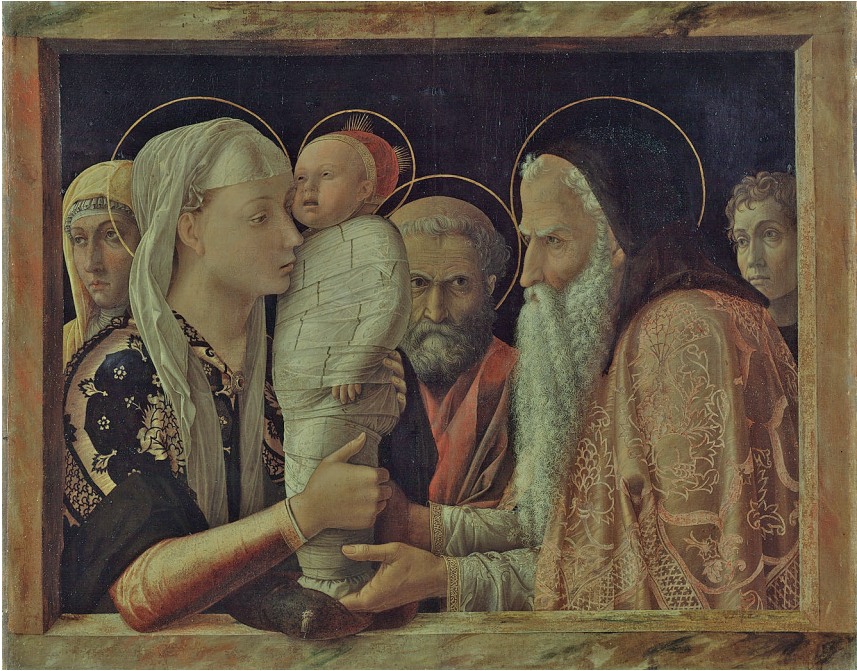


Figure 26 Andrea Mantegna, *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, ca. 1454, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

view gazing to the left, where a side altar may originally have been set up, for whose chapel the picture was possibly intended. In this way, the painting is part of the tradition of depictions of patrons, in which the benefactor was often depicted with his wife in order to ensure long-lasting religious devotion and memoria. Due to their individual features, research identified the two portraits early on as self-portraits of the painter with his wife Nicolosia Bellini.<sup>132</sup> This assessment

<sup>132</sup> See Prinz 1962.

is supported by the symmetrical arrangement typical of representations of patrons: due to their identical lines of vision and positioning, the portraits refer to each other, thus underlining their relationship. Mantegna seems to reinforce this correspondence all the more by emphasising their similar facial features. Comparable details such as the large eyes surrounded by dark circles, the high eyebrow arches, and the finely curved mouths emphasise the couple's physical analogies. This similarity is all the more striking because Mantegna was meticulous about varying the physiognomies of the other figures in the center of the picture, such as Simeon, Joseph, and Mary, who belong to the elevated sphere of the sacred, and about using skin tones, body positions, and gestures that were as different as possible, in accordance with the paradigm of variety.

Although these similarities have been explained through the standardizing effects of the individual style of an artist, Renaissance natural philosophy suggests another explanation. The often obvious resemblance between a husband and his wife was not only explained by the concept of *aedequatio*, but also seen as a result of love and affection, which are capable of transforming a body. A wife who constantly thinks of her husband will naturally acquire some of his corporeal features with the passing of time. During the Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino's philosophy provided a widely accepted explanation for this phenomenon of transmutation. The key element of his theory is the so-called *spirito*, a rarified and invisible part of the blood which connects the body with the soul. According to his *Libro dell' amore* (1544), the *volgare* version of his famous commentary to Plato's *Symposium* from the 1470s, the *spirito* serves as an intermediate for the sensual impressions that are received through the sensory organs (for example, images, sounds, and odors). But only the soul is able to assess, reprocess, and store these data received from the *spirito*.<sup>133</sup> Due to the faculty of *imaginatio* or *fantasia*, the soul is also able to evoke reprocessed and refined parts of these data – for example, the portrait of a beloved person.<sup>134</sup> When this happens, for instance in a moment of

---

133 For Ficino's ideas on spirit and soul see Hankins 2007.

134 Cfr. Garin 1985, pp. 351 ff. The German magician and alchemist Agrippa von Nettesheim expressed ideas similar to those of Ficino in his *De occulta philosophia* (1531). For example, dreams might change the corporeal constitution of men due to their deep impact on the *imaginatio*. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, p. 223: "Vehemens enim cogitatio, dum species vehementer movit, in illis rei cogitatae figuram depingit quam illi in sanguine effingunt: ille nutritis a se imprimit membris cum propriis, tum aliquando etiam alienis, [...] sicut imaginatio morsi cane rabido in urinam imprimit imagines canum: sic multi subito canescunt; alius e puero unius noctis somnio in virum perfectum excrevit." With regards to the good influences of christian paintings Gabriele Paleotti expressed similar observations. Paleotti 1582 (1960–1962), p. 230: "Sostengono [i filosofi e medici] che, a seconda dei concetti che nella nostra fantasia si creano a partire dalle forme della

yearning or desire, the soul provokes a physical reaction which consists of a re-affectation of the *spirito*: The image of the lover is re-impressed on the blood, and the blood imprints this image on the body of the recalling person.<sup>135</sup> If this occurs habitually, the shape of the body must be necessarily altered in correspondence with the portrait of the lover, and couples will resemble each other both in the characteristics of their souls, particularly in regards to the faculty of *imaginazione*, and their bodies.<sup>136</sup> Ultimately, Ficino romanticised with this idea the endogamy practised in Renaissance marriage politics, according to which marriage partners were selected according to social, economic and legal equality criteria. If the origin, beauty, and status of the man and woman were comparable, a successful alliance was guaranteed. This ideal of *aequalitas* also corresponds to a piece of advice coined by Ovid (*Heroides*, 9,32), which found great favour in the marriage treatise literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: “Unde si vis nubere, nube pari” (If you want to marry, marry alike).

Ficino’s theory, modelled upon the scholastic principle *anima forma corporis* (the soul is the form of the body),<sup>137</sup> can serve as an alternative explanation for the conspicuous accumulation of portraits in which a wife resembles her husband. Although Ficino’s ideas applied to men as well, women were believed to be the principal bearers of this corporeal adaptation. Female imagination was thought to be stronger than male imagination, and their cold, humid nature as well as their pale, soft flesh made women the ideal objects for a physical metamorphosis.<sup>138</sup> Raphael’s portrait of *La Fornarina* (Fig. 27), a woman often believed to be identical to Margherita Luti, his preferred model and mistress, can serve as an example of

---

realtà, si generano in noi impressioni così forti da produrre alterazioni e segni visibili nel corpo stesso.” Similar observations had been made by Pliny with regards to the process of procreation: A thought suddenly flitting across the mind of either parent is supposed to produce likeness or to cause a combination of features in the offspring (*Historia naturalis*, VII, XII, 52).

135 Ficino 1470 (1987), pp. 123 f. See also Dietrich 2000, pp. 166 f. and p. 179.

136 Ficino 1470 (1987), p. 201: “E però nessuno di voi si maravigli se udisse alcuno innamorato avere concepito nel corpo suo alcuna similitudine della persona amata. Le donne gravide molte volte desiderando il vino, veementemente pensano al vino desiderato. Quella forte immaginazione gli spiriti interiori commuove: e commevendogli, in essi dipinge lo immagine del vino desiderato. Questi spiriti muovono similmente il sangue, e nella tenera materia del concetto la immagine del vino scolpiscono. Or’ chi è sì poco pratico, che non sappia che un Amante appetisce più ardentemente la persona amata, che le donne gravide il vino? E però più forte e fermo cogita. Sì che non è maraviglia che il volto della persona amata, scolpito nel cuore dello Amante, per tale cogitazione si dipinga nello spirito: e dallo spirito nel sangue si imprima.”

137 Kläden 2008, p. 258.

138 For maternal imagination and the corporeal qualities of women see Finucci 2001.



Figure 27 Raffaello Sanzio, *La Fornarina*, 1518–1519, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini



Figure 28 Raffaello Sanzio, *Self-Portrait with a Friend*, 1518–1520, Paris, Musée du Louvre

the deep and enduring impact of the faculty of *imaginazione* on the corporeal constitution of women.<sup>139</sup> When her portrait is compared to a self-portrait of Raphael with an unknown friend (Fig. 28) which was made during the same time from 1518–1520, she shows a nearly identical physiognomy, most prominently visible in the dark and thin eyebrows, the succulent lips, and the well-defined nose. His signature (RAPHAEL VRBINAS) on the bracelet around Margherita's left arm might be seen as an allusion to this apocryphal yet obvious self-portrait in the dress of his beloved model. If one considers the great variety of faces that he used in his history paintings, a phenomenon that astonished art theorists of the Cinquecento,<sup>140</sup> the fusion of their facial features was probably an intentional choice. Even if the model did not look like Raphael, her pictorial resemblance to the artist had a distinct meaning that was known to contemporary beholders who were familiar with Renaissance concepts of love.<sup>141</sup> Rather than being a mannerist defect of the painter, a close likeness between the portrait of the artist and the portrait of his model was understood as an expression of reciprocal love and empathy. Later, this concept of an unwitting transfer of facial features was also taken up by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was familiar with the work of Raphael. In a chapter of his *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), he describes how a painter-architect, while decorating a chapel in the presence of a young lady named Ottilie, made the physiognomies of all of his figures look like the woman. To explain this phenomenon, Goethe resorted to the aforementioned mechanics of the soul: the image of the beautiful Ottilie, taken up by the man's soul, left such a strong impression upon him that his hands couldn't help but to execute it involuntarily in his paintings.<sup>142</sup>

---

139 For a discussion of this portrait in relation to theories of artistic inspiration see Pfisterer 2012.

140 Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 196: “[...] in tutte le sue opere egli usò una varietà tanto mirabile, che non è figura che né d'aria né di movimento si somigli, tal che in ciò non appare ombra di quello che da' pittori oggi in mala parte è chiamata maniera, cioè cattiva pratica, ove si veggono forme e volti quasi sempre simili.”

141 For Renaissance concepts of love with particular regard to their influence on the art of painting see Bolzoni 2010, pp. 137–150. For a general discussion of the perception of physiognomic likeness in the art of painting see Gombrich 1972.

142 von Goethe 1809, vol. 2, pp. 35 f.: “Auch die Gesichter, welche dem Architekten zu malen allein überlassen war, zeigten nach und nach eine ganz besondere Eigenschaft; sie fingen sämtlich an, Ottilien zu gleichen. Die Nähe des schönen Kindes mußte wohl in die Seele des jungen Mannes, der noch keine natürliche oder künstlerische Physiognomie vorgefaßt hatte, einen so lebhaften Eindruck machen, daß ihm nach und nach auf dem Wege vom Auge zur Hand nichts verlorenging, ja daß beyde zuletzt ganz gleichstimmig arbeiteten. Genug, eins der letzten Gesichtchen glückte vollkommen, so daß es schien, als wenn Ottilie selbst aus den himmlischen Räumen heruntersähe.”





## 4 Giorgio Vasari's *Vite* and Automimesis

While the previous chapter explored recurrent features in the style of a painter, the following chapter discusses the use of recurrent narrative models in the lives of artists. One of the causes of their persistent importance lies in the great impact caused by the publication of Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* in 1550, re-published in a revised and extended form in 1568. The following chapter describes Vasari's method of constructing the *Vite* by analyzing his use of literary figures and topoi. Special interest will be paid to automimesis, to the rhetorical motif of a similarity between the artist and his artworks, and to other natural philosophical ideas that played with the interchangeability of producer and product and were fashionable during Vasari's time.

Since antiquity, biography was one of the many ways to write history. The personal lives of emperors, philosophers or poets not only provided biographical details but also structured the narrative of important historical events. Mostly written by historians, biographies provided some sort of outline for intertwining biographical anecdotes and historical facts. The accounts of famous men were therefore an interdependently organized mixture of macro- and microhistory, the biographical part of which was often fictitious or based on tropes and word-of-mouth evidence.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the discipline of art history, artist's *Lives* constitute one of the most enduring genres. A relatively new invention, biographies of artists remained a stable component from their first appearance in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Be it Antonio Manetti's *Vita di Brunelleschi* (ca. 1488), Giovan Pietro Bellori's *Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (1672) or Arnold Houbraken's *Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (1718–1721), the description of the artist's life was always combined with the description of his works and *vice versa*.<sup>2</sup> But this method of analyzing art, based on the individual achievements of the single artist rather than on the socio-cultural dynamics of his time, did not go unquestioned. One of the first authors to distrust this genre of art history was Johann Joachim Winckelmann. In his *Geschichte der Kunst des*

---

1 For a discussion of fiction in classical biography see Fairweather 1974.

2 Cfr. Soussloff 1990, p. 158 and Soussloff 1997, pp. 43–72.

*Altertums* (1764), he stressed the importance of focussing on the history of the art rather than on the history of the artist.<sup>3</sup> His interest in the succession of styles led to an abandonment of biographical patterns of narration, which was also due to the general process of scientification and historization in the humanities at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

Winckelmann's approach found an enduring echo in the intellectual climate of the more recent past. The idea of the coherent evolution of a single life, which starts with the birth of the artist and ends with his death, suggests a determinate *telos* which is independent from historical events and social configurations. Siegfried Kracauer<sup>5</sup> and later Pierre Bourdieu<sup>6</sup> have therefore criticized biographical historiography as an illusion: by constructing the *Life*, the biographer gives meaning to the events in the life of an individual and the biography develops as if it were a linear and self-sufficient process. These critical considerations were accompanied by literary theories that questioned the authority of the author. Roland Barthes (*La mort de l'auteur*, 1968) and Michel Foucault (*Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*, 1969), based on similar ideas expressed by Umberto Eco (*L'opera aperta*, 1962), argued that the writer of prose or history is unable to control the meaning of his textual production. By focussing on the recipient, they underscored the ephemeral and unstable character of a text. Rather than the intentional ideas of the author, the discursive practices of his time or of the time of the reader were considered relevant for the allocation of meaning.<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of the methodological problems of writing art history by looking through the lens of an individual life or author, early modern biographies still constitute an important category for today's academic research. As it happens, the legacy of post-structuralism has led to an extensive discussion of literary models and tropes that were used when writing history. In particular, the historiography of the art literature of the Renaissance greatly benefitted from the vast number of studies that were published in the last few decades. Following the early

---

3 Winckelmann 1764, vol. 1, p. X: "Das Wesen der Kunst aber ist in diesem sowohl als in jenem Teile [the first and the second part of the 'Geschichte des Kunst des Altertums'] der vornehmste Entzweck, in welches die Geschichte der Künstler wenig Einfluß hat, und diese, welche von anderen zusammengetragen worden, hat man also hier nicht zu suchen: es sind hingegen auch in dem zweyten Teile diejenigen Denkmale der Kunst, welche irgend zur Erläuterung dienen können, sorgfältig angezeigt. Die Geschichte der Kunst soll den Ursprung, das Wachsthum, die Veränderung und den Fall derselben, nebst dem verschiedenen Stile der Völker, Zeiten und Künstler lehren, und dieses aus den übriggebliebenen Werken des Alterthums, so viel möglich ist, beweisen."

4 Hellwig 2005, p. 15.

5 Kracauer 1977.

6 Bourdieu 1986, pp. 70–71.

7 For a discussion and a reprint of these seminal texts see Jannidis 2000.

examples in the works of Gaetano Milanesi, Wolfgang Kallab, and Ernst Kris' and Otto Kurz'<sup>8</sup>, rhetorical structures in the *Lives* of Renaissance artists were identified,<sup>9</sup> recurring topoi classified<sup>10</sup>, and the literary sources and personal motives of the author were carefully examined.<sup>11</sup> Despite the great attention that was paid to the literary conventions of the artist's life, his life's details often continued to affect the interpretation of the works of art. The personal events in a painter's life influenced the understanding of his paintings, and his paintings were used to illuminate aspects of his biography. Or, as Martin Kemp puts it in his discussion of the conventions of monographic art history: "Our perception of what evidence is relevant to the interpretation of art is deeply affected by our enduring models of the 'Life of an artist', which is in turn founded on our image of the 'artist as cultural hero'."<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1 Art History and Biography

The first edition of the *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* was published in two volumes in 1550 by the printer Lorenzo Torrentino. A revised and expanded edition was issued in 1568 in three volumes under the slightly altered title *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* by the Giunti print shop in Florence. It contained the description of the lives and works of more than 160 artists and was preceded by a historical and technical introduction to the three arts: architecture, painting, and sculpture. The lives, ranging from the time of Cimabue to the time of Vasari, were arranged in chronological order and divided into three historical parts, each of which was introduced by a *proemio* summarizing the achievements and shortcomings of that age.<sup>13</sup>

Vasari's *Vite* constitutes one of the most important works in early-modern biography. His book provided a vast amount of information, gathered by Vasari himself and various other contributors. It was written in the Tuscan vernacular and organized in a methodological manner. More importantly, it established a

8 Milanesi 1878–1885, Kallab 1908, Kris/Kurz 1934.

9 See for example Barocchi 1960–62 and 1971–1977, Goldstein 1991.

10 Wittkower 1963, Pfisterer/Seidel 2003.

11 Agosti/Ginzburg/Nova 2013, Jonietz/Nova 2016.

12 Kemp 1992b, p. 168.

13 For the genetic process of writing the two editions of the *Vite* see the excellent discussion by Ruffini 2011, pp. 72–103.

genre of its own. Preceding biographies were primarily concerned with historical figures, dealing exclusively with the lives of rulers, philosophers, saints, or poets and often dating back to antiquity. By choosing architects, painters, and sculptors from his own time as the subject of his opus, Vasari gave written evidence of the changing status of the artist in 16<sup>th</sup> century Florence. His *Vite* is the first autonomous work entirely devoted to the rise and triumph of the visual artist in the Renaissance.<sup>14</sup>

However, Vasari's *Vite* was not entirely without precedent. Antonio Manetti, Bartolomeo Fazio, and Cristoforo Landino contributed to the genre of the artist's life when they wrote about Florentine artists in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, Antonio Billi, the Anonimo Magliabechiano, and Giovanni Battista Gelli (to name but a few), provided useful information in the Cinquecento which was often appreciated by Vasari when composing his *Vite*.<sup>15</sup> But their writings, often in manuscript form, represented a rhetorical exercise rather than a systematic approach to the visual arts. In any case, theirs were much shorter biographies, often combined – and sometimes included in larger works about the history of Florence that primarily served to enhance the fame of the city, not of the artist.<sup>16</sup>

When starting to compose the *Vite*, Vasari could not rely on any of these literary models. Instead he turned to antique compilations of lives that became prominent amongst the humanists of Florence. The historian and bishop Paolo Giovio, himself the author of an early version of the lives of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo, became one of Vasari's advisors during this important stage of the project at the beginning of the 1540s.<sup>17</sup> As he states in the dedicatory letter of his *Uomini illustri* from 1546, Giovio modelled his own biographies loosely on Plutarch's *Lives*, which he must have deemed a suitable model for Vasari's *Vite* as well. Contrary to the traditional humanist biography, in which the individual develops according to the personal and historical events in his life, the Plutarchan biography draws on early signs that predetermine the character of a person. Thus, the narrative elements of a life serve to underscore the progressive trajectory of an individual's character development. As Plutarch himself puts it in the life of Alexander, his aim was not to write histories, but lives.<sup>18</sup> Notably, as is ap-

---

14 Cfr. Watts 1995, pp. 63 ff.

15 Artists' lives prior to Vasari's work are analyzed by Tanturli 1976.

16 For the discussion of epideictic rhetoric and its impact on writing artist's biographies in Florence see Goldstein 1991.

17 For the impact of Giovio on the art literature of 16<sup>th</sup> century Florence see Agosti 2008, pp. 34–96.

18 Cfr. Zimmermann 1995, p. 40. For Plutarch's methods see Wardman 1971. Vasari's life of Michelangelo, beginning with prenatal signs, is a good example for this method of constructing a biography.

parent from his work, Vasari did not constrain himself to use only one literary model. Diogenes Laertius *Lives of of Illustrious Philosophers* served as an example for the geographical order of the *Vite*. Following Diogenes' standard, Vasari grouped masters and pupils according to schools, thus giving a chronological structure to the development of the art of painting in Italy.<sup>19</sup> Suetonios was no less an influence on Vasari. The Roman historian, whose *Lives of the twelve Caesars* circulated in various copies in Renaissance Florence, described the ruler's career, followed by an extensive discussion of his temperament and character. By inserting facts and vignettes into his *Lives*, he gave a moralizing pen portrait of each respective sovereign.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the popular genre of the lives of the saints, most prominently exemplified by Jacobus de Voragine's seminal *Legenda aurea*, stimulated the treatment of the artist's life in Vasari's *Vite*.<sup>21</sup> Heavenly inspiration and divine providence were part of his programme to promote the social status of the artists who were deemed worthy of long-lasting commemoration.<sup>22</sup> Last but not least, Vasari borrowed heavily from Pliny's *Historia naturalis*<sup>23</sup> – not only for the vast number of biographical anecdotes, but also for the general idea of artistic progress in the *Vite*.<sup>24</sup>

While the general structure of a Vasarian life was indebted to the aforementioned models, the frequently used motif of resemblance between an artist, his life, and his artworks can be traced back to the genre of poets' biographies. Early works derived most of their data from the plays and poems of the author. By using fictional text as biographical fact, the poet was increasingly identified with the content and character of his works, including the *dramatis personae* – as is the case, for instance, in the classical life of Aristophanes. Based on quotations from the *Ranae* and the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes' political and moral views in his biography are fashioned according to the events and characters of his plays. Similarly, the life of Euripides is modelled upon anecdotes found in his dramatic

---

19 Kemp 1987, p. 16 and Watts 1995, p. 64.

20 Watts 1995, p. 65.

21 For Vasari's use of hagiography see Barolsky 1990, pp. 55–58 and Rubin 1995, p. 162.

22 The life of Michelangelo is a good example: when his body was examined in Florence several months after his death in February 1564, it was not decayed – a sign of sanctity that was also a typical element in the lives of saints.

23 McHam 2011.

24 Vasari's ideas on progress have been frequently discussed. The succession of the three *età* of artists has been paralleled to the physical development of a human being, to the *aescesis* to Divine Revelation in Dante's *Divina commedia*, and, more recently, to a theological model of periodization (*ante legem – sub lege – sub gratia*). For a discussion of the latter see Blum 2010.

inventions.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the central methodological problem of early Greek biography is described by Bruno Gentili and Giovanni Cerri as a problematic conflation of identities:

“Una poesia, dunque, che si presentava come il piú immediato punto di riferimento per il biografo, il quale d'altra parte doveva vagliare il dato offerto dal testo sulla base di altre testimonianze, tenendo conto della prospettiva necessariamente personale e soggettiva del poeta, oscillante tra verità e finzione. S'intende che questo procedimento era viziato dalla tendenza a non discernere sempre con la dovuta attenzione l'*io* della *persona loquens* dall'*io* dell'autore.”<sup>26</sup>

This method of composing the *Lives* drew heavily on the interchangeability of poetry and poet. Like his poetry, Euripides is described as persuasive, elusive, and immoral; and like his plays, Aeschylus is described as being weighty, traditional, and pious.<sup>27</sup> An ancient proverb coined this narrative principle of many antique plays: “As are his characters, so is the man.”<sup>28</sup>

Just as these classical works were available in print by the time Vasari started working on the *Vite*, the *Lives* of the Italian poets Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio, written on the threshold of the Renaissance, served as a blueprint for his *magnum opus*. Because the earliest *Lives* of artists were not written until the end of the Quattrocento, Vasari had to turn to the *Lives* of poets which had already begun to appear in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante*, for instance, is not only an account of biographical details, written in the vernacular, but also concerned with the character, style, and content of Dante's works. Traditionally published as a preamble to Dante's *Divina commedia*, it served as an introduction to the epic poem. This example was followed by many other authors of Dante's biography, such as Cristoforo Landino and Giannozzo Manetti. Contrary to the classical *Lives*, Boccaccio and his disciples were aware of methodological problems, however. By meticulously distinguishing between *vita* and *commento* in their *Vita di Dante*, they deliberately separated the biographical part from the narrative and stylistic analysis of the author's work.<sup>29</sup>

When Vasari was looking for a model for his book, these biographies constituted an important reference point. But the division of the *Vita* into two sepa-

25 Lefkowitz 1978, p. 459.

26 Gentili/Cerri 1978, p. 54, italics by the original authors.

27 Lefkowitz 1978, p. 464.

28 For this proverb in relation to Aristophanes' method of constructing identity see Muecke 1982, pp. 50–53.

29 Soussloff 1990, pp. 156 f.

ate genres, on one hand the discussion of the life of the artist and on the other hand the discussion of his works, was dismissed. Not able to include the original works of the visual artists themselves, Vasari had to transform frescoes, paintings, and statues into text by means of ekphrastic description.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the neat separation between *vita* and *commento* was abandoned in favour of a conjunctive model of biography, in which the life and work of each artist was discussed in an identical textual corpus.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, as has been shown by Patricia Lee Rubin<sup>32</sup> and Catherine M. Soussloff,<sup>33</sup> preceding models and biographies continued to influence the structure of the *Vite*. The division of a Vasarian *vita* into birth, youth, maturity, and death, along with the discussion of the fate of his body and his works (including the education of students), is highly indebted to these preceding models.

As a biographer and critic who discussed the genesis of his work with humanistic advisors such as Paolo Giovio, Vincenzo Borghini, and Annibale Caro, Vasari was well aware of his role as a historiographer of art. The preface to the second part of the *Vite* is a vital account of his tasks as a historian; he reflects on the importance not only of discussing the works of the artists, but also of describing their lives and the causes of their different styles:

“[...] mi sono ingegnato non solo di dire quel che hanno fatto [i.e., the artists], ma di scegliere ancora scorrendo il meglio dal buono e l’ottimo dal migliore, e notare un poco diligentemente i modi, le arie, le maniere, i tratti e le fantasie de’ pittori e degli scultori; investigando, quanto più diligentemente ho saputo, di far conoscere a queglii che questo per se stessi non sanno fare, le cause e le radici delle maniere e del miglioramento e peggioramento delle arti accaduto in diversi tempi et in diverse persone.”<sup>34</sup>

As a first-hand source, this passage illuminates Vasari’s self-conception as a historian and artist who is interested in the development and progress of art according to the time and place of its origin. Furthermore, it elicits his aim to treat the personal character of the single artist along with the development of his individual style or *maniera*. Thus, in the process of conflating *vita* and *commento*, he united the analysis of the life with the analysis of the work. Thus the personal character and the personal work of an artist were inextricably intertwined.

---

30 For Vasari and the use of ekphrasis see Alpers 1960.

31 Soussloff 1990, p. 158.

32 Rubin 1995, pp. 148–186.

33 Soussloff 1997, p. 2, pp. 43–72.

34 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 94.

## 4.2 The Artwork as a Reflection of the Artist's Mind

Before starting to compose the *Vite*, Vasari had to gather information about his subjects. In some cases he could rely on preceding biographies and art treatises which provided useful material.<sup>35</sup> After the first edition of the *Vite* was printed in 1550, several other works became accessible. Ascanio Condivi wrote the first monograph on Michelangelo (1553), Lodovico Dolce (1557) was interested in the artists of Venice, and Gilio da Fabriano (1564) was specifically concerned with the spirituality of the Renaissance artist. Vasari tried to incorporate most of the new material into the second edition of his work.

But the most important contributor to the *Vite* was Vasari himself. His research was not only based on journeys to various cities where he visited chapels and churches, but also rooted in a large network of informants who provided important details on the lives of the painters. In the concluding remarks to the *Vita di Fra Giocondo e Liberale ed altri Veronesi*, he acknowledges the importance of these often anonymous collaborators and friends, who were helpful when gathering information on the artists of Verona.<sup>36</sup> By collecting anecdotes, word-of-mouth evidence, historical records, and autobiographical notes of the artists themselves, he assembled a vast corpus of material – an immense effort that took him more than ten years.<sup>37</sup>

35 This was the case, for instance, with Leon Battista Alberti's *Della pittura* (1436), Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Commentarii* (1447), or the collection of artists' lives by Bartolomeo Fazio (1456). In the Cinquecento available information began to increase. Antonio Billi, Giovanni Battista Gelli, and Paolo Giovio, to name but a few, reported on the artists of Florence, and art theorists such as Pietro Aretino, Paolo Pino, and Antonio Francesco Doni wrote influential letters and dialogues on the art of painting.

36 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 5, p. 334: "Io sapeva bene alcune cose dei sopradetti eccellenti e nobili artefici veronesi: ma tutto quello che n'ho raccontato non arei già saputo interamente, se la molta bontà e diligenza del reverendo e dottissimo fra' Marco de' Medici veronese, et uomo pratichissimo in tutte le più nobili arti e scienze, et insieme il Danese Cataneo da Carrara eccellentissimo scultore, e miei amicissimi, non me n'avessero dato quell'intero e perfetto ragguaglio che di sopra, come ho saputo il meglio, ho scritto a utile e commodo di chi leggerà queste nostre *Vite*; nelle quali mi sono stati e sono di grande aiuto le cortesie di molti amici, che per compiacermi e giovare al mondo si sono in ricercar questa cosa affaticati."

37 Rubin 1995, pp. 106 ff. In the concluding remarks of the first edition of the *Vite*, Vasari gives an account of this laborious process. Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 6, p. 409: "[...] non pensava io però da principio distender mai volume sì largo, od allontanarmi nella ampiezza di quel gran pelago: dove la troppo bramosa voglia di satifare a chi brama i primi principii delle nostre arti, e le calde persuasioni di molti amici, che, per lo amore ch'e' mi portano, molto più si promettevano forse di me che non possono le forze mie, et i cenni di alcuni padroni, che mi sono più di comandamenti, finalmente, contra mio grado, m'hanno condotto."



Because Vasari's inquiries were usually based on personal experience and acquaintance, the quantity and quality of his information varied according to the place and time. Whereas he was very well informed of the artists of Tuscany, his knowledge diminished when he considered the lives of artists who were active in the north and south of Italy. The same applied to painters active in Vasari's own time, when compared to the artists of the late Middle Ages. It goes without saying that the lives of painters of the Cinquecento were described in much more detail than the lives of the artists of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the abundance of information, but also because of their major relevance to Vasari's conception of artistic progress that culminated in the substantial *Vita di Michelangelo*, personal details and biographical anecdotes were first and foremost the privilege of artists of the *terza età*. And obviously, the different amounts of information and material available influenced his narrative models regarding the life of an artist. This is especially true for the motif of automimesis, since a similarity between artist and artwork can be discussed only if the personal life and character of an artist, as well as his works, are known to the author.

But the lack of information on artists of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was not necessarily an impediment to looking at the similarity between the life and work of an artist. Although automimetic motifs begin to increase in the third part of the *Vite*, Vasari also drew on analogies in the preceding parts of his work, which he was able to do because of his general conception of the *idea* as an indispensable tool for artistic creation. His characterisation of the medieval artists at the beginning of the *Vita di Donato* is a good example in this regard, defining his conception of the artistic *idea* for the entire *Vite*. According to the Aretine author, their works were mediocre and clumsy (*tonde*), because the medieval sculptors themselves had clumsy minds (*spiriti tondi*):

“Gli scultori che noi abbiamo chiamati vecchi ma non antichi, sbigottiti dalle molte difficoltà della arte, conducevano le figure loro sì mal composte di artificio e di bellezza, che, o di metallo o di marmo che elle si fussino, altro non erano però che tonde, sì come avevano essi ancora tondi gli spiriti e gli ingegni stupidi e grossi: e nasceva tutto da questo, che ritraendosi esprimevano se medesimi, e se medesimi assomigliavano. E così le povere cose loro erano in tutto prive de la perfezzione del disegno e della vivezza, essendo veramente al tutto impossibile che chi non ha una cosa la possa dare.”<sup>38</sup>

The purpose of the opening of the *Vita di Donato* is to introduce Donatello as a new kind of artist, one acquainted with the imitation of nature and the expres-

---

38 Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 3, p. 201.

sion of ideas. As Vasari states in the following lines, nature was so shocked by the artistic creations of the medieval sculptors that she decided to generate artists worthy of representing her beauty.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, the rhetorical structure of the life of the sculptor Donatello is comparable to the life of the painter Giotto. Just as the former marks the boundary to the Middle Ages, the latter is said to have brought to light the art of painting, which had been buried for many centuries. Furthermore, the intrinsic connection between their lives is indicated by the use of the adjective *tondo*, which in the Tuscan vernacular means “round” as well as “clumsy”.<sup>40</sup> This ambiguous meaning of the term was explained by Vasari in the preceding *Vita di Giotto* when describing the painter’s ability to draw perfect circles without using a compass. Besides its traditional significance, Vasari states, *tondo* was also employed to indicate, “tardità e grossezza d’ingegno” (slowness and dullness/clumsiness of mind), a pejorative meaning also shown by the proverb, “Tu sei più tondo che l’O di Giotto” (You are rounder than the O of Giotto).<sup>41</sup>

Vasari’s negative characterisation of the artists of the Middle Ages as clumsy or *tondo* was directly associated with his conception of *disegno*. This technical term described the improved imitation of the beauty of nature as a process of mental invention and material execution that was exclusively mastered by the artists of the Renaissance. Because Vasari considered the medieval sculptors as less experienced and talented than the artists of his own time, their lack of *disegno* was a major defect which resulted in a rudimentary form of mimesis. Accordingly, he describes their works as lifeless, ill-proportioned, and ugly. That Vasari drew especially on the capacity of the artists to express their mental ideas is also shown by his allusion to a famous principle of Roman and early modern jurisdiction. The

39 Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 3, p. 201: “Per la qual cosa la Natura, giustamente sdegnata per vedersi quasi beffare da le strane figure che costoro [i.e., the medieval sculptors] lasciavano al mondo, deliberò far nascere chi operando riducesse ad ottima forma, con buona grazia e proporzione, i male arrivati bronzi et i poveri marmi, da lei, come da madre benigna, et amati e tenuti cari sì come cose daùllel prodotte con lunga diligenza e cura grandissima.”

40 Cfr. Giovanni di Gherardo da Prato’s *Paradiso degli Alberti*, as cited in Löhr 2008, p. 172: “Noi sappiamo quanta è la fama di Giotto nell’arte della pittura; diremo noi ch’una lumaca l’avanzi nell’arte, ché dipigne al buio, e Giotto non saprebbe menare pennello senza lume? Dé, andate, ché voi avete troppo del tondo a avere così detto.”

41 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, pp. 283 f.: “Giotto, che garbatissimo era, prese un foglio et in quello con un pennello tinto di rosso, fermato il braccio al fianco per farne compasso e girato la mano, fece un tondo sì pari di sesto e di profilo che fu a vederlo una meraviglia. (...) Divolgatasi poi questa cosa, ne nacque il proverbio che ancora è in uso dirsi agl’uomini di grossa pasta: *Tu sei più tondo che l’O di Giotto*. Il qual proverbio non solo per lo caso donde nacque si può dir bello, ma molto più per lo suo significato, che consiste nell’ambiguo, pigliandosi *tondo* in Toscana, oltre alla figura circolare perfetta, per tardità e grossezza d’ingegno.”

rule, “Nemo dat quod non habet” (No one gives what he does not possess) was meant in a materialistic sense as the prohibition to sell property that is not in one's possession. Vasari interpreted this principle in a very different way. When stating that, “Chi non ha una cosa la possa dare” in the last clause of the passage cited above, he refers to the intellectual property of the artist, which consists of the ideas of his mind. In this way he also paraphrased the famous poem *Le dolci rime d'amor ch'io solia* by Dante, in which the poet underlined the importance of mental images. The lines similar to Vasari's statement are contained in the fourth book of Dante's *Convivio*, written between 1303 and 1308: “poi chi pinge figura / se non può esser lei, non la può porre”<sup>42</sup>.

As has been shown by Paolo D'Angelo, these verses do not indicate that a painter portrays himself physically or psychologically in his figures. Rather they imply that a painter can only realize those figures that are contained in his mind; i.e., figures in his possession.<sup>43</sup> Dante himself suggests such a reading of the verse in a commentary to the poem, in which he states that, “no painter could depict any form if he did not first conceive in his imagination how he wishes it to be.”<sup>44</sup> It was probably his friend and advisor Vincenzo Borghini who proposed to Vasari the allusion to Dante's poem. In his *Selva di notizie*, written in 1564, he discussed it himself when mocking the artist Benvenuto Cellini for his lack of imagination.<sup>45</sup>

---

42 Dante (1988), p. 505 (*Convivio*, IV, III, 52–53).

43 D'Angelo 1991, p. 218. For a discussion of Dante's theory of the arts and Dante's poem see also von Schlosser 1924 (1956), p. 88.

44 Dante (1988), p. 505 f.: “nullo dipintore potrebbe porre alcuna figura, se intenzionalmente non si facesse prima tale, quale la figura esser dee.” (*Convivio*, IV, X, 11).

45 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 640: “Dante, che fu veramente in tutte le cose divino, disse quelle belle parole: *E chi pinge figura, se non è prima lei, non la può fare*. Nelle quali non solo come platonico, ma come vero e natural filosofo conobbe che da l'intelletto nostro non puo uscire operazione alcuna perfetta, mediante le mani artefici, se non ha prima conceputo l'idea di quella tal cosa.”

The same verse had already been cited by Pico della Mirandola when discussing the Platonic ideas, as cited in Garin 1942, pp. 467–468: “È da sapere che ogni causa che con arte o con intelletto opera qualche effetto, ha prima in sè la forma di quella cosa che vuole produrre, come un architetto ha in sè e nella mente sua la forma dello edificio che vuole fabbricare, e riguardando a quella come a esempio, ad imitazione sua produce e compone l'opera sua. Questa tale forma chiamano e' Platonici Idea e esemplare e vogliono che la forma dello edificio, che ha l'artefice nella mente sua, abbia essere più perfetto e più vero che l'artificio poi da colui prodotto nella materia conveniente, cioè o di pietre o di legni o altre cose simile. [...] e questo è quello che il nostro poeta Dante tocca in una sua canzone, dove dice: ‘poi chi pinge figura, se non può esser lei, non la può porre.’ Dicono adunque e' Platonici che benchè Dio producessi una sola creatura, nondimeno produsse ogni cosa, perchè in quella mente produsse le idee e le forme d'ogni cosa.”

Vasari's characterisation of the medieval artists is thus an exemplary case for his heuristic method of deducing the quality of an artist from the quality of his works. Although he never met artists from the Middle Ages in person, he is able to give a critical judgement of their capacities and personalities on the basis of their surviving sculptures and paintings. The same method for guessing an artist's character from his work was applied by Vasari in several other cases. But whereas the medieval sculptors were treated as a homogeneous crowd, summarized under the adjective *tondo*, and disentitled to bear individual names, artists from the more recent past were endowed with a bunch of singular traits and personal characteristics. As the artists became more self-conscious and the interest in individual forms of expression began to increase, their personal characters and lives received more attention.

### Beautiful Artists, Beautiful Art?

Vasari's characterisation of medieval artists has been discussed in detail because it represents Vasari's conception of the interdependence of artist and artwork *in nuce*. The individual *ingegno* of the artist reflects itself in the generation of the *idea*, which then translates into the *disegno*, the first draft or design of the work of art. Besides this general correlation between the artist and his artworks, Vasari used other rhetorical devices to underscore his conviction that every work of art is a reflection of the individual artist: his physical appearance, social manners, and ethical traits played an important role and often served as a blueprint for the discussion of his paintings or sculptures.

Probably the most intriguing example for the parallelisation of corporeal beauty, moral virtues, and the excellence of art is contained in the *Vita di Leonardo*, the first life in the third part of the *Vite*. It discusses the works of an artist who was considered the first to have mastered the acquisitions of the *terza età*, which consisted of the refinement of *regola* (measurement), *ordine* (order), *misure* (proportion), *disegno* (design), and *maniera* (style).<sup>46</sup> In the *Proemio alla terza parte*, Vasari also introduced the category of *grazia divina* (divine grace), which is said to be an attribute of Leonardo's work.<sup>47</sup> When Vasari gave a pen portrait

46 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, pp. 7ff. For a thorough discussion of Vasari's five categories in the third *proemio* see Pinelli 1993, pp. 105–109.

47 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 11: "Ma lo errore di costoro [i.e., the preceding artists] dimostrarono poi chiaramente le opere di Lionardo da Vinci, il quale, dando principio a quella terza maniera, che noi vogliamo chiamare la moderna, oltre la gagliardezza e bravazza del disegno, et oltre il contraffare sottilissimamente tutte le minuzie della na-

of the artist at the beginning of his life, it is precisely this last category which he used to describe Leonardo's physical amenities and social habits. The extraordinary beauty of his body and his refined manners and social skills were described as bearing infinite grace.<sup>48</sup> Vasari's description of Leonardo was not only inspired by Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*, who described the perfect courtier as being interested in beauty, grace, and virtue, but was also a reference to the idea that a beautiful mind is supposed to produce beautiful works of art.<sup>49</sup> Of course, this did not mean that Vasari believed Leonardo to be limited to merely reproducing nature's beauty. As if he wanted to underscore the exceptional mimetic capacities of the artist, Vasari discussed Leonardo's perfect knowledge of human proportions as well as his bizarre inventions, which included disgusting representations of spiders, bats, and lizards.<sup>50</sup> In accordance with Aristotle, who admired images of flies or even dead bodies because of their aesthetic value and artistic quality,<sup>51</sup> Vasari thus emphasized the universality of artistic expression, which was a main characteristic of the first painter of the *terza età*: The beauty of body and mind did not necessarily impede the imitation of nature's less charming elements.<sup>52</sup>

The same narrative principles used in the life of Leonardo were also used in the *Vita di Piero di Cosimo*, although in a somewhat different way. Whereas the corporeal beauty of Leonardo served as a blueprint to discuss the exceptional beauty of his works, Piero's pictorial representations were employed to illustrate the bizarre character of the painter. Described as an artist who was less man than beast, who loved to work in isolation, who never swept his house and abandoned the crops in his garden to wilderness, Piero becomes the counterpart of the well-educated courtier, who is trained in refined manners and conversation.<sup>53</sup> The problematic nature of the artist is further stressed by Vasari's discussion of Piero's habits, which consisted of the strange custom of eating extraordinary numbers of

---

tura così appunto, come elle sono, con buona regola, miglior ordine, retta misura, disegno perfetto e grazia divina, abbondantissimo di copie e profondissimo di arte, dette veramente alle sue figure il moto et il fiato."

48 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 17: "Questo lo videro gli uomini in Lionardo da Vinci, nel quale oltre la bellezza del corpo, non lodata mai abastanza, era la grazia più che infinita in qualunque sua azione; e tanta e sì fatta poi la virtù, che dovunque l'animo volse nelle cose difficili, con facilità le rendeva assolute."

49 Cfr. Rubin 1990.

50 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 24.

51 As cited in Sörbom 1994, p. 40: "Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies." (*Poetics*, 1448b). For a discussion of this passage in relation to the works of Quattrocento artists see Pfisterer 1996, p. 119.

52 For the ideal of the artist as beauty in Vasari's *Vite* see Rogers 1998.

53 Cfr. Lüdemann 2010, p. 121.

boiled eggs and of despising the crying of children and the sound of church bells and chanting friars. These *stranezze* of Piero were an evident sign of his individual character, just as his paintings were a visible representation of the personal inclinations of his mind. Interested in the eccentric, Piero not only studied the most abnormal manifestations of nature but also used to invent new compositions by gazing at a wall against which sick people had been discharging their spittle (a sneaky allusion to Leonardo, who watched clouds instead). Not surprisingly, one of Piero's works discussed by Vasari represents a marine monster, which is described as "so extravagant, bizarre, and fantastic in its deformity, that it seems impossible that Nature should produce anything so deformed and strange among her creations."<sup>54</sup> And the most fascinating passage about Piero's life probably consists of the description of a triumphal chariot with marching skeletons, illustrating the unusual and macabre ideas of the Florentine artist.

Although Vasari praised his *bizzarrissime fantasie*, his use of colour, and the naturalness of his figures, Piero's life as a whole is nevertheless treated as an *exemplum vitiosum*, both ethically and artistically. Neither his misanthropic constitution nor his achievements as a painter were deemed satisfactory by Vasari. Having spent his life with bizarre interests, in solitude, Piero had wasted a once promising youth and ended his career in unproductive agony and despair. Furthermore, Piero never acquired a unique style but changed his *maniera* frequently.<sup>55</sup> Vasari leaves the reader with no doubt as to the inevitable causes for this lability. Having had strange fantasies, Piero was bound to lead a strange life which ended with his death at the foot of a staircase (and not at the top, we may add).<sup>56</sup> In the first edition of the *Vite*, Vasari emphasized this motif of similarity between the artist's life and work by quoting an epitaph, which reads as follows:

---

54 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 138: "E certamente che simil' cose non credo che nessuno le facesse meglio di lui né le immaginasse a gran pezzo, come ne può render testimonio un mostro marino che egli fece e donò al magnifico Giuliano de' Medici, che per la deformità sua è tanto stravagante, bizzarro e fantastico, che pare impossibile che la natura usasse e tanta deformità e tanta stranezza nelle cose sue."

55 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 134: "[...] per che bene si può dire che e' la [i.e., la maniera] mutasse quasi a ciò ch'e' faceva. E se Piero non fusse stato tanto astratto e avesse tenuto più conto di sé nella vita che egli non fece, avrebbe fatto conoscere il grande ingegno che egli aveva, di maniera che sarebbe stato adorato, dove egli per la bestialità sua fu più tosto tenuto pazzo, ancora che egli non facesse male se non a sé solo nella fine, e beneficio et utile con le opere a l'arte sua. Per la qual cosa dovrebbe sempre ogni buono ingegno et ogni eccellente artefice, ammaestrato da questi esempli, aver gli occhi alla fine."

56 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 143: "Laonde per sì strane sue fantasie vivendo stranamente, si condusse a tale, che una mattina fu trovato morto appiè d'una scala, l'anno MDXXI; et in San Pier Maggiore gli fu dato sepoltura."

“Piero di Cosimo Pittor F.  
 S’io strano e strane fur le mie figure,  
 Diedi in tale stranezza e grazia et arte,  
 e chi strana il disegno a parte a parte  
 dà moto forza e spirito alle pitture.”<sup>57</sup>

Presumably fictitious and from the hand of Vasari or of one of his collaborators,<sup>58</sup> the epitaph at the end of the *Vita di Piero di Cosimo* thus underlines the conception of the *Vite* as a literary work which is meant for discussing artworks as a direct manifestation of the artist’s personal *ingegno*.

### 4.3 Rhetorical Strategies for the Description of Style

Vasari’s technique of drawing on the physical appearance, the social behaviour, and the events which occurred in the life of an artist (i.e., his personal experience) was not only meant to provide a narrative pattern for his *Vite* but served another purpose as well: it provided a way to describe an artist’s style at a time when a critical vocabulary had yet to be developed.<sup>59</sup> As has been shown by Michael Baxandall and others, the epideictic discussion of artworks became a wide-spread custom amongst humanists at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By describing the great variety of objects and attitudes in the artworks of contemporary artists, they improved their rhetorical skills and demonstrated their own intellectual capabilities.<sup>60</sup> Vasari continued in the opposite direction. As an artist who became an art historian as well, Vasari was interested in promoting the public role of the artists. One means of enhancing their social status was the literary description of their works, in which every artist was treated as an individual.

Compared with artists’ lives from the Quattrocento, which were less detailed and explicit when it came to the question of artistic distinctiveness and individuality, Vasari’s *Vite* bursts with adjectives that try to capture the unique character and style of the artists. Almost every painter is rhetorically equipped with a repertoire of particular features or a combination of varying attributes which try to transform the visual encounter with his artworks into a literary experience for the readers of Vasari’s text. The abundance of terms such as *grande*, *minuta*, *cruda*,

57 Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 4, p. 71.

58 Rubin 1995, p. 227.

59 Zimmerman 1995, p. 51.

60 Baxandall 1971, pp. 90 ff.

*tagliante, delicata, dolce, pastosa, unita, gagliarda, leggiadria, diligente, facile, affaticata, soda, giudiziosa, and sciagurata*, often used in superlative form and never before employed in the context of the visual arts, is an indicator of his pursuit of accuracy and originality when it came to the question of describing the particularities of an artist.<sup>61</sup> Still, in contrast to the peculiarities of a painting or a sculpture, these words were limited in their semantic power and hardly ever expressed the entire idea of the style of a painter that Vasari might have had in mind. The lack of an appropriate language with a critical vocabulary to illustrate the individual style of a painter made it necessary to recruit other rhetorical means, which served to underline stylistic differences between artists.<sup>62</sup>

The introduction of biographical reports, bodily features, and personal anecdotes (even of dubious authenticity) thus served as a second semiotic layer against which the character of the artist's work was rendered more visible. By relying on the accidental properties of the single artist, Vasari provided a pen portrait of the artist's interior ideas and patterns of pictorial representation, which was perceivable even for those unaccustomed to the rhetorical principles of ekphrasis and epideictic: The external appearance and behaviour of the artist operated as an amplifier for the characterisation of his art.<sup>63</sup> If we consider that Vasari introduced himself on the title page of the 1550 edition of the *Vite* as a Tuscan painter who writes about the artists of his own age in the vernacular, we might suppose that he addressed an audience of readers who were more interested in fashionable entertainment than in humanist traditions. It is therefore no coincidence that his *Vite* is highly indebted to the popular genre of the humorous novel.<sup>64</sup>

A good example of the use of witty anecdotes to characterise the style of a master can be found in the life of Parri Spinelli. Described as a melancholic artist who used to paint elongated figures with intensified facial expressions, Parri's particular *maniera* is conceived as the result of an assault by some of his relatives while he was painting a fresco in S. Domenico in Arezzo:

“Mentre che Parri faceva quest'opera, fu assaltato da certi suoi parenti armati con i quali piativa non so che dote; ma perché vi sopraggiunsono subito alcuni, fu soccorso

---

61 Cfr. Freeman 1867, who provides an uncommented catalogue of these adjectives that were often used in relation to the word *maniera*.

62 Sohm 2001, pp. 86–114 analyses Vasari's art criticism in the context of other early modern examples.

63 Cfr. Alpers 1960, p. 213.

64 Franco Sacchetti's *Trecentonovelle* and Boccaccio's *Decamerone* provide good examples for satirical remarks about art and artists. For a general analysis of the use of wit and humor in Renaissance art and in the genre of the so-called *facezie, burle, detti, and motti* see Barolsky 1978.



di maniera che non gli feciono alcun male; ma fu nondimeno, secondo che si dice, la paura che egli ebbe cagione che, oltre al fare le figure pendenti in sur un lato, le fece quasi sempre da indi in poi spaventatice.”<sup>65</sup>

As is shown by a fresco of the *Crucifixion* with a seemingly receding Mary exhibited in the Palazzo Comunale in Arezzo, visual evidence seems to confirm Vasari’s observations (Fig. 29). As an Aretine author he was certainly familiar with Parri’s



**Figure 29** Parri Spinelli, *Crucifixion*, 1430s, Arezzo, Palazzo Comunale

works and the biographical tales that circulated in his hometown. More importantly, this passage shows how Vasari used personal events and characteristics to illustrate the *maniera* of an artist. Whereas an abstract discussion of Parri’s stylistic repertoire would have demanded a set of various adjectives, the anecdote

65 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 284.

provided a suggestive idea of his paintings in one single glimpse. The reader of Vasari's text was thus able to link Parri's works with his own emotional experiences, allowing him to appreciate a work of art that was only available in a derivative, verbatim form.<sup>66</sup>

Similar examples can be found throughout the *Vite*. Pontormo's unconventional lifestyle was correlated to his work, the strangeness of his mind mirrored in the entangled nudes, that he painted in S. Lorenzo and which Vasari deemed incomprehensible.<sup>67</sup> The rugged and coarse personality of Andrea del Castagno was demonstrated by the rude and assertive style of his paintings, a narrative chosen by Vasari because he groundlessly assumed that Andrea murdered his companion Domenico Veneziano out of jealousy.<sup>68</sup> And Andrea del Sarto's works, painted in a simple style, were a reflection of his timid and simple character.<sup>69</sup> It is obvious that these examples fulfill different purposes and that they address problems of artistic expression as well as political issues. Vasari was not only an objective observer and historiographer of the artistic life in Renaissance Florence, but as an artist he was also involved in courtly animosities and motivated by personal interests. Pontormo's frescoes in S. Lorenzo, for instance, were dismissed, not only because of their confusing style, but also because their iconography was influenced by reformatory ideas too – a fact that could have hardly been ignored by Vasari during the first stage of the Counter-Reformation in Florence.<sup>70</sup> What connects these

---

66 For a discussion of Parri's *Vita* regarding questions of style and personality see Zucker 1979.

67 Pinelli 1993, pp. 5–32, discusses Vasari's *Vita* of Pontormo in detail. It is interesting to note that Francesco Bocchi observed a similar concordance between Pontormo's confusing concepts and his *difforme* personality. See Bocchi 1584 (1960–1962), p. 185: “Mirabile è l'artificio, all'incontro, ma il soggetto senza grazia, che si vede nelle figure di Iacopo da Pontormo in San Lorenzo; perché egli è tanto lontano nel suo Diluvio da ogni ragione, anzi in sé stesso tanto *difforme*, che la maniera della pittura, comeché sia di pregio, mostra tuttavia il poco senno di questo artefice, che, volendo in questa opera tutti gli altri superare, non arrivò a gran pezzo a quelle lodi che quasi nella sua fanciullezza si avea partorito.”

68 For a discussion of the *Vite* of Andrea del Castagno and Domenico Veneziano and Vasari's use of jealousy as a narrative means see Graul 2012.

69 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 5, p. 6: “Ma una certa timidità d'animo et una sua certa natura dimessa e semplice, non lasciò mai vedere in lui un certo vivace ardore né quella fierezza che, aggiunta all'altre sue parti, l'arebbe fatto essere nella pittura veramente divino [...]. Sono nondimeno le sue figure, se bene semplici e pure, bene intese, senza errori, e in tutti i conti di somma perfezione. [...] e se bene disegnò semplicemente, sono nondimeno i colori suoi rari e veramente divini.”

70 Pinelli 1993, pp. 13 ff., has shown, that the iconographic program of Pontormo's fresco cycle was indebted to the *Beneficio di cristo*, a treatise popular amongst the adherents of the various reformist tendencies in the Catholic Church.

examples from his *Vite* is the recurrent motif of a unity between the external appearance or behaviour of an artist, his mental constitution, and finally his works. Following this tripartite scheme, Vasari not only provided a new, personalised model for the ekphrastic description of artwork, but he also remodelled physiognomic theory according to his own needs as an art historian.

#### 4.4 Physiognomic Theory

In addition to their suggestive explanatory power, the above-discussed examples retain strong ties to physiognomic theories, which partly explains why Vasari's characterisation of artists remained unquestioned for a long time. The basic idea of physiognomy consists of the belief that the ethical quality of an individual is mirrored in his/her outward appearance. Because the individual soul of each man was considered the constructor and governor of the body (a fact that became visible every time a man felt anger, joy, or sorrow), its moral attributes were directly related to the corporeal features of the individual. Thus the more beautiful a person, the more beautiful his soul. According to this simple heuristic principle, the reverse was also true: physical shortcomings and deviations from the social norms of beauty were interpreted as signs of a deteriorated character.<sup>71</sup>

Deeply rooted in ancient thought and mainly influenced by the re-discovery of the Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*, physiognomy became one of the most popular theories in Renaissance Italy.<sup>72</sup> It was closely related to the mysteries of the human body and the immortality of the soul, and thus provided orientation in questions of faith and religion as well as in the judgement of people. Girolamo Manfredi's *Liber de homine*, a highly influential treatise written in 1474 which had the self-declared scope to answer the most important questions of human physiology, was amongst the first printed works to discuss physiognomic prin-

---

71 Physiognomic theory and its relation to the art literature of the Renaissance has been discussed by Reißer 1997. The widespread principle to judge the inward qualities of a person by evaluating their external appearance is exemplified by Bernardino of Siena around 1430 in the following way, Bernardino da Siena (1911), p. 160. "A che si cognosce una donna quando ella è buona? A la portatura sua. Così si cognosce la bottiga di quello lanaiuolo al suo segno. Così il mercatante si cognosce la sua buttiga al segno. E' frati a che si cognoscono? Pure al lor segno. El monaco a che il cognosci quando elli è nero o bigio o bianco? Al segno loro. Quello di fuore dimostra quello che è dentro. A lo strinsico puoi cognoscere lo intrinseco."

72 For Aristotle's *Physiognomonica* in Renaissance Italy see Vogt 1999.

ciples. Writing on the similarity between the face of a person and his ethical traits, Manfredi argues that the character of a man is best shown in his facial features. Because the face is highly saturated with the blood and thus the spirit of a man, the qualities of his character and disposition become especially visible in this part of the human body.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, an ugly and deformed face can only be seen as the sign of a bad soul.

“Perché chi ha la faza deforme e bruta non può essere buono se non rare volte’ La bontà del’anima seguita la bontà dela complexione e la cattività del’anima seguita la cattività de essa complexione. E perché la deformità e bruteza dela faza non procede se non da mala complexione de tutto il corpo, imperhò significa tal faccia sopra la malatia del’anima, de che tal’huomo rare volte può esser buono.”<sup>74</sup>

Although physiognomic theories usually concentrate on similarities between the face and soul, Manfredi’s remarks reveal the relevance of this concept for the whole corporeal constitution of man. The complexion of an individual, i.e., the beauty of his entire body as guaranteed by a well-balanced mixture of the elements, was seen as an exterior symptom of the qualities of his soul.<sup>75</sup> Or, as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola put it in a slightly different context: A perfect soul resonates even in the terrestrial components of the human body.<sup>76</sup> Similar ideas and notions continued to influence the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were popularized by various humanists such as Andrea Vesalius (*De humani corporis fabrica*, 1543), Francesco Sansovino (*L’edificio del corpo humano*, 1550), and most prominently by Giambattista della Porta (*De humana physiognomia*, 1586). Even the art theo-

---

73 Manfredi 1474 (1988), p. 207: “Perché l’uomo è di simili costumi come se asomiglia la sua faza, zoèchi ha la faza simile al’ebrio se de’ inebriare e chi l’ha simile al’iracundo se debbe spesso corrizzare, e cussi dele altre cose.’ La dispositione di tutto il corpo del’huomo più se dimesotra nela faza che in nesuno altro luoco, perché la faza è un membro nobile, al qual manda la natura molto sangue e spirito. Secundo adunque la similtudine dela faza noi havemo a iudicare la dispositione e costumi de tutto il corpo. Chi adonque se asimiglia al’ebrio over iracundo nella faza debbe havere simili costumi e dispositione.” (*Liber de homine*, II, IV, 7).

74 Manfredi 1474 (1988), p. 208 (*Liber de homine*, II, IV, 12).

75 For the term *complexione* and the understanding of the human body in early modern europe cfr. Groebner 2004 and Stolberg 2001.

76 Benivieni/Mirandola 1522, p. 63: “Credo che dapoi che tale effetto [i.e., the effect of beauty] dal corpo non procede, necessariamente debba attribuirsi all’ Anima, laquale quando in se è molto perfetta & lucida, credo che insino nel corpo terrestre qualche raggio del suo splendore trasfonda, & in questo convengono tutti gli antichi philosophi & Theologi [...]”

rist Pomponio Gaurico included a lesson on physiognomy in his *De sculptura*, because he considered the knowledge of facial features and their meaning to be necessary for the ability to represent different character types and figures. He understood that a spiky nose is the sign of an angry man, and small ears are the sign of a malicious individual.<sup>77</sup>

As an artist and historiographer, Vasari was well aware of these ideas. By applying the principles of physiognomy not only to the corporeal appearance and ethical traits, but also to the works of an artist, he enlarged its semiotic potential. This transfer of analytical patterns was made possible by Vasari's conception of the incorporeal *idea* as the primary cause for a work of art. Like the body of the artist, this idea was generated by his individual soul and provided the basis for the execution of the *disegno*, the first material draft for a painting or a sculpture. In short, Vasari's theory can be summarized like this: Both the body and the artwork of an artist are fashioned by identical generative principles of his individual soul and thus necessarily share the same characteristics.<sup>78</sup>

Interestingly, Vasari applied these principles in an unsystematic way and even made fun of the diagnostic capacities of physiognomy.<sup>79</sup> His pen portrait of the painter Jacopo di Giovanni di Francesco in the life of Aristotile da Sangallo, however, shows that he employed this theory to characterise artists and their art. Commonly known by the name Jacone, the painter was part of a clique of artists infamous for their excessive and vulgar behaviour in public. As Vasari claims, they indulged in quarrel and defamation, and never washed their hands, faces, or heads. Furthermore, they never cut their beards, nor did they sweep their houses. Furthermore, when they prepared dinner, the tables were laid with the cartoons for their pictures and they drank directly from the flask or the jug. In short, under the pretence of living the finest life in the world, they lived like pigs.<sup>80</sup> Vasari did not doubt that their appearance and behaviour were to be seen as reflections of their inner selves:

---

77 Gaurico 1504 (1999), pp. 186, 190.

78 See also his characterisation of the medieval artists as *tondo* at the beginning of this chapter.

79 When Michelangelo was once approached by an old friend who was dressed in a penitential robe, he sarkastically remarked: "Oh, voi siete bello! Se fossi così drento come io vi veggo di fuori, buon per l'anima vostra." (Vasari 1568 (1878–1885) vol. 7, p. 279).

80 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, p. 451: "[...] viveano come porci e come bestie: non si lavavano mai nè mani nè viso nè capo nè barba, non spazzavano la casa e non rifacevano il letto se non ogni due mesi una volta, apparecchiavano con i cartoni delle pitture le tavole, e non beevano se non al fiasco et al boccale: e questa loro meschinità, e vivere, come si dice, alla carlona, era da loro tenuta la più bella vita del mondo."

“Ma perché il di fuori suol esser indizio di quello di dentro, e dimostrare quali sieno gli animi nostri, crederò, come s'è detto altra volta, che così fussero costoro lordi e brutti nell'animo, come di fuori apparivano.”<sup>81</sup>

Given this statement, it is no surprise that Vasari was similarly disappointed by Jacone's artistic career. Although he is said to have executed beautiful altar pieces and paintings, Vasari portrays him as an artist who spent most of his time with his friends in the taverns of Florence, where he insulted more respectable painters. He did not execute many works, was very bizarre in the posing of his figures, and contented himself with the little that his idleness allowed him to do. Wasting his promising talents with arguments and feasts, Jacone finally ended his unproductive and deviant life in misery in the small hovel that he had never cleaned.<sup>82</sup>

As has been argued by Antonio Pinelli, Vasari's characterisation of Jacone can be seen as the result of Vasari's struggle for artistic engagement at the court of the Medici in the 1540s.<sup>83</sup> Artists such as Jacopo Pontormo, Agnolo Bronzino, and Baccio Bandinelli (but even painters of minor importance such as Jacone), belonged to a circle of artists that were favoured by the majordomo of Cosimo I de' Medici, Pierfrancesco Riccio. Responsible for the selection, supervision, and payment of the artists, he was the central figure when it came to the placing of commissions.<sup>84</sup> But as Vasari claims in the life of Niccolò Tribolo, Riccio abused his authority by choosing the same old artists over new talent, thus excluding virtuous and excellent artists like Vasari himself from well-deserved success.<sup>85</sup> In the eyes of Vasari, Jacone thus represented an artist who was chosen not because of artistic diligence and refined manners, but because of friendly affiliations.

Riccio died in 1564, and by the time of the second edition of the *Vite*, the tables had finally turned. Vasari had acquired an important position at the court, which

81 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, p. 451.

82 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, pp. 452ff.: “La somma è che Iacone spese il miglior tempo di sua vita in baie, andandosene in considerazioni et in dir male di questo e di quello, essendo in que' tempi ridotta in Fiorenza l'arte del disegno in una compagnia di persone che più attendevano a far baie et a godere che a lavorare, e lo studio de' quali era ragunarsi per le botteghe et in altri luoghi, e quivi malignamente e con loro gerghi attendere a biasimare l'opere d'alcuni che erano eccellenti e vivevano civilmente e come uomini onorati. Capi di questi erano Iacone, il Piloto orefice et il Tasso legnaiuolo; ma il peggiore di tutti era Iacone [...]. Finalmente essendo stato Iacone da una infermità mal condotto, essendo povero, senza governo e rattappato delle gambe senza potere aiutarsi, si morì di stento in una sua casipola che aveva in una piccola strada overo chiasso, detto Codarimessa, l'anno 1553.”

83 Pinelli 1988, p. 8 ff.

84 For Riccio's role at the court of Cosimo I see Pinelli 1988 and Cecchi 1998.

85 Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, p. 91.

granted him a generous salary, a good reputation, and power. His position also gave him the opportunity to attack the conduct of Jacone and his fellows. An episode in the life of Aristotile which recounts Vasari's relationship to the moral standards and social manners of his artistic antagonists was omitted in the first edition of the *Vite* but later included.<sup>86</sup> Riding back to Florence on the back of his horse one day in 1541, Vasari was approached by Jacone who tried to insult him at the Canto de' Medici. Responding to Jacone's vain attempt to engage in an embittered conversation with the painter, Vasari showed his disdain:

“Perchè entrato egli così a cavallo fra loro, gli disse Iacone: ‘Orbè, Giorgio’, disse, ‘come va ella?’ ‘Va bene, Iacone mio’, rispose Giorgio. ‘Io ero già povero come tutti voi, ed ora mi trovo tre mila scudi, o meglio; ero tenuto da voi goffo, ed i frati e’ preti mi tengono valentuomo; io già serviva voi altri, ed ora questo famiglio che è qui serve me, e governa questo cavallo; vestiva di que’ panni che vestono i dipintori che son poveri, ed ora son vestito di velluto; andava già a piedi, ed or vo’ a cavallo: sicchè, Iacon mio, ella va bene affatto: rimanti con Dio.’ Quando il povero Iacone senti a un tratto tante cose, perdè ogni invenzione, e si rimase senza dir altro tutto stordito, quasi considerando la sua miseria, e che le più volte rimane l’ingannatore a piè dell’ingannato.”<sup>87</sup>

Vasari's pejorative portrayal of the demeanor and conduct of Jacone marks the beginning of a new era in the artistic life of Renaissance Florence. Although the works of Jacone and his fellows like Battista Tasso and Giovanni di Baldassare were esteemed as valuable and precious, they were nevertheless the products of a group of individuals who violated the social norms introduced and established by the examples of Vasari and his highly sophisticated friends. In contrast to the artisan of the *Quattrocento*, engaged in manual labor and covered with the stains of his pigments or the chips of his marble, the artist of the *Cinquecento* was an ally of the philosophers and humanists at the courts of Renaissance Italy. As Vasari's account suggests, the modern artist is assisted by a servant, rides on horseback, dresses in velvet robes, and is generally more interested in the liberal arts than the mechanical arts. This process of social emancipation had to be accompanied by a refinement of habits and manners by the aspiring new artists. Their instincts and needs had to be controlled and regulated by superior powers and values. Only the emulation of the distinct behavioural patterns of an intellectual elite, as described by Baldassare Castiglione and suggested to the artists by humanists and

---

86 For a discussion of this episode see Pinelli 1988, p. 6, for a general history of the courtly artist see Warnke 1985.

87 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 6, pp. 453 f.

artists such as Leon Battista Alberti,<sup>88</sup> Leonardo,<sup>89</sup> or Paolo Pino,<sup>90</sup> allowed artists to flourish in the courtly spheres of Florence.

The portrayal of Jacone can thus be seen as a counterpoint to the life of Leonardo, or all the more to the life of Raphael. Whereas Jacone engages in quarrels, Raphael engages in friendly conversations with everyone who approaches him; whereas Jacone is described as uncivilized and rough, Raphael is described as a beautiful and graceful artist; and whereas Jacone paints in a bizarre style, Raphael's paintings are famous for their lovely and harmonious compositions.<sup>91</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that Vasari modelled his own biography at the end of the second edition of the *Vite* upon the example of Raphael. Both his manners and *maniera*, i.e., his life as a courtier and as an artist, represented an ideal that Vasari tried to incorporate which became the role model for the artists of the Accademia del disegno, the first modern academy of the arts, founded in 1563 and devoted to the demands of Cosimo I de' Medici.<sup>92</sup>

As is shown by these examples, the identity of body, soul, and moral virtue was thus a recurrent motif that pervaded the entire *Vite*. Physiognomic conceits served as an interpretative scheme to enhance the social status of the artists and also complemented the ekphrastic description of their works of art, providing a common language for an easily accessible stock of attributes. Rather than reporting on the (often identical) iconographic subjects in lengthy passages, Vasari portrayed the artist's habits instead, because he knew that his reader would be able

88 Alberti (2002), p. 150: "Ma piacerammi sia il pittore, per bene potere tenere tutte queste cose, uomo buono e dotto in buone lettere. E sa ciascuno quanto la bontà dell'uomo molto più vaglia che ogni industria o arte ad acquistarsi benivolenza da' cittadini, e niuno dubita la benivolenza di molti molto all'artefice giovare a lode insieme e al guadagno. E interviene spesso che i ricchi, mossi più da benivolenza che da maravigliarsi d'altrui arte, prima danno guadagno a costui modesto e buono, lassando adrieto quell'altro pittore forse migliore in arte ma non sì buono in costumi. Adunque conviensi all'artefice molto porgersi costumato, massime da umanità e facilità, e così arà benivolenza, fermo aiuto contro la povertà, e guadagni, ottimo aiuto a bene imparare sua arte."

89 Leonardo (1995), pp. 33 f.: "[...] il pittore con grande agio siede dinanzi alla sua opera ben vestito e muove il lievissimo pennello co' vaghi colori, ed ornato di vestimenti come a lui piace; ed è l'abitazione sua piena di vaghe pitture, e pulita, ed accompagnata spesse volte di musiche, o lettori di varie e belle opere, le quali, senza strepito di martelli od altro rumore misto, sono con gran piacere udite."

90 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 137: "Né apparisca il nostro maestro con le mani empiistrate de tutti i colori, con li drappi lerci e camise succide, come guataro; ma sia delicato e netto, usando cose odorose, come confortatrici del cerebro." For a discussion of Pino's dependance upon Castiglione see the edition of his treatise by Dubus 2011.

91 Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, pp. 315 ff.

92 Cfr. Rubin 1995, pp. 357–401, Irle 1997, pp. 67 ff., and Brückle 2001.



to guess the style of his works from the depiction of his character (and *vice versa*). With rare exceptions, the characterisations of painting and painter were thus interchangeable. The great success of Vasari's *Vite* is therefore also indebted to its exploitation of popular theories, used in a new and often humorous context. It was not until the Seicento, with its *Vite* by Giovan Pietro Bellori (1672) and Filippo Baldinucci (1681–1728), that academic art criticism was brought to a new analytical level. Without abandoning the idea of a unity between artist and artwork, their ekphrastic models established a different form of art historiography.<sup>93</sup>

#### 4.5 Artistic Procreativity

Vasari's use of rhetorical patterns which draw on analogies between the artist and his works would have been incomplete if he had ignored the motif of parental resemblance. As has been shown by Ernst Robert Curtius, the metaphor labelling the works of an author as his biological offspring was already applied by ancient authors. Plato differentiated between those men who give birth by means of their bodies, and those who give birth by means of their minds. "Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory?"<sup>94</sup> Whereas the first method resulted in the creation of mortal children, only the latter method assured the everlasting immortality and fame of the author. Following the example of Plato, Ovid labelled his work as offspring (*progenies*) generated without the aid of a mother (*sine mater creata*); similar terms such as birth (*partus*) or even litter (*fetura*) were used throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages to describe the literary production of an author.<sup>95</sup>

It is clear from Ovid's reference to the female that these metaphors were based on a classical idea of procreation that continued to be in vogue during the Italian Renaissance. Its main element consisted of a strict discrimination between the male and the female contributions to the act of reproduction. Whereas the semen of the father contained the entire blueprint for the construction of the new human being, the mother merely provided the nourishment of the embryo, consisting of the menstrual blood – or *katamenia*, as Aristotle would have called it. Given

---

93 For Bellori's and Baldinucci's use of the equation of artist and artwork see Chapter 7.4.

94 Plato, *Symposium*, 177d, see also *Symposium*, 210a, *Phaedrus*, 278a and 275b, and *Republic*, 330.

95 Curtius 1948, p. 141. Cfr. also Pfisterer 2001, p. 306.

the ideal case of a lossless transmission of the male predispositions to the female matter, one must think of the resulting progeny as an exact copy of the father, identical both in the form of his body and the characteristics of his soul.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the function of the male was identified with an active, shape-giving principle, while the function of the female was characterized by a passive, form-receiving principle.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, one of these procreative ideas, the so-called encephalomyelogenic theory later illustrated by Leonardo (Fig. 30), localized the production



**Figure 30** Leonardo da Vinci, Hemisection of a Man and Woman in the Act of Coition, ca. 1490–1492, Windsor, Royal Collection

96 Balme 1990, p. 27. Aristotle develops his theory of procreation extensively in *De generatione animalium*, I, XIX–XXII and IV, III. Considering the existence of female offspring a necessity for the endurance of man, he nevertheless assigns some of the form-giving powers to the female as well. If the male seed is weak or if the father is old, women might contribute to the form of their children as well. Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 5: “For even he who does not resemble his parents is already in a certain sense a monstrosity; for in these cases Nature has in a way departed from the type. The first departure indeed is that the offspring should become female instead of male; this, however, is a natural necessity. For the class of animals divided into sexes must be preserved, and as it is possible for the male sometimes not to prevail over the female in the mixture of the two elements, either through youth or age or some other such cause, it is necessary that animals should produce female young. And the monstrosity, though not necessary in regard of a final cause and an end, yet is necessary accidentally.” (*De generatione animalium*, 767b5–15).

97 For classical theories of procreation see Nardi 1938 and Lesky 1951, especially regarding Renaissance art theory Jacobs 1997, pp. 27–63.

of sperm in the male brain, the center of human physiology and creativity. Passing through the spinal canal and the penis, it was finally absorbed by the womb of the female, where it started to model the form of the embryo.

It is no coincidence that many natural philosophers paralleled the process of procreation with the generation of works of art. When Aristotle described biological actions, he repeatedly referred to the principles of craftsmanship; i.e., he evoked the world of *techne*. Like the male semen, a carpenter who builds a chair using wood, or a builder who constructs a house using stones, transforms shapeless matter into moulded form by realizing an idea that was first conceived in his mind (*De generatione animalium*, 730b20).<sup>98</sup> Or, as Aristotle puts it in the *Metaphysics*: “It is the same with natural formations as it is with the products of art. For the seed produces just as do those things which function by art. It contains the form potentially, and that from which the seed comes has in some sense the same name as the product.”<sup>99</sup>

In his *De naturalibus facultatibus* Galen expressed the same thought by commenting on the works of the sculptor Phidias. Just as the male seed contains the future progeny in potentia, he possessed the form of his sculptures before touching the material.<sup>100</sup> Similar notions can be found in the works of Albertus Magnus (*De animalibus*, XV, IV, 86 and XVI, VIII, 50), Thomas Aquinas (*Summa theologica*, III, XXXII, 4), and Isidor of Seville.<sup>101</sup> The child metaphor was thus a figure of speech which granted the author of written works both male and female powers, since not only did he generate the ideas for his poems, letters, or narrations, but he also gave form to their material existence by producing the text. Felice Figliucci, a Paduan humanist who was later active in Florence, explained this singular quality of writers in his important commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, published in 1551:

“Gl’altri artefici [i.e., those who do not write] non fanno la materia, ne la quale inducano la forma, ma la pigliano fatta, come dire, lo scultore non fa il marmo, ma solo intaglia in quello la figura, e però gli altri artefici amano le opere solamente per la forma, che loro hanno data, ma li poeti ritruovano per loro stessi la materia, e quella formano,

98 Cfr. Lesky 1951, pp. 135 f. For the parallelisation of art and nature in Aristotle in general see Fiedler 1978.

99 Aristotle (1908–1952), vol. 8, 1034b. For this passage see also Oehler 1963 and Pfisterer 2001, p. 307.

100 See Pfisterer 2001, p. 307. For the parallelisation of art and nature in Galen in general see Kovačić 2003.

101 Isidor of Seville (2006), p. 206: “A mother is so named because something is made from her, for the term ‘mother’ is as if the word were ‘matter’, but the father is the cause.” (*Etymologiae*, IX, V, 6).

e dispongono distintamente, e con artificio dandole quella più leggiadra forma, che possono, e però amano li lor poemi, non solo per havergli data la forma, ma ancora per haver ritrovata la materia.”<sup>102</sup>

Renaissance humanists and poets were especially aware of their exceptional capacity and did not hesitate to defend their procreative privilege against other artists who tried to claim the same status for their own works. Consequently, sculptors and painters, who had to rely on alien material such as marble, canvases, and various kinds of pigments to realize their ideas, were often deemed ignoble if they referred to their works of art as children. This is shown in a letter by Marsilio Ficino which was edited in *volgare* by the same Felice Figliucci who provided the above cited explanation. Writing to the Venetian cardinal Marco Barbo in 1487, Ficino claims that only books represent the true likeness of an author, because they alone reveal the true and transparent image of his self.

“Sogliono a le volte i padri così efficacemente l’immagin loro ne i figliuoli imprimere, che colui che il figliuolo vede, vede similmente il padre. Questa cosa hora vorrei io, che dal cielo mi fusse concessa, e vorrei con la mente una epistola tanto a me simile generare, [...] perche i libri soli tra tutte le opere de l’arti figliuoli son detti: perche quelli solo simili a gli autori loro si mostrano, e sono certo più simili che la pittura non sarebbe, perche questa sola una ombratile figura de la persona nostra dimostra [...]”<sup>103</sup>

In contrast to a painting, which merely reproduces the external appearance, a book was thus considered the only way to preserve the entirety of the mind by the humanists.<sup>104</sup>

---

102 Figliucci 1551, p. 416.

103 Ficino (1546–1548), vol. 2, fol. 112r. For the Latin version see Ficino 1495, fol. 142r.: “Solent aliquando genitores adeo efficaciter imaginem suam filio prorsus imprimere, ut qui natum videat viderit et parentem. Id equidem dari mihi nunc divinitus opto, ut epistolam mente in praesentia procreem adeo mei similem [...]. Solus enim liber ex omnibus operibus artium liberi tanquam filii nomine nuncupatur, quia solus prodit simillimus auctori, certe similior quam pictura, haec enim solam refert umbratilem personae nostrae figuram, siquidem homines ipsos, id est animos, Plotinus mundanam hanc tragoediam ingredi putat corporibus personatos.”

104 Although the art of painting claimed to be able to reveal the motions of the sitter’s mind since the time of Alberti as well, most humanists remained sceptical. Epigrammatical inscriptions that were accompanying many portraits of erudites in the 16<sup>th</sup> century thus emphasize that the true likeness and effigy of the sitter is only realized in his writings. Cfr. Ludwig 1998, pp. 124 ff.

Despite the exclusiveness demanded by Ficino, many sculptors and painters of the Italian Renaissance began to think of their works as the result of a procreative act as well. Around 1460, the architect and sculptor Filarete imagines himself as a hybrid being, who gives birth to a tiny architectural model after having thought about its design for a time of up to nine months.<sup>105</sup> Leonardo often used verbs such as *partorire* (to give birth), *nascere* (to be born), or *generare* (to generate), when writing about the creation of his works.<sup>106</sup> These analogies between reproductive and productive processes may also have been suggested by the etymology of the Italian term *pennello* (paintbrush), which derived from the Latin *peniculus* (small penis), a connection which particularly interested the painter Agnolo Bronzino.<sup>107</sup> Michelangelo refused to have a wife and considered his works to be his children: “Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte, che m’ha fatto sempre tribolare, ed i miei figliuoli saranno le opere che lasserò.”<sup>108</sup> Titian gave visual evidence to these ideas by comparing his works to the offspring of a bear, traditionally believed to be unformed on birth: His *impresa* shows the animal licking its cub into shape (Fig. 31). The motto *Natura potentior ars* (Art is more powerful than nature) and the accompanying poem, probably written by Pietro Aretino or Lodovico Dolce, allude to the notion that his works are an improvement upon the imperfect forms of nature.<sup>109</sup> By the time of the publication of Cristoforo Sorte’s *Osservazioni sulla pittura* in 1573, painters often applied the child metaphor self-consciously to their works, thus assuming a position equal to the poets. As if the objections by Ficino and Figliucci had never existed, Sorte understood the realization of a painting as the manifestation of a mental conception or *idea* that displayed a strong resemblance to the character of the artist, like a child does to its parent.<sup>110</sup>

---

105 Filarete (1972), vol. 2, p. 40: “L’architetto debba nove o sette mesi fantasticare e pensare e rivoltarselo per la memoria in più modi, e fare varii disegni nella sua mente [...] così l’architetto è madre a portare questo ingeneramento, e secondo la sua volontà, quando l’ha bene ruminato e considerato e in molti modi pensato, debbe poi eleggere quello gli pare che sia più comodo e più bello secondo la terminazione del generante; e fatto questo, partorirlo, cioè farne uno disegno piccolo rilevato di legname, misurato e proporzionato come che ha a essere fatto poi [...]”

106 Cfr. Kemp 1977, p. 381.

107 For the etymology of *pennello* in art theory see Pfisterer 2005, p. 45 and Quiviger 2003b.

108 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 281.

109 For Titian’s motto see Garrard 2010, pp. 207–211 and Bohde 2003, pp. 116 f.

110 Sorte 1580 (1960–1962), p. 299: “E questa naturale Idea o vogliamo dire più tosto celeste ammaestramento, in noi da superiori corpi a questo proposito infuso, non solamente ci aiuta ad operare, ma nelle maggiori e più perfette eccellenze con imperio signoreggia; onde quella istessa libertà hanno i pittori, che si suole concedere per ordinario ai poeti, e come questi nelle invenzioni e nello stile differenti l’uno da l’altro si conoscano, così



Figure 31 Titian's Impresa from the 1568 Edition of Battista Pittoni's *Imprese di diversi prencipi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi*

Vasari's conception of the *disegno* is clearly indebted to these theories. Although direct and explicit allusions to a similarity between reproductive and productive processes are rather rare, he defined *disegno* as the father of the three arts (architecture, painting, and sculpture).<sup>111</sup> Similarly, painting and sculpture are said

a quelli parimente aviene. E di qui è che le immagini o figure che fanno si dicono essere loro figliuoli, perciocché ritengono ordinariamente della loro Idea; e perciò nelle immagini di alcuni pittori si vede la melanconia, in alcuni altri la modestia, et in altri una certa vivacità di spiriti accompagnata da una graziosa e perfetta imitazione, com'io ho osservato in M. Giacomo Tentoreto [...]."

111 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, pp. 168 f.: "Perché il disegno, padre delle tre arti nostre architettura, scultura e pittura, procedendo dall'intelletto cava di molte cose un giudizio universale simile a una forma ovvero idea di tutte le cose della natura [...], e perché da questa cognizione nasce un certo concetto e giudizio, che si forma nella mente quella tal cosa che poi espressa con le mani si chiama disegno, si può concludere che esso disegno altro non sia che una apparente espressione e dichiarazione del concetto che si ha nell'animo, e di quello che altri si è nella mente imaginato e fabricato nell'idea."

to be twin sisters, born from one father at one and the same birth.<sup>112</sup> Because he gendered the mental creation of artworks as male, he implicitly associated the matter, i.e., paint or marble, with female characteristics. Following the traditional Aristotelian model of procreation, which attributed the principle of form to the male, a work of art was thus conceived as a combination of its conceptual blueprint, provided by the male artist, and its material substance, provided by the female nature.<sup>113</sup>

One of Vasari's frescoes in the Casa Vasari in Florence seems to confirm this division of artistic labour programmatically. Painted between 1569 and 1573, Vasari's frescoes in the *Sala grande* allude to specific artistic issues, such as the invention of painting or the methods of amending errors in a painting. The fresco cycle also includes an illustration of the process of artistic invention, exemplified by a representation of the painter Zeuxis in his studio (Fig. 32). Surrounded by female models, the famous artist is shown in the act of painting an image of Diana. By skillfully using his paintbrush on the canvas, he gives form to his conception of the ancient goddess of the hunt, the animal kingdom, and fertility.<sup>114</sup>



**Figure 32** Giorgio Vasari, *Zeuxis paints Diana in his Studio*, 1569–1573, Florence, Casa Vasari

112 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, p. 103: “Dico adunque, che la scultura e la pittura per il vero sono sorelle, nate di un padre, che è il disegno, in un sol parto e ad un tempo [...]”

113 Jacobs 1994, pp. 81 f.

114 For the similarity of Diana with Helena and Juno see Nardinocchi 2011, p. 142. Nardinocchi also discusses the sources for the iconographic program, mainly based on Pliny, and the impact of Vasari's advisors.

That Vasari understood this fresco as an illustration of the concept of *disegno* is shown by two statues to the right of the artist's studio: The one on the far right represents the abundance of nature, symbolized by a statue of the many-breasted goddess Diana Ephesia; the other, situated on a decorative panel in the center between the artist's studio and its entrance area, being an allegory of *disegno* with a *caput trifrons*, embodying the three arts.<sup>115</sup> The iconographic program may thus be read as follows: By picking the most beautiful forms from nature, the artist creates something entirely new. Vasari's fresco is focused on the intellectual act in which the substance is provided by the abundant female nature, while it is the virile mind of the artist, symbolized by the allegory of *disegno*, which actively fashions the amorphous material.

#### 4.6 Michelangelo's Mouse. Who is an Artist?

Obviously, Vasari tried to incorporate allusions to the biological process of reproduction in his *Vite*. The *disegno*, linked to the mind of the artist, became a reflection of his individual soul and *ingegno* in just the same way that a child was believed to mirror the features of its father. Usually Vasari's analogies are based on a similarity between the character of the artist and the style of his paintings, but sometimes Vasari drew on corporeal analogies as well. A particular example of the latter is the case of the stonemason Topolino (It. "little mouse"), narrated in the life of Michelangelo. According to Vasari, the clumsy assistant Topolino, instructed to send blocks of marble from the rough hills of Carrara to Michelangelo's workshop in Florence, also made small statues, that he showed the famous sculptor for his consideration. When Michelangelo saw one of these unpolished *figurine*, a statue of Mercury with extremely short legs, he burst out laughing and told Topolino that he had made a dwarf of his Mercury. Topolino's remedy – to lengthen the legs of Mercury by making him a pair of marble boots – was considered unsatisfactory by Michelangelo, who was surprised by the naive solution of his unschooled assistant:

“[Michelangelo] Amò parimente Topolino scarpellino, il quale aveva fantasia d'essere valente scultore, ma era debolissimo. Costui stette nelle montagne di Carrara molti anni a mandar marmi a Michelagnolo; né arebbe mai mandato una scafa carica, che non avessi mandato sopra tre o quattro figurine bozzate di sua mano, che Michelagnolo

---

115 Kemp 1974, pp. 227 f.



moriva delle risa. Finalmente ritornato et avendo bozzato un Mercurio in un marmo, si messe Topolino a finirlo; et un dì che ci mancava poco, volse Michelagnolo lo vedessi e strettamente operò li dicessi l'openion sua. 'Tu sei un pazzo, Topolino' gli disse Michelagnolo, 'a volere far figure. Non vedi che a questo Mercurio dalle ginocchia alli piedi ci manca più di un terzo di braccio, che gli è nano e che tu l'hai storpiato?'. 'Oh, questo non è niente: s'ella non ha altro, io ci rimedierò; lassate fare a me'. Rise di nuovo della semplicità sua Michelagnolo; e partito, prese un poco di marmo Topolino, e tagliato il Mercurio sotto le ginocchia un quarto, lo incassò nel marmo e lo comesse gentilmente, facendo un paio di stivaletti a Mercurio, che il fine passava la commettitura, e lo allungò il bisogno; che fatto venire poi Michelagnolo e mòstrogli l'opera sua, di nuovo rise e si maravigliò che tali goffi, stretti dalla necessità, piglion di quelle risoluzioni che non fanno i valenti uomini."<sup>116</sup>

As so often occurs in the *Vite*, Vasari based his anecdote on a mix of facts and fictional elements. Domenico di Giovanni da Settignano, nicknamed Topolino, was actually in charge of procuring marble in the quarries of Carrara and (at least temporarily) assumed the role of an artistic assistant to Michelangelo, responsible for the first processing of undressed stone blocks. As is shown by his correspondence with Michelangelo in the years 1518–1526, he was given the task of choosing the marble for the Medici chapel in Florence. Furthermore, a drawing by Michelangelo, giving indications as how to cut the marble for one of the river gods in the chapel, was supposedly made for Topolino (Fig. 33).<sup>117</sup> His nickname seems to have pointed to these activities. As has been argued by Eric Scigliano, the name might have referred to a particularly agile *cavatore* of small stature, who could scurry up rocks and crawl through tight passages in the mountains of Carrara as nimble as a mouse.<sup>118</sup> In fact, just as Domenico da Settignano himself used to sign many of his letters with the honorific nickname, both his colleagues and collaborators, including Michelangelo, referred to him as Topolino.<sup>119</sup> Although Vasari did not describe the physical characteristics of Topolino, his name suggests that he was small. The contemporary reader, acquainted with the procreative theories of the time, was therefore able to establish a connection between the small stature of Topolino and his tiny figures or *figurine*.<sup>120</sup> That Vasari intended such a

116 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 282. See also the commentary by Paola Barocchi in Vasari (1962), vol. 4, pp. 2123–2127.

117 Perrig/Güse 1997, p. 129.

118 Scigliano 2005, p. 153.

119 See for example Buonarroti (1965–1983), vol. 2, pp. 124, 158, 359, 362.

120 A similar method was applied to the painter Pieter van Laer, the so-called *bamboccio*, by the Roman painter and art historian Giovanni Battista Passeri. When writing his *Vite de pittori, scultori e architetti* during the 1670s, he drew on analogies between the



**Figure 33** Michelangelo, Instructional Sheet with River Gods for Topolino, 1525, London, British Museum

reading of the episode can be proven by investigating its literary origins. As has been shown by Gaetano Milanese, Vasari's account was based on a similar novel by Antonio Francesco Doni written in the winter of 1544. Doni's *mezza novella* describes an encounter between Michelangelo and a *scarpellino* from Fiesole, who had made a deformed statue of Jupiter.<sup>121</sup> Although the Fiesolean Jupiter had a broken shoulder and thin legs, Vasari adapted the account to the corporeal features of Topolino by shortening the statue's legs, thus making it a dwarf like his creator.<sup>122</sup>

---

size of the painter and the size of his figures. See Passeri 1772 (1934), pp. 73f.: "Questi [i.e., the Oltramontani], perche era gobbo, mal disposto, e di sconcertata proportione, il chiamarono Bamboccio, e con questo nome fù da allhora riconosciuto, e chiamato per sempre; e fù una fatalità, perche il suo genio nella pittura fù solo dipingere bambocci, e bambocciate, et introdusse quelli soggetti vili di baronate [...]. Dimorò in Roma qualche tempo, facendo giornalmente quadri a varie misure, ma di figure piccole, in proportione della grandezza d'un palmo, e non passò mai questa misura, e vi rappresentava tutti gli avvenimenti [...]."

121 For a commented edition of the *novella* see Doni 1544 (2002), pp. 394–397.

122 A similar account, featuring the sculptor Mino da Fiesole, is reported in Domenichi 1548, fol. 9v.: "Mino scultore lavorando una statua di San Paolo a Papa Paolo, l'assottigliò tanto, che gliela guastò, hora sendo sdegnato il Papa, e narrando questo à messer Battista Alberti, disse detto Messer; che Mino non haveva errato; che questa era la mi-

Vasari's allusion to the similarity between Topolino's body and the size of his statues had a particular pedagogic purpose. Far from being simply a reference to procreative theories and a humorous occurrence in the life of Michelangelo, the account was meant to illustrate various artistic issues. First and foremost it underlined the *difficoltà* of sculpture. Contrary to the art of painting, statues could not be repaired or amended as easily as paintings. The artist had to shape the form of his statues without being able to add new material.<sup>123</sup> Or, as Vasari puts it: "La scultura è una arte che levando il superfluo dalla materia suggetta, la riduce a quella forma di corpo che nella idea dello artefice è disegnata."<sup>124</sup> In the context of the contemporary *paragone* between painting and sculpture, the episode thus draws attention to the artistic superiority of Michelangelo, who excelled in both arts.

Furthermore, it exemplified the importance of artistic judgement or *giudizio*, a concept that lies at the very core of Vasari's art theory. In comparison to his predecessors from the Quattrocento, Vasari granted the modern artist a major understanding of perspective and proportions, thus conceding him the right to determine the right disposition of his figures without applying mathematical methods. This artistic autonomy or *licenzia* was highly dependent on the artist's ability to discern the good from the bad, and although it could be improved by meticulous studies of the beauty of nature, it was ultimately believed to be a part of the individual *ingenium*, i.e., a god-given gift.<sup>125</sup> Artists endowed with judgement were thus able to create beautiful works of art; their sculptures and paintings were not as crude and arithmetical as the works of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but disposed of a harmonious grace in which the different parts were fitted together perfectly.<sup>126</sup>

---

glier cosa che facesse mai." In later editions Domenichi added an explanation of Alberti's witty answer in brackets: "Percioche egli [Mino] era avezzo à errar sempre." For other sources of Vasari's account see Doni 1544 (2002), p. 394, fn. 1.

123 Vasari describes this difficulty of sculpture in his *Introduzione alle tre arti del disegno*, stating that patching statues would be considered a lack of artistic excellence. See Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, pp. 154 f.: "Per che quelli che hanno fretta a lavorare e che bucano il sasso da principio e levano la pietra dinanzi e di dietro risolutamente, non hanno poi luogo dove ritirarsi, bisognandoli: e di qui nascono molti errori che sono nelle statue; chè, per la voglia c' ha l'artefice del vedere le figure tonde fuor del sasso a un tratto, spesso si gli scuopre un errore che non può rimediarsi se non vi si mettono pezzi commessi, come abbiamo visto costumare a molti artefici moderni; il quale rattoppamento è da ciabattini e non da uomini eccellenti o maestri rari; et è cosa vilissima e brutta e di grandissimo biasimo."

124 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, p. 148.

125 Klein 1961, p. 108. Further analysis of the artistic judgement in the Renaissance is provided by Summers 1981, pp. 368–379, and Summers 1987.

126 Pinelli 1993, pp. 107 f.

Michelangelo represented this artistic ideal *par excellence*. In addition to Vasari, who was particularly fond of the judgmental capabilities of the Florentine sculptor, the Venetian poet Pietro Aretino<sup>127</sup> also expressed admiration for Michelangelo's exceptional *giudizio*.<sup>128</sup> As stated by the Aretine author, Michelangelo had internalized the rules of measuring and possessed a *giudizio dell'occhio* which gave him the ability to work without using scale tapes and compasses.<sup>129</sup> Michelangelo's instant understanding of sculpture and painting becomes even the more visible if compared to the artistic practice of his untrained assistant Topolino, forced to rework and alter his statues continuously. As was observed by Antonio Francesco Doni in 1549, many artists who tried to imitate the great master failed and instead of making their figures harmonious they reduced them to cripples.<sup>130</sup> That Topolino erred was even the more obvious because he failed to make even a small statue. Compared to monumental sculptures or large drawings, in which disproportions became suddenly visible, small works concealed their compositional errors and were considered easy to execute.<sup>131</sup> The contemporary reader

127 Pietro Aretino in a letter to Francesco Pocopanno from November 24, 1537, as cited in Kliemann 2006, p. 224.

128 Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 520 f.: “Bisogna avere le seste negli occhi e non in mano, perché le mani operano e l'occhio giudica.” (Vasari in a letter to Martino Bassi from August 1570). The same dictum was cited by Vasari in Michelangelo's *Vita* (Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 270).

129 Cfr. for Michelangelo's concept of eyesight and *giudizio* Clements 1954.

130 Doni 1549, fol. 8r f.: “Ben è vero che molti [artisti] si son posti a volere avanzarlo [i.e., Michelangelo], con lor misure et arti, & in cambio di far giuste le figure l'hanno storpiate, & questo donde nasce che le misure non corrispondono? [...] Percio che nelle figure humane nelle quali consiste maggior dignità che in nessun altra figura, si vede certo che le contengono in loro innumerabili misure, che le non si possono con alcuno ordine geometrico ridurre; come si vede per ogni membro minimo che varia di punto in punto nelle sue grossezze, & larghezze: però è necessario acompagnare (per far simil corpi) la virtù del giudicio con quella gratia di che la natura ci ha fatto capaci; & questa ti credo sia una difficoltà grandissima.”

131 Cfr. Alberti (2002), p. 158: “Ma guarda non fare come molti, quali imparano disegnare in picciole tavolette. Voglio te esserciti disegnando cose grandi, quasi pari al ripresentare la grandezza di quello che tu disegni, però che nei piccioli disegni facile s'asconde ogni gran vizio, nei grandi molto i bene minimi vizi si veggono. Scrive Galieno medico avere ne' suoi tempi veduto scolpito in uno anello Fetonte portato da quattro cavalli, dei quali suo freni, petto e tutti i piedi distinti si vedeano. Ma i nostri pittori lassino queste lode agli scultori delle gemme; loro vero si spassino in campi maggiori di lode. Chi saprà ben dipignere una gran figura, molto facile in uno solo colpo potrà quest'altre cose minute ben formare. Ma chi in questi piccioli vezzi e monili arà usato suo mano e ingegno, costui facile errerà in cose maggiori.” For a contemporary example see Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 115: “[...] far nell'opere figure grandi, per ch'in esse si può perfettamente ordinare la proporzione dal vivo.” For a recapitulation of this practice see also Lana Terzi 1670, p. 148: “Devo anche ricordare [...] che [i pittori] si avvezino da princi-

might well have been able to associate Topolino's lack of *giudizio* with his supposedly small stature and head. According to anatomical treatises of Vasari's time, a small brain indicated a defect of the central cerebral ventricle, where judgement was traditionally situated.<sup>132</sup> Francesco Sansovino exemplified this connection between the corporeal diminutiveness and the lack of intellectual sensibility by remembering Thersites, the vulgar and small-headed soldier from Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>133</sup>

Topolino's disproportionate statue of Mercury may thus symbolize his unsuccessful attempts to become a proper artist not only in a literal, but also in a metaphorical, sense. As a mythological deity and personification of the planet, Mercury was a patron of the arts as well as the traditional protector of sculptors and painters. His astral influences guaranteed the success of an artist and ensured his fame and fortune.<sup>134</sup> An autobiographical woodcut from Cesare Cesariano's edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura* illustrates the huge impact that was attributed to Mercury in artistic matters (Fig. 34). The allegorical self-portrait from 1521 shows Cesariano protected by the personification of *Audacia* (audacity). Ignoring *Invidia* (envy) and *Ignorantia* (ignorance) to his left, he looks to the heavenly spheres of artistry where he finally shares direct eye contact with Mercury. In an etching from 1592, Bartholomeus Spranger employed a similar motif that was later copied by Jan Harmensz Muller (Fig. 35). Guided by Mercury and dressed in oxhide, the artist receives his laurel wreath, symbol of immortal fame, from the caring hand of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Furthermore, the long and winding road to artistic success is symbolized by various attributes that appear in the background of the etching. We can identify, among others, a personification of ar-

---

pio a disegnare in grande, cioè conforme al naturale: poiche in un' imagine piccola ben spesso vi stanno nascosti errori grandi, la dove in un' imagine grande si scopre ogni benche minimo difetto; che altri scolpisca in un anello Fetonte tirato da quattro cavalli, non merita altra lode che di fermezza di mano, acutezza di vista, e pazienza nell'operare, e questa è più propria de' scultori, che de pittori; i quali se apprenderanno bene il modo di formar imagini grandi, facilmente poi formeranno ancora le piccole; la dove coloro, che hanno avvezza la mano a lavori minuti, rare volte riescono nei grandi."

132 For a physiognomic interpretation of small heads see Gaurico 1504 (1999), p. 188: "Caput valde parvum quiquis habuerit, is ab omni erit sensu humanoque captu alienior [...]. Caput volunt id sensibus caeterisque rebus videri perfectum quod mediocre fuerit, quod rectum, quod et intra mensum constiterit ac ζ Graecae litterae figuram habuerit." For the ventricles of the human brain see Kemp 1971, p. 134.

133 Sansovino 1550, p. 5: "A proportione del corpo il capo grande è lodato, il picciolo & acuto dimostra la temperatura del cerebro manca e imperfetta. Però Homero biasimando Thersite tra l'altre cose gli oppose ch'egli avesse il capo acuto, volendo per questo significare ch'ei non aveva giudizio, il che non puo d'altro procedere che dal ventricolo di mezzo del cerebro, il quale non ben situato & ristretto per l'acutezza del capo impedisce il discorso." Cfr. Homer, *Iliad*, II, 212–277.

134 King 2007, pp. 191 ff.

## MVNDI ELECTIVA CAESARIS CAESARIANI CONFIGVRATA



Et perho quilli che si confidono in Dio & che pacientemente hanno supportato como ha dicho Seneca: Multa fecit tulitque puer sudavit & allest  
 Et si virtuti dant cõta locum. Bene dicere possumus. Nunquam fugias fertur ad umbras Inclina virtus: minue fortes: I deo cõ sit uirtus q̄ exal-  
 tat & uiros ad fidera tollit: Et perho quilli Pono dire hauere feco le pmanete possesside: & in ogni Cita essere Ciudadinicosi et e uerfo como ha  
 dicho Vitruuio q̄lli che nõ hano le naturale dote nel aio: sono fubditi a la cuedice de la fortuna enõ pono dire como al p̄tete et dice Vitruuio.  
 M iiii

Figure 34 Cesare Cesariano, Allegorical Self-Portrait, from his 1521 Edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura*



Figure 35 Jan Harmensz Muller (after Bartholomeus Spranger), Mercury leading Young Artists to Minerva, 1592/1628, London, British Museum

chitecture carrying a compass, the traditional symbol of *giudizio*, as is shown by a woodcut from Cesare Ripa's influential *Iconologia* (Fig. 36). Against this iconographic background, Topolino's relationship with Mercury seems less fortunate.



Figure 36 Personification of the Giudizio from the 1603 Edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*

Even though he was granted the advice of Michelangelo, he did not manage to create an entirely perfect sculpture of his astral patron and protector. As is demonstrated by Vasari's account, the ambitious but untalented sculptor was bestowed with neither immortal fame nor artistic success.

In a more fundamental sense, Vasari's account illustrates the difference between artisans and artists (and between the rocky mountains of Carrara and the



civilised city of Florence). After painters and sculptors had been emancipated from their traditional status as craftsmen, they engaged in the stabilization of their new social position, drawing distinct lines between themselves and their former relatives. This process of separation was initiated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but was brought to a new academic level through the publication of Benedetto Varchi's *Lezzioni* in 1550.<sup>135</sup> Defining the essence of art, Varchi states that all artificial products are founded in the intellectual faculty of its creator. In contrast to animals, which are guided by their natural instincts when making nests or cobwebs, a true artist is able to use his mind by discharging his natural dispositions, which allows him to acquire new techniques of creation (see Chapter 3.3).<sup>136</sup> Whereas the medieval artisan followed a limited set of rules and patterns, Varchi's *artista* is dedicated to the divine ideas and innumerable fantasies of his mind. Varchi compared this process of artistic refinement with the education of the young. As they gradually improve their knowledge and skills, the development of their lives is similar to the arts, which once had humble beginnings.<sup>137</sup> According to Varchi, an art like painting or sculpture was thus highly dependent upon the moral virtues and intellectual capacities of an individual; simply repeating the same figures and forms was considered inappropriate for the modern artist of the Cinquecento. Due to this restrictive conception of the visual arts, Varchi could exclude the discussion of other

135 For Varchi's conception of the modern artist see Roggenkamp 1996.

136 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 10 f.: “[...] l’arte non è altro che un abito intellettivo, che fa con certa e vera ragione (...). Dicesi ‘con vera ragione’ per due cagioni: prima, perché tutte l’arti sono infallibili, cioè non errano mai e sempre conseguiscono l’intendimento e fine loro; poi, perché mediante quelle parole se ne esclude e cava l’arte colla quale i ragnateli ordiscono le loro maravigliose tele, e le rondini et altri animali fanno il nido, e molte altre cose, le quali paiono bene fatte artificiosamente, ma nel vero non sono, perciocché, non essendo fatte per ragione ma per istinto naturale, non si possono chiamare arti veramente.” The same argument was used by various other humanists and even by artists, cfr. Martini (1967), vol. 2, p. 505: “[...] tutti li altri animali operando naturalmente sempre ad uno modo operano, come similmente ogni ironidine nidifica e similmente ogni ape ovvero aranea domifica, ma nell’intelletto umano essendo l’arte con la forza assegnata, tutte le opare sue, le quali sono infinite, infinito varia. Onde volendo esemplificare di tutti l’istrumenti che nella mente occorrono, saria uno processo infinito.”

137 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 15, 26: “Ben è vero che nessuna arte fu trovata e compiuta o in un medesimo tempo o da un solo, ma di mano in mano e da diversi, perché sempre si va o aggiungendo o ripulendo o quello che manca o quello che è rozzo et imperfetto. [...] Quanto a’ dubbii e problemi che possono cadere in questa materia dell’arte, si dimanda prima onde è che i giovani ordinariamente non sono artefici perfetti; al che si risponde che alla perfezione dell’arte si ricerca non solamente la dottrina, cioè la cognizione universale delle cose appartenenti a essa arte, ma ancora l’uso e l’esercitazione, perché come la dottrina acuisce o vero assottiglia la mente, così l’esercitazione fa perfetta la mano, dove si ricerca non meno tempo che studio.”

forms of artistry that were based merely on manual labor. This becomes especially apparent when he denies an anonymous stonemason, whom we might consider the Roman brother of Topolino, the right to be called an artist:

“È ben vero che non ognuno che fa alcuna opera si può chiamare artefice, perché, se la facesse a caso o insegnato da un altro, non è artefice: come dimostrò quello scarpellino, il quale, avendo per ordine e coll'aiuto di Michelagnolo rifatto non so che membra a una statua antica, chiese un marmo a papa Clemente per lavorarlo, dicendo che infino allora non s'era avveduto mai d'essere scultore; et avutolo, non prima s'accorse dell'error suo che l'ebbe ridotto e consumato in iscaglie, non avendo l'arte, la quale è uno abito, come si disse, e secondo quello bisogna ch'e' s'operi.”<sup>138</sup>

Varchi's and Vasari's accounts are thus to be seen in the light of the changing social status of sculptors and painters. Both authors were part of a courtly elite, which was interested in promoting the arts by enhancing the intellectual – not the manual – origin of a work of art. Vasari's *Vite* in particular can be seen as the literal manifestation of this process. Focussing on the individual *ingenium* of the artists, his biographies illustrate the importance of generating new motifs and ideas according to the principles of *invenzione*. The *disegno*, or first draft, containing the main outlines of an artwork, was considered the direct expression of the artist's mind. Although Vasari was aware of the necessity of manual training, his art theory evolves mainly from this conception of sculpture and painting as a mental act.<sup>139</sup>

When the arts became an important facet of the political dominion of Cosimo I de' Medici, Vasari was entrusted with the foundation of an art academy, giving him the opportunity to organize the production of art in an efficient manner. Whereas the erudite members of the Florentine Accademia del disegno were often responsible for the intellectual conception of decorative programs, the execution of the final product was frequently abandoned to specialized assistants, who were used to working fast and steadily. Instead of making the existence of the traditional

---

138 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 25 f. A similar account can be found in Vasari's *Vita* of Michelangelo, directly following the Topolino episode. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 284: “Mentre che egli [Michelagnolo] faceva finire la sepoltura di Giulio Secondo, fece a uno squadratore di marmi condurre un termine per porlo nella sepoltura di S. Piero in Vincola, con dire: ‘Lieva oggi questo, e spiana qui, pulisci qua’; di maniera che, senza che colui se n’avedessi, gli fe fare una figura; perchè, finita, colui maravigliosamente la guardava. Disse Michelagnolo: ‘Che te ne pare?’ ‘Parmi bene’, rispose colui, ‘e v’ho grande obbligo’. ‘Perchè?’, soggiunse Michelagnolo. ‘Perchè io ho ritrovato per mezzo vostro una virtù che io non sapeva d’averla.’”

139 Cfr. Kemp 1974.

craftsmen and artisans superfluous, the rise of the modern artist thus led to a diversification of their tasks and functions. Stonemasons like Topolino were therefore a vital part of the artistic life in Florence, but as is shown by the anecdotes by Vasari and Varchi, they had to obey the rules by sticking to their traditional duties, which consisted of manual labor.<sup>140</sup> Vasari finishes the account about Topolino with Michelangelo's remark, that *valenti uomini* would never have done what the untrained *scarpellino* did – implicitly referring to the differences between simple artisans and the artists of the Florentine academy.<sup>141</sup> In contrast to the little statues made by the little stonemason, the artists of the academy were used to adapting their trained minds to the miscellaneous needs of the duke, who demanded the conception of ephemeral decorations as well as the execution of monumental statues and fresco cycles.

### Ugly Artists, Ugly Art?

In this context, the negative example of Topolino is likely to have reminded Vasari's readers of the mental versatility of Giotto and Filippo Brunelleschi. Although both were infamous for their physical unattractiveness and the small size of their bodies, they figured as artists who were able to generate beautiful works of art. In contrast to Topolino (who mirrored his own physical shortcomings in his figures) and dissimilar to animals (who repeated identical patterns because of their natural instinct), they were not dependent upon the faculties of their bodies, but devoted to the beauty of their minds. In the teleological chronology of Vasari's *Vite*, they thus function as prefigurations of artistic virtues that were only entirely realized by the artists of the *terza età* in the Cinquecento.<sup>142</sup>

Giotto's and Brunelleschi's unpleasant appearances had repeatedly been the subject of novels and humorous tales in the Renaissance.<sup>143</sup> Vasari referred to the physical qualities of the artists explicitly in the life of Brunelleschi. By mentioning Giotto and the famous jurist Forese da Rabatta in the same breath, he reminds the reader of Boccaccio's description of Giotto as an ugly genius.<sup>144</sup> Ac-

140 For the impact of the *Accademia* see Ważbiński 1987, Barzman 2000 and Pinelli 1993, esp. pp. 25 f., 158 ff.

141 For a discussion of the differences between *uomini intendenti* and artisans see Thomas 2000.

142 For a thorough discussion of the topos of the ugly artist who creates beautiful art in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance see Jonietz 2011 and Saviello 2012.

143 For a discussion of examples see Land 1997.

144 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, pp. 327 f.: “E molte volte nasce in questi che sono di spartutissime forme tanta generosità d’animo e tanta sincerità di cuore, che sendo mesco-

ording to Boccaccio's novel the *Decamerone*, a stranger would never believe Giotto to be the best painter in the world, nor would he believe the erudite Farese to be able to read, if he could see them.<sup>145</sup> Although Vasari does not draw particular attention to the physical shortcomings of the artist Giotto, Vasari's description is clearly indebted to Boccaccio's account. In the same way in which Vasari contradicts the principles of physiognomy by describing the beauty of Giotto's paintings, when discussing the works of Brunelleschi he contrasts them with his corporeal features. As is shown by his introduction to Brunelleschi's life, Vasari understood that the unpleasant appearance and small size of an artist who otherwise excelled in his profession was an exception to the rule. To compensate for their physical defects, such artists would often develop great talent, which allowed them to create marvelous works of art.<sup>146</sup> Vasari thus uses the small size of Brunelleschi's stature as a background against which the monumental dome of S. Maria del Fiore, Brunelleschi's architectural masterpiece, becomes even more impressive. In fact, Vasari compares the beauty of his mind with the beauty of the *cupola*, thus making the impressive church an intellectual self-portrait of the small-sized artist.<sup>147</sup>

Considering the dominance of analogies in his *Vite*, Vasari's strategy behind the lives of Giotto and Brunelleschi is more than an exception to the rule; it follows a distinct motive. Instead of following the traditional parallelisation of external appearance and internal beauty, Vasari focuses on the dissimilarity between their bodies and minds. He thus emphasises the strength of cognitive and cerebral processes over the repetitive, reproductive cycles of nature. Whereas the act of procreation leaves the artist without any choice in the predetermined form and shape of his progeny, the acts of painting and sculpting gives the artist the opportunity to invent a great variety of figures. The biographies of artists such as Giotto

---

lata la nobiltà con esse, non può sperarsi da loro se non grandissime maraviglie; perciò che e' si sforzano di abbellire la bruttezza del corpo con la virtù dell'ingegno: come apertamente si vide in Filippo di ser Brunellesco, sparuto de la persona non meno che messer Forese da Rabatta e Giotto [...]."

145 For this novel see Land 2008, p. 16.

146 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 327: "Molti sono creati dalla natura piccoli di persona e di fattezze, che hanno l'animo pieno di tanta grandezza et il cuore di sì smisurata terribilità, che se non cominciano cose difficili e quasi impossibili, e quelle non rendono finite con maraviglia di chi le vede, mai non danno requie alla vita loro; e tante cose quante l'occasione mette nelle mani di questi, per vili e basse che elle si siano, le fanno essi divenire in pregio et altezza. Laonde mai non si dovrebbe torcere il muso quando s'incontra in persone che in aspetto non hanno quella prima grazia o venustà che dovrebbe dare la natura nel venire al mondo a chi opera in qualche virtù, perché non è dubbio che sotto le zolle della terra si ascondono le vene dell'oro."

147 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 343.

and Brunelleschi thus illustrate the autonomy of the arts and serve as an example for the ongoing process of the emancipation of the artists. No longer bound to merely imitating nature, painters and sculptors were invited to manipulate, improve on, and exceed nature. To achieve these qualities they had to overcome their natural instincts and oppress their individual needs, devoting the capacities of their minds to the creation of works of art. In short, Giotto and Brunelleschi were the total opposite of Topolino, and thus figured as prefigurations of artistic ideals that were only achieved by their successors.



## 5 Artistic Strategies Against Automimesis

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the artist of the Italian Renaissance was bound to adhere to certain standards of behaviour and conduct. In the same way in which he behaved in accordance with the social *decorum*, he had to monitor his artistic creations. When Leonardo discussed the problem of automimesis, he advised painters to stick to certain patterns of pictorial representation that were cherished by the majority of people. For example, he recommended the use of a model figure with perfect proportions, which would help the painter to overcome his individual preferences and result in paintings which were generally accepted by the public. The following chapter discusses similar strategies in use amongst the artists of the Renaissance. The natural affection and love for their creations above all made a critical approach to their works difficult. By relying on the advice of learned friends, by referring to proportion theory, or by inverting their perception through the use of mirrors, painters and sculptors trained their artistic judgement and established rational methods for the creation and evaluation of works of art.

### 5.1 Fighting One's Own Inclinations

The antagonism between individual forms of expression and predominant rules, often referred to as between *ingenium* and *ars*, is one of the key elements which renders Renaissance art so particularly vivid. Whereas Topolino was a symbol for uncontrolled creation, Michelangelo, who partly fashioned himself as an ugly genius,<sup>1</sup> represented the virtues of self-knowledge, self-control, and self-discipline in an exemplary way. It is therefore a sign of aesthetic criticism when

---

1 For Michelangelo's self-fashioning as an ugly artist in the tradition of Socrates see Saviello 2012, pp. 223–232 and Barolsky 1990, p. 25.

Michelangelo mocks the beautiful artist Francesco Francia,<sup>2</sup> a Bolognese painter of whom he disapproved, for his ability to create beautiful offspring while failing to create beautiful paintings.<sup>3</sup> Although Vasari preferred other artists as role models for the Accademia del disegno, the Florentine artist embodied the principles of art perfectly. His unquestioned role as advisor and instructor becomes manifest, not only in Vasari's *Vite*, but also in various paintings that illustrate how contemporary artists admired and studied his pictorial, architectural, and sculptural work (Fig. 37).

While paintings like the one by Nicodemo Ferrucci, with its representation of famous works by Michelangelo, underline the latter's general influence on the Renaissance artist, Daniele da Volterra's decoration of the Orsini chapel in the S. Trinità dei Monti in Rome is interesting because it showcases Michelangelo's superior understanding of the arts by means of a particular iconographic program. In addition to the official decoration of the chapel commissioned by Elena Orsini, which included frescoes of the legend of the cross as well as an altarpiece representing the deposition of Christ, Daniele da Volterra was granted the privilege of including two massive stucco reliefs, positioned at the bottom of the lateral walls and facing each other. Executed after the completion of the *Deposition* between 1547 and 1548, the reliefs were mentioned by Vasari.<sup>4</sup> As is proved

2 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, p. 533: “Francesco Francia [...] si fece crescendo di persona e d’aspetto tanto ben proporzionato, e nella conversazione e nel parlare tanto dolce e piacevole [...]”

3 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, p. 170: “E di questo proposito medesimo, venendogli innanzi un figliuolo del Francia su detto, che era molto bel giovanetto, gli disse: ‘Tuo padre fa più belle figure vive che dipinte.’” Francia's lack of artistic beauty was further emphasized by Vasari when describing his death. Looking at a painting by Raphael, Francia was literally extinguished by the beauty of the work, took to his bed and died. Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 3, p. 546.

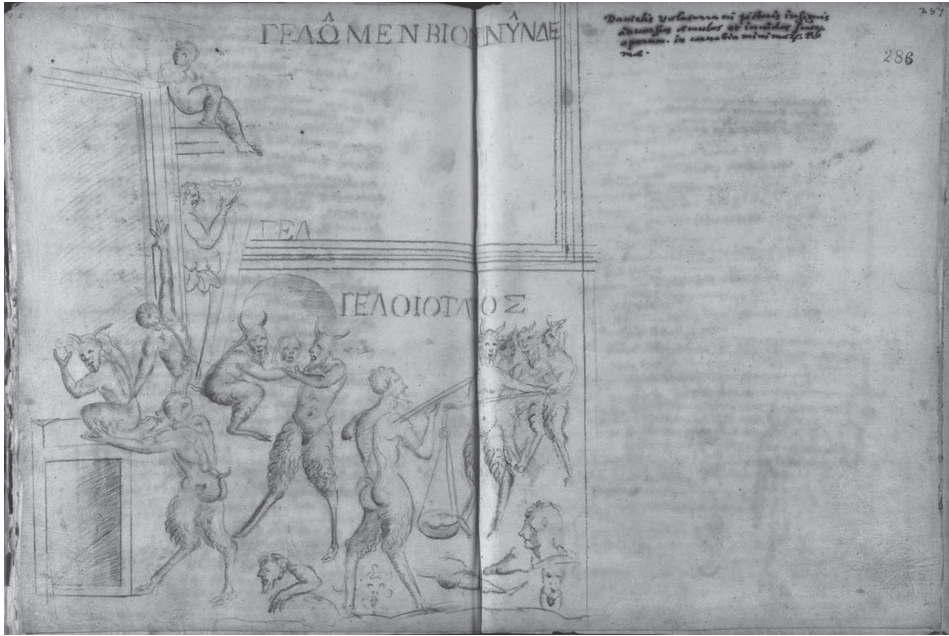
4 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, pp. 55f.: “Ma perché le pitture che son fatte per questa via hanno sempre del duro e del difficile, manca quest’opera [i.e., the works of the Orsini chapel] d’una certa leggiadra facilità che suole molto dilettere. Onde Daniello stesso, confessando la fatica che aveva durata in quest’opera, e temendo di quello che gl’avenne e di non essere biasimato, fece per suo capriccio, e quasi per sua defensione, sotto i piedi di detti due Santi, due storiette di stucco di basso rilievo; nelle quali volle mostrare che essendo suoi amici Michelagnolo Buonarroti e fra’ Bastiano del Piombo (l’opere de’ quali andava imitando et osservando i precetti), se bene faceva adagio e con istento, nondimeno il suo imitare quei due uomini poteva bastare a difenderlo dai morsi degl’invidiosi e maligni, la mala natura de’ quali è forza, ancorché loro non paia, che si scuopra. In una, dico, di queste storiette fece molte figure di Satiri che a una stadera pesano gambe, braccia et altre membra di figure, per ridurre al netto quelle che sono a giusto peso e stanno bene, e per dare le cattive a Michelagnolo e fra’ Bastiano, che le vanno conferendo. Nell’altra è Michelagnolo che si guarda in uno specchio: di che il significato è chiarissimo.”





**Figure 37** Nicodemo Ferrucci, *Artists studying the Works of Michelangelo*, 1615–1616, Florence, Casa Buonarroti

by a letter to Giovanni Bottari,<sup>5</sup> they were still visible in the 18<sup>th</sup> century although they were later destroyed. Thanks to a manuscript made for the Spanish antiquarian Alonso Chacón at the end of the Cinquecento, we also have visual evidence of Volterra's reliefs. The two sketches in the manuscript represent satyrs that are weighing legs, arms, and other members of figures with a steelyard on the right-hand side of the chapel (Fig. 38), and Michelangelo looking at himself in a mir-



**Figure 38** Unknown Artist after Daniele da Volterra, Drawing of the Relief on the right of the Orsini Chapel, 1590s, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica

ror, flanked by a personification of Justitia and a representation of Sebastiano del Piombo on the left-hand side (Fig. 39). Furthermore, both reliefs were equipped with Greek inscriptions, the one to the right reading ΓΕΛΩΜΕΝ ΒΙΟΝ ΝΥΝ ΔΕ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΤΑΤΟΣ (“We laugh at life, but now life is really laughable”), the two to the left ΠΑΣΙ ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΛΛΩ ΜΗΔΕΝ ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΝ ΜΕΤΡΟΝ (“My advice to all is that nothing is beyond measure”) and ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ (“Know thyself”).<sup>6</sup>

5 Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 4, p. 558.

6 For a discussion of the sketches and further literature on the chapel see Graul 2009.

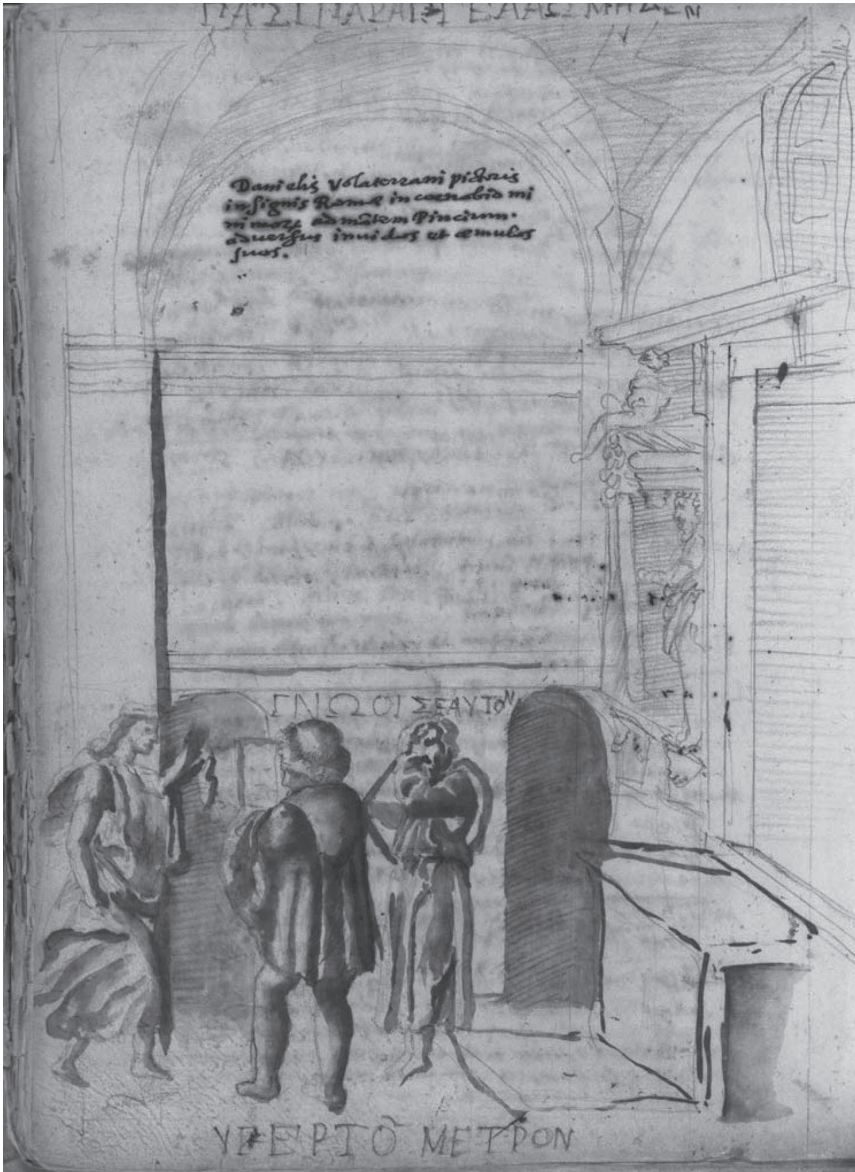


Figure 39 Unknown Artist after Daniele da Volterra, Drawing of the Relief on the left of the Orsini Chapel, 1590s, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica

David Jaffé, who first identified the sketches as representing the lost decoration of the Orsini chapel in 1991, interpreted Volterra's reliefs as an illustration of the right judgement of art. Virtually taking limbs and members from the figures of Volterra's paintings to measure them with scale tape and steelyard, the group of satyrs represents a mathematical method of artistic *giudizio* which is merely based on the right proportions and a coherent perspective. Michelangelo, literally on the other side, exemplifies a different approach to the evaluation of pictorial compositions. As is suggested by the mirror and the inscriptions next to the Florentine artist, his appearance is meant to illustrate that there are no strict rules or prescriptions to follow and that every artist should look for his own style and talents.<sup>7</sup> According to Julian Kliemann's observations, the group around the Florentine artist was actually a visual manifestation of the *giudizio dell'occhio*. According to this interpretation, Justitia represents self-knowledge and right measurement; Sebastiano del Piombo, who holds a compass while covering his right eye, and Michelangelo, who gazes at his reflection in a mirror, allude to the necessity of inner examination as the first step towards an internalized recognition of beauty and proportion.<sup>8</sup> The ancient proverb *Know thyself*, better known in its Latin form *Nosce te ipsum*, suggests a philosophical reading of the scene. The implications of the famous sentence, one of the maxims of the seven Sages written on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, was popularized by the writings of Erasmus in the Renaissance. The maxim emphasized the importance of a thorough knowledge of one's abilities and defects, necessary for a fulfilling life.<sup>9</sup>

But the saying was also meant in a corporeal way, as is shown by its appearance in prefaces of 16<sup>th</sup> century treatises on human anatomy. Although the authors are clearly referring to the ancient meaning of the proverb, they also suggest a transposition from a psychological to a physical and anatomical interpretation of *Nosce te ipsum*.<sup>10</sup> Illustrations also underscored this altered meaning. A fugitive sheet from ca. 1555 with liftable flaps emphasized the connection between self-knowledge and the knowledge of the human body by depicting a woman who shows her internal organs while holding a plate with the aforementioned motto (Figs. 40 and 41). This modern understanding of the saying was particularly interesting to artists as they strived for a deeper understanding of proportions by dissecting and analyzing the individual parts of the human body. Andrea Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica libri VII*, published in 1543, illustrates the attention that was paid to anatomical dissections. Furthermore, Michelangelo is known to have

7 Jaffé 1991, p. 250.

8 Kliemann 2006, pp. 220 f.

9 Hager 1992.

10 Carlino 1995, pp. 64 f.

Figure 40 Monogrammist RS, Fugitive Sheet with Anatomical Models after Andrea Vesalius, ca. 1555, London, British Museum



Figure 41 Monogrammist RS, Fugitive Sheet with Anatomical Models after Andrea Vesalius (detail), ca. 1555, London, British Museum

participated in the preparation of a similar treatise, Realdo Colombo's *De re anatomica libri XV* from 1559, in which he is portrayed among the persons on the title page (Fig. 42).<sup>11</sup>

Daniele da Volterra's portraiture of Michelangelo, accompanied by the Greek inscription, thus points not only to the philosophical implications of the motto, but was also hinting at the necessity of knowing the proportions of the human body by heart. While the satyrs have to rely on external, technical instruments to evaluate pictorial compositions, the self-reflective Michelangelo is granted the ability to replace these instruments with his eyes and mind. Volterra's reliefs thus illustrate the raw and uncontrolled artistic *ingenium*, represented by the libidinous and unreasonable satyrs, as opposed to the refined and sophisticated artist, who possessed *misura* as well as *giudizio* and *licenzia*.<sup>12</sup>

However, even as Volterra expressed his admiration for his friend and teacher Michelangelo, he applied the motto *Nosce te ipsum* to his own work, fashioning himself as a successor to the Florentine artist. By choosing Michelangelo as his example to follow, he showed a superior understanding of his own nature and talents. Volterra's style in the *Deposition* of the Orsini chapel is similar to that of the master, not only because he chose to copy his works, but also because his inborn soul was similarly shaped. Just as Sebastiano del Piombo decided to adhere to the style of Michelangelo, allowing him to compose many beautiful works, Volterra was following his natural inclinations when he followed the style of Michelangelo. Although absent from the honorific relief representing Michelangelo and Sebastiano, Daniele da Volterra was close to the two artists through his work, which embodied the principles of Michelangelo's (and Sebastiano's) art.<sup>13</sup> Volterra's awareness of his individual *ingegno* was appreciated by Lomazzo, who complimented him on his clear-sighted choice.<sup>14</sup> This awareness was later incorporated

---

11 Michelangelo's collaboration with Colombo is mentioned by Ascanio Condivi, cfr. Dillon 2012, p. 227.

12 Cfr. Pinelli 1993, p. 107.

13 Hansen 2013, pp. 61–64.

14 Cfr. Lomazzo 1590 (1974), vol. 1, p. 31: "Per via d'imitazione si procede quando uno, non avendo notizia perfetta dei termini e precetti dell'arte, sì che con quelli possa per se stesso liberamente operare, con l'osservar solamente le cose d'altri, e rapresentarsele inanzi, segue la maniera di alcuni pittori eccellenti, i quali furono Daniello da Volterra e Sebastiano del Piombo dietro a Michel Angelo [...]." Lomazzo's advice to choose an adequate master was probably modelled on similar remarks made by Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*, II, VIII and X, II). When discussing the qualities of a good rhetor, he also debates his capacity to instruct students. Rather than teaching each pupil identical things, a good rhetor should foster the particular characteristics of his pupils. And a pupil as well should take care of his individual dispositions when choosing his master.



Figure 42 Title Page from the 1559 Edition of Realdo Colombo's *De re anatomica libri XV*

in a general formula of artistic self-knowledge and education in Charles Alphonse Dufresnoy's *De arte graphica* (1668). Its English edition, published in 1695 by John Dryden, discusses the issue as follows:

"Since every painter paints himself in his own Works (so much is Nature accustom'd to reproduce her own Likeness) 'tis advantageous to him, to know himself: to the end that he may cultivate those Talents which make his Genius, and not unprofitably lose his Time, in endeavouring to gain that, which she has refus'd him."<sup>15</sup>

## 5.2 Artistic Narcissism

The presence of satyrs in Volterra's stucco reliefs was not only a reference to an unreasonable and libidinous process of artistic creation; it also pointed to another issue of self-referentiality as well. As personifications of the artist's instincts, the satyrs alluded to the destructive power of excessive love and self-indulgence. An uncritical approach to painting and sculpture, caused by the painter's natural affection for his own works, was indeed a frequently discussed problem in the art literature of the Cinquecento. Although Alberti described Ovid's Narcissus, the beautiful youth who fell in love with the reflection of his own image, as the inventor of painting,<sup>16</sup> artistic narcissism was considered to be negative because it prevented self-criticism and led to mediocrity.

Leonardo addressed the issue repeatedly in his *Trattato della pittura*. Blinded by the inclinations of their souls, painters would only paint figures which appeal to them. According to Leonardo, this natural habit was the cause of misproportioned figures and a lack of *varietà*.<sup>17</sup> Albrecht Dürer, probably influenced by Leonardo, was also aware of the dangers caused by blind affection. When writing about judgement in 1512, he advised painters to be aware of their own predilections, because they could trigger paintings which are only pleasant to the painter:

"Many fall into error because they follow their own taste alone; therefore let each look to it that his inclination blind not his judgment. For every mother is well pleased with

15 Dufresnoy 1695, pp. 63 f.

16 For a discussion of Alberti's Narcissus in *Della Pittura* with regards to the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* cfr. Ordine 2003, pp. 173–181; for the negative reception of Narcissus in the Renaissance see Pfisterer 2001.

17 Leonardo (1995), p. 75.



her own child, and thus also it ariseth that many painters paint figures resembling themselves.”<sup>18</sup>

Leonardo and Dürer addressed a crucial question at the very core of artistic creation: How can an artist defeat his natural inclinations and create works of art that are commonly appreciated because of their universal beauty? Indeed, the love for one’s own creations was considered a natural law and applied to children as well as to intellectual products. During the Renaissance, Aristotle provided a widely accepted explanation for this general phenomenon. In his *Rhetoric* he states that similar things are usually pleasant to each other. For instance, a horse, man, or young person is pleasant for another horse, man, or young person. This empirical observation served to explain why human beings tend to love not only themselves, but also their works. Since everything like and akin to oneself is pleasant, and since every man is more like and akin to himself than anyone else is, it follows that everyone is naturally pleased by himself. The same applied to the works of a man: What is our own pleases, because it is similar to us.<sup>19</sup> This principle of creative affection, regarded as a universally valid principle, helped explain natural

---

18 Conway 1889, p. 180. For the German text see Ullmann 1993, p. 128. Because of their corporeal beauty, neither Leonardo nor Dürer had to be preoccupied with the quality of their works. When Joachim Camerarius wrote the introduction to the Latin edition of Dürer’s *Unterweysung der Messung* (1532), he explicitly states that Dürer possessed a beautiful soul, a quality which naturally led to the creation of beautiful works of art. Conway 1889, pp. 180 f.: “Nature bestowed on him a body remarkable in build and stature and not unworthy of the noble mind it contained; that in this too Nature’s Justice, extolled by Hippocrates, might not be forgotten – that Justice, which, while it assigns a grotesque form to the ape’s grotesque soul, is wont also to clothe noble minds in bodies worthy of them. [...] But after his hand had, so to speak, attained its maturity, his sublime and virtue-loving genius became best discoverable in his works, for his subjects were fine and his treatment of them noble. [...] The nature of a man is never more certainly and definitely shown than in the works he produces as the fruit of his art.”

19 Aristotle (1549), p. 63: “Et perche egli è piacevole tutto quello, che è naturale, essendo le cose dei parenti naturali inverso l’un dell’altro, però tutte le parentele, & tutte le similitudini ci dan’ piacere il piu delle volte, sicome fa l’huomo all’altro huomo, & il cavallo al cavallo, & il giovane al giovane; La onde è il Proverbio Che il simile appetisce il simile. Et che al simile il simile sempre è amico. Et che la fiera conosce la fiera. Et che la cornacchia sta con la cornacchia, & altre cose simiglianti. Ma perche tutto quello, che ci è simile, & che ci è congiunto per parentado, ci arreca piacere, essendo queste due conditioni in ciaschedun’ huomo, massimamente inverso di se medesimo, per necessità si conchiude, che tutti gli huomini sieno di loro stessi amatori ò piu, ò meno, perche le cose dette disopra sono massimamente in se stesso. Et perche chiascheduno ama se medesimo, però tutte le cose, che da noi stessi dependono, di necessità ci arrecan’ piacere, come sono l’attioni, & i ragionamenti.” (*Rhetoric*, 1371b). Segni’s *volgare* edition of the *Rhetorica* and *Poetica* was crucial for the reception of Aristotle in Italy. With re-

as well as cultural phenomena. That is, because they resemble each other, a father loves his son and a poet adores his poems.<sup>20</sup> Vincenzio Borghini, the *luogotenente* of the Accademia del disegno and a friend of Vasari's, discussed the issue in 1564 in his *Selva di notizie* with regards to the works of artists:

“Dice Aristotile ch’ogniuno ama sé stesso e le cose sue: pongniàn caso il padre e’ figli come cosa fatta da sé. Di qui nasce che gl’artefici amano l’opere loro [...] perché, se bene un padre ama e’ sua figli, imperò ne ama più quello che è più grazioso, più gentile e più virtuoso etc., et i pittori e scultori stimano et aman più quelle opere che gl’han fatte più belle.”<sup>21</sup>

Although love and affection were generally regarded as positive, they had their downsides, too. Borghini identified the natural inclination of artists as a reason for the never-ending *paragone* between painting and sculpture. Since painters tend to appreciate the art of painting and sculptors tend to appreciate the art of sculpture, it would be rather unlikely to expect an objective judgement from the artists.<sup>22</sup>

A frequently used example for the bad influence of excessive narcissism was provided by the animal kingdom. Since antiquity, the ape mother served to illustrate the bad effects of unconditional love.<sup>23</sup> According to Pliny (*Historia naturalis*, VIII, LXXX, 216), she used to hug and embrace her newborns so often that they frequently died. Since her offspring were thought to be remarkably ugly, her behaviour was not only seen as an exaggerated form of affection but also as a sign of defective judgement. Consequently, many authors mentioned the ape mother when they discussed the problem of individual judgement. The ancient author Synesius of Cyrene<sup>24</sup>, as well as the Renaissance humanists Angelo Poliziano and

---

gard to the nature of friendships, Aristotle makes similar observations, but admits that opposites could attract each other, too. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155b).

20 For the use of analogy in Aristotle see Müller 1965, p. XV and Oehler 1963, pp. 37 ff. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the proverbs cited by Aristotle were widely in use. This is especially true for the proverb *Ogni simile appetisce il suo simile*.

21 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 657.

22 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 657.

23 For the ape in Renaissance art history see Janson 1952. A similar example was the sculptor Pygmalion, who fell in love with a sculpture he had carved.

24 Synesius of Cyrene (1926), p. 78: “After all, love of offspring is so great a force in nature that, according to the fable, the very apes when they bring forth their young gaze upon them as idols, and are lost in admiration of their beauty, but those of their fellows they see just as they are – the offspring of apes. Hence we should leave to others the task of appraising the value of our creation, for partiality is quite capable of warping our judg-

Benedetto Varchi,<sup>25</sup> were aware of the dangers of self-deception and used the example as an illustration. The metaphor of the ape was highly descriptive and therefore easily understandable for artists as well. The unusual proportions of the ape, its fur covering wide parts of the body, and its uncovered and joyfully exposed genital area collided with the traditional ideals of corporeal beauty in Renaissance Italy. In addition, the ridiculous appearance of the ape was understood to be an expression of its ridiculous soul.<sup>26</sup> As an *exemplum vitiosum* of social behaviour and bodily shape, the ape was thus used to describe libidinous and unreasoned humans: “Sono le simie significato de gli huomini maligni, e libidinosi [...]. Un’uomo c’ha le parti del corpo mal composte, è detto Simia.”<sup>27</sup>

As a result of this negative background, pictorial representations of the ape mother and her offspring were frequently used to illustrate the bad effects of excessive self-love and unjustified adoration. An emblem from Giulio Cesare Capaccio’s *Delle imprese* (1592) is used in this sense; it depicts the ape mother in a beautiful landscape hugging her offspring (Fig. 43). The gesticulating arms and



**Figure 43** Illustration of an Ape Mother with her Offspring, from the 1592 Edition of Giulio Cesare Capaccio’s *Delle imprese*

---

ment. It was for this that the sculptor Lysippus brought the painter Apelles to see his pictures, and for the same reason Apelles brought Lysippus to see his own.” Synesius’ epistles were first published in Marco Musuro’s *Corpus degli epistolografi greci* (Venice 1499) and translated into Latin by Giano Cornario in 1560.

25 Varchi 1570 (1995), p. 519: “Perché tutti amano più sé stessi che altri e più le loro cose proprie che l’altrui; e perché i figliuoli sono la più cara cosa che habbiano gli huomini e i componimenti sono i figliuoli de’ componitori, quindi avviene che ciascuno, e massimamente coloro che sono più boriosi degli altri, ne’ loro componimenti s’ingannano, come dicono che alle bertucce paiono i loro bertuccini la più bella e vezzosa cosa che sia, anzi che possa essere in tutto ‘l mondo.”

26 Gesner 1551, p. 961: “natura simiae ridiculo animali, & animam habenti ridiculam, corporis quoque constructionem ridiculam dedit.”

27 Capaccio 1592, fol. 68r.

the open snout of the newborn indicate that this scene is not as peaceful as it seems: Driven by her great affection, the ape mother is actually crushing her offspring to death rather than softly squeezing it. In fact, as the Horatian titulus *Est modus in rebus* (There is a measure in all things) suggests,<sup>28</sup> the etching was meant to allude to the virtue of *temperantia*, since excessive love for one's own creation can cause harmful effects. According to Capaccio, apes were therefore frequently used as emblems for poets who were enthused by their own writings, while being overly critical of the works of other authors.<sup>29</sup>

### 5.3 Apelles and the Use of Collective Intelligence

The increasing popularity of narcissistic apes in Renaissance culture was the result of a change in attitude towards the creation of works of art. Similar to the iconographic program of Volterra's stucco reliefs in S. Trinità dei Monti, they gave visual expression to a general tendency in the arts of the Cinquecento. The criticism of art had become a matter of public interest performed in the academic spheres of the humanists, in the studios of the artists, and in the interiors of churches and chapels. The artists were confronted with a multitude of observations and objections that they had never encountered before.<sup>30</sup> While they were gaining a social status comparable to that of the poets, their works received the same critical attention as the writings of poets. Because of this paradigmatic shift Vasari interpreted Volterra's reliefs as a sort of self-defense against art critics who accused him of blindly imitating the style of Michelangelo.<sup>31</sup> The increased attention paid to the works of artists also obliged them to perform a self-conscious evaluation of their own works. In benefitting from the opinions of others, artists showed an analytical approach to their own defects – the first step towards an improvement in the art of painting and sculpture.

---

28 The titulus is taken from Horace: "Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines, quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum." (*Satires*, I, 1, 106–107).

29 Capaccio 1592, fol. 68v.: "E per che le Simie, turpissimae bestiae dette da Ennio, credono che i loro Simiotti più belli siano de gli altri parti, per questo sono Imprese di queglii Scrittori, che i proprij scritti lodano, e schivano gli altrui."

30 For the increase of art criticism cfr. Frangenberg 1990, pp. 44 ff. and Franceschini 2021.

31 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, pp. 55 f.: "Daniello stesso, confessando la fatica che aveva durata in quest'opera, e temendo di quello che gl'avenne e di non essere biasimato, fece per suo capriccio, e quasi per sua defensione, sotto i piedi di detti due Santi, due storiette di stucco di basso rilievo [...]."

The advice to consider the judgement of others was hardly a new one. Since the time of Horace (*Ars poetica*, 408–434), poets were aware of their reduced capacities when it came to the question of auto-evaluation; they were counseled to rely on the judgement of their closest friends to improve upon their writings. Many bibles published in the 16<sup>th</sup> century emphasized the human inclination to recognize the errors of others while failing at recognizing one's own, by incorporating illustrations of the famous parable of the mote and the beam (Fig. 44),



**Figure 44** Unknown Artist, Parable of the Mote and the Beam, ca. 1526, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek

given in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt, 7,1–5): “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again. And why seest thou the mote, that is in thy brother’s eye, and perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” In the Renaissance, this general phenomenon was explained by the diversity of human nature. Because each man was equipped with special talents and interests, the judgement of each man was believed to be different. Whereas the defects of a

friend are therefore easy to recognize, one's own errors are unrecognizable by one's own judgement and thus remain invisible.<sup>32</sup>

It is in this context that many writers on art advised their readers about the problem of narrow-mindedness. As remarked by Gilio da Fabriano in his *Dialogo* (1564), a painter had to examine his own paintings as carefully as a critical judge would. By amending compositional errors, reading books, and asking others for advice, he could improve the quality of his works.<sup>33</sup> Giovanni Battista Armenini was especially concerned with the tender affection that artists showed towards their own paintings, which they unreasonably believed to be the most perfect. Critical advice from learned people was therefore strongly suggested in his *De' veri precetti della pittura*:

“E perciò è di molta utilità al pittore il sottoporsi al parere altrui, ed è bene à cominciarsi da' disegni, che tuttavia vien facendo, e lasciata la sua persuasione, accettar la correction de gli huomini eccellenti, perche le sciocche compositioni e l' opere malfatte, nascono bene spesso dal troppo credere di se medesimo. [...] Ma gli huomini buoni, et intelligenti, ti faranno secondo il loro giuditio, toglier via alcune cose, mutare, aggiungere, e variare e per quanto e come li parerà di bisogno.”<sup>34</sup>

As is shown by Armenini's remarks, this process of consultation was not to be considered a free exchange of equivalent opinions. Instead, the works of an artist were evaluated on the basis of the judgement of the *huomini eccellenti*, well-read artists and humanists familiar with the academic principles of the art of painting. According to their profession, their verdict was characterised by an artistic analysis of formal aspects regarding compositional errors and technical problems, as well as an examination of the rhetorical structure of the painting, mainly focusing on the treatment of its literary subject.<sup>35</sup>

32 Cfr. Castiglione 1528 (1998), p. 28: “Chi vol con diligenza considerar tutte le nostre azioni, trova sempre in esse varii difetti; e ciò procede perché la natura, così in questo come nell'altre cose varia, ad uno ha dato lume di ragione in una cosa, ad un altro in un'altra: però interviene che, sapendo l'un quello che l'altro non sa ed essendo ignorante di quello che l'altro intende, ciascun conosce facilmente l'error del compagno e non il suo ed a tutti ci pare essere molto savi, e forse più in quello in che più siamo pazzi.”

33 Gilio 1564 (1960–1962), p. 49: “Però sarebbe bene che facesse, come di anzi fu detto, parecchi giorni prima i loro cartoni, schizzi o modelli, e quelli cento volte rivedere e considerare, non come padre, ma come giudice; aggiungere, scemare, emendare e correggere bene la cosa come esser vuole; domandare, informarsi, leggere et aver bene a mente tutto il soggetto et ogni sua particolarità e qualità, tanto del proprio quanto degli accidenti; e non fare a la cieca, e dar tosto l'imprimiera et operare il pennello.”

34 Armenini 1587 (1988), p. 159.

35 Thomas 2000, p. 44.

But in addition to learned artists, patrons, and humanists, the common people – the so-called *popolo basso*, who consisted of *uomini non intendenti* – were able to have their say, too. Although not acquainted with the peculiarities of art, they were often believed to have a good understanding of the abundance of natural phenomena, so their advice was often appreciated.<sup>36</sup> Vincenzio Borghini, one of Vasari's closest friends and advisors, discussed the issue in his *Selva di notizie*, a short treatise that contained several observations on the arts; it was probably meant to serve as a preparatory draft for a lecture to be held at the Accademia del disegno.<sup>37</sup> According to the scholar, the people possessed a general understanding of beauty and proportion because they were equipped with a multitude of eyes and brains, allowing them to generate a universal judgement: “Notando uno una cosa e quell'altro un'altra e conferendo insieme di molti particolari che di per sé sarebbon perfetti, ne nasce un universale perfetto.”<sup>38</sup>

The *locus classicus* for this topos in art literature was provided by Pliny (*Historia naturalis*, XXXV, 85). As stated by the Roman historian, the painter Apelles liked to set his paintings up in public and then hide behind them to hear what faults the passersby noted. When a passing cobbler commented on the mistakes he had made painting a shoe, Apelles corrected him thankfully. On seeing the improved painting the next day, the cobbler felt encouraged and began to criticize other parts of the painting as well. Enraged by the presumptuous craftsman, Apelles harshly told him to stick to his last (“Sutor, ne ultra crepidam!”).<sup>39</sup>

Although Pliny's account ultimately focuses on the limits of a synthesised judgement, his story was often retold by Italian art theorists such as Alberti,

---

36 Cfr. Leonardo (1995), p. 63: “Certamente non è da ricusare mentre che l'uomo dipinge il giudizio di ciascuno, perocché noi conosciamo chiaro che l'uomo, benché non sia pittore, avrà notizia della forma dell'altro uomo, e ben giudicherà s'egli è gobbo o s'egli ha una spalla alta o bassa, o s'egli ha gran bocca o naso od altri mancamenti. Se noi conosciamo gli uomini poter con verità giudicare le opere della natura, quanto maggiormente ci converrà confessare questi poter giudicare i nostri errori, ché sappiamo quanto l'uomo s'inganna nelle sue opere; e se non lo conosci in te, consideralo in altrui, e farai profitto degli altrui errori. Sicché sii vago con pazienza udire l'altrui opinione; e considera bene e pensa bene se il biasimatore ha cagione o no di biasimarti; e se trovi di sí, racconcia, e se trovi di no, fa vista di non l'aver inteso; o, s'egli è uomo che tu stimi, fagli conoscere per ragione ch'egli s'inganna.” A contemporary source, the literary critic Matteo Bandello, confirms that Leonardo actually worked like this when he painted the *Last supper* in Milan. As cited in Villata 1999, p. 301: “[...] allora l'eccellente pittore Lionardo Vinci fiorentino dipingeva, il quale aveva molto caro che ciascuno veggendo le sue pitture, liberamente dicesse sovra quelle il suo parere.”

37 Cfr. Burioni 2008, p. 77.

38 Borghini, *Selva*, Ed. Barocchi, p. 629.

39 The proverbial “Cobbler, stick to thy last” is already quoted by the Roman historian Valerius Maximus (*Factorum et dictorum memorabilium*, VIII, 12).

Varchi, and Dolce, who underlined the positive effects of Apelles' strategy.<sup>40</sup> According to these authors, the individual judgement of an artist had to be accompanied by a corrective authority, which stimulated an objectified approach to his works of art. Vasari relates the episode not only in his *Vite*, but also in the form of a large-scale fresco in the Casa Vasari in Florence, painted between 1569 and 1573 (Fig. 45). The fresco shows the cobbler on his knees in front of Apelles' painting, indicating the incriminated sandal with the index finger of his right hand. Other persons, a bearded older man among them, seem to interfere with the cobbler, presumably engaging in discussions about the quality of the painting of Diana. Whereas these persons are the center of attention, Apelles himself is shown to the far right in a small corner behind his painting. Unnoticed by the spectators and enshadowed by a red curtain, he seems to be listening to the ongoing debate while his chin rests on his left hand in a gesture of reasoning.

That Vasari emphasized the importance of the *giudizio del popolo* with this fresco is not only shown by the visual precedence given the cobbler, but also confirmed by the spatial collocation of the painting. It was positioned on one of the longitudinal walls of the *Sala grande* in the Casa Vasari, facing a representation of the painter Zeuxis relying on his individual judgement to compose an image of ideal beauty (Fig. 32). While the portrait of Apelles represented a humble and self-reflective artist, always interested in improving his art, the portrait of Zeuxis can be associated with the authority of the individual nature, an art in which the entire process of artistic invention was attributed to the painter. As is shown by these opposing frescoes, both paradigms were indispensable for Vasari. According to the Aretine author, the art of painting was best served by combining the Apellian and Zeuxian strategy. While the former ensures the legibility of paintings and represents the application of universally valid rules, the latter focuses on the importance of individual solutions and inventions, a quality of the artist that Renaissance humanists summarized under the term *ingegno*.

Of course, the *popolo* was not to be followed in all regards. In his amusing adaption of the Apellian episode, Paolo Pino mocked an old lady for her concerns regarding a portrait of her daughter. Mistaking a shadow cast on the face of her offspring for a mole, she showed a lack of understanding of the peculiarities

---

40 Alberti (2002), pp. 166 ff.: "L'opera del pittore cerca essere grata a tutta la moltitudine. Adunque non si spregi il giudicio e sentenza della moltitudine, quando ancora sia licito soddisfare a loro oppenione. Dicono che Appelles, nascoso drieto alla tavola, acciò che ciascuno potesse più libero biasimarlo e lui più onesto udirlo, udiva quanto ciascuno biasimava o lodava. Così io voglio i nostri pittori apertamente domandino o odano ciascuno quello che giudichi, e gioveralli questo ad acquistar grazia." Further examples for the paedagogic use of this anecdote can be found in Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), p. 56, Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 134, and Dolce 1557 (1960–1962), p. 156.





Figure 45 Giorgio Vasari, Apelles and the Cobbler, 1569–1573, Florence, Casa Vasari

of pictorial representations.<sup>41</sup> Borghini was of a similar opinion. While he attributes to the people a general understanding of questions of proportion and beauty (thus repeating some old advice of Leonardo's<sup>42</sup>), he criticizes their deficiencies in questions of *diligenza* and *difficoltà*, specific artistic issues which could not be judged by simple cobblers or stonemasons.<sup>43</sup> According to Borghini, artists should therefore consider themselves happy if they are only criticized by experts: "Felici gl'artefici, se de l'arte loro giudicassino sempre e' periti."<sup>44</sup>

#### 5.4 The Use of Mirrors and Time

Besides universally valid proportions, an internalized judgement, and external judges, artists also made use of other tools and strategies to improve their works: mirrors proved particularly useful. By looking at their paintings using a mirror, artists manipulated their own perception and were able to dissociate themselves

---

41 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 134: "Non meno rimase vinto il nostro Paolo Pino ritraggendo una donna, e sopragionta la madre di lei disse: 'Maestro, questa macchia sott'il naso non è in mia figliola'; rispose il Pino: 'Gli è il lume che causa l'ombra sott'il rilievo del naso'; disse la vecchia: 'Eh? come può stare ch'il lume facci ombra?'. Confuso il pittore disse: 'Quest'è altro che fillare'; et ella, dando una guanciattina alla figliuola in modo di scherzo, disse: 'E quest'altro che pittura. Non vedete voi che sopra questa faccia non vi è pur un neo, non che macchie tanto oscure?'" For an analysis of this passage regarding the Venetian *colorito* cf. Koos 2010, pp. 15 f.

42 Leonardo (1995), p. 76: "Deve il pittore fare la sua figura sopra la regola d'un corpo naturale, il quale comunemente sia di proporzione laudabile; oltre di questo far misurare se medesimo e vedere in che parte la sua persona varia assai o poco da quella antedetta laudabile; e, avuta questa notizia, deve riparare con tutto il suo studio di non incorrere ne' medesimi mancamenti nelle figure da lui operate, che nella persona sua si trovano." Also Leonardo (1995), p. 88: "Parmi non piccola grazia quella di quel pittore, il quale fa buone arie alle sue figure. La qual grazia chi non l'ha per natura la può pigliare per accidentale studio in questa forma. Guarda a tórre le parti buone di molti visi belli, le quali belle parti sieno conformi più per pubblica fama che per tuo giudizio; perché ti potresti ingannare togliendo visi che avessero conformità col tuo (...)."

43 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 629: "Ma se noi parleremo delle particolarità de l'arte, di certe sottigliezze, di certe diligenze, di certe difficoltà e particolari intelligenze de l'arti, io dirò bene ch'in questo non abbia il populo giudizio alcuno o pochissimo, e che di questo ne sieno non solo ottimi ma ancora soli giudici gl'artefici, perché quelle sottigliezze non le considera il populo, ma solo chi le fa o è uso a farle." A different opinion is expressed in his *Riflessioni sul giudizio dell'arte*, dating in the same year. For a transcription see Carrara 2006, pp. 566–568.

44 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 629. In a marginal note Borghini ascribed this saying to a certain "Fabio pictore".

from their works, allowing them to spot and amend errors that went unnoticed when the work was uninverted and familiar. Although mirrors consisted of polished metal or convex glass surfaces and began to assume their modern functionality only at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>45</sup> their use was already advised by Leon Battista Alberti, who stated that a painter could gain a great advantage by correcting his paintings with the help of a mirror.<sup>46</sup> Leonardo underlined the positive effect of the alienation that occurred when a painter looks at his paintings with a mirror. The inversion of the painted surface makes the work appear as if it had been painted by a stranger, giving him the opportunity to recognize errors more easily:

“Noi sappiamo che gli errori si conoscono piú nelle altrui opere che nelle proprie, e spesso riprendendo gli altrui piccoli errori, non vedrai i tuoi grandi. [...] Ma per tornare alla promessa di sopra, dico che nel tuo dipingere tu devi tenere uno specchio piano, e spesso riguardarvi dentro l’opera tua, la quale lí sarà veduta per lo contrario, e ti parrà di mano d’altro maestro, e giudicherai meglio gli errori tuoi che altrimenti.”<sup>47</sup>

Another method for obtaining an incorruptible artistic *giudizio* consisted of the use of time. According to art theorists, temporal intervals between periods of work were helpful for the critical evaluation of an artist’s paintings and contributed to the understanding of individual inclinations. In claiming huge amounts of time for the execution of their works (a habit that drove many patrons to despair), the artists of the Cinquecento were in excellent company. According to Horace (*Ars poetica*, 388–390), poets should leave their completed works aside for at least nine years before re-evaluating them. It might prove better to destroy bad writing than to be confronted with it for the rest of one’s life. Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*, XI, IV, 1–4) took a slightly different approach. Although he advised his readers to leave their works aside for a while (so that they might lose the sympathy of their creator and appear to be the work of a stranger), he considered constant and time-consuming editing harmful. Not only would the author never finish his work, but he would also risk rewriting felicitous passages of his poems. Alberti, familiar with the works of the Roman orator, applied this technique to painting. Accusing the contemporary painters of *cupidità*, implying that

45 For a history of the mirror in Renaissance Italy see Kalas 2002.

46 Alberti (2002), p. 142: “E saratti a ciò conoscere buono giudice lo specchio, né so come le cose ben dipinte molto abbino nello specchio grazia: cosa maravigliosa come ogni vizio della pittura si manifesti diforme nello specchio. Adunque le cose prese dalla natura si emendino collo specchio.”

47 Leonardo (1995), pp. 200 f.

they would rather start a new painting than finish an old one, he advised them to work with great dexterity and diligence on one painting at a time and warned them not to spend too much time on needless details, at the risk of spoiling their works.<sup>48</sup>

Alberti's advice was motivated by the unstable conditions in Renaissance workshops. Unfinished or abandoned works were part of an economy in which the artists had to meet the demands of their commissioners. Works requested by wealthy merchants or influential rulers often led to a redistribution of tasks, and a change in priorities altered the coherent process of production. Things got even worse when patrons began to compete for the attention of particularly talented artists. The increase in demand put artists in the position of accepting a great number of commissions, often resulting in quarrels with their patrons when they were not able to finish the work in the amount of time committed to in the contract.

Leonardo, well known for his habit of abandoning paintings, followed another strategy, justifying his absence from work by citing his methods of artistic invention.<sup>49</sup> Amusement, distraction, and interruption were considered reasonable activities because they led to an improvement of the artistic *giudizio* and assured the amelioration of the work.<sup>50</sup> To go for a walk, to play the violin, or simply sit

---

48 Alberti (2002), pp. 164 ff.: "In lavorare la istoria aremo quella prestezza di fare, congiunta con diligenza, quale a noi non dia fastidio o tedio lavorando, e fuggiremo quella cupidità di finire le cose quale ci facci abboracciare il lavoro. [...] Vidi io alcuni pittori, scultori, ancora rettorici e poeti, – se in questa età si truovano rettorici o poeti, – con ardentissimo studio darsi a qualche opera, poi freddato quello ardore d'ingegno, lassano l'opera cominciata e rozza e con nuova cupidità si danno a nuove cose. [...] Né in poche cose più si pregia la diligenza che l'ingegno; ma conviensi fuggire quella decimaggine di coloro, i quali volendo ad ogni cosa manchi ogni vizio e tutto essere troppo pulito, prima in loro mani diventa l'opera vecchia e sucida che finita." A similar criticism of artists is shown by Pliny (*Historia naturalis*, XXXIV, 92) when writing on the Attic sculptor and painter Callimachus. Described as being very assiduously and overly critical with his own works, people would pejoratively call him *katatexitechnos*, i.e., someone who dissolves his art in details.

49 Leonardo (1995), p. 51: "[...] andando tu per campagne, fa che il tuo giudizio si volti a' varî obietti, e di mano in mano riguarda or questa cosa, or quella, facendo un fascio di varie cose elette e scelte infra le men buone. E non fare come alcuni pittori, i quali, stanchi colla lor fantasia, dimetton l'opera, e fanno esercizio coll'andare a spasso, riservandosi una stanchezza nella mente, la quale, non che vogliano por mente a varie cose, ma spesse volte, incontrandosi negli amici e parenti, essendo da quelli salutati, non che li vedano o sentano, non altrimenti sono conosciuti come se non li scontrassero."

50 Leonardo (1995), p. 200: "Ed ancora sarà buono levarsi spesso e pigliarsi qualche sollazzo, perché nel ritornare tu migliorerai il giudizio; ché lo star saldo nell'opera ti farà forte ingannare. È buono ancora lo allontanarsi, perché l'opera pare minore, e più si comprende in un'occhiata, e meglio si conoscono le discordanti e sproporzionate mem-

and look at flowers were therefore interests devoted to the professional life of a painter, not merely personal proclivities.<sup>51</sup> Leonardo's line of reasoning was not only a self-fashioned demonstration of artistic sovereignty and distinguished behaviour, but also a direct result of his own practice as a painter, visible in the preparatory drawings for a representation of the *Virgin and child with Saint Anne and John the Baptist*. As is shown by his drawings and drafts for the *Burlington House Cartoon*, he corrected the tracings of his pen repeatedly as if fighting against internalized prototypes and craving to discover alternative patterns for the bodily contours of his figures (Fig. 46). His time-consuming drawing technique helped him to overcome automimesis and guaranteed paintings which faithfully represented the great variety of nature.<sup>52</sup>

Of course, neither Alberti's invitation to hurry nor Leonardo's advice to relax were considered practicable.<sup>53</sup> In most cases, artists had to finish and deliver their works in a specific amount of time – even if they were unsatisfied with the final result. One way out of the resulting dilemma was the application of an intellectual ruse. By introducing their individual signatures with the imperfect tense of the Latin *facere* (“to make”), they suggested that they had abandoned their paintings only temporarily and would return soon to complete them. As Pliny records (*Historia naturalis*, I, 26–27), this cunning habit was first practised by Apelles and Polykleitos. Inscribing their works with *faciebat* (meaning “he was making”) instead of *fecit* (meaning “he made”), they implied that art was always in process and never completed. The artists could answer every criticism by saying that, had they not been interrupted, they would have corrected their mistakes. Furthermore, the signature *faciebat* was identified as a humble gesture towards the public. Ac-

---

bra ed i colori delle cose, che d'appresso.” Matteo Bandello, who observed Leonardo when painting the *Last supper* in Milan, seems to confirm this working method of the master. As quoted in Villata 1999, p. 301: “Se ne sarebbe poi stato dui, tre e quattro di che non v'averebbe messa mano, e tuttavia dimorava talora una e due ore del giorno e solamente contemplava, considerava ed essaminando tra sé, le sue figure giudicava. L'ho anco veduto secondo che il capriccio o ghiribizzo lo toccava, partirsi da mezzo giorno, [...] asceto sul ponte pigliar il pennello ed una o due pennellate dar ad una die quelle figure, e di subito partirsi e andar altrove.”

51 Paolo Pino, familiar with Leonardo's work, suggested similar activities. Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 135: “Non [...] voglio ch'il nostro pittore assiduamente s'eserciti nel dipignere, ma divertisca dall'operare, intratenendosi et istaurandosi con la dolcezza della poesia, over nella soavità della musica di voce et istromenti diversi, o con sue altre virtù, dil che ciascuno vero pittore debbe esser guarnito.”

52 For Leonardo's working practice see Nathan 2005.

53 Cfr. Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 119: “Vero è ch'ambi gli estremi sono biasmevoli, et a questo proposito si dice ch'Apelle biasmava sé stesso perch'era troppo diligente, né mai finiva di ricercare e perficere l'opere sue, la qual cosa è molto all'intelletto nociva.”



**Figure 46** Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Infant Saint John*, ca. 1505–1508, London, British Museum

ording to Pliny, Apelles only signed three of his works with the perfect tense *fecit*, implying absolute perfection, which showed his confidence (but made him also appear very conceited).<sup>54</sup>

Known to Petrarch<sup>55</sup> as well as to Angelo Poliziano,<sup>56</sup> Apelles' custom became fashionable among the artists of the Renaissance at the end of the Quattrocento, and remained *en vogue* until far into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Like many artists who inscribed their works with *faciebat*, including Giovanni Bellini, Titian, and Michelangelo, Paolo Pino not only used the signature on two of his paintings,<sup>57</sup> but also referred to it in his *Dialogo*. Writing about the difficulty of learning the rules of painting, he advised his readers to use the signature as a sign of modesty and unpretentiousness. Because the limited amount of time at his disposition would never allow a painter to become perfect, he should display his humility by using Apelles' signature.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Pino justified the subtle but clear self-identification with Apelles as a means to preserve the painter's *memoria*, thus making him equal to poets. An artist's signature would record his name for posterity, just as a writer's name on his books would ensure his was recorded.<sup>59</sup> The hardly readable signature on one of Pino's paintings, a portrait made in 1534 representing the Paduan humanist and collector of antiquities Marco Mantova Benavides (Fig. 47), is to be seen in this context. The *cartellino* bearing the artist's name ("Paulus de

54 Land 2000, p. 163.

55 Cfr. Petrarca (1945), pp. 115f.: "Huic simillimum calliditatis genus, licet in longinqua materia, secutus michi videtur artifex, qui operibus suis usque in miraculum excultis nunquam se supremam manum imposuisse dicebat; ut scilicet et sibi semper addendi mutandique libertatem reservaret et suspenso iudicio spectantium animis quiddam de artifice quam de opere magnificentius ac perfectius semper occurreret." For a discussion of Petrarch's particular use of the episode see Baxandall 1971, pp. 64 f.

56 See Hegener 2006, pp. 153 f. Poliziano relates the Plinian episode in his *Liber Miscellaneorum* from 1489, describing an encounter with the Venetian humanist Giovanni Lorenzi in Rome when they were discussing an antique column with the inscription "Lysippus faciebat".

57 Mazza 1992, pp. 53.

58 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 124: "[...] è crudel cosa che niuno mai finisca di farsi maestro. Questo ci avviene perché gli intelletti nostri sono impediti dall'imperfezione corporea, a tal ch'aggiugniamo prima alla morte ch'ai termini dell'intendere. Questo è ch'il nostro Pino scrive nell'opere sue 'faciebat'."

59 Pino 1548 (1960–1962), p. 125: "Dimostra anco ch'egli [i.e., Apelles] aspirava alla sua immortalità: il ch'è il più alto umore, la più degna sete ch'ingombrar possi li petti di noi mortali (e ne dovrebbe sopra ogni altra cosa attendere tutto uomo), e per che s'affaticorno tanti e tanti antichi, fin a' giorni nostri penetrati illesi dalla rivoluzione delle sorti e dalla velocità del tempo mercè degli scrittori che, celebrando le prodezze, negli anni e nelle lettere insieme insieme si resero immortali. E che maggior vituperio di noi, che morire sotterarsi col nome, cosa propria agli animali irrazionali?"



Figure 47 Paolo Pino, Portrait of Marco Mantova Benavides, 1534, Chambéry, Musées d'Art et d'Histoire



Pinis pict faciebat 1534”) is positioned at the edge of a table covered with antiquities, as if it were about to slip off to disappear into oblivion (Fig. 48). This work contrasts with an altar painting in the church of San Benedetto in Scorzè (Veneto),



**Figure 48** Paolo Pino, Portrait of Marco Mantova Benavides (detail), 1534, Chambéry, Musées d’Art et d’Histoire

Painted around 1565, which Pino inscribed merely with his name in the style of a *capitalis rustica*, suggesting longevity of the artist’s fame and fortune. The signature on the portrait of Benavides thus points to the ephemeral status of the artist by imitating his handwriting. As perishable as the ink on a piece of paper, his letters are not only a portrait of his individual character as later signaled in treatises on the art of graphology,<sup>60</sup> but also a self-ironic wink addressing his own artistic capacities.

60 See for example the analysis of handwriting by Baldi 1622.



## 6 The Harmonisation of the Arts

As set out above, the artists of the Renaissance were highly aware of their own deficiencies and limitations. In order to compensate for their defects and lack of knowledge resulting from their natural inclinations, their bodily shapes, or their lack of artistic judgement, they followed the advice of experts, applied mathematical measurements, or systematically trained their *giudizio*. In a certain way, these methods guaranteed an objectivating approach to the imitation of nature, allowing the artists to create works of art without being omniscient in matters of history or equipped with a well-balanced complexion. Furthermore, this system ensured the integration of the single artist into a network of social norms and rules. As the artists exchanged different points of view with humanist advisors or discussed theories of proportion, they acquired an understanding of generally valid models of pictorial representation – and became used to behavioral patterns as well. In a restrictive society in which each individual had precisely defined obligations and duties, subordination under the social *decorum* was indispensable for the stability of the early modern state and its institutions.

### 6.1 Benvenuto Cellini's Self-Portrait as an Eloquent Artist

In contrast to this well-balanced model of artistry, in which the painter or sculptor was surrounded by learned people who advised him on particular details of a representation, the Florentine sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini developed a theory which was based entirely on the artist's own knowledge and capacities. This theory first became known to a wider public due to Benedetto Varchi's *Lezzioni*, held in 1547 and published in Florence in 1550. For a better understanding of Cellini's ideas on artistic creation, it is helpful to briefly delineate the aims of Varchi's lecture first.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 For the following see also Lampe 2016.

Varchi's *Lezzioni* were concerned with the so-called *paragone*, the question asking whether the art of painting or the art of sculpture should be considered superior.<sup>2</sup> For the printed version of his learned lecture, in which he compiles the most important arguments on both sides, he invited eight artists (featuring inter alia Michelangelo, Giorgio Vasari, and Benvenuto Cellini) to express their opinions in letter form. These letters were published as an appendix to the *Lezzioni*. Renowned as the first survey among artists, they provide us with a lively picture of the varying ideas of painters and sculptors working in Renaissance Florence in the first half of the Cinquecento. Whereas many of the ideas expressed are characterized by a conciliatory approach (trying to reconcile the art of painting with the art of sculpture), the letter of Benvenuto Cellini shows that he was particularly keen to underline the supremacy of the art of sculpture. Accordingly, his letter starts off with the affirmation that the art of sculpture is not simply superior to the art of painting but seven times superior. Cellini explains this exceptional affirmation by referring to the way in which a sculpture is usually seen: unlike a flat painting, a three-dimensional piece of marble can be seen from eight different points of view – the four sides of a block of marble and its four corresponding angles.<sup>3</sup> Having discussed the spatial nature of a statuary work, Cellini derived an additional argument in favour of sculpture from the qualities of the sculptor. According to Cellini, a good sculptor must not only be equipped with the practical tools and methods for creating a statue but also be a learned person. Knowledge of the most noble arts, comprising warfare, poetry, rhetoric, and music, are deemed necessary by Cellini because they allow the sculptor to create the faithful representation of a brave warrior by imparting his own attributes to the sculpture. A statue of an eloquent orator can thus only be made by an eloquent sculptor who embodies the same qualities as his work:

---

2 For a discussion of Varchi's *Lezzioni* see the introduction by Oskar Bätschmann and Tristan Weddigen in Varchi 1550 (2013), pp. 6–64.

3 Cfr. Morét 2003, p. 204. Of course a sculpture could be seen from more than eight angles. Borghini was well aware of Cellini's lack of arithmetical coherence and sharply criticised him for his arbitrary and unreasoned numbering. Cfr. Borghini (1971–1977), p. 617: "Or veggiamo un po' prima queste otto vedute, e poi se una veduta più fa la scultura o altra cosa maggiore. Prima io vorrei sapere da lui donde e' cava queste otto vedute così per l'appunto e che le non sieno né più né meno. Dico così, perché questo è un cervello da sua possa et ha filosofie che non ne vendono gli speziali dall'insegna d'Aristotile o di Platone. Vogliamo noi dire che, avendosi a rigirare da chi guarda la figura intorno intorno e di necessità far un cerchio, e' divida questo cerchio in otto parti? Ma perché non in dodici etc. o pure in manco? A questo modo non starebbono ferme le sette volte."

“Ancora dico che questa meravigliosa arte dello statuare non si può fare, se lo statuario non ha buona cognizione di tutte le nobilissime arte; perché, volendo figurare un milito, con quelle qualità e bravure che se gli appartiene, convien che il detto maestro sia bravissimo, con buona cognizione dell’arme; e volendo fare uno oratore, convien che sia eloquentissimo e abbia cognizione della buona scienza delle lettere; volendo figurare un musico, conviene che il detto abbia musica diversa, perché sappia alla sua statua ben collocare in mano uno sonoro instrumento, che gli sia di necessità l’esser poeta.”<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the fact that Cellini could have argued in favor of painting with the same reasoning, his statements underline the obvious fact that works of art benefit from a learned artist who knows how to represent certain objects and persons. Cellini follows the clear strategy of enhancing the social status of sculptors by promoting their intellectual capacities and their interest in the traditional arts and sciences, making them more similar to erudite noblemen than to artisans who work physically with hammer and chisel. An artist who knows about musical instruments or the art of horsemanship not only makes better statues of musicians or monuments of equestrians, but is also better equipped to converse with humanists and statesmen at the courts of Renaissance cities. Conceptually and terminologically, Cellini’s ideas follow the works of influential art theorists, who argued in favor of erudite artists and whose treatises were frequently read during the Cinquecento. Of particular importance was the *De architectura* by the Roman architect Vitruvius, the only treatise on architecture from antiquity that has survived; it was rediscovered and translated into Italian during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the first chapter, Vitruvius discusses the essential qualifications of an architect, delineating the image of a versatile person endowed with encyclopedic knowledge. Although an architect need not equal Aristarchus in the art of grammar, nor Aristoxenus in the art of music, nor Hippocrates in the art of medicine, it might prove useful for him to be acquainted with all of these arts.<sup>5</sup> Similar ideas were expressed by Renaissance scholars and art theorists. For example, Leon Battista

---

4 Cellini’s letter is dated January 28, 1546 and printed in Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 80–81, here p. 81. For this passage see also Suthor 2010, p. 28.

5 Vitruvius (1964), p. 32: “Non enim debet nec potest esse architectus grammaticus, uti fuerit Aristarchus, sed non agrammatus, nec musicus ut Aristoxenus, sed non amusus, nec pictor ut Apelles, sed graphidos non inperitus, nec plastes quemadmodum Myron seu Polyclitus, sed rationis plasticae non ignarus, nec denuo medicus ut Hippocrates, sed non aniatrologetus, nec in ceteris doctrinis singulariter excellens, sed in is non inperitus. Non enim in tantis rerum varietatibus elegantias singulares quisquam consequi potest, quod earum ratiocinationes cognoscere et percipere vix candid in potestatem.”

Alberti<sup>6</sup> and Lorenzo Ghiberti<sup>7</sup> argue in favour of painters and sculptors who were familiar with the works of philosophers, poets, and rhetors – not only from antiquity but also in the present time. When composing his *De statua*, written to ennoble the art of sculpture and published in 1504 in Florence, the humanist Pomponio Gaurico was likewise interested in the promotion of courtly arts and manners. He advises the sculptor to be particularly well acquainted with the art of horsemanship, otherwise he might build horsemen that would look like peasants instead of noble equestrians.<sup>8</sup> The learned artist was thus a recurrent theme, which served to underline the indispensable importance of knowledge for the creation of artwork and at the same time operated as a means of social promotion.<sup>9</sup>

It was precisely the latter which interested Cellini the most. But in contrast to the reasonable precepts proposed by the aforementioned authors, Cellini seems to interpret these requirements in a more fundamental sense when stating that the statue of an eloquent orator can only be made by an eloquent sculptor. By demanding “buona cognizione di tutte le nobilissime arte”, he not only points out the proper knowledge of physical characteristics of objects, but advises the sculptors to embody all of these arts.<sup>10</sup> Thus Cellini radicalized the ideas of Vitruvius, whom he knew well. Cellini was probably in possession of the 1521 *volgare* edition by Cesare Cesariano.<sup>11</sup> One of the reasons for his re-interpretation of Vitruvian

6 Alberti (2002), pp. 150 ff.: “Piacemi il pittore sia dotto, in quanto e’ possa, in tutte l’arti liberali; ma in prima desidero sappi geometria. Piacemi la sentenza di Panfilo, antiquo e nobilissimo pittore, dal quale i giovani nobili cominciarono ad imparare dipignere. Stimava niuno pittore potere bene dipignere se non sapea molta geometria. [...] Pertanto consiglio ciascuno pittore molto si faccia famigliare ad i poeti, retorici e agli altri simili dotti di lettere, già che costoro doneranno nuove invenzioni, o certo aiuteranno a bello componere sua storia, per quali certo acquisteranno in sua pittura molte lode e nome.”

7 Ghiberti (1998), pp. 46, 49: “Conviene che llo scultore, etiamdio el pittore, sia amestrato in tutte queste arti liberali: Gramatica, Geometria, Phylosophia, Medicina, Astrologia, Prospectiva, Istorico, Notomia, Teorica disegno, Arismetica. [...] imperò non può lo scultore né debba essere gramatico, come fu Aristarco, ma bene de’ esser perito nela teorica di detta arte, cioè il disegno, come Apelles e come Mirone e molto più che nessuno, però quanto sarà più perito tanto sarà perfetissimo lo scultore e così el pittore; non bisogna esser medico come Ypocrate et Avicenna e Galieno, ma bene bisogna avere vedute l’opere di loro [...]”

8 Gaurico 1504 (1999), p. 136: “Sed enim quum equestres potissimum ponantur statuae, si modo rusticano equitatu equitem deformare noluerit, nonne optimum insessorum eum esse oportebit, aut saltem equitandi rationem ipsam tenere?”

9 For the concept of the courtly artist see also Warnke 1985.

10 The edition of 1612 of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* defines *conoscere*, the verb generating the noun *cognizione*, in the following way: “Apprendere con lo’ ntelletto a prima giunta, per mezzo de’ sensi, l’essere degli oggetti.”

11 For example, he refers to the first chapter of Vitruvius’ *De architectura* in his autobiography. Cfr. Cellini (1996), pp. 15 f.: “E perché, sí come dice Vitruvio, in fra l’altre cose, vo-

ideas can be identified with the circulating ideas on automimesis. As we have seen before, Leonardo and Paolo Pino had discussed the problem that painters were often inclined to reproduce their own physical nature in their works. Likewise, Vasari was convinced of the similarities between the character of a painter and the style of his paintings. Cellini's strategy to impersonate and embody those qualities that he intended to represent can in part be understood as a remedy against unwitting self-portraiture. Another reason for Cellini's amalgamation of Vitruvian ideas on universal knowledge lies in their power to rhetorically underline the intellectual capacities of an artist. Indeed, the idea of a universal education proposed by Vitruvius was used by Cellini mostly to fashion himself as an eloquent, erudite, and sophisticated sculptor who was well accustomed to the liberal arts that were part of the aristocratic and humanist circles in Florence. In his autobiography, written in the years between 1558 and 1567, he clearly pictured himself as an artist who was not only an excellent warrior familiar with the use of weapons, but also an excellent rhetor who knew how to engage in learned conversations with patrons and princes.<sup>12</sup> In the same evident and self-praising way, he alluded to his knowledge of ancient authors, his ability to play various musical instruments, and his skill in composing poems. Thus, by sending his letter to Varchi on January 28, 1547, he was deliberately creating an intellectual portrait of himself as an artist who was particularly proud of his qualities as musician, orator, poet, and warrior.<sup>13</sup>

## 6.2 Vincenzo Borghini's *Selva di notizie*

Not surprisingly, Cellini's self-indulgence was harshly criticized by Vincenzo Borghini, a distinguished humanist and close friend of Vasari's who helped draft the *Vite*.<sup>14</sup> His criticism of Cellini in the *Selva di notizie*, a manuscript preserved

---

lendo fare bene detta arte, bisogna avere alquanto di musica e buon disegno, essendo Giovanni [i.e., Cellini's father] fattosi bun disegnatore, cominciò a dare opera alla musica, et insieme con essa imparò a sonare molto bene di viola e di flauto; et essendo persona molto studiosa, poco usciva di casa."

12 Cfr. Cellini (1996), p. 637f: "Et una sera infra le altre, essendo giunto alquanto più tardi che al mio solito, il Duca mi disse: 'Tu sia il malvenuto'. Alle quali parole io dissi: 'Signor mio, cotesto non è il mio nome, perché io ho nome Benvenuto; et perché io penso che l'Eccellenza Vostra moteggi meco, io non entrerò in altro.'"

13 For Cellini's methods of self-fashioning see Gardner 1997.

14 For Borghini's impact on the first edition of the *Vite* see Ginzburg 2007.

at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence<sup>15</sup> (and later discussed in detail), was not only based on personal animosities but also on diverging ideas about artistic issues. In fact, Borghini repeatedly attacked the sculptor, accusing him of laziness and misconduct.<sup>16</sup> Finally, in the summer of 1564 their mutual hostility reached an unprecedented level. What were the reasons for this escalation?

After the death of Michelangelo in Rome on February 18, 1564, the Florentine artists decided to honour their compatriot by organizing a grand funeral in Florence, including processions and festivities. Due to the great interest in Michelangelo's mortal remains, which led to lengthy discussions, the preparations for these celebrations took time. The artists entrusted with the organization of the funeral, among whom Giorgio Vasari had a prominent role, used the time to design the decoration of the church of S. Lorenzo where the obsequies were to be held. In particular, the design of a huge catafalque, meant to honour the life and work of Michelangelo with an allegorical programme, received the most attention. Featuring personifications of painting and sculpture, the catafalque illustrated his universal excellence – but also provoked rivalry amongst the artists. Whereas the sculptors were interested in granting the personification of sculpture a prominent position, the painters preferred that the personification of painting have a prominent position. Benvenuto Cellini tried to increase the significance of sculpture by providing plans in which he suggested positioning its personification on the heraldically more important right side. However, all of his suggestions and drafts for the catafalque were dismissed, so he left the preparations for Michelangelo's obsequies in anger and did not turn up for the funeral, finally held on July 14, 1564.<sup>17</sup>

As prior of the Ospedale degli Innocenti and *luogotenente* of the newly-founded Accademia del disegno, Vincenzo Borghini can be identified as the main reason for Cellini's rejection. He was responsible for the coordination of artistic life in Florence, and the obsequies were one of the tasks to be organized by the commander-in-chief of academic artistry.<sup>18</sup> In close collaboration with Vasari, Borghini decided to give the personification of sculpture a less meaningful place,

15 Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz, Ms. K 783 (16 (RARO), ca. 242 × 174 mm.

16 In a letter to Vasari, dating August 11, 1564, Borghini writes: “[...] non dico di Benvenuto, – che stimandolo pazzo spacciato, io non ne tengo un conto al mondo, come proprio se un di questi cagnacci da beccaio abbaiaassi – [...]”. In another, dating August 19, 1564: “Delle baie nate io me ne passerei di leggieri. Et di quella bestiaccia [Cellini] per conto mio non dire’ altro, senon che sentendo le sue pazzie, alzai il capo e me ne risi [...], perche so che egli è, fu et sara sempre una bestia asinina; et se un asino mi havessi dato un calcio, io non terrei collera: Così fo con lui, perche lo stimo da una bestia, come egli è etc. [...]”. See Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, pp. 93, 97, 109 f.

17 Wittkower 1964, pp. 19 ff.

18 Calamandrei 1952, pp. 202 f., Wittkower 1964, p. 22.



emphasising the prominence of painting in the works of Michelangelo. By deciding to position the personification of painting to the right of the catafalque, the executive committee allocated the art of painting to the visually more important side, immediately visible upon entering S. Lorenzo.<sup>19</sup> Cellini was quick to criticise Borghini for this maneuver, claiming that the sculptor had been influenced by his friend Vasari, who was known for his immoderate predilection for the art of painting.<sup>20</sup>

The argument with the sculptors of Florence was one of the reasons that Borghini wrote the *Selva di notizie* in the summer of 1564.<sup>21</sup> As is suggested by its title, literally meaning a “forest of notes”, the *Selva* consisted of several sections, including excerpts from the works of Pliny and Benedetto Varchi. It also contained genuine and original thoughts by Borghini himself on the *paragone*. He was probably interested in clarifying the intellectual discussions that he had had with the Florentine sculptors, and Varchi's *Lezioni* proved to be a good starting point. According to Borghini's function as *luogotenente*, the *Selva* was intended as a systematic evaluation of the benefits and downsides of sculpture and painting, preferring neither the one nor the other. It was most likely to be held as a series of lectures at the Accademia del disegno.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in his *Selva di notizie* Borghini did not hesitate to include a rigorous attack on Cellini's theory of imitation that we have discussed above.

---

19 Carrara 2001, p. 243.

20 Calamandrei 1952, p. 208. Cellini expressed his displeasure in a short text, named *Discorso sopra la differenza nata tra li Scultori e Pittori, circa il luogo destro stato dato alla Pittura nelle Esequie del gran' Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, and published in Florence in 1564 as appendix to Giovan Maria Tarsia's *Oratione overo discorso fatto nell' esequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti*.

21 In a letter dating August 14, 1564, Borghini writes to Vasari: “Hora vi bisognerà rigare più diritto, che io ho studiato Plinio et la letione del Varchi et quelle belle lettere del Tasso sopra la pittura; tal che io ci son mezzo dottorato et saprò veder meglio et giudicare più minutamente le virtù et difetti de l'arte [...]” Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 101. For the *Selva* see Barocchi 1970, Frangenberg 1990, pp. 47–58, Carrara 2001, and Burioni 2008, pp. 76–91.

22 Burioni 2008, pp. 77, 91. Nevertheless, we can attribute a certain preference for the art of painting to Borghini. According to his views, the art of painting and its expressive means were more universal and thus closer to the traditionally appreciated art of poetry. Cfr. Barocchi 1970, p. 92.

### 6.3 Ethical and Intellectual Qualities of the Artist

Borghini was particularly amused by Cellini's letter, published in the appendix of Varchi's *Lezzioni*. After having studied the *Lezzioni*, he repeatedly referred to Varchi's lecture in the *Selva di notizie*. He paid particular attention to Cellini's thoughts on the education of the artist. In taking Cellini's letter literally and thus deliberately misunderstanding him, Borghini interpreted his demand for universal knowledge as an explicit request to embody those qualities that the artist intended to represent. In fact, because Cellini was more acquainted with expressing himself through manipulating stone than with manipulating words, Cellini's incoherent theory was an easy target for Borghini's analytical and trained judgement as a humanist.

“Dice [Cellini] ch'uno statuario ha aver buona cognizione di tutte le nobilissime arti, e che, volendo figurare un milito con quelle qualità e bravure che se gl'appartiene, conviene che detto maestro sia bravissimo, e volendo figurar un oratore, convien che sia eloquentissimo et abbia cognizione della buona scienza delle lettere, volendo figurare un musico, conviene che abbia musica diversa etc. Tutte queste sono parole formali. Or non bisognerebbe qui gridare: *Proh divùm numina sancta*<sup>23</sup> che sia un sì pazzo che dica cose sì stravaganti e che le si stampino? Prassitele, quando fece quel cavallo ch'oggi è nelle Esquilie con quel di Fidia, che perciò si dice Montecavallo, dovette esser un bravo cavallo [...]”<sup>24</sup>

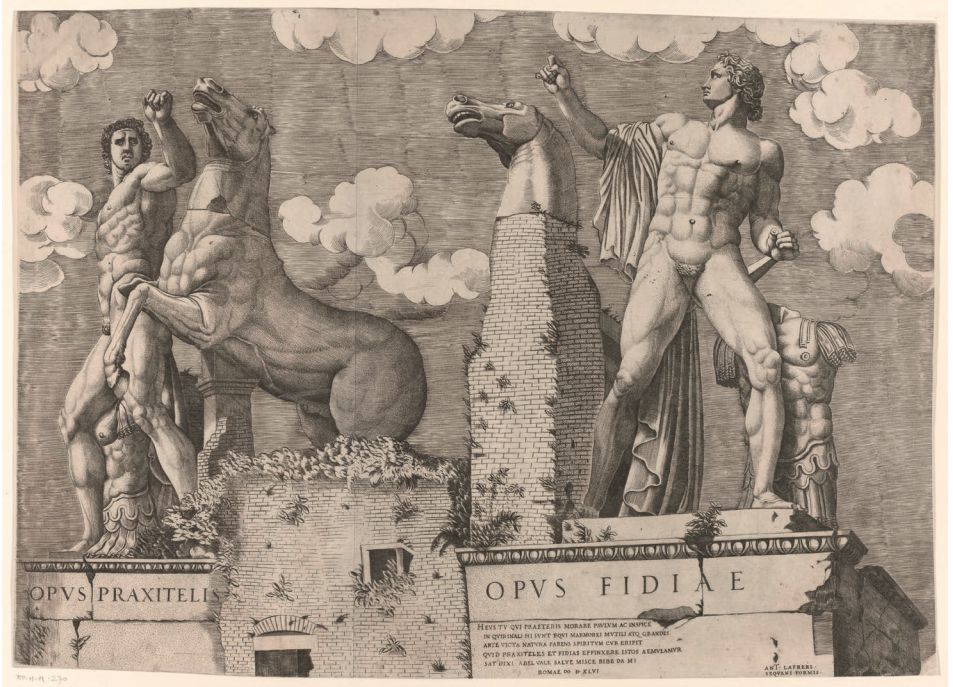
Borghini's critique in a nutshell: According to Cellini's theory, wouldn't Praxiteles himself have to have been a horse in order to be able to create the equestrian statue on the Esquiline (i.e., the Quirinal)?<sup>25</sup> It is no coincidence that Borghini chose the sculptures of Phidias and Praxiteles to demonstrate the absurdity of Cellini's idea to equate the artist and the artwork. Already known to Petrarch as an example for *ars et ingenium*, their monumental statues were considered

23 The exclamation “*Proh divùm numina sancta!*” is an allusion to Lucretius and his discussion of the sense of touch as a means of perception: “*Tactus enim, tactus, proh Divùm numina sancta!*” (*De rerum natura*, II, 434). Referring to the Roman philosopher, Varchi recommended the tactile sense as one of the most reliable senses in his *Lezzioni* (Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), p. 42). By alluding to Lucretius, Borghini criticized Cellini's sense of tactility in a most malicious way: The sense of touch was considered an indispensable skill of sculptors.

24 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 639.

25 Borghini composed his *Selva* hastily without checking for minor errors and inaccuracies: Obviously, the statues by Phidias and Praxiteles are not located on the Esquilin, but on the Quirinal.

unexcelled examples of artistic excellence during the Renaissance.<sup>26</sup> An etching published by Antonio Lafreri, dated 1546, gives evidence of the material condition of the monument before it was restored and altered under the pontificate of Sixtus V in the years 1589–1591 (Fig. 49). Marked as “OPVS PRAXITELIS” and “OPVS FIDIAE”, the statues were recognizable as the works of two of the most



**Figure 49** Antonio Lafreri, Statues of Praxiteles and Phidias on the Quirinal in Rome (front), 1546, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

prominent sculptors of antiquity. Borghini might well have read these inscriptions during one of his journeys to Rome. Furthermore, the etching by Lafreri reveals why Borghini referred to the work of Praxiteles. Whereas the horse by Phidias was partly destroyed and covered with protective bricks, the horse by Praxiteles only suffered minor damage and was generally in good condition. Another etching in Lafreri’s *Speculum romanae magnificentiae* illustrates the importance accorded to the statues by Renaissance artists (Fig. 50). Showing the sel-

26 For these sculptures see Thielemann 1996, pp. 40 f. and Thielemann 1994, p. 89 f.

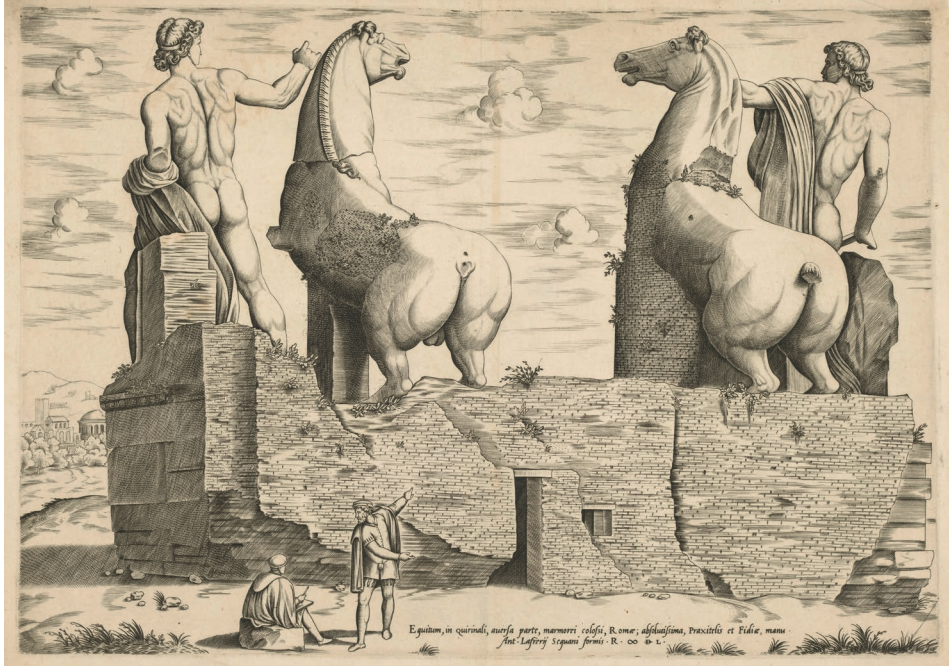


Figure 50 Antonio Lafreri, Statues of Praxiteles and Phidias on the Quirinal in Rome (rear), 1550, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

dom depicted rear of the monument, it also features an artist, visible at the bottom of the statues. Equipped with a pencil and a drawing board, he seems to sketch the statues; his companion, a well-dressed nobleman, is pointing to both the monument and an explanatory inscription which alludes to the excellence of the works of Phidias and Praxiteles (“marmorei colossi, Romæ; absolutissima, Praxitelis et Fidiæ, manu”).<sup>27</sup> By choosing the famous works of two famous artists to illustrate the absurdity of Cellini’s theory of imitation, Borghini mocked his mimetic ideas efficiently and polemically.

Having teased Cellini by contrasting his art theory with works by the sculptors Phidias and Praxiteles, Borghini continued to refer to ancient art history to mock the Florentine sculptor. In the second half of the passage cited above, Borghini mentions the sculptor Perillus, who – in contrast to Phidias and Praxiteles – was not known for his virtues. In fact, Perillus was better known for his inhumane cruelty and viciousness than for his works. According to various ancient

27 For Lafreri and the publication of the *Speculum romanæ magnificentiæ* see Parshall 2006.

authors, Perillus was in the service of the tyrant Phalaris, active in Acragas (today Agrigento) in Sicily in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. One of his tasks was the construction of instruments to punish and torture the people of Acragas. His most malicious invention was a hollow brazen bull, equipped with pipe holes in the nostrils of the bull. Phalaris' victims were placed inside this sculpture, where they were burned to death by a fire underneath the bull's belly. According to the sources, Perillus presented his work to the tyrant with the following words: "If you ever wish to punish some man, O Phalaris, shut him up within the bull and lay a fire beneath it; by his groanings the bull will be thought to bellow and his cries of pain will give you pleasure as they come through the pipes in the nostril." On seeing the voluminous sculpture, Phalaris demanded a demonstration of its function. As the sculptor Perillus was the only person at hand, he was ordered to climb into the bull, where he was tortured to death by the tyrant.<sup>28</sup>

Understandably, artists frequently referred to this episode. An etching after a lost fresco by Baldassare Peruzzi<sup>29</sup> was made by the French engraver Pierre Woeiriot before 1562 in Rome. It depicts the historical account in detail (Fig. 51). Supported by two of Phalaris' assistants, Perillus is being forced to climb into the bull, while another assistant is lighting a fire underneath the bull's belly. Peruzzi's interpretation of the scene was inspired by an etching by Giulio Bonasone, published in Acchille Bocchi's *Symbolicarum quaestionum [...] libri quinque* in 1555 (Fig. 52).<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Bonasone's composition, which is rather static, Peruzzi's dramatized the execution of Perillus by positioning the tyrant in the background of the image and animating the bull. As described by various Renaissance authors, the sacrificial animal is bending its neck to emit its bellowing, as if the statue is brought to new life by the screams of pain of its victim.<sup>31</sup>

28 The most important ancient sources for the episode are Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, IX, 18; Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, XXXIV, 89; Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, I, 653.

29 Peruzzi's fresco was painted on a Roman façade and probably inspired by a similar motif from the hands of Polidoro da Caravaggio. Although the work had been discussed in the *Vite*, his invention is only preserved in form of an engraving. See Frommel 1968, p. 110 and Avery 1971, p. 25.

30 For Bonasone's etchings see Massari 1983.

31 For a discussion of Perillus' bull see for instance Dante's *Divina Comedia* (XXVII, 7–15) and Cristoforo Landino's comment on Dante's passage. Landino 1481 (2001), vol. 2, pp. 904 f.: "[...] chome el bue facto di rame e messo dentro l'huomo, quando l'huomo gridava madava fuori per la bocca dell'animale un suono che pareva el muggio suo, et non la voce humana; [...]. Muggiava non con la sua voce perché era inanimato, ma con quella dell'afflicto, cioè con quella di colui che dentro v'era tormentato, [...] et questo fu chosa diricta et iusta, imperochè la crudeltà di tale inventore [i.e., Perillo] meritava tal supplicio. Sichè con tutto che questo bue fussi di rame, nientedimeno pareva che lui muggiassi chome fa el bue vivo quando è traficto dal dolore."



Figure 51 Pierre Woeriot after Baldassare Peruzzi, Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus, before 1562, London, British Museum



Figure 52 Giulio Bonasone, Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus, from the 1555 Edition of Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicarum quaestionum [...] libri quinque*

The fate of Perillus was well known to the artists of the Cinquecento. In the early modern literature on jurisdiction and governance, his death was described as an example for fair and just punishment.<sup>32</sup> Following Ovid (*Ars amatoria*, I, 653), it was argued that there is no juster law than that contrivers of death should perish by their own contrivance. Influenced by the increasing importance of the early modern state and its institutions, art theorists discussed the example of Perillus accordingly. Although he was appreciated as a valued artist, his moral virtues were considered unworthy. The true Renaissance artist had to live in accordance with an ethical *decorum* and follow certain social standards. No one knew this better than Benedetto Varchi, whose *Lezioni* had a fundamental effect on the self-conception of the Florentine artists in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When discussing his concept of art and artistry, he explicitly referred to Perillus as a warning example. According to the humanist, art should always improve the lives of men by fulfilling noble and laudable purposes. Thus Perillus could only serve as a negative example.

“[...] nessuna arte, se è dannosa, può chiamarsi arte veramente secondo quella definizione. Né si creda alcuno che Perillo si possa chiamare veramente scultore, non avendo avuto quel fine che debbono avere gli scultori, se già non credessimo che tanto buoni e valenti maestri, che furono innanzi a lui, avessero tanto faticato nell’arte della scultura, non per fare le statue degli dèi e contraffare l’immagini degli uomini grandi, ma per fabbricare un toro, dentro al quale si devesse abbronzare crudellissimamente gli uomini vivi.”<sup>33</sup>

In Varchi’s understanding, the execution of Perillus was therefore justified.<sup>34</sup> Similar opinions about Perillus were expressed by Filarete,<sup>35</sup> in the so-called *Anonimo Magliabechiano*,<sup>36</sup> and by Pomponio Gaurico, who appreciated the sculptor as one

32 The brazen bull was frequently depicted in treatises on jurisdiction and treated as a symbol for legal practice and torture in early modern Europe, see for example the *Constitutio criminalis carolina* respectively the *Peinlich Gerichts Ordnung*, published in Frankfurt a.M. in 1573, where the bull is represented on fol. 7v.

33 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), pp. 26 f.

34 Varchi 1550 (1960–1962), p. 26: “[...] quanto in tutte l’altre si debbe biasimare Fallari, tanto in questa crudeltà meritò d’essere lodato.”

35 Filarete (1972), vol. 2, p. 578: “Perillo gli era, benché trovato avessi l’aspro martoro del toro a Fallaride tiranno di Siracusa, ma lui prima patì la pena, perché come cercatore di crudele morte per altro fu lecito che lui prima la provasse.”

36 Anonimo Magliabechiano (1892), p. 38: “Perillo scultore non fu lodato nell’arte sua se non da Fallaride tiranno. Ne è degno d’essere lodato ne fatto conto delle sue opere per havere fatto a esso Fallaride il toro di bronzo, voto drento, nel quale gl’huomini vivi si



of the important artists of antiquity but would not grant him any fame because of his cruelties.<sup>37</sup> In criticizing the demeanour of the unscrupulous sculptor in explicit terms, the art literature of the Renaissance followed the judgement of Pliny, who first associated Perillus with the decline of the arts.<sup>38</sup>

When Vincenzo Borghini criticized Cellini's theory of imitation in his *Selva di notizie*, he drew on these characterisations of the ancient sculptor. After he discusses the horse of Praxiteles as an example of the dissimilarity between sculpture and sculptor, he brings up the example of Perillus to illustrate similarities between work and worker in a satirical way: "[...] et ora intendo quel che volse dire un valentuomo che mi disse già che quel Perillo che fece quell'animale di rame a Falari fu un gran bue."<sup>39</sup>

Whereas Praxiteles was fashioned as an autonomous artist who was able to create all kinds of artworks without reproducing his own physical features, Perillus was labeled as a counter-example. By equating the sculptor Perillus with his sculpture of the brazen bull, Borghini polemically pointed to Cellini's ideas on the similarity of artist and artwork. Just as Perillus embodied the characteristics of an uncivilized and unethical person, his bull personifies the unreasoned animal instinct.<sup>40</sup> According to the ancient saying *Artificem commendat opus* (The artist

---

serravano per farli morire con grandissimo dolore, et mettendo sotto a detto toro il fuoco, gli faceva ardendo morire; et gridando essi per la gran pena, veniva la voce fuori uscendo per la bocca di tal fiera, pareva che mughiassi. Onde Fallaride veggendo questo nuovo strumento crudelissimo, fattoli per tale artefice, volle, che esso fussi il primo a prouarlo, et drento velo fece morire giustamente. Che da poi haveva l'arte humanissima del fare idii et huomini exposta a tal crudeltà, la quale i primi inventori di quella non s'erono afaticati a trovarla per tormentare gl'huomini, ma per farli eterni et a posterì notissimi."

37 Gaurico 1504 (1999), p. 252: "Perillus nullum impietate sua nomen est meritus."

38 Pliny (1938–1963), vol. 9, p. 192: "Perillum nemo laudet saeviozem Phalaride tyranno, cui taurum fecit mugitus inclusi hominis pollicitus igni subdito et primus expertus cruciatum eum iustiore saevitia. huc a simulacris deorum hominumque devocaverat humanissimam artem. ideo tot conditores eius laboraverant, ut ex ea tormenta fierent! itaque una de causa servantur opera eius, ut quisquis illa videat, oderit manus." (*Historia naturalis*, XXXIV, 89).

39 Borghini (1971–1977), pp. 639 f. The *valentuomo* mentioned by Borghini was probably Michelangelo. As is recorded by Vasari, the sculptor is said to have mocked a painting in which a bull was most skillfully painted with the following remark: "Ogni pittore ritrae sé medesimo bene." See Vasari 1568 (1878–1885) vol. 7, p. 280 and Chapter 2.3.

40 By comparing Cellini to animals, Borghini alluded to the important difference between human rationality and animal instinct. Whereas an artist repeatedly produces new compositions, animals are merely occupied with the reproduction of inherited patterns – for example, cobwebs or nests. See Chapter 3.3.

is recognized by his work), frequently referred to in Renaissance art theory,<sup>41</sup> the sculpture of the bull becomes the involuntary self-portrait of its sculptor, just as Cellini demonstrated his lack of academic reason in his letter to Varchi. Apparently, Borghini added the keen reference to Perillus after he had dictated the text of the *Selva* to his secretary. It is part of a marginal note, written with his own, less-experienced hand, which replaces a passage of the main text, now illegible (Fig. 53).

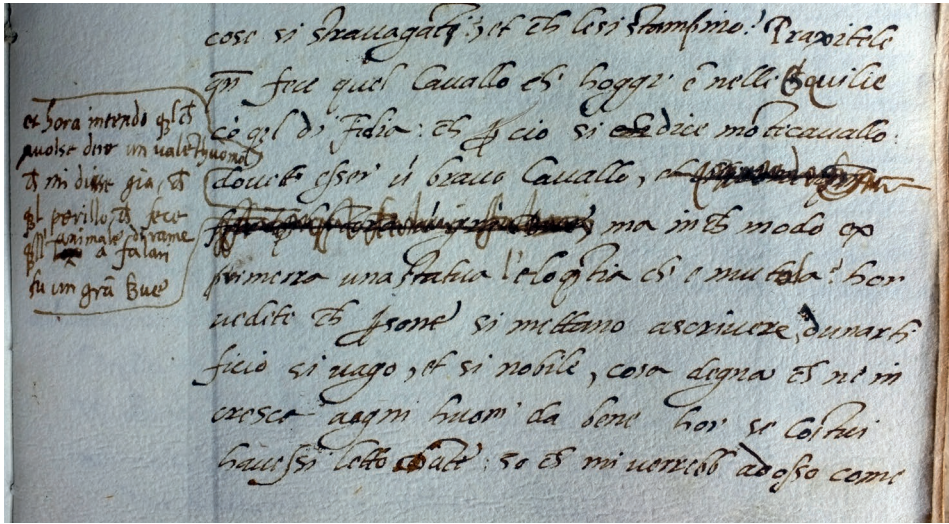


Figure 53 Vincenzo Borghini, Fol. 35r of the *Selva di notizie* with Marginal Note in Borghini's Handwriting, 1564, Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz

#### 6.4 Rationalizing Mimesis: The Accademia del Disegno

Borghini's criticism of Cellini aimed at the increased self-awareness of the sculptors and painters of Renaissance Italy. Following the example of the humanists, artists were more and more interested in achieving the ideal of an *uomo universale*, equipped with universal knowledge and refined manners.<sup>42</sup> Emancipat-

41 See for example Gaurico 1504 (1999), p. 170: "Solent enim, ut in proverbio est, artificem instrumenta, dominum qualis sit domus ostendere." More examples are discussed by Löhr 2008, p. 170.

42 The ideal of the *uomo universale* was extensively discussed in Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, first published in 1528. Borghini's criticism was pointed explicitly against Castiglione's influential treatise on the accomplished courtier. See for example Bor-

ing themselves from the *artes mechanicae*, they not only fashioned themselves as poets, musicians, and orators, but actually performed these arts frequently. Borghini considered this development dangerous. As executive head of the Accademia del disegno, he was more interested in the actual production of artwork than in the promotion of the pastimes of the Florentine artists. His negative attitude towards the scholarly trained artist is best shown by his remarks regarding the eloquence of artists. No matter how much an artist is educated in the art of rhetoric, he would never be able to make one of his statues speak. “Ma in che modo esprimerà una statua l’eloquenzia, ch’è mutola?”<sup>43</sup>

Consistent with his viewpoint, Borghini proposed another method for creating works of art by focussing on pragmatic aspects. Rather than encouraging the artists to engage in poetry and music, he advised them to imagine the appearance of a poet, a musician, or an orator by means of their intellectual capacity. By referring to the famous poems of Dante and Michelangelo which he cited on this occasion,<sup>44</sup> he underlined the importance of the artistic *idea*, the ability of artists to generate new compositions and inventions. If an artist wants to build a statue of Cicero, it is not necessary for him to be eloquent. It is sufficient for him to use his *giudizio* to conceptualize the image of a learned and noble man before realizing it in stone. Similarly, he does not have to be armed with weapons before making an image of the warrior Achilles.

“Dirò per esempio: vorrà un buono pittore o un buono scultore fare (e non ritrarre) un Cicero? A costui non è necessario esser eloquente o buono filosofo, come fu Cicerone, ma gli basta bene aver tanto giudizio che conosca quel che si conviene a un cittadino grave, prudente, valoroso e buono, e da questa cognizione formerà nel concetto suo un volto che negl’occhi, nella fronte et un tutta la persona co’ gesti e co l’abito rappresenti quella prudenzia et autorità che fu in quell’uomo; e da questo Cicerone che

---

ghini (1971–1977), p. 641: “Parmi degno di considerazione che queste arti hanno molte accompagnature e di molti corredi. E non parlando ora di quelli la Boschereccia [i.e., Cellini] voleva che avessi il suo scultore, che lo voleva musico, soldato et oratore etc. (che questo è vizio comune di tutte l’arti, e colui che formò il cortigiano voleva insino a pittore, quell’altro che fa l’oratore vuole che gl’abbia tutte l’arti etc.), parliamo un poco di certi corredi più intrinseci e più familiari, dove a me pare ch’altra cosa sia l’opera che si fa, et altro l’instrumento con che si fa.”

43 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 640.

44 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 640: “Dante, che fu veramente in tutte le cose divino disse quelle belle parole: E chi pinge figura, se non è prima lei, non la può fare. [...] Però ben disse il divin Michelangnolo, parlando delle perfezione de l’artefice: E solo a quello arriva la man che ubidisce a l’intelletto.” The poems cited by Borghini were discussed frequently in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, for example also in Varchi’s *Lezzioni*, see also Chapter 2.1.

gl' ha ne l'intelletto caverà poi la mano quel che si dipinge in su la tavola o si cava del marmo. Se per contrario arà daffar Achille, si farà quella idea d'un giovane stizoso, feroce, tutto sdegno e tutta rabbia etc., e non per questo sarà necessario che vadia armato o bisognerà che sia un Curio de' nostri tempi o quel Febus de l'Isole Lontane della Tavola Ritonda."<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to Cellini, who argued in favour of an actual knowledge of these arts, Borghini concentrates on the intellectual judgement of the artist. Rather than embodying a great variety of competencies, the artist should focus on his ability of abstract reasoning. An artist does not need to be proficient in all of the arts; it is more than sufficient to be merely acquainted with them to be able to represent the entirety of the manifestations of nature, the "proprietà della natura di tutte le cose."<sup>46</sup> Borghini's understanding of the artistic *giudizio* is thus very close to Vasari's definition of the *disegno*, further discussed and developed in the second edition of the *Vite*.<sup>47</sup> According to Vasari, the *idea* – and hence the work of an artist – is subject to his *giudizio universale*, acquired by constant practice.

"Perché il disegno, padre delle tre arti nostre architettura, scultura e pittura, procedendo dall'intelletto cava di molte cose un giudizio universale simile a una forma ovvero idea di tutte le cose della natura [...], e perché da questa cognizione nasce un certo concetto e giudizio, che si forma nella mente quella tal cosa che poi espressa con le mani si chiama disegno, si può concludere che esso disegno altro non sia che una apparente espressione e dichiarazione del concetto che si ha nell'animo, e di quello che altri si è nella mente imaginato e fabricato nell'idea."<sup>48</sup>

In contrast to Vasari's conception of *disegno*, Borghini went even further. In the same way in which he attacked Cellini for his theory of imitation, he criticized Cellini's idea of the modern artist. At a time of social mobility, Borghini was keen on reminding the artists of their actual position in the Florentine Republic. Rather than spending their time on useless activities in the courts, artists should concentrate on their duties as craftsmen. In a lecture held at the Accademia del disegno shortly after October 18, 1564, he addressed the artists directly and expressed his opinion in the following way: "Voi uscite di casa vostra, dove siate patroni, et en-

---

45 Borghini (1971–1977), pp. 640 f.

46 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 641.

47 Similarities between Borghini's and Vasari's definitions are discussed by Williams 1997, pp. 29–72.

48 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 1, pp. 168 f.

trate in casa di filosofi et retori, dove voi havete non troppo gran parte et dove noi siam patroni noi [...], è Accademia di FARE et non di RAGIONARE [...].<sup>49</sup>

In the *Selva di notizie* he elaborated on this idea in more detail. Writing about the specific tasks of each artist, he advised each one to stick to his traditional duties. A painter should know how to prepare wooden panels, a sculptor how to make chisels, and an architect how to use ginny wheels. If they were to engage in other activities that had nothing to do with their art, they would hardly achieve anything.<sup>50</sup> Thus, by criticizing Cellini's (and Vitruvius') idea of universal knowledge, Borghini also managed to contribute to the enhancement of the professionalism of sculptors, painters, and architects. The latter two in particular were often charged with identical tasks, and a neat distinction between their duties could lead to a productive decrease in rivalry. This improvement must have been deemed positive by Borghini.

Borghini's neat analysis of Cellini's theory of imitation was an important contribution to the redefinition of the artistic life; it must be seen in conjunction to the evolving organization of the arts in Florence. During the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, artists were increasingly confronted with an organizational system which imposed new conditions on the production of art. The aristocratic establishment was interested in the production of a large amount of representative portraits, monumental statues, and ephemeral decorations of festivities which served to emphasise their authority and power. The increasing demands on painters, sculptors, architects, and their assistants led to a reorganization of existing structures – and finally to the foundation of the Accademia del disegno.<sup>51</sup> Established with the encouragement of Cosimo I in May 1563, this academy of the arts not only had the purpose of facilitating the artists' education and self-representation, but was also meant to coordinate the artistic activities of the Republic of Florence and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. As its *luogotenente*, Vincenzo Borghini was entrusted with the mission to structure this process of institutionalizing the cultural policy under Cosimo I.<sup>52</sup>

One of his tasks consisted of the optimisation of the artistic work flow. Even though the rules and regulations of the Accademia del disegno do not provide

---

49 As transcribed in Carrara 2006, p. 565.

50 Borghini (1971–1977), p. 642: “[...] io ho gran paura ch’artificiosamente, come dice Vitruvio, non faccia il suo architetto un tante tante cose, come fece il Castiglione il suo cortigiano, e che quando poi egli arà a restare co’ sua proprii panni e rendere quelli che gl’ha tolti in presto, e’ non rimanga (come quella cornacchia) mezzo nudo. Questo si consideri bene.”

51 For the history of the *Accademia del disegno* see Ważbiński 1987, Barzman 2000, and Pinelli 1993, pp. 25 f., 158 ff.

52 Borghini's impact on the *Accademia* is discussed by Ruffini 2011.

much information about its didactic principles, we have fragmentary treatises from the 1560s by Alessandro Allori (*Il primo libro de' ragionamenti delle regole del disegno*) and Vincenzo Danti (*Il primo libro del trattato delle perfette proporzioni*). These two members of the academy were interested in the professionalization and rationalization of workmanship.<sup>53</sup> According to these painters' notes, the execution of pictorial representations can be facilitated by dividing a figure into several smaller parts, such as the mouth, the nose, or the ears. Frequent repetition of these patterns would then lead to an increase in speed and finally contribute to the faster completion of paintings. Along with the instruction on human anatomy and the laws of perspective, these methods were part of the instructive curricula of the academy, enabling the artists to accomplish commissions within a short length of time. Furthermore, the artists were invited to re-use their preparatory drawings for other paintings.<sup>54</sup> By inverting or re-composing single parts and patterns of their figures, they reinvented their paintings in an economic yet creative way. Minor repetitions and aesthetic disparities were ignored in favour of working better and faster. This kind of re-organization of labor had another advantage as well: executive artists who partitioned the work into subdivisions could nominate specialized assistants who were charged with specific tasks.<sup>55</sup> The systematic collaboration on major commissions was the result not only of rationalization, but also of the focus on the visual orchestration of authority and power, considered a necessity in a republic like Florence.

## 6.5 The Death of the Sculptor Perillus

Borghini's attack on Cellini was based on these precepts of productivity. Although the sculptor fashioned himself repeatedly as an assiduous worker,<sup>56</sup> Borghini accused him of laziness and disobedience. He was thus rendered the ideal antagonist

---

53 Both Allori's *Il primo libro de' ragionamenti delle regole del disegno* and Vincenzo Danti's *Il primo libro del trattato delle perfette proporzioni di tutte le cose* were composed during the time of the academy's foundation. See Barzman 2000, pp. 167 f.

54 Nova 1992.

55 For these methods see also Wackernagel 1938; Bambach 1999; Hiller von Gaertringen 1999.

56 For example, when talking to Cosimo I and his wife Eleonora di Toledo in his *Vita* about the process of making a crucifix, meant to decorate the artist's tomb, he described it as being exceptionally laborious. Cellini (1996), p. 736: "Signora mia, io mi sono preso per piacere di fare una delle più faticose opere che mai si sia fatte al mondo: et questo si è un Crocefisso di marmo bianchissimo, in su una croce di marmo neris-

to the artists of the academy, who devoted their lives to the commissions of patrons and rulers. In some of the letters exchanged with Vasari, Borghini's aversion to Cellini becomes explicitly apparent. From the years 1563 to 1566, Borghini's pen portraits of Cellini were written within the important time range that covers the funeral of Michelangelo, the foundation of the academy, and the preparation of the second edition of Vasari's *Vite*. Borghini's characterisations of the sculptor are motivated by new artistic requirements, as drafted by the academy and its direct beneficiaries. Consequently, Cellini is not only labeled as *boschereccio*,<sup>57</sup> i.e., a rude artist who lacks courtly etiquette, but is also accused of being inefficient.<sup>58</sup> In another letter addressed to Cosimo I regarding the preparations for the wedding ceremony of his son Francesco I, dated April 5, 1565, he also blamed the sculptor for his lack of discipline. According to Borghini, one should be grateful if Cellini were to execute as much as the eighth part of a work he had promised.<sup>59</sup> In the concluding remarks of his letter, Borghini thus recommends that the Duke should instead focus on a new generation of artists, including Alessandro Allori, Santi di Tito, and Bartolomeo Ammannati. Proficient, well-mannered, and younger than the antiquated Cellini, these artists would thankfully execute the decorations for the festivities in honour of Cosimo's son.<sup>60</sup>

Borghini's characterisation of the sculptor was motivated by a new idea of artistic practice and later mirrored in the work of his friend Giorgio Vasari, where

---

simo, et è grande quanto un uomo vivo." Similarly, on p. 764: "[...] l'avermi levato la fatica del marmo del Nettunno si era stato la propria causa dell'avermi fatto condurre una cotale opera [i.e., the crucifix], nella quale non si era mai messo nessuno altro innanzi a me; e se bene io avevo durato la maggior fatica che io mai durassi al mondo, e' mi pareva averla bene spesa, e maggiormente poi che loro Eccellenzie illustrissime [Cosimo I and Eleonora di Toledo] tanto me la lodavano."

57 Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 269 (Letter to Vasari, dating August 11, 1566). Borghini was not the only one who used the expression. Cellini used the term *boschereccio* repeatedly when referring to himself in his written works. As a method of self-fashioning, he thus turned the pejoratively used adjective into something positive and addressed his own deviant behaviour as an artist.

58 Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 109: "[Cellini] farebbe il meglio a fare et non sen' andare in cicalerie: che tirando gia 18 mesi la provvisione, non ha fatto anchor nulla." (Letter to Vasari, dating August 19, 1564)

59 Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 1, p. 197: "[...] Benvenuto similmente se ei facesse l'ottava parte di quel che e' suol ragionare, farebbe pur assai: ma in vero l'età comincia a essergli troppa per certe fatiche." This is, of course, a sneaky allusion to Cellini's idea that a three-dimensional sculpture, to be seen from eight different angles, is seven times more worth than a flat painting. For a discussion of this letter see Legrenzi 1910, pp. 112 ff.

60 Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 1, pp. 194 ff.

it was given a theoretical foundation.<sup>61</sup> In his characterisation of the artists of the *terza età*, Vasari emphasized their celerity when executing their works. In contrast to the artists of the early Quattrocento, who worked assiduously and repetitively on their paintings, he described the artists of his own time as being equipped with *facilità* and *prestezza*<sup>62</sup>. Although hard, continuous work was strongly recommended by Vasari<sup>63</sup>, he stressed the importance of the mental conception of paintings. Rather than engaging in lengthy labour, the modern artists should work with passion and leisure. Paraphrasing Baldassare Castiglione's concept of *sprezzatura*, a certain nonchalance and effortlessness attributed to the ideal courtier, Vasari thus promotes an art which is less concerned with the pedantic diligence of workmanship than with the joyful play of artistic *difficoltà*, the latter being a characteristic of the distinguished artist.<sup>64</sup> As explicitly stated by Vasari, this new concept of artistic self-expression also aimed to improve productivity. Whereas the artists of the Quattrocento used to work six years on one painting, nowadays the artists would execute six paintings in one year.

“Ma quello che importa il tutto di questa arte è che l'hanno ridotta oggi talmente perfetta e facile per chi possiede il disegno, l'invenzione et il colorito, che dove prima da que' nostri maestri si faceva una tavola in sei anni, oggi in un anno questi maestri ne fanno sei: et io ne fo indubitatamente fede, e di vista e d'opera; e molto più si veggono finite e perfette che non facevano prima gli altri maestri di conto.”<sup>65</sup>

Aware of his autonomy as an artist, Cellini did not remain silent confronted with this academic opposition. Several poems by the hand of the sculptor ridicule the intimate friendship between Borghini and Vasari.<sup>66</sup> In one of these poems, he was particularly concerned with Vasari's artistic qualities, since Vasari was proud of his speed when executing paintings. Comparing Vasari with unexcelled artists,

61 For the collaboration between Borghini and Vasari on the *Vite* cfr. Ginzburg 2007 and Ruffini 2011, pp. 72–103.

62 The importance of corporeal work in the art literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is discussed by Jonietz 2011.

63 For the concept of *prestezza* see Suthor 2010, pp. 141–149.

64 The greater *diligenza* of painters was one of the characteristics which allowed them to reclaim a superiority over the hard-working sculptors, see von Rosen 2003, pp. 327 f.

65 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 4, p. 13. For Vasari's teleological model of history cfr. Gombrich 1955, Belting 1983, pp. 67–71, and Blum 2010.

66 Cfr. Cellini (1890), p. 113: “Giorgio Aretin e quel Frate Priore / sono uno stesso, se ben paion due: / Così non suol quel vostro buon signore. // Agli scultor dà il cuore / Di far ben quanto lor ogni pittura; / Ma lor faran mai ben di scultura. // La verità è pura; / E costor contro lor si sono armati; / Questo avvien sempre dove guidan frati.”



including Donatello, Leonardo, and the divine Michelangelo, who worked slowly but well, he accused the Aretine painter of exaggerated hastiness.

“Donato, Maso, il Lippi, e Lionardo  
 Quel gran Michel più dotto Angel divino.  
 Ciascun di questi fu pittor profondo.

A chi piace il far presto; un, meglio e tardo.  
 Or se Dio presta vita all’ Aretino,  
 Gli è per dipinger tutto questo mondo.”<sup>67</sup>

Cellini’s rejection of the productive principles of the academy not only led to personal attacks, but were also mirrored in his plans for a new signet of the academy as well. Cellini identified its unofficial symbol, a bull, as an attribute of Saint Luke the Evangelist (and painter) – and thus as a sign of superiority of the art of painting. His own ideas for a signet were based on the figure of Saint Mark, whose attribute, a lion, was relatable neither to the art of painting nor to the art of sculpture. In the same poem in which he attacked Borghini and Vasari, he thus encouraged the artists of Florence to abandon the academy of the bull and invited them to build a new organization under the sign of the lion (which was also part of his family crest).<sup>68</sup> Obviously, Cellini was well aware of the negative connotations associated with the bull. Traditionally treated as an ambivalent animal, Cellini identified it not only with ambition and assiduousness, but also with a repetitive and lifeless form of labour – a form of labour that was propagated by the academy as well.<sup>69</sup>

The commingling of personal animosities and diverging ideas on the duties of the artist is one of the causes of the enduring antagonism between Cellini and Borghini. In a letter dated August 11, 1564, the latter advised Vasari to erase every

67 Cellini (1890), p. 114. A similar observation was made by Federico Zuccari in a letter to Antonio Chigi, see Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 7, p. 510 f.: “E voi sapete come [Vasari] trattò il mio povero fratello [Taddeo Zuccari], sebbene, a detta di tutti, non vi fosse ai suoi di Toscano che lo superasse, meno poi il povero Vasari che non sapeva che far presto, ed empir di figure le muraglie, che vi paiono poste a pigione.”

68 Cellini (1890), p. 113.: “O spiriti alti e pregiati, / Con la scultura vostra al mondo sola / Lasciate il bue, e fate un’altra squola. // Nè ozio, sonno o gola; / Marco e lion chiamate questi due: L’un dirà ben, l’altro sbranerà el bue.” For this passage see also Jonietz 2011, p. 643, Barzman 2000, pp. 42–47, and Kemp 1974, pp. 220–231.

69 For the different meanings of the bull/ox in the 16<sup>th</sup> century cfr. Capaccio 1592, fol. 29v–33; Dittrich 2004, pp. 397–409, and particularly with regards to the art literature Hermann-Fiore 1992, and Jonietz 2011.

reference to Cellini in the *Vite*, since a book as beautiful as Vasari's should not bear any allusion to a pork like Cellini.<sup>70</sup> Although Vasari did not follow Borghini's advice, his remarks on Cellini are rather condensed and incorporated in a collective biography of the artists of the academy.<sup>71</sup> In the same way that he despised the demeanour of Jacone and his companions (see Chapter 4.4), he must have been disgusted by Cellini's presumptuous and often aggressive behaviour.<sup>72</sup> In the following years, Borghini continued to long for the end of his enemy, before Cellini actually died on February 13, 1571, in Florence. Two years after the initial stimulus of their quarrels, Michelangelo's funeral, he equated Cellini and the ancient sculptor Perillus again. In a letter to Vasari, dating August 11, 1566, he writes:

“Fucci dua di fa messer Pietro Vettori et leggemo la lettera [...] della boschereccia, cioè di Benvenuto: Ridemo tanto, che anchora ridiamo, et conchiudemo, che per quella sua ragione che bisogna, che uno scultore che havessi a fare una istatua di Cicerone sia eloquentissimo; che bisognò, che Perillo quando e fece quel toro a Dionisio, fussi un gran bue, et massime poi che il poveraccio vi mori dentro.”<sup>73</sup>

By relating Cellini to the death of Perillus in the belly of the bull, Borghini also evokes the image of the end of an artist who is overburdened by the new requirements of the academy as a vital part of a hierarchically organized republic. In the eyes of Borghini, Cellini embodied the characteristics of an artist who was neither devoted to the new specifications of productivity nor acquainted with the elaborate social standards of the courts in Renaissance Italy. Identifying Cellini with Perillus was thus a political statement that promoted the subordination of individual ways of expression to the needs and requirements of a central state.

As is shown by a work of Giovanni Caccini, Florence provided the perfect background for this reading of the Perillus episode (Fig. 54). His terracotta relief places the punishment of the ancient sculptor in the middle of a square that is reminiscent of the Piazza della Signoria, a place in front of the ducal palace

70 Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 98: “Parmibene, che voi vogliate vituperare quel vostro libro, volendovi mescolar quel porco di Benvenuto fra tanti huomini da bene; il quale vedete come è gentile et generoso: Che havendo al vescovo d’Arezzo et il Vecchietto dato un disegno, lo vorrebbe dare a uoi et torlo al loro, come quel che dono una mula, che non havea, a tutti i cardinali di Roma.”

71 See Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 7, pp. 621–623.

72 For Cellini as a criminal see Bredekamp 2008.

73 Frey (1923–1940), vol. 2, p. 269. Writing his letter hastily, Borghini mistook the tyrant Phalaris of Acragas (Sicily) with the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse (Sicily). A mistake that becomes comprehensible if we consider the fact, that Dionysius is said to have killed one of his personal entertainers as well.



**Figure 54** Attributed to Giovanni Caccini, *Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus*, ca. 1590, Chicago, Art Institute

and townhall, traditionally used for public executions. Surrounded by a crowd of people, including the tyrant Phalaris on his throne on the left-hand side of the relief, Perillus is put into the bull by three of the tyrant's assistants. His body heavily contorted and overwhelmed by despair, the helpless sculptor is apparently trying to escape the judgement imposed on him.<sup>74</sup> Giovanni Caccini, a member of the *Accademia del disegno* and later assistant to Giambologna, made the relief in the last decade of the Cinquecento, when the academy was already an established institution. His representation of the scene was not only based on the preceding works of Giulio Bonasone and Baldassare Peruzzi/Pierre Woeiriot, but also devoted to the particular architecture in Florence. By referring to famous depictions of the Piazza della Signoria, such as Domenico Ghirlandaio's frescoes in the Sassetti chapel in S. Trinita, he pointed out the close interrelation that existed be-

---

74 For the attribution of the relief to Caccini see Avery 1971.

tween the power of the early modern state and the events performed in the public space. This connection was made explicit by citing the architecture of a *loggia*, present in Florence among other things in the form of the Mercato Nuovo, built by Giovanni Battista del Tasso in the years between 1547 and 1551 – but foremost in the Loggia dei Lanzi on the Piazza della Signoria. As a symbol of the authority of Cosimo I, who established the Loggia dei Lanzi as a visual demonstration of his power, it was closely connected with his dominion in Florence and likely to be associated with his impact on the Accademia del disegno. Contemporary representations of the so-called *Festa degli Omaggi*, a popular feast day to celebrate Saint John, show Cosimo I frequently in a nearly identical pose to that of Phalaris in Caccini's relief. In a painting by Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, dated 1561–1562, he is seated on a throne on a dais beneath a canopy close to the Palazzo della Signoria, while the public gathers in front of the Loggia dei Lanzi to participate in the celebration of their patron saint (Fig. 55). By showing the sentencing to death of Perillus in front of such a building, Giovanni Caccini might have been alluding to an important era which gave birth to a new kind of artist.

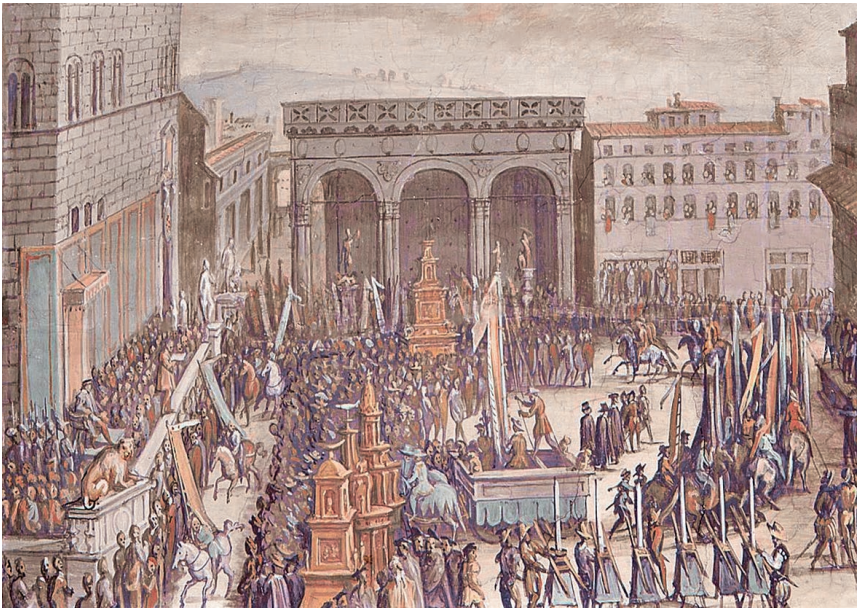


Figure 55 Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, *Festa degli Omaggi* on the Piazza della Signoria, 1561–1562, Florence, Palazzo della Signoria

## 7 Art and Artist in the Age of the Counter-Reformation

Borghini's criticism of Cellini was intended to rationalise the arts. Rather than reproducing the objects of their representations or following their individual interests, painters and sculptors were invited to perform their tasks in accordance with the demands of the Republic of Florence. Against this backdrop, the personality of the artist was either irrelevant, unimportant, or even detrimental for the efficient and continuous production of works of art. While this characterisation of the artist might be true for Vincenzo Borghini, not all seem to have agreed with these strict principles. The artist's individual inclinations, particularly in the domain of sacred images, played an important role in the production of religious paintings which, for religious painters, were considered to be a necessary prerequisite. While Borghini argues in favour of a separation of art and artist, the art theory of the Counter-Reformation increasingly stressed the importance of a spiritual unity between the artist and his works. Only when endowed with a deep faith and a thorough understanding of the Christian mysteries might an artist be able to create religious paintings.

### 7.1 The Ideal of the *artefice cristiano*

When art theorists of the Cinquecento discussed the positive effects of religious paintings, they often referred to the life of Saint Luke. Primarily celebrated as the evangelist who described the life of the Virgin Mary and the infancy of Christ in detail, he was also known as a painter. He was particularly famous for his representations of the Virgin Mary. According to hagiographic legends, Mary gave Saint Luke the permission to paint her portrait and used to sit as his model while holding Jesus in her arms.<sup>1</sup> Later sources enhanced the account and reported that the evangelist had been granted a vision of the Mother of God, or that she had

---

1 Andratschke 2010, pp. 1ff.

guided Saint Luke's hand while he was holding the pencil to depict her.<sup>2</sup> These Byzantine paintings, highly venerated and miraculously increasing in number over time, were seen as an authentic evidence of her appearance. Similar to other images which were thought to represent the true likeness of Mary or Christ – for example, the veil of Veronica or the so-called *acheiropoieta* (icons made without hands) – such early Christian paintings were thought to embody the presence of the divine and were highly esteemed. Due to their intimacy with the heavenly spheres, they provided the ideal background for prayers and were even believed to cause miracles.<sup>3</sup>

During the Renaissance, the image of Saint Luke painting the Virgin became a popular subject. Painters took pride in their holy lineage to the saint, made him the patron of their guilds, and even painted their own likenesses into the facial features of the evangelist. When Vasari was bestowed the commission to decorate the private chapel of the artists of the Accademia del disegno in the SS. Annunziata in Florence with a representation of Saint Luke in 1565, Vasari identified with the first Christian painter by making Saint Luke assume his own characteristic physiognomy (Fig. 56).<sup>4</sup> Similar examples can be found in works by Rogier van der Weyden, Maerten van Heemskerck, and Giulio Romano.

As is shown by the veneration of Saint Luke, divine inspiration was considered a helpful if not necessary ingredient for the success as an artist. This was particularly true for the depiction of saints. Artists who did not have a deep faith and a sound soul were thought to be incapable of capturing the beauty of heavenly creatures. According to the principles of *adaequatio* and analogy, heuristic methods frequently used in the Renaissance, the painter had to be virtuous and pious to be able to conceive and represent holy subjects.<sup>5</sup> The art literature relates several accounts of artists who had difficulties depicting saints until they had turned their mind to God and purified their souls. A frequently retold story from Florence concerns the fortune of a certain painter called Bartolomeo. When given the task to paint an *Annunciation* for the confraternity of the Servites of Mary in 1252, he was happy to accept the commission, but was unable to execute the last part of his fresco. No matter how hard he tried, painting the face of the Virgin Mary proved too difficult. Desperately, the painter decided to take a break, confessed his sins, and returned to his unfinished work only to see the face of the

---

2 Belting 2005, pp. 209 ff.

3 Belting 1990, pp. 57 ff.

4 For the chapel of St. Luke and its iconography see Summers 1969.

5 Cfr. Endres 2012.



**Figure 56** Giorgio Vasari, Saint Luke painting the Virgin, 1565, Florence, SS. Annunziata (Cappella di S. Luca)

Virgin miraculously completed.<sup>6</sup> Just as Jesus had been immaculately conceived by a Virgin who was free from the original sin, a painter had to purify his soul before conceiving true and authentic images of God.

In the art literature of the Cinquecento, the *pictor christianus* became a recurrent theme; many biographies stressed the particular faith and devotion of artists.<sup>7</sup> In 1538, the Portuguese painter and humanist Francisco de Hollanda advised his readers about the great spirituality requested of painters of religious imagery. Like the first Christian artists advised to decorate the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, a painter should be enlightened by the spirit of God.<sup>8</sup> Bartolomeo Ammannati drew on the aesthetic benefits of the *artefice cristiano* when citing Michelangelo in a letter to the members of the Accademia del disegno in August 1582. He claimed that good Christians would always make good and beautiful figures.<sup>9</sup> Vasari's *Vite* contains the lives of six artists who were friars and these lives contributed to the ideas on the moral conduct and artistic virtues of pious painters.<sup>10</sup> The life which renders Vasari's conception of the ideal *artefice cristiano* best is probably that of Fra Angelico. Following the ideas of Domenico di Giovanni da Corella, who in 1465 interpreted the external beauty of Fra Angelico's frescoes as a reflection of the internal beauty of his soul,<sup>11</sup> Vasari pays close attention to the similarities between the painter's character and work. Fra Angelico entered the Dominican Order of his own will at the age of 23, withdrew from the material temptations of the world, and lived a simple and devout life in the ser-

---

6 Da Cortona/Ottonelli 1652, p. 185: "È fama, che l'anno 1252 in Fiorenza un Pittore, stando in Peccato, cominciò più volte à dipingere il volto della Santissima Nuntziata, nè mai fece cosa di sua soddisfazione: onde sospettando, ciò esser cagionato da' suoi peccati, risolse di purgarli con la Confessione, la quale fatta egli s'accinse all'opera, preparando le cose necessarie, delle quali però non si servì, per condurre il capo dell'immagine, perche accostatosi per cominciar il lavoro, trova con so gran stupore la sacra testa fatta con tanta gratia, e maestà, che da lui all'hora, e poi da altri fù stimato, che quella testa era stata fatta miracolosamente coll'Arte d'Angelico Pittore: e tutta Città concorse à vedere, e venerare una tanta maraglia." This legend was first coined by the confraternity of the Servites of Mary in Florence in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to promote their order. For a discussion of the sources and causes of this legend see Ważbiński 1985.

7 See Wimböck 2002, pp. 23–35.

8 De Hollanda 1538 (1899), pp. 109–111.

9 Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 3, p. 539: "E, facendo qui fine a questo mio ragionamento, pregherò il Signore Dio che vi conservi sempre nella santissima grazia sua e vi felicitì in tutte l'opere vostre, sovvenendomi d'una parola, che già mi disse Michelagnolo Buonarruotì, et è: Che i buoni cristiani sempre facevano le buone e belle figure."

10 O'Connor 1998. Of course, pious artists were also available outside of religious orders. The *Vita* of Pietro Cavallini is a good example of a religious artist who was not associated with confraternities.

11 For Domenico di Giovanni da Corella's *Theotocon* cfr. Amato 2008, p. 75.



vice of God until his death in 1455. Likewise, his paintings and frescoes are described as humble, and it is said that his representations of saints captured their true likeness because they were simple and devout (Fig. 57). According to Vasari, this achievement was probably the result of Fra Angelico's working technique. He considered the first draft of a painting a gift of God, so he engaged in prayer before starting to work and never retouched or improved any of his frescoes.<sup>12</sup> Applying the literary topos of the *furor poeticus* to the paintings of Fra Angelico, one could say that the friar was possessed by a moderate form of *furor spiritualis*, which allowed him to produce images of saints with great diligence.<sup>13</sup>

---

12 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 520: “Insomma fu questo non mai abastanza lodato padre in tutte l’opere e ragionamenti suoi umilissimo e modesto, e nelle sue pitture facile e devoto; et i Santi che egli dipinse hanno più aria e somiglianza di santi che quegli di qualunque altro. Aveva per costume non ritoccare né racconciare mai alcuna sua dipintura, ma lasciarle sempre in quel modo che erano venute la prima volta, per creder (secondo ch’egli diceva) che così fusse la volontà di Dio. Dicono alcuni che fra’ Giovanni non arebbe messo mano ai penelli, se prima non avesse fatto orazione. Non fece mai Crucifisso ch’e’ non si bagnasse le gote di lagrime: onde si conosce nei volti e nell’attitudini delle sue figure la bontà del sincero e grande animo suo nella religione cristiana.”

13 The immediate expression of the artist's ideas was seldom judged positively. A rare case is Donatello, who is said to have shown artistic judgment by expressing his ideas instantly. Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 171: “[...] pare anco che nelle bozze molte volte, nascendo in un subito dal furore dell’arte, si sprima il suo concetto in pochi colpi, e che per contrario lo stento e la troppa diligenza alcuna fiata toglia la forza et il sapere a coloro che non sanno mai levare le mani dall’opera che fanno. E chi sa che l’arti del disegno, per non dir la pittura solamente, sono alla poesia simili, sa ancora che come le poesie dettate dal furore poetico sono le vere e le buone e migliori che le stentate, così l’opere degli uomini eccellenti nell’arti del disegno sono migliori quando sono fatte a un tratto dalla forza di quel furore che quando si vanno ghiribizzando a poco a poco con istento e con fatica; e chi ha da principio, come si dee avere, nella idea quello che vuol fare, camina sempre risoluto alla perfezione con molta agevolezza.” For the concept of immediate expression see Janson 1961, for *furor* in the early modern period see Magnago Lampugnani 2020.



Figure 57 Fra Angelico, Annunciation, ca. 1440, Florence, S. Marco

## 7.2 Characteristics of Religious Paintings

Vasari's description of the life and work of Fra Angelico was clearly indebted to the new ideas about religious imagery that were promulgated by the advocates of the ecumenical Council of Trent (1545–1563). Since parts of the Protestant Reformation had shown a more critical attitude towards the use of paintings and statues in sacral contexts, the Catholic Church was eager to develop guidelines for the appropriate use of the representations of saints.<sup>14</sup> Although lascivious paintings and idolatry had always been banned by the Church, the Tridentine Council re-structured and re-confirmed its ancient convictions about the legitimate use of images when faced with the iconoclastic movements of the Protestant Reformation, which reached a new peak in the early 1560s.<sup>15</sup> During the last session of the Council of Trent in December 1563, it was stipulated that images of sacred objects were indeed legitimate and that religious imagery was welcomed as a support for religious teaching and Catholic propaganda. One crucial passage of the Tridentine decree, which circumscribes the appropriateness of the use of images, demands that “by paintings or other representations, the people is instructed, and confirmed in the habit of remembering, and continually revolving in the mind the articles of faith” and further, that images may cause people to “be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety.”<sup>16</sup>

Although the rather vague decree did not contain concrete instructions, it had a considerable impact on the arts. Many art theorists, including Gilio da Fabriano, Raffaello Borghini, and Romano Alberti, referred to the ideas of the Counter-Reformation when describing the qualities of religious imagery. Focussed on the imagery's ability to stimulate piety, the theorists believed that such paintings should be based on clarity, simplicity, and historical probability. The depiction of stories from the Bible or the representation of saints and apostles was meant to illustrate the theological dogmas of the Catholic Church as a means of educating illiterate people. Of course, this conservative conception of sacred art affected the duties of the artist. To ensure the educational impact of their paintings, artists ideally assumed the role of learned orators, familiar with the texts of the Bible and the rhetorical methods of stimulating piety. In this context, Horace's widely read *Ars poetica* and his influential thoughts on the emotional affection of poets proved to be crucial for the art literature of the Counter-Reformation. According to Horace, a speaker must himself achieve a state of excitement if he is to evoke emotions in

---

14 Hecht 2012 provides a detailed analysis of Catholic treatises that are concerned with the usage of religious images in the age of the Counter-Reformation.

15 For a graphic discussion of the various models of venerating images see Wirth 2000.

16 As cited in Hall 2011, p. 20.

his auditors.<sup>17</sup> By applying this principle to the painters of sacred art, many art theorists of the Cinquecento stressed the importance of Christian faith and devotion. Only an artist who is imbued with true religious feelings can display them in his works and thus emotionally affect and teach the beholders of his paintings.

Romano Alberti's *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura* (1585) is a good example of the application of rhetorical elements to religious paintings. He compares the art of oratory with the art of painting, asserting that the latter is far more effective at evoking people's passions and showing a schematic understanding of the causality between religious artists and their art. According to Alberti, painters have to be faithful to God if they want to affect the feelings of the people with their works.<sup>18</sup> Similar examples can be found in Federico Borromeo's *De pictura sacra*, drafted at the end of the Cinquecento and published in 1624.<sup>19</sup> As is shown by some of Alberti's references, he was directly inspired by the writings of the influential archbishop Gabriele Paleotti. In 1563 Paleotti had actively participated in the Council of Trent, where he was specifically concerned with the visual arts. Although unfinished, his *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1582) can be described as a detailed reference manual for applying the Tridentine decree.<sup>20</sup> By applying the rhetorical principles of *docere*, *delectare*, and especially *movere* to religious paintings, Paleotti showed great confidence in the persuasive powers of religious images. As a medium of information, preservation, and mass conversion, they could serve as important ammunition in the fight against the virulent spread of protestantism. Begun in the 1570s and published in 1582, his treatise not only pays attention to the appropriate use of images in sacred and profane places by describing their various forms and functions, but discusses the figure of the artist as well.<sup>21</sup> According to Paleotti, painters of religious images had the duty to promote the Christian faith by producing clear, legible, and devout representations. It was thus necessary for the artist to be familiar with the texts of the Bible, the

---

17 Horace (1942), pp. 459–461: “If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself”/“si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.” (*Ars poetica*, 102–105). For a discussion of this concept cfr. Abrams 1953, pp. 71 f. and Rudd 1976, pp. 170–181.

18 Alberti 1585 (1960–1962), p. 231: “Giova ancora alli pittori la pittura cristiana, incitan-doli a dover esser sprituali per esprimere li affetti devoti, i quali se non sentono in lor stessi, non possono produrli facilmente. E di più, come potranno unir li altri con Dio, se essi da quello seran disuniti?”

19 Borromeo 1624 (2010), p. 46: “Quin etiam sicuti vanus est Oratoris conatus ad permovendos aliorum animos, nisi suum ipse animum moverit prius, ita pictoribus cunctis evenire arbitror, ut nisi ipsi prius pium aliquem animi sui motum excitare conati fuerint, nequeant postea operibus dare suis id quod sibi deest, pietatem nempe et laudabiles animi sensus.”

20 For a general survey of Paleotti's treatise see Steinemann 2006.

21 For Paleotti's ideas on the *artefice cristiano* see Zacchi 1985.

traditional iconography, and the doctrines of the church. Furthermore, Paleotti was concerned with the spiritual constitution of artists and advised them that they need to be devout. Unsurprisingly, faith in God was described as indispensable for the production of effectual religious imagery:

“[I pittori] non possono rappresentare, nelle figure che fanno, quella maniera di devozione ch’essi non hanno né sentono dentro di sé; onde si vede per isperienza che poche imagini oggi si dipingono, che produchino questo effetto. [...] non basta solo esser buono artefice, ma, oltre l’eccellenza dell’arte, essendo egli di nome e di professione cristiano, ricercano da lui l’imagini ch’egli farà, un animo e affeto cristiano, essendo questa qualità inseparabile dalla persona sua, e tale ch’egli è ubligato di mostrarla ovunque sia bisogno.”<sup>22</sup>

Similar to Vasari’s first version of Fra Angelico’s life, in which he stressed the equation of pious artists and pious art right from the beginning,<sup>23</sup> Paleotti’s treatise draws on analogies between the mind of the painter and his works to promote his threefold image of an ideal artist in the service of the Church: The *artefice cristiano* had to be pious, inspired by his faith in God, and simple and unlicentious in his style of living.

### 7.3 Francesco Bocchi and the *immagine miracolosa*

It is against this cultural background that the well-known image of the Annunciation in the SS. Annunziata in Florence received new attention during the second half of the Cinquecento. As demanded by the art literature of the Counter-Reformation, it displayed the Annunciation to the Virgin in accordance with the text of the Bible (Lk 1, 26–38), showing the archangel Gabriel announcing the birth of Christ to a modest and devout Mary (Fig. 58). Furthermore, the historical appropriateness of the representation was matched by its style. Neither licentious nor capricious, the fresco possesses a simple, descriptive appeal and complied with the demand of legibility. The legends attached to the image since the 14<sup>th</sup> century

22 Paleotti 1582 (1960–1962), pp. 120, 136.

23 Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 3, pp. 273 f.: “Certamente chi lavora opere ecclesiastiche e sante doverrebbe egli ancora del continuo essere ecclesiastico e santo, perché si vede che quando elle sono operate da persone che poco credino e manco stimino la religione, fanno spesso cadere in mente appetiti disonesti e voglie lascive; onde nasce il biasimo dell’opre nel disonesto e la lode nell’artificio e nella virtù.”



Figure 58 Attributed to Jacopo di Cione, Annunciation, ca. 1360, Florence, SS. Annunziata

proved to be advantageous for its reception as well. According to popular belief, it either belonged to the group of *acheiropoieta* or was actually painted by Saint Luke himself. Furthermore, representations of the Annunciation reaffirmed the importance of Mary as indispensable for the salvation of mankind and acknowledged her active participation in God's plans; this conscious contribution of the Mother of God had been negated by Martin Luther. In short, the *Annunciation* in the SS. Annunziata, venerated by Gabriele Paleotti and other protagonists of the Catholic Reform, provided the ideal context for the discussion of the precepts of religious art and artists in a time of theological instability and uncertainty.<sup>24</sup>

Francesco Bocchi's treatise *Sopra l'immagine miracolosa della Santissima Nunziata di Fiorenza* is an interesting compendium of these ideas about the image.<sup>25</sup>

24 See Ważbiński 1985 and Ważbiński 1987b. According to Miklós Boskovits, the painting was made by Jacopo di Cione around 1360. Giorgio Vasari attributed it to Pietro Cavallini.

25 For a discussion of the works of Bocchi see Schröder 2003 and Frangenberg 2016.

The monograph of this Florentine historian and art theorist, published in 1592, gives an account of the various miracles associated with the fresco, highlights its beauty and simplicity, and recounts the legend of its miraculous creation in 1252. According to Bocchi, the painter was unable to paint the face of the Virgin and decided to confess his sins. He took a nap on the scaffolding underneath the image, and when he returned to his work he saw that the fresco was miraculously finished.<sup>26</sup>

In narrating this legend, Bocchi paid particular attention to the question of authorship, stressing the divine origins of the image. Although parts of the fresco had been painted by the artist, he ascribed its supernatural power and beauty entirely to the intervention of God. The face of the Virgin was painted not by the artist, but by the hand of God.<sup>27</sup> Hence its unexcelled beauty, which was unusual and *supra humano* at a time when the art of painting was considered to be immature or *rozo*.<sup>28</sup> As is emphasized by Bocchi, even artists of the Cinquecento like Michelangelo or Andrea del Sarto would have been unable to paint a face of similar beauty.<sup>29</sup> A woodcut from Luca Ferrini's *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze*, published in the year following Bocchi's treatise, gives visual expression to Bocchi's understanding of the creation of the fresco. Like other illustrations of the legend from the same period, it shows the sleeping artist against the background of a simplified reproduction of the image in the SS. Annunziata, while a miniaturized God paints the face of the Virgin (Fig. 59).

---

26 Bocchi 1592, pp. 26 f.: "[...] con molta voglia si era messo il pittore all' alta impresa: il quale, poscia che si fu confessato, & hebbe preso il santissimo Sacramento, avanzandosi, quanto poteva piu in suo artificio, incominciò l'opera, che tanto era da' Servi di Maria bramata. [...] Sgomentato adunque, e disperatosi del fine, come piacque a Dio, un giorno sul ponte, dove dipingeva, si addormentò; e svegliato poco appresso trovò miracolosamente finito il santo volto della Madonna."

27 Bocchi 1592, p. 26: "Per questo egli non si puote, & non si dee pensare, che il volto miracoloso della santissima Nunziata sia stato allora da sapere humano effigiato, quando della pittura era estinto ogni artificio, ma dalla mano di DIO, et da virtù divina, si come di quello divinamente si provano ad hora, ad hora gli effetti."

28 Bocchi 1592, p. 25: "In un secolo adunque rozo quando era all'oscuro ogni artificio della pittura, fu fatta questa opera così altamente, & fu con tanta virtù effigiato il volto della miracolosa Nunziata, che posciache à questo i più perfetti artifizij, & migliori, quando è l'arte homai venuta in colmo, non arrivano, bene di certo si puote affermare, come è opera questa non da senno humano, ma divino procedente."

29 Bocchi 1592, p. 25: "Ne si faccia in questo alcuno à credere, che il Buonarrotto, o Andrea del Sarto, o Raffaello da Urbino di tutti i pittori più nobili, & più sovrani, siano arrivati à questo segno [...], & ben sono lodate le altre opere, come cosa humana, ma à questo sublime honore, & à questa maestà non arrivano in modo alcuno."



Figure 59 Unknown Artist, *The Divine Hand paints the Face of the Virgin while the Painter sleeps*, from the 1593 Edition of Luca Ferrini's *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze*

Although Bocchi attributed the creation of the miraculous image to God, he discussed the influence of the artist as well. As a collaborative work, the painting of the Virgin mirrored the divine inspiration of the artist and was seen as a material reflection of his devout mind and life:

“Ottimamente è conforme la pittura all’artefice, l’opera mirabile a’ pensieri suoi santi, & quello, che si vede all’animo singulare, onde è nato sì pregiato lavoro. Egli si suol dire molto sovente, che ogni buon pittore è usato, quando dipigne, di dipignere sè stesso; cio è con artificio effigiare quelle cose che a’ costumi suoi molto e alla vita sono simili. Perche pieno questo ottimo artefice di santi avvisi, tutta questa pittura, che da



lui fu dipinta, ordinò con tanta grazia, che mirare non si puote senza dolcezza di divozione, ne senza horrore di riverenza. E se le azzioni, come da fonte, procedono dall'animo, come esser puote, che non somiglino quello, onde sono prodotte.”<sup>30</sup>

By referring to the Florentine proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé stesso*, Bocchi stressed the (by now) topical motif of a similarity between the artist and his work. For Bocchi, this similarity consisted of the artist's individual character, his life, and the subjects of his paintings.<sup>31</sup> Despite the conservative and anti-individualistic nature of counter-reformatory art theory, this was a very modern approach to the interpretation of paintings. It suggested that all art is stimulated by an individual impetus. That is, the life of the artist provides the fertile humus for his work. Although Bocchi exemplified his theory with the legend of a Christian artist from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the theory proved to be valid for contemporary artists as well. According to Bocchi, Raphael and Michelangelo painted themselves whenever they used a paintbrush:

“Raffaello da Urbino, come era di volto, così fu egli di animo allegro: & gentile, & leggiadro ne' costumi fece tutte le sue pitture altresu accese di letizia: ne dipinse mai alcuna cosa, in cui con somma grazia non resti quasi egli stesso effigiato. [...] Michelagnolo Buonarroti, colmo di profondo sapere, & di alto intelletto, amatore di vita solitaria, hora con colori, & hora col marmo effigiò sempre se stesso, cioè figure piene di nobil senno, & di gravità, [...] non è egli nelle sue mirabili figure conforme, & simile oltra modo a suoi pensieri?”<sup>32</sup>

#### 7.4 The Afterlife of *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*

In a certain sense, Bocchi's anonymous painter of the Annunciation thus became the prototype for the modern artist of the Italian Renaissance. Whereas the first half of the Cinquecento was still characterised by a critical approach to individual forms of expression, the figure of the *artefice cristiano* provided the cultural background for an unquestioned equation of artist and art towards the end of the century. Similarities between the life and work of an artist were no longer seen as a defective form of imitation, but understood as the positive expression

30 Bocchi 1592, p. 45.

31 For Bocchi's understanding of *costume*, a derivative of the Greek *ethos*, cfr. Barasch 1975, p. 419.

32 Bocchi 1592, pp. 45 f.

of his individual ideas and thoughts. It is almost an irony of history that an institution which aimed to regulate the arts proved to be the midwife of a new and autonomous type of artist. By promoting the idea of a close correlation of painting and painter as an all-pervasive imperative, the Counter-Reformation prepared the way for future generations of artists, who were eager to draw on these analogies. The subsequent increase in artistic freedom and the emergence of an art market gave rise to new forms of artistic self-fashioning, allowing painters to blend their art with their lives. Art theorists were only too happy to exploit such examples when writing their biographies – and sometimes they even inverted this process by creating artists in the image of their work.

A few passages from the 17<sup>th</sup> century might illustrate how the rhetorical figure of automimesis continued to make its appearance in art literature. Claudio Achillini, a teacher of Carlo Cesare Malvasia's, applied the topos to one of the most influential painters of his time, Guido Reni. Reni was famous for his faith in God and the beauty of his angelic figures. Intermingling body, soul, and creativity, Achillini states that Guido Reni paints angelic figures so well because he himself has angelic features.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, according to the *Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672), a detailed description of the works and lives of the most influential painters of the Baroque period by the Roman artist and antiquarian Giovan Pietro Bellori, the painter Domenichino used to identify with the objects of his representations before depicting them: "A painter should feel and act like his figures to give them the right expression."<sup>34</sup> In a particularly vivid anecdote, Bellori recounts how Domenichino used to interact with the figures of his paintings by shouting and yelling at them.<sup>35</sup> The frequently voiced idea of the close

---

33 Manzini 1633, p. 55: "I pittori, per un' instinto di natura dissegnando, e colorendo figure, disegnano e coloriscono, senza propria industria ò consiglio, sé medesimi, ò almeno figure in gran parte somiglianti a sé medesimi; [...]. Hor quale maraviglia sarà se Guido essendo un Angelo per le bellezze del Corpo, e dell'Anima, e dipingendo, dipinga figure Angeliche?" For this passage see also Sohm 2002, p. 462, n. 97.

34 Bellori 1672 (1976), p. 359: "[Domenico] Non poteva capire come certi conducono l'opere gravissime ciarlando in conversazione: il che è contrasegno di pratica, e non di applicazione d'intelletto; ed aggiungeva che nelle azzioni della pittura bisogna non solo contemplare e riconoscere gli affetti, ma sentirli ancora in se stesso, fare e patire le medesime cose che si rappresentano; onde alle volte udivasi ragionare da sé solo e mandar voci di duolo e d'allegrezza, secondo l'affezioni espresse."

35 Bellori 1672 (1976), p. 359: "Et è memorabile quello gli incontrò col maestro nella sua giovinezza, quando, essendo andato Annibale a trovarlo a San Gregorio in tempo che dipingeva il Martirio di Santo Andrea, e trovando aperto, lo vide all'improvviso adirato e minacciante con parole di sdegno; Annibale si ritirò indietro ed aspettò fintanto si accorse che Domenico intendeva a quel soldato che minaccia il Santo col dito; non poté ritenersi allora e si avvicinò ad abbracciarlo, dicendogli: 'Domenico, oggi da te imparo.'"

connection between life and art was echoed by Bellori's younger contemporary, the Florentine art biographer Filippo Baldinucci. His *Notizie de' professori del disegno* employed the motif when describing the life of Caravaggio. Because he had a turbulent and contentious nature, his works are endowed with identical characteristics. By explicitly referring to the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*, Baldinucci states that Caravaggio's physiognomy, his rough table manners, and his violent comportment were in accordance with his naturalistic and unrefurbished paintings.<sup>36</sup> Similar references were made in the lives of Antonio Rossellino<sup>37</sup> and Gregorio Pagani.<sup>38</sup>

The topos even made its way into the art literature north of the Alps. Arnold Houbraken's *Groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*

---

36 Baldinucci, *Notizie*, Ed. Ranalli, vol. 3, p. 960: "Perdonisi al Caravaggio questo suo modo d'usare il pennello; mentre egli volle avverare in se medesimo quel proverbio che dice, che ogni pittore dipigne se stesso, merce che se s'osserva il modo, che egli usò nel conversare, si trova tale, quale sopra accennammo; se ci voltiamo al portamento di sua persona lo veggiamo stravagante quanto altro mai, e poco e il dire, che egli volendo pascere sua burbanza, particolarmente dopo la conseguita dignità di cavaliere, vestivasi di nobile drapperia, ne mutavasela mai, sin tanto non se la vedeva cascare in terra a brano a brano, se l'osserveremo in quello, in che fino gl'istessi bruti pare che premano alquanto, che e il tener netto il proprio corpo, ed il nutrirsi, lo vedremo difettoso, trovandosi che egli nel primo fu neglimentissimo, e nel secondo non meno." For the proverb in relation to the various biographies of Caravaggio see the excellent article by Sohm 2002.

37 Baldinucci 1681–1728 (1974–1975), vol. 1, pp. 410 f.: "E si vede ancora nella Pieve di Empoli in Toscana un San Bastiano di Marmo, bellissimo di porporazione, di mezzo naturale. Furono le opere di questo maestro lodate dal Buonarrotto: e fino al presente son tenute in gran pregio: e Ciò non tanto per la vaghezza e grazia, che diede alle teste, ma per la delicatezza, con che si vede lavorato il marmo: per la morbidezza e leggiardia de' panni, e per ogni altro più bel precetto dell'arte statuaria, che si vede così bene osservato nell'opere sue, che veramente arrecano stupore: e se alcuna fede prestare si dovesse al proverbio volgare, cioè: che ogni Artefice se stesso ritrae, non saprei dire in chi più avverato egli si fosse, che nel Rossellino, il quale fu da natura dotato di un animo così ben composto, e all'eccellenza nell'arte sua ebbe aggiunte qualità di tanto singolari di modestia e di gentilezza, che fu da tutti, non che amato e riverito, in certo modo adorato."

38 Baldinucci 1681–1728 (1974–1975), vol. 3, pp. 54 f.: "Vollero però alcuni tacciarlo perchè egli si fosse preso per uso d'eleggere per le sue pitture arie di teste troppo piene di carne, e ne fu una volta avvisato: ma egli rispose quello che veramente fu, cioè, che il suo natural talento per altro il portava piuttosto al secco, che altrimenti, ed essendo d'abito di corpo molto estenuato, per non avverare in se medesimo il proverbio, che dice, che ogni Pittore dipinge se stesso, s'era gettato, ed attenuto con eccesso, anzi che no, alla parte dell'opere, e fatti di tal maestro; ed io non dubito punto d'accertare il mio Letore, ch'elle sono in ogni particolare più minuto degnissime d'ogni fede, perchè elle uscirono dalla bocca d'un uomo de' più ingenui, e sinceri, ch'io conoscessi mai [...]."

(1718–1721) applied the motif to the lives of Adriaen Brouwer<sup>39</sup> and Jan Steen,<sup>40</sup> two Dutch artists who were known for their immoral lives and realistic genre paintings. In France, Claude-Henri Watelet's *L'art de peindre* (1761) expected the artists to embody the same passions as their figures;<sup>41</sup> in Switzerland, Johann Caspar Lavater repeatedly referred to the idea of the interdependence of artist and artwork.<sup>42</sup> The tendency of painters to imprint their own characteristics on their portraits was also noticed by individuals who, by profession, weren't constantly concerned with art theory. For example, Gabriele von Bülow, the daughter of Wilhelm von Humboldt, observed in 1828 how a portrait of her father echoed the physiognomy of the painter, Thomas Lawrence. While the upper half of the face was more faithful to Wilhelm von Humboldt, the lower half resembled Lawrence who, according to von Bülow, made all of his paintings look like himself.<sup>43</sup>

39 Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 1, p. 318: “Adriaan Brouwer zal ons gezegde als in een spiegel doen zien. Deze zyne genegenheid opvolgende, die tot boerterye helde, heeft niet anders beoogt als de zelve op het natuurlykst door 't penceel af te malen, ('t geen hem boven anderen gelukt is) en daar door den eernaam van een groot meester bekomen. Potsig was zyn penceelkonst, potsig zyn leven. Zoo de man was, was zyn werk.”

40 Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 3, p. 13: “In't algemeen moet ik zeggen, dat zyn schilderyen zyn als zyn levenswyze, en zyn levenswyze als zyne schilderyen.” For this topos in the art theory of the Netherlands see Cartwright 2007.

41 Watelet 1761, p. 134: “Le caractere d'esprit de l'artiste influe beaucoup sur la partie de l'Expression. Ce caractere fait que les objets le frappent par certaines qualités de préférence à d'autres. L'habitude y contribue aussi. Il est donc essentiel que l'artiste s'accoutume, autant qu'il est possible, à être affecté préférentiellement des qualités distinctives qui tiennent plus essentiellement à la perfection des objets qu'il envisage relativement à son Art.” For the art theory in France with particular regards to the expression of the passions see Kirchner 1991, pp. 239 ff.

42 Lavater 1775–1778, vol. 3, p. 192: “Ich habe schon gesagt: Die Werke der Künstler sind wie ihre Physiognomien. Ich wag' es, noch eine nähere Bestimmung beyzufügen. Die Umrisse ihrer Arbeiten sind gemeiniglich wie die Umrisse ihrer Gesichter; oder noch näher, wie die Umrisse ihrer Stirnen und Nasen – locker, wenn diese locker, und scharf, wenn diese scharf sind; bestimmt, wenn diese bestimmt, unbestimmt, wenn diese unbestimmt sind. Denn wie ihre Physiognomie ist, so ist ihr Gefühl, so ihre Liebe. Der hartgezeichnete liebt das hartgezeichnete; der weichumrissene die weichern Umrisse – warum? der hartgezeichnete hat mehr Sinn, Auge, Gefühl für das, was ihm ähnlich ist.” Lavater 1775–1778, vol. 4, p. 435: “Jeder Maler malt mehr und minder sich selbst. Wie einer ist, so malt er auch. Jeder Christ hat so gewiß Züge von Christus, Mienen von Christus, so gewiß er vom Geiste Christus hat. Wer das bestreitet, hat gewiß wenig Menschen- und Christuskenntniß.”

43 von Bülow 1895, p. 222: “Neulich haben wir auch des Vaters Portrait bei Lawrence gesehen, der Kopf ist soweit vollendet, und ist im Obertheil, Stirn, Augen, Nase ähnlich, aber im unteren Teil des Gesichts unähnlich geblieben, wie es war, gar zu rosig in der Farbe, und sieht nebenbei Lawrence selbst ähnlich, wie alle seine Bilder, finde ich.” Discussed by Gombrich 1972, p. 40.

Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when influential art treatises like Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato* had been translated into English, and artists had gained considerable self-confidence, more authors, art theorists, and artists began to reflect upon artistic creativity by invoking the idea of involuntary self-portraiture. Dorothy Stanley, an English painter who became famous for her portraits of poor children in the streets of London in the Victorian era, describes how she struggled with their pictorial representations, which she often deemed unsatisfactory. In her book *London Street Arabs* (1890), a collection of her works with a short introductory essay on the art of painting street children, she recounts the difficulties of rendering authentic depictions of *raggamuffins* because of the tendency of artists to always put themselves into their work.<sup>44</sup> While Stanley grappled to suppress the individuality of the artist, her compatriot Aubrey Beardsley used it to his advantage. As a young artist during his education at Westminster Art School in 1892, he observed that many students would interpret the models before them according to their own individuality: stout men would draw stout figures and *vice versa*. This presumed correlation between the physical nature of an artist and his works came in handy when he was asked by his friend Aymer Vallance to paint a portrait of Sandro Botticelli. Since he considered the works of Botticelli to be a corporeal reflection of the physical likeness of the Renaissance painter, he was able to reconstruct his physiognomy from his works.<sup>45</sup> The resulting drawing from 1893, probably based on the study of a photographic reproduction of Botticelli's *Portrait of a young man with a medal* in the Uffizi, is today housed at the Harvard Art Collection (Fig. 60). Although it does not look like the self-portraits of Botticelli, which are known to us today, it features a distinct physiognomy which reminds us not only of the works of the Florentine artist but also of the prominent

---

44 Stanley 1890, p. 6: "How I wish I could draw them as I see them, as I feel them – but there is such a wide chasm between conceiving and carrying out. No ragamuffin is ever vulgar or common. If the pictures render him so, it is the artist's fault, since he always puts himself into his work. All his vulgarity and affectations go into the drawing, just as simplicity, dignity, and love of truth are to be found in the work if found in the artist."

45 Vallance 1898, p. 367: "I remember on one occasion he was telling me of his amusement in noting how the different students at Brown's school would always interpret the subject before them, each according to his own individuality: the stout men drew stout figures and *vice versa*. In fact, he remarked upon the universal tendency to reproduce one's own personal type, and that he supposed it had always been so. 'Not, surely, in the case of Botticelli?' I asked; and, on his replying in the affirmative, I suggested to reconstruct Botticelli's portrait from the materials supplied in his own works. This idea evidently attracted Beardsley, for, without saying any more, he went off, evolved a head of Botticelli on those lines, and, not long afterwards, came and presented it to me. Until now, the drawing has never left my hand nor been reproduced. It was executed in the spring or summer of 1893." Cfr. Owens 2015, p. 83.

cheekbones of Beardsley himself. Beardsley's and Stanley's observations are thus consistent with the ideas of one of the most influential art theorists of their time, Oscar Wilde. As we can read on the first pages of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the poet and playwright was convinced of a mutual relationship between an artist and his work. The painter Basil Hallward, the principal figure of the literary masterpiece, cites the following words: "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the colored canvas, reveals himself."<sup>46</sup> Another interesting example of automimesis, along the lines of Wilde, is provided by Oskar Kokoschka. When confronted with the particularly rigid physiognomy of one of his sitters, the Austrian painter assumed a similar expression which allowed him to capture the facial features of his subject more adequately. Kokoschka needed to have a similar muscular experience to understand the other person's face.<sup>47</sup>

The list of examples of automimesis in the art literature could easily be continued. They show that art theorists not only referred to the lives of the artists when interpreting their works, but that they also referred to their works when interpreting their lives. Artists also referred to the same interrelatedness of art and life when discussing artistic issues. The similarity and interchangeability of artist and art, first voiced through the Florentine proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* at the end of the Quattrocento, thus provided the ideal background for a modern understanding of the autonomy of the arts, one in which the painter often figures as an independent and eccentric genius.

---

46 Wilde 1891, p. 12.

47 Gombrich 1972, p. 41.



**Figure 60** Aubrey Beardsley, Portrait of Sandro Botticelli, 1893, Boston, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum





# Conclusion

The present study has offered a broad examination of the literary motif of the similarity between artist and artwork in the context of the art literature of the Italian Renaissance. Rather than claiming to be a definitive study on the subject, this dissertation has explored specific examples that have proven to be particularly illuminating for the genesis and later development of the discussion of automimesis and artistic self-referentiality in the art theory of the early modern period. The choice to explore the history of the idea of automimesis through individual case studies was important because it allowed me to focus on the specific circumstances that surrounded each case of unwitting, unwelcome, or even voluntary forms of self-portrayal.

Despite its focus on specific examples, the thesis allows us to derive some general assumptions on the process of artistic emancipation and self-reflection during the Quattro- and Cinquecento. As we have seen in the first chapter, the poetic theory of ancient Greece was indebted to the idea of a hierarchical relationship between the single human and the Goddesses. The poet's individual nature and creativity were conceived as a mere reflection of the divine, acquired through the communication with celestial powers, the muses. In the Quattrocento, when humanists and artists began to contemplate individual forms of expression in terms of style, they discussed the *ingegno* of each artist in a very similar way. The ubiquitous presence of God in creation was not only mirrored by the great variety of objects, animals, and plants, but also echoed in the individual nature of each artist, resulting in different personal styles. When Filarete links the infinity of God to the infinity of *maniere* in his treatise on architecture around 1460, he is clearly referring to this theological model of artistic creativity.<sup>1</sup>

It is only during the course of the Cinquecento that the artist was understood as an independent authority with equal powers. As an *alter deus*, or *divino artista*, he had the capacity to enhance and alter the beauty of nature through the works of his art. This separation of individual creativity from religious patterns of un-

---

1 See Chapter 2.2.

derstanding prepared the way for a paradigmatic shift. Whereas the artists of the early Renaissance were judged on the basis of their capacity to imitate nature as closely as possible, the Cinquecento can be characterized as a century in which individual preferences, personal inclinations, and the will to self-fashion became dominant motives. As so often occurs during times of social and cultural transformation, the increasing autonomy of the arts brought a feeling of uncertainty and instability. Established principles for the evaluation and appreciation of art were slowly being abandoned, and new explanations for processes of creation and productivity had to be found. The ambiguity in the discussion of repetitive features in a painter's style mirrors these fundamental changes in the appreciation of art. At the same time, Vasari's *Vite* constitutes the first major step towards a methodological art history during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By referring to theories that were largely fashioned by a humanist elite, including contemporary ideas on procreation and physiognomy, he explained artists' individual works on the basis of their physical constitution, personal knowledge and experience, and other individual traits – rather than following pantheistic ideas.<sup>2</sup> Against this background, the literary figure of the similarity between artist and artwork was used to characterise a new kind of artist, who was self-sufficient and autonomous. On the other hand, Vasari was aware of the problems that could arise from unrestrained subjectivity. When he likened the small size of Topolino's statues to the size of his body, Vasari stressed the importance of training, self-discipline, and intellectual effort over repetitive biological patterns. The implicit principles and rules that were laid down in Vasari's *Vite* thus replaced traditional aesthetic models, constituting a new, secularized meshwork of norms and forms of individual expression.

The self-conscious artists of the Cinquecento were overwhelmed by the increased freedom of expression and in need of these new guidelines and restrictive rules. This attitude is probably best shown by Vincenzo Borghini's attack on the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini in the *Selva di notizie*. Cellini was known for his self-fashioning as a sophisticated *uomo universale*, and had declared that artists should embody the qualities of rhetors, warriors, or musicians if they were to make statues of rhetors, warriors, or musicians. Borghini harshly criticized him for this presumptuous and self-referential theory of imitation. Rather than knowing how to speak well in public or how to use a weapon during a tournament, artists should stick to their traditional duties as craftsmen in the service of wealthy patrons. As a conservative humanist, Borghini was less interested in the promotion of the social status of artists than the painter Vasari was; Borghini's crit-

---

2 For style and mobility in Italian early modern art theory see Kim 2014.

icism of artistic self-referentiality can probably claim more objectivity than any other criticism of the time. Furthermore, his opinion is likely to have been shared by the general, less well educated public of the Cinquecento. The comparison of Vasari's and Borghini's discussions of automimesis gives us an idea of the antagonism between modern and traditional points of view on individual expression, which became particularly vivid in a period of transition and social mobility. The increasing lacuna left by the gradual disappearance of religious patterns of understanding gave way to a time of experimentation and research that proved to be especially fruitful for the arts and the sciences. The art literature of the Italian Renaissance is a perfect example of this process, as it combines the contemplation of personality and character with findings from the optical sciences, alchemy, and astrology.

Although the idea of the similarity between artist and artwork was frequently voiced in the art theory of the Renaissance, it was never fully accepted. As part of a social system devoted to the maintenance of cultural norms, the painters and sculptors of the Cinquecento had to follow the *decorum* and had no obligation to promote the idea of an absolute art in the modern sense of the word.<sup>3</sup> Artistic strategies to prevent unwitting forms of self-portraiture, such as the use of proportion theory or learned academic advice, give witness to this critical approach towards excessive subjectivity. A remarkable exception to this rule was formulated by the art theorists of the Counter-Reformation in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By re-establishing the traditional explanation of artistic individuality, in which the artist figured as a mere reflection of the infinity of God, the union of image and artist was seen as completely positive. Inspired by divine grace and guided by the hand of God, the *artefice cristiano* was able to produce works of eternal beauty that were frequently associated with supernatural powers. It is probably due to the re-institutionalisation of these historical patterns of understanding that automimesis was legitimized in religious contexts, leading to its great acclamation by clerics and the general public (even if paintings by pious painters were often of mediocre quality). Later generations of artists who lived in periods of greater secularisation benefited from this development. Although the reactionary art theory of the Counter-Reformation caused a cultural backlash, it helped to popularize the idea of a similarity between artist and artwork.

As we have seen in the introduction, the modern understanding of the rise of the individual was partly inspired by Burckhardt's discussion of individuality in *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*. Mainly written in the 1850s, his work

---

3 For a historiography of the concept of absolute art, often circumscribed with the French slogan "L'art pour l'art", see Soussloff 1997.

describing Renaissance art and individualism was embedded in a cultural system that was still influenced by poetic theories of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of the main components of these influences was the Romantic period's emphasis on individual emotions and feelings as a source of aesthetic expression. Romantic theories stressed the importance of individual genius and the true autonomous self, embodying a movement which disagreed with the rational criteria and objective principles that had been put forward during the Enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> When Burckhardt looked back at the Italian Renaissance from a distance of 300 years, he was probably seeing it through the lens of ideas about original authorship and creative genius that were partly fashioned during his own lifetime. Today, almost 200 years later, the perspective has changed only slightly. Artists like Leonardo, Michelangelo, or Caravaggio continue to dominate our modern understanding of individuality and creative genius – even if most of their works were made for patrons, not for personal pleasure. Our backward projection of these ideas of authorship is probably indebted to the suggestive works of art theorists like Giorgio Vasari. His chronicles of the lives of the most prominent artists of the Italian Renaissance provided a portrait of individuality and self-consciousness that still fascinates and touches the modern reader. In order to resolve this fixation on the artist as a cultural hero, it might prove useful to continue the study of literary topoi, anecdotes, and rhetorical structures along with the social history of art. Only if we try to escape the strictures of monographic art history might we gain a more detailed picture of what happened to the figure of the artist during the Cinquecento.

The present study was primarily focussed on examples of automimesis from the art literature of the Italian Renaissance. Periods prior to the Renaissance were largely neglected, for reasons of coherence, length, and time. A still-necessary discussion of texts from the Middle Ages would have probably shown that different modes of expression were in fact noticed, but they were explained by referring to theological models of understanding, not by referring to the personality of the artist.<sup>5</sup> Further research should also concentrate on the mutual influences among theories that were written on behalf of poetry, acting, or music during the Cinquecento.<sup>6</sup> As these arts are concerned with representing emotions and feelings, the empathy of the individual poet, actor, or musician was discussed as an important means of production. This is not only true for Renaissance Italy,

---

4 For a discussion of these theories and ideas see Abrams 1953.

5 For some important observations in this regard see Panofsky 1924, pp. 17–22, Pfisterer 2002, pp. 40–54, and Brückle 2004, pp. 63–64.

6 Cfr. Metzger 2004 and Hénin 2003.

but also valid for later centuries as well.<sup>7</sup> When Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach discussed the art of playing the piano in his *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen*, he advised the pianist to actually embody the feelings and affects that he was going to represent in his playing.<sup>8</sup> Denis Diderot, after promoting similar ideas in his early writings, developed a more critical attitude towards this Horatian principle of personal identification when discussing the work of actors in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien* in 1774. Rather than identifying with the figures in a theatrical play, a good actor should methodically study how to represent emotions effectively.<sup>9</sup> These examples show not only that automimesis was discussed in various contexts, but also that it maintained its ambivalent reputation throughout the entire early modern era. It is only with the increasing freedom of artistic forms of expression during the last century that the notion of similarity between artist and artwork has become fully accepted.<sup>10</sup> Today, automimesis is an annoying commonplace, to the extent that some contemporary artists have begun to dissociate personality and work.<sup>11</sup> In order to promote the auton-

---

7 Many useful examples for 17<sup>th</sup> century France, including the discussion of theoretical works by Nicolas Boilieu, Roger de Piles, and André Félibien, are discussed by Tocanne 1978, esp. pp. 291–310. For examples from the literary theory of 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy, including Lodovico di Breme e Giacomo Leopardi, see Schlüter 1995.

8 Bach 1787, p. 91: “Indem ein Musikus nicht anders rühren kann, er sey dann selbst gerührt; so muß er nothwendig sich selbst in alle Affecten setzen können, welche er bey seinen Zuhörern erregen will; er giebt ihnen seine Empfindungen zu verstehen und bewegt sie solchergestalt am besten zur Mit-Empfindung. Bey matten und traurigen Stellen wird er matt und traurig. Man sieht und hört es ihm an. Dieses geschieht ebenfalls bey heftigen, lustigen, und anderen Arten von Gedanken, wo er sich alsdenn in diese Affecten setzet. Kaum, daß er einen stillt, so erregt er einen andern, folglich wechselt er beständig mit Leidenschaften ab.”

9 Diderot’s highly discussed ideas on the subject were written in 1774 and first published in 1830.

10 For the increasing autonomy of the arts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century see Ruppert 1998. Abstract art and the rise of non-figurative painting were no reason to refrain from automimetic art theories. When asked about the essence of his works, Jackson Pollock answered: “Painting is self-discovery. Every good artist paints what he is.” (As cited in Rodman 1961, p. 85).

11 See for instance Sherman 1996, p. 233: “Ich denke, es geht nie um mich. [...] Was ich mit mir anstelle, um zu Bildern zu gelangen, hat mit mir selber nur sehr wenig zu tun. Die Leute nehmen immer an, es müßte so sein, daß ich mich als Person in die Arbeit einfließen lasse. [...] Die fertigen Bilder, die Resultate, sollen mehr sein als bloße Reflexe meiner Persönlichkeit. Um zu vermeiden, dass die Arbeiten mit mir persönlich in Verbindung gebracht werden, habe ich versucht, mit anderen zu arbeiten. Aber das lief nicht so, wie ich es mir vorstellte. Ich habe dann immer das Problem, daß ich demjenigen sagen muß, was er tun soll.”

omy of the arts and express their individuality, many artists have found it a good strategy to remain anonymous and produce absolute art without an author.<sup>12</sup> As Karl Marx would have put it: History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.<sup>13</sup>

---

12 The Berlin-based artists collective Artists anonymous, but also the street artist Banksy, or the pop duo Daft Punk can serve as examples for this strategy. For interesting observations in this regard cfr. Pontzen 1999, Weinhart 2004, and Fastert/Geretsegger/Joachimides 2011.

13 Marx 1852 (1960), p. 115.

# List of Illustrations and Copyright Remarks

- Fig. 1: Philips Galle, *Man is born Naked*, 1563, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 2: Leonardo da Vinci, *Homo vitruvianus*, ca. 1490, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia || CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons, Luciob76, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7a/Leonardo\\_da\\_Vinci\\_-\\_Uomo\\_vitruviano.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7a/Leonardo_da_Vinci_-_Uomo_vitruviano.jpg)
- Fig. 3: Leonardo da Vinci, *Annunciation* (detail), ca. 1472–1473, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi || CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons, Raffaele Pagani, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Leonardo\\_da\\_Vinci\\_Annunciazione\\_%28dettaglio%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Leonardo_da_Vinci_Annunciazione_%28dettaglio%29.jpg)
- Fig. 4: Andrea del Verrocchio and Lorenzo di Credi, *Madonna di Piazza* (detail), ca. 1474–1486, Pistoia, Cattedrale di San Zeno || CC BY 3.0, Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/Andrea\\_del\\_verrocchio\\_e\\_lorenzo\\_di\\_credi%2C\\_madonna\\_di\\_piazza%2C\\_1475-86\\_ca.\\_%28pistoria%2C\\_duomo%29\\_o3\\_giovanni\\_battista.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/Andrea_del_verrocchio_e_lorenzo_di_credi%2C_madonna_di_piazza%2C_1475-86_ca._%28pistoria%2C_duomo%29_o3_giovanni_battista.jpg)
- Fig. 5: Leonardo da Vinci, *Studies of an Infant*, ca. 1504–1508, Windsor, Royal Collection || Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022, RCIN 912562
- Fig. 6: Andrea del Verrocchio, *Studies of an Infant*, ca. 1470, Paris, Musée du Louvre || From Carmen Bambach (Ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*, New York 2003, p. 252
- Fig. 7: Leonardo da Vinci, *Profile Head of an Old Man* (detail), ca. 1490, Windsor, Royal Collection || Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022, RCIN 912283
- Fig. 8: Leonardo da Vinci, *Profile Head of an Old Man* (detail), ca. 1493, Windsor, Royal Collection || Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022, RCIN 912495
- Fig. 9: Leonardo da Vinci, *Profile Head of a Youth* (detail), ca. 1511–1513, Windsor, Royal Collection || Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022, RCIN 919093
- Fig. 10: Illustration of the Finitorium in the 1568 Edition of Leon Battista Alberti's *Della statua* || CC NC 1.0, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10166480-6>
- Fig. 11: Illustration of the Human Body and its Relation to Zodiacal Signs in the 1508 Edition of Gregorius Reisch's *Margarita philosophica* || CC NC 1.0, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00012215-2>
- Fig. 12: Baccio Bandinelli, *Laocoön and his Sons*, 1520, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi || Public Domain Mark 1.0, Wellcome Collection, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fd48nzqf>
- Fig. 13: Unknown Artist, *Virgin with Child*, ca. 1280, Siena, S. Niccolò del Carmine || From Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult*, Munich 1990, p. 386
- Fig. 14: Pietro Perugino, *Ascension of Mary*, 1505–1507, Florence, SS. Annunziata || © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Roberto Sigismondi, 2017

- Fig. 15: Pietro Perugino, Ascension of Christ, 1495–1498, formerly Perugia, S. Pietro, today Lyon, Musée des Beaux Arts || CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons, Sdegroisse, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/67/Pietro\\_Perugino\\_cat48c.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/67/Pietro_Perugino_cat48c.jpg)
- Fig. 16: Pietro Perugino, Ascension of Christ, 1510, Sansepolcro, S. Giovanni Evangelista || © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Roberto Sigismondi, 2014
- Fig. 17: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Last Judgement (detail), 1534–1541, Città del Vaticano, Cappella Sistina || From Cristina Acidini Luchinat, Michelangelo pittore, Milan 2007, p. 299
- Fig. 18: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Virgin with Child and the Infant Saint John (Tondo Taddei), 1504–1505, London, Royal Academy || © Artemis Bildarchiv, Kunsthistorisches Institut, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
- Fig. 19: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Last Judgement (detail), 1534–1541, Città del Vaticano, Cappella Sistina || From Cristina Acidini Luchinat, Michelangelo pittore, Milan 2007, p. 289
- Fig. 20: Illustration of the Male Body and its Proportions in the 1521 Edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura libri decem*, edited by Cesare Cesariano || CC NC 1.0, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg, <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11199658-6>
- Fig. 21: Illustration of the Female Body and its Proportions, from the 1528 Edition of Albrecht Dürer's *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion* || CC NC 1.0, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00084490-7>
- Fig. 22: Domenico Beccafumi, Zeuxis and the Crotonian Maidens, 1519, Siena, Palazzo Bindi Sergardi || From Pascale Dubus, Domenico Beccafumi, Paris 1999, p. 163
- Fig. 23: Monogrammist IP, Lay Figure, 1525, Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum || From Arpad Weixlgärtner, Von der Gliederpuppe, in: Göteborgs Konstmuseum Årstryck 1954, Gothenburg 1954, p. 41
- Fig. 24: Albrecht Dürer, Study after a Lay Figure, 1526, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 25: Andrea del Sarto, Disputation on the Trinity, 1517, Florence, Galleria Palatina || From Mina Gregori, Uffizien und Palazzo Pitti, die Gemäldesammlungen von Florenz, Munich 1994, p. 190
- Fig. 26: Andrea Mantegna, Presentation of Christ in the Temple, ca. 1454, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie || © Photo: Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, SMB, Fotograf: Jörg P. Anders
- Fig. 27: Raffaello Sanzio, La Fornarina, 1518–1519, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini || CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons, Alonso de Mendoza, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/La\\_Fornarina%2C\\_por\\_Rafael.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/La_Fornarina%2C_por_Rafael.jpg)
- Fig. 28: Raffaello Sanzio, Self-Portrait with a Friend, 1518–1520, Paris, Musée du Louvre || CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons, Dcoetzee, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/Portrait\\_de\\_l%27artiste\\_avec\\_un\\_ami%2C\\_by\\_Raffaello\\_Sanzio%2C\\_from\\_C2RMF.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/Portrait_de_l%27artiste_avec_un_ami%2C_by_Raffaello_Sanzio%2C_from_C2RMF.jpg)
- Fig. 29: Parri Spinelli, Crucifixion, 1430s, Arezzo, Palazzo Comunale || From Patricia Lee Rubin, Giorgio Vasari, Art and History, New Haven 1995, p. 250
- Fig. 30: Leonardo da Vinci, Hemisection of a Man and Woman in the Act of Coition, ca. 1490–1492, Windsor, Royal Collection || Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022, RCIN 919097
- Fig. 31: Titian's *Impresa* from the 1568 Edition of Battista Pittoni's *Imprese di diversi principi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi* || CC BY 4.0, Biblioteca Nacional de España, <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdho00050148>



- Fig. 32: Giorgio Vasari, Zeuxis paints Diana in his Studio, 1569–1573, Florence, Casa Vasari || © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Studio Rabatti-Domingie, 2008
- Fig. 33: Michelangelo, Instructional Sheet with River Gods for Topolino, 1525, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 34: Cesare Cesariano, Allegorical Self-Portrait, from his 1521 Edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura* || CC NC 1.0, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg, <https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11199658-6>
- Fig. 35: Jan Harmensz Muller (after Bartholomeus Spranger), Mercury leading Young Artists to Minerva, 1592/1628, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 36: Personification of the Giudizio from the 1603 Edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* || Public Domain Mark 1.0, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/ripa1603>
- Fig. 37: Nicodemo Ferrucci, Artists studying the Works of Michelangelo, 1615–1616, Florence, Casa Buonarroti || From Nicole Hegener, *Divi Iacobi Eques. Selbstdarstellung im Werk des Florentiner Bildhauers Baccio Bandinelli*, Berlin 2008, p. 288
- Fig. 38: Unknown Artist after Daniele da Volterra, Drawing of the Relief on the right of the Orsini Chapel, 1590s, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica || From Jana Graul, *I due bassorilievi in stucco di Daniele da Volterra per la cappella Orsini*, in: *Prospettiva*, Nr. 134–135, 2009, p. 142
- Fig. 39: Unknown Artist after Daniele da Volterra, Drawing of the Relief on the left of the Orsini Chapel, 1590s, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica || From Jana Graul, *I due bassorilievi in stucco di Daniele da Volterra per la cappella Orsini*, in: *Prospettiva*, Nr. 134–135, 2009, p. 143
- Fig. 40: Monogrammist RS, Fugitive Sheet with Anatomical Models after Andrea Vesalius, ca. 1555, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 41: Monogrammist RS, Fugitive Sheet with Anatomical Models after Andrea Vesalius (detail), ca. 1555, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 42: Title Page from the 1559 Edition of Realdo Colombo's *De re anatomica libri XV* || Public Domain Mark 1.0, Wellcome Collection, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/zcjp265>
- Fig. 43: Illustration of an Ape Mother with her Offspring, from the 1592 Edition of Giulio Cesare Capaccio's *Delle imprese* || Public Domain Mark 1.0, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/capaccio1592bd2/0134>
- Fig. 44: Unknown Artist, Parable of the Mote and the Beam, ca. 1526, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek || CC BY-SA 3.0, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel
- Fig. 45: Giorgio Vasari, Apelles and the Cobbler, 1569–1573, Florence, Casa Vasari || © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Studio Rabatti-Domingie, 2008
- Fig. 46: Leonardo da Vinci, Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Infant Saint John, ca. 1505–1508, London, British Museum || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 47: Paolo Pino, Portrait of Marco Mantova Benavides, 1534, Chambéry, Musées d'Art et d'Histoire || © Photo: Musées d'Art et d'Histoire de Chambéry

- Fig. 48: Paolo Pino, Portrait of Marco Mantova Benavides (detail), 1534, Chambéry, Musées d'Art et d'Histoire || © Photo: Musées d'Art et d'Histoire de Chambéry
- Fig. 49: Antonio Lafreri, Statues of Praxiteles and Phidias on the Quirinal in Rome (front), 1546, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum || © Photo: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
- Fig. 50: Antonio Lafreri, Statues of Praxiteles and Phidias on the Quirinal in Rome (rear), 1550, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum || © Photo: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
- Fig. 51: Pierre Woeiriot after Baldassare Peruzzi, Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus, before 1562, London, British Museum || CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, The Trustees of the British Museum
- Fig. 52: Giulio Bonasone, Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus, from the 1555 Edition of Acchille Bocchi's *Symbolicarum quaestionum [...] libri quinque* || © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
- Fig. 53: Vincenzo Borghini, Fol. 35r of the *Selva di notizie* with Marginal Note in Borghini's Handwriting, 1564, Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz || CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Personal archive of the author
- Fig. 54: Attributed to Giovanni Caccini, Phalaris and the Bull of Perillus, ca. 1590, Chicago, Art Institute || CC0 1.0, The Art Institute of Chicago
- Fig. 55: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, Festa degli Omaggi on the Piazza della Signoria, 1561–1562, Florence, Palazzo della Signoria || From Volker Breidecker, *Florenz oder die Rede, die zum Auge spricht*, Munich 1990, fig. 49
- Fig. 56: Giorgio Vasari, Saint Luke painting the Virgin, 1565, Florence, SS. Annunziata (Cappella di S. Luca) || © Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut; Photographer: Roberto Sigismondi, 2017
- Fig. 57: Fra Angelico, Annunciation, ca. 1440, Florence, S. Marco || From William Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*, New Haven 1993, p. 208
- Fig. 58: Attributed to Jacopo di Cione, Annunciation, ca. 1360, Florence, SS. Annunziata || From Antonia Putzger, Marion Heisterberg, Susanne Müller-Bechtel (Edd.), *Nichts Neues schaffen*, Berlin 2018, p. 301
- Fig. 59: Unknown Artist, The Divine Hand paints the Face of the Virgin while the Painter sleeps, 1593 || From Luca Ferrini, *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze*, Florence 1593, p. 17
- Fig. 60: Aubrey Beardsley, Portrait of Sandro Botticelli, 1893, Boston, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum || © Photo: President and Fellows of Harvard College, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, The Richard Norton Fund and the Kate, Maurice R. and Melvin R. Seiden Special Purchase Fund in memory of Frederick Deknatel and in honor of Virginia Deknatel, <https://hvr.dart/0/193479>

# Bibliography

## Primary Sources

- Agrippa von Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, edited by Vittoria Perrone Compagni, Leiden 1992.
- Alberti, Leon Battista, “Della statua”, in: Cosimo Bartoli (Ed.): *Opusculi morali di Leon Battista Alberti gentil’huomo fiorentino*, Venice 1568, pp. 290–305.
- , *L’architettura, De re aedificatoria*, edited by Giovanni Orlandi, 2 vols., Milan 1966.
- , *De statua*, edited by Marco Collareta, Livorno 1998.
- , *Della pittura*, edited by Oskar Bätschmann, Wiesbaden 2002.
- Alberti, Romano, “Trattato della nobiltà della pittura” (Rome 1585), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d’ arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 3, pp. 195–236.
- Albertus Magnus, *On animals, a medieval summa zoologica*, edited by Kenneth F. Kitchell and Irven Michael Resnick, 2 vols., Baltimore 1999.
- Anonimo Magliabechiano, *Notizie sopra l’arte degli antichi e quella de’ fiorentini da Cimabue a Michelangelo Buonarroti*, edited by Carl Frey, Berlin 1892.
- Aretino, Pietro, *Lettere sull’arte*, edited by Ettore Camesasca, 3 vols., Milan 1957–1960.
- Aristides, Aelius, “In defence of oratory”, in: Charles Allison Behr (Ed.), *Aristides in four volumes*, 4 vols., vol. 1, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1973.
- Aristophanes, *The Thesmophoriazusae*, edited by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, London 1924
- Aristotle, *Rettorica et poetica d’Aristotile, tradotte di Greco in lingua volgare fiorentina*, edited by Bernardo Segni, Florence 1549.
- , “On the generation of animals”, edited by Arthur Platt, in: W. D. Ross (Ed.), *The works of Aristotle*, 12 vols., Oxford 1908–1952.
- , “On the soul”, edited by Walter S. Hett, in: W. D. Ross (Ed.), *The works of Aristotle*, 12 vols., Oxford 1908–1952.
- , “Physiognomonica”, edited by Thomas Loveday and E. S. Forster, in: W. D. Ross (Ed.), *The works of Aristotle*, 12 vols., Oxford 1908–1952.
- , “Poetics”, edited by Ingram Bywater, in: W. D. Ross (Ed.), *The works of Aristotle*, 12 vols., Oxford 1908–1952.
- , “The art of rhetoric”, edited by John Henry Freese, in: W. D. Ross (Ed.), *The works of Aristotle*, 12 vols., Oxford 1908–1952.
- , *Politics*, edited by Ernest Barker, Oxford 1998.
- Armenini, Giovanni Battista, *De’ veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna 1587), edited by Marina Gorreri, Torino 1988.
- Avicenna, *Libro della guarigione: le cose divine*, edited by Amos Bertolacci, Turin 2007.
- Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen*, Leipzig 1787.
- Baldi Camillo, *Trattato come da una lettera missiva si conoscano la natura, e qualità dello scrittore*, Carpi 1622.

- Baldinucci, Filippo, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua* (Florence 1681–1728), edited by Ferdinando Ranalli, 7 vols., Florence 1974–1975.
- Bellori, Giovan Pietro, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (Rome 1672), edited by Evelina Borea, Turin 1976.
- Benivieni, Girolamo; Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della, *Dell'amore celeste e divino*, Venice 1522.
- Bernardino da Siena, *Fioretti*, edited by Nazareno Orlandi, Siena 1911.
- Betussi, Giuseppe, "Il Raverta, dialogo di messer Giuseppe Betussi, nel quale si ragiona d'amore et degli effetti suoi", in: Giuseppe Zonta (Ed.), *Trattati d'amore del Cinquecento*, Bari 1912, S. 3–150.
- Bocchi, Francesco, *Sopra l'immagine miracolosa della Santissima Nunziata di Fiorenza*, Florence 1592.
- , "Eccellenza del San Giorgio di Donatello" (Florence 1584), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 3, pp. 125–194.
- Boethius, *The consolation of philosophy*, edited by H. F. Stewart, London 1918.
- Borghini, Vincenzio, "Selva di notizie", in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols., Milan 1971–1977, vol. 1, pp. 611–673.
- Borromeo, Federico, *De pictura sacra/Sacred painting* (Milan 1624), edited by Kenneth S. Rothwell, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 2010.
- Bosse, Abraham, *Sentiments sur la distinction des diverses manières de peinture, dessin et gravure*, Paris 1649.
- Bottari, Giovanni Gaetano; Ticozzi, Stefano (Edd.), *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura scritte da' più celebri personaggi dei secoli XV, XVI, e XVII*, 8 vols., Milan 1822–1825.
- Buonarroti, Michelangelo, *Il carteggio di Michelangelo*, edited by Paola Barocchi, 5 vols., Florence 1965–1983.
- , *Rime*, edited by Enzo Noe Girardi, Bari 1967.
- Campi, Bernardino, "Parere sopra la pittura" (Cremona 1584), in: Alessandro Lamo, *Discorso intorno alla scoltura, e pittura*, Cremona 1774, pp. 103–106.
- Capaccio, Giulio Cesare, *Delle imprese*, Naples 1592.
- Castiglione, Baldassare, *Il libro del Cortegiano* (Venice 1528), edited by Walter Barberis, Turin 1998.
- Cecchi, Alessandro, "Il maggiordomo ducale Pierfrancesco Riccio e gli artisti della corte medicea", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 42/1, 1998, pp. 115–143.
- Cecchi, Giovan Maria, *L'ammalata*, edited by G. Tortolli, Florence 1855.
- Cellini, Benvenuto, *Le rime*, edited by Adolfo Mabellini, Florence 1890.
- , *La vita*, edited by Lorenzo Bellotto, Parma 1996.
- Cennini, Cennino, *Il libro dell'arte*, edited by Gaetano Milanese, Florence 1859.
- Cesariano, Cesare, *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de Architectura*, Como 1521.
- Cicero, *De oratore*, edited by E. W. Sutton and Harris Rackham, 2 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1942–1948.
- , *Tusculan disputations*, edited by J. E. King, London 1971.
- Condivi, Ascanio, *Vita di Michelagnolo*, Florence 1553.
- Da Cortona, Pietro; Ottonelli, Gian Domenico, *Della pittura e scultura. Uso et abuso loro, composto da un theologo e un pittore*, Florence 1652.
- Dante Alighieri, "il Convivio", in: Cesare Vasoli and Domenico Robertis (Edd.), *Dante Alighieri, Opere Minori*, Milan 1988.
- Danti, Vincenzio, "Il primo libro del Trattato delle perfette proporzioni" (Florence 1567), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 1, pp. 207–269.

- De Hollanda, Francisco, *Vier Gespräche über Malerei/Diálogos em Roma 1538*, edited by Joaquim de Vasconcellos, Vienna 1899.
- Della Porta, Giambattista, *De i miracoli et maravigliosi effetti dalla natura prodotti*, Venice 1560.
- Diderot, Denis, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, Paris 1830.
- Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, Venice 1476.
- Dolce, Lodovico, "Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino" (Venice 1557), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d' arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 1, pp. 141–206.
- Domenichi, Lodovico, *Facetie et motti arguti*, Florence 1548.
- , *Facetie, motti, et burle*, Florence 1564.
- Doni, Antonio Francesco, "Lettere" (Venice 1544), in: Patrizia Pellizzari (Ed.), *Le novelle di Antonio Francesco Doni*, Rome 2002.
- , *Disegno del Doni, partito in piu ragionamenti, ne quali si tratta della scoltura et pittura*, Venice 1549.
- , *La seconda Libreria*, Venice 1551.
- Dufresnoy, Charles-Alphonse, *De arte graphica/The art of painting*, London 1695.
- Dürer, Albrecht, *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion*, Nuremberg 1528.
- , *Della simmetria dei corpi humani, libri quattro. Nuovamente tradotti dalla lingua Latina nella Italiana da M. Giovanni Paolo Gallucci*, Venice 1591.
- Euripides, *Suppliant women*, edited by David Kovacs, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1998.
- Ficino, Marsilio, *Epistolae libri XII*, Venice 1495.
- , *Le divine lettere*, edited by Felice Figliucci, 2 vols., Venice 1546–1548.
- , *The letters of Marsilio Ficino*, London 1975 ff.
- , *El libro dell'amore (Commentarium in Convivium Platonis de amore)*, edited by Sandra Niccoli, Florence 1987.
- , *Platonic theology/Theologica Platonica* (Florence 1482), edited by James Henkins, 6 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts) 2001–2006.
- Figliucci, Felice, *De la filosofia morale libri dieci: sopra li dieci libri de l'Ethica d'Aristotile*, Rome 1551.
- Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, edited by Anna Maria Finoli e Liliana Grassi, 2 vols., Milan 1972.
- Franco, Matteo, *Il Libro dei Sonetti*, edited by Giulio Dolci, Milan 1933.
- Gaurico, Pomponio, *De sculptura* (Florence 1504), edited by Paolo Cutolo, Naples 1999.
- Gelli, Giovan Battista, *Sopra quei due sonetti del Petrarca che lodano il ritratto della sua M. Laura*, Florence 1549.
- , "Vite d'artisti", edited by Girolamo Mancini, in: *Archivio storico italiano*, XVII, 1896, pp. 32–62.
- Gesner, Conrad, *Historia animalium*, Zurich 1551.
- Ghiberti, Lorenzo, *I commentarii*, edited by Lorenzo Bartoli, Florence 1998.
- Giambullari, Pierfrancesco, "Degli influssi celesti" (Florence 1551), in: *Biblioteca enciclopedia italiana*, XI, Milan 1881.
- Gilio, Giovanni Andrea, "Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istorie" (Camerino 1564), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d' arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 2, pp. 1–115.
- Giovo, Paolo, "Fragmentum trium dialogorum", in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols., Milan 1971–1977, vol. 1, pp. 19–23.
- Horace, *Satires, epistles and ars poetica*, edited by H. Rushton Fairclough, London 1942.
- Houbraken, Arnold, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1718–1721.
- Isidor of Sevilla, *Etymologies/Etymologiae*, edited by Stephen A. Barney et al., Cambridge 2006.
- Juvenal, *Satires*, edited by Niall Rudd and E. Courtney, Bristol 1990.

- Lana Terzi, Francesco, *Prodromo*, Brescia 1670.
- Landino, Cristoforo, *Commento sopra la comedia di Dante Alighieri* (Florence 1481), edited by Paolo Procaccioli, 4 vols., Rome 2001.
- Lavater, Johann Caspar, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntniß und Menschenliebe*, 4 vols., Leipzig 1775–1778.
- Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura*, edited by Ettore Camesasca, Milan 1995.
- Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura*, Milan 1584.
- , *Idea del tempio della pittura* (Milan 1590), edited by Robert Klein, 2 vols., Florence 1974.
- Malvasia, Carlo Cesare, *Felsina pittrice: vite de pittori bolognesi* (Bologna 1678), edited by Marcella Brascaglia, Bologna 1971.
- Manfredi, Girolamo, *Liber de homine: il perché* (Bologna 1474), edited by Fabio Foresti, Parma 1988.
- Manzini, Giovanni Battista, *Il trionfo del pennello: raccolta d'alcune composizioni nate a gloria d'un ratto d'Helena di Guido*, Bologna 1633.
- Martini, Francesco di Giorgio, *Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare*, edited by Corrado Maltese, 2 vols., Milan 1967.
- Michiel, Marcantonio, *Anonimo Morelliano, Notizia d'opere del disegno*, edited by Theodor Frimmel, Vienna 1888.
- Milano, Francesco da, *Intabulatura di liuto de diversi con la bataglia, et altre cose bellissime*, Venice 1536.
- Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della, *Oration on the dignity of man*, edited by Russell Kirk, Chicago 1956.
- Nicholas of Cusa, *De visione dei*, edited by Jasper Hopkins, Minneapolis 1985.
- Paleotti, Gabriele, "Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane" (Bologna 1582), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d' arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 2, pp. 117–517.
- Passeri, Giovanni Battista, *Vite dei pittori, scultori ed architetti che anno lavorato in Roma, morti dal 1641 al 1673* (Rome 1772), edited by Jacob Hess, Leipzig 1934.
- Pescetti, Orlando, *Proverbi italiani*, Verona 1598.
- Petrarca, *Rerum memorandarum libri*, edited by Giuseppe Billanovich, Florence 1945.
- Philo of Alexandria, *Works*, edited by Charles Duke Yonge, 4 vols., Peabody (Massachusetts) 1993.
- Pino, Paolo, "Dialogo di pittura" (Venice 1548), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d' arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 1, pp. 93–139.
- Plato, "Republic", in: H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb (Eds.), *Plato in twelve volumes*, 12 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1914–1935.
- , "Ion", in: H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb (Eds.), *Plato in twelve volumes*, 12 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1914–1935.
- , "Symposium", in: H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb (Eds.), *Plato in twelve volumes*, 12 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1914–1935.
- Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, edited by Harris Rackham, 10 vols., Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1938–1963.
- Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, edited by Haidd Edgworth Butler, 4 vols., London 1920–1922.
- Reisch, Gregorius, *Margarita filosofica*, Venice 1600.
- Rosa, Salvatore, *Satire sulla pittura* (Naples 1664), edited by Danilo Romei, Milan 1995.
- Sansovino, Francesco, *L'edificio del corpo humano: Nel quale brevemente si descrivono le qualità del corpo dello huomo e le potentie dell'anima*, Venice 1550.
- Savonarola, Girolamo, *Prediche devotissime et piene de divini mysterii*, Ferrara 1513.
- , *Prediche sopra Ezechiel*, Venice 1517.
- , *Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea*, edited by Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols., Rome 1962.

- Seneca the Younger, *Epistulae morales*, edited by Richard M. Gummere, 3 vols., London 1917–1925.
- Sherman, Cindy, “Ich wollte auch häßliche Bilder so attraktiv erscheinen lassen, daß man Lust hat, sie sich anzusehen”, Interview with Heinz-Norbert Jocks, in: *Kunstforum International* (Die Zukunft des Körpers II), 133, 1996, pp. 226–243.
- Sorte, Cristoforo, “Osservazioni nella pittura” (Venice 1580), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 1, pp. 271–301.
- Stanley, Dorothy Tennant, *London Street Arabs*, London 1890.
- Synesius of Cyrene, *The letters*, edited by Augustine Fitzgerald, London 1926.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, book two: creation*, edited by James F. Anderson, Notre Dame (Indiana) 1975.
- , *Quaestiones disputatae de anima/Questions on the soul*, edited by James H. Robb, Milwaukee 1984.
- Vallance, Aymmer, “The invention of Aubrey Beardsley”, in: *The magazine of art*, Nr. 5, 1898, pp. 362–369.
- Varchi, Benedetto, “La generazione dei mostri”, in: Antonio Racheli (Ed.), *Opere di Benedetto Varchi*, Trieste 1858–1859, 2 vols., vol. 2, pp. 284–310.
- , “Lezione nella quale si disputa della maggioranza delle arti e qual sia più nobile, la scultura o la pittura” (Florence 1550), in: Paola Barocchi (Ed.), *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra maniersimo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962, vol. 1, pp. 1–82.
- , *L’Ercolano* (Florence 1570), edited by Antonio Sorella, Pescara 1995.
- , *Paragone – Rangstreit der Künste: Italienisch und Deutsch*, edited by Oskar Bätschmann and Tristan Weddigen, Darmstadt 2013.
- Vasari, Giorgio, “Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori” (Florence 1568), in: Gaetano Milanese (Ed.), *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, 9 vols., Florence 1878–1885.
- , *La Vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, edited by Paola Barocchi, 5 vols., Milan 1962.
- , “Le Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani” (Florence 1550), in: Rosanna Bettarini, Paola Barocchi (Edd.), *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, 11 vols., Florence 1966–1997.
- , *Edition Giorgio Vasari*, edited by Alessandro Nova et al., Berlin 2004–2015.
- Vitruvius, *De architectura/Zehn Bücher über die Architektur*, edited by Curt Fensterbusch, Darmstadt 1964.
- von Bülow, Gabriele, *Ein Lebensbild. Aus den Familienpapieren Wilhelm von Humboldts und seiner Kinder*, Berlin 1895.
- von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, 2 vols., Tübingen 1809.
- Watelet, Claude-Henri, *L’art de peindre: poème, avec des réflexions sur les différentes parties de la peinture*, Amsterdam 1761.
- Wilde, Oscar, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, London 1891.

## Secondary Sources

- Abrams, M. H., *The mirror and the lamp. Romantic theory and the critical tradition*, New York 1953.
- Agosti, Barbara, *Paolo Giovio: uno storico lombardo nella cultura artistica del Cinquecento*, Florence 2008.

- Agosti, Barbara; Ginzburg, Silvia; Nova, Alessandro (Edd.), *Giorgio Vasari e il cantiere delle Vite del 1550*, Venice 2013.
- Alpers, Svetlana L., "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23, 1960, pp. 190–215.
- Amato, Lorenzo, "L'angelicus pictor e il confratello poeta Domenico di Giovanni da Corella", in: Alessandro Zuccari (Ed.), *Angelicus pictor: ricerche e interpretazioni sul Beato Angelico*, Milan 2008, pp. 67–81.
- Ames-Lewis, Francis, *The intellectual life of the early Renaissance artist*, New Haven 2000.
- Andratschke, Claudia, *Vom Lukasbild zur Pictura-Allegorie. Die Ikonografie und Theorie der Malerei in der niederländischen Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, Univ. Diss. Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, Tübingen 2010.
- Arasse, Daniel, *Le sujet dans le tableau*, Paris 1997.
- Asemissen, Hermann Ulrich; Schweikhart, Gunter (Edd.), *Malerei als Thema der Malerei*, Berlin 1994.
- Aurenhammer, Hans, "'Multa aedium exempla variarum imaginum atque operum': das Problem der 'imitatio' in der italienischen Architektur des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts", in: Wilhelm Kühlmann, Wolfgang Neuber (Edd.), *Intertextualität in der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu ihren theoretischen und praktischen Perspektiven*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, pp. 533–605.
- Austin, Colin; Olson, S. Douglas, *Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae*, Oxford 2004.
- Avery, Charles, "The Bull of Perillus: a relief attributed to Giovanni Caccini", in: *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 6, 1971, pp. 23–33.
- Baader, Hannah, "Freundschaft versus Automimesis: frühneuzeitliche Paradigmen künstlerischer virtus", in: Joachim Poeschke, Thomas Weigel (Edd.), *Die Virtus des Künstlers in der italienischen Renaissance*, Münster 2006, pp. 109–127.
- Bätschmann, Oskar; Weddigen, Tristan (Edd.), *Benedetto Varchi: Paragone – Rangstreit der Künste: Italienisch und Deutsch*, Darmstadt 2013.
- Balme, D. M., "'Ἀνθρώπος ἀνθρώπων γεννά' Human is generated by Human", in: G. R. Dunstan (Ed.), *The Human embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European traditions*, Exeter 1990, pp. 20–31.
- Bambach, Carmen, *Drawing and painting in the Italian Renaissance workshop: theory and practice, 1300–1600*, Cambridge 1999.
- Barasch, Moshe, "Character and Physiognomy: Bocchi on Donatello's St. George a Renaissance Text on Expression in Art", in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36, 1975, pp. 413–430.
- Barbieri, Costanza, "Neoplatonism, Augustinianism and Michelangelo's masculin women", in: Liana De Girolami Cheney (Ed.), *Neoplatonism and the arts*, Lewiston 2002, pp. 109–122.
- Barocchi, Paola (Ed.), *Trattati d' arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari 1960–1962.
- , *Scritti d' arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols., Milan 1971–1977.
- , "Una 'selva di notizie' di Vincenzo Borghini", in: *Un augurio a Raffaele Mattioli*, Florence 1970, pp. 87–172.
- Barolsky, Paul, *Infinite jest: wit and humor in Italian Renaissance art*, Columbia 1978.
- , *Michelangelo's nose: a myth and its maker*, University Park 1990.
- Barzman, Karen-edis, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State. The Discipline of Design*, Cambridge 2000.
- Battaglia, Salvatore, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, 22 vols., Turin 1961–2004.
- Battisti, Eugenio, "Il concetto d'imitazione nel Cinquecento italiano", in: *Commentari. Rivista di critica e storia dell' arte*, VII, 1956, pp. 86–104 and pp. 249–262.
- Baxandall, Michael, "A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's De Politia Litteraria, Pars LXVIII", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26, 1963, pp. 304–326.



- , *Giotto and the orators: humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition, 1350–1450*, Oxford 1971.
- Beck, Herbert; Bol, Peter; Bückling, Maraike (Eds.), *Polyklet: der Bildhauer der griechischen Klassik: Ausstellung im Liebieghaus, Museum Alter Plastik, Frankfurt am Main, Mainz 1990*.
- Beierwaltes, Werner, *Marsilio Ficinos Theorie des Schönen im Kontext des Platonismus*, (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse), Heidelberg 1980.
- Belting, Hans, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?*, Munich 1983.
- , *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1990.
- , *Das echte Bild: Bildfragen als Glaubensfragen*, Munich 2005.
- Bialostocki, Jan, “The Renaissance concept of nature and antiquity”, in: *The Renaissance and mannerism (Acts of the twentieth international congress of the history of art)*, 2 vols., 1963, vol. 2, pp. 19–30.
- Birnfeld, Nicole, *Der Künstler und seine Frau: Studien zu Doppelbildnissen des 15.–17. Jahrhunderts*, Weimar 2009.
- Blum, Gerd, “Provvidenza e progresso: la teologia della storia nelle ‘Vite’ vasariane; con alcune considerazioni su periodizzazione e paginatura nell’*Torrentiniana*”, in: Katja Burzer, Alessandro Nova, Sabine Feser (Eds.), *Le Vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione*, Venice 2010, pp. 131–152.
- Blunt, Anthony, *Artistic theory in Italy, 1450–1600*, Oxford 1940.
- Bohde, Daniela, “Der Schatten des disegno: Benvenuto Cellinis Siegelentwürfe und Tizians Zweifel”, in: Alessandro Nova, Anna Schreurs (Eds.), *Benvenuto Cellini: Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*, Cologne 2003, pp. 99–122.
- Bokody, Péter; Nagel, Alexander (Eds.), *Renaissance Metapainting*, London 2020.
- Bolland, Andrea L., “Art and humanism in early Renaissance Padua: Cennini, Vergerio and Petrarch on imitation”, in: *Renaissance quarterly*, 49, 1996, pp. 469–487.
- Bolzoni, Lina, *Il cuore di cristallo: ragionamenti d’amore, poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento*, Turin 2010.
- Borinski, Karl, *Die Antike in Poetik und Kunsttheorie*, Leipzig 1914.
- Boschloo, Anton W. A., *The limits of artistic freedom: criticism of art in Italy from 1500 to 1800*, Leiden 2008.
- Borsche, T., “Individuum/Individualität”, in: Joachim Ritter (Ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols., Darmstadt 1971–2007, vol. 4, cols. 299–323.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, “L’illusion biographique”, in: *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 62/63, 1986, pp. 69–72.
- Bowen, Barbara C., “The collection of facezie attributed to Angelo Poliziano”, in: *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 56, 1994, pp. 27–38.
- Bredenkamp, Horst, *Der Künstler als Verbrecher: ein Element der frühmodernen Rechts- und Staatstheorie*, Munich 2008.
- Brückle, Wolfgang, “Wege zum Ruhm: Raffael in der Literatur der akademischen Kunststepoche”, in: Wolfgang Brückle, Corinna Höper (Eds.), *Raffael und die Folgen. das Kunstwerk in Zeitaltern seiner graphischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2001, pp. 121–133.
- , “Personalstil als Makel der Kunst zu Anfang des Cinquecento”, in: Michael Brunner (Ed.), *Stil und Stilpluralismus in den Künsten des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Engen 2004, pp. 63–80.
- Burckhardt, Jacob, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, Basel 1860.
- Burg, Tobias, *Die Signatur: Formen und Funktionen vom Mittelalter bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2007.
- Burioni, Matteo (Ed.), *Giorgio Vasari: Kunsttheorie und Kunstgeschichte: eine Einführung in die Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Künstler anhand der Proemien*, Berlin 2010.

- , *Die Renaissance der Architekten. Profession und Souveränität des Baukünstlers in Giorgio Vasaris Viten*, Berlin 2008.
- Burnett, Charles, "The planets and the development of the embryo", in G. R. Dunstan (Ed.), *The Human embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European traditions*, Exeter 1990, pp. 95–112.
- Burzer, Katja, Feser, Sabine; Davis, Charles, Nova, Alessandro (Edd.), *Le Vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione = Die Vite Vasaris: Entstehung, Topoi, Rezeption*, Venice 2010.
- Büttner, Frank, "Rationalisierung der Mimesis: Anfänge der konstruierten Perspektive bei Brunelleschi und Alberti", in: Andreas Kablitz (Ed.), *Mimesis und Simulation*, Freiburg 1998, pp. 55–87.
- Calabrese, Omar, *Die Geschichte des Selbstporträts*, Munich 2006.
- Calamandrei, Piero, "Sulle relazioni tra Giorgio Vasari e Bevenuto Cellini", in: *Atti del Convegno internazionale per il IV centenario della prima edizione delle "Vite" del Vasari*, Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 16–19 settembre 1950, Florence 1952, pp. 195–214.
- Cantarella, Raffaele, "Agatone e il prologo delle 'Tesmoforiazuse'", in: *Komoidotragemata. Studia Aristophanea viri Aristophanei W. J. W. Koster in honorem*, Amsterdam 1967, pp. 7–15.
- Carlino, Andrea, "Knowe Thyself: Anatomical Figures in Early Modern Europe", in: *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 27, 1995, pp. 52–69.
- Carrara, Eliana, "Vasari e Borghini sul ritratto: gli appunti pliniani della 'Selva di notizie'", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 44/2-3, 2001, pp. 243–291.
- , "Vincenzo Borghini, Lelio Torelli e l'Accademia del disegno di Firenze: alcune considerazioni", in: *Annali di critica d'arte*, 2, 2006, pp. 545–568.
- Cavazzini, Patricia, *Painting as business in early seventeenth-century Rome*, University Park 2008.
- Chapman, Hugo, *Michelangelo*, New Haven 2006.
- Chastel, André, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: études sur la Renaissance et l'Humanisme platonicien*, Paris 1959.
- Christadler, Maike, "Abwesend anwesend. Spuren des Künstlers in der Kunstgeschichte und in seinem Werk", in: Kaspar von Greyerz (Ed.), *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit: Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, Munich 2007, pp. 63–78.
- Christiansen, Keith; Weppelmann, Stefan; Rubin, Patricia Lee (Edd.), *The Renaissance portrait: from Donatello to Bellini*, New York 2011.
- Cieri Via, Claudia, "Ornamento e varietà: riflessi delle teorie albertiane nella produzione artistico-figurativa fra '400 e '500", in: *Leon Battista Alberti. Architettura e cultura; Atti del Convegno internazionale, Mantova, 16–19 novembre 1994*, Florence 1999, pp. 235–250.
- Clark, Kenneth, *Leonardo da Vinci. An account on his development as an artist*, Cambridge 1939.
- Clements, Robert J., "Eye, Mind, and Hand in Michelangelo's Poetry", in: *PMLA (Journal of the Modern Language Association of America)*, 69/1, 1954, pp. 324–336.
- Clough, Cecil H., "The cult of Antiquity: letters and letter collections", in: Cecil H. Clough (Ed.), *Cultural aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, New York 1976, pp. 33–67.
- Cole, Bruce, *The renaissance artist at work*, New York 1983.
- , "Titian and the idea of originality in the Renaissance", in: Andrew Ladis (Ed.), *The craft of art: originality and industry in the Italian Renaissance and baroque workshop*, Athens (Georgia) 1995, pp. 86–112.
- Cole, Michael Wayne; Pardo, Mary (Edd.), *Inventions of the studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, Chapel Hill 2005.
- Connell, William J., *Society and individual in Renaissance Florence*, Berkeley 2002.
- Conway, William Martin, *The literary remains of Albrecht Dürer*, Cambridge 1889.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Bern 1948.
- Cutler, Anthony, "La 'questione bizantina' nella pittura italiana: una visione alternativa della 'maniera greca'", in: Carlo Bertelli (Ed.), *La pittura in Italia: L' altomedioevo*, Milan 1994, pp. 335–354.

- D'Angelo, Paolo, "‘Ogni dipintore dipinge se’: contributo alla storia di un'idea", in: *Intersezioni: rivista di storia delle idee*, 11/2, 1991, pp. 213–235.
- Daly Davis, Margaret, "Beyond the 'Primo Libro' of Vincenzo Danti's 'Trattato delle Perfette Proporzioni'", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 26/1, 1982, pp. 63–84.
- Di Pietro, Filippo, *I disegni di Andrea del Sarto negli Uffizi*, Siena 1910.
- Diels, Hermann, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1903.
- Dietrich, Bettina, *Darstellung von Einfachheit: die Idee des Schönen in Marsilio Ficinos Grundlegung einer Metaphysik des Geistes*, Munich 2000.
- Dillon, Anne, *Michelangelo and the English martyrs*, Farnham 2012.
- Dittrich, Sigrid and Lothar, *Lexikon der Tiersymbole: Tiere als Sinnbilder in der Malerei des 14.–17. Jahrhunderts*, Petersberg 2004.
- Dubus, Pascale, *Paolo Pino: Dialogo di Pittura/Dialogue sur la Peinture, 1548*, Paris 2011.
- Endres, Johannes, "Unähnliche Ähnlichkeit. Zu Analogie, Metapher und Verwandtschaft", in: Martin Gaier, Jeanette Kohl, Alberto Saviello (Edd.), *Similitudo: Konzepte der Ähnlichkeit in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 29–58.
- Fairweather, Janet Anne, "Fiction in the biographies of ancient writers", in: *Ancient Society*, 5, 1974, pp. 231–275.
- Fanfani, Pietro, *Vocabolario dell'uso toscano*, 2 vols., Florence 1863.
- Farago, Claire J. (Ed.), *Re-reading Leonardo: the Treatise on painting across Europe, 1550–1900*, Burlington 2009.
- Fastert, Sabine; Geretsegger, Sophie; Joachimides, Alexis (Edd.), *Die Wiederkehr des Künstlers: Themen und Positionen der aktuellen Künstler/innenforschung*, Cologne 2011.
- Feser, Sabine; Nova, Alessandro, *Die Anfänge der Maniera Moderna: Giorgio Vasaris Viten*, Hildesheim 2001.
- Fiedler, Wilfried, *Analogiemodelle bei Aristoteles: Untersuchungen zu den Vergleichen zwischen den einzelnen Wissenschaften und Künsten*, Amsterdam 1978.
- Finucci, Valeria, "Maternal Imagination and Monstrous Birth: Tasso's 'Gerusalemme Liberata'", in: Kevin Brownlee, Valeria Finucci (Edd.), *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity Through Early Modern Europe*, Durham 2001, pp. 41–77.
- Foucault, Michel, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, Frankfurt a.M. 1974.
- Franzenberg, Thomas, *Der Betrachter: Studien zur florentinischen Kunstliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1990.
- , "The Style of the Divine Hand: Francesco Bocchio on the Santissima Annunziata", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 79, 2016, pp. 131–148.
- Franceschini, Chiara, "Giudizi negativi e stime d'artista nel mondo di Vasari e Michelangelo", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 63/1, 2021, pp. 46–69.
- Freedberg, David, "Empathy, motion and emotion", in: Klaus Herding, Antje Krause-Wahl (Edd.), *Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen*, Taunusstein 2007, pp. 17–51.
- Freedberg, Sidney Joseph, "Observations on the painting of the Maniera", in: *The art bulletin*, 47, 1965, pp. 187–197.
- Freeman, John Grace, *The Maniera of Vasari*, London 1867.
- Frey, Karl, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, 3 vols., Munich 1923–1940.
- Frommel, Christoph Luitpold, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner*, Munich 1968.
- Gardner, Victoria C., "Homines non nascuntur, sed figuntur: Benvenuto Cellini's Vita and Self-Presentation of the Renaissance Artist", in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28/2, 1997, pp. 447–465.
- Garibaldi, Vittoria, *Perugino: catalogo completo*, Florence 1999.
- Garin, Eugenio, *Pico della Mirandola: De hominis dignitate e scritti vari*, Florence 1942.
- , *Il pensiero pedagogico dello umanesimo*, Florence 1958.

- , “Phantasia e imaginatio fra Ficino e Pomponazzi”, in: *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 64, 1985, pp. 349–361.
- Garrard, Mary D., *Brunelleschi's egg: nature, art, and gender in Renaissance Italy*, Berkeley 2010.
- Gentili, Bruno; Cerri, Giovanni, “L’idea di biografia nel pensiero greco”, in: *Studi Storici*, 19/1, 1978, pp. 45–60.
- Gilbert, Creighton, *Italian art, 1400–1500: sources and documents*, Evanston (Illinois) 1980.
- Ginzburg, Silvia, “Filologia e storia dell’arte: il ruolo di Vincenzo Borghini nelle genesi della ‘Torrentiniana’”, in: Eliana Carrara (Ed.), *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo: atti delle giornate di studio; Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, 30 settembre–1 ottobre 2004*. Pisa 2007, pp. 147–203.
- Gludovatz, Karin, *Fährten legen – Spuren lesen: die Künstlersignatur als poetische Referenz*, Munich 2011.
- Godman, Peter, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, Princeton 1998.
- Goldstein, Carl, “Rhetoric and art history in the Italian Renaissance and baroque”, in: *The Art Bulletin*, 73, 1991, pp. 641–652.
- Gombrich, Ernst H., “Botticelli’s Mythologies: a Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of his Circle”, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 8, 1945, pp. 7–60.
- , “Leonardo’s Grottesque Heads: Prolegomena to their Study”, in: Achille Marazza (Ed.), *Leonardo: saggi e ricerche*, Rome 1954, pp. 199–219, figs. CVII–CXII.
- , “The Renaissance Concept of Artistic Progress and its Consequences”, in: *Actes du XVII<sup>me</sup> congrès international d’histoire de l’art*, La Haye 1955, pp. 291–307.
- , “The Mask and the Face: the Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and in Art”, in: Ernst H. Gombrich, Julian Hochberg, Max Black (Edd.), *Art, Perception, and Reality*. Baltimore 1972, pp. 1–47.
- , “Styles of art and styles of life”, in: *Ibid.*, *The uses of images. Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*, London 1999, pp. 240–261.
- Gosebruch, Martin, “‘Varieta’ bei Leon Battista Alberti und der wissenschaftliche Renaissancebegriff”, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 20/3, 1957, pp. 229–238.
- Grafton, Anthony, “Renaissance Histories of Art and Nature”, in: Bernadette Bensauve-Vincent (Ed.), *The Artificial and the Natural. An Evolving Polarity*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 2007, pp. 185–210.
- Gramaccini, Norberto, “Wie Jacopo Bellini Pisanello besiegte: der Ferrareser Wettbewerb von 1441”, in: *Idea: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, 1, 1982, pp. 27–53.
- Graul, Jana, “‘...fece per suo capriccio, e quasi per sua defensione’: i due bassorilievi in stucco di Daniele da Volterra per la cappella Orsini”, in: *Prospettiva. Rivista di storia dell’arte antica e moderna*, 134–135, 2009, pp. 141–156.
- , “‘Tanto lontano da ogni virtù’: zu Konkurrenz, Neid und falscher Freundschaft in Vasaris Vita des Andrea del Castagno und Domenico Veneziano”, in: *kunsttexte.de, E-journal für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte*, 1, 2012.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, *Renaissance self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, Chicago 1980.
- Groeber, Valentin, “Complexio/Complexion: categorizing individual natures, 1250–1600”, in: Lorraine Daston, Fernando Vidal (Edd.), *The moral authority of nature*, Chicago 2004, pp. 361–383.
- Gutkind, Curt S., *Cosimo de’ Medici: pater patriae; 1389–1464*, Oxford 1938.
- Habermas, Jürgen, “Modernity: An unfinished project”, in: Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves, Seyla Benhabib (Edd.), *Habermas and the unfinished project of modernity. Critical essays on “The philosophical discourse of modernity”*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1997, pp. 38–55.
- Hager, Fritz Peter, “Selbsterkenntnis”, in: Joachim Ritter (Ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols., Darmstadt 1971–2007, vol. 9, cols. 406–440.
- Hall, James, *The self-portrait: a cultural history*, London 2014.

- Hall, Marcia B., *The sacred image in age of art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio*, New Haven 2011.
- Hankins, James, "Ficino, Avicenna and the occult powers of the rational soul", in: Fabrizio Meroi, Elisabetta Scapparone (Edd.), *La magia nell'Europa moderna: tra antica sapienza e filosofia naturale*, 2 vols., Florence 2007, vol. 1, pp. 35–52.
- Hansen, Hardy, "Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae: Theme, Structure, and Production", in: *Philologus. Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption*, 120/2, 1976, pp. 165–186.
- Hansen, Morten Steen, *In Michelangelo's mirror: Perino Del Vaga, Daniele Da Volterra, Pellegrino Tibaldi*, Pennsylvania 2013.
- Hazan, Olga, *Le mythe du progrès artistique*, Montreal 1999.
- Hecht, Christian, *Katholische Bildertheologie der Frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren*, 2. Ed., Berlin 2012.
- Hegener, Nicole, "'Sancti Iacobi eqves faciebat': Signiersucht und Selbsterhebung im Werk Baccio Bandinellis", in: Joachim Poeschke (Ed.), *Die Virtus des Künstlers in der italienischen Renaissance*, Münster 2006, pp. 143–172.
- , *Divi Iacobi eqves: Selbstdarstellung im Werk des Florentiner Bildhauers Baccio Bandinelli*, Munich 2008.
- Helas, Philine, "Lo 'smeraldo' smarrito, ossia il 'vero profilo' di Cristo", in: Giovanni Morello, Gerhard Wolf (Edd.), *Il volto di Cristo*, Milan 2000, pp. 215–226.
- Hellwig, Karin, *Von der Vita zur Künstlerbiographie*, Berlin 2005.
- Hénin, Emmanuelle, *Ut pictura théâtre: théâtre et peinture de la Renaissance italienne au classicisme français*, Geneva 2003.
- Herrmann-Fiore, Kristina, "Il tema 'Labor' nella creazione artistica del Rinascimento", in: Matthias Winner (Ed.), *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk: internationales Symposium der Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rom 1989*, Weinheim 1992, pp. 245–292.
- Hibbard, Howard, *Michelangelo*, Harmondsworth 1978.
- Hiller von Gaertringen, Rudolf, *Raffaels Lernerfahrungen in der Werkstatt Peruginos: Kartonverwendung und Motivübernahme im Wandel*, Munich 1999.
- , "Vasari und Perugino: Geschichte einer Verleumdung", in: Andreas Schumacher (Ed.), *Perugino: Raffaels Meister*, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 107–127.
- Horký, Mila, *Der Künstler ist im Bild: Selbstdarstellungen in der italienischen Malerei des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2003.
- , *Künstlerbilder, Künstlermythen: Graphik und Zeichnung des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts*, Braunschweig 2002.
- Irlé, Klaus, *Der Ruhm Der Bienen: das Nachahmungsprinzip der italienischen Malerei von Raffael bis Rubens*, Münster 1997.
- Jacobs, Fredrika Herman, "Woman's capacity to create: The unusual case of Sofonisba Anguissola", in: *Renaissance studies: journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies*, 47, 1994, pp. 74–101.
- , *Defining the Renaissance virtuosa: women artists and the language of art history and criticism*, Cambridge 1997.
- Jaffe, David, "Daniele da Volterra's satirical defence of his art", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 54, 1991, pp. 247–252.
- Jannidis, Fotis (Ed.), *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft*, Stuttgart 2000.
- Janson, Horst W., *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London 1952.
- , "The 'Image made by chance' in Renaissance thought", in: *The artibus Opuscula XL*, 1, 1961, pp. 254–266.
- Jonietz, Fabian; Nova, Alessandro (Edd.), *Vasari als Paradigma: Rezeption, Kritik, Perspektiven*, Venice 2016.
- Jonietz, Fabian, "Die Topik des hässlichen Künstlers. Zum Körperbild als Reflexionsfläche von Diskurs und Kritik", in: *Zeitsprünge. Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit*, 15/4, 2011a, pp. 441–483.

- , “Labor omnia vincit? Fragmente einer kunsttheoretischen Kategorie”, in: Jan-Dirk Müller, Ulrich Pfisterer, Anna Kathrin Bleuler (Eds.), *Aemulatio: Kulturen des Wettstreits in Text und Bild (1450–1620)*, Berlin 2011b, pp. 573–681.
- Kalas, Rayna, “The Technology of Reflection: Renaissance Mirrors of Steel and Glass”, in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32/3, 2002, pp. 519–542.
- Kallab, Wolfgang, *Vasaristudien*, Vienna/Leipzig 1908.
- Karnatz, Sebastian; Kirchner, Nico (Eds.), *Signatur und Selbstbild. Die Rolle des Künstlers vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*, Berlin 2019.
- Kemp, Martin, “‘Il Concetto dell’Anima’ in Leonardo’s Early Skull Studies”, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 34, 1971, pp. 115–134.
- , “‘Ogni dipintore dipinge se’: a Neoplatonic echo in Leonardo’s art theory?”, in: Cecil H. Clough (Ed.), *Cultural aspects of the Italian Renaissance: essays in honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, Manchester 1976, pp. 311–323.
- , “From ‘Mimesis’ to ‘Fantasia’: The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts”, in: *Viator*, 8, 1977, pp. 347–398.
- , “‘Equal excellences’: Lomazzo and the explanation of individual style in the visual arts”, in: *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies*, 1, 1987, pp. 1–26.
- , “Virtuous artists and virtuous art: Alberti and Leonardo on decorum in life and art”, in: Francis Ames-Lewis (Ed.), *Decorum in Renaissance narrative art: papers delivered at the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians, London, April 1991*, London 1992a, pp. 15–23.
- , “Lust for life: some thoughts on the reconstruction of artist’s lives in fact and fiction”, in: *L’art et les Révolutions (Congrès international d’Histoire de l’Art, Strasbourg 1989)*, Strasbourg 1992b, pp. 167–186.
- Kemp, Wolfgang, *Natura. Ikonographische Studien zur Geschichte und Verbreitung einer Allegorie*, Tübingen 1973.
- , “Disegno: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Begriffs zwischen 1547 und 1607”, in: *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 19, 1974, pp. 219–240.
- Kim, David Young, “Mal’aria: style, mobility and ‘influence’ in Italian early modern art theory”, in: *Kritische Berichte*, 42, 2014, pp. 82–97.
- King, Catherine E., *Representing Renaissance Art, c. 1500–c. 1600*, Manchester 2007.
- Kirchner, Thomas, *L’expression des passions: Ausdruck als Darstellungsproblem in der französischen Kunst und Kunsttheorie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Mainz 1991.
- Kläden, Tobias, “Anima forma corporis. Zur Aktualität der nichtdualistischen Sicht des Menschen bei Thomas von Aquin”, in: Oliver Auge, Matthias Müller (Eds.), *Natur und Geist: von der Einheit der Wissenschaften im Mittelalter*, Ostfildern 2008, pp. 253–270.
- Klein, Robert, “Giudizio et gusto dans la théorie de l’art au Cinquecento”, in: *Rinascimento: rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento*, 12, 1961, pp. 105–116.
- Klibansky, Raymond; Panofsky, Erwin; Saxl, Fritz, *Saturn und Melancholie*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990.
- Kliemann, Julian, “Die virtus des Zeuxis”, in: Joachim Poeschke, Thomas Weigel (Eds.), *Die Virtus des Künstlers in der italienischen Renaissance*, Münster 2006, pp. 197–229.
- Kohl, Jeanette; Gaier, Martin; Saviello, Alberto, “Ähnlichkeit als Kategorie der Porträtggeschichte”, in: Martin Gaier, Jeanette Kohl, Alberto Saviello (Eds.), *Similitudo: Konzepte der Ähnlichkeit in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 11–27.
- Kovačić, Franjo, “Die Natur als Künstler und Baumeister bei Galen”, in: *Traditio*, 58, 2003, pp. 1–57.
- Kracauer, Siegfried, “Die Biographie als Neubürgerliche Kunstform”, in: *Ibid.*, *Das Ornament der Masse. Essays*, Frankfurt a.M. 1977, pp. 75–80.
- Kris, Ernst; Kurz, Otto, *Die Legende vom Künstler: ein geschichtlicher Versuch*, Vienna 1934.

- Kwakkelstein, Michael W., "Leonardo da Vinci's recurrent use of patterns of individual limbs, stock poses and facial stereotypes", in: Michael W. Kwakkelstein, Lorenza Melli (Edd.), *From pattern to nature in Italian Renaissance drawing*, Florence 2012, pp. 175–193.
- Lampe, Moritz, "Das unbeabsichtigte Selbstporträt als Ochse: Benvenuto Cellinis Nachahmungstheorie im Spiegel von Vincenzo Borghinis 'Selva di notizie'", in: Barbara Kuhn (Ed.): *Selbst-Bild und Selbst-Bilder. Autoporträt und Zeit in Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie*, Paderborn 2016, pp. 73–98, 375–377.
- , "Gleiches zu Gleichem? Ähnlichkeit und Metamorphose im Ehepaarbildnis der Renaissance", in: Julia Dellith, Johannes Gebhardt, Daniela Roberts (Ed.): *Recycle – (Re)invent: Rezeptionswege von Byzanz bis in die Moderne*, Leipzig 2021, pp. 64–75.
- Land, Norman E., "Giotto as an ugly genius: a study in self-portrayal", in: *Explorations in Renaissance culture*, 23, 1997, pp. 23–36.
- , "Apelles in Venice: Bellini, Pino, Titian, and Esengren", in: *Explorations in Renaissance culture*, 26, 2000, pp. 161–176.
- , "The wit an humor of maestro Zoane", in: *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 27/4, 2008, pp. 16–19.
- Larner, John, *Culture and society in Italy, 1290–1420*, New York 1971.
- Laurenza, Domenico, *De figura humana: Fisiognomica, anatomia e arte in Leonardo*, Florence 2001.
- Lazzarini, Elena, *Nudo, arte e decoro: oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, Pisa 2010.
- Lee, Rensselaer W., "Ut pictura poesis: the humanistic theory of painting", in: *The art bulletin*, 22/4, 1940, pp. 197–269.
- Leeman, A. D., *Orationis Ratio. The stylistic theories and practice of the roman orators, historians and philosophers*, Amsterdam 1963.
- Lefkowitz, Mary R., "The poet as Hero: Fifth-Century Autobiography and Subsequent Biographical Fiction", in: *The Classical Quarterly*, 28/2, 1978, pp. 459–469.
- Legner, Anton, *Der Artifex: Künstler im Mittelalter und ihre Selbstdarstellung; eine illustrierte Anthologie*, Cologne 2009.
- Legrenzi, Ada, *Vincenzo Borghini: studio critico*, Udine 1910.
- Leitao, David D., *The Pregnant Male as Myth and Metaphor in Classical Greek Literature*, Cambridge 2012.
- Lesky, Erna, *Die Zeugungs- und Vererbungslehren der Antike und ihr Nachwirken*, Wiesbaden 1951.
- Lesnick, Daniel R., *Preaching in medieval Florence: the social world of Franciscan and Dominican spirituality*, Athens 1989.
- Loh, Maria H., "New and improved: repetition as originality in Italian Baroque practice and theory", in: *The art bulletin*, 86/3, 2004, pp. 477–504.
- Löhr, Wolf-Dietrich, "Handwerk und Denkwerk des Malers. Kontexte für Cenninis Theorie der Praxis", in: Wolf-Dietrich Löhr, Stefan Weppelmann (Edd.), *Fantasie und Handwerk. Cennino Cennini und die Tradition der toskanischen Malerei von Giotto bis Lorenzo Monaco*, Berlin 2008, pp. 153–176.
- Lüdemann, Peter, "Vom Ursprung der Menschheit ins Florenz der Medici: Piero di Cosimos Prometheus-Tafeln in München und Straßburg", in: *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 37, 2010, pp. 121–149.
- Ludwig, Walter, "Das bessere Bildnis des Gelehrten", in: *Philologus. Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption*, 142/1, 1998, pp. 123–161.
- Luhmann, Niklas, "Die Autopoiesis des Bewusstseins", in: Alois Hahn, Volker Kapp (Edd.), *Selbstthematization und Selbstzeugnis: Bekenntnis und Geständnis*, Frankfurt a.M. 1987, pp. 25–94.

- Magnago Lampugnani, Anna, *Furor: Vorstellungen künstlerischer Eingebung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 2020.
- Mai, Ekkehard (Ed.), *Wettstreit der Künste: Malerei und Skulptur von Dürer bis Daumier*, Wolfenbüttel 2002.
- Mansfield, Elizabeth, *Too beautiful to picture: Zeuxis, myth, and mimesis*, London 2007.
- Marschke, Stefanie, *Künstlerbildnisse und Selbstporträts: Studien zu ihren Funktionen von der Antike bis zur Renaissance*, Weimar 1998.
- Marx, Karl, "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte" (1852), in: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. VIII, Berlin 1960, pp. 115–207.
- Massari, Stefania, *Giulio Bonasone*, Rome 1983.
- Maturana, Humberto R.; Varela, Francisco J., *Der Baum der Erkenntnis: die biologischen Wurzeln des menschlichen Erkennens*, Munich 1987.
- Mazza, Angelo, "Due pale d'altare di Paolo Pino", in: Ibid. (Ed.), *Paolo Pino. Teorico d'arte e artista. Il restauro della pala di Scorzè*, Scorzè 1992, pp. 51–78.
- McHam, Sarah Blake, "Pliny's influence on Vasari's first edition on the Lives", in: *Artibus et historiae*, 32, 2011, pp. 9–23.
- Metzger, Stefan, "Ich selbst, Leser, bin also der Inhalt meines Buchs' Subjekt und Stil in Literatur und Philosophie des 16. Jahrhunderts", in: Michael Brunner (Ed.), *Stil und Stilpluralismus in den Künsten des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Engen 2004, pp. 83–98.
- Milanesi, Gaetano (Ed.), *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, 9 vols., Florence 1878–1885.
- Miteva, Evelina, "The Soul between Body and Immortality: The 13<sup>th</sup> Century Debate on the Definition of the Human Rational Soul as Form and Substance", in: *Philosophia. E-Journal of philosophy and culture*, 1, 2012, pp. 63–69.
- Modersohn, Mechthild, "Natura Artifex – ein alternatives Schöpfungsmodell?", in: Herbert Beck, Kerstin Hengevoss-Dürkop (Edd.), *Studien zur Geschichte der Europäischen Skulptur im 12./13. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt a.M. 1994, pp. 219–229.
- Mondin, Battista, "Il principio 'omne agens agit sibi simile' e l'analogia dei nomi divini", in: *Divus Thomas: commentarium academiis et lycaeis scholasticam sectantibus inserviens*, 63, 1960, pp. 336–348.
- , *La metafisica di S. Tommaso d'Aquino e i suoi interpreti*, Bologna 2002.
- Morét, Stefan, "Der 'paragone' im Spiegel der Plastik", in: Alessandro Nova, Anna Schreurs (Edd.), *Benvenuto Cellini: Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*, Cologne 2003, pp. 203–215.
- Muecke, Frances, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman", in: *The Classical Quarterly*, 32/1, 1982, pp. 41–55.
- Müller, Carl Werner, *Gleiches zu Gleichem: Ein Prinzip frühgriechischen Denkens*, Wiesbaden 1965.
- Müller, Wolfgang G., *Topik des Stilbegriffs: zur Geschichte des Stilverständnisses von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Darmstadt 1981.
- Myssok, Johannes, *Bildhauerische Konzeption und plastisches Modell in der Renaissance*, Münster 1999.
- Najemy, John M., *Between friends: discourses of power and desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori letters of 1513–1515*, Princeton 1993.
- Nardi, Michele Giuseppe, *Problemi d'embriologia umana antica e medioevale*, Florence 1938.
- Nardinocchi, Elisabetta, "Casa Vasari a Firenze, specchio e sintesi dell'opera di un artista", in: Cristina Acidini, Giacomo Pirazzoli (Edd.), *Ammannati e Vasari per la città dei Medici*, Florence 2011, pp. 139–146.
- Nathan, Johannes, "Grammatik der Erfindung: zur künstlerischen Arbeitsmethode bei Leonardo da Vinci", in: Maren Huberty (Ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci all'Europa: einem Mythos auf den Spuren*, Berlin 2005, pp. 35–57.



- Nelson, Jonathan Katz, "La disgrazia di Pietro: l'importanza della pala della Santissima Annunziata nella Vita del Perugino del Vasari", in: Laura Teza (Ed.), *Pietro Vannucci, il Perugino*, Perugia 2004, pp. 65–73.
- Norden, Eduard, *Die antike Kunstprosa: vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1898.
- Norton, Robert Edward, *The beautiful soul: aesthetic morality in the eighteenth century*, Ithaca 1995.
- Nova, Alessandro, "Salviati, Vasari, and the reuse of drawings in their working practice", in: *Master drawings*, 30/1, 1992, pp. 83–108.
- O'Connor, Dónal J., "Artist Friars of the Renaissance in Georgio Vasari", in: *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 63/167, 1998, pp. 167–195.
- O'Malley, Michelle, "Quality, Demand, and the Pressures of Reputation: Rethinking Perugino", in: *The Art Bulletin*, 89/4, 2007, pp. 674–693.
- Oehler, Klaus, *Ein Mensch zeugt einen Menschen: über den Missbrauch der Sprachanalyse in der Aristotelesforschung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1963.
- Onians, John, "The biological basis of Renaissance aesthetics", in: Francis Ames-Lewis (Ed.), *Concepts of beauty in Renaissance art*, Aldershot 1998, pp. 12–27.
- , *Neuroarthistory: from Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven 2007.
- Ordine, Nuccio, *La soglia dell'ombra: letteratura, filosofia e pittura in Giordano Bruno*, Venice 2003.
- Otto, Stephan, *Das Wissen des Ähnlichen: Michel Foucault und die Renaissance*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992.
- Owens, Susan, "Beardsley und Botticelli", in: Stefan Weppelmann et al. (Edd.), *The Botticelli Renaissance*, Munich 2015, pp. 82–85, 336–337.
- Panofsky, Erwin, "Die Entwicklung der Proportionslehre als Abbild der Stilentwicklung", in: *Monatshfte für Kunstwissenschaft*, 14, 1921, pp. 188–219.
- , *"Idea": ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie*, Leipzig 1924.
- Park, Katharine, "Nature in Person: Medieval and Renaissance Allegories and Emblems", in: Lorraine Daston, Fernando Vidal (Edd.), *The moral authority of nature*, Chicago 2004, pp. 50–73.
- Parshall, Peter W., "Antonio Lafreri's Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae", in: *Print quarterly*, 23, 2006, pp. 3–28.
- Pekáry, Thomas, *Imago res mortua est: Untersuchungen zur Ablehnung der bildenden Künste in der Antike*, Stuttgart 2002.
- Peppel, Claudia, *Der Manichino: von der Gliederpuppe zum technisierten Kultobjekt; Körperimaginationen im Werk Giorgio de Chiricos*, Weimar 2008.
- Periti, Giancarla, "From Allegri to Laetus-Lieto: the shaping of Correggio's artistic distinctiveness", in: *The art bulletin*, 86, 3, 2004, pp. 459–476.
- Perrig, Alexander; Güse, Ernst-Günther, *Zeichnungen aus der Toskana: Das Zeitalter Michelangelo*, Munich 1997.
- Pfisterer, Ulrich; Seidel, Max (Edd.), *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich 2003.
- Pfisterer, Ulrich; von Rosen, Valeska (Edd.), *Der Künstler als Kunstwerk: Selbstporträts vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 2005.
- Pfisterer, Ulrich, "Künstlerische potestas audendi und licentia im Quattrocento: Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea Mantegna, Bertoldo di Giovanni", in: *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, Bd. 31, 1996, pp. 107–148.
- , "Künstlerliebe: der 'Narcissus'-Mythos bei Leon Battista Alberti und die Aristoteles-Lektüre der Frührenaissance", in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 64, 2001, pp. 305–330.
- , *Donatello und die Entdeckung der Stile: 1430–1445*, Munich 2002.

- , “Leon Battista Alberti: De Statua. Zu Oskar Bätschmanns und Christoph Schäublins Neuausgabe von Albertis kleineren kunsttheoretischen Schriften”, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 66, 2003, pp. 533–545.
- , “Zeugung der Idee – Schwangerschaft des Geistes: sexualisierte Metaphern und Theorien zur Werkgenese in der Renaissance”, in: Ulrich Pfisterer, Anja Zimmermann (Eds.), *Animationen, Transgressionen: das Kunstwerk als Lebewesen*, Berlin 2005, pp. 41–72.
- , “Raffaels Muse – erotische Inspiration in der Renaissance”, in: *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden*, Bd. 38, 2012, pp. 62–83.
- Pietrass, Katrin, *Michelangelos ‘Gesichter’: Identitätskonzepte in den Selbstdarstellungen Michelangelo Buonarrotis*, Leipzig 2012.
- Pigman, G. W., “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance”, in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33, 1980, pp. 1–32.
- Pinelli, Antonio, “Raffaello ‘convenevole’ Michelangelo ‘sconveniente’”, in: Micaela Sambucco Hamoud, Maria Letizia Strocchi (Eds.), *Studi su Raffaello*. Urbino 1987, pp. 683–694.
- , “Vivere ‘alla filosofica’ o vestire di velluto? Storia di Jacone fiorentino e della sua ‘masnada’ antivasariana”, in: *Ricerche di storia dell’arte*, 34, 1988, pp. 5–34.
- , *La bella maniera. Artisti del Cinquecento tra regola e licenza*, Turin 1993.
- Pizzani, Ubaldo, “Il dipinto mostruoso che apre l’Ars poetica di Orazio e la sua interpretazione in epoca rinascimentale”, in: Luisa Rotondi Secchi Tarugi (Ed.), *Disarmonia, bruttezza e bizzaria nel Rinascimento*, Florence 1998, pp. 215–232.
- Plackinger, Andreas, *Violenza. Gewalt als Denkfigur im michelangelischen Kunstdiskurs*, Berlin 2016.
- Pontzen, Alexandra, *Künstler ohne Werk: Modelle negativer Produktionsästhetik in der Künstlerliteratur von Wackenroder bis Heiner Müller*, Berlin 2000.
- Posselt, Christina, *Das Porträt in den Viten Vasaris: Kunsttheorie, Rhetorik und Gattungsgeschichte*, Cologne 2013.
- Pozzi, Mario; Mattioda, Enrico, *Giorgio Vasari: storico e critico*, Florence 2006.
- Prinz, Wolfram, “Die Darstellung Christi im Tempel und die Bildnisse des Andrea Mantegna”, in: *Berliner Museen, Berichte aus den Staatlichen Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, 12, Nr. 2, 1962, S. 50–54.
- Puttfarcken, Thomas, “Sul molteplice nella teoria pittorica del rinascimento italiano”, in: *Accademia Raffaello, Urbino, Atti e studi*, 1, 2006, pp. 39–62.
- Quiviger, François, “Honey from heaven: aspects of the topos of the bees in Renaissance artistic literature”, in: Ulrich Pfisterer, Max Seidel (Eds.), *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich 2003a, pp. 317–321.
- , “The brush in poetry and practice: Agnolo Bronzino’s ‘Capitolo del pennello’ in context”, in: Thomas Frangenberg (Ed.), *Poetry on Art Renaissance to Romanticism*, Donnington 2003b, pp. 101–113.
- Reisenbichler, Anna, *‘Madonna sancta Maria che n’ ai mostrata la via’: die großformatigen Tafelbilder der thronenden Madonna in der Toskana des Duecento*, Univ. Diss. Vienna 2006.
- Reißer, Ulrich, *Physiognomik und Ausdruckstheorie der Renaissance: der Einfluss charakterologischer Lehren auf Kunst und Kunsttheorie des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1997.
- Rejaie, Azar M., *Defining artistic identity in the Florentine Renaissance: Vasari, embedded self-portraits, and the patron’s role*, Doctoral thesis at the University of Pittsburgh 2006.
- Rhein, Gudrun, *Der Dialog über die Malerei: Lodovico Dolce’s Traktat und die Kunsttheorie des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Cologne 2008.
- Rodman, Selden, *Conversations with artists*, New York 1961.
- Roesler-Friedenthal, Antoinette, “Ein Porträt Andrea Mantegnas als alter Orpheus im Kontext seiner Selbstdarstellungen”, in: *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 31, 1996, pp. 149–186.

- Rogers, Mary, "The artist as beauty", in: Francis Ames-Lewis (Ed.), *Concepts of beauty in Renaissance art*, Aldershot 1998, pp. 93–106.
- Roggenkamp, Bernd, "Vom 'Artifex' zum 'Artista': Benedetto Varchis Auseinandersetzung mit dem aristotelisch-scholastischen Kunstverständnis 1547", in: Jan A. Aertsen (Ed.), *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, Berlin 1996, pp. 844–860.
- Rosand, David, *Drawing acts: studies in graphic expression and representation*, Cambridge 2002.
- Rosemann, Philipp W., "'Homo hominem generat, canis canem, et Deus Deum non generat?' Procréation humaine et filiation trinitaire chez S. Augustin", in: Jacques Follon, James McEvoy (Edd.), *Actualité de la pensée médiévale*, Paris 1994, pp. 159–170.
- , *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A "Repetition" of Scholastic Metaphysics*, Leuven 1996.
- Rubin, Patricia Lee, "What Men Saw: Vasari's Life of Leonardo Da Vinci and the Image of the Renaissance Artist", in: *Art History*, 13, 1990, pp. 34–46.
- , *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven 1995.
- Rudd, Niall, *Lines of enquiry: studies in Latin poetry*, Cambridge 1976.
- Ruffini, Marco, *Art without an author: Vasari's lives and Michelangelo's death*, New York 2011.
- Ruppert, Wolfgang, *Der moderne Künstler: zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der kreativen Individualität in der kulturellen Moderne im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.
- Sabbatino, Pasquale, *La bellezza di elena. L'imitazione nella letteratura e nelle arti figurative del rinascimento*, Florence 1997.
- Salatowsky, Sascha, *De Anima: die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Amsterdam 2006.
- Satzinger, Georg, "Der Stier des Pausias: eine Anmerkung zur Wirkung Plinius' des Älteren in Malerei und Plastik der Renaissance", in: Willi Jung, Birgit Tappert (Edd.), *Heitere Mimesis. Festschrift für Willi Hirdt zum 65. Geburtstag*, Tübingen 2003, pp. 105–125.
- Saunders, Gill, *The nude: a new perspective*, Cambridge 1989.
- Saviello, Alberto, "Unähnlichkeit. Überlegungen zum Motiv des 'hässlichen' Künstlers", in: Martin Gaier, Jeanette Kohl, Alberto Saviello (Edd.), *Similitudo: Konzepte der Ähnlichkeit in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 207–232.
- Scheller, Robert W., *Exemplum. Model-Book drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (900–ca. 1470)*, Amsterdam 1995.
- Schlüter, Renate, *Zeuxis und Prometheus: die Überwindung des Nachahmungskonzeptes in der Ästhetik der Frühromantik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1995.
- Schmidt, Siegfried J., *Kognitive Autonomie und soziale Orientierung: Konstruktivistische Bemerkungen zum Zusammenhang von Kognition, Kommunikation, Medien und Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994.
- Schnitzler, Norbert, "Tugendhafte Körper und die Disziplinierung des Blicks: Bilddidaxe und Körperwahrnehmung im Alltag des 16. Jahrhunderts", in: Klaus Schreiner, Norbert Schnitzler (Edd.), *Gepeinigt, begehrt, vergessen. Symbolik und Sozialbezug des Körpers im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 1992, pp. 337–363.
- Schreiner, Klaus, "Si homo non peccasset... Der Sündenfall Adams und Evas in seiner Bedeutung für die soziale, seelische und körperliche Verfaßtheit des Menschen", in: Klaus Schreiner, Norbert Schnitzler (Edd.), *Gepeinigt, begehrt, vergessen. Symbolik und Sozialbezug des Körpers im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 1992, pp. 41–84.
- Schröder, Gerald, *"Der kluge Blick": Studie zu den kunsttheoretischen Reflexionen Francesco Bocchis*, Hildesheim 2003.
- Schulze Altcappenberg, Hein-Thomas; Thimann, Michael (Edd.), *Disegno: der Zeichner im Bild der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 2007.
- Schweikhart, Gunter (Ed.), *Autobiographie und Selbstportrait in der Renaissance*, Cologne 1998.

- Scigliano, Eric, *Michelangelo's Mountain: The Quest For Perfection in the Marble Quarries of Carrara*, New York 2005.
- Sheerman, John K. G., "Maniera as an aesthetic ideal", in: *The Renaissance and mannerism (Acts of the twentieth international congress of the history of art)*, 2 vols., 1963, vol. 1, pp. 200–221.
- , *Mannerism*, Harmondsworth 1967.
- Sheehan, Michael J.; Nachman, Michael W., "Morphological and population genomic evidence that human faces have evolved to signal individual identity", in: *Nature Communications*, 5, 2014.
- Sohm, Philip L., "Maniera and the absent hand: avoiding the etymology of style", in: *Res: anthropology and aesthetics*, 36, 1999, pp. 100–124.
- , *Style in the art theory of early modern Italy*, Cambridge 2001.
- , "Caravaggio's deaths", in: *The art bulletin*, 84, 2002, pp. 449–468.
- , *The artist grows old: the aging of art and artists in Italy, 1500–1800*, New Haven 2007.
- Sörbom, Göran, *Mimesis and art; studies in the origin and early development of an aesthetic vocabulary*, Stockholm 1966.
- , "Aristotle on Music as Representation", in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52/1, 1994, pp. 37–46.
- Soussloff, Catherine M., "Lives of poets and painters in the Renaissance", in: *Word & image: a journal of verbal visual enquiry*, 6, 1990, pp. 154–162.
- , *The absolute artist: the historiography of a concept*, Minneapolis 1997.
- Spagnolo, Maddalena, "La fortuna di Andrea del Sarto nella riforma della maniera", in: *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, 64, 1998, pp. 35–56.
- Spear, Richard E., *The "divine" Guido: religion, sex, money and the art in the world of Guido Reni*, New Haven 1997.
- Spencer, John R., "Ut Rhetorica Pictura. A Study in Quattrocento Theory of Painting", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20, 1957, pp. 26–44.
- Stehle, Eva, "The body and its representations in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazousai: where does the costume end?", in: *American Journal of Philology*, 123/3, 2002, pp. 369–406.
- Steinberg, Ronald M., *Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Florentine Art, and Renaissance Historiography*, Athens, Ohio 1977.
- Steinemann, Holger, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung: Kardinal Gabriele Paleottis "Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane" (1582)*, Hildesheim 2006.
- Steinitz, Wolfgang; Wagner, Franz; Zaunschirn, Thomas, *Spätgotik in Salzburg: Skulptur und Kunstgewerbe, 1400–1530*, Salzburg 1976.
- Stohn, Günther, "Zur Agathonszene in den 'Thesmophoriazusen' des Aristophanes", in: *Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie*, 121/2, 1993, pp. 196–205.
- Stoichiță, Victor Ieronim, *The self-aware image: an insight into early modern meta-painting*, Cambridge 1997.
- Stolberg, Michael, "Der gesunde Leib. Zur Geschichtlichkeit frühneuzeitlicher Körpererfahrung", in: *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte*, 31, 2001, pp. 37–57.
- Summers, David, "The Sculptural Program of the Cappella di San Luca in the Santissima Annunziata", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 14/1, 1969, pp. 67–90.
- , "Figure come Fratelli: a transformation of symmetry in Renaissance painting", in: *The art quarterly*, 1, 1978, pp. 59–88.
- , *Michelangelo and the language of art*, Princeton 1981.
- , *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, London 1987.
- , "ARIA II: the union of image and artist as an aesthetic ideal in Renaissance art", in: *Artibus et historiae*, 10, 1989, pp. 15–31.
- Suthor, Nicola, *Bravura: Virtuosität und Mutwilligkeit in der Malerei der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 2010.

- Tanturli, Giuliano, "Le biografie d'artisti prima del Vasari", in: *Il Vasari Storiografo e artista. Atti del congresso internazionalae nel IV centenario della morte*, Florence 1976, pp. 275–298.
- Thielemann, Andreas, "Roma und die Rossebändiger im Mittelalter", in: *Kölner Jahrbuch*, 26, 1994, pp. 85–131.
- , *Phidias im Quattrocento*, Univ.Diss. Universität Köln, Cologne 1996.
- Thomas, Anabel, *The painter's practice in Renaissance Tuscany*, Cambridge 1995.
- Thomas, Ben, "'Artefici' and 'huomini intendenti': questions of artistic value in sixteenth-century Italy", in: Gabriele Neher, Rupert Shepherd (Edd.), *Revaluating Renaissance art*, Aldershot 2000, pp. 43–56.
- Tigerstedt, E. N., "Furor Poeticus: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato", in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31/2, 1970, pp. 163–178.
- Tigler, Peter, *Die Architekturtheorie des Filarete*, Berlin 1963.
- Tocanne, Bernard, *L'idée de nature en France dans la seconde moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: contribution à l'histoire de la pensée classique*, Paris 1978.
- Treves, Marco, "Maniera, History of a word", in: *Marsyas*, 1, 1941, pp. 69–88.
- Ullmann, Ernst, *Albrecht Dürer: Schriften und Briefe*, Leipzig 1993.
- Villata, Edoardo, *Leonardo da Vinci: i documenti e le testimonianze contemporanee*, Milan 1999.
- Vogt, Sabine, *Aristoteles' Physiognomonica, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Berlin 1999.
- von Rosen, Valeska, *Mimesis und Selbstbezüglichkeit in Werken Tizians: Studien zum venezianischen Malereidiskurs*, Emsdetten 2001.
- , "Celare artem: die Ästhetisierung eines rhetorischen Topos in der Malerei mit sichtbarer Pinselschrift", in: Ulrich Pfisterer, Max Seidel (Edd.), *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich 2003, pp. 323–350.
- von Schlosser, Julius, "Aus der Bildnerwerkstatt der Renaissance: Fragmente zur Geschichte der Renaissanceplastik", in: *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 31/2, 1913, pp. 67–135.
- , *Die Kunstliteratur: ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, Vienna 1924.
- , *La Letteratura artistica: manuale delle fonti della storia dell' arte moderna*, Florence 1956.
- Wackernagel, Martin, *Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der Florentinischen Renaissance*, Leipzig 1938.
- Wardman, A. E., "Plutarch's Methods in the Lives", in: *The Classical Quarterly*, 21/1, 1971, pp. 254–261.
- Warnke, Martin, "Praxisfelder der Kunsttheorie. Über die Geburtswehen des Individualstils", in: *Idea. Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, 1, 1982, pp. 54–71.
- , *Hofkünstler: Zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Künstlers*, Cologne 1985.
- Watts, Barbara Jane, "Giorgio Vasari's Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti and the shade of Donatello", in: Thomas Frederick Mayer (Ed.), *The rhetorics of life-writing in early modern Europe: forms of biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV*, Ann Arbor 1995, pp. 63–96.
- Ważbiński, Zygmunt, "L'annunciazione della vergine nella chiesa della SS. Annunziata a Firenze. Un contributo al moderno culto dei quadri", in: Andrew Morrogh, Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi (Edd.), *Renaissance studies in honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, 2 vols., Florence 1985, vol. 2, pp. 533–552.
- , *L'accademia medicea del disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento*, Florence 1987a.
- , "Il modus semplice: un dibattito sull'ars sacra fiorentina intorno al 1600", in: Micaela Sambucco Hamoud, Maria Letizia Strocchi (Edd.), *Studi su Raffaello*, Urbino 1987b, pp. 625–648.
- Weihe, Richard, *Die Paradoxie der Maske: Geschichte einer Form*, Munich 2004.
- Weinhart, Martina, *Selbstbild ohne Selbst: Dekonstruktionen eines Genres in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Berlin 2004.

- Weixlgärtner, Arpad, "Dürer und die Gliederpuppe", in: *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, Franz Wickhoff gewidmet*, Vienna 1903, pp. 80–90.
- , "Von der Gliederpuppe", in: *Göteborgs Konstmuseum Årstryck 1954*, Gothenburg 1954, pp. 37–70.
- Weppelmann, Stefan, "Some thoughts on likeness in italian early Renaissance portraits", in: Keith Christiansen, Stefan Weppelmann (Eds.), *The Renaissance portrait: from Donatello to Bellini*, New York 2011, pp. 64–76.
- Williams, Robert, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi in Praise of Andrea del Sarto", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52, 1989a, pp. 111–139.
- , *Vincenzo Borghini and Vasaris Lives*, Princeton 1989b.
- , *Art, theory, and culture in sixteenth-century Italy: from techne to metatechne*, Cambridge 1997.
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 2 vols., Dresden 1764.
- Winner, Matthias, "Ein Wort zuvor", in: Matthias Winner (Ed.), *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk: internationales Symposium der Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rom 1989*, Weinheim 1992, pp. 1–11.
- Wirth, Jean, "Soll man Bilder anbeten? Theorien zum Bilderkult bis zum Konzil von Trient", in: Cécile Dupeux, Peter Jezler, Jean Wirth (Eds.), *Bildersturm*, Munich 2000, pp. 28–37.
- Witten, Norbert, *Angelo Camillo Decembrio, De politia litteraria*, Munich 2002.
- Wittkower, Rudolf and Margot, *Born under Saturn: The character and conduct of artists*, London 1963.
- Wittkower, Rudolf, *The divine Michelangelo: the Florentine Academy's homage on his death in 1564*, London 1964.
- Wolf, Gerhard, *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance*, Munich 2002.
- Woods-Marsden, Joanna, *Renaissance self-portraiture: the visual construction of identity and the social status of the artist*, New Haven 1998.
- Zaccaria, Vittorio, "Sulle opere di Pier Candido Decembrio", in: *Rinascimento: rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento*, 7, 1956, pp. 13–74.
- Zacchi, Alessandro, "La figura dell' 'artefice cristiano' nel Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane di Gabriele Paleotti", in: *Il Carrobbio*, 11, 1985, pp. 339–347.
- Zimmermann, T. C. Price, "Paolo Giovio and the rhetoric of individuality", in Thomas Frederick Mayer (Ed.), *The rhetorics of life-writing in early modern Europe: forms of biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV*, Ann Arbor 1995, pp. 39–62.
- Zöllner, Frank, *Vitruvs Proportionsfigur: quellenkritische Studien zur Kunstliteratur im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Worms 1987.
- , "'Ogni pittore dipinge sé' Leonardo da Vinci and 'automimesis'", in: Matthias Winner (Ed.), *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk: internationales Symposium der Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rom 1989*, Weinheim 1992, pp. 137–160.
- , "Leon Battista Albertis 'De pictura': die kunsttheoretische und literarische Legitimierung von Affektübertragungen und Kunstgenuss", in: *Georges-Bloch-Jahrbuch des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars der Universität Zürich*, vol. 4, 1997, pp. 23–39.
- , "Leonardo und Michelangelo: vom Auftragskünstler zum Ausdruckskünstler", in: Maren Huberty (Ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci all'Europa: einem Mythos auf den Spuren*, Berlin 2005, pp. 131–160.
- , "Kunst und Wissenschaft: Leonardo zwischen 'automimesis' und Proportionslehre", in: *Denkströme. Das Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 4, 2009, pp. 42–57.
- Zucker, Mark J., "Vasari and Parri Spinelli: a study of Renaissance and Modern attitudes towards the personality of artists", in: *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 93, 1979, pp. 199–206.

# Index of Names

This index includes the names of artists, the names of patrons, and the names of authors born before the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it also includes a few names of fictional or mythological characters. Variant names of the same individual are given in brackets.

## A

Achillini, Claudio 256  
Aelius Aristides 28  
Aeschylus 148  
Agathon 24, 25, 26, 27, 29  
Aglaophon 79  
Alberti, Leon Battista 19, 42–43, 69–71, 87,  
99–100, 110, 112, 121, 123, 126–127, 150,  
166, 170, 176, 178, 198, 205–206, 209–211,  
219–220  
Alberti, Romano 249–250  
Albertus Magnus 42, 50–51, 128, 169  
Alcaeus 26  
Allori, Alessandro 236–237  
Ammannati, Bartolomeo 237, 246  
Anacreon 26  
Anaxagoras 42  
Andrea del Castagno (Andrea di  
Bartolo) 160  
Andrea del Sarto (Andrea d’Agnolo) 19, 126,  
132–135, 160, 253  
Andrea del Verrocchio (Andrea di Michele di  
Francesco di Cione) 57–60  
Antonio da Sangallo (Antonio Cordini) 80  
Apelles 68, 79, 121–122, 201, 205–207, 211,  
213, 219–220  
Apollonio Ateniese 90  
Aretino, Pietro 80–81, 103, 112, 122, 150, 171,  
178, 238  
Aristarchus 219–220  
Aristophanes 23–27, 29, 147–148  
Aristotile da Sangallo (Bastiano da  
Sangallo) 163, 165

Aristotle 13, 42, 44, 47–48, 50, 52, 98,  
116, 126, 135, 155, 161, 167–169, 199–  
200, 218  
Aristoxenus 219  
Armenini, Giovanni Battista 77–78, 84,  
90, 129, 204  
Artists Anonymous 268  
Avicenna (Ibn Sina) 44, 220

## B

Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel 267  
Baldi, Camillo 215  
Baldinucci, Filippo 167, 257  
Ballini, Gasparo 112  
Bamboccio (Pieter van Laer) 91, 175–176  
Bandello, Matteo 205, 211  
Bandinelli, Baccio (Bartolomeo  
Brandini) 77, 88–89  
Banksy 268  
Bartoli, Cosimo 71  
Barzizza, Gasparino 35  
Beardsley, Aubrey 259–261  
Beccafumi, Domenico (Domenico di Jacopo  
di Pace) 123–124  
Beccaria, Augusto 38  
Bellini, Giovanni 213  
Bellini, Jacopo 67–68, 71  
Bellini, Nicolsia 136  
Bellori, Giovan Pietro 15, 143, 167, 256  
Bembo, Pietro 73–75  
Bernardino da Siena (Bernardino degli  
Albizzeschi) 161

Billi, Antonio (Anonimo Magliabechiano) 146, 150, 230  
 Boccaccio, Giovanni 40, 56, 148, 158, 185, 186  
 Bocchi, Acchille 227, 229  
 Bocchi, Francesco 126, 160, 252–255  
 Boethius 45  
 Boileau, Nicolas 267  
 Bonasone, Giulio 227, 229, 241  
 Bonifazio da Cremona (Bonifacio Bèmbò) 38  
 Borghini, Raffaele 56, 249  
 Borghini, Vincenzio 20, 149, 153, 200, 205, 208, 218, 221–226, 231–240, 243, 264–265  
 Borromeo, Federico 250  
 Bosse, Abraham 72  
 Bottari, Giovanni Gaetano 112, 192, 237, 239, 246  
 Botticelli, Sandro (Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi) 40, 57, 259  
 Bracciolini, Poggio 69  
 Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano) 164, 171  
 Brouwer, Adriaen 258  
 Brunelleschi, Filippo 82, 143, 185–187  
 Bruni, Leonardo 35  
 Buonarroti, Michelangelo 19, 43, 45, 65–66, 76–81, 84–86, 88, 90, 104–105, 110–118, 120–122, 125, 128, 146–147, 150–151, 163, 166, 171, 174–178, 182, 189–192, 194, 196, 202, 213, 218, 222–223, 231, 233, 239–240, 246, 253, 255, 266

## C

Caccini, Giovanni 240–242  
 Callimachus 210  
 Camerarius, Joachim 199  
 Campi, Bernardino 129–130  
 Capaccio, Giulio Cesare 201, 239  
 Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi) 257, 266  
 Caro, Annibale 149  
 Carracci (Family) 91–92  
 Carracci, Annibale 91  
 Carracci, Lodovico 91  
 Cartari, Vincenzo 66  
 Castiglione, Baldassare 33–34, 79, 87, 94, 155, 165–166, 204, 232, 235, 238  
 Cattaneo, Danese 150

Cavalcanti, Giovanni 82  
 Cavallini, Pietro 246, 252  
 Cecchi, Giovan Maria 62  
 Cellini, Benvenuto 20, 153, 217, 218–222, 224, 226, 231, 232–240, 243, 264  
 Cellini, Giovanni 221  
 Cennini, Cennino 39, 42, 75–76, 78, 96, 118–119  
 Cesariano, Cesare 119, 179–180, 220  
 Chacón, Alonso 192  
 Chigi, Antonio 239  
 Chrysippus of Soli 30  
 Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero) 28, 48, 74–76, 79, 87, 98, 123, 126, 233  
 Cimabue (Cenni di Pepi) 88, 95, 101–102, 145  
 Clement of Alexandria 66  
 Colombo, Realdo 196, 197  
 Condivi, Ascanio 77, 120, 150, 196  
 Cornario, Giano 201

## D

D'Este, Leonello 67, 68–69, 71–72, 78  
 Daft Punk 268  
 Daniele da Volterra (Daniele Ricciarelli) 19, 86, 90, 112, 190, 192–194, 196, 198, 202  
 Dante (Durante di Alighiero degli Alighieri) 37, 78, 147–148, 153, 227, 233  
 Danti, Vincenzio 19, 122–123, 125, 135, 154–156, 171, 198–199, 208–209, 211, 236, 239  
 de Piles, Roger 267  
 Decembrio, Angelo 67–69, 72, 100  
 Decembrio, Pier Candido 69  
 del Fede, Lucrezia 133, 135  
 del Tasso, Giovanni Battista 165  
 della Corgna, Pierfilippo 35–36  
 della Porta, Giambattista 127–128, 162  
 Diderot, Denis 267  
 Diodorus Siculus 68–69, 71, 227  
 Diogenes Laertius 147  
 Dionysius of Halicarnassus 28  
 Dionysius of Syracuse 240  
 Dolce, Lodovico 84, 100, 103, 111–112, 114, 123, 125, 127, 141, 150, 171, 206  
 Domenichi, Lodovico 63–65, 176–177  
 Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri) 256  
 Domenico di Giovanni da Corella 246  
 Donatello (Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi) 151–152, 239, 247



Doni, Antonio Francesco 62, 80, 150, 176–178  
 Dryden, John 198  
 Dufresnoy, Charles Alphonse 198  
 Dürer, Albrecht 120, 127, 131, 198–199

## E

Eleonora di Toledo (Leonor Álvarez de Toledo y Osorio) 236–237  
 Euripides 23–26, 147–148

## F

Fabrini, Giovanni Francesco 112  
 Fanfani, Piero 62–63  
 Fazio, Bartholomeo 100, 146, 150  
 Félibien, André 267  
 Ferrari, Gaudenzio 85  
 Ferrini, Luca 253–254  
 Ferrucci, Nicodemo 190–191  
 Ficino, Marsilio 35–38, 43, 45, 64, 137–138, 170–171  
 Figliucci, Felice 36, 169–171  
 Filarete (Antonio Averlino) 41, 72, 127, 171, 230, 263  
 Foppa, Vincenzo 38  
 Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro) 57, 246–249, 251  
 Francesco da Milano (Francesco Canova) 87  
 Francia, Francesco (Francesco Raibolini) 190  
 Francisco de Hollanda 40, 79, 246  
 Franco, Matteo 62

## G

Gaddi, Agnolo 75  
 Gaddi, Taddeo 75  
 Galen (Aelius Galenus) 169, 178, 220  
 Galle, Philips 32–33  
 Gallucci, Giovanni Paolo 127  
 Gaurico, Pomponio 162–163, 179, 220, 230–232  
 Gelli, Giovanni Battista 101–102, 128, 146, 150  
 Gentile da Fabriano (Gentile di Niccolò di Giovanni di Massio) 82

George of Trebizond (Georgius Trapezuntius) 100  
 Gesner, Conrad 201  
 Ghiberti, Lorenzo 40, 82, 96, 121, 150, 220  
 Ghirlandaio, Domenico (Domenico Bigordi) 40, 241  
 Giambologna (Jean de Boulogne) 241  
 Giambullari, Pierfrancesco 81–82  
 Gilio, Giovanni Andrea (Gilio da Fabriano) 20, 150, 204, 249  
 Giocondo, Giovanni (Fra Giocondo) 150  
 Giorgione (Giorgio da Castel Franco) 79  
 Giotto di Bondone 40, 75, 78, 88, 95–96, 101–102, 152, 185–187  
 Giovanni Battista del Tasso 242  
 Giovanni di Gherardo da Prato (Giovanni Gherardi) 152  
 Giovio, Paolo 104, 146, 149–150  
 Guarino da Verona (Guarino Veronese) 100

## H

Hallward, Basil 260  
 Hesiod 87, 167  
 Hippocrates 219–220  
 Homer 121, 167, 179  
 Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) 13, 26, 60, 74, 86, 92, 126, 202–203, 209, 249–250, 267  
 Houbraken, Arnold 127, 143, 257–258

## I

Ibycus 26  
 Isidore of Seville 116, 169

## J

Jacobus de Voragine 147  
 Jacone (Jacopo di Giovanni di Francesco) 163–166, 240  
 Jacopo di Cione 252

## K

Kokoschka, Oskar 260

**L**

- Lafreri, Antonio 225–226  
 Lamo, Alessandro 130  
 Landino, Cristoforo 78, 95, 146, 148, 227  
 Lavater, Johann Caspar 258  
 Lawrence, Thomas 258  
 Leonardo da Vinci 49–58, 60–63, 79,  
     85, 104, 111, 146, 168, 210–211, 221,  
     259, 266  
 Leopardi, Giacomo 267  
 Liberale da Verona (Liberale di Jacopo della  
     Brava) 150  
 Lippi, Filippino 40  
 Lodovico di Breme (Ludovico Arborio  
     Gattinara dei Marchesi di Breme) 267  
 Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo 56, 76, 84–86,  
     90, 196  
 Lorenzi, Giovanni 213  
 Lorenzo di Credi (Lorenzo d'Andrea  
     d'Oderigo) 58, 129  
 Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus) 224  
 Luti, Margherita (La Fornarina) 138–139,  
     141  
 Lysippus 79, 121, 201, 213

**M**

- Macrobius (Macrobius Ambrosius  
     Theodosius) 74  
 Maecenas (Gaius Cilnius Maecenas) 29–30  
 Malvasia, Carlo Cesare 15, 91–92, 256  
 Manetti, Antonio 143, 146  
 Manetti, Giannozzo 148  
 Manfredi, Hieronymo 51–52, 161–162  
 Mantegna, Andrea 39, 79, 85, 136–137  
 Mantova Benavides, Marco 213, 215  
 Marco, Barbo 170  
 Marcolini da Forlì, Francesco 87  
 Martini, Francesco di Giorgio 103  
 Marx, Karl 268  
 Maturino Fiorentino 135  
 Medici, Cosimo I de' 164, 166, 184, 235–  
     237, 242  
 Medici, Cosimo the Elder de' 63–64  
 Medici, de' (Family) 36, 63, 175  
 Medici, Francesco I de' 237  
 Medici, Giuliano de' 156  
 Medici, Giulio de' 88  
 Melzi, Francesco 54

- Menander 28  
 Michiel, Marcantonio (Anonimo  
     Morelliano) 128  
 Miele, Giovanni (Jan Miel) 90–91  
 Mino da Fiesole (Mino di Giovanni) 90,  
     176–177  
 Mirandola, Giovanfrancesco Pico della 73–  
     74, 76  
 Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della 12, 153, 162  
 Mnesilochus 23–27  
 Monogrammist IP 130  
 Monogrammist RS 195  
 Muller, Jan Harmensz 179, 181  
 Musuro, Marco 201  
 Myron of Eleutherae 79, 219–220

**N**

- Nicholas of Cusa 45

**O**

- Orsini, Elena 190  
 Ottonelli, Gian Domenico 246  
 Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) 68, 135, 138,  
     167, 198, 230

**P**

- Pagani, Gregorio 257  
 Paleotti, Gabriele 20, 137, 250–252  
 Pamphilus of Amphipolis 220  
 Passeri, Giovanni Battista 90–91, 125–126,  
     175–176  
 Pausias 65  
 Perillus 226–232, 240–242  
 Perino del Vaga (Piero di Giovanni  
     Bonaccorsi) 90  
 Perugino (Pietro di Cristoforo  
     Vannucci) 40, 104–111  
 Peruzzi, Baldassare 227–228, 241  
 Pescetti, Orlando 56  
 Pesello (Giuliano d'Arrigo) 82  
 Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca) 40, 74, 148,  
     213, 224  
 Petrucci, Ottaviano 87  
 Phalaris 227–231, 240–242  
 Phidias 30, 95, 122, 169, 224–226

Philo of Alexandria 30–31  
 Philocles 27  
 Phrynichus 26–27  
 Piero della Francesca (Piero di Benedetto de' Franceschi) 129  
 Piero di Cosimo (Pietro di Lorenzo) 155–157  
 Pietro da Cortona (Pietro Berrettini) 246  
 Pietro da Milano 39  
 Piloto (Giovanni di Baldassarre) 164–165  
 Pino, Paolo 34, 49, 56–57, 76, 82, 84, 100, 119, 126, 150, 166, 206, 208, 211, 213–215, 221  
 Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano) 67–68, 71, 100  
 Plato 26, 28, 30, 37–38, 44, 47–48, 74, 137, 167, 218  
 Pliny the Elder 65, 68, 76, 86, 121, 123, 126, 128, 138, 147, 173, 200, 205, 210–211, 213, 223, 231  
 Plotinus 38, 170  
 Plutarch 146  
 Polidoro da Caravaggio (Polidoro Caldara) 85, 135, 227  
 Poliziano, Angelo 48, 63, 200, 213  
 Pollock, Jackson 267  
 Polycleitos 79, 211, 219  
 Pontormo (Jacopo Carrucci) 160, 164  
 Pope Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici) 88  
 Pope Paul II (Pietro Barbo) 176  
 Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere) 37, 104  
 Pope Sixtus V (Felice Piergentile) 225  
 Praxiteles 95, 224–226, 231  
 Pygmalion 200

## Q

Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus) 29, 86–88, 99, 121, 126, 196, 209

## R

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) 79, 84–85, 91, 104–105, 114, 132, 138–141, 146, 166, 190, 253, 255  
 Reisch, Gregorius 82, 103  
 Reni, Guido 91–92, 256  
 Riccio, Pierfrancesco 164

Rinuccini, Alamanno 87  
 Ripa, Cesare 182  
 Romano, Giulio (Giulio Pippi) 244  
 Rosa, Salvator 66  
 Rossa, Basilio Berta 62  
 Rossellino, Antonio (Antonio Gamberelli) 257

## S

Sacchetti, Franco 158  
 Sansovino, Andrea 32  
 Sansovino, Francesco 162, 179  
 Sansovino, Jacopo (Jacopo Tatti) 32  
 Santi di Tito 237  
 Sassetti (Family) 241  
 Savonarola, Girolamo 46–49, 62, 63  
 Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani) 86, 190, 192, 194, 196  
 Semolei (Battista Franco Veneziano) 114  
 Seneca the Elder 74, 86  
 Seneca the Younger 29, 38  
 Sforza, Bianca Maria 60  
 Sforza, Francesco 72  
 Sherman, Cindy 267  
 Socrates 28, 189  
 Soderini, Francesco 36  
 Sorte, Cristoforo 79, 171  
 Spinelli, Parri 19, 158–160  
 Spranger, Bartholomeus 179, 181  
 Squarcione, Francesco 32  
 Stanley, Dorothy 259–260  
 Steen, Jan 258  
 Stradano, Giovanni (Jan van der Straet) 242  
 Synesius of Cyrene 200

## T

Telekles 68–69, 71–72  
 Terzi, Francesco Lana 132, 178  
 Thersites 179  
 Theodorus 68–69, 71–72  
 Theognis 27  
 Thomas Aquinas 45–46, 51, 169  
 Tiarini, Alessandro 91–92  
 Ticozzi, Stefano 112, 192, 237, 239, 246  
 Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti) 172  
 Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) 76, 85, 112, 114, 125, 171–172, 213

Topolino (Domenico Fancelli da  
Settignano) 19, 174–179, 182, 184–185,  
187–189, 264  
Tribolo (Niccolò di Raffaello di Niccolò dei  
Pericoli) 164

---

## V

Valerius Maximus 205  
Valla, Lorenzo 87  
Vallance, Aymer 259  
van der Weyden, Rogier 244  
van Heemskerck, Maerten 244  
Varchi, Benedetto 81, 103, 116, 121, 183–185,  
201, 206, 217–219, 221, 223–224, 230,  
232–233  
Vasari, Giorgio 14–15, 19, 37, 40, 62, 65–66,  
80–81, 88, 90, 93–95, 101, 104–105, 107,  
110–111, 114–115, 122, 129, 132–133, 135,  
143, 145–161, 163–167, 171–179, 182, 184–  
186, 190, 200, 202, 205–207, 218, 221–  
223, 231, 234, 237–240, 242, 244–245,  
247, 249, 251–252, 264–266  
Veneziano, Domenico 160  
Vergerio, Pier Paolo 76  
Vesalius, Andrea 118, 162, 194–195  
Vettori, Pietro 240  
Villani, Filippo 95  
Vincent of Beauvais 42  
Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) 87

Visconti, Gaspare 60  
Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio) 54, 56,  
80, 119–120, 122, 179, 219–221, 235  
von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 141  
von Humboldt, Wilhelm 258  
von Mainz, Berthold 116  
von Nettesheim, Agrippa 137  
von Sandrart, Joachim 15

---

## W

Watelet, Claude-Henri 258  
Wilde, Oscar 260  
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim 143–144  
Woeiriot, Pierre 227–228, 241

---

## X

Xenocles 27  
Xenophanes of Colophon 66

---

## Z

Zainario, Jacopino 38  
Zeuxis 71, 76, 79, 95, 121, 126, 173, 206  
Zuccari, Federico 239  
Zuccari, Taddeo 239

Automimesis or the idea that “every painter paints himself” was a notion that was frequently voiced in art literature of the Italian Renaissance. It was initially thought to be an artistic flaw which threatened the faithful imitation of nature. The corporeal or spiritual similarity between an artist and his work, however, was soon to become a facet that was regarded as positive. Considering biographies of artists, art treatises, and artworks, this book explores the reasons for this paradigmatic shift and shows how ideas from the early modern period continue to shape our modern understanding of the autonomy of the arts.

