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FRONT COVER

Raphael, *An Allegory* ('*Vision of a Knight*') (NG 213), detail of PLATE 13, page 16.

TITLE PAGE

Nicolas Lancret, *The Four Times of Day: Morning* (NG 5867), detail of PLATE 1, page 49.

A note on the reproductions

The reproductions of complete paintings from the National Gallery's collection in this book have been printed from colour-correct, high-resolution digital scans made with the MARC II Camera. This process was described in 'The MARC II Camera and the Scanning Initiative at the National Gallery', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 23, 2002, pp. 76–82.

Infrared examinations were performed by Rachel Billinge, Rausing Research Associate in the Conservation Department. Infrared reflectography was carried out using a Hamamatsu C2400 camera with an N2606 series infrared vidicon tube. The camera is fitted with a 36mm lens to which a Kodak 87A Wratten filter has been attached to exclude visible light. The infrared reflectogram mosaics were assembled using Vips-ip software.

For further information about the software see the Vips website at [www.vips.ecs.soton.ac.uk](http://www.vips.ecs.soton.ac.uk)

# Polidoro da Caravaggio's *Way to Calvary*: Technique, Style and Function

LARRY KEITH, MINNA MOORE EDE AND CAROL PLAZZOTTA

*The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954, PLATE 1) by Polidoro da Caravaggio (c.1499–1543) was acquired in February 2003 and is the first work certainly by the artist to enter the National Gallery collection.<sup>1</sup> It was bought from the Estate of Philip Pouncey, the great scholar and connoisseur of

Italian paintings and drawings who was formerly Assistant Keeper at the National Gallery (1939–45) and subsequently in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum (1945–66). Nothing is known of the painting's whereabouts before its appearance on the London art market in



PLATE 1 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954), by 1534. Walnut, 73.3 × 59.3 cm.

the early 1930s. Its connection with Polidoro's most important commission, the altarpiece for the oratory of the Catalan confraternity attached to the church of SS. Annunziata in Messina (now in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; PLATE 2), was established by Pouncey (and subsequently in greater depth by Marabottini), following his acquisition of the work at auction at Christie's, London, in 1959.<sup>2</sup>

The picture, an extremely rare survival of a work by an artist whose painted oeuvre has largely perished, is a significant addition to the national holding of paintings by Polidoro. The majority of his surviving paintings are today in the Capodimonte, Naples, and the Museo Regionale, Messina. In the UK, he is represented only by a handful of works in

the Courtauld Institute Galleries, London, Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford, the Royal Collection and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.<sup>3</sup> In terms of the National Gallery's collection, the painting fills an important gap. Although the Gallery owns eight great works by Raphael, it has hitherto possessed nothing, apart from the recently restored *Birth of Jupiter* (NG 624) by Giulio Romano and his workshop, to represent the diverse productions of his talented followers.<sup>4</sup> The *Way to Calvary*, a rare example of Southern Italian Mannerism, is a vital addition to the Gallery's sparse collection of Italian Mannerist paintings and complements works by other artists who were in Rome at the same time as Polidoro, including Rosso Fiorentino, Parmigianino and Sebastiano del Piombo. The acquisition is also



PLATE 2 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *The Way to Calvary*, by 1534. Panel, 310 × 247 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. © Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale di Napoli Photo: Archivio dell'Arte/Luciano Pedicini, Naples.



PLATE 3 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Self portrait in a hat* (recto), 1527–8. Paper, 13.2 × 10.3 cm. INV. 2896  
© Collection Frits Lugt, Institut Néerlandais, Paris.

significant in that it represents one of the earliest surviving examples of an oil sketch, or *bozzetto*.

Polidoro Caldara was called Polidoro da Caravaggio after the town near Bergamo in Northern Italy where he was born (PLATE 3), but his exact birth date and further details of his origins and artistic training remain obscure.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that he had some exposure to the art scene in Lombardy and possibly to the works of Leonardo, whose preference for tone over colour may have made a lasting impression on him. Judging from the pronounced Northern tendencies that are already evident in his earliest works he also absorbed influences from north of the Alps (Dürer for example).<sup>6</sup>

According to Vasari, Polidoro moved to Rome at the time the Vatican Loggie were being constructed under Pope Leo X (1514–17), and until the age of eighteen was employed as a labourer on that project, carrying lime for the masons.<sup>7</sup> He learned to draw by observing artists at work in the Loggie under the direction of Giovanni da Udine, the great pioneer of the techniques and typology of antique painting. Frescoes attributable to Polidoro in the Stanza dell'Incendio suggest that he had migrated into Raphael's workshop by 1517. Vasari writes enthusiastically about the young Lombard's preco-

cious artistic talent and by the time of Raphael's death in 1520, if not before, Polidoro was receiving independent commissions.<sup>8</sup>

Between Raphael's death and the Sack of Rome in 1527, Polidoro and his Florentine collaborator Maturino specialised in the production of grisaille fresco decorations in imitation of antique reliefs for the exterior façades of numerous buildings throughout Rome. Vasari wrote that 'there is no apartment, palace, garden or villa in Rome that does not contain work by Polidoro and Maturino' (FIG. 1).<sup>9</sup> The monochrome work was greatly admired by Polidoro's contemporaries, and praised by sixteenth-century writers including Dolce, Armenini and Lomazzo. Vasari's lengthy account of this work reflects his admiration for the pair's unrivalled skill in this medium: 'their works are continually being drawn by all the foreign painters; wherefore they conferred greater benefits on the art of painting with the beautiful manner that they displayed and with their marvellous facility, than have all the others together who have lived from Cimabue onwards.'<sup>10</sup>



FIG. 1 Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino da Firenze, *Façade decorated with Roman historical scenes*, mid-1520s? (restored periodically from the 1600s). Fresco. Palazzo Ricci, Rome (photograph taken around 1890). Archivi Alinari, Florence. © Fratelli Alinari, Florence. All rights reserved 2004.



PLATE 4 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Two singing putti*, c.1526. Fresco. Cappella di Fra' Mariano, San Silvestro al Quirinale, Rome. © Direzione Centrale per l'Amministrazione del Fondo Edifici di Culto del Ministero dell'Interno, Rome. Photo: Giuseppe Schiavinotto.

These façades (of which over forty examples are recorded in Rome) were avidly copied by later artists such as Rubens and Poussin but have today virtually disappeared, ravaged by time and the elements. However, the lower register of Polidoro's monochrome frescoes in San Silvestro al Quirinale (datable to c.1526), the masterpiece of his last years in Rome, gives a good idea of his fluent handling and convincing illusionism (PLATE 4).<sup>11</sup> The scenes from the lives of Saints Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena in the upper register are among the earliest examples of pure landscapes in existence and were enormously influential. The atmospheric depiction of trees and rocks in these frescoes, particularly noted by Vasari, is also a characteristic feature of the *Way to Calvary*.<sup>12</sup>

Polidoro was among the many artists driven out of the papal city when it was sacked by German troops in 1527. He fled south, first to Naples, where he was commissioned to paint an important altar-

piece of *Saints Andrew and Peter and Souls in Purgatory* (1527–8) for a confraternity of fishmongers in Sant'Angelo alla Pescheria, of which only a few fragments survive today.<sup>13</sup> Vasari reports that Polidoro was not appreciated in Naples, a fact confirmed by his departure only a year later for Sicily. By October 1528, he had settled in the port of Messina, where he spent the remainder of his career, cut short by his untimely death in 1543 (he was allegedly strangled by an avaricious assistant for the savings he had withdrawn to return to Rome).

The *Way to Calvary*, Polidoro's most ambitious and monumental work, was completed seven years after his arrival in Messina (see PLATE 2).<sup>14</sup> The altarpiece was commissioned by Pietro Ansalone, consul of the Catalan confraternity, for their oratory in the church of SS. Annunziata, also known as 'dei Catalani'. The finished work was unveiled by 1 September 1534 when it was reproduced as the woodcut frontispiece of Cola Giacomo d'Alibrando's *Il Spasmo di Maria Vergine*, a remarkable poem of seventy-six stanzas in which the altarpiece's genesis, reception and installation are described in some detail.<sup>15</sup> Ansalone's family owned a chapel in the Olivetan monastery of S. Maria dello Spasimo in Palermo, the high altar of which was



PLATE 5 Raphael, *The Way to Calvary*, 1517. Panel, 318 × 229 cm. © Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

adorned with Raphael's *Way to Calvary* of c.1516 (PLATE 5, now in the Prado, Madrid), and, probably at Ansalone's behest, this prestigious work was the starting point for the design of the Catalani altarpiece.<sup>16</sup> Seeking perhaps not only to compete with, but also to surpass his master's example, Polidoro quickly abandoned the studied classicism and theatrical rhetoric of Raphael's painting and developed his own dramatic and highly idiosyncratic response to the subject.

Alibrando's poem emphasises the central role of the design process:

*Ora Polidor comincia il disegno  
come sempre far suole in cotal opra.  
E quello fatto glorioso e degno  
apresso il quadro a dipintar s'adopra.*<sup>17</sup>

(Now Polidoro begins the design  
as is always done for such a work.  
And having done this in a magnificent  
and appropriate manner  
He next strives to paint the picture.)

Notwithstanding the poet's claim that the painter was designing his altarpiece 'as is always done for such a work', Polidoro seems in fact to have stepped outside the bounds of contemporary practice in a highly original and innovative manner. The theory and practice of serial preparatory work for painted compositions of any complexity was well established by this time, but had hitherto been restricted almost exclusively to drawing media.<sup>18</sup> Within this tradition – which Polidoro would have witnessed in Raphael's workshop – initial drawings, loosely and freely executed, were continually refined through a progression of intermediary drawings until the final composition was set down in a full-size, drawn cartoon, which was often used as a template for the final painting. Although this practice was adopted by painters as diverse in style as Leonardo, Michelangelo, Fra Bartolommeo and Andrea del Sarto, the reliance on purely graphic media perpetuated a traditional, more contour-based way of thinking about composition (Leonardo's *sfumato* notwithstanding). Polidoro was a prolific draughtsman and made numerous preparatory drawings for his painted works, but when it came to designing the Catalani altarpiece he seems to have chosen to supplement these with exploratory compositional trials in oil on panel. This permitted him freely to explore qualities of tone, colour, texture and even expression, in dramatic and dynamic relation to the



PLATE 6 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *The Way to Calvary*, by 1534. Panel, 60 × 45 cm. Vatican Museums, Vatican City. INV. 40652 © Archivio Fotografico Musei Vaticani.

drawn line. The National Gallery painting is the third in a series of three such preparatory works to survive, the other two being in the Vatican Museums, Rome (PLATE 6), and the Capodimonte, Naples (PLATE 7).<sup>19</sup> These exceptional experiments constitute the earliest known examples of the oil sketch or *bozzetto*, and provide valuable insight into the composition's evolution.

The Vatican sketch (PLATE 6), the first in the sequence, is little more than a copy of Raphael's work. The chief difference is the elimination of Saint John the Evangelist and the three Marys who are replaced at the Virgin's side by the mournful figure of Saint Veronica (not obviously identifiable in Raphael's work). The second sketch (PLATE 7), that in Naples, departs radically from the first overtly Raphaellesque design. The figures are pushed further back into space, the distinctive rocky outcrop and blasted tree are visible for the first time, and the number of protagonists is vastly increased. The subject is slightly altered, for Christ is no longer carrying the cross, but is shown protecting himself from his tormentors. Polidoro, however, introduces one detail from Raphael's design not included in his first sketch, namely the figure of the



PLATE 7 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *The Way to Calvary*, by 1534. Panel, 71 × 54 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. © Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale di Napoli. Photo: Archivio dell'Arte/Luciano Pedicini, Naples.

Virgin reaching out to Christ. In the third sketch, that now in the National Gallery (PLATE 1), Polidoro combines elements from both the previous studies. He returns to his initial idea of Christ crushed beneath the giant cross, but retains the atmospheric landscape and the violence and emotional intensity of the second sketch. This is the only version to include the figure of the Virgin collapsing in a 'spasm' of grief, which – as poignantly described in Alibrando's poem – is taken up so dramatically in the finished picture (much more emphatically than in Raphael's high altarpiece for the church dedicated precisely to S. Maria dello Spasimo).

The National Gallery picture was painted on a thick walnut panel, made up of two planks.<sup>20</sup> The construction was assembled from wood recycled from what appears to have been some sort of furniture or door panel. The carved depressions and channels on the reverse were presumably made in association with now-missing fastening hardware. A small rectangular section of wood was cut away from the left plank and replaced before the two boards were glued together. Walnut was a very expensive commodity, and its use for what is ostensibly a preparatory work is unusual. However,

Polidoro selected recycled walnut for other oil sketches and small-scale panel paintings made at about this time, and it may be that he simply happened across a supply of walnut dismantled from some previous project and re-used it.<sup>21</sup> Although walnut was sometimes used as a high quality painting support in Lombard paintings of about the same date, Polidoro's treatment of the wood was quite idiosyncratic: despite its unusual thickness (for a work of this size), the panel was crudely planed, and unevennesses in its surface are clearly visible through the gesso and paint layers. The gesso was also applied in a very rough-and-ready manner, perhaps with a palette knife or other spreading tool rather than a brush, and not even extended consistently to the panel edges.

A warm translucent medium-rich oil-based *imprimitura* was applied over the gesso ground, with a composition of mixed earth pigments, including ochres and umbers, as well as red lead, lead white and black, more or less in keeping with standard contemporary practice (PLATE 8).<sup>22</sup> Over a border crudely drawn in black chalk, Polidoro rapidly drew in the main figures in the same medium (FIG. 2).<sup>23</sup> Some of the principal elements seem to have been well established in the artist's mind, such as the figure of Christ who is simply laid in and quite faithfully adhered to in the finished painting. In a manner reminiscent of Raphael (and ultimately deriving from the prescriptions of Alberti), Christ was drawn unclothed in order to establish the position of the limbs (FIG. 3).<sup>24</sup> The woman and baby behind the Magdalen are drawn in a more frenetic and less resolved way, with Polidoro repeatedly going over and over the contours of the

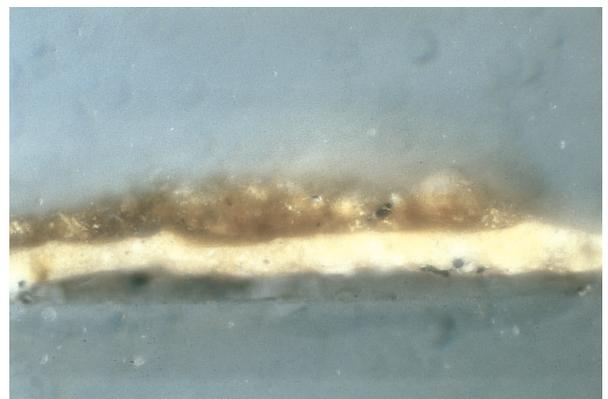


PLATE 8 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954). Cross-section showing the composition of the oil-based *imprimitura* consisting of mixed earth pigments including ochres and umbers, as well as red lead, lead white and black. Original magnification 280×; actual magnification 230×.



FIG. 2 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954), infrared reflectogram mosaic.



FIG. 3 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954). Infrared reflectogram mosaic detail showing Christ, initially drawn unclothed in order to establish the position of the limbs.

figures in the manner of some of his independent composition sketches on paper. Other elements, including the Roman banner, are drawn in such a perfunctory manner as to be little more than ciphers at this stage, their forms altered considerably in the paint layers. The Vatican sketch was mapped out with a similarly sketchy and vigorous underdrawing.<sup>25</sup>

The first laying-in of the composition was done in white or off-white paint, and shows the artist

already thinking in terms of form and tone as well as contour. The stiff ridged quality of this paint, used to sketch in the lighter values of the composition, strikingly anticipates the *abbozzo* techniques of Italian artists working a century later.<sup>26</sup> These initial indications were not followed strictly as the work progressed; revisions are evident in areas such as the drapery of the Magdalen and the sleeve of Saint Veronica. The free and calligraphic application of the paint of the tormenting bugler's bald head gives some idea of the aesthetic quality of Polidoro's initial paint – although the head as now described is in fact a repetition of the first idea for it, initially placed just to the left, still visible under the paint of the cross (PLATE 9).

Polidoro maintained an essentially improvisatory approach to much of the subsequent painting, and freely revised or altered several elements as he went along. The head of the bending figure to the right of the swooning Virgin in the middle distance was initially placed near the elbow of the standing figure behind (and the texture of the underpaint is again readily visible to the naked eye). The decision to move the head to its final position in front of the standing man's torso required Polidoro to scrape away the paint from the latter's abdomen to allow the sketchy rendition of the face as it now appears. What had originally been the right arm of this bending figure was then altered to become his left, reaching across the breast of the fainting Virgin (PLATE 10).

Polidoro's considerable expertise in working within a deliberately muted, relatively tonally unified chromatic range in the oil sketches may reflect his experience with a severely restricted palette when producing the frescoed grisaille façade decorations in Rome. The intensity of the blues and reds, which appear at first glance to have significantly faded, are in fact deliberately suppressed. The greenish-blue sky paint at the upper left contains no blue pigment at all, and consists of black and yellow ochre within a predominantly lead-white matrix; at the upper right the sky is a distinctive mixture of indigo, green earth, and verdigris with scattered red earths and lead white (PLATE 11). A sample from Christ's robe showed it to be a thin layer of red lake mixed with black, laid over the translucent brown of the *imprimatura* with no evidence of significant fading.<sup>27</sup> Strong local colour seems to have been similarly suppressed in the earlier sketches for this commission, as well as in other roughly contemporary works, in favour of a mainly brown, beige and black palette. It is interesting to note that the finished



PLATE 9 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954). Detail showing the initial placement of the bugler's head.



PLATE 10 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954). Detail showing alterations to the initial placement of the figure standing to the right of the swooning Virgin.

altarpiece employs areas of strong local colour, albeit within a predominantly warm brown tonality. It therefore seems more accurate to see the sketches for this work as a bridge between the monochrome quality of drawing and the fuller palette of his contemporary public commissions, perhaps somewhat informed by – but certainly not dependent on – his earlier grisaille paintings.<sup>28</sup>

Writing of his earlier work in Rome, Vasari shows a marked preference for Polidoro's pure grisaille manner: 'they [Polidoro and his partner, Maturino] were never able to achieve with colours that beauty which they always displayed in their work in chiaroscuro.'<sup>29</sup> By the time of the Catalani sketches, however, Polidoro was adeptly integrating the use of colour with grisaille. The intensity of the colour is skilfully manipulated in order to increase the legibility of the image, and to accentuate the drama of the narrative. The weeping mendicant

monk at the lower left is rendered in virtual monochrome, but his juxtaposition with the more colourful Saint Veronica – who by virtue of being the figure closest to the picture plane is painted with the greatest tonal contrasts – gives her even stronger emphasis. Colour has been similarly leached from the Roman soldier further to the right, who in spite of his animation nonetheless leads the eye convincingly to the more powerfully emotive mother and infant he is roughly manhandling. The infant, rendered in five or six strokes, is an excellent example of Polidoro's facility, praised by numerous authors from Alibrando onwards (PLATE 12).<sup>30</sup> The varied levels of finish within the work are all carefully considered, and the variations exploited for expressive reasons, bringing attention to the principal figures and their animated actions. Comparison with the preparatory technique of Polidoro's fellow alumnus in Raphael's workshop, Giulio Romano, is telling. Both artists went on to develop styles steeped in an almost obsessive study of antique art. Yet they produced work very dissimilar in appearance, a distinction already visible in the preliminary planning stages. Giulio's preparatory work involved much greater delegation to assistants, and therefore needed to be highly resolved and easily reproducible, differing fundamentally from Polidoro's in its greater dependence on fixed line and contour.<sup>31</sup> And while Giulio was praised for the classical learning and skilful complexity of his compositions, his work has little of the expressive emotional intensity found in analogous works by Polidoro.

Although there is no evidence that Polidoro ever saw unfinished works by Leonardo, his oil sketches

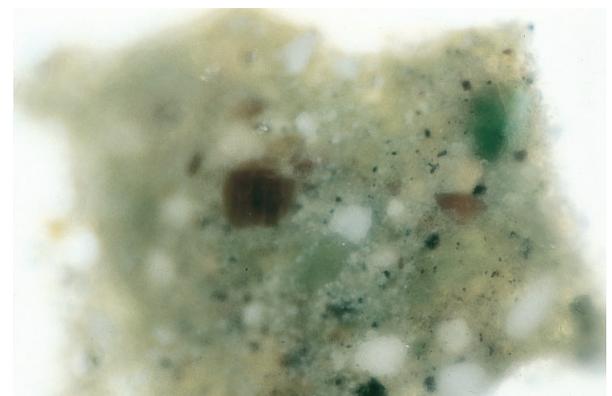


PLATE 11 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954), upper surface of an unmounted sample of paint showing the distinctive composition of the greenish-blue paint from the upper right of the picture, containing indigo, green earth, and verdigris with scattered red earths and lead white. Original magnification, 320x; actual magnification, 260x.



PLATE 12 *The Way to Calvary* (NG 6954). Detail showing the mother and infant at the lower right.



PLATE 13 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, c.1535–8. Panel, 71 × 53 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. INV. VT0831 © Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale di Napoli. Photo: Archivio dell'Arte/Luciano Pedicini, Naples.

bear suggestive comparison to Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* (Florence, Uffizi) or his *Saint Jerome*, (Rome, Vatican Museums) where the largely monochromatic renderings, punctuated with areas of subdued colour, create a similar powerfully expres-

sive effect. In this period there was an increased awareness of the intrinsic artistic merit in the creative process itself, as attested by the trend for collecting drawings and the fame and influence of cartoons by artists such as Leonardo and Michelangelo, as well as their many unfinished works. While Polidoro's *non finito* style is certainly on the extreme edges of this new awareness, it provides something of the context needed to consider one of the key issues surrounding works such as the National Gallery sketch: their ultimate intended function.

Little is known about the genesis of the oil sketch in the early- to mid-Cinquecento, so the precise function of these sketch-like works in Polidoro's oeuvre is problematic. The only contemporary artist who has been identified as producing comparable examples of preparatory sketches in oil or tempera is Beccafumi, though these are works on paper.<sup>32</sup> It was not until later in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the tradition of producing oil sketches began to emerge as an acknowledged genre, and even during this later period oil sketches as preparatory works were still rare.<sup>33</sup> Rather than working tools, their more accepted function was either as *modelli* (small-scale models of intended larger works to show to patrons) or as *ricordi* (small-scale records made after larger works), as produced by many artists, including Tintoretto, Veronese, Vasari, Naldini, Cigoli, El Greco and Rubens. In the case of the latter two artists, their sketches were also prized as works of art in their own right.<sup>34</sup> Rubens, following in Polidoro's footsteps (whom we know he very much admired), also made exploratory oil sketches on panel.

The three small-scale paintings of the *Way to Calvary* by Polidoro discussed here are considered by most scholars to fall into the category of preparatory works because they show a clear compositional development away from Raphael's prototype. However, the problem of defining the function of these sketches is further complicated by the fact that following the Catalani commission Polidoro began to paint finished works, both small and large in scale, in the same very loose, monochromatic manner. In executing the preparatory works for the *Way to Calvary*, it would appear that Polidoro discovered (possibly quite by chance) a dynamic and expressive technique that appealed to him. Because of their similarity to the sketches, his late works have their own problems of categorisation and there is much debate over whether, for



PLATE 14 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, c.1542. Panel, 160 × 63.5 cm. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. INV. Q1040 © Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale di Napoli. Photo: Archivio dell'Arte/Luciano Pedicini, Naples.

example, the small *Adoration* (PLATE 13) in the Capodimonte is an oil sketch much like those for the *Way to Calvary*, or a small-scale work for private devotion, of which Polidoro produced several.<sup>35</sup>

During the last seven years of his life, Polidoro adopted the techniques that he had employed for the *Way to Calvary* sketches for large panel paintings. Among the most remarkable of these are a group of indisputably finished works, representing three Franciscans dressed as Capuchins (Saint Francis, Saint Francesco da Paola and a friar whose identity has remained a mystery) and Mary Magdalene, today in the Capodimonte. The ensemble was commissioned by the Capuchin Order, probably for a hermitage, and can be dated to the 1540s.<sup>36</sup> The panels were probably once part of a polyptych, flanking an Immaculate Conception, which has tentatively been identified as the work today in the Museo Regionale, Messina.<sup>37</sup> In the *Saint Francis* panel (PLATE 14), Polidoro has once again applied a brown *imprimitura* over the white gesso layer, thereby reducing the reflective quality of the gesso and resulting in the very dark background tone that recalls the monochromatic approach of the *bozzetti* for the *Way to Calvary*. The figure seems to have been drawn in paint directly on to the *imprimitura*. Heavy strokes indicate his deep-set eyes and almost grotesquely exaggerated features, emphasised all the more by his disproportionately large hands and feet. The technique implies a certain casualness on the part of the artist, but, since there is no attempt to hide this practice, Polidoro seems to have been intentionally seeking a more dramatic effect.

The National Gallery *Way to Calvary* is the closest to the finished altarpiece of the three preparatory sketches for it, especially with respect to the figure of Christ and the group around the swooning Virgin, but Polidoro continued to alter his design so that the finished work differs yet again from the exploratory works. Furthermore, he made additional preparatory drawings in order to work up specific areas of the composition. A sheet of studies in red chalk (PLATE 15) includes two different studies for the head of the woman to the left of Saint Veronica and a study for the figure of the bugler, with two further solutions for his left hand and another alternative for his right.<sup>38</sup> In the drawing the bugler is blowing a conch shell, a motif which Polidoro at first included in the final painting but then substituted with the slender horn, revealing how he continued to make revisions even at a very



PLATE 15 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Studies for the head of a woman and for a man who blows a conch shell*. Paper, 19.9 × 14 cm. INV. D1784. The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. © National Galleries of Scotland. Photo: Antonia Reeve.

late stage. A handful of other studies that are less securely linked with this commission are known, and many more must originally have existed.<sup>39</sup>

Polidoro's early experience in grisaille painting no doubt helped to shape his way of thinking in tone as well as line, while the rigours of the fresco medium and the long viewing distances dictated by the high façades encouraged the use of a technique both sure of touch and loose in finish. Something of that experience is brought to the production of the oil sketches, but Polidoro also incorporates elements of an established tradition of preparatory drawing and a selective and expressive use of local colour. The resulting *bozzetti* are unprecedented images both in function and appearance, and seem to have led the artist to develop an ever more dramatic and animated style for his clearly finished late works. Polidoro's approach anticipates the working methods of the following centuries, and the newly acquired *Way to Calvary* is an important milestone in this extraordinary stylistic evolution, the development of which can be seen in numerous later works in the collection.

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## Notes and References

- 1 An exhibition to celebrate the acquisition was held at the National Gallery in Room One between 12 September and 7 December 2003 (see the accompanying leaflet by M. Moore Ede, *Polidoro: The Way to Calvary*, London 2003).
- 2 P. Pouncey and J.A. Gere, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: Raphael and his Circle*, London 1962, p. 116; A. Marabottini, 'Genesi di un dipinto (*l'Andata di Calvario* di Polidoro da Caravaggio)', in *Commentari*, 1967, pp. 170–5, 181–2.
- 3 *The Transfiguration* and *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (London, Courtauld Galleries); *David and Goliath* and *Saint Christopher* (Oxford, Christ Church Picture Gallery); eight panels from a decorative ensemble (Hampton Court, Royal Collection); with Stefano Giordano, *Saint George* (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery). This small group is supplemented by impressive holdings in a number of institutions of the artist's very beautiful drawings.
- 4 In addition to the eight paintings by Raphael, a ninth, the *Mackintosh Madonna*, is so damaged that only a small percentage of the original remains. For a full account of the technique and restoration of the *Birth of Jupiter*, see L. Keith, 'Giulio Romano and the *Birth of Jupiter*: Studio Practice and Reputation', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 24, 2003, pp. 38–49.
- 5 The principal studies on the life and work of Polidoro are: A. Marabottini, *Polidoro da Caravaggio*, 2 vols, Rome 1969; L. Ravelli, *Polidoro Caldara da Caravaggio*, 2 vols, Bergamo 1978; *Polidoro da Caravaggio, fra Napoli e Messina*, ed. P.L. De Castris, exh. cat., Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples 1988; P.L. De Castris, *Polidoro da Caravaggio*, Naples 2001.
- 6 See, for example, his frescoes in S. Maria della Pietà in the Camposanto Teutonico in Rome. For a discussion of these frescoes, see De Castris 2001 (cited in note 5), pp. 78–107.
- 7 Giorgio Vasari, *Vite (nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568)*, ed. R. Bettarini, Florence 1991, Vol. 4, p. 456.
- 8 An unpublished document of 1517, for which reference we thank Michael Hirst, records a payment made to Polidoro for work carried out for a Passion performance in the Colosseum (see F. Cruciani, *Il Teatro nel Rinascimento, Rome, 1450–1550*, Rome 1983, p. 472), but his most important early commission, datable to the early 1520s, is a cycle of scenes from the Passion in S. Maria della Pietà, Rome (see note 6).
- 9 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives*, ed. E. Rhys and trans. A.B. Hinds, London 1927, Vol. 2, p. 353; Vasari, ed. Bettarini 1991 (cited in note 7), Vol. 4, p. 466.
- 10 Vasari, ed. Rhys 1927 (cited in note 9), Vol. 2, p. 350; Vasari, ed. Bettarini 1991 (cited in note 7), Vol. 4, pp. 458–9.
- 11 On this commission, see De Castris 2001 (cited in note 5), chapter 8.
- 12 Vasari, ed. Rhys 1927 (cited in note 9), Vol. 2, p. 351; Vasari, ed. Bettarini 1991 (cited in note 7), Vol. 4, p. 462.
- 13 Vasari writes of these: 'la quale di disegno più che di colorito è tenuta bellissima.' Vasari, ed. Bettarini 1991 (cited in note 7), Vol. 4, p. 467.
- 14 For a full discussion of this commission, see Naples 1988 (cited in note 5), chapter 10, and De Castris 2001 (cited in note 5), chapter 14.
- 15 The manuscript survives today in the Biblioteca Regionale Universitaria di Messina (Inc. Br/3).
- 16 For the Ansalone chapel in Palermo, see A. Bettagno et al., *The Prado Museum*, Brussels 1996, pp. 255–6. For Raphael's painting, see R. Jones and N. Penny, *Raphael*, London 1983, p. 235.
- 17 Cola Giacomo d'Alibrando, *Il Spasmo di Maria Vergine. Ottave per un dipinto di Polidoro da Caravaggio a Messina*, eds B. Agosti, G. Alfano and I. di Majo, Naples 1999, p. 11.
- 18 See *Vasari on Technique* (preface to the original 1568 edition; trans. and ed. L. Maclehorse), reprinted 1960, pp. 212–15.
- 19 For these two *bozzetti*, see Naples 1988 (cited in note 5), cats X2 and X3.
- 20 The painting was restored by Larry Keith in February 2003.
- 21 Clear signs of similar recycling of wood have been seen by the authors on the Vatican Museum version of the *Way to Calvary* (Rome, Vatican Museum, inv. 652) as well as the Capodimonte *Pentacost* (inv. Q742) and *Assumption of the Virgin* (inv. Q1038); De Castris has also confirmed this practice in connection with several other Polidoro panels in verbal communication.
- 22 For contemporary written sources see Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, Florence 1584, p. 174; the preface to the 1568 edition of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives*, ed. G. Milanesi, Florence 1878, Vol. I, p. 186; *Vasari on Technique* (cited in note 18), pp. 230–1; G.B. Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Ravenna 1586, p. 125 (trans. E. Olszewski, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, New York 1977, p. 192).
- 23 We would like to thank Rachel Billinge for producing an infrared reflectogram mosaic of the painting.
- 24 *Leon Battista on Painting*, ed. and trans. J.R. Spencer, London 1956, p. 73.
- 25 Unpublished infrared reflectograms of the Vatican sketch were consulted in the conservation laboratory in the Vatican Museums. A new infrared reflectogram of the Naples picture was made at the time of the National Gallery exhibition.
- 26 For a fuller description of *abbozzo* brushwork in the work of Caravaggio, see L. Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 19, 1998, pp. 37–51.
- 27 Identified from cross-sections by Ashok Roy.
- 28 Vasari wrote of monochrome façade decorations in his technical introduction to the *Lives of the Artists*: 'Monochromes according to the painters are a kind of picture that has a closer relation to drawing than to work in colour...', see *Vasari on Technique* (cited in note 18), p. 240.
- 29 Vasari, ed. Rhys 1927 (cited in note 9), Vol. 2, p. 352; Vasari, ed. Bettarini (cited in note 7), Vol. 4, p. 463.
- 30 Alibrando 1999 (cited in note 17), p. 9, is the earliest to comment on this aspect of Polidoro's art: 'in somma col pennello in un sol tratto / tutti li sensi inganna fuor ch'el tatto' ('in short with the brush in a single stroke he deceives all the senses, with the exception of touch').
- 31 See Keith 2003 (cited in note 4), pp. 38–49.
- 32 See O. Ferrari, 'The Development of the Oil Sketch', in *Giambattista Tiepolo, Master of the Oil Sketch*, B.L. Brown et al., exh. cat., Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth 1993, pp. 43–5. These are datable to the 1520s and 30s, but Beccafumi's sketches are quite different in character, being for the most part heads of figures in tempera on paper. Like Polidoro, Beccafumi was interested in monochrome projects, including the pavement scenes in Siena Cathedral, and chiaroscuro woodcuts.
- 33 A notable example is Barocci, as described by O. Ferrari in Fort Worth 2003 (cited in note 32), p. 44.
- 34 For a general overview of the evolution of the oil sketch, see L.F. Bauer, *On the Origins of the Oil Sketch*, Ann Arbor 1975; O. Ferrari, *Bozzetti Italiani dal Manierismo al Barocco*, Naples 1990, and O. Ferrari in Fort Worth 2003 (cited in note 32), pp. 42–64, which also includes a brief discussion of Polidoro's *Way to Calvary* sketches. On El Greco's *ricordi*, see D. Davies et al., *El Greco*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and National Gallery, London 2003, cat. nos 21 and 23.
- 35 For a discussion of this, and other late works that he believes are preparatory, see De Castris 2001 (cited in note 5), p. 446.
- 36 F. Susinno, *Le Vite de' Pittori Messinesi*, ed. V. Martinelli, Florence 1990, p. 61.
- 37 See F. Campagna Cicala, 'Una scheda per il periodo estremo di Polidoro', in *Scritti in onore di Alessandro Marabottini*, Rome 1997, p. 137.
- 38 See T. Clifford et al., *The Draughtsman's Art: Master Drawings from the National Gallery of Scotland*, exh. cat., Edinburgh 1999, cat. 5.
- 39 Other drawings that may be connected with this commission are in Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. K.d.Z.26460 79. D.34, Palermo, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, coll. Sgadari di Lo Monaco, cart. Novelli, and Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, inv. RF 61; see also Naples 2001 (cited in note 5), cats X1, X5 and X6.