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Annibale Carracci's *Montalto Madonna*

LARRY KEITH

Annibale Carracci's *Montalto Madonna* (NG 6597; PLATE 2) achieved great fame in the seventeenth century, and was specifically praised for its beauty by the famous seventeenth-century critic Giovan Pietro Bellori in his *Le vite*.¹ Further evidence of its popularity can be found in the numerous surviving contemporary painted copies, as well as in Cornelius Bloemaert's reproductive engraving made in the late 1630s.² Annibale's original painting, however, had been thought lost – until a version of high quality, painted on copper, appeared on the art market in 2003 and was eventually acquired by the National Gallery. Investigation of the painting's materials and technique undertaken during the course of the painting's recent restoration, together with a careful reconstruction of its provenance, provided crucial evidence to support the belief that this was the autograph version painted around 1598–1600 in Rome by Annibale. This belief, supported as it is by relatively objective evidence, nonetheless has at its core an aesthetic estimation of the picture's quality, and it is through the combination of these different ways of considering the picture that its prime status has been convincingly re-established.

While the attribution of the composition to Annibale is placed beyond doubt by the early written descriptions, the painted copies and the inscription on Bloemaert's engraving, there is no documentary evidence of its exact date apart from what can be surmised by looking at other more securely dated works. Annibale first came to Rome in 1594 under the patronage of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, and although his first Roman works are the large-scale decorative works made for the Palazzo Farnese – the Camerino Farnese and the fresco cycle for the ceiling of the Galleria – from 1596 to 1601, there are other works datable to this period, including several other small-scale pictures, many also executed on copper, which allow closer comparison of his handling of specific painterly details. Seen as a group they show something of the range of stylistic influences being considered by Annibale as he gradually absorbed the examples of Roman painting around him – a development that can also be traced in the works within the collection of the National Gallery. The *Christ appearing*

to *Saint Anthony Abbot* (NG 198; PLATE 1), dating from around 1598, shows the influence of Roman-based northern artists such as Adam Elsheimer in its meticulously finished surface and realistic details. The *Montalto Madonna*, however, includes something of the monumentality of Roman art in its sense of composition, as well as a naturalism in the interaction of the figures that owes a debt to Correggio. Its synthesis of northern and central Italian painting is a key moment in Annibale's career, pointing the way to the more austere, purer classicism of later works such as the *Domine Quo Vadis* (NG 9; PLATE 3) or *The Dead Christ Mourned* (NG 2923; PLATE 4) of a few years later.



PLATE 1 Annibale Carracci, *Christ appearing to Saint Anthony Abbot during his Temptation* (NG 198), c.1598. Oil on copper, 49.5 × 34.4 cm.



PLATE 2 Annibale Carracci, *The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist (The Montalto Madonna)* (NG 6597), c.1598–1600. Oil on copper, 35 × 27.5 cm.



PLATE 3 Annibale Carracci, *Christ appearing to Saint Peter on the Appian Way (Domine Quo Vadis)* (NG 9), 1601–2. Oil (identified) on wood, 77.4 × 56.3 cm.



PLATE 4 Annibale Carracci, *The Dead Christ Mourned ('The Three Maries')* (NG 2923), c.1604. Oil (identified) on canvas, 92.8 × 103.2 cm.



PLATE 5 Annibale Carracci, *The Madonna and Child with Saint John*, c.1596–7. Oil on copper, 26.3 × 20.3 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.



PLATE 6 Annibale Carracci, *The Vision of Saint Francis*, c.1595–8. Oil on copper, 46.8 × 37.2 cm, including added lateral wood strips. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, no. 18905.

The distinctive amalgam of Roman design with north Italian colour and naturalism seen in the *Montalto Madonna* is also present in other works of the period. The Uffizi's *Madonna and Child with Saint John* (PLATE 5), generally thought to be among Annibale's first Roman works,³ is of a similar figure scale to the *Montalto Madonna*, and with its smaller cast of characters packs the composition even more forcefully than the London picture. The arrangement of the three central figures is also broadly similar, as are many of the finer aspects of the rendition of drapery, hair and flesh. *The Vision of Saint Francis* (PLATE 6), now in the National Gallery of Canada, also depicts a Virgin and Child that is recognisably of the type seen in the *Montalto Madonna*, with the same colour schemes, and details of dress (including the Virgin's blue sandals) painted in very similar ways – for example the heavier fall of the Virgin's robes compared to the more animated folds of Christ's tunic. The picture also combines monumental figures with classical architectural elements and distant landscape views, albeit within a composition that was opened up by the addition of vertical strips to its sides.⁴

Useful comparisons can also be made with contemporary larger-scale works, such as the *Saint Margaret* (FIG. 1) from the church of Santa Caterina dei Funari,

which is firmly dated to 1599.⁵ The painting is probably mainly the work of assistants, and its principal figure is recycled from an earlier, pre-Roman larger altarpiece now in the Louvre – the *Madonna of Saint Luke* (PLATE 7) from around 1592, a picture which is itself heavily influenced by Correggio.⁶ Yet Annibale's revisiting of that Correggesque work, even if only for purposes of pilfering his own composition for the use of his assistants, seems to have resonated with him, as the figure type and physiognomy of the Saint Margaret seem close to those of the Virgin in the *Montalto Madonna* – as does the device of her gazing out directly to the viewer, now given even greater animation by the way that she leans forward and could even be said to be caught in the act of rising to meet the viewer. The general spatial organisation is also similar, with a monumental figure set off by a deeply receding classical landscape vista at the left, rising from a riverbank running across the middle distance with trees and buildings nestling near the horizon. However, while it is useful to compare the composition and figural types of the two pictures, it is also important to bear in mind their differing scales: the *Saint Margaret* is over two metres tall, the *Montalto Madonna* just over thirty centimeters.

The *Montalto Madonna* sits easily among these works



FIG. 1 Annibale Carracci, *Saint Margaret*, 1599. Oil on canvas, 239 × 143 cm. Rome, Church of Santa Caterina dei Funari.

from a stylistic point of view and is therefore generally dated to around 1598–1600. It shares many of the same preoccupations, namely an interest in creating a monumental, somewhat packed composition even within the small format imposed by the copper support, and it also somewhat surprisingly takes its place comfortably enough among the vast figural compositions of the roughly contemporary Farnese ceiling frescoes. The surviving drawings relating to the ceiling project show that this was an extraordinarily productive time for Annibale. The act of drawing may have facilitated the kind of experimentation necessary for the development of his large decorative schemes, even if they did not always provide definitive compositional solutions.⁷ While no drawing exists showing the Montalto composition in its final form, at least one sketch has been suggested as an initial essay containing similar compositional elements which may represent Annibale's



PLATE 7 Annibale Carracci, *The Madonna of Saint Luke*, c.1592. Oil on canvas, 401 × 226 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre.

earliest, relatively undeveloped ideas for the subject.⁸

The finished copper also demonstrates another key element of Annibale's work at this time: his deep interest in the classicising monumentality of Roman art as epitomised by Michelangelo and Raphael. The arc of Annibale's stylistic evolution can be rather broadly seen as developing under a succession of stylistic influences in which his early Bolognese realism yields to the sensual and painterly influences of Lombard and Venetian painting before finally achieving a more austere classicism informed by Roman example. But it is important to note that his artistic growth was founded on more than a kind of magpie eclecticism. It is certainly true that the fundamental critical question relating to the art of all of the Carracci concerns the manner in which they engaged with the art of other painters, both living and dead, and from a much wider range of stylistic traditions (and geographic loca-



PLATE 8 Raphael (and Giulio Romano), *Sagrada Familia del Roble*, c.1518. Oil on panel, 144 × 110 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.

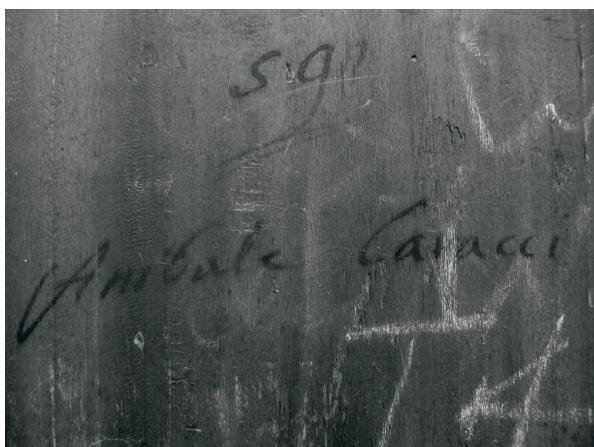


FIG. 2 Detail showing the eighteenth-century inventory number on the backboard of the *Montalto Madonna*.



PLATE 9 Cross-section of the foreground paint in the *Montalto Madonna*, showing the beige preparation layer containing predominantly lead white and ochre pigments, beneath which is a green layer resulting from reaction of the oil binding medium with the copper support.

tions) than had generally been the norm. The specific nature of Annibale's engagement with other painters was openly acknowledged and discussed by his contemporaries, and was seen in a positive light as something going well beyond a mere succession of borrowings. His intention was rather to leave behind the old polemics of the relative merits of individual artists or schools in order to learn as much as possible from what each had to offer, and from them to create something that was not derivative, but fundamentally new.⁹ The concept is described by Bellori and Malvasia, among others, but it is perhaps most telling to refer to the writings of Giovanni Battista Agucchi, as he alone was friendly with Annibale himself. In his unpublished *Trattato Agucchi* writes of Annibale's wish to 'costituire una maniera d'una sovranna perfettione; disegno finissimo di Roma and bellezza di colorito Lombardo'.¹⁰ Writing a generation later, Malvasia elaborates on the basic concept: 'Ed accoppiando insieme ed unendo con la giustezza di Rafaelle la intelligenza di Michelangelo, ed a questi anch aggiungendo con colorito di Tiziano l'angelica purita del Correggio, venne li tutte queste maniere a formare una sola, che alla Romana, alla Fiorentina, alla Veneziana, e alla Lombarda che invidiar non avesse'.¹¹ However the sources of Annibale's development are specified, it was generally agreed that his experience of Roman art was absolutely indispensable to his growth. Coming to Rome and immersing himself in its artistic riches provided the final key to allow him to develop his own vision, as was widely recognised in the seventeenth century by such writers as André Félibien, the perceptive biographer of Poussin, who wrote: 'Le jugement le plus universel qu'on a fait de ce Peintre, est qu'il acquit dans Rome une manière beaucoup plus correcte, et un dessein plus excellent qu'il n'avoit auparavant...c'est cette dernière manière qui lui a donné un rang parmi les plus grandes Peintres qu'il n'auroit peut-être jamais eu, s'il n'eut suivi l'école de Rome et quitté celle de Lombardie'.¹² Works like the *Montalto Madonna* therefore illustrate a fascinating moment in which the new stimuli of Roman art – especially that of Raphael – are being absorbed by Annibale, and incorporated into what had been a way of working more obviously influenced by northern Italian artists such as Correggio. The *Montalto* picture is probably specifically indebted to Raphael's *Sagrada Familia* (PLATE 8), now in the Prado, for the general disposition of the principal figures and motifs such as the crib, the evocation of the classical world within its landscape, and the general sense of balance between its rather lyrical landscape setting and its classicising, ordered composition.¹³

Research at the time of the picture's recent sale has

allowed the reconstruction of a credible provenance for most of its history.¹⁴ Bellori saw the picture sometime before 1672, when it had already passed from the Montalto family into the collection of Lorenzo Salviati, but he confirms Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto as its first owner. Montalto was a notable patron of work from important artists such as Bernini, who made his portrait bust and the Neptune and Triton fountain of 1622–3, first installed in the grounds of the Villa Montalto and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. He also commissioned the important (and famously contentious) fresco works carried out at San Andrea delle Valle by Domenichino and Lanfranco.¹⁵

After the *Montalto Madonna* left the Salviati estate, it descended through various Roman families, and was recorded in inventories of 1704, 1756 and 1783.¹⁶ The 1783 entry, contained within a published list of pictures owned by Filippo III Colonna, is the most significant. The inventory number given, No. 591, also appears on the wooden backboard that still accompanies the copper panel (FIG. 2), suggesting that the backboard is no later than this date; the preservation of the by then obscure inventory number thus provides physical evidence in support of the painting's provenance.¹⁷ After the eventual dispersal of the Colonna collection¹⁸ the painting was next recorded in the collection of Sir Archibald Campbell of Succoth, at Garscube House (Dumbartonshire), by Waagen in his 1854 *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, where it is listed as 'ANNIBALE CARRACCI.-1. The Virgin and Child, St. John the Baptist near a cradle, and Joseph. A good example of this often repeated picture'.¹⁹ The picture left the Campbell collection on its dispersal in 1947, and passed by descent to the eventual sellers to the Gallery.

As is common with paintings on copper, the paint layers are executed in simple applications laid directly over the beige-coloured preparation (PLATE 9).²⁰ There is little by way of complex build-ups beyond the occasional use of a glaze to modify the primary body colour, as is seen in the red dress and blue mantle of the Virgin. The paint handling is direct and simple, which would imply that it was well prepared in drawings; nonetheless, the painting displays a few minor pentimenti: in the location of Joseph's glasses (PLATE 10), the details of folds of the Virgin's blue mantle and the arrangement of the white linen draped over the wicker crib in front of the Baptist (PLATE 11). This last change was the only one of any compositional significance, as the lowered final placement of the linen allows the viewer to see more of the Baptist's torso, effectively giving him a slightly greater visual prominence within the larger composition. While the changes are just discernible within the texture of the paint itself, they are much



PLATE 10 Detail from the *Montalto Madonna* showing pentimento of location of Saint Joseph's eyeglasses.

more clearly visible in an electron emission radiograph, a kind of X-ray technique occasionally employed on works on copper in which only the uppermost paint layers contribute to the image, thus avoiding it being overwhelmed by the relatively enormous atomic density of the copper support (FIG. 3).²¹ Interestingly, one of the first copper paintings to be examined with this technique was Annibale's roughly contemporary *Vision of Saint Francis* (PLATE 6); the radiograph revealed important changes in the painting of the background architecture which led to the enlargement of the composition with copper strips added to each side (coincidentally, by the time Bellori was writing his *Vite* these two paintings were both owned by Lorenzo Salviati).²² It is interesting and perhaps instructive to note that even as he did much of his thinking and problem-solving in preparatory drawing – an inclination that must have been greatly strengthened by the need to create cartoons for the Farnese frescoes – his creative process was fluid enough to allow him to continue to revise his work well into the later stages of the painting. This also accords with his practice on the Farnese frescoes themselves, where examples of radical revisions made after the 'final' cartoon have been discovered – an unusual practice within the uncompromising dictates of fresco technique.²³

If the manipulation of the brushwork is relatively straightforward, the tonal and chromatic ranges are more considered than at first seems apparent. As has been noticed elsewhere,²⁴ Annibale uses colour to focus attention on the principal figures, giving them stronger, more saturated colours as well as the greatest

tonal contrasts. In the *Montalto Madonna* this practice can be seen in the comparison of the intensely coloured, strongly modelled red and blue draperies of the Virgin with those of Joseph, whose yellow robe is markedly more subdued in hue and tonal values. A similar control is evident in the handling of the various white draperies, where Christ's garment is both higher in key and stronger in contrast than both the Virgin's sleeve and the bed linen. It is also interesting to consider the handling of the Baptist's flesh in this context. Not surprisingly, his skin tones are considerably darker than those of Christ, and are rendered with a markedly greater *sfumato* effect. The means of producing this more dusky hue are as economic as they are effective: the lighter flesh tones are thinly painted over the darker tones of the background landscape, thus giving the desired subdued effect relative to the flesh of Christ. The optical effect of the darker underlayers has been heightened, however, by the passage of time, as a result of both the naturally increased transparency of the oil paint and the painting's particular physical history.²⁵

The fame of the picture was such that it was copied repeatedly in the seventeenth century, and the cumulative effect of this process was already becoming problematic by the time Bellori saw the painting sometime before the publication of his *Vite* in 1672. He wrote: 'Because for its beauty this little picture was copied continually while it was in the Villa Montalto, it was already then being worn away in the hands of copyists.'²⁶ There seems little doubt of Bellori's meaning – 'se consumava ai mani dei copisti' – both from close textual analysis and from his description of similar injurious practice applied to other pictures, such as Barocci's *Entombment*, where confirmation of the damage caused by copying comes in a letter from the painter himself.²⁷ Several different tracing techniques were commonly

used, some more damaging than others; oiled transparent paper could be placed against the picture surface to allow tracing of contours with charcoal or ink, or sometimes the contours of the picture could first be gone over with chalk or charcoal which was then rubbed or scored onto the oiled paper when it was placed onto the picture surface. Another seventeenth-century text describes a process whereby 'those wretches outline the paintings in lake ground with oil, then afterwards oil paper and press with the hand until these outlines are impressed', which process seems to be the one decried by Bellori in his description of the Barocci, where he says that it had been almost ruined by a tracer 'who penetrated the contours and colours'.²⁸

The condition of the *Montalto Madonna* strongly suggests that it was also the victim of such dubious practices. There is considerable paint loss around almost the whole of its perimeter (FIG. 4), much of which was probably caused by removing the copper panel from a wooden strainer on to which it seems to have been originally nailed, but which may have also resulted from pinning or fixing paper or fabric to the panel edges to facilitate accurate tracing. The distant landscape has also suffered disproportionately, appearing unusually sunken and indistinct with considerable abrasion and loss of fine detail (PLATE 13). Such a pattern of damage could easily have resulted from copyists' repeated applications of oily paints and their subsequent removal from Annibale's relatively young paint layers with the harsh materials then available for cleaning. This is particularly borne out by close comparison with similar landscape passages on other roughly contemporary paintings by Annibale, such as the National Gallery's *Domine Quo Vadis* (PLATE 3), which is considerably better preserved in these areas.²⁹

Ironically, one of the earliest contributors to this unfortunate process of damage has also provided one of



PLATE 11 Detail from the *Montalto Madonna* showing pentimento of patterns of folds of the Virgin's mantle and arrangement of Christ's bed linen.



FIG. 3 The *Montalto Madonna*, electron emission radiograph detail of same area as PLATE 9.

FIG. 4 The *Montalto Madonna*, overall electron emission radiograph.PLATE 12 Cornelius Bloemaert, engraving after the *Montalto Madonna*, c.1638–45. London, British Museum.

the more accurate records of the picture's initial appearance: the reproductive engraving produced by Cornelius Bloemaert in Rome sometime between 1638 and 1645 (PLATE 12). Bloemaert was particularly noted for his skill in translating the subtleties of paint handling into the engraving medium, as was described by Joachim von Sandrart, a contemporary critic, painter and biographer: 'For in everything his intelligence was thorough, the reasoning uncommon, the action of his burin and its duct delicate, yet the elaboration very full-bodied, so that he quite justly could be considered a phoenix'.³⁰ Writing in 1681, Filippo Baldinucci describes Bloemaert's work for the Montalto family, including the mention of a picture that is surely the *Montalto Madonna* itself: 'Cardinal Montalto housed him [Bloemaert] in his famous villa, where he had to engrave his portrait and other illustrious paintings, among which the very fine Madonna of Annibale Carracci'.³¹ The engraving itself substantiates the documentary evidence, as its contours align precisely with those of the painting in a manner which could only have been produced by some sort of direct tracing.

There is therefore a kind of justice in the fact that the Bloemaert engraving proved extremely useful

during the picture's recent restoration. Most of the areas of repaint were easily recognisable as such, occurring over losses around the perimeter or other obvious damages, as well as showing a characteristic appearance in ultraviolet or infrared illumination. Further investigation by the National Gallery Scientific Department allowed a more specific characterisation of the repainting, beginning with the sky paint across the top edge. This was found to contain Prussian blue pigment, and therefore was applied at least a century after the picture was painted; the same pigment was also used in mixtures of green paint in all sampled areas of suspect landscape within the landscape.³² The repaint also had other distinguishing features. Unlike Annibale's paint, which was found to be executed in heat-bodied linseed oil, the repaint was done with heat-bodied walnut oil to which had been added pine and mastic resins – a mixture which experience suggests would be more typical of nineteenth- or possibly eighteenth-century practice, but which has not been encountered in seventeenth-century paintings.³³ Additionally, where the repaint had been extended over original paint there was a fluorescing resinous layer between it and the original paint underneath, further confirming its status



PLATE 13 Detail of landscape from the *Montalto Madonna*, during cleaning.

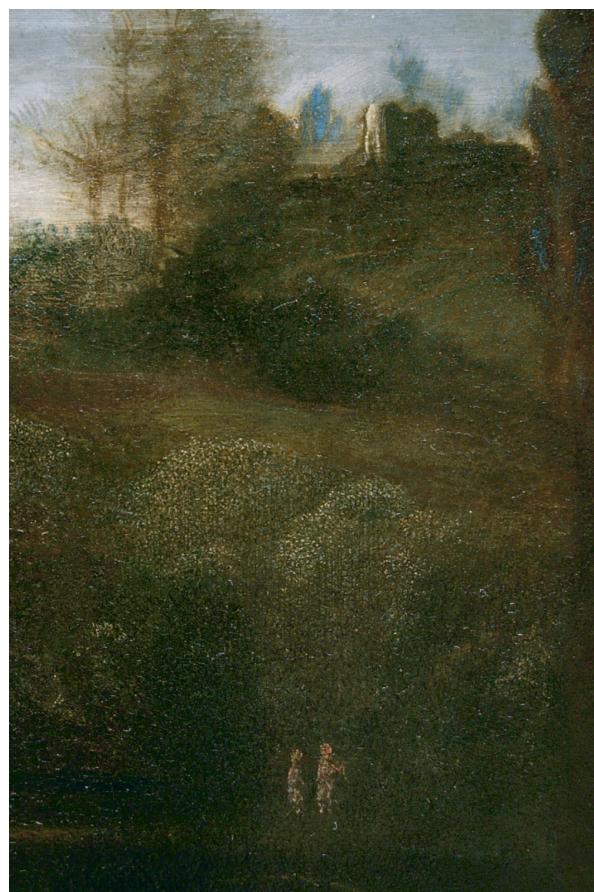


PLATE 14 Same detail of landscape after restoration.

as material added after the painting had been varnished. The distinctive mixed media and underlying fluorescent layers were found in all other areas of repaint that were sampled, and because of their generally darkened appearance and overgenerous application they were removed for the most part during the cleaning of the picture. Unfortunately, the same features were also found in many of the fine details within the distant landscape, confirming them as retouching, including much of the foliage of the trees and most of the two tiny figures on the distant riverbank (PLATE 15). Close inspection with the stereo microscope suggested that while original details in the upper landscape describing the architecture, trees and undulating hill were obscured by repaint, there was comparatively little underlying original paint in the area of the trees along the riverbank. After consultation and discussion it was decided to leave much of the old retouching intact in this area, reducing it in part and incorporating it within the most recent restoration (PLATE 14) with the intention of bringing it as close as possible to the most accurate record we have of the original state of the picture – the Bloemaert print (PLATE 12). It was also decided to leave

the visual evidence of Annibale's pentimenti largely unretouched in the restored picture, as they were not thought to be visually disturbing and were an important, relatively objective feature in any consideration of the painting's status as Annibale's original work.

In a sense it seems fitting that the recent confirmation of the panel's authorship results from a coming together of many different strands of argument, given that the picture itself can be seen as a kind of distillation of Annibale's wide-ranging artistic interests. His unabashed acknowledgement of his diverse influences is perhaps out of key with present-day notions of creativity and originality, not least because such practice makes considerable extra demands on the viewer to know the sources well enough to see how they have been transformed.³⁴ But if writers like Malvasia were perhaps over-literal in their exhaustive cataloguing of his influences, they were certainly correct in their implicit assumption that what he created was somehow fundamentally new and greater than the sum of its parts. Visitors to the National Gallery are particularly fortunate to have the opportunity to compare Carracci's work with Correggio's *Madonna of the Basket* (PLATE 16)

as well as Raphael's *Madonna of the Pinks* (PLATE 15) and his more rigorously classicising *Garvagh Madonna* (PLATE 17).³⁵ Mindful of Annibale's own documented impatience with over-theorising,³⁶ they can still experience something of the seventeenth-century critical response to Annibale, consider anew his desire to fuse the best of the central and northern Italian painterly traditions, and see for themselves the nature of his extraordinary achievement.

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PLATE 16 Correggio, *The Madonna of the Basket* (NG 23), c.1524.
Oil on wood, 33.7 x 25.1 cm.



PLATE 15 Raphael, *The Madonna of the Pinks* ('La Madonna dei Garofani') (NG 6596), probably 1507–8. Oil on yew, 27.9 x 22.4 cm.



PLATE 17 Raphael, *The Madonna and Child with the Infant Baptist* (*The Garvagh Madonna*) (NG 744), probably 1509–10. Oil on wood, 38.7 x 32.7 cm.

Notes

- 1 Rome 1672, p. 84; trans. as *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* by A.S. Wohl, H. Wohl and T. Montanari, Cambridge 2005, p. 101.
- 2 The better of the many painted copies are to be found in the Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford; the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; and Convento di Sant'Antonio, Cortona. Among the seventeenth-century engravings made from the painting in addition to that of Bloemaert are those made by Ludwig von Siegen (1609–1680); Pierre Lombard (1613–1682) (with variations); Nicolas Poilly (1626–1696) (as a tondo with Saint Elizabeth); Giacomo Antonio Stefanoni (17th century Bolognese); Wallerant Vaillant (1623–1677); Abraham Blootelink (1640–1690); and Pierre Landry (1630–1701) (as an oval with only the Virgin and Child). See D. Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, London 1971, Vol. II, pp. 43–4, and P. Cooney, *L'opera completa di Annibale Carracci*, Milan 1976, p. 110 note 93, and Sotheby's *Old Master Paintings*, Part One, London, 12 July 2004, lot 35.
- 3 See D. Posner 1971 (cited in note 2) and *Annibale Carracci*, ed. D. Benati and E. Riccomini, exh. cat., Milan 2006, pp. 284–5.
- 4 *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper 1575–1775*, exh. cat., Oxford 1999, pp. 75–6.
- 5 Benati ed. 2006 (cited in note 3), pp. 286–7.
- 6 Op. cit., pp. 286–7. On the question of the disputed authorship of the *Saint Margaret* see Aidan Weston-Lewis, 'The Annibale Carracci exhibition in Bologna and Rome,' *Burlington Magazine*, 149, 2007, p. 260.
- 7 Bellori refers to Annibale's extensive preparations for the Farnese palace frescoes, citing the example of the Hercules in the Camerino: 'Contutio qualche volta veniva anch'egli ritardato, non potendo giungere con l'opera alla perfezione della mente, come si rincontra ne suoi reiterati studij, la figura di Hercole, che sostiene il globo con gli asterismi, imitata da un altro Hercole antico di marmo nel palazzo Farnese. Annibale nel disporlo perfettamente vario molti disegni, e schizzi, de' quali oltre il numero di venti habbiamo veduto, concorrendo a quell'ultime linee dela gratia, che consiste in un punto.' Bellori 1672, p. 81; Bellori trans. Wohl, p. 100 (both cited in note 1); Diane de Grazie, 'The inventive genius of Annibale Carracci', in *The Drawings of Annibale Carracci*, exh. cat., Washington DC 1999, p. 19.
- 8 See R. Wittkower, *The Drawings of the Carracci in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, London 1952, p. 143, no. 343, for his suggestion of RL2342 as a loosely preparatory drawing (not universally accepted). The lack of scholarly agreement about the drawing highlights the very fluidity of Annibale's generative process, and the drawing also implies something of the inherent monumentality present in his work of this time, regardless of scale or format. One indisputable example of a preparatory sketch for a contemporary copper painting exists for the Ottawa *Vision of Saint Francis*, also in the National Gallery of Canada, where a drawing (no. 26531r, ink and brown wash on cream laid paper, 20.9 x 22.6 cm) gives the basic arrangement of the principal figures as they appear in the painting.
- 9 These contemporary cookbook recipe dissections of Annibale's style did not help his critical reputation in the nineteenth century, when ideas about eclecticism led to the belief that Annibale did little more than stitch together a patchwork of varied stylistic components. From the mid-twentieth century there has been a more balanced appraisal of Carracci's artistic influences. On questions of eclecticism and imitation see Denis Mahon, 'The Classic and Eclectic Misinterpretations of the Carracci', *Studies in Seicento Art Theory*, London 1947, pp. 195–229; Charles Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci and the Beginnings of Baroque Style*, Florence 1977, pp. 43 and 52; and Elizabeth Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair: Novelty, Imitation, and Theft in Seventeenth Century Rome*, New Haven 2005, pp. 103–4 and 109. See also *Art History in the Age of Bellori: Scholarship and Politics in Seventeenth Century Rome*, ed. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette, Cambridge 2002. For further exploration of Bellori's ideas see *L'idea del Bello: un viaggio per Roma nel seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori*, exh. cat., Rome 1999.
- 10 '...to construct a manner of sovereign perfection; the finest design of Rome and the beauty of Lombard colouring': quoted in Denis Mahon, 'Aguucchi's *Trattato*: Annotated Reprint of Mosini's Preface of 1646 Containing the Surviving Fragment of the Treatise', in *Studies in Seicento Art Theory*, London 1947, p. 257. See also 'The construction of a legend: the origins of the classic and eclectic misinterpretations of the Carracci', in Mahon 1947 (op. cit.), pp. 109–54, and A. Ubeda, 'Venus, Adonis, and Cupid: *Ad emulazione di Tiziano*', in *Annibale Carracci: Vénus, Adonis et Cupid*, exh. cat., Madrid 2006. Elsewhere in his treatise Aguucchi repeats this formulation, writing of Annibale's goal 'di congiugnere insieme la finezza del Disegno delle Scuola Romana, con la vaghezza del colorito de quelle di Lombardia': Mahon 1947 (op. cit.), p. 257.
- 11 '...and joined together and united the judgement of Raphael, the intelligence of Michelangelo, and to these also added the colour of Titian and the angelic purity of Correggio, coming from all these manners to form a single style which the Roman, Florentine, Venetian, and Lombard did not individually possess.' Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice. Vite de pittori Bolognesi alla Maesta Christianissima di Luigi XIII Re di Francia e di Navarra il sempre vittorioso. Consagrata dal Co. Carlo Cesare Malvasia, fra Gelati L'Asoso. Divisa in due Tomi; con Indici in fine copiosimi*, Bologna 1678, Vol. 1, p. 358, and *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci: Commentary and Translation*, trans. and ed. Ann Summerscale, University Park, Pennsylvania, 2000, p. 81.
- 12 'The most widely held opinion on this painter is that it was in Rome where he acquired a more proper style, and finer draughtsmanship than he had earlier displayed... it is the later style that placed him among the great painters, which he never would have been had he not followed the Roman school and left that of Lombardy.' A. Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes* (1666–79, Vol. III, p. 282). The view that the experience of Rome was essential for the perfection of Annibale's art was also held by Bellori; perhaps unsurprisingly, the Bolognese writer Malvasia felt that Annibale's best works were made before leaving Bologna. See Dempsey 1977 (cited in note 9), p. 38.
- 13 Posner 1971 (cited in note 2), Vol. 1, p. 86, and note 57, p. 166. Raphael's *Sagrada Família* is only firmly documented from its arrival in the Spanish royal collection well after Annibale's death, but its presence in Rome during his lifetime has been plausibly surmised on the basis of copies made there throughout the sixteenth century. See Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Raphael: The Paintings. Volume II: The Roman Religious Paintings ca. 1508–1520*, Munster 2003, pp. 190–1, and note 306, p. 194.
- 14 National Gallery dossier, NG 6597; Sotheby's *Old Master Paintings*, Part One, London, July 12, 2004 (cited in note 2); Benati ed. 2006 (cited in note 3), p. 284.
- 15 The Bernini bust is now in the collection of the Hamburg Kunsthalle. See I. Lavin, 'Bernini's bust of Cardinal Montalto', *Burlington Magazine*, CXXVII, no. 982, January 1985, figs 36–38. The fountain was acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. A.18.1-1950) in 1950. On the San Andrea delle Valle commission see Cropper 2005 (cited in note 9), pp. 5–6 and 175–6.
- 16 1704, *Altro Quadro rappresentante altra Madonna con Bambino*, S. Giuseppe, e S. Giovanni alto palmi 1, e mezzo largo palmi uno 2/12 con Cornice near a tre ordini d'intaglio dorato di Annibale Carracci. 1756, *Altro Quadro I misura di mezza testa piccolo p. alte rappresentante la Madonna S. Sma con il Bambino*, S. Giuseppe, e S. Giovanni, opera di Annibale Carracci dipinto in Rame, con Cornice a tre ordini d'intaglio dorata 600. See National Gallery dossier, NG 6597; Sotheby's *Old Master Paintings* 2004 (cited in note 2); Benati ed. 2006 (cited in note 3), p. 284.
- 17 Catalogo dei Quadri, e Pitture esistente nel Palazzo dettissima Casa Colonna in Roma Coll'indicazione dei loro Autori Diviso in sei Parti Secondo I rispettivi Appartamenti. The association of backboard and copper was kept even when the frame was changed, as the nineteenth-century frame in which the picture was purchased in 2003 was clearly later than this list. The picture was reframed in a seventeenth-century frame after its acquisition by the Gallery, but the backboard has been kept in the reframing. The picture is described as 591. *Un Quadro in Rame di 1 ½ per alto = La Madonna, il Bambino, S. Giuseppe, e S. Giovanni = Opere insigni d'Annibale Carracci*, and its hanging location is specified within the Palazzo Colonna; its hanging location on the Quarto Facciata verso la Galleria, in the Ultima Camera del Letto verso la Galleria, the tenth room listed on the Secondo Piano Nobile of the Secondo Appartamento Nobile. See National Gallery dossier, NG 6597; Sotheby's *Old Master Paintings* 2004 (cited in note 2); Benati ed. 2006 (cited in note 3), p. 284.
- 18 Another work from the Colonna collection which later came into the National Gallery Collection is the Correggio *Venus with Mercury and Cupid ('The School of Love')*, NG 10, which was acquired in 1834.
- 19 G. Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, London 1854, Vol. III, p. 292. The 1891 publication gives an inventory number, 77, which was found on the frame in which the picture was acquired by the Gallery. The painting was also included in two published versions, made in 1864 and 1891, of the *Catalogue of the Pictures at Garscub House*, presumably produced by the Campbell family.
- 20 The layer is comprised of predominantly lead white with small amounts of black and vermillion, slightly thicker in application than often encountered. FTIR found some chalk as well, perhaps an extender for the lead white. Oil as binder also confirmed by FTIR. In a cross-section there is a green zone at the bottom of the priming layer where the oil has reacted with the copper metal to form copper fatty acid salts (copper carboxylate band seen at 1585 cm⁻¹ in FTIR); see report from Marika Spring, National Gallery Scientific Department. For a more general discussion of priming methods in painting on copper see Isobel Horowitz, 'The Materials and Techniques of European Paintings on Copper Supports' in *Copper as Canvas* 1999 (cited in note 4), pp. 63–92.
- 21 For descriptions of the method of electron emission radiography see C. F.

- Bridgman, P. Michaels and H. F. Sherwood, 'Radiography of a Painting on Copper by Electron Emission', *Studies in Conservation*, 10, 1965, pp. 1–7; Ian Wainwright, 'Examination of Paintings by Physical and Chemical Methods', *Shared Responsibility*, Ottawa 1990, pp. 83–4 and 92–3; France Drilhon, 'L'apport de l'émissiographie dans l'étude des peintures et des émaux', *ICOM Committee for Conservation: 7th Triennial Meeting, Copenhagen*, 1984, Vol.1, pp. 54–7. The electron emission radiograph of the *Montalto Madonna* was done at the British Museum by Janet Ambers, whose invaluable support and expertise are gratefully acknowledged.
- 22 *Copper as Canvas* 1999 (cited in note 4), pp. 75–6. See also Bellori 1672 (cited in note 1), p. 84, on Salviati's ownership of the two coppers.
- 23 See De Grazia 1999 (cited in note 7), p. 21, for the suggestion that the fresco of *Hercules Resting* in the Camerino Farnese was reversed and reworked after the composition had been completed, and, possibly, after he had begun the fresco. As this reworking involved excising sections of the frescoed plaster, replastering and repainting, it cannot be considered a pentimento in the usual sense. Personal communication, Aidan Weston-Lewis.
- 24 See the discussion of Annibale's *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, now in the Brera, in Dempsey 1977 (cited in note 9), pp. 32–3.
- 25 It cannot be ruled out that the light over dark build-up resulted from the late addition of the figure of the Baptist to the composition, but given the generally careful planning, the iconographic tradition of his presence, and the odd compositional void that would result, it seems most unlikely to have been an afterthought.
- 26 'Questo quadretto per la sua bellezza, quando era nella Villa Montalto, copiando del continuo, già si consumava nelle mani de' copisti'. Bellori 1672, p. 84, and trans. Wohl 2005, p. 101 (both cited in note 1).
- 27 For the story of the damaged Barocci see L.F. Bauer, 'A letter by Barocci and the tracing of finished paintings', *Burlington Magazine*, 128, 1986, pp. 355–7. For further accounts of seventeenth-century tracing practices see idem, 'Van Dyck, replicas, and tracing', *Burlington Magazine*, 149, 2007, pp. 99–102.
- 28 Bellori's full comment regarding the damage to the *Entombment* reads: 'Quest'opera per la sua bellezza, mentre veniva copiata continuamente, ebbe quasi aperdersi, per la temerita di uno che nel lucidarla penetra il colore e li dintorni e la guasto tutta.' Bellori 1672 (cited in note 1), p. 179. Barocci extensively reworked his damaged painting; see Bauer 1986 (cited in note 27). For more on seventeenth-century tracing methods see also G.B. Volpati, 'Modo da tener nel dipinger' in M. P. Merrifield, *Original Treatises on the Art of Painting* (1849), New York 1967, Vol. II, pp. 734–9 and 750–2, cited by Bauer 1986, p. 356.
- 29 NG 9, 1601–2; the picture is painted on a wooden panel.
- 30 Joachim von Sandrart, *Der Teutschen Akademie zweyter Theil*, Nuremberg 1675, p. 362, quoted in Marcel Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and his Sons: Paintings and Prints*, Vol. 1, Doornspijk 1993, pp. 513–14.
- 31 Bloemaert was employed by Abate Francesco Peretti, nephew of the original patron, Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto, to whom it had passed by descent. Bloemaert also engraved the *Saint Margaret* in the church of Santa Caterina dei Funari; see Benati ed. 2006 (cited in note 3), p. 286. Baldinucci was equally fulsome in his praise of Bloemaert's engraving skill: 'One of the merits of this artisan was an unparalleled sweetness and evenness of the handling; and in addition his ability to imitate marvelously and express the manner of the painter whose works and drawings he expresses.' Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 1681, edn 1846, IV, P. 600: 'Uno de pregi di questo artefice è stata una tale dolcezza ed equalità della taglia, da non trovarse pari: ed inoltre un sapere a maraviglia imitare, ed esprimere la maniera di quell pittore, di cui egli ha intagliate le opere e disegni', and p. 598: '...lo accolse il Cardinale Montalto nella sua celebre villa, dove ebbe ad intagliare il proprio ritratto di lui, e più suoi insignissimi quadri, fra quali la bellissima Madonna di Annibale Carracci.'; and Roethlisberger 1993 (cited in note 30), pp. 515–17. Bloemaert's copper plate is now kept in the Chalcografia, Rome; see Roethlisberger, p. 515.
- 32 The pigment was invented after 1704, and came into wide use in the early eighteenth century. See Barbara Berrie, 'Prussian Blue', in *Artists' pigments: a handbook of their history and characteristics*, ed. Elisabeth West-FitzHugh, Vol. 3, Washington DC, 1997, pp. 191–217.
- 33 Report from Raymond White, Scientific Department, National Gallery, 2004.
- 34 Cropper 2005 (cited in note 9), pp. 116–17.
- 35 The *Madonna of the Basket* and the *Madonna of the Pinks* were hung together with the *Montalto Madonna* when it was first acquired, but have since been dispersed within the Gallery.
- 36 For example, this reputed statement by Annibale: 'noi altri Dipinti habbiamo da parlare con le mani' (we painters have to speak with our hands), quoted in Dempsey 1977 (cited in note 9), p. 40.