ITALIAN DRAWINGS AT THE ART INSTITUTE

Recent Acquisitions and Discoveries

The Art Institute of Chicago
MUSEUM STUDIES
VOLUME 17, NO. 1

A Masterpiece of Renaissance Drawing: A *Sacrificial Scene* by Gian Francesco de' Maineri

KRISTEN LIPPINCOTT
The Warburg Institute, University of London

In 1989, The Art Institute of Chicago acquired one of the great masterpieces of Ferrarese drawing (pl. 2 and fig. 1). Beautifully constructed and finely drawn, the *Sacrificial Scene* is an outstanding example of late fifteenth-century craftsmanship and a fascinating cultural and historical document. It tells us a great deal about Ferrarese art, fifteenth-century drawing practices, religious iconography, and early Renaissance attitudes toward the past.

Executed in black ink and wash, with highlights added in lead white, the drawing is an imaginative reconstruction of an ancient sacrifice. Two priests, one wearing a turban and the other bald, attend the sacrificial fire. The turbaned priest stirs the ashes of the fire with a long stick, in anticipation of the sacrificial victim's blood being poured onto its flames. The other priest holds a turban in his left hand and a small, covered dish (probably for scented oils) and a censer in his right. Standing atop the altar is a small statuette of a nude female—presumably the deity to whom the offering is being made—whose private parts are modestly covered by a long swath of drapery. She carries a spearlike arrow in her upraised right hand, suggesting that she may represent either Diana in her guise as the moon goddess, Luna, or *Venus victrix*. In the foreground of the composition, another turbaned priest slits the throat of a small animal whose exact species, while hard to determine, seems closest in shape to a fawn or new-born calf. The third priest is attended by a youth who holds forth a large, flat dish, or *patera*, to catch the blood that will soon flow from the animal's wounds.

As grisly as all this may seem, the drawing is actually serene and elegant. The scene is presented as a religious event—meditative, slow-moving, balanced, and harmonious. Much of this mood is created by the drawing's artful composition. The artist utilized all his skills in combining a number of features whose overall effect is reassuring to the viewer. The classically inspired architecture establishes a tone of refined grace. Although heavily corniced, the architecture is neither fussy nor distractingly decorative. It is clean, simple, and straightforward. The figures, in turn, are arranged nearly symmetrically around the altar, balancing the right and left halves of the drawing. Furthermore, their four heads outline an arc that complements the

FIGURE 1. Gian Francesco de' Maineri (Italian, active 1489–1506). *Sacrificial Scene* (detail of pl. 2), 1488/90. Pen and black ink, with brush and gray and brown wash, heightened with lead white (partially discolored), on cream laid paper; 41.8 x 30 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Regenstein Collection (1989.686). Impressive for its high quality and large dimensions, this drawing is intriguing on many levels: the history of its attribution, its possible purpose and meaning, and how it reveals Renaissance interpretations of the past.

major architectural feature of the setting, the curved niche within which the sacrificial altar is set. The drawing is bisected vertically by the central altar and its goddess, and horizontally at the level of the altar table. Added to this very solid compositional structure, the even depiction of light and shade contributes to the drawing's overall sense of tranquility. The drapery of the figures' robes, although complex, lacks the excited, static charge typical of mid-fifteenth-century Ferrarese painting and drawing.

Late Fifteenth-Century Ferrarese Painting and Misunderstandings about Ercole de' Roberti

For most of its documented history, this remarkable drawing has been attributed to the Ferrarese artist Ercole de' Roberti, who served as court painter to the Este, the ruling ducal family of Ferrara, from the late 1480s until his death, in 1496.[1] The reasoning behind this attribution in many ways reveals less about the *Sacrificial Scene* than about the development of art-historical approaches to Ferrarese art.

During the Renaissance, Ferrara was one of the major city-states of the Italian peninsula. Its income was largely derived from the trade and commerce that had developed due to its fortuitous position on the banks of the Po River, the great east-west trade route of northern Italy. Records suggest that Ferrara had more square feet of frescoed and decorated walls than any other city in Italy. Sadly, however, when the Este family fell from power, in the last years of the sixteenth century, Ferrara was virtually destroyed by a successive series of invading armies. Very little survives of the glory that was Renaissance Ferrara. Scholars have been left with the difficult task of trying to re-create a lost ambience from the few fragments and documents that remain.

For the past century, art historians have tended toward a peculiar sort of oversimplification when it came to the attribution of works of art that were thought to be connected, in some way, with Ferrara. Since only a handful of artists' names had been discovered in the documents, all extant Ferrarese paintings and drawings were divided among these few names. The "better" pieces were attributed to whoever was known to be the court artist during the period to which the painting was assigned; the mediocre pieces were handed over to followers or to fictitious, art-historical creations such as the Italian connoisseur Roberto Longhi's invention: "Vicino da Ferrara" (literally, "close to [the style of someone] from Ferrara"). The former attribution of the Art Institute's drawing to Roberti, therefore, is not particularly informative, since virtually every late fifteenth-century work from Ferrara of this quality has been assigned to him at one time or another.

Only recently have art historians begun to acknowledge the frustrating complexities of Ferrarese art. Much of this has to do with understanding the role of the court artist in a north Italian duchy. Officially, he seems to have been personally responsible for every decorated object in the ducal territory. This task involved composing great fresco cycles; subcontracting and supervising the teams of painters involved in these great undertakings; repairing damaged works of art; painting theater sets, marriage chests, heraldic banners, and horse-trappings (such as bridles and saddles); constructing and decorating the odd bit of furniture; painting illusionistic scenery for summer parties, and so on. In a sense, the role of a court artist in the fifteenth century was not unlike that of a leading Hollywood movie producer in the 1930s and 1940s, except that the artist was consistently a "hands-on" member of the

team. The court painter set the "visual style" for the court and, to a greater or lesser degree, everyone who worked under him painted in this style as long as it remained fashionable. Only careful study reveals the individual personalities of the different artists active in Ferrara during the latter years of the fifteenth century. Consequently, the oeuvres of artists known to have worked closely with Roberti or his immediate followers, such as Panetti, Mazzolino, Coltellini, Grimaldi, the young Costa, and Maineri — to whom the museum's drawing is presently attributed — have only begun to be explored. Indeed, the history behind the present attribution of the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene* to Gian Francesco de' Maineri is a case in point. Understanding why the drawing might be attributable to Maineri rests on appreciating the sort of detective work that goes into any study of fifteenth-century Ferrarese art.

The Peculiar History of the *Pala Strozzi*

The story begins with a large altarpiece, the *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints William and John the Baptist*, in the National Gallery, London (fig. 2). This panel is commonly known as the *Pala Strozzi*, since originally it had been commissioned by the Strozzi family for the high altar of the Oratorio della Concezione (known as Santa Maria della Scala) in Ferrara. Since 1880, the *Pala Strozzi* had been attributed to the largely hypothetical persona "Ercole Grandi."[2] In 1934, however, Longhi rejected the attribution of the altarpiece to "Ercole Grandi" on the altogether sensible premise that

FIGURE 2. Lorenzo Costa (Italian, 1460–1535) and Gian Francesco de' Maineri. *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints William (of Aquitaine?) and John the Baptist (The Pala Strozzi)*, 1498–99. Oil on panel; 247 x 163.8 cm. London, National Gallery (no. 1119). The Ferrarese artist Maineri was probably responsible for the composition of this altarpiece, which is closely related to the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene*.

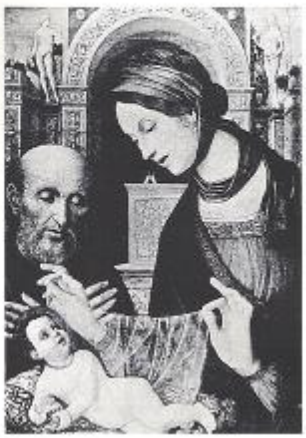


FIGURE 3. Gian Francesco de' Maineri. *Madonna and Child*, c. 1490. Oil on panel; 48.5 x 35.7 cm. Turin, Galleria dell'Accademia Albertina.

FIGURE 4. Gian Francesco de' Maineri. *Holy Family*, c. 1500. Oil on panel; 60 x 44 cm. Formerly Ferrara, Testa Collection. This panel and the *Madonna and Child* (fig. 3) are two of three extant paintings signed by Maineri. They serve as important touchstones in attributing a body of work to this artist.

such an artist never existed. He argued that the *Pala Strozzi* seemed to be the product of a collaboration of two different artists, one of whom was certainly the Ferrarese painter Lorenzo Costa.[3] Prompted by Longhi's suggestion, the English connoisseur Philip Pouncey decided to have the *Pala Strozzi* x-radiographed. This revealed that the entire panel had been repainted, except for Saint William's armor and left hand. Furthermore, the repainting had been done by someone other than the original artist. Pouncey agreed with Longhi's attribution of the final painting of the altarpiece to Costa, and suggested, by means of comparison to other signed works, that the original painting had been done by the then little-known Ferrarese painter Gian Francesco de' Maineri.[4] Pouncey's role in untangling the history of the *Pala Strozzi* is interesting because he was also responsible for the attribution of the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene* to Maineri.[5]

Born in Parma sometime between 1460 and 1470, Gian Francesco de' Maineri is first recorded in Ferrara in 1489 as having received payment for painting some "green batons" (*per fare verde zerti bastoni*) in the garden of the city's great Castello.[6] He seems to have traveled regularly between Ferrara and Mantua. Documents dating from 1489–93, 1502–03, and 1505 place Maineri in Ferrara at these times; and records from 1498–99, 1504, and 1506 show him in Mantua during these periods. Indeed, this constant "to-ing and fro-ing" upset more than one patron who found himself with an unfinished commission on his hands.

This, in fact, seems to be the explanation behind the peculiar history of the *Pala Strozzi*. One series of letters, running through November and December of 1498, records a heated episode between the agents of Isabella d'Este, Ferrarese wife of the Mantuan marquis Francesco II Gonzaga, and the brothers Carlo and Camillo Strozzi. Isabella had called Maineri to Mantua to paint her portrait. In answering the marquise's summons, Maineri apparently abandoned a large altarpiece he had been painting for the Strozzi brothers, which he had promised to finish by Christmas 1498. Understandably upset, the Strozzi retaliated by threatening to sue Maineri's wife, who had remained in Ferrara, for damages and interest. Isabella was furious. She wrote to the Strozzi, loyal patrician subjects of her father, Duke Ercole I d'Este, and told them to leave off bothering about Maineri, as he was now

working for her! The Strozzi, given little alternative, gracefully bowed out.[7] Pouncey suggested that Costa's single trip to Ferrara in 1499 (his only return visit to his hometown after he had left it in 1485) coincides perfectly with the probable date for his completion of the *Pala Strozzi*.[8] The most plausible scenario, then, is that Costa was called to Ferrara by the Strozzi expressly to finish the huge altarpiece that Maineri had left incomplete—hence, Maineri's underpainting, visible only by means of X-radiography, underneath the final surface of what is essentially Costa's painting.

The Paintings of Gian Francesco de' Maineri

Our knowledge of Maineri's work rests on three signed paintings: a *Madonna and Child* in the Galleria dell'Accademia Albertina, Turin (fig. 3); a similar, but probably slightly later, *Holy Family*, formerly in the Testa

FIGURE 5. Anonymous painter (Italian). *Madonna and Child*, 1500/1505. Tempera or oil on panel, 52 x 35 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Charles H. and Mary F. S. Worcester Collection (1947.92). This painting, produced by someone in the circle of the Ferrarese painter Ercole de' Roberti, exhibits a sweetness of style that was pervasive throughout Italy in the late fifteenth century.

Collection, Ferrara (fig. 4), and a *Head of Saint John the Baptist* in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.[9] Furthermore, at least seven partial copies of Maineri's *Holy Family* and a similar number of his *Christ Carrying the Cross* have been uncovered to date. Such a quantity of nearly identical paintings suggests that there must have been a tremendous market for small, devotional paintings in and around Ferrara and Mantua, for which Maineri was a leading supplier.[10]

The small nucleus of secure works already tells us a great deal about Maineri's painting style. As one might expect, he was strongly influenced by Ercole de' Roberti, an influence that Maineri never wholly outgrew. Even in his mature works, the solidity of form, monumentality of the figures, and overall color schemes hark back to Roberti's painting style of the late 1480s and 1490s. At the very least, this debt could be attributed to the fact that Roberti's tenure as court painter in Ferrara overlapped with Maineri's early years in the town. It does seem, however, that the link between the two artists may have been closer: Maineri may even have been trained in Roberti's shop.

One incident supports such a thesis: among all the artists available in Ferrara, it was Maineri who was hired to finish an important commission that had been left incomplete at Roberti's death in 1496.[11] Furthermore, stylistic examination of one painting, the *Gravaghi Madonna and Child*, formerly in the Canto Collection, Milan, seems to indicate that Maineri was

FIGURE 6. Ercole de' Roberti. *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints Elizabeth, Anne, Augustine and the Beatified Pietro degli Onesti (The Pala Portuense)*, c. 1480–81. Oil on panel; 323 x 240 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera. Many stylistic and compositional features of this altarpiece by Roberti, such as its rigidly geometrical composition, the shapes of the heads, and the arrangement of the drapery folds, can be found in the work of Maineri.

FIGURE 7. Ercole de' Roberti. *Saint Jerome*, c. 1480. Oil on panel; 35.2 x 23.5 cm. London, Barlow Collection.

called upon to finish the Christ Child and the hands of the Madonna in a composition that otherwise seems to be by Roberti.[12] Indeed, Longhi made a similar suggestion regarding a *Madonna and Child* in the Art Institute (fig. 5), which recalls Roberti's work in both its composition and form. The finish, however, is slightly more elegant and langorous than is usual in Roberti's autograph works and the details are slightly too precious. Longhi, no great fan of Maineri's, characterized the painting as showing Ercole "replaced. . . by his more decadent and affected [literally, 'strained'] pupil."[13]

Such full-scale condemnation seems unwarranted. Certainly, Maineri was a more refined stylist than Roberti was. But this tendency toward prettiness should not be seen as a defect; instead, it reflects a general trend toward what is often termed "the sweet style" seen in the work of artists active during the last decades of the fifteenth century and evident in the paintings of such Emilian artists as Costa and Francia, as well as in the art of the Venetian Giovanni Bellini and of the Umbrian Perugino, not to mention that of the young Raphael Santi. The reason behind this perceptible shift in taste is not clear. Some scholars have suggested that it reflects the deep religious fervor that spread over the Italian peninsula during these years, exemplified by the pervasive influence of the preachings of Girolamo Savonarola. Perhaps it was a reaction to the seemingly interminable wars between the Italian city-states and their neighbors during the latter years of the fifteenth century, evidence of a cultural fatigue and a pervasive desire for retreat from worldly concerns. Perhaps this style was consciously developed as yet another commodity for wealthy aristocratic patrons who wanted something "pretty" to touch and look at. This change in sensibility probably reflects a combination of factors that have yet to be satisfactorily analyzed. Nonetheless, it is into this milieu that one must place Maineri's *Sacrificial Scene*.

FIGURE 8. Francesco del Cossa (Italian, c. 1436–1478) and Ercole de' Roberti. *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints Apollonia, Catherine of Alexandria, Augustine, and Jerome (The Pala di San Lazzaro)*, c. 1473/79. Oil on canvas; 309 x 234 cm. Formerly Berlin, Staatliche Museen (destroyed 1945). Photo: Eberhard Ruhmer, *Francesco del Cossa* (Munich, 1959), pl. xx.

Maineri and the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene*

The Chicago drawing fits most comfortably into Maineri's early career, when he was still very close to Roberti's style of the 1480s, as exemplified by the latter's *Pala Portuense* in the Brera (fig. 6), the Barlow Collection's *Saint Jerome* (fig. 7), or the now destroyed painting on which Ercole collaborated with his teacher, Francesco del Cossa, the *Pala di San Lazzaro*, formerly in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin (fig. 8). All these works share a self-conscious, geometricizing attitude toward composition. The diagonal posture of the Barlow Collection *Saint Jerome*, for example, actually forms one side of an inverted triangle, which locks the overall structure of the painting into place much in the same way that the V-shaped arc of the priests' heads stabilizes the composition of the *Sacrificial Scene*. The bald head of the priest in the upper right of the drawing also has Robertian precedence (the aforementioned *Saint Jerome*, the same saint in the *Pala di San Lazzaro*, and the Beatified Pietro degli Onesti in the *Pala Portuense*). The priest in the upper left of the drawing sports a beard not dissimilar in form from those worn by Roberti's Saint Jeromes. The drapery style also recalls Roberti's in the way that the cloth is always bundled around the hip and upper thighs, while the lower limbs are partially defined by some sort of material that alternately clings to and protrudes from the figure to create unusual, shelflike folds. The physiognomy of the two figures at the drawing's right strongly resembles Roberti's early work and reflects the influence of Francesco del Cossa.[14] Yet, for all these similarities, the Art Institute sheet is clearly not by Roberti's hand.

FIGURE 9. Ercole de' Roberti. *Study for "The Betrayal of Christ,"* c. 1482/86. Pen and ink on paper; 15 x 21 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (no. 1448E). The mature Roberti tended to use drawing as an expressive medium, exploring the layered emotions generated by a given subject.

Despite the fact that the drawing recalls Roberti's paintings, it does not coincide with what we know about his skill as a draftsman. Roberti tended to use drawing as an expressive medium, a tool with which he explored the portrayal of ideas and emotion. This fundamental difference in approach becomes clear when one compares the *Sacrificial Scene* with one of Roberti's mature drawings, such as the *Study for "The Betrayal of Christ"* in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (fig. 9). The *Sacrificial Scene* is a completely different sort of drawing. There is little evidence of creative furor or of the intense study after live models. Instead, the sheet is carefully constructed, painfully accurate in the rendering of detail, and finished to a very high degree. It is more of a demonstration piece, proving the artist's skill and his ability to control the pen-and-ink medium. In this regard, one might argue, it seems to betray the efforts of a young or slightly insecure artist—by no means untalented, but still slightly anxious to "get everything right."

If one compares the *Sacrificial Scene* to other works attributed to Maineri, the similarities are striking. For example, the decorative grotesque on the front of the altar is nearly identical to the carved design that appears on the altar in the Testa Collection *Holy Family* and in one of the copies of this composition now in the Wernher Collection in Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire, England. The architecture found in the Art Institute drawing is close to that of the base of the Madonna's throne in the *Pala Strozzi*, with large, flat, inset panels surrounded by simple, beveled moldings spaced from the crowning cornice by an elegantly proportioned, unornamented architrave (fig. 10). The physiognomic structure of the two prophets' heads in the decorative roundels on the Madonna's throne is extremely close to that of the priest who is slitting the animal's throat in the Chicago drawing. Indeed, the mysterious, small beast also appears in the background of the Turin *Madonna and Child*. All of these aspects seem to confirm Pouncey's attribution of the Chicago drawing to Maineri. It is probably early, executed while he was still very close to Roberti, perhaps while still in his workshop. Many scholars have since recognized the *Sacrificial Scene* as Maineri's first known work.[15] A likely date for the drawing, then, would be sometime before 1490.

Modello Drawings in Fifteenth-Century Italy

The most impressive single feature of the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene* is its size. At 41.8 x 30 cm, or about 16½ x 11¾ inches, it is among the largest fifteenth-century drawings known. Indeed, it seems that fifteenth-century papermakers were unable to produce laid paper much larger than this. The sheet's dimensions and the very high quality of the drawing tempt one to suggest that it was intended as a finished product in itself, a presentation piece offered by the artist to a friend or patron whom he wished to please, such as the numerous drawings Michelangelo made for his friend Tommaso de' Cavalieri[16] or, as has been argued, Andrea Mantegna's *Judith* in the Uffizi (fig. 11).

While an intriguing possibility, the likelihood that the Art Institute *Sacrifice* is a presentation drawing is not great. We know painfully little about fifteenth-century drawing practices—too little, in fact, to do much more than generalize—but it seems that presentation drawings were more a phenomenon of the mature, self-assured artist than of the young trainee. Moreover, such drawings are actually extremely rare in the fifteenth century. Mantegna's *Judith*, for example, is more probably a highly finished *modello*—the perfected template upon which a painting is modeled—than a presentation drawing, because at least three small chiaroscuro paintings, which have been attributed to Mantegna or to his immediate circle, seem to depend directly on the drawing for inspiration: one in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (fig. 12); another in the Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal; and a third, a workshop piece, in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.[17] This duplication suggests that Mantegna's finished drawings were probably studio aids, things he kept around the shop as ready models from which he or his apprentices could produce "made-to-order" paintings. This attitude toward the production of pictures was also employed by Titian, as his numerous compositions of the *Mary Magdalen*, *Diana and Actaeon*, and *Danaë* attest.[18] And, certainly, Maineri, who no doubt knew Mantegna well

FIGURE 10. Detail of figure 2 showing the base of the Madonna's throne, which is similar in structure to the architecture in the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene*.

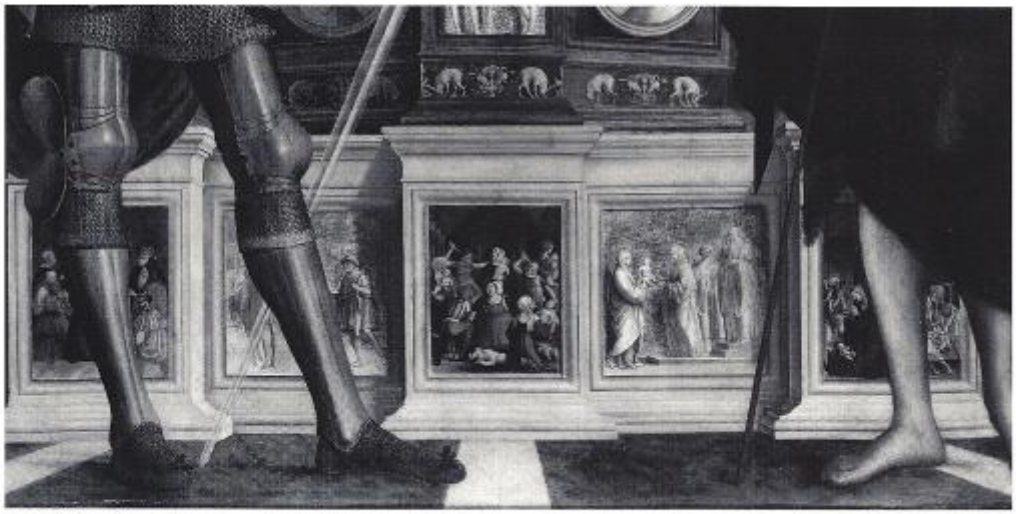


FIGURE 11. Andrea Mantegna (Italian, 1430/31–1506). *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, 1491. Pen, brown wash, with some heightening in white lead; 38.8 x 25.8 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (no. 404E).

FIGURE 12. Andrea Mantegna. *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1500. Tempera on linen, mounted on millboard; 46 x 36 cm. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland (no. 442). This is one of a group of paintings apparently based directly on Mantegna's own highly finished drawing of *Judith* (fig. 11), which itself may have been a presentation piece for a friend or client or, more likely, was a *modello* that he and his workshop assistants used in creating one or more pictures of the same subject.

and was himself the author of at least seven Holy Family paintings and an equal number of paintings depicting *Christ Carrying the Cross*, must have been aware of the advantages of this method of preserving successful designs.

The rather obscure subject matter of the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene*, however, makes it unlikely that it was a *modello* for one of Maineri's "best-sellers." Furthermore, as has been noted, the drawing seems a youthful product. Its conscientious execution suggests instead that it is a *modello* for a specific painting or part of a painting, a sort of trial run or test piece in which Maineri could prove to himself or to his patron that he was capable of completing the task at hand. Fifteenth-century *modelli* of this sort are extremely common. One only need cite, for example, the half-dozen *modelli* executed by Domenico Ghirlandaio for his frescoes in the Cappella Tornabuoni in Santa Maria Novella (figs. 13–14) and for the Cappella Sassetti in Santa Trinita, both in Florence.[19] The shear number of *modelli* surviving from the fifteenth century illustrates the extent to which a final, carefully executed drawing was then often considered a required part of the process of making a painting. It represented the final hurdle the artist had to overcome before he actually picked up his brush.

The Representation of Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Paintings

For what sort of painting did Maineri's *modello* serve? Ironically, one telling aspect of the drawing's iconography is its non-specific nature. We can tell that it represents a sacrificial scene, possibly made to a pagan goddess, but little more. The turbaned priests are presented as antique figures, and their turbans mark them out as "Eastern," but it is unclear whether they are supposed to be Greek, Persian, Arab, or even Old Testament figures. It is hard to tell whether this anonymity was intended or not.

The fifteenth century was still an age of discovery. Despite much research and thought, few during the early Renaissance had a very clear understanding or image of the past. For most, "antiquity" simply meant "from a previous age." The classical past was known largely through literary sources, such as the writings of Pliny, Livy, or Suetonius. This meant that artists, most of whom had little access to or real appreciation of the great monuments of Rome, were forced to rely on humanist scholars for second-hand scraps of knowledge about the marvels of the past.

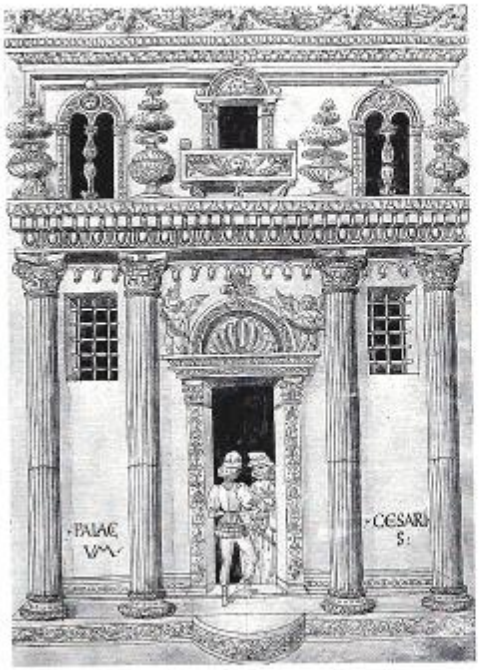
Thus, in the re-creation of historical or mythological compositions, imagination is often more evident than archeology. Even conscientiously antiquarian draftsmen, such as Ciriaco d'Ancona or Felice Feliciano, who spent hours painstakingly copying antique inscriptions, relied on their knowledge of contemporary events or current pictorial formulae to create their own "classical" scenes. For example, among the relatively faithful drawings after antique monuments added to the fifteenth-century antiquarian Giovanni Marcanova's manuscript in Modena, there is a series of fantastic interpretations of Caesar's palace and scenes of ancient sacrifice, which, although full of isolated antiquarian detail, remain typically late medieval in their overall effect (see figs. 15–16).[20] This demonstrates one of the great disjunctions of art history, the gap between acquired knowledge and intuitive creative response, and well illustrates the art historian Ernst Gombrich's profound observation that people most often draw what they know, rather than what they see.[21] No doubt, Maineri had a fairly good idea of what an "antique sacrifice" must have looked like. One scholar has even suggested that the drawing is a "free variation of an antique type."[22] But this observation seems to misrepresent the focus or aim of the drawing. In the *Sacrificial Scene*, Maineri created an image that was largely the product of his own imagination, a record of what he believed a sacrificial scene ought to look like. The nationality of the priests and exact historical context of the scene are left unclear precisely because they are superfluous to the particular story Maineri was trying to tell.

"Type" and "Antitype" in Renaissance Art

Accepting that the Art Institute's *Sacrificial Scene* is non-specific in its subject matter helps us identify its probable purpose. One extremely popular iconographic *topos* in Christian art is the "type/antitype." Stemming from the writings of the early Church fathers, such as Saint Augustine and Tertullian, this device set up a number of different episodes in the Old Testament,

FIGURE 13. Domenico Ghirlandaio (Italian, 1449–1494). *Annunciation to Zachariah*, 1485/90. Pen and ink and wash; 25.9 x 37.4 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina (no. 4860). This drawing served as a *modello* for the fresco scene in figure 14.

FIGURE 14. Domenico Ghirlandaio. *Annunciation to Zachariah*, 1485–90. Fresco. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Cappella Tornabuoni.



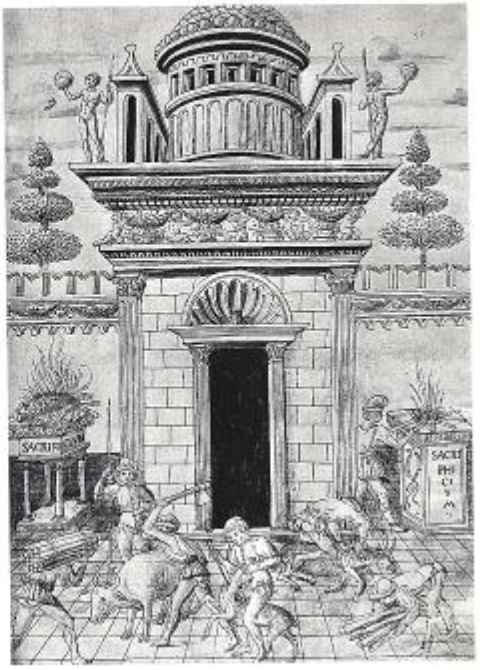


FIGURE 15. Anonymous artist (North Italian, fifteenth century) (Felice Feliciano?). *Caesar's Palace*, c. 1465. Pen and ink on parchment. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, cod. lat. 992 (α.L.5.15), fol. 27r.

FIGURE 16. Anonymous artist (North Italian, fifteenth century) (Felice Feliciano?). *Scenes of Classical Sacrifices*, c. 1465. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, cod. lat. 992 (α.L.5.15), fol. 38r. Even though the early Renaissance was a period of active rediscovery of the past, antiquity continued to be somewhat freely reinvented by artists such as Maineri and his north Italian contemporaries.

classical history, and pagan myths ("types") as the symbolic counterparts to events described in the New Testament ("antitypes"). For example, God speaking to Moses from the Burning Bush was seen as a "type" for the Annunciation to the Virgin (see fig. 17); the Creation of Eve from the rib of Adam was the "type" for the creation of the Church (*Ecclesia*) from the wound in Christ's side (see fig. 18), and so on. The most recurrent "type" for the Crucifixion of Christ was an Old Testament or pagan sacrifice.

The most convenient format for the presentation of "type" and "antitype" was two separate flanking scenes, seen in numerous copies of the *Mirror of Human Salvation* (the *Speculum humanae salvationis*) or the *Moralized Bible (Bible moralisée)*, for example. With the Renaissance penchant for a single, spatially unified pictorial field, the tradition had to be redressed. The new solution was to depict the "type" as a decorative element—either in a simulated painting or a sculptural relief—in the architecture surrounding or supporting the main subject of the picture. Examples of this solution appear throughout Italy during the fifteenth century: the Milanese Bernardo Luini's *Circumcision*, where the Sacrifice of Isaac appears as a simulated bronze roundel decorating the altar upon which the Christ Child is about to be circumcised; Bellini's *Christ the Redeemer*, which features a classical sacrifice inserted in the marble panels behind the main figure (fig. 19); Mantegna's fresco *The Trial of Saint James the Great*, in the Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua, where the marble relief of a pagan sacrifice is embedded in the wall of the triumphal arch above James's head; and Ghirlan-

FIGURE 17. Anonymous miniaturist (Italian, fourteenth century). Page from *Speculum humanae salvationis*. Pen and ink on parchment. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. lat. 9584, chap. 7. Since the early Middle Ages, Christian writers and artists tended to interpret classical myths, ancient history, and the Old Testament as symbolic counterparts ("types") to episodes in the New Testament ("antitypes"). Here *Moses and the Burning Bush* is coupled with the *Annunciation to the Virgin*.

FIGURE 18. Anonymous miniaturist (French, mid-thirteenth century). Page from *Bible moralisée*. Vienna, Oesterreichisches National-bibliothek, cod. 2554, fol. 1v. Photo: facsimile edition (Graz and Paris, 1973). Here the *Creation of Eve from Adam's Rib* is the "type" and the *Creation of the Church from the Wound in Christ's Side* the "antitype."

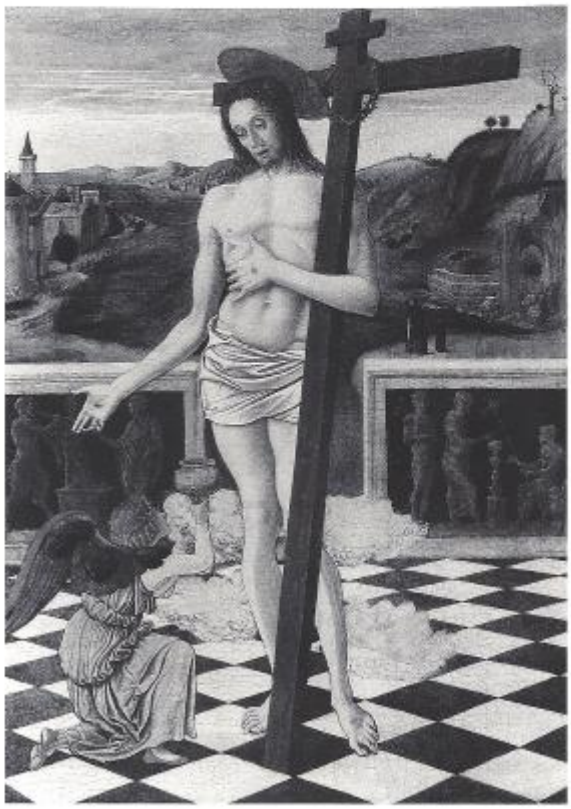


FIGURE 19. Giovanni Bellini (Italian, c. 1430–1516). *Christ the Redeemer*, c. 1465. Tempera on panel; 47 x 34 cm. London, National Gallery (no. 1233). Renaissance artists preferred scenes unified both in terms of time and space; their symbolic pairings of "type" and "antitype" was often achieved by including the "type" as a decorative feature in the "antitype" scene. Here a pagan sacrifice serves as the "type" for Christ's sacrifice.

FIGURE 20. Lorenzo Costa. *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Members of the Family of Giovanni II Bentivoglio (Madonna dei Bentivoglio)*, 1488. Fresco. Bologna, San Giacomo Maggiore, Cappella dei Bentivoglio.

FIGURE 21. Lorenzo Costa. Detail of figure 21 showing sacrificial scene at the base of the Madonna's throne. Most likely, Maineri's *Sacrificial Scene* was intended to serve as a "type" in a larger composition, much like this detail in the *Madonna dei Bentivoglio* altarpiece.

daio's fresco *The Sacrifice of Zachariah*, in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which similarly contains a marble sacrifice in its architecture.

The use of fictive architectural reliefs to contain biblical and pagan "types" seems particularly strong in Ferrarese and Bolognese painting: for example, in Roberti's *Pala di San Lazzaro* and *Pala Portuense*, and in at least six of Lorenzo Costa's works, the most notable being his *Madonna dei Bentivoglio* in the Bolognese church of San Giacomo Maggiore (figs. 20–21).[23] In addition to the examples found in Roberti's work—perhaps the most obvious source for Maineri—one should also note the use of inset scenes in both the Madonna's throne and in the architecture of the National Gallery's *Pala Strozzi*, particularly since several scholars have suggested that it is precisely in these sections that one sees a record of Maineri's original composition most clearly.[24]

Before we can determine whether the *Sacrificial Scene* was a *modello* for an illusionistic "type" inset, we must consider the complexity of the drawing's architectural setting. Most insets have either a plain background or one painted with tesselated gold squares to create the effect of a gold-mosaic backing. The reason for this is two-fold: first, a highly detailed inset is difficult for the average viewer to read. The significance of the insets is nullified if they are impossible to understand. As a result, most are composed very simply, usually with just a ground line for the figures to stand on and the most minimal indications of setting. Second, if the insets are too detailed, they detract from the primacy of the main subject.

One painting attributed to Maineri clearly shows the consequences of architectural decoration getting out of hand. His *Flagellation of Christ* (fig. 22) is so busy with illusionistic details of putti, soldiers, horses, trophies, and inscriptions that the actual flagellation can barely compete for equal attention. Indeed, the excess of architectural decoration, made more oppressive by the strict symmetry of nearly every element, seems to subsume the purpose of the narrative altogether.

In the depiction of a Madonna and Child or of Christ the Redeemer, the "type" must be added discreetly, its message delivered *sotto voce* for the

devotional power of the image to remain intact. Having said that, however, the most notable exception to this rule appears in the *Pala Strozzi* itself. The bottom level of the Madonna's throne contains three fully-colored inset scenes. The central panel represents the *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 23). The figures are set within a shallow stage, very reminiscent of the *Sacrificial Scene*, and backed by a triumphal arch; yet the dramatic clarity of the event remains unimpinged. There is, therefore, a parallel for the architectural background of the *Sacrificial Scene* in a large-scale work directly related to Maineri. One suspects that, if the Art Institute drawing were translated into paint as an inset panel, its effect would be equally compelling and similarly effective.

Maineri's *Sacrificial Scene* is an important addition to the Art Institute's collection for several reasons. It is a superb drawing, among the finest to have survived from Renaissance Ferrara. It tells us a great deal, not only about the artistic styles and development of late fifteenth-century Ferrarese art, but also about the way one Ferrarese artist began the complex process of creating a work of art. And, finally, the *Sacrificial Scene* functions as an instructive cultural document. It records a fascinating moment in the development of the Italian Renaissance, when man was trying to reconcile the prerequisites of his predominantly Christian culture with his yearnings for the romance of his classical past.

FIGURE 22. Gian Francesco de' Maineri. *Flagellation of Christ*, 1490/99. Oil on panel; 31.5 x 23.4 cm. Formerly Milan, private collection.

FIGURE 23. Lorenzo Costa and Gian Francesco de' Maineri. Detail of figure 2 showing the *Massacre of the Innocents*.

42

Notes

LIPPINCOTT, "A Masterpiece of Renaissance Drawing: A *Sacrificial Scene* by Gian Francesco de' Maineri," pp. 6–21.

1. The earlier attributions of the Chicago drawing to Ercole de' Roberti include: *Descriptive Catalogue of the Drawings. . . in the Possession of the Hon. A. E. Gathorne-Hardy* (London, 1902), no. 59; J. Schönbrunner and J. Meder, *Handzeichnungen alter Meister aus der Albertina und anderen Sammlungen*, 12 vols. (Vienna, 1896–1908), vol. 9, no. 1046; *The Vasari Society for the Reproduction of Drawings by Old Masters*, vol. 5 (Oxford, 1908–09), no. 15; E. G. Gardner, *The Painters of Ferrara* (London, 1911), p. 224; G. Gronau, "Ercole (di Giulio Cesare) Grandi," in U. Thieme and F. Willis, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler*, vol. 14 (Leipzig, 1921), p. 507; London, Royal Academy, *Exhibition of Italian Art, 1200–1900* (1930), exh. cat., p. 297, no. 612; Lord Balniel and Kenneth Clark, *A Commemorative Catalogue of the Exhibition of Italian Art Held in the Galleries of the Royal Academy, Burlington House, London, January-March, 1930* (London, 1931), p. 239, no. 752; A. E. Popham, *Italian Drawings Exhibited at the Royal Academy, Burlington House, London, 1930* (London, 1931), p. 42, no. 150, pl. 129; N. Barbantini, *Catalogo della esposizione della pittura ferrarese del Rinascimento* (Ferrara, 1933), p. 198, no. 239; Roberto Longhi, *Officina ferrarese* (Florence, 1934), p. 170 n. 89; F. Saxl, "Pagan Sacrifice in the Italian Renaissance," *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 2 (1938–39), p. 352 and fig. 61b; S. Ortolani, *Tura, Cossa, Roberti* (Milan, 1941), p. 191; M. Salmi, *Ercole de' Roberti* (Milan, 1960), p. 45, pl. 51; and Eberhard Ruhmer, "Ercole de' Roberti," *Encyclopedia of Universal Art*, vol. 12 (Venice and Rome, 1963), col. 611; and idem, "Ercole de' Roberti," *Encyclopedia of World Art*, vol. 12 (London, 1966), col. 229.

2. For reasons stemming back to the sixteenth century and a mistake in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, scholars, until recently, thought that the painter we now call Ercole de' Roberti was two different individuals: an earlier artist who painted very much like Cosimo Tura, called "Ercole di Antonio de' Roberti" ("Ercole, son of Antonio, from the Roberti family"); and another, who was believed to be a Bolognese pupil of Lorenzo Costa named "Ercole di Giulio Cesare Grandi" ("Ercole Grandi, the son of Giulio Cesare Grandi"). This muddle was worsened by the fact that many documents referred simply to "Ercole da Ferrara" ("Ercole from Ferrara"), particularly since the experts could not agree whether "Ercole di Giulio Cesare Grandi" was from Ferrara or Bologna.

The numerous scholarly articles written with the sole aim of distinguishing the one Ercole from the other ignored the fact that, in 1864, the great Ferrarese archivist Luigi Napoleone Cittadella had published a document referring to a single Ferrarese painter as "Magistri Erculis de Robertis alias de Grandis, pictor et civis Ferrariae" ("Master Ercole de' Roberti, also known as being from the Grandi family, painter and Ferrarese citizen"). See L. N. Cittadella, *Notizie relative a Ferrara per la maggior parte inedite* (Ferrara, 1864), p. 589. The idea of two Ercoles was so ingrained in the art-historical imagination that Cittadella himself believed the notation actually confirmed that there were two separate Ercoles: Ercole de' Roberti-Grandi, the painter; and Ercole de' Grandi, the painter and architect. This document, in fact, tells us, or so most now believe, that there was only one Ercole; his double name reflected the fact that his father was from the Roberti family and his mother was a Grandi. It was not at all unusual for artists to use their mothers' names. For example, in the mid-seventeenth century, Artemisia Gentileschi used her mother's family name, Lomi, when painting in Florence, rather than that of her father, the painter Orazio Gentileschi, probably to maximize the possible benefit of her mother's Tuscan origins.

3. Longhi (note 1), pp. 121ff. *Officina ferrarese* was reprinted as part of Longhi's *Opera completa*, vol. 5 (Florence, 1956); see pp. 72–73. This expanded work was itself reprinted as the *Officina ferrarese* (Florence, 1971); see pp. 97–99. See also Longhi's notes on the *Pala Strozzi* in "Ampliamenti nell'Officina ferrarese," *Critica d'arte*, suppl. 4 (1940), esp. pp. 25–27; reprinted in the 1956 *Officina ferrarese*, pp. 151–54, and in the 1971 *Officina ferrarese*, pp. 188–92.

4. See Philip Pouncey, "Ercole Grandi's Masterpiece," *The Burlington Magazine* 70 (1937), pp. 161–68.

5. The attribution by Pouncey first appeared in London, P & D. Colnaghi, *Loan Exhibition of Drawings by Old Masters from the Collection of Mr Geoffrey Gathorne-Hardy* (1971), no. 8, pl. 6.

6. The relevant documents concerning Maineri's career appear in Cittadella (note 2), p. 590; idem, *Documenti ed illustrazioni riguardanti la storia artistica ferrarese* (Ferrara, 1868), pp. 127–28; G. Campori, "I pittori degli Estensi nel secolo XV," in *Atti e memorie della RR deputazione di storia patria per le provincie modenesi e parmensi*, ser. 3, 3 (1885), pp. 525–604 (also published as *Artisti degli Estensi: I pittori* [Modena, 1875], esp. pp. 60–61, 78–79; and reprinted with the same title in Sala Bolognese, 1980, same pagination); A. Venturi, "Gian Francesco de' Maineri pittore," *Archivio storico dell'arte* 1 (1888), pp. 88–90; and in A. Luzio, *La Galleria dei Gonzaga venduta all' Inghilterra nel 1627–28* (Milan, 1913), pp. 196–98.

The best summary of Maineri's work and career can be found in Silla Zamboni, *Pittori di Ercole I d'Este: Giovan Francesco Maineri—Lazzaro Grimaldi—Domenico Panetti—Michele Coltellini* (Milan, 1975), pp. 10–23, 39–61. The artist's first forename, Giovanni, is generally elided with the second as "Giovan Francesco" or "Gian Francesco." I have chosen to use the latter, since this form most closely approximates the sound of his name as it appears in fifteenth-century documents ("Joanne Francisco de Maineriis de Parma, filio quondam Magistri Petri pictoris, et civis Ferrariae" ["Gian Francesco of the Maineri family from Parma, son of the deceased painter Master Pietro, and a citizen of Ferrara"], cited in Zamboni, p. 39).

7. The letter describing the Strozzi's reaction records that they "subito inclinarano la testa facendo reverenza a Sua Excellenza" ("they immediately bowed their heads out of respect for your Excellency"). See Luzio (note 6), p. 197.

8. Pouncey (note 4), pp. 162–68.

9. The last of these three may date to 1502, coinciding with a documented payment for a head of this saint that the artist had received in February of that year from Ercole I d'Este (Ercole I had commissioned the piece as a gift for the Abbess Beatified Sister Lucia da Narni, a miracle-working mystic whom the duke apparently had kidnapped in the hopes that she might be canonized to sainthood, thereby providing Ferrara with its first, and much-needed, "local" saint). Since Maineri habitually repeated his compositions, however, it is virtually impossible to say whether the Brera *Head of Saint John the Baptist* is indeed the painting commissioned for the duke. For more about Ercole I d'Este and the abbess, see L. A. Gandini, *Sulla venuta in Ferrara della B. Suor Lucia da Narni* (Modena, 1901).

10. Similar paintings of the Holy Family can be seen in the Museo di San Giuseppe, Bologna; the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem; the Wernher Collection, Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire; the Museo del Prado, Madrid; and in paintings that were formerly in the Molinari Collection, Cremona; the Civic Museum, Gotha; and the Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne.

Versions of Christ Carrying the Cross are in the Taddei Collection, Ferrara; the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; the Museo di Palazzo d'Arco, Mantua; the Galleria e Museo Estense, Modena; the Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome; the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; and formerly in the Carter Collection, Florence. For additional information about these pictures' provenance and the scholarly literature on them, see Zamboni (note 6).

11. For more information about the commission by Clara Clavell of an altarpiece for her family chapel in the Ferrarese church of Santo Spirito, see Campori (note 6), p. 603; and Venturi (note 6), pp. 88–89. I am grateful to Dr. Catherine Turrill of Dartmouth College for informing me that the documents list the patron's last name as "Clavell," rather than "Clavee," as is often repeated in the secondary literature.

12. This suggestion was first made by Longhi (note 3) (1956 ed.), pp. 181–82.

13. Ibid., p. 182: "supplita. . .dal suo allievo più decadente e lambiccato." Further information about the Art Institute's *Madonna and Child* will be included in the forthcoming catalogue by Christopher Lloyd of the Art Institute's fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian paintings.

14. Compare, for example, the broad jawlines and small, pointed chins of Maineri's figures with those found in Cossa's heads on the eastern wall of the Salone dei Mesi in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara.

15. See Pouncey (note 4); Zamboni (note 6), pp. 11–12, 56, and no. 33; V. I. Stoichita, "Deux Oeuvres ferraraises au Musée d'Art de la République Socialiste de Roumaine," *Revue roumaine d'histoire de l'art* 15 (1978), pp. 19–52; esp. p. 41 and fig. 23; and Maria Grazia Vaccaro's catalogue entry in A. Boschetto, ed., *Maestri emiliani del Quattro e Cinquecento*, vol. 11 of *Biblioteca di Disegni* (Florence, 1980), no. 1.

16. For an overview of the topic, see Michael Hirst, "The Making of Presents," in *Michelangelo and His Drawings* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1988), pp. 105–18.

17. For reproductions and a discussion, from a slightly different point of view, see R. Lightbown, *Mantegna* (Oxford, 1986), esp. pp. 210–18 and 227–35.

18. The *Danaë* on loan to the Art Institute (loan no. 9.1973), for example, is most likely a workshop product, with the hand of Titian evident only in some finishing touches in the landscape and in the flesh of Danaë.

19. Also relevant here is Vittorio Carpaccio's drawing *Saint Augustine in His Study* in the British Museum, London (1934–12–8–1). The best overview of fifteenth-century drawing techniques appears in Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1981); and Nottingham, University Art Gallery, and London, Victoria and Albert Museum, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop*, exh. cat. by Francis Ames-Lewis and Joanne Wright (1983).

20. The antiquarian drawings in the Modena manuscript (Modena, Biblioteca Estense, cod. lat. 992 [olim 5.15]) have long been attributed to Felice Feliciano. See, for example, Silvia Danesi Squarzina, "Eclisse del gusto cortese e nascita della cultura antiquaria: Ciriaco, Feliciano, Marcanova, Alberti," in *Da Pisanello alla nascita dei Musei Capitolini. L'antico a Roma alla vigilia del Rinascimento*, exh. cat. (Milan and Rome, 1988), pp. 27–37. Recently, however, one Italian scholar has suggested that the fanciful classical scenes included in the manuscript are by another hand, possibly that of the Paduan Marco Zoppo or one of his immediate circle. See M. T. Fiorio, "Marco Zoppo et le livre padouan," *Revue de l'art* 53 (1981), pp. 65–77. I thank Michael Koortbojian for discussing these drawings with me.

21. See E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London, 1960), chap. 2.

22. Saxl (note 1), p. 352, n. 4.

23. Other Emilian artists whose paintings include pagan/Old Testament insets include Tura, Aspertini, Grimaldi, Mazzolino, and Munari.

24. Pouncey's suggestion (note 4) has been widely accepted. See, for example, R. Varese, *Lorenzo Costa* (Milan, 1967), pp. 57–58, 71; Zamboni (note 6), pp. 16–17, 47–49; London, National Gallery, *The National Gallery Illustrated Catalogue* (London, 1973), p. 131, no. 1119; and C. Gould, *National Gallery Catalogues, The Sixteenth-Century Italian Schools* (London, 1975), pp. 77–80.

GILES, "*Christ before Pilate*: A Major Composition Study by Pontormo," pp. 22–40.

I would like to thank the following individuals for their generous assistance with various aspects of this article: Jonathan Bober, Eve Borsook, Anselmo Carini, Rachel Dressler, Douglas Druick, John and Marjorie Giles, George Goldner, Sarah Kianovsky, Suzanne McCullagh, Robert Miller, Dirk Shears, Miriam Stewart, Harriet Stratis, John Tedeschi, Martha Tedeschi, Claire Van Cleave, and Martha Wolff.

1. This drawing was acquired from the British Rail Pension Fund.

2. This number is based on Janet Cox-Rearick's *The Drawings of Pontormo: A Catalogue Raisonné with Notes on the Paintings*, 2 vols. (New York, 1981). Allowing for additions to and deletions from the first edition (*The Drawings of Pontormo* [Cambridge, 1964]), the revised number of drawings considered autograph by Cox-Rearick is 416.

3. In addition to the Art Institute study, these are: two drawings (on one sheet) in The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (Cox-Rearick [note 2], nos. 188–189); three drawings (on two sheets) in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Cox-Rearick [note 2], nos. 139, 151, 340); and eight drawings (on five sheets) in the J. Paul Getty Museum of Art, Malibu, California. For six of the Getty drawings, see Cox-Rearick (note 2), nos. 38, 48a, 60, 67a, and Malibu, California, The J. Paul Getty Museum of Art, *European Drawings: Catalogue of the Collections*, exh. cat. by George R. Goldner (1988), nos. 34–35.

4. When Julien Stock saw the drawing, it was still laid down on a cream laid-paper mount with a hand-colored decorative border, on the back of which was inscribed in graphite and in three different hands: *circa 1670/not Carracci* (upper left); *Carracci* (middle center); *Agos. Carracci* (lower center). Ultraviolet examination in the Paper Conservation Laboratory at The Art Institute of Chicago revealed an inscription on the verso of the primary support that seemed to read *Pontormo*. When David Chandler, Paper Conservator, debacked the drawing in the course of treating it, such an inscription was confirmed, written in pen and brown ink and in a seventeenth-century, or perhaps later, hand.

5. It should be acknowledged that Janet Cox-Rearick has verbally confirmed the authenticity of the drawing on the basis of a photograph and has dated it to the early 1520s.