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The Painting Techniques and Workshop Practices of Guido Reni

Volume I

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2017

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Summary

The intention of this thesis is to produce an account of the workshop practices of the seventeenth-century Bolognese painter, Guido Reni. Reni was a painter of great eminence in *seicento* Italy; a contemporary and competitor of the now more famous Caravaggio and the leading painter of the century in his hometown of Bologna. He ran a notably large workshop in the Via della Pescherie, Bologna, where his output in the first half of the seventeenth century was evidently high. In the creation of an account of Reni's techniques and workshop, this thesis combines information from a number of sources, including seventeenth-century texts, scientific reports made by conservation departments, visual analysis of paintings, and modern scholarship. By consulting, analysing, criticising and combining these sources, certain conclusions have been drawn regarding Reni's working methods.

While accounts of this kind have been written on the practices of other seventeenth-century artists (including Rembrandt and Rubens, among others), a detailed description of Guido Reni's workshop has yet to be published. This may be, in part, due to the painter's lack of popularity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is only in recent decades that a renewed interest has formed in Reni and his work, with thanks, in large, to the writing of the late Sir Denis Mahon. This renewed interest in Reni has led to exhibitions and publications, and to conservation and analysis being carried out on Reni paintings in galleries in a number of countries. Most of the information that has been gathered by painting conservators on Reni's works has yet to be published. Therefore, it is hoped that by interpreting this information and placing it into art-historical context, this thesis will provide an entirely new contribution to the scholarly literature on Reni.

The thesis begins with a focus on the seventeenth-century sources, with an attempt to provide historical context to the literature and analyse the information that the *seicento* writers provide on the artist's workshop. This is followed by an investigation of the artist's painting techniques and materials, using both scientific and art-historical sources. A number of notable characteristics can be identified in Reni's use of materials and painting techniques, which vary depending on the nature of the work in

question and the period in which it is painted. Such characteristics include the artist's brushwork and palette, in which distinct traits can be observed over the course of his career. Also of note is Reni's apparent interest in material longevity for his paintings, as evidenced through the seventeenth-century sources, and through the artist's use of certain pigments and supports.

The next section is devoted to the artist's workshop as a school. Reni trained a great number of pupils in his Bolognese studio, and his methods of training can be linked to commercial aims. By teaching students to imitate his technique, many of them became excellent copyists, and large numbers of copies were produced by students and assistants after Reni's original compositions. This links to the subject of the final chapter of the thesis, the artist's workshop as a business, outlining Reni's aforementioned commercial aims through a discussion of his dealings with patrons, pricing, use of assistants and creation of copies. As a result of the artist's teaching methods, workshop paintings can be particularly difficult to distinguish from those by Reni himself and are said to have been sold for financial gain. This difficulty is complicated further by Reni's practice of retouching studio works, and by his creation of autograph copies of certain compositions. Problems regarding the attribution of paintings from Reni's workshop persist to the modern day. The final sections of the thesis discuss this complex topic, using information gathered on the artist's materials, techniques, and workshop practices with the aim of bringing clarity to the attributional problems associated with Guido Reni.

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2.48. Detail of face of Christ, Guido Reni, *Flagellation of Christ*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, 278.5 x 180.5 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.49. Guido Reni, "*Cappuccini" Crucifixion*, 1617, oil on canvas, 397 x 226 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

2.50. Detail of face of Christ, Guido Reni, "*Cappuccini" Crucifixion*, 1617, oil on canvas, 397 x 226 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

2.51. Guido Reni, *Christ and Infant Saint John*, 1640-1642, oil on canvas, 69 x 86.5 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.52. Detail of robes of Saint John, Guido Reni, *Christ and Infant Saint John,* 1640-1642, oil on canvas, 69 x 86.5 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.53. Guido Reni, *The Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia*, c.1614, oil on copper, 44 x 33.5 cm, private collection.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/painting-passion-the-baroque-in-italy-n09108/lot.1.html

2.54. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1636-1637, oil on copper, 76 x 60 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.
Source: http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/de/contents/showSearch?id=378309

2.55. Guido Reni, *Suicide of Lucretia*, 1640-1642, oil on canvas, 73 x 91 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/lucretia/UQElcstDCFQJCw

2.56. Guido Reni, *Figure Studies,* unknown date, ink on paper, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings,* vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), pl. 10.

2.57. Guido Reni, *Study of Forearms with Hands Crossed,* unknown date, chalk on paper, Morgan Library, New York.
Source: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/karlins/karlins12-18-07.asp

2.58. Guido Reni, *Studies of a Nude Male Figure*, unknown date, ink on paper, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings,* vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), pl. 12.

2.59. Guido Reni, *Study for the Coronation of the Virgin*, unknown date, chalk and ink on paper, British Museum, London.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings,* vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), 366, fig. 2.

2.60. Guido Reni, *Studies for an Annunciation*, unknown date, chalk and ink on paper, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings,* vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), 374, fig. 6.

2.61. Guido Reni, *Preparatory study for the Pietà dei Mendicanti,* chalk and brown ink on paper, 28.8 x 18.3 cm, Palazzo Rosso, Genoa, inv. 2804.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 442, fig. 15.

2.62. Guido Reni, *Preparatory study for the Pietà dei Mendicanti,* chalk and brown ink on paper, 41 x 21.8 cm, Palazzo Rosso, Genoa, inv. 2797.
Source: Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 443, fig. 16.

2.63. Guido Reni, *Preparatory study for the Pietà dei Mendicanti,* chalk and brown ink on paper, 25 x 16 cm, Palazzo Rosso, Genoa, inv. 2803.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 443, fig. 17.

2.64. Guido Reni, *Preparatory study for the Pietà dei Mendicanti,* black chalk and brown ink on paper, 15 x 27 cm, Private collection, New York.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 443, fig. 18.

2.65. Guido Reni, *The Apostle Saint James the Greater,* 1618-23, oil on canvas, 135 x 89 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-apostle-james-the-greater/ecfe4801-d460-49ce-ac62-8916ab2ac634

2.66. Guido Reni, *Moses with Pharaoh's Crown*, c. 1640, oil on canvas, 132.2 x 172.2 cm, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.
Source: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/r/artist/guido-reni/object/moses-with-pharoahs-crown-ng-2375

2.67. Guido Reni, *Portrait of a girl with crown*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, 91 x 73 cm, Capitoline Museums, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.68. Guido Reni, *Cupid*, 1637-38, oil on canvas, 101 x 88 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/cupido/79460be4-4261-4084-bcb0-369f885a31df

2.69. Infrared image of saint's torso, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

2.70. Infrared image of saint's torso, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

2.71. X-radiograph image of saint's thigh, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

2.72. X-radiograph image of saint's thigh, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

2.73. Guido Reni, *Saint Cecilia,* 1606, oil on canvas, 95.9 x 74.9 cm, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California.
Source: Courtesy of Tom Norris, Norton Simon Museum.

2.74. X-radiograph image, Guido Reni, *Saint Cecilia,* 1606, oil on canvas, 95.9 x 74.9 cm, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California.
Source: Courtesy of Tom Norris, Norton Simon Museum.

2.75. Detail of exposed ground layer between left shoulder of Samson and background, Guido Reni, *Victorious Samson*, 1617-19, oil on canvas, 260 x 223 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.76. Caravaggio, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard,* c. 1594-1595, oil on canvas, 66 x 49.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/michelangelo-merisi-da-caravaggio-boy-bitten-by-a-lizard

2.77. Detail, Caravaggio, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, c. 1594-1595, oil on canvas, 66 x 49.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/michelangelo-merisi-da-caravaggio-boy-bitten-by-a-lizard

2.78. Raphael, *Mond Crucifixion*, c. 1502-1503, oil on poplar, 283.3 x 167.3 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/raphael-the-mond-crucifixion

2.79. Detail, Raphael, *Mond Crucifixion,* c. 1502-1503, oil on poplar, 283.3 x 167.3 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/raphael-the-mond-crucifixion

2.80. Detail, Raphael, *Mond Crucifixion,* c. 1502-1503, oil on poplar, 283.3 x 167.3 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/raphael-the-mond-crucifixion

2.81. Detail of brushwork between saint's legs, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian,* 1639-1640, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 137 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.82. Guido Reni, *The Crucifixion*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 96 x 75 cm, Alnwick Castle, Northumberland.
Source: Courtesy of the Northumberland Estates, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland.

2.83. Guido Reni, *Christ Embracing Saint John the Baptist,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 48.5 x 68.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.84. Guido Reni, *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist*, 1639-42, oil on canvas, 248.5 x 174 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago.

Source: http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/11434

2.85. Detail of darkened paint, Guido Reni, *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist*, 1639-42, oil on canvas, 248.5 x 174 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/salome-with-the-head-of-saint-john-the-baptist/GgFaJER6zOp_4g

2.86. Guido Reni, *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist,* 1638-1639, oil on canvas, 134 x 97 cm, Galleria Corsini, Rome.
Source: http://galleriacorsini.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/125/reni-salom-con-la-testa-del-battista

2.87. Infrared image, Guido Reni, *The Massacre of the Innocents,* 1611, oil on canvas, 268 x 170 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

2.88. Infrared image detailing woman's face, Guido Reni, *The Massacre of the Innocents,* 1611, oil on canvas, 268 x 170 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

2.89. Detail of textural *pentimenti,* Guido Reni, "*Cappuccini" Crucifixion*, 1617, oil on canvas, 397 x 226 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.90. Detail of oval, Guido Reni, *Madonna of the Rosary,* 1598, oil on canvas, 220 x 260 cm, Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca, Bologna.
Source: http://uploads0.wikiart.org/images/guido-reni/rosary-madonna-1598.jpg

2.91. Guido Reni, *Madonna of the Rosary,* 1598, oil on canvas, 220 x 260 cm, Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca, Bologna.
Source: http://uploads0.wikiart.org/images/guido-reni/rosary-madonna-1598.jpg

2.92. Guido Reni, *Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin,* 1602-03, oil on panel, 77 x 51 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/asuncion-y-coronacion-de-la-virgen/0cbc0618-1ef7-42bc-b114-62abf968c07d

2.93. Guido Reni, *Blessed Soul*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, 252 x 153 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.94. Detail of *pentimento* around wing, Guido Reni, *Blessed Soul*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, 252 x 153 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.95. Guido Reni, oil sketch for *Blessed Soul*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.96. Detail of loincloth, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/saint-sebastian/gAFSjsJZOZam1g

2.97. X-radiograph image of face versus finished painting, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

2.98. X-radiograph image of face versus finished painting, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

2.99. After Guido Reni, *The Virgin and Child with the Protector Saints of the City of Bologna (Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Petronius, Procolus, Francis of Assisi, Francis Xavier, Dominic and Florianus)*, unknown date (17th century), oil on copper, 61 x 36 cm, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Source: Photo © National Gallery of Ireland.

2.100. Guido Reni, *Saint Jerome*, c. 1624-25, oil on canvas, 111.8 x 86.4 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.101. Guido Reni, *Susannah and the Elders*, 1620-25, oil on canvas, 116.6 x 150.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.102. Guido Reni, *Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl*, 1638-39, oil on canvas, 73.4 x 60.8 cm, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham.
Source: http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/portrait-of-a-woman-lady-with-a-lapis-lazuli-bowl-33187

2.103. Guido Reni, *Lucretia*, 1626, oil on canvas, 151 x 215 cm, Potsdam Neues Palais, Potsdam.
Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/lucretia-1626-1

2.104. Guido Reni, *The Rape of Europa,* 1637-39, oil on canvas, 177 x 129.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.105. Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 480 x 321 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.106. Guido Reni, *Jupiter and Europa,* c. 1636, oil on canvas, 157.5 x 115.3 cm, National Gallery of Art, Canada.
Source: https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=40848

2.107. Detail of Virgin's robes, Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 480 x 321 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-adoration-of-the-shepherds

2.108. Detail of sky, Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 480 x 321 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-adoration-of-the-shepherds

2.109. Annibale Carracci, *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Catherine of Alexandria,* 1593, oil on canvas, 175 x 112.5 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/index.php/content_page/10-le-collezioni/39-madonna-col-bambino-in-trono-fra-le-sante-caterina-d-alessandria-e-maria-maddalena.html

2.110. Guido Reni, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, c. 1619-1620, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 86.4 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/bacchus-and-ariadne/-gEy3h8Uu8AXiw

2.111. Detail of paint surface, Guido Reni, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, c. 1619-1620, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 86.4 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/bacchus-and-ariadne/-gEy3h8Uu8AXiw

2.112. Detail of canvas, Guido Reni, *Victorious Samson*, 1617-19, oil on canvas, 260 x 223 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

2.113. X-radiograph image, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

2.114. Studio of Guido Reni, *Toilet of Venus,* 1620-1625, oil on canvas, 281.9 x 205.7 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/studio-of-guido-reni-the-toilet-of-venus

2.115. Caravaggio, *Saint John the Baptist (Youth with Ram),* c. 1602, oil on canvas, 129 x 95 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: https://www.sartle.com/sites/default/files/images/artwork/caravaggio_michelangelo_merisi_saint_john_the_baptist_.jpg

2.116. Lord Leighton, *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna is carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence,* 1853-1855, oil on canvas, 22 x 521 cm, Royal Collection, on loan to National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/frederic-lord-leighton-cimabues-celebrated-madonna

2.117. Guido Reni, *Archangel Michael,* c. 1636, oil on silk, 293 x 202 cm, Santa Maria della Concezione, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.118. Guido Reni, *Assumption,* 1642, oil on silk, 295 x 208 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/assumption-of-mary-1642

2.119. Guido Reni, *The Virgin and Child with Saint John,* c. 1606, oil on copper, 25 x 19 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Virgin_Child_Baptist_Louvre_INV524.jpg

2.120. Guido Reni, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1607, oil on copper, 66.6 x 48.8 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.121. Detail, After Guido Reni, *The Virgin and Child with the Protector Saints of the City of Bologna (Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Petronius, Procolus, Francis of Assisi, Francis Xavier, Dominic and Florianus)*, unknown date (17th century), oil on copper, 61 x 36 cm, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Source: Photo © National Gallery of Ireland (author's own photograph).

2.122. Guido Reni, *Saint Jerome with two angels in landscape,* c. 1600, oil on copper, 32.5 x 25 cm, Private Collection, New York.
Source: Biffis, Mattia, 'A rediscovered 'St Jerome' on copper by Guido Reni and its early provenance', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 158, no. 1361 (2016), 611.

2.123. Guercino, *Saint Sebastian Succoured by Two Angels,* 1617, oil on copper, 43.2 x 32.5 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Source: http://everypainterpaintshimself.com/article_images_new/St_Sebastian_succoured_by_two_angels.jpg

2.124. Magnified cross-section, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

2.125. Detail of sky, Guido Reni, *Victorious Samson*, 1617-19, oil on canvas, 260 x 223 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.126. Detail of rebate abrasion on right-hand boarder, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian,* 1639-1640, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 137 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.127. After Guido Reni, *Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns,* oil on wood, 56 x 42.8 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.128. Guido Reni, *Saint Mary Magdalene,* c. 1634-35, oil on canvas, 79.3 x 68.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

2.129. Guido Reni, *Madonna and Child Appearing to Saint Francis,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 298 x 204 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/index.php/content_page/10-le-collezioni/321-madonna-col-bambino-in-apparizione-a-san-francesco.html

2.130. Guido Reni, *The Sucide of Cleopatra,* 1640, oil on canvas, 77 x 65 cm, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Source: Photo © National Gallery of Ireland.

2.131. Guido Reni, *Immaculate Conception,* 1627, oil on canvas, 268 x 185.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Source: http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437423

2.132. Guido Reni, frescoes and altarpiece, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

2.133. Guido Reni, fresco, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

Chapter Three

3.1. Denys Calvaert, *Annunciation,* c. 1595, oil on copper, 52.86 x 39.21 cm, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine.
Source: http://www.pressherald.com/2016/02/21/elise-ansel-gloriously-revisits-calvaerts-annunciation-at-bowdoin/

3.2. Detail of angel's wings, Guido Reni, *Angel Appearing to Saint Jerome,* c. 1638, oil on canvas, 231.8 x 180.3 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.
Source: http://www.dia.org/object-info/34869d8f-dca8-44c5-bcf7-31449b72068c.aspx

3.3. Detail of angel's wing, Guido Reni, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1607, oil on copper, 66.6 x 48.8 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-coronation-of-the-virgin

3.4. Denys Calvaert, *The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist in a Landscape,* c. 1590-1600, oil on copper, 63.5 x 55.2 cm, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.
Source: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/c/artist/denys-calvaert/object/the-holy-family-with-the-infant-saint-john-the-baptist-in-a-landscape-ng-2447

3.5. Detail of the robes of the Virgin, Guido Reni, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1607, oil on copper, 66.6 x 48.8 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-coronation-of-the-virgin

3.6. Denys Calvaert, *Noli me tangere,* c. 1600, oil on canvas, 149 x 117 cm, National Museum, Warsaw.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Calvaert_Noli_me_tangere.jpg

3.7. Annibale Carracci, *Christ Appearing to Saint Peter on the Appian Way,* 1601-1602, oil on panel, 77.4 x 56.3 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/annibale-carracci-christ-appearing-to-saint-peter-on-the-appian-way

3.8. Detail of lower half of painting, Guido Reni, *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints,* 1595/1598, oil on canvas, 253x197 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/coronation-of-the-virgin-with-st-catherine-of-alexandria-st-john-the-evangelist-st-john-the-1596?utm_source=returned&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=referral

3.9. Annibale Carracci, *The Samaritan Woman at the Well,* oil on canvas, 170 x 225 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.
Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/annibale-carracci/the-samaritan-woman-at-the-well

3.10. Detail of upper half of painting, Guido Reni, *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints,* 1595/1598, oil on canvas, 253x197 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.

Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/coronation-of-the-virgin-with-st-catherine-of-alexandria-st-john-the-evangelist-st-john-the-1596?utm_source=returned&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=referral

3.11. Denys Calvaert, *Annunciation,* oil on canvas, Collezioni Comunali d'Arte, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

3.12. Guido Reni, *Self Portrait,* 1635, oil on canvas, 45.5 x 34 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.
Source: http://uploads3.wikiart.org/images/guido-reni/self-portrait.jpg

3.13. Simone Cantarini, *Portrait of Guido Reni,* c. 1635-1636, oil on canvas, 37.5 cm (diameter), Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/collezione/percorsi/percorsoEsp_A.php?IDSala=24&IDOpera=51

3.14. Guido Reni, *Cleopatra,* 1638-1639, oil on canvas, 122 x 96 cm, Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace, Florence.
Source: http://www.themedicifamily.com/Cardinal-Leopoldo-de-Medici.html

3.15. Giovanni Andrea Sirani, *Fortune and Cupid,* c. 1660, oil on canvas, 161 x 131 cm, Fondazione Sorgente Group, Rome.
Source: http://www.fondazionesorgentegroup.com/Fortune-and-Cupid__painting_list_20.html

3.16. Guido Reni, *Fortune with a Crown,* c. 1637, oil on canvas, 163 x 132 cm, Accademia San Luca, Rome.
Source: http://www.accademiasanluca.eu/it/collezioni_online/pittura/archive/cat_id/1788/id/1718/la-fortuna-con-la-corona-in-mano

3.17. Detail of hair, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, *Fortune and Cupid,* c. 1660, oil on canvas, 161 x 131 cm, Fondazione Sorgente Group.
Source: http://www.fondazionesorgentegroup.com/Fortune-and-Cupid__painting_list_20.html

3.18. Detail of hair, Guido Reni, *Fortune with a Crown,* c. 1637, oil on canvas, 163 x 132 cm, Accademia San Luca, Rome.
Source: http://www.accademiasanluca.eu/it/collezioni_online/pittura/archive/cat_id/1788/id/1718/la-fortuna-con-la-corona-in-mano

3.19. Francesco Gessi, *The Temptation of San Tommaso d'Aquino,* c. 1632-1633, oil on canvas, 132 x 93 cm, Musei Civici di Reggio Emilia, Reggio Emilia.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/the-temptation-of-san-tommaso-d%E2%80%99aquino/CgEFjEheNYmhvg

3.20. Guido Reni, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife,* c. 1630, oil on canvas, 128 x 170 cm, Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8b/Guido_Reni_%28Italian_-_Joseph_and_Potiphar%27s_Wife_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

3.21. Ercole de Maria, *Saint Joseph,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 43.9 x 38.1 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 13th – 14th June 2007, Lot 11.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/fine-art-old-masters-to-contemporary-n08333/lot.11.html

3.22. Guido Reni, *Saint Joseph,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Brera, Milan.
Source: http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.jsp?decorator=layout_resp&apply=true&tipo_scheda=F&id=109828&titolo=Anderson+%2C+Milano+-+Testa+di+S.+Giuseppe+-+Guido+Reni+-+Brera+-+insieme

3.23. Simone Cantarini, *Saint Jerome Reading,* c. 1637, oil on canvas, 117 x 88 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/collezione/percorsi/percorsoEsp_A.php?IDSala=26&IDOpera=52#

3.24. Guido Reni, *Angel Appearing to Saint Jerome,* c. 1638, oil on canvas, 199.7 x 147.9 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

Source: http://www.dia.org/object-info/34869d8f-dca8-44c5-bcf7-31449b72068c.aspx

3.25. Francesco Gessi, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata,* 1620-1625, oil on canvas, 263 x 183 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.emiliaromagna.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/22/eventi/579/alla-maniera-di-guido-reni-dipinti-dai-depositi-della-pinacoteca-nazionale-di-bologna

3.26. Detail of Saint Francis, Guido Reni, *The Virgin and Child with the Protector Saints of the City of Bologna; Ignatius of Loyola, Petronius, Procolus, Francis of Assisi, Francis Xavier, Dominic and Florianus ("Pala della Peste")*, 1630, oil on silk, 383 x 242 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

3.27. Detail of face, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

3.28. Detail of face of Saint John, Guido Reni, "*Cappuccini" Crucifixion*, 1617, oil on canvas, 397 x 226 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

3.29. Giovanni Lanfranco, *Samson Skinning the Lion,* 1635-1637, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 110 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/collezione/percorsi/percorsoEsp_A.php?IDSala=26&IDOpera=181#

Chapter Four

4.1. Pietro Lauri, *Flight into Egypt,* 1634-1635, oil on canvas, unknown dimensions, Santuario della Madonna della Celletta, Argenta.

Source: Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 235, pl. 112.

4.2. Studio of Guido Reni, *Flight into Egypt,* c. 1620-1630, oil on canvas, 160 x 129.3 cm, City Art Gallery, Bradford.
Source: http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=88541

4.3. Studio of Guido Reni, *Flight into Egypt,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 157x 131 cm, Quadreria dei Girolamini, Naples.
Source: http://www.arte.it/opera/fuga-in-egitto-2915

4.4. Guido Reni, *Moses Striking the Rock (The Israelites Gathering Manna),* 1614-1615, oil on canvas, 280 x 170 cm, Ravenna Cathedral.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_-_The_Gathering_of_the_Manna_-_WGA19287.jpg

4.5. Detail of daughter, Guido Reni, *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom*, c. 1615-16, oil on canvas, 111.2 x 149.2 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-lot-and-his-daughters-leaving-sodom

4.6. Guido Reni, *Girl with a Rose,* 1630-1631, oil on canvas, 81 x 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/girl-with-a-rose/5768dc77-e70c-4290-9323-77c098eea57f

4.7. Detail of *putti,* Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 480 x 321 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

4.8. Detail of Christ child's face, Guido Reni, *Adoration of the Shepherds,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 480 x 321 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/guido-reni-the-adoration-of-the-shepherds

4.9. Detail of *putto*, Guido Reni, *Madonna and Child Appearing to Saint Francis,* c. 1640, oil on canvas, 298 x 204 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.10. Ercole de Maria, *Saint Joseph,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 43.9 x 38.1 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 13th – 14th June 2007, Lot 11.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/fine-art-old-masters-to-contemporary-n08333/lot.11.html

4.11. Guido Reni, frescoes, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.12. Guido Reni, frescoes, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.13. Antonio Carracci, *Study for the Presentation at the Temple,* black chalk with white highlights on blue paper, 39.5 x 26.2 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II: The Commissions', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 113, no. 820 (1971), 377, fig. 25.

4.14. Detail of the *Presentation at the Temple*, attributed potentially to Antonio Carracci, fresco, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.15. Detail of *putti*, attributed potentially to Francesco Albani, fresco, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.16. Detail of *putti*, attributed potentially to Guido Reni, fresco, 1609-1611, Annunciation Chapel, Quirinal Palace, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.17. Detail of paint surface, Guido Reni, *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, 1640-42, oil on canvas, 225.4 x 162.2 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/saint-sebastian/gAFSjsJZOZam1g

4.18. Guido Reni, *Holy Trinity,* 1625, oil on canvas, 564 x 301 cm, SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini, Rome.
Source: http://s528.photobucket.com/user/Jay123_074/media/GuidoRENI_Trinity_302.jpg.html

4.19. Domenichino, *Madonna of the Rosary,* c. 1625, oil on canvas, 498 x 289 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/collezione/percorsi/percorsoEsp_A.php?IDSala=29&IDOpera=348#

4.20. Guido Reni, *Saint Peter Weeping,* c. 1637, oil on canvas, 74 x 61 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Source: https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1525/

4.21. Guido Reni, *Saint Peter Weeping,* 1633-1634, oil on canvas, 76 x 61 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/saint-peter/7f91b34e-795f-41ed-973b-e4294890dd46?searchid=2fa7b14b-08c7-0875-9fd4-cbab7e68a157

4.22. Guido Reni, *Assumption of the Virgin,* 1642, oil on canvas, 208 x 295 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Source: http://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/assumption-of-mary-1642

4.23. Guido Reni, *Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns,* early 1630s, oil on copper, 49.5 x 40.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit.
Source: http://www.dia.org/object-info/17982f50-0fcb-403e-ab09-6d644c606834.aspx?position=2

4.24. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* c. 1620-1622?, oil on copper, 50 x 40 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.
Source: Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 237, pl. 115.

4.25. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* unknown date, oil on copper, 49 x 39.5 cm, Christie's Sale, London, 8th July 2008, Lot 9.
Source: http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/guido-reni-christ-crowned-with-thorns-5101816-details.aspx?from=searchresults&intObjectID=5101816&sid=778db7d0-666d-40e9-8f9d-40c3432c2679

4.26. Workshop of Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* unknown date, oil on copper, 50 x 41 cm, Kunshistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Source: https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1532/?offset=10&lv=list&cHash=ad105a5554a10ea5b05d6f653fedf85a

4.27. Follower of Guido Reni, *Man of Sorrows,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 51.5 x 44.5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/man-of-sorrows/FQHXabiZ9QYmoA

4.28. Detail of beard, Guido Reni, *Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns,* early 1630s, oil on copper, 49.5 x 40.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit.
Source: http://www.dia.org/object-info/17982f50-0fcb-403e-ab09-6d644c606834.aspx?position=2

4.29. Detail of beard, Workshop of Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* unknown date, oil on copper, 50 x 41 cm, Kunshistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Source: https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1532/?offset=10&lv=list&cHash=ad105a5554a10ea5b05d6f653fedf85a

4.30. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* c. 1636-1637, oil on copper, 76 x 60 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.
Source: http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/de/contents/show

Search?id=378309

4.31. Guido Reni, *Ecce Homo,* c. 1639, oil on canvas, 113 x 95.2 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Source: http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos/collection_pages/italy_pages/2546/TXT_SE-2546.html

4.32. Guido Reni, *Christ as Ecce Homo,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 67 x 55.5 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 29th January 2015, Lot 74.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/master-paintings-part-i-n09302/lot.74.html

4.33. Detail of crown, Guido Reni, *Christ as Ecce Homo,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 67 x 55.5 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 29th January 2015, Lot 74.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/master-paintings-part-i-n09302/lot.74.html

4.34. Detail of crown, Guido Reni, *Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns,* early 1630s, oil on copper, 49.5 x 40.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit.
Source: http://www.dia.org/object-info/17982f50-0fcb-403e-ab09-6d644c606834.aspx?position=2

4.35. Detail of crown, Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.1 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.36. Detail of crown, Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* c. 1636-1637, oil on copper, 76 x 60 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.
Source: http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/de/contents/showSearch?id=378309

4.37. Detail of crown, Guido Reni, *Ecce Homo,* c. 1639, oil on canvas, 113 x 95.2 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Source: http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos/collection_pages/italy_pages/2546/TXT_SE-2546.html

4.38. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* c. 1639-1640, oil on canvas, 79 x 65 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.
Source: http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/de/contents/showSearch?id=378327

4.39. Guido Reni, *Bust of Christ,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 78.7 x 67 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 29th January 2015, Lot 68.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/master-paintings-part-i-n09302/lot.68.html

4.40. Guido Reni (?), *Christ as the Man of Sorrows,* c. 1638, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.1 cm, Bonhams Sale, London, 4th July 2007, Lot 46.
Source: https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/14705/lot/46/

4.41. Guido Reni, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.1 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.42. Guido Reni, *Ecce Homo,* c. 1639-1640, oil on canvas, 60 x 45 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Source: http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=1672

4.43. Guido Reni, *Saint Mary Magdalene,* c. 1634-35, oil on canvas, 79.3 x 68.5 cm, National Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of National Gallery Picture Library, London.

4.44. Guido Reni, *Saint Jerome,* 1633-34, oil on canvas, 63 x 53 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/saint-jerome/xAFqoFQC74TZ3A

4.45. Guido Reni, *Mary Magdalene,* 1630-32, oil on canvas, 234 x 151 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.

Source: Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 171, pl. 79.

4.46. After Guido Reni, *Mary Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 160 x 131 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Source: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?q=guido+reni+magdalene&p=4&ps=12&st=OBJECTS&ii=2#/SK-A-331,38

4.47. Studio of Guido Reni, *The Penitent Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 153 x 127 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 10th April 2013, Lot 109.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/old-master-british-paintings-l13030/lot.109.html

4.48. Circle of Guido Reni, *The Penitent Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 161.5 x 132.5 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 4th July 2013, Lot 222.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/old-master-british-paintings-day-sale-l13034/lot.222.html

4.49. Circle of Guido Reni, *The Penitent Mary Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 66 x 49.5 cm, Bonhams Sale, London, 6th March 2012, Lot 126.
Source: https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/19777/lot/126/

4.50. Detail of face, Guido Reni, *Mary Magdalene,* 1633, oil on canvas, 234 x 151 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.
Source: Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 171, pl. 79.

4.51. Detail of face, Studio of Guido Reni, *The Penitent Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 153 x 127 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 10th April 2013, Lot 109.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/old-master-british-paintings-l13030/lot.109.html

4.52. Detail of face, Circle of Guido Reni, *The Penitent Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 161.5 x 132.5 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 4th July 2013, Lot 222.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/old-master-british-paintings-day-sale-l13034/lot.222.html

4.53. Detail of face, After Guido Reni, *Mary Magdalene,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 160 x 131 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
Source: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?q=guido+reni+magdalene&p=4&ps=12&st=OBJECTS&ii=2#/SK-A-331,38

4.54. Guido Reni, *The Magdalene,* c. 1627, oil on canvas, 175 x 135 cm, Private collection.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, *Guido Reni: A Complete Catalogue of his Works with an Introductory Text* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1984), pl. XI.

4.55. Guido Reni, *The Magdalene,* date unknown, oil on canvas, 75 x 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte

4.56. Guido Reni, *Magdalene*, 1635, oil on canvas, 90.8 x 74.3 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.
Source: http://art.thewalters.org/detail/40183/the-penitent-magdalene-2/

4.57. Detail of sleeve, Guido Reni, *The Magdalene,* date unknown, oil on canvas, 75 x 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte

4.58. Detail of hair on left, Guido Reni, *The Magdalene,* date unknown, oil on canvas, 75 x 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte

4.59. Detail of lower part of hair, Guido Reni, *The Magdalene,* date unknown, oil on canvas, 75 x 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte

4.60. Detail of hair, Guido Reni, *Mary Magdalene,* 1633, oil on canvas, 234 x 151 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome
Source: Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 171, pl. 79.

4.61. Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* c. 1622-1623, oil on canvas, 98 x 74 cm, Private Collection, New York.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, *Guido Reni: A Complete Catalogue of his Works with an Introductory Text* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1984), pl. 113.

4.62. After Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 99 x 54.6, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/explore-the-collection/201-250/lucretia/

4.63. Studio of Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 100.5 x 76.2 cm, Sotheby's Sale, New York, 30th January 2014, Lot 251.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.251.html/2014/old-master-paintings-n09102

4.64. Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* 1640-1642, oil on canvas, 73 x 91 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/lucretia/UQElcstDCFQJCw

4.65. Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* 1640-1641, oil on canvas, 98 x 73 cm, Museo della Città di Bologna, Bologna.
Source: http://collezioni.genusbononiae.it/products/dettaglio/1678#

4.66. Elisabetta Sirani after Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* unknown date, oil on canvas, Galleria Borghese, Rome.
Source: http://www.alinariarchives.it/en/search?isPostBack=1&panelAdvSearch=opened&artista=Sirani,%20Elisabetta

4.67. Guido Reni, *Cleopatra,* 1638-1639, oil on canvas, 122 x 96 cm, Palatine Gallery, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.
Source: http://www.themedicifamily.com/Cardinal-Leopoldo-de-Medici.html

4.68. Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* 1636-38, oil on canvas, 82 x 101.5 cm, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/lucretia/YwFJ1LxoaFoeGg

4.69. Giovanni Andrea Sirani after Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 103 x 83.5 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 6th December 2012, Lot 172.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/old-master-british-paintings-day-sale-l12037/lot.172.html

4.70. Giovanni Andrea Sirani after Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* unknown date, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 83.2 cm, Sotheby's Sale, London, 10th July 2014, Lot 205.
Source: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/old-master-british-paintings-day-l14034/lot.205.html

4.71. Detail of face, Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* 1636-38, oil on canvas, 82 x 101.5 cm, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo.
Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/lucretia/YwFJ1LxoaFoeGg

4.72. Detail of face, Guido Reni, *Lucretia,* 1640-1641, oil on canvas, 98 x 73 cm, Museo della Città di Bologna, Bologna.
Source: http://collezioni.genusbononiae.it/products/dettaglio/1678#

4.73. Guido Reni, *Cleopatra with the Asp,* c. 1628, oil on canvas, 147 x 128.7 cm, Picture Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London.
Source: https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/405338/cleopatra-with-the-asp

4.74. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian,* c. 1615, oil on canvas, 127 x 92 cm, Musei di Strada Nuova, Palazzo Rosso, Genova.

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Guido_Reni_-_Saint_Sebastian_-_Google_Art_Project_%2827740148%29.jpg

4.75. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1615, oil on canvas, 129 x 98 cm, Capitoline Museum, Rome.
Source: Author's own photograph.

4.76. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

4.77. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1620 (?), oil on canvas, 170 x 132 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Source: http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=28412

4.78. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1617-1619, oil on canvas, 170 x 133 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Source: https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/saint-sebastian/d98d334e-a7f4-44eb-9d7c-7cfc689a6d5b

4.79. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, unknown date, oil on canvas, 169 x 132 cm, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico.
Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/oquendo/7816018416/sizes/c/

4.80. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

4.81. Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian,* 1639-1640, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 137 cm, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Source: Courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza BAPe Polo Museale.

4.82. Detail of loincloth, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

Source: https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/saint-sebastian/gAFSjsJZOZam1g

4.83. X-radiograph image of loincloth, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, 1620s-30s, oil on canvas, 170 x 131.1 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.
Source: Courtesy of Sorcha Ní Lideadha, Dulwich Picture Gallery.

4.84. Detail of face, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

4.85. X-radiograph image of face, Guido Reni, *Saint Sebastian*, c. 1625, oil on canvas, 167 x 127.6 cm, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland.
Source: Courtesy of Sarah Hillary, Auckland Art Gallery.

4.86. Guido Reni (?), *David with the head of Goliath,* 1637, oil on canvas, 100 x 127 cm, Latner Collection.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath" by Guido Reni', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 1192 (2002), 430, fig. 41.

4.87. X-radiograph image of left of painting, Guido Reni (?), *David with the head of Goliath,* 1637, oil on canvas, 100 x 127 cm, Latner Collection.
Source: D. Stephen Pepper, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath" by Guido Reni', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 1192 (2002), 432, fig. 47.

4.88. X-radiograph image of right of painting, Guido Reni (?), *David with the head of Goliath,* 1637, oil on canvas, 100 x 127 cm, Latner Collection.
Source: Pepper, D. Stephen, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath" by Guido Reni', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 1192 (2002), 432, fig. 48.

4.89. X- radiograph image, Guido Reni, *Saint Cecilia,* 1606, oil on canvas, 95.9 x 74.9 cm, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California.
Source: Courtesy of Tom Norris, Norton Simon Museum.

Introduction

Guido Reni was born in Bologna in 1575, and became one of the most eminent painters of his day. Seventeenth-century author, Francesco Scannelli, described Reni as "*sopra d'ogni altro famoso ed eccellente*", that is, "above every other, famous and excellent".[1] The artist trained under Flemish painter, Denys Calvaert, and, later, the Carracci family. Upon leaving the Carracci Academy to begin work as an independent master, around 1598, Reni had already established himself as a painter of merit in several public works.[2] Reni then spent a period of years, between 1602 and 1613, working in Rome. It was there that he gained wider acclaim as an artist by undertaking a number of important commissions, including a series of fresco paintings for the Papal Chapel of Pope Paul V. On his return to Bologna, Reni set up a studio on the Via delle Pescherie, which became hugely successful, and, according to biographer Carlo Cesare Malvasia, it was "impossible to put together even an inadequate list" of the students and assistants that the studio housed over the decades that followed.[3]

Reni is described by the *seicento* sources as having possessed extraordinary technical skill, which surpassed even that of his masters. Malvasia describes an occasion, for example, on which a frustrated Annibale Carracci struggled to complete a passage of drapery to his satisfaction, and ordered Reni to complete it for him. On Annibale's return, "he saw the resolution and execution of the order which Guido had been able to accomplish so quickly and without difficulty", and noted the "intelligence and mastery" with which the young artist painted, leading the master to "openly praise" his student "to the skies."[4]

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[1] Francesco Scannelli, *Il microcosmo della pittura* (Cesena: Peril Neri: 1657), 347.
[2] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings,* vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), 372.
[3] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *The Life of Guido Reni*; *Felsina Pittrice*, translated by Catherine Enggass and Robert Enggass (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 107: "Degli allievi della sua scuola è impossibile il metterne assieme un registro..."
[4] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 41: "Tornato Annibale, e veduto la risoluzione, con che avea saputo eseguir ben tosto, e senza difficoltà veruna il comando; ma più la intelligenza, e la maestria, con che sì bene avea, adattato al nudo sotto le piazze sopra, i recinti attorno, e gli suolazzi di quel manto, non potè, come non apertamente lodarlo in estremo."

The aim of this thesis is to create a comprehensive account of the manner in which Reni and his workshop functioned. A discussion of Reni's workshop practices has yet to be published in any great detail. This may be, in part, due to the painter's lack of popularity in the art world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century that a renewed interest formed in Reni and his work. However, modern literature up to this point, for example that published by the late Dr. Stephen Pepper, has focused mainly on the content and style of Reni's paintings, rather than his studio practice or painting techniques. Richard Spear has described "a lack of any comprehensive overview of Reni's life that does not focus narrowly on chronology and style at the expense of other important factors in the artist's career."[5] The work of Spear, especially in his 1997 text *The "Divine" Guido,* has proved the most useful modern source in this thesis, particularly in addressing the subjects of Reni's pricing, attribution and copies. Spear's approach focuses largely on the psychology of the artist and less with his physical practices, though some understanding of the former aids in explanations of the latter.

Fifteenth-century painter and writer Cennino d'Andrea Cennini said that "[painting] justly deserves to be enthroned next to theory", that is to say, the physical act of painting is of equal importance to the theory which exists alongside it.[6] Therefore, it might be suggested, research into artistic technique and workshop practice is as important as its theoretical counterpart. In a discussion regarding the research for this thesis, Charles Dempsey stated that "Guido is difficult."[7] Such "difficulty" is undeniable, and will become apparent over the course of the next four chapters, but this makes the artist and his studio a worthwhile topic of research. The complexity of Guido Reni as subject is a product of numerous circumstances; the challenges presented in interpreting the Italian *seicento* sources, the lack of substantial accounts on the artist's studio practices, the large size and high output of Reni's Bolognese studio, the proliferation of copies of Reni's work and the problems of attribution associated with them. To meet these challenges, a twofold approach is required – close examination of seventeenth-century texts, and close examination of Reni's paintings. This approach combines information from a number of sources, including

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[5] Richard Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 1.
[6] Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook: "Il Libro dell' Arte"*, translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (1960), New York, 1-2.
[7] Personal correspondence with Prof. Emeritus Charles Dempsey and Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Cropper, Museo del Prado, Madrid, 3rd March 2016.

seventeenth-century biographical accounts, letters and artist inventories, modern writing on Reni's work, and scientific analysis and reports made by conservation departments. In illustrating the value of such an interdisciplinary approach to the study of artists' painting materials and practices, Leslie Carlyle noted that while scientific analysis is "a highly sophisticated branch of inquiry in itself", results from it alone are not sufficient to make conclusive statements about artistic practice, and "it is only in partnership with other forms of investigation that we can hope to unravel the meaning behind what we find through analysis."[8]

Though no modern publications exist on Reni's workshop and painting techniques, the Rembrandt Research Project provides a comparable model for my research methodology. The project was originally launched in 1968 to create a catalogue and deal with problems of authenticity and attribution associated with Rembrandt. The project approached these issues not only in a traditional, art-historical sense, but with scientific investigation, which the researchers used as data alongside traditional written sources, to create an account of Rembrandt's working methods and painting materials. This methodology – the combination of written and scientific sources – was utilised in a similar manner, as a basis for the present research on Reni. In the 1997 publication which resulted from this project entitled *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, by Ernst van de Wetering, the author champions the combination of traditional written sources with scientific analysis as an approach to the study of works of art. Van de Wetering writes that when traditional sources are "read in the light of these new [scientific] insights" they gain the potential to "add to our knowledge in an often unexpected way."[9]

The National Gallery's *Technical Bulletin* also takes a similar approach to subjects. Though these publications do not address Reni's work directly, they are informative regarding many of Reni's contemporary artists and predecessors, and have provided useful comparative technical information for the subjects addressed in this research. However, the *Technical Bulletin,* as its name might suggest, is not made up of lengthy

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[8] Leslie A. Carlyle, 'Beyond a Collection of Data: What We Can Learn from Documentary Sources on Artists' Materials and Techniques, in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials and Studio Practice*, *Symposium of the Getty Conservation Institute at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, 26-29 June 1995,* by Wallert, Arie, Hermens, Erma, and Peek, Marja (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1995), 1.

[9] Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), 5.

studies but short articles, usually relating to conservation projects on specific paintings in the National Gallery's collection. While the publications usually provide brief historical backgrounds to the work, they do not seek to place the paintings into a detailed historical context. Instead, they act as a medium through which conservators can present their work and therefore are more technical in nature than the present writing.

Given the scarcity of directly relevant secondary sources, this thesis depends heavily on primary source material. The primary sources utilised – both literary and scientific – are addressed in detail in their individual contexts at the beginnings of chapter one and two respectively. Reni's paintings serve as the most important source in this research. Through the close examination of paintings from collections in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, National Gallery, London, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, National Gallery, Washington, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Capitoline Museum, Rome, visual interpretations of the techniques and materials used in specific paintings have been made. Further interpretation of works has been made from photographs where it has not been possible to examine paintings personally. In all cases, the images used are of the highest quality available to the writer. Many gallery websites now provide high-definition images of works from their collections, which have proved useful in this regard. The Google Cultural Institute, which was launched in the final year of this research, makes available to scholars a series of high definition images of collections from galleries all over the world, to which it is continually adding.[10] The quality and detail visible in such images provides an exciting new source for the analysis of painting technique in that brushwork, paint losses, impasto and surface texture can be examined at a high magnification. Sixty-five works by, after or otherwise related to Reni (including several paintings but more drawings) have been included in the project at the time of writing, and many have been included in their magnified form as examples for discussion of the artist's technique and materials.

The seventeenth-century sources for this research include biographies, treatises, letters and an inventory. These literary sources offer valuable insight into the studio practices, techniques and materials used by artists in the seventeenth century, and are discussed in detail in chapter one. Unpublished technical reports as created by

[10] https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute

painting conservators form another major source for this research. The reports consulted originate from institutions all over the world, including Auckland Art Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, the National Gallery, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, the Borghese Gallery, Rome, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, and the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California. Some have been accessed in gallery archives, while others have been generously shared via email or post. These documents are useful primary sources in that they can provide specific, detailed information on the materials and techniques employed in a painting. The reports used take different forms; many contain detailed information regarding analysis or restoration work performed on Reni's paintings, while others provide results without necessarily elaborating on the procedure involved in achieving the data presented. Others are simply presented as visual observations by the conservator, or as histories of prior restoration projects or of damage. The individual author of each technical report, where available, along with the date, location and specific nature of the report (whether results from technical analysis, observations on condition or details of restoration work) is referenced in the footnotes and bibliography. The writer has endeavoured to use these reports with an appreciation for the fact that their origins and purposes vary. In some cases, cross-sectional analysis and the results of scientific imaging techniques (including x-radiograph, infrared and ultraviolet) have also been obtained, which provide information on underdrawings, *pentimenti*, supports, paint layer structure, pigments and other painting materials.

This research poses a number of questions regarding the inner workings of the artist's workshop, ranging from how the artist painted and what materials he used, to the training of his pupils and use of assistants. Chapter one begins by addressing the nature of the *seicento* sources that this thesis draws from. The first part of this chapter describes the sources to be consulted, and places each source into historical context. In using seventeenth-century texts as sources for writing on artists' workshops and techniques, the conventions of history writing in this period must be acknowledged, and the use of established themes and anecdotes as tools in the creation of such literary works must be recognised. This chapter discusses literary conventions and motifs that the seventeenth-century authors may be drawing from in their writing, and notes advantages and disadvantages of each source. The second part of this chapter

presents the information drawn from the *seicento* sources pertaining to Reni's painting technique, materials and workshop practices.

In chapter two, details of Reni's painting technique, style and materials are discussed. This account is produced using scientific analysis, as collected by painting conservators, and visual interpretations of a number of artworks, in conjunction with the seventeenth-century source information introduced in chapter one. Distinctive traits are identified regarding Reni's style of painting and brushwork, and the evolution of these traits over the course of the artist's career. The chapter continues with a discussion of Reni's creation of compositions. It examines a selection of Reni's preparatory drawings, as well as some of the underdrawings on his supports, where they have been made visible through infrared examination. The order in which the artist has painted the various layers of his composition is investigated through the examination of the contours of the forms in certain works, and the observation of areas of overlapping paint. This chapter also addresses the artist's *pentimenti* (where alterations to the composition of a work have been made during the painting process), which are sometimes visible on the paint's surface, and other times are evidenced from x-ray or infrared imagery, and offer insight into the process of the creation of composition. The chapter continues with a discussion of the palette of colours routinely used by Reni in his work, and the specific pigments which make up this palette. The artist's palette is often distinct and related to his style, and changes at different points in time. The artist's painting supports are next to be addressed; linen canvas was Reni's usual choice of support, though occasionally he deviated to painting on wood panel, silk and copper. The artist's choice of support provides information on the overall visual impression he hoped to achieve. The chapter continues to include information on the artist's ground layers; his choice of ground materials, and his use of coloured grounds. The chapter will conclude with details of the condition of some of Reni's works, using accounts from earlier sources and reports by modern conservators.

Chapter three is entitled "The Workshop as a School". This chapter provides a description of the artistic training that Guido Reni received in the studio of Denis Calvaert and the Carracci Academy, as a precursor to his later efforts as a teacher in his own workshop. It discusses details of Reni's studio; its size and location, the number of students and assistants that it housed, and the manner in which it was run.

It also provides information on the artist's personality and his behaviour in studio when dealing with assistants, customers and other visitors. This section looks in to the artist's role as a teacher – examining Reni's workshop not only as an area of painting production, but also a place of learning, where the artist trained many students during the course of his career. The training that these pupils received from their master is examined, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the identities of students Reni trained, and their roles within Reni's workshop.

The final chapter in this thesis is an account of the artist's workshop as a business. Following on from the discussion of Reni's pupils in chapter three, this chapter begins by investigating the role of the assistant in Reni's workshop, and collaboration between assistants and their master. The chapter continues by examining the relationship between Reni and his clientele. The pricing of Reni's works varied throughout his career, and reflects his working methods as well as his eminence as a painter. Chapter four outlines the manner in which prices were set for Reni's work at different points in the artist's career and how these prices corresponded to the paintings themselves and their production. The final section of this chapter, entitled "Copies and Attribution", addresses problems regarding the attribution of Guido Reni works, which are a common theme in writings on the artist. While this section does not intend to definitively make or refute attributions of works, it discusses the reasons for the difficulties in attributing Reni paintings. The production of copies and their relationship with attributional problems is also addressed. This includes a survey of a number of compositions that were repeated by Reni and his assistants, in an attempt to provide some clarity on the practice of copying in Reni's studio, and the reasons behind repetitions.

Chapter 1: Reni in the *Seicento* Literary Sources

The purpose of this initial chapter is to survey the *seicento* literary source material that will be used in conjunction with other sources in the investigation of Guido Reni's working method that takes place in subsequent chapters. A number of seventeenth-century sources will be examined, and in each case, passages regarding their discussion of Reni, his training, painting technique, materials and studio practices have been extracted for analysis. The information in this chapter does not represent the totality of what the primary sources have to say on Guido Reni. Rather, it seeks to give an account of the selected sources' discussion regarding the artist's painting techniques and materials specifically (or to note the absence of such information). Further information from primary sources will be introduced and discussed elsewhere in the thesis where relevant to specific topics. For example, information on Reni's personality, training and the artist's practice as a teacher, as well as the patronage and pricing of paintings as mentioned by seventeenth-century sources is not addressed in its entirety here, but will be discussed at length in chapters three and four.

The seventeenth-century sources which have been selected for examination for the purposes of this research have been limited to some extent by availability, since only in certain cases have these been translated from Italian to English. Where English translations for Italian sources have not been available, translations are the author's own. These translations can prove difficult to perform, due to the nature of the language – seventeenth-century Italian presents idioms and expressions no longer in use in the modern day, and many words have changed in spelling or meaning. For those occasions where translations have been made from Italian texts, or the author has used translations made by other scholars, the original Italian text has been provided in the footnotes, so as to make it available to the reader. Such text has been recounted as it appears in the publication being consulted; that is, discrepancies or errors in spelling or punctuation have not been altered, where such errors might occur. No distinctions have been made regarding what might be a typographical error versus a difference in spelling brought about by the evolution of the Italian language, and the author has determined to present these pieces of text exactly as they appear

in their original publications. Many words have been encountered in the source texts which have different spelling to their modern Italian counterparts (alongside many that do not have a modern Italian version at all).

In this regard, the author has followed an approach outlined by Anne Summerscale, who worked extensively on the translation of some of Malvasia's biographies. With regards to the translation of *The Lives of the Carracci*, Summerscale notes that "no ready equivalents exist in English for some crucial and distinctive Italian terms such as *terrible, amoroso, gentile, sprezzato, fiero, dolce, risoluto.*"[11] While Summerscale here is referring to language encountered in Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice*, this is not unique to Malvasia's writing. These words, as well as others with no direct translation, are encountered in all of our Italian sources and are to be interpreted by the translator based on their context, with the acknowledgement that in their original context these words would often have encompassed several meanings at once. Summerscale states that, for example, in different instances the word *disegno* might be translated as "drawing", or "draftsmanship", or "design", depending on the understanding of the context in which it appears, "and yet the Italian word contains all the shadings of the three English words as well as inherited or inflected meanings accrued through its previous use by writers such as Vasari or Dolce or Boschini."[12]

The bulk of the primary literary source information is drawn from two series of biographies written in Italy in the seventeenth century, the most relevant for the subject of Guido Reni and his painting technique being the aforementioned work by Carlo Cesare Malvasia; *Felsina pittrice*, first published in 1678, and Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Lives,* of 1672.[13] Works by Francesco Scannelli and Giulio Mancini have also

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[11] Anne Summerscale, 'Note to the Translation', in *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci*, Felsina pittrice, by Malvasia, Carlo Cesare, translated by Anne Summerscale (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 79.

[12] Summerscale, 'Notes to the Translation', 79.

[13] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: vite de pittori bolognesi*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Per l'Erede di Domenico Barbieri, 1678), especially vol. 2, 'La vita di Guido Reni', 3-91.
A later edition of these volumes was also published in 1841 (Bologna: Tip. Guidi all'Ancora), and translations to English have been made of the lives of the Early Bolognese Painters, Guido Reni, the Carracci, Domenichino and Francesco Albani, which will be cited where appropriate. Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, edited by Evelina Borea, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Torino: G. Einaudi, 2009), and Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, translated by Alice Sedgwick Wohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Wohl's 2005 translation is based on Borea's publication (first published in 1976). Borea's text incorporates manuscripts of biographies not published in Bellori's original edition (Mascardi, 1672), including the life of Guido Reni, which has been consulted in conjunction to the English translation.

been used as sources.[14] Texts by the latter two of these authors remain largely untranslated. The information provided by Scannelli and Mancini specifically on Guido Reni is considerably less extensive than the two aforementioned biographers, but they contain useful information on artistic practice in the seventeenth century more generally.

Giovanni Battista Passeri also produced a biographical account of Reni, composed chiefly during the 1670s, and while it has been consulted and is made reference to briefly in this chapter, the author has not cited information from it as regularly as our other sources.[15] This is because Passeri's writing, while occasionally useful, does not often offer up significant information beyond that found in Malvasia's work (whom Passeri is almost certainly using as a source). Passeri also fails to write in any great detail on Reni, and makes some chronological errors in his writing, even mistaking the year of Reni's death, demonstrating that he is not as familiar with his subject as the other biographers appear to be.[16]

Other literary sources which have been consulted (but are, again, utilised to a lesser extent than those previously mentioned) in the chapters that follow include Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550),[17] Giovanni Baglione's *Le Vite De' Pittori, Scultori et Architetti* (1642),[18] and Filippo Baldinucci's *Life of Bernini* (1682),[19] as well as other more minor texts, including Vincenzo Giustiniani's letter to his friend Amayden, which appears in *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura* and describes "categories, concerning the methods of painting and the rankings of painters, based on a bit of experience I have

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[14] Francesco Scannelli, *Il microcosmo della pittura* (Cesena: Peril Neri: 1657), and Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, edited by Adriana Marucchi and Luigi Salerno, 2 vols. (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1956-1957).

[15] Giovanni Battista Passeri, *Vite de'pittori, scultori, ed architetti che hanno lavorato in Roma; morti dal 1641 fino al 1673* (Rome: Presso Gregorio Settari, 1772).

[16] Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 14.

[17] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* translated by Jonathan Foster, in 5 volumes (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850-1864).

[18] Giovanni Baglione, *Le Vite De' Pittori, Scultori et Architetti*, 3 vols. (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1995). Baglione conspicuously omits Reni from his lives, despite including "sixteen other artists from Bologna, a greater number than from any other region", becase, according to Malvasia, when Baglione asked Reni for a "summary of his biography and his finest pictures", he was rudely refused by the artist. (Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 112.)

[19] Filippo Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, translated by Catherine Enggass (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966).

had of this profession", in which Giustiniani outlines in detail the various techniques and methods which make up an achieved artist, with reference to specific seventeenth-century painters.[20]

The first part of this chapter will be dedicated to the introduction of the four principal authors to be used in this investigation, and an assessment of their works and approaches. This will be followed by a discussion of the manner in which the seventeenth-century sources should be read, and the concept of "reliability" and "truth" with regard to Renaissance and *seicento* literature. A small section is devoted to the relationship between Guido Reni and his principal biographer, Carlo Cesare Malvasia, given the author's importance as a source for this thesis. The second part of the chapter will comprise of an analysis of passages from our sources, which pertain to Reni's artistic practice. The information provided by the *seicento* writers will be subject to further interpretation later in this thesis when it is put into context with analysis of Reni's artworks.

Part I: The *seicento* authors – backgrounds and texts

The following sections will discuss the authors of the main *seicento* sources to be examined in this chapter, in chronological order of publication, that is, Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (1617-1621), Francesco Scannelli's *Il microcosmo della pittura* (1657), Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (1672), and Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina Pittrice* (1678).

1.1. Giulio Mancini

Giulio Mancini was born in Siena in 1559, and was, like fellow author Francesco Scannelli, an "amateur critic" – this being a new group of critics who emerged in seventeenth-century Italy, who were neither professional artists, writers or scholars,

[20] Vincenzo Giustiniani in *Raccolta di Lettere sulla Pittura, Scultura ed Architettura scritte da'piu celebri Professori che in dette arti fiorirono dal Secolo XV. al XVII*, edited by Giovanni Gaetano Bottari, vol. 6, (Rome: Eredi Barbiellini, 1768), and in H. W. Janson, with Robert Enggass, and Jonathan Brown, *Italian and Spanish Art, 1600-1750: Sources and Documents* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 16-17: "...farò alcune distinzioni, e gradi di pittori, del modo di dipingere, che sono a mia notizia, fondata più in qualche poca pratica, che io abbia di questa professione."

but whose primary profession lay outside the field of arts. Mancini, again like Scannelli, was a trained physician, having studied medicine in the University of Padua, and was led to his writing by his love of art, as a collector and connoisseur. He was a collector who, in the words of Frances Gage, was "practiced at distinguishing the hands and schools of artists", and "whether or not an object was well preserved", making him a useful source for this thesis.[21] Mancini's principal work, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* or "Thoughts on Painting" was completed largely between 1617 and 1621, but only published in 1956.[22]

Mancini wrote his *Considerazioni sulla pittura* while practicing medicine in Rome and is thought to be the first author who fully addressed the problem of distinguishing copies of paintings from originals. His expertise on painting was widely acknowledged, and he was practiced in connoisseurship to the point that he could, reportedly, easily distinguish between paintings by Raphael and by members of his workshop.[23] He wrote that it is important to know whether a painting is "a copy or an original, because sometimes the originals are so well imitated that it is difficult to tell." He goes on to say that "in order to make the deception more effective, they [copyists] take old panels and paint over them. Even with all this, those who are experienced unmask all these forms of deception."[24] Mancini's writing underlines the importance of connoisseurship in distinguishing copies (and, in some cases, fakes) from originals. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the problem of how to distinguish original paintings from copies had become of sufficient importance for Mancini to write at length about it, and this is an issue which reportedly arises amongst Reni's patrons.[25] Mancini's writing is relevant to research into *seicento* painting techniques and studio practices as the creation of copies by students and assistants was common practice in Reni's studio, and in those of the artist's contemporaries.

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[21] Frances Gage, *Painting as medicine in early modern Rome: Giulio Mancini and the efficacy of art* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 14.
[22] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 33.
[23] Mancini, *Considerazioni*, I, 144-45, cited by Gage, *Painting as medicine,* 14: "Ma non vorrei già che fosse messa insieme la medessima schuola e maniera, come per essempio nelle cose sacre tutte le cose di Raffaello e sua scuola, come di Giulio, Timoteo, Buon Fattore e altri già detti, ma vorrei che si tramezzassero con altre maniere / e schuole del medessimo secolo..."
[24] Mancini, *Considerazioni*, I, 34: "E sopra tutto se sia copia o originaria, perchè alle volte avviene che sia tanto ben imitata che è difficile riconoscerla, aggiontovi che questi, che le voglion vendere per originarie, l'affumano con il fumo di paglia molle, che così nella pittura introduce una certa scorza simile a quella che gl'indusse il tempo, et così paiano antiche, levandogli quel colore acceso e resentito della novità e recenza; oltre che, per coprir più l'inganno, pigliano delle tavole vecchie e sopra d'esse vi lavorano."
[25] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 34.

Mancini's text provides information on the process patrons might have gone through in attempting to recognise a painting by an artist's assistants as opposed to the work of the master himself.

Mancini took up residence in Bologna briefly in the mid-1580s, and though this visit occurred too early to witness Reni working, it instilled an interest in Bolognese art in the author that is evident in his writing.[26] In his writing, Mancini singles out Guido Reni, Francesco Albani and Domenichino as "three highly qualified and virtuous young men who came from Bologna to Rome together" and chose to treat them as a group, creating a precedent for how they would be discussed by both Bellori and Malvasia later in the century. Indeed, Malvasia is said to have known Mancini's *Considerazioni* in manuscript version.[27] *Considerazioni sulla pittura* also provides information on the ideal methods of display for works of art, again addressing the seventeenth-century patron. This passage has special relevance for the history of patronage – a subject which is addressed in relation to Guido Reni's studio in chapter four. Mancini provides advice to patrons living in both large residences and one-bedroom dwellings. This indicates that the growth in the art market in Italy in the seventeenth century was sustained "at least in part by the *petit bourgeoisie*, that is, by persons of such modest circumstances that they could afford no more than two principal rooms, a living room and a bedroom."[28] This insight into the art market in *seicento* Italy implies that not only people of high status in society would have purchased art, but also those of lesser means. While the purchase of art is often associated with wealthy collectors, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, paintings had become a fashionable element of decoration in peoples' homes, and even those of modest means bought and displayed art.[29]

Mancini's *Considerazioni* offers advice to the collector beyond the identification of originals and the conventions of display. He also discusses how to arrive at the

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[26] Gage, *Painting as medicine,* 14.
[27] Mancini, *Considerazioni*, I, 241-242, cited by Elizabeth Cropper, 'Malvasia's Life of Domenichino: An Ambivalent Legacy', in *Lives of Domenichino and Francesco Gessi,* by Malvasia, Carlo Cesare, Felsina pittrice, vol. 13, translated by Anne Summerscale (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013), 2: "...tre giovani molto qualificati e virtuosi che di compagnia da Bologna vennero a Roma.", and Giovanna Perini, 'Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters: Insight into Conflicting Trends in Seventeenth-Century Italian Art Historiography', *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 70, no. 2, (1988), 285.
[28] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 34.
[29] Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things; A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 139.

correct price for a painting, how it should be cleaned, varnished, and framed, how to discover in what period it was executed, to what country and region it belongs, and, most relevant for present research, how to determine in what technique the work was made. His text is a valuable source in the examination of all of these aspects of Reni's workshop, especially in chapter four, where the artist's business practices are investigated.

1.2. Francesco Scannelli

Francesco Scannelli was born in Forlì in 1616 and, studied medicine in the University of Perugia. Like Mancini, Scannelli was a practicing physician and an amateur art theorist and writer, as well as connoisseur and collector. He exemplifies a kind of author which became more common in the seventeenth century, and began to replace the professional artist as a writer, as the major source and authority of art criticism and theory. Scannelli's only published work is his *Microcosmo della Pittura* of 1657. Scannelli's *Il Microcosmo della pittura*, despite being a short text, is important in studies on Reni and his contemporaries because it was written by an author who claimed to have known Reni personally.[30] Scannelli published his text around twelve years after Reni's death, unlike Malvasia, whose life of Reni was published decades subsequent to the artist's death. While Scannelli is not known to have been as familiar with Reni as Malvasia supposedly was, the writer is said to have occasionally visited Reni, as well as Albani, and knew Guercino well.[31] This reflects positively on Scannelli as a source on Reni's painting technique, having visited his studio in Bologna and perhaps observed him at work.

Although the title page of *Il Microcosmo* suggests that the entire first half of the book deals with theory, most of it can be considered criticism.[32] In dealing with the subject of problems of attribution and connoisseurship, Scannelli's writing focuses on specific works of art. An exchange of letters between Scannelli and Francesco Albani was recorded and published by Malvasia in his *Felsina pittrice* which describes Scannelli's intentions for *Il Microcosmo*. Scannelli, according to Malvasia, specifically defined his purposes in *Il Microcosmo della pittura* by contrasting them with those of the Roman

[30] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 14.
[31] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 39.
[32] Ibid., 40: "...nel primo spettante alla theorica si discorre d'essa Pittura..."

biographer, Giovanni Baglione, and told Albani not to refer to his book as a *Vite di Pittori* (part of the title of Baglione's publications of 1642), "because it isn't one". Rather, *Il Microcosmo* was intended to be a "*bilancia*", a scale with which "readers with judgment" can "weigh and estimate the differences between the masters."[33] This makes Scannelli a distinct source in that he is using a different approach to either Malvasia or Bellori when writing about Reni and his contemporaries, who are seen to use anecdotal evidence and give lengthy accounts in an attempt to create more complete narratives of artists' lives. Despite Scannelli's text being considerably shorter than those of Malvasia or Bellori, it nonetheless contains valuable information. Scannelli's approach means he does not report at length the entire story of an artist's life, but rather provides criticisms of artworks based on his own knowledge and experience.

Scannelli's engagement with the subject of connoisseurship makes him a useful source to research painting technique, as the practice of connoisseurship is partly dependent on familiarity with artists' working methods and painting materials. Scannelli practiced as a connoisseur himself, working as an art consultant and buyer for Francesco d'Este, the Duke of Modena, who was one of the greatest collectors in Italy.[34] This contributes to the overall impression of Scannelli as an expert on art, who must have had a good knowledge of specific artworks and artistic styles and techniques, and gives him more authority as an author on this subject.

Though Scannelli's treatise deals with all of Italy, he writes with a predisposition toward north Italian artists. Scannelli has been described as northern Italian "to the core", and his writing is a celebration of the artistic merits of this region, which was seen as insignificant and uninteresting to many writers before him, who considered the artistic epicenters of art in Italy to be Florence or Rome.[35] This is quite similar to the position taken by Malvasia in his *Felsina pittrice*, who presents Bologna as the centre of artistic practice in *seicento* Italy and sees it as his role to defend the artists

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[33] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed, II, 279, cited by Anne Summerscale 'Part One: Context', in *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci*, Felsina pittrice, by Malvasia, Carlo Cesare, translated by Anne Summerscale (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 4-5, n. 9: "Vengo poi à soggiungere, che io non vorrei chiamasse V. S. od altri l'opera col nome di Vite di Pittori, perche non è ... Io intendo, che il mio Microcosmo sia come una Bilancia, colla quale i Lettori di giudicio suoi pari possano persare il valore de' megliori maestri della Pittura, ed anco conoscere la differenza che si ritrova fra di loro."
[34] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 39.
[35] Ibid., 41.

of his city against their Roman critics. This focus on north Italy and Bologna and opposition to the Roman sources, who often neglected the region, provides information that might not otherwise be available. This is not unprecedented; an obvious patriotism or partisanship for a hometown is seen in Renaissance histories too, such as Leonardo Bruni's *History of Florence*, in which the author manipulates the sources for his own purposes; that is, "the glorification of Florence as a political power of the first rank".[36] Vasari is another obvious example of an author's partisanship toward homegrown artists, and many later authors championed different regions in response to the Renaissance biographer's promotion of all things Florentine, "seeking to revise his history according to local interests", including Scannelli and his bolstering of Bologna.[37]

Scannelli, in his opposition to both the Roman and Florentine schools, was often led to take an anticlassical position. Rome and Florence were the places where almost all *seicento* art criticism originated, and were strongholds of classicism.[38] In this way, Scannelli counters one of the other major biographical sources on Reni, Giovanni Pietro Bellori. Scannelli is not vehemently anticlassical, however, in that he recognises both *disegno* and *colore* as the dual bases of the art of painting – as opposed to discounting *disegno* entirely. Although most critics held the practice of drawing as superior to colour, Scannelli treated them as equal.[39] Scannelli, like Giulio Mancini, is noted as a source for classicist writer Giovanni Pietro Bellori for information in his *Vite*, despite his somewhat anti-Roman stance.[40] This would suggest that even writers from opposing schools of thought viewed Scannelli as a respected source of information and an authority on his subject.

While Scannelli did not reject the entire body of classical theory, his position regarding *disegno* and *colore,* and as an admirer of northern Italian art, led him to favour spontaneity in art over careful design in drawing. Towards the end of his treatise,

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[36] Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 8.
[37] Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 388.
[38] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 41-42.
[39] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 102-103, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 42: "Si dimostra, con tutto che i primi trè maggiori Maestri habbiano posseduto col buon dissegno, e colorito la prattica universale dell'operare..."
[40] Janice Bell, Introduction to *Art History in the Age of Bellori: Scholarship and Cultural Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, edited by Bell, Janice and Willette, Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.

Scannelli asserts that works that are the result of the artist's inspiration are superior to those that reflect the effects of prolonged study. Scannelli writes that it was Reni's belief that a master would not only possess "extraordinary talent", but would express this talent as a result of "studious efforts".[41] He disapproved of the later, classicising phases of Domenichino and Guido Reni, preferring instead the early, darker, more painterly works of Guercino. This makes Scannelli's writing particularly relevant with regards to Reni's *ultima maniera*, or final style, which departed drastically from his early manner. Scannelli describes this change in technique and provides reasons for the stylistic deviation, which he so clearly lamented.

1.3. Giovanni Pietro Bellori

Giovanni Pietro Bellori was born in Rome in 1613, and was a central figure in the city in the seventeenth century, at a time when it was still a major hub of artistic and intellectual activity in Europe.[42] He is best known for his book *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti moderni* or "Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects", published in Rome in 1672. Bellori's *Lives* is a compilation of biographies of twelve painters; Annibale and Agostino Carracci, Federico Barocci, Caravaggio, Rubens, Van Dyck, Domenichino, Lanfranco, Poussin, Guido Reni, Andrea Sacchi and Carlo Maratti, two sculptors; Francois Duquesnoy and Alessandro Algardi, and one architect, Domenico Fontana.

Bellori was friends with artist Domenichino Zampieri, art theorist and Papal diplomat Monsignor Giovanni Battista Agucchi, and Giovanni Antonio Massani, who was *Maestro di casa* to Pope Urban VIII, as well as with many other erudite collectors and artists.[43] From the time of his youth Bellori had privileged exposure to the world of art and antiquities, making him most informed as a writer. From the age of sixteen or seventeen, Bellori had intentions of becoming a painter. He met artist Giovanni Angelo Canini in his youth when both were studying painting with Domenichino in the summer of 1635.[44] Though Bellori painted briefly under Domenichino, his chief

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[41] Scannelli, *Il micrcosmo,* 359, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 42: "...e di studiosa fatica conforme al proprio straordinario talento particolar maniera con idea veramente singolare..."
[42] Bell, Introduction to *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, 2.
[43] Ibid., 4.
[44] Ibid.

interests later became literary. Unlike the artist-writers of the sixteenth century, Bellori discontinued the pursuit of a career as a professional artist to devote himself entirely to writing. His decision to change career paths seems to have arisen during the time when he was studying painting and Domenichino left for Naples in 1635.[45] Despite quitting his formal studies, Bellori is said to have continued painting as a hobby in the decades following the departure from his original ambitions. As late as 1665, long after the death of Bellori's first master Domenichino, the English traveler Philip Skippon noted that "sig. Bellori ... draws pictures and makes good landskips."[46] As well as this, a letter written by the biographer's friend Camillo Massimo "attests that Bellori executed a series of landscapes at the palace of the Massimo at Roccasecca before 1662."[47] Bellori's practice in landscape painting is further evidenced by his only signed work, a landscape known now in the form of an engraving included in a series by Canini.[48] This knowledge of painting and personal contact with artists such as Domenichino – which in turn provides an indirect connection to Reni – suggest that Bellori had the potential to provide insider information on the workshop practices of *seicento* artists in Bologna. Though not necessarily direct observer of Reni at work, he had a grasp of painting technique and had spent time watching one of Reni's closest competitors in his studio, and therefore had the "insider" means to interpret and recount information on artistic technique and studio practices.

In terms of artistic theory, Bellori was a classicist, as were almost all of his contemporaries in Rome. The author's *Lives* have been described as one of the most authoritative statements of classical artistic theory of the seventeenth century, making Bellori heir to Vasari's classical tradition.[49] Bellori's frequent correspondence with his personal friend Cardinal Massimo demonstrates the author's admiration of and devotion to the study of the classical past, and belief in the importance of the link

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[45] Alice Sedgwick Wohl, Introduction to *The Lives of Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* by Giovanni Pietro Bellori, translated by Alice Sedgwick Wohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.
[46] Philip Skippon, 'An Account of a Journey made thro' parts of the Low Countries, Germany, Italy and France', in A. Churchhill, *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, VI (London: 1752), 682, cited by Wohl, Introduction to Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 8.
[47] Archivio Massimo, vol. 276, fol. 642v, Rome, cited by Wohl, Introduction to Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 8: "To Signor Giovan Pietro Bellori. Your Honor quite makes up for the length of your silence with the agreeableness of your letter of the 29th of last month, in which you paint for me with your pen as many beautiful landscapes as you represented for me with your brush as an ornament to this house.... Roccasecca, 5 May 1662."
[48] Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory* (1947; Reprint, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975),148, cited by Wohl, *Lives,* n. 65.
[49] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 5.

between the ancient past and contemporary artistic production, reaffirming his position as a staunch classicist.[50] In contrast with the northern Italian sources – particularly Scannelli – what Bellori prized in art was an idealisation of nature, as observed in the work of Raphael, or, in the seventeenth century, in some of the classically oriented work of Annibale Carracci, Domenichino, Carlo Maratti, or Guido Reni.[51]

Bellori and Malvasia are regularly compared to one another, given that they produced the two most comprehensive accounts of artists' lives in Italy in the seventeenth century. Bellori's methodology, however, contrasted sharply with that of Malvasia. While in Bellori's writing, he used historical material to support his classicist position, Malvasia's biographies give the impression of being more observational, in that there is a sense that his writing is based less on a theoretical position and more on information he had to hand, and on his experience of an artist or their work. There is a fundamental difference between the two writers' approaches in that Bellori had little interest in biographical detail – the incorporation of letters and documents that are noted extensively in Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice* was not Bellori's practice in his *Lives*. The two authors are often portrayed as enemies, the antithesis of one another, but Malvasia was well aware of Bellori's work, and made use of it in his own writing. He incorporated the text of Bellori's *Argomento della Galeria Farnese dipinta da Annibale Carracci e intagliata da Carlo Cesio* ... in his life of the Carracci, describing this as one of "the most ingenious and erudite descriptions imaginable", and describing the Roman as "the most highly knowledgeable Signor Giovan Pietro Bellori, who is weaving the Lives of the Painters, picking up the thread of Giorgio Vasari."[52] Bellori's *Life of Guido Reni* has been described as "reliant for details" on Malvasia's then

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[50] Lisa Beaven, *An Ardent Patron: Cardinal Camillo Massimo and his Antiquarian and Artistic Circle, Giovanni Pietro Bellori, Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Diego Velázquez* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2010), 12.

[51] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 7.

[52] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 437, cited by Elizabeth Cropper, 'Malvasia's Life of Domenichino: An Ambivalent Legacy', in *Lives of Domenichino and Francesco Gessi, Felsina pittrice*, by Carlo Cesare Malvasia, vol. 13, translated by Anne Summerscale (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013), 7: "Ottoboni: e perche il valore in ciò non meno di questo Virtuoso, che la stessa Virtù di Annibale meritò che sotto il titolo di: *Argomento della Galleria Farnese dipinta da Annibale Carracci & intagliata da Carlo Cesio, nel quale spiegansi, e riduconsi allegori camente alla moralità le favole poetiche in essa rappresentate*, precedesse al detto libro una delle più ingegnose, & erudite descrizioni, che la grande operazione uguagliar possa, ottenuta dall'intelligentissimo Sig. Gio. Pietro Bellori, che stà tessendo le vite de' Pittori che sieguono il filo di Giorgio Vasari."

unpublished manuscript, therefore suggesting that the biographers are both using one another as sources in their respective works.[53]

The two biographers differ in a more significant way when it came to recording or describing works of art. Bellori, while providing extensive accounts of subject matter, had a reputation for relying on prints of paintings for this information rather than the scrutiny of actual artworks, and did indeed provide detailed descriptions of works he had not seen by referring to prints.[54] Malvasia, in contrast, made a point of only describing those works he had seen himself, and held an "expressly stated dedication to ocular inspection", made more evident by the fact that "where he had not seen a work he would often say so."[55] This contrast in methodologies is particularly relevant to the study of painting techniques and materials. While prints give sufficient evidence to make detailed analysis of subject matter and composition, where Bellori has not examined a painting, he cannot comment specifically on painting techniques, materials or states of preservation. While Cropper describes Bellori's descriptions of paintings as "masterpieces of attentive visual analysis", because they describe "every pose, expression, and gesture", they often lack the visual analysis most relevant to research into technical matters, that of the paint surface, colours and brushwork; all aspects which could only be studied by the *seicento* authors from first hand encounters with artworks.[56]

Bellori's attention to subject matter and *istoria* in his descriptions of paintings, and his omission of details regarding colour and texture may not only be the result of his use of prints as a source, but could also be related to his position as a Roman writer. That is to say, Bellori's position as an author championed the practice of *disegno* over *colore*, and therefore the description of composition and structure took precedence over any mention of colour palette or surface texture. The description of elements such as brushwork and colour were also related to manual dexterity. Such skills were not valued in classicist theory. Bellori's descriptive technique, like Vasari's, was aimed at fostering appreciation for the artist's genius, and for *invenzione* and *bellezza* as traits that arose from the practice of drawing.[57]

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[53] Spear, *The Divine Guido,* 14.
[54] Cropper, 'A Plea for *Felsina pittrice*', 9-10.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 15.
[57] Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, 245.

Bellori's descriptions might also be related to the practice of ekphrasis; rhetorical descriptions of works of art. In his writing, Vasari looked to ancient ekphrases of paintings (the most important of which were contained Philostratus the Elder's *Imagines*), which serve as a demonstration of the writer's skill and a literary device in evoking people, places, and events in history, as a "re-creation of the effect and associations of viewing", rather than a "direct transcription of an artwork's physical details."[58] Bellori, looking to Vasari and to the ancient past (which he so admired), may be creating ekphrasis rather than performing the "ocular inspection" carried out by Malvasia. As in Vasari's *Lives,* Bellori's lengthy recitals of elements of the composition and the subject matter "gives a cumulative impression of the beauty, interest and variety of the works" and emphasised the artist's inventive capacities, as well as the author's literary abilities.[59]

While Scannelli and Malvasia are seen to be partisan towards northern Italian artists, Bellori's writing similarly promotes those artists to which he feels allegiance, though Bellori is more partial to Roman, classicizing artists than to their northern Italian counterparts. Bellori, however, was a friend of Domenichino's, and therefore he had some vested interest in painting in Bologna. Both Malvasia and Bellori write of Domenichino's greatness, but Malvasia often voices disapproval for Domenichino's work, and stated clear preference for Guido Reni.

1.4. Carlo Cesare Malvasia

Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616-93) was an Italian writer, collector, connoisseur antiquarian, lawyer and amateur artist. He is considered one of the most valuable authorities for the understanding of Bolognese art from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. He was an active member of Bologna's most renowned literary society, the *Accademia dei Gelati.*[60] He spent a period travelling in Rome and moving in circles of *primi personaggi* (including Bernardino Spada, one of Guido Reni's advocates and a close acquaintance of the artist), and, upon his return to Bologna, he was appointed professor of law at the University in 1647. In 1653 he obtained a

[58] Ibid., 275.
[59] Ibid., 276.
[60] The *Accademia dei Gelati,* or "Academy of the Frozen Ones", was founded in Bologna in 1588 and was one of the innumerable local intellectual 'academies', which formed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Italy.

degree in theology and he was appointed a canon of the Cathedral of Bologna in 1662.[61] When *Felsina pittrice: vite de' pittori bolognesi,* or *Lives of the Bolognese Painters*, was published, Malvasia was sixty-three years old and had attained a distinguished reputation in Bologna and, to a lesser extent, throughout Italy.[62] Malvasia was an advocate for culture and the arts in his hometown; he was a collector of drawings and prints, ran a drawing academy, published a variety of books on art and antiquity in the city, and held a role as "tour guide" to artists and scholars who visited Bologna. Like Scannelli, Malvasia confessed to "finding superiority in all things Bolognese".[63] The structure of Malvasia's work is in part indebted to the Renaissance biographer Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* of 1550. However, rather than following on from Vasari's work, the *Felsina pittrice* sought to bring about an awareness of the importance of the Bolognese school, in opposition to Vasari's view of the Renaissance and biases towards the art of Florence (and Rome). In his writing, Malvasia shows clear partisanship towards Bolognese art, and challenges the authority of Vasari as a historian.

Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice* was first published in two volumes in Bologna in 1678. The author had conceived the work in the 1650s or early 1660s and researched it exhaustively.[64] Malvasia composed this as a history of Bolognese painting in four sections – the first volume containing three parts, and the second containing the final part. Expansive in its historical embrace, the book treats, in approximately chronological order, more than one hundred painters (and engravers) who lived or practiced in Bologna up to the time of its writing, with many more mentioned in passing.[65] The first section of Malvasia's work is concerned with early painters of the late medieval period in Bologna, while the primary focus of his second section is Francesco Francia, a painter and goldsmith active in Bologna in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Malvasia continues in the third section of his biographies to the Carracci and their contemporaries, with the fourth and largest part concerning the followers of the Carracci (with whom Malvasia was a contemporary himself), including Domenichino, Francesco Albani, Guercino and, the subject of present research, Guido Reni. Malvasia's work was one of the first extensive studies of this local school.

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[61] Giovanna Perini, 'Malvasia, Carlo Cesare', *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online*, (1996), n.p.
[62] *Felsina* was the Etruscan name for the modern city of Bologna.
[63] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 219, cited by Spear, *The Divine Guido,* 14: "Trovo sempre I vantaggi della mia patria."
[64] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 86.
[65] Summerscale, 'Context', in *Life of the Carracci,* 4.

Malvasia was one of several writers in the seventeenth century producing studies of artists in the regions of Italy, including Raffaello Soprani for Genoa, Carlo Ridolfi for Venice, and Bernardo De Dominici for Naples – but he was arguably the most important, given the monumental nature of the *Felsina pittrice*.[66]

Like many seventeenth-century noblemen (and several of his fellow writers), Malvasia also studied painting under Giacinto Campana and Giacomo Cavedone.[67] However, like Bellori, he did not pursue this as a career – as a nobleman, a profession of this sort would have been inappropriate. As an amateur painter he would have been trained in technique, and observed masters at work, thereby attaining some understanding of painting materials and working methods, and perhaps the ability to recognise specific techniques and materials. Both Campana and Cavedone are known to have worked directly with Reni, which perhaps would have provided Malvasia with an opportunity to gain information on Reni's manner.

Malvasia's authority as a source varies according to the subject that he is addressing. While his writing encompasses a lengthy period of time, from the *trecento* to the *seicento*, the author was only alive during one of these centuries. Therefore, his *prima parte* addressing early medieval art, and his *seconda parte* regarding Francesco Francia are both chronologically quite far removed from the writer's own life. He was too young to have known even the Carracci, but their followers, and the subjects of his *quarta parte* were contemporaries of his - Guido Reni, Domenichino, Albani and Guercino, the majority of whom had already reached maturity at the time Malvasia was born.[68] Naturally, therefore, the writer presents himself as a more confident, authoritative figure in writing in the *quarta parte*, given that he was alive and living in Bologna in much of the period to which it refers. Denis Mahon makes an enlightened statement on Malvasia's information on earlier periods, writing that "we are entitled to look upon conversations reported by him as having taken place many years before he wrote, and indeed before he was born, more as a convenient literary device for making a historical or critical point of his own rather than as a reliable reportage of what actually occurred".[69] The use of literary devices and the "reliability" of a source is

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[66] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 86.
[67] Perini, 'Malvasia, Carlo Cesare', n.p.
[68] Summerscale, 'Context', in *Life of the Carracci,* 6.
[69] Denis Mahon, 'Malvasia as a source for sources', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 128, no. 1004 (1986), 794.

a complex topic and arises in relation to all of the *seicento* authors. The following sections will attempt to address this.

1.5. The sources and the "truth"

Questioning what information provided by seventeenth-century sources might be "true" or "false" proves problematic, and it is necessary to first address the nature of the sources and how they should be read. Schaefer considers our seventeenth-century biographical sources to be "limited" in comparison to modern day biographies, which, he argues leave the historian "with no scarcity of information".[70] This comparison cannot strictly be considered valid in light of the mode in which seventeenth-century sources are written – they are constructed histories, rather than attempts to record exact biographical accounts. If modern day biographies, as Schaefer implies, are indeed based on exacting accounts, it must be inferred that the modern and *seicento* biography are fundamentally different genres which cannot be measured against one another in this way. Even modern day biographies should be considered constructs of sorts; written to create the story of a life, as opposed to a detailed record, and that all biographies are constrained by "the accidental survival of materials, obliged to make and impose a pattern where none exists, forced to construct a narrative where the only materials he or she possesses have also to be the only significant events within it".[71]

Schaefer claims that "the early seventeenth-century chronicler, historians and critics did us no such service [in providing detailed information regarding the artist's private life] even in the case of an artist as famous and successful in his own lifetime as Guido Reni."[72] While one might agree with Schaefer that the seventeenth-century celebrity might have perhaps enjoyed a more private life than those today, the biographers of Reni's day do not fail to provide certain personal details on the artist's character and everyday life. Fortunately, the seventeenth-century writers seem to have maintained an interest into the artist's studio, many of them training as artists

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[70] Scott Schaefer, '*Io Guido Reni Bologna,* Man and Artist', in *Guido Reni: 1575 – 1642*, edited by Susan L. Caroselli (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1988), 2.
[71] John Worthen, 'The Necessary Ignorance of A Biographer', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, edited by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 241.
[72] Schaefer, '*Io Guido Reni Bologna*', 2.

themselves and visiting artists at work, and therefore can still inform the reader to a significant degree on artists' painting techniques and working methods. What Schaefer fails to acknowledge is that terms like "chronicler" cannot strictly be applied to these sources – both Vasari and Cicero distinguished "bare records of dates, personalities, places and events without rhetorical ornament from true history".[73] Giorgio Vasari was the ultimate source for both Malvasia and Bellori – in the seventeenth century there was no other model for artistic biography on the same scale of Vasari's *Lives* – and modern scholars have examined the structure of his biographies and "the construction of his own artistic past."[74] Patricia Rubin wrote that "history was a literary art for Vasari and his contemporaries", and this is also the case with the *seicento* sources.[75]

The seventeenth-century texts might be viewed as a sequence of events inserted into a constructed narrative in order to create a story out of what would otherwise be only a "chronicle". Narrative, when "used to represent real events", as in the seventeenth-century source texts, "endows them with an illusory coherence."[76] Constructed narrative, or rhetoric, as utilised by *seicento* authors, served as a vehicle for information, and such literary embellishment was conventional in the seventeenth century. Narrative aided authors in communicating information to their audiences.

Renaissance and seventeenth-century literary sources have been criticised by many modern scholars for their lack of "reliability". Cropper and Dempsey have responded to criticisms of these writings as invalid or unreliable, in instances where historians "have discovered that the seventeenth-century sources were skilled at rhetoric, and on this account dismiss their reports of the history of their era and its values as mere fiction".[77] In defence of the *seicento* sources, the authors point out that literature was, in fact, a branch of history until the nineteenth century, and "that it was the humanist revival of rhetoric that recreated history, as distinguished from chronicle, in the modern sense."[78] These texts are historically-located sources which must be viewed in a certain way. Rather than expecting a series of recorded facts, the reader must

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[73] Cicero, *De Oratore,* II.XII.53, vol. I, 236-237, cited by Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari,* 152.
[74] Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, 149.
[75] Ibid., 151.
[76] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 40.
[77] Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, 'The State of Research in Italian Painting of the Seventeenth Century', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 69, no. 4 (1987), 496.
[78] Cropper and Dempsey, 'Research in Italian Painting', 496.

accept the nature of the texts and understand that they are grounded in literary convention. White writes that "what often gets in the way of telling truths about someone's life is not the biographer's distortions or myopia, but the reader's preconceptions about what should be there, the way it should be told, and the conclusions which should be drawn", and this might be particularly true with regards to our *seicento* sources.[79] It is vital that the reader not dismiss these sources as valuable informants on the past – but rather, that the information contained within them should be viewed as the author's attempt to communicate certain messages to their audience, rather than recounting specific information grounded in what the modern reader perceives as "fact". These texts were not meant to be "simply descriptive or factual", but "effective or useful" and "meant to be read for that utility."[80]

1.6. The biographers' constructs

During the twentieth century, Bellori maintained a reputation amongst art historians as an authority on *seicento* art history, in contrast to Malvasia, who, in rather extreme terms according to Bell, "was dismissed as a falsifier for his reliance upon anecdotes and willingness to mold historical information in support of his opinions".[81] Though the concept of addressing whether this kind of writing is "true or false" is not valid in a *seicento* context, several scholars on Malvasia have attempted to verify aspects of the biographer's writings, such as dates and documents used – coming to the conclusion that a reputation as a "falsifier" is certainly not warranted.[82] Bellori's reputation in the twentieth century was as a trusted source, and this may have been linked to his position as the seventeenth-century spokesperson for classicism, "where classicism is seen as rational, orderly and systematic."[83] However, like Malvasia, Bellori's writing cannot be evaluated by the modern reader to determine the level of "truth" to his biographies. Both authors created these works within narrative constructs, rather than as verifiable accounts. Bellori's approach in his biographies was just another mode of

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[79] Norman White, 'Pieties and Literary Biography', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, edited by Batchelor, John (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 214
[80] Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, 155.
[81] Bell, Introduction to *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, 29.
[82] Giovanna Perini, 'Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters: Insight into Conflicting Trends in Seventeenth-Century Italian Art Historiography', *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 70, no. 2, (1988): 273-299.
[83] Bell, Introduction to *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, 29.

history writing, different to Malvasia's but not necessarily more reliable, and "fraught with its own partisanship, inaccuracies and political agendas."[84]

In the case of Bellori's *Life of Domenichino*, the writer is seen to be more interested in Domenichino's views on critical or theoretical questions, and, though he includes some of the artist's letters in his biography, Bellori cuts out parts, writing that the letters are "not transcribed in their entirety because they contain business and other matters that are not germane."[85] This is where Malvasia and Bellori differ further – Malvasia regularly includes such details of business and studio practice, especially where he had direct contact with an artist and would have known of the inner workings of his studio, like Bellori might have as a friend and former student of Domenichino's.

Malvasia, however, has been criticised for his editing of letters included in his *Felsina.* Denis Mahon in his article *Malvasia as a Source for Sources* refers specifically to a letter in Malvasia's *Life of Guido Reni* (in which Ludovico Carracci is writing to Annibale expressing his shock at the high price Reni commanded for his fresco work at San Gregorio), and his assessment of the document as it was printed in the *Felsina*, as to whether Malvasia had added passages to it.[86] Mahon defends the assertion by Roberto Zapperi that Malvasia "forged" the letter, describing such terminology as inappropriate and "crude" and writing that while there may at times be cause for scepticism when reading Malvasia's biographies, on these occasions evidence reported by him should be viewed as a "literary device for making a historical or critical point of his own rather than as a reliable reportage of what actually occurred."[87] Cropper and Dempsey also address the subject of Malvasia's practice of editing letters for insertion into his text, with reference to the same letter. The authors suggest that while the published letter *omits* sections which the biographer considered excessive, or expressed negativity against Reni, Annibale or the Farnese, material has not been fabricated and the purpose and sentiment of the letter have not been obscured.[88] This practice of omitting passages not relevant to the writer's own agenda

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 271: "...non essendosi trascritte intiere per contener negozio, ed altro, che non appartiene."
[86] Mahon, 'Malvasia as a source for sources', 794.
[87] Ibid., 790, 794.
[88] Cropper and Dempsey, 'Research in Italian Painting', 500-501.

is similar to Bellori's practice of omitting passages pertaining to business, and is another device used by the sources in conveying a message to their reader.

Again on the subject of the same letter, Janson writes that "it must be emphasized that Malvasia was prepared to invent documents to support his point of view", and describes the document in question as "letter in his possession that he claimed was written by Raphael to the Bolognese painter Francesco Francia in the year 1508 is now recognized to be written in a style that is completely characteristic of mid-seventeenth century Italian."[89] This was common practice, however, and Janson's use of the word "invent" in this context implies that Malvasia was performing some kind of deceit when he included such information – writers of this era commonly constructed their histories to form a comprehensive piece of literature for their reader, using what knowledge and understanding of their subject that they had. White writes of the literary aspect of the historical narrative, claiming that writers included "stylistic embellishments" that rendered the account vivid and interesting to the reader, and that this could be defended as a legitimate mode of historical representation and even as a valid mode of explanation because it improved the communicative function of these texts.[90]

Spear, in contradiction to Janson, says that the writings in the *Felsina pittrice* "are anchored in accounts of sufficient specificity that rarely is there reason for doubt because when documents have emerged, they consistently have sustained Malvasia's reports". Spear deduces that "hence, by extension, the whole of the *vita* gains enormously in plausibility."[91] His own research on Domenichino uncovered no evidence to suggest that Malvasia manipulated material in writing about Domenichino's life.[92] Gail Feigenbaum's research into Malvasia's work on Ludovico Carracci reaches a similar conclusion.[93] Giovanna Perini, who has examined the writings of Malvasia extensively, has made a statement that "none of which [his documents] has as yet been proved false."[94] Perini describes "Malvasia's long, meticulous quest for original documents, his extensive visual reconnaissance of

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[89] Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 86-87.
[90] White, *The Content of the Form*, 40.
[91] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 17-18.
[92] Richard E. Spear, *Domenichino*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982), 4.
[93] Gail Feigenbaum, in *Ludovico Carracci,* exh. cat. (Bologna: Museo Civico and Pinacoteca Nazionale, 1993), lxxxv, n. 3, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 14.
[94] Giovanna Perini, 'Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters: Insight into Conflicting Trends in Seventeenth-Century Italian Art Historiography', *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 70, no. 2, (1988), 284.

unknown or little-known Bolognese paintings and drawings, and his requests as home and abroad for new information", and maintains that there is no basis upon which to believe that any of this material is misinformation.[95] While it is interesting to examine individual passages of the source texts with regards to whether they are verifiable by other means or not, this exercise is not strictly relevant when one considers the mode in which the *seicento* sources write. Where aspects of the texts appear as constructs rather than absolute records, or certain material is fabricated, this is not done to mislead the reader, but rather was in keeping with the culture of writing at the time, where writing may have been embellished to make it more comprehensive or make certain points to an audience.

In keeping with the understanding of the convention of historical constructs, Spear suggests that errors in Malvasia's texts arise from the misinterpretation of his writings as opposed to deliberate falsification of evidence on the part of the author. He advises that "the question should not be, is each anecdote in the *Felsina pittrice* 'true', did Reni 'really' say this or that" and says that "obviously, some of the stories are *topoi* from the lives of artists and some of the information is literary embellishment."[96] *Topoi* are literary conventions; constructed motifs in support of an argument, the use of which was typical in seventeenth-century writers, and was inherited from antiquity. These *topoi* appear frequently in the *seicento* biographies, in the form anecdotes describing events in an artist's life, or recounted conversations. These anecdotes should not necessarily be read as actual accounts of real events, but as creations by the author, perhaps based on other events or in support of a statement which is fundamentally true. Spear describes these anecdotes as "classical rhetorical devices that are plausible rather than true, *verosimile* rather than *vero.*"[97] Their frequent inclusion in the *Felsina pittrice* does not undermine Malvasia's usefulness as a source, but rather the reader must be aware of such conventions and attempt to recognise these *topoi* as they appear. Indeed, these *topoi* are often easily recognisable, as Spear suggests when he states that "those he [Malvasia] uses to enrich and magnify Reni's life tend to be obvious, at times explicitly referential. In any case, they are markedly different in substance from Malvasia's narration of

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[95] Perini, 'Malvasia's Florentine Letters', 284.
[96] Giovanna Perini, 'Biographical Anecdotes and Historical Truth: an Example from Malvasia's "Life of Guido Reni"', *Studi secenteschi,* XXXI (1990), 151, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 17.
[97] Perini, 'Biographical Anecdotes and Historical Truth', 151, cited by Spear *The "Divine" Guido*, 17.

biographical events."[98] Kris and Kurz's study of these *topoi* identify some of the common motifs present in ancient and Renaissance writing, and many of these can be readily identified in the writings of Malvasia and Bellori.[99] These constructs still provide useful information as they were either be based in truth, or echo the writer's own beliefs or knowledge, and have been carefully selected by him to communicate a message to the reader.

Malvasia makes a comment in the preface of the *Felsina pittrice* regarding the fourth part of his text, writing that "the fourth part will browse widely through the noble, delightful, lively and spirited manners of Guido, Domenichino, Albani, Barbieri, and others who were either their competitors or their disciples, their imitators or their followers, relating similarly their deeds, successes, sayings, and witticisms, as much for the sake of utility as delight."[100] The author's use of words here inform the reader on his position; he recounts the deeds, successes, sayings and witticisms of the artists for the sake of "utility", informing the reader that anecdotes are used by the author as a tool in his writing of a history. The author asserts his authority as a historian in the preface to *Felsina pittrice*. He writes that in order to understand the book "and as necessary and preliminary information about it, I want you, courteous reader, to know that I write nothing that is not based on the most secure and true foundations."[101] The notion that his writing is based on true *foundations* is not contradicted by his use of *topoi*, as has been previously observed. The importance that Malvasia places on the concept of "fact" in biographical writing corresponds with the rising importance of scientific method in the early-modern period.[102] Malvasia continues to assert himself as an authority by describing his sources, stating that either he has "seen something and actually experienced it" himself, or it "has been

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[98] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 17.
[99] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (1934; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
[100] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Early Bolognese Painting: Felsina pittrice,* vol. 1, translated by Elizabeth Cropper, (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2012), 185: "E spazterà diffusamente la QUARTA per le nobili, amene, vivaci, e spiritose maniere d'un Guido, d'un Domenichino, d'un Albani, d'un Barbieri, & altri di questi, ò concorrenti, ò discepoli, ò imitatori, e seguaci; le loro gesta parimente, le fortune, i detti, i motti, non senza utile non meno, che con diletto riferendo."
[101] Ibid.: 183: "Per intelligenza dunque, e necessaria antecedente informazione di esse, voglio che tu sappi, o cortese Lettore, che non iscrivo cosa, che non sia appoggiata a fondamenti per lo più sicurì, e veri."
[102] Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact, and Form* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 5-6.

reported by the very person who witnessed it, or by his family or servant".[103] The importance of eye-witness testimony in writing was in line with the growing interest of creating records *ad vivum* in seventeenth-century science, and gives authority to the author's statements; eye-witness accounts "can be read as a guarantee of the one-to-one relation" between an author and their subject.[104] Malvasia describes these sources more specifically, writing that his information was not only gathered from oral exchanges, but from written material also, stating that his writing either "derives from the most faithful reports, manuscripts, and unimpeachable memoirs ... or it stems from the infinite number of letters I have collected, not to mention the many others I have seen."[105]

Malvasia's statement of authority on his subjects, alongside his description of his sources, is strengthened by the varying levels of detail provided when writing about early artists versus *seicento* artists. Malvasia gives noticeably less detail in his accounts on artists who were not his contemporaries when compared to those active during his lifetime, and provides even more information on those contemporary artists who he is known to have had met personally, contrasting with those he had little to no contact with. On the topic, Malvasia himself writes "I can and will express my regret that while I have been able to write extensively about Guido, whom I knew so well and saw so often, I have been unable to write adequately about Zampieri, whom I never came to know or even saw."[106] This is suggestive of a historian who is not creating evidence purely for the sake of a more balanced text, but using genuine sources to which he had access. Malvasia acknowledges the wealth of information that is available to him for his *quarta parte*, writing that "because [the fourth part] is so close to us, this fourth part is as copious in information as the second is wanting, and even more so the first, which is totally remote and alien from our times."[107]

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[103] Ibid.: "O l'aurò veduto io medesimo, e praticato di fatto; ò sarà relazione dello stesso, al quale avvenne ciò che si racconta, ò di suo parente, ò dimestico."
[104] Claudia Swan, '*Ad vivum, naer het leven*, from the life: defining a mode of representation', *Word & Image,* vol. 11, issue 4 (1995), 365.
[105] Ibid.: "...ò cavata da fedelissime relazioni, manoscritti, e memorie irrefragabili ... ò da infinità di lettere, che hò posto assieme, senza le tant'altre vedute."
[106] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 41: "Ben posso e vo' dolermi che come del primo [Reni], tanto da me conosciuto e praticato, ho potuto copiosamente scrivere, così al contrario del secondo [Domenichino], che mai viddi e conobbi, mi sia tolto il potere sufficientemente discorrere."
[107] Malvasia *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Cropper (2012), 185: "Riuscendoci poi (come a noi prossima tanto, e contigua) di notizie al trettanto copiosa, & abbondante questa Quarta parte, quanto scarsa per lo contrario, e mancante la Seconda, e tanto più la Prima, da noi totalmente, e da'nostri tempi rimota, ed aliena."

1.7. Malvasia and Reni

Malvasia's claim that he knew Guido Reni well gives him the potential to be a particularly valuable source in the investigation of Reni's painting techniques.[108] Of the biographies in part four of the *Felsina pittrice*, Reni's is by far the most detailed, containing information that could arguably only have been gained from direct interaction with the artist, for example, descriptions of the contents of the artist's home.[109] It is widely known that Malvasia had a close friendship with Reni, and thereby access to a great deal of information about him, "making his biography one of the longest, most richly documented, and most encomiastic in the *Felsina pittrice*."[110] Malvasia was born when Reni was thirty-one years old. However, despite the age gap, it was when Reni returned to Bologna (around 1614) after a period in Rome that he became one of the city's most famous artists.[111] This was around the time when Malvasia was growing up and receiving his education in Bologna, so he then knew Reni as a prominent and important artist in his hometown. Malvasia came to know Reni personally during the later 1630s, the last decade of the artist's life, when Reni was in his sixties and Malvasia in his early twenties.[112] This was around the time when Malvasia was studying law in Bologna, and Reni had gained great renown, not just in their hometown, but in wider Italy.

Malvasia describes himself as an eyewitness to Reni at work in his studio, and frequently quotes the artist directly, suggesting that he personally discussed a variety of topics with Reni. He prefaces several statements in Reni's biography with "many time he confirmed to me", or "as he himself often said", or "many times he himself related to me what the Pope said to him", suggesting that he is providing information directly from the artist.[113] Such quotations, while perhaps to some extent based in truth, are an attempt by the writer to show authority in his work. Malvasia recounts

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[108] Malvasia *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 41: "...[Reni] tanto da me conosciuto..."

[109] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., II, 60: "Contento poi di questa esterna apparenza, scarsamente ammobigliavale, provedendole di quegli arnesi, de' quali non potè far di meno, per uso massime della cucina."

[110] Cropper, 'Malvasia's Life of Domenichino', 2.

[111] Reni went to Rome in 1601 and was based there for over a decade. He made several visits to his hometown during this period but did not re-establish himself in Bologna until around 1614.

[112] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 11.

[113] Malvasia *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 18, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 18: "Piu' volte confesso' ... come anche diss'egli piu' volte ... piu' volte a me riferi' egli stesso avergli detto il Papa."

details in his writing on Reni's life that suggests he had a close relationship with the artist, and spent time in his studio and home. He describes the artist's personality and appearance in detail, as well as describing his home and furnishings.[114] Historically, acquaintance with the biographical subject was considered a qualification for writing a life; the authority of the Gospels of the four Evangelists, for example, is understood to have been linked to their knowing Jesus Christ personally.[115] The writer describes some of the contents of Reni's studio also, placing himself as a witness to Reni at work, writing for example, that in Reni's studio "there was an enormous canvas that had cost forty scudi, on which he was representing the fable of *Latona*."[116] Some of these details are verifiably correct – for example, a death inventory of 1642 of Reni's Bolognese house and studio on the Via delle Pescherie upholds the biographer's report of very sparse furnishings, as well as supporting other aspects of Malvasia's writing on Reni, including that, during its final years, Reni's studio turned out countless *ritocchi* (retouchings), *abbozzi* (underpaintings), and copies.[117]

To cement the information about Reni's life that was readily available to him in the form of written documents and personal experience, Malvasia is said to have travelled to see art and to interview those who knew his subjects, to Lombardy and the Veneto, to Florence and to Rome.[118] In his *Life of Reni*, Malvasia includes words from the artist's students, like Giovanni Andrea Sirani, and servants, like Marco Bandinelli (also known as "Marchino"), as well as information from Francesco Albani and Alessandro Tiarini, artists who knew Reni personally.[119] Among the leading painters in *seicento* Bologna, Malvasia had a strong and obvious preference for Guido Reni. This may have been simply a result of his friendship with the artist, though other scholars suggest it relates to Reni's role within the Bolognese tradition, in which he "continued and fulfilled, as he [Malvasia] saw it, the Bolognese manner of Ludovico Carracci".[120] Malvasia may have seen it as his duty as Reni's friend, with a firm belief in the artist

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[114] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 43-44: "Di natura malinconica, mista però di spirit a tempo, e di vivcità … Mai si senti dal suo corpo uscire cattivo odore … Era il suo vestire il più nobile … Contento poi di questa esterna apparenza, scarsamente ammobigliavale, provedendole di quegli arnesi."
[115] Catherine Neal Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 4.
[116] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "Rimase isomma un immenso telone, che costò quaranta scudi, in cui andava rapprsentato la favola di Latona."
[117] John T. Spike, 'L'inventario dello Studio di Guido Reni (11 Ottobre 1642)', in *Accademia Clementina: Atti e memorie,* vol. 22 (Bologna, Nuova Alfa, 1988): 43-65, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 18.
[118] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 13.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Cropper, 'Malvasia's Life of Domenichino', 2.

as the heir of the Bolognese tradition, to promote him. Malvasia's acknowledgement of the artist's shortcomings, however (for example, the issues Malvasia took with Reni's late works), imply that Malvasia is not blinded by his admiration for the artist and remains capable of providing objective opinions on Reni's painting.

Malvasia not only trained with artists who were known to have worked with Reni, but is said to have actively consulted with artists who would be familiar with techniques and working methods of Reni and his studio. Francesco Gessi, a former student of Reni's, and Alessandro Tiarini, another contemporary, were known to have provided the biographer with information, and "it has long been recognized that one of his most important informants was the sculptor Alessandro Algardi, who had studied with Ludovico Carracci".[121] Actively seeking out information from these artists strengthens Malvasia's position as an authority on artists' working methods. Spear recognises the advantage that Malvasia's "hands-on experience" brings to his writing on technique, and says that this knowledge "underlies various broad remarks about the creative process."[122] He notes that Malvasia's "artist's eye" is more specifically evident when he makes detailed observations on Reni's palette and flesh tones, which will be discussed later in this chapter.[123] Such observations might only be made by a writer with a good understanding of materials and technique. Malvasia's experience as an artist, however brief, makes him a valuable source in that he is equipped with the knowledge required to write with authority about Reni's working method and painting technique.

Malvasia is confident enough in his knowledge of technique to challenge the accuracy of Vasari in identifying different materials, noting that the work mentioned by Vasari as a "fresco" by Lippo di Dalmasio above the door of San Procolo was in fact done in oil. He is said to have had both eyewitness and expert proof of this, in that both he himself and the painter Alessandro Tiarini had climbed up a ladder to examine the work after questions had been raised, before declaring that "this arch is in oil, then, and also in oil are the Virgin Mary below the portico of the Bolognini in Strada Santo Stefano, Signor Guidalotti's own personal Madonna and other similar images by

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[121] Ibid., 4.
[122] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 12.
[123] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 58, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 12: "...con certi lividetti, e azzurrini mescolati fra le mezze tinte, e fra le carnagioni; come poi forse troppo arditamente volle anche usar il Cagnacci suo allievo, il Castiglione, il Maffaei, e altri."

Lippo, both public and private." [124] Malvasia's knowledge of painting materials does not always prove to be as accurate as his discerning eye in San Procolo might suggest. In his *Life of Reni,* the writer speculates that Reni was the first artist to have painted on silk – though this proves to be untrue.[125] Cennino Cennini described the how to "work on silk" almost two centuries earlier in *Il Libro dell'Arte*, his "craftsman's" handbook on painting methods, having noted, in fact, that it could "serve for ensigns, banners and all."[126] Malvasia is very likely to have been aware of this; his declaration of Reni as an "inventor" is part of a literary motif, and part of his portrayal of the artist as a hero, and the emphasis on the artist's genius. In constructing an image of the artist as a hero in Renaissance and seventeenth-century literature meant that the "origin of every artistic technique" had an "inventor".[127] For example, in Egypt, the invention of painting was "traditionally ascribed to the Lydian, Gyges; in Greece, to Eucheir; and in China, to Shi Huang".[128] The attribution of the "invention" of the silk support to Reni was associated with a demonstration of the importance of the artist as a figure in Bologna's artistic history.

In his preface, Malvasia writes about the intended audience for his *Felsina*, and the manner in which he plans to write, stating that "as for style and idiom, you are already beginning to understand what they will be: completely domestic and popular. I am writing for painters, not for literary men; to delight, not to teach. I content myself with being understood, I do not mean to be studied."[129] It is possible that in writing "for painters", Malvasia addresses not only the masters, but also those aspiring to be artists, and amateur painters (like the other literary sources). This might have directed the biographer in giving information on the inner workings of the studio, which would

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[124] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 27-28, cited by Cropper, 'A Plea for *Felsina pittrice',* 33: "Egli è a olio quest'arco ed a olio è quell'altra Maria Vergine sotto il portico de' signori Bolognini in strà Stefano; quella privata del signor Guidalotti ed alter simili del detto Dalmasio, e pubbliche e private."

[125] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "...essendo egli forse stato il primo, che sopra vi pingesse..."

[126] Cennino D'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook – Il Libro Dell' Arte*, translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 106-107: "Del lavorate in zendado", "Questo basti a stendardi e gonfaloni, e tutto."

[127] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 21.

[128] Pliny, in *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art,* edited by E. Sellers, trans. By K. Jex-Blake (London: 1986), vol. 7, 205, Aristotle, cited by Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters,* vol. 7, 205, and Friedrich Hirth, *Über Entstehung und Ursprungslegenden der Malerei in China* (Leipzig: 1900), cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 21.

[129] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Cropper (2012), 187: "Circa lo stile e la frase, tu già cominci a sentire qual sia: dimestica affatto e poplare. Scrivo a' pittori, non a' letterati; per dilettare, non per insegnare. Onde basta m'intendano, non voglio mi studino."

be of interest to his readers. Certainly, he does provide specific details of artists' working methods at times, which may be linked with his intended audience.

Part II: The *seicento* sources on Reni's workshop practices and technique

The second part of this chapter recounts and explains the information provided by the sources regarding Reni's painting technique and studio practices. This information is arranged synthetically by topic, each of which will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. The topics include the manner in which sources deal with Reni's style and painting technique (including its evolution later in his career), the artist's brushwork, the creation of compositions, choice of painting materials, the deterioration of artworks, the artist's use of assistants, and the subject of studio copies versus autograph works. Further material from the literary sources will be introduced in subsequent chapters where relevant. Information on Reni's artistic training and his practice as a teacher, the pricing of his work and his interactions with patrons will be addressed separately in chapters three and four. Some topics are dealt with more fully than others by the *seicento* sources; for example, due to the biographical nature of the writings of Bellori and Malvasia, a lot of information is provided regarding Reni's training and his practice as a teacher, as this information is seen as more relevant to the story of the artist's life than, perhaps, specific details regarding the painting materials he used.

1.8. Reni's style and brushwork

Reni's style or *maniera* is discussed by almost every source that mentions him and similar descriptive terms are used repeatedly in discussions of the artist's works. His paintings are frequently described as showing *bellezza, grazia*, *delicata* and *vaghezza*. These words are occasionally used independently of one another, but are more often used together in various combinations, and their literal meanings (beauty, grace, delicacy and vagueness) are not necessarily the way in which they were meant to be read in their various contexts. Scannelli repeatedly attributes two of these qualities in particular to Reni's work, *grazia* and *vaghezza*. *Grazia* was one of the "essential qualities of a perfect work of art", and was linked to another often used

term, *facilità,* to imply ease, softness and appropriateness.[130] While the first term is more obviously positive in its current context, *vaghezza* in its modern sense – when literally translated as "vagueness" – might imply a negative unclear nature. The word *vaghezza* is, indeed, derived from the Latin *vagus*, which means "vague, indeterminate." But, in the seventeenth century, "it also takes on a positive sense, that of an indefinite charm that is closer to the idea of grace than to that of beauty."[131]

Scannelli cites *facilità, gratia* and *vaghezza* as "talents" which only a "worthy Master" such as Reni might possess, and writes that they are a result of the artist's lengthy studies, combined with his genius.[132] Elizabeth Cropper provides further information on these terms when writing on portraits of women in the Renaissance. Many of the qualities ascribed to Reni are included in lists of "indefinable" qualities which were used in descriptions of beautiful women, including *grazia* and *vaghezza,* as well as the term which encompasses the rest, *bellezza*. Many of these terms are also used in descriptions of artists in Vasari's *Lives.* The biographer, in introducing Leonardo's *Life*, describes the artist as "endowed by heaven with beauty, grace and talent."[133]

By the seventeenth century, undoubtedly thanks to the influence of Vasari, these terms (as well as others, such as *leggiadria, venustà, aria,* and *maestà*) were used not only to describe the beauty of a woman but also that of individual artistic styles, and are terms that cannot be appreciated without a study of their significance in the sixteenth century. Cropper writes that despite being terms which are "as much evocative as descriptive", they are "vital to an understanding of the perfections expressed in the style of Poussin or Reni, who was as famous for his *grazia* as Correggio and the Barocci were for the *aria* with which they endowed their women."[134] Renaissance writer Firenzuola explained the origins and the meaning of *grazia* and *vaghezza* in first part *Dialogo*. Firenzuola wrote that *grazia* was associated with one of the Graces, Aglaia, who represented *splendore*. *Splendore* is a quality that is

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[130] George Bull, 'Vasari and the Renaissance Artist', in *The Lives of the Artists,* by Giorgio Vasari, translated by George Bull, I (1965; Reprint, London: Penguin, 1987), 19-20.
[131] B. Cassin, E. Apter, J. Lezra, and M. Wood (eds.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables, A Philosophical Lexicon*, translated by Steven Rendall, Christian Hubert, Jeffrey Mehlman and Nathaniel Stein (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 84.
[132] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 113: "...la facilità, gratia, vaghezza, ed altri simili talenti qualificati di questo degno Maestro, come effetti derivanti dalla longezza dello studio, e pratticata operatione, mediante l'aiuto del di lui particolar genio."
[133] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 255.
[134] Elizabeth Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 58, no. 3 (1976), 380.

indefinable, but can make desirable a woman who lacks the "accepted proportions of beauty" – in a modern sense, it might be said that *splendore,* and therefore *grazia,* gives unconventional beauties a *je ne sais quoi. Vaghezza*, according to Firenzuola, is related to *grazia,* and is a quality which "turns the mind of the spectator into a wanderer", allowing and encouraging them to appreciate beauty.[135]

Mancini includes a chapter in his *Considerazioni sulla pittura* entitled "*Requisti per la bontà delle pitture*", or "Requirements for good paintings", which lists aesthetic factors that the writer suggests determine the material worth of a work of art. He lists these characteristics as *bellezza, decoro, grazia, proporzione, colore,* and *bruttezza*, that is, "beauty, decoration, grace, proportion, colour and ugliness". Mancini writes that the quality of a work, as with the qualities of a Renaissance woman, can be judged by investigating whether a painting does or does not possess these particular traits.[136] That beauty and grace appear in a list alongside characteristics which might seem fundamental to painting such as colour is telling with regard to the importance of these elements in a work of art to the *seicento* viewer. Mancini writes that "beauty is born from form and proportion accompanied by colour", the implication being that an artist can only achieve beauty through technical skill in creating a composition and correct use of colour, making a link between beauty and good painting technique.[137] Vasari makes similar links; associating the "difficulty" in creating paintings, when successfully resolved, with *facilità, grazia, leggiadrezza* and *prontezza*.[138] The biographer, in writing about Raphael, combines descriptions of subject matter with comments on style, using terms including *grazia, dolcezza, bellezza* and *vaghezza* to describe both Raphael's compositions and his *maniera*, demonstrating an understanding that "style is not separable from matter".[139] Reni's aesthetic is linked to his technical skill by the *seicento* sources. For example, Bellori writes that "Guido's noble genius gave him a mind uplifted to beauty" and suggests that in his time, people were led "to marvel and their voices to celebrate Guido's name" because of "the lovely accompaniment of

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[135] Angolo Firenzuola, *Le Opere di Angolo Firenzuola,* 2 vols., I, (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1848), 272-79, cited by Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women', 380, n. 34.
[136] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 120: "Requisti per la bontà delle pitture: Bellezza - Decoro - Grazia - Proporzione - Colore - Bruttezza."
[137] Mancini *Considerazioni*, I, 121: "E così poi la bellezza pittoresca sarà nella formatione e proportione accompagnata con il color conveniente."
[138] Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, 271.
[139] Ibid., 387.

grace with which he tempered his colours."[140] This creates a link between the artist's mind with the creation of beauty, and the portrayal of beauty with the ability to use colours. Terms like *bellezza* and *grazia* can at times refer both to the style of a work and the method used to paint it. Mancini later reasserts that both good colouring and composition or form are necessary in the creation of a "beautiful" work of art,[141] and that there is "grace in all grades of beauty".[142] Therefore, if a painting is to be beautiful, it requires skill on the part of the artist, and the achievement of beauty brings *grazia*.

Scannelli describes Reni's work as possessing "the most beautiful grace and delicate manner", which the artist has achieved through study.[143] He describes a panel in San Bernardo on the wall to the left of the high altar – possibly Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints,* painted in 1596 – and says the painting demonstrates "mastery, grace, and extraordinary talent", linking *grazia* to technical skill or "mastery", as Mancini does with the term *bellezza.* Scannelli also describes Reni's *Pala della Peste* as a "Madonna of the Rosary painted at the time of the plague in 1630, where he painted Blessed Virgin with the protector saints [of Bologna]", citing it as a work from Reni's second manner, which was "in *grazia*, *facilità* and *vaghezza*, truly unparalleled".[144] That Scannelli describes both paintings as possessing *grazia*, but in different terms otherwise, suggests that the writer is making a distinction with regards to Reni's *maniera* in the *Coronation of the Virgin* and the *Pala della Peste.* Given that the *Pala della Peste* was painted approximately thirty-five years later than the *Coronation of the Virgin,* this is likely part of the critic's commentary on the development of Reni's *maniera*, moving from technical "mastery" to *facilità* and

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[140] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 347: "Portò seco Guido dal suo nobil genio una mente elevata alla bellezza...", "Quello ancora che all'età nostra rivolse gli occhi e le voci degli uomini alla maraviglia et alla celebrazione del nome di Guido, fu certamente la venusta compagnia della grazia con cui egli temperando i colori..."

[141] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 123-124: "Stando dunque che la bellezza stia e nel temperamento conosciuto per il colore e nella formatione e che per l'integrità sua habbia bisogno dell'uno e dell'altro, e dandosi una bellezza di formatione con brutto colore e un bel colore con brutta formatione."

[142] Ibid., 126: "V'è in ultimo la gratia in tutti i gradi del bello."

[143] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 350: "...e singulare nella sufficienza dello studio, più bella gratia, e delicata maniera..."

[144] Ibid., 349: "... & un Quadro in S. Bernardo sopra il muro alla sinistra dell'Altare maggiore, le quali sopra l'altre, c'havea primo dipinto, dimostrano Maestria, gratia, e straordinario talento ... Madonna del Rosario nel tempo della Peste del 1630 ove e' dipinta la B. Vergine co'Sa'ti Protettori della seconda maniera d'esso Maestro, ma nella gratia, facilità, e vaghezza veramente impareggiabile."

vaghezza. Analysis of these works will appear in chapter two (figs. 2.1 and 2.2), where an attempt is made to ascribe visual and technical qualities to these terms.

Malvasia likewise comments on the beauty of the artist's work, also considering it unsurpassable, and determines that "no one before had ever painted such beautiful expressions on faces; no one painted infants so plump and soft; nor hands and feet better drawn nor clothes more appropriate and magnificent; nor nudes whose forms were more fully understood."[145] The *Adoration of the Shepherds,* painted around 1640 and now in the National Gallery, London, serves as good illustration for this passage. Several of these qualities are apparent in this work, with the exception of the nude forms, though in the shepherds' bare chests and shoulders Reni's command of anatomy and form is visible. The body of the Christ child certainly appears "plump and soft", and the various serene faces on the adults that surround him show command of human expression.

Being the earliest of our sources, it is possible that Scannelli formed a literary precedent for the other authors in their descriptions of Reni, all of whom later use one or more of the adjectives chosen by Scannelli in his descriptions of Reni – though they all too must have looked to Vasari in their use of terminology. Spear cites Scannelli as the source who first wrote about Reni's *grazia*, a term which is now so closely associated with the artist's style, writing that "few Italian authors after Scannelli discussed Reni's style without using some form of the term *grazia*."[146] Vasari frequently mentions *grazia* in reference to Raphael, so its use by the *seicento* writers in describing Reni creates a link between the two great masters of successive generations. In describing Raphael's altarpiece of *St. Cecilia,* painted for San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna, as "a wonderful example of the grace and art that flowed from Raphael's subtle workmanship".[147] It seems appropriate, then, that Reni was chosen to paint a copy of this work for Cardinal Sfondrato in 1600.[148]

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[145] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 133: "Nissuno perciò fece mai più belle arie di teste; nissuno puttini più carnosi, e teneri; mani e piedi meglio disegnati; panni più proprij, e magnifici; nudi più profondi, e ricerchi."
[146] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 106.
[147] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 304.
[148] Stephen Pepper, *Guido Reni: A complete catalogue of his works with an introductory text* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1984), 22.

Bellori frequently comments on Guido's *grazia,* even in the opening sentence of his *Life* of Guido he tells his readers that Reni "prided himself on being the foremost in grace alone, and for this he was commended above all others."[149] The suggestion that Reni prided himself on grace "alone" suggests that it was the characteristic for which he was most renowned, and one which made him stand out as an artist – and therefore is the defining characteristic of his style. Bellori also describes Reni's self-professed method of attaining beauty in his paintings, writing that "Guido also boasted that he painted beauty, not as it appeared to his eyes, but as he saw it in the Idea; hence his beautiful abducted Helen was esteemed as an equal of that by Zeuxis."[150] That Reni painted "not as it appeared to his eyes", but as he saw in his mind, portrays him as wholly classical in his methods, and perhaps Bellori wished to portray him as such, but it might be argued that Reni took as much inspiration from nature as from his own *idea*. A resolution between nature and the ideal was famously reached by the Carracci family, under whom Reni studied in their Bolognese Academy. This relationship is best illustrated in Reni's drawings, which will be examined briefly in chapter two.

1.9. Reni's change in style and "second manner"

The sources address Reni's change in style and technique, and suggest some explanations for this evolution, from what they term the artist's "first manner" to his "second manner", and, toward the end of his life, his *ultima maniera*. More information is given regarding the artist's technique and materials during this change than is written in relation to the first half of his career. Scannelli makes it clear in his writing that he believes Reni's first manner to be superior to the later work of his second manner. He writes that the artist's first manner "is based on the fundamentals of the imitation of nature", and is, thus, "praiseworthy".[151] This is part of Scannelli's reaction

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[149] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 347: "...egli con la sola grazia vantavasi d'essere il primo, e con essa sopra tutti veniva commendato."

[150] Bellori also wrote *L'Idea del pittore, dello scultore, e dell'architetto* (1664); this translation is from the English edition of Erwin Panofsky, *Idea, A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. by Joseph J. S. Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 155-175, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 11: "Vantavasi però Guido dipingere la bellezza non quale gli si offeriva a gli occhi, ma simile a quella che vedeva nell'Idea; onde la sua bella Helena rapita al pari dell'antica di Zeusi sù celebrata."

[151] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 111: "...e però so potrà credere essere veramente laudabile quella tal maniera, che apparirà sopra il buoni fondamenti dell'arte co la puntuale imitatione della natura."

against classicism, prizing observation and imitation of nature over idealisation. Scannelli also describes Reni's second manner as a move away from the imitation of nature, but an increase in *grazia* and *vaghezza*, and while he, in his somewhat anti-classical stance, disapproves of the departure from imitating nature, he considers the latter attributes laudable, too.[152]

Scannelli discusses the lightening of the artist's colour palette in Reni's second manner, and says that he observed similar changes in "not only Reni and Rubens", "but likewise in Gio Francesco Barbieri [Guercino], Francesco Albani and Pietro da Cortona".[153] Scannelli says that Guercino changed from his "first manner" because patrons complained that "the eyes, mouth and other members were in excessive darkness" and because of this it was difficult to make out the faces in the artist's works.[154] Therefore, the writer tells us, that "to satisfy the taste of the majority, and in particular those who come to request the works", Guercino began to paint using a lighter palette.[155] These passages from Scannelli might be considered particularly significant because they help in understanding Guercino's artistic development, in that that this radical change in style was a result of patrons' demands. Reni was renowned for his stubborn nature, and his displeasure in bending to the will of his patrons (these personality traits as described by the sources are discussed in chapter three), and therefore outside pressure would seem an unsuitable explanation for his changing palette. This is an interesting observation nonetheless, and one relevant to the study of Reni's technique and that of his contemporaries, in that it suggests reasons for drastic changes in the appearance of his paintings, which may not necessarily stem from a shift in the artist's way of thinking. There is, however, some evidence from

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[152] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo*, 113: "...il quale era della seconda maniera, dove egli per riconoscerlo veramente in gratia, vaghezza, e gran facilità non poco laudabile, se bene in molte parti lontano dalla naturale imitatione; concluse dopo haverlo in lungo considerato, essere l'opera per se stessa bella, mà favolosa."

[153] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 114, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 99 "...osservandosi simili mutationi non solamente nell'opere della seconda maniera del medesimo Guido Reni, di Pietro Paolo Rubens, mà anco alla giornata in quelle di Gio Francesco Barbieri, di Francesco Albani, e similmente ne gli ultimi operati di Pietro da Cortona... hanno poscia nel tempo del maggior grido inclinato il proprio modo di operare alla maggior chiarezza..."

[154] Ibid.: "...e l'haver' egli sentito più volte dolersi coloro, che possedono i dipinti della propria sua prima maniera, per ascondere (come essi dicono) gli occhi, bocca, ed altra membra nella soverchia oscurita ... e così per sodifare a tutto potere alla maggior parte, massime quelli, che col danaro richiedevano l'opera, havea con modo più chiaro manifestato il dipinto."

[155] Ibid.: "...il medesimo Pittore da Cento, venedomi a dimostrare ciò succedere per ritrovarsi di tal forma il gusto della maggior parte, e di quelli in particolare, che vengono a richiedere l'opere loro..."

sources to suggest that Reni adapted his technique according to the demand he experienced at specific points in time. Malvasia relates that, upon return to Bologna from Rome, around 1614, Reni made a number of paintings quickly and cheaply, adjusting his style accordingly, adopting a more "nonchalant" and painterly technique of dabbing and outlining.[156] Spear recognises a direct correlation between Reni's style and his economic objectives, saying that this is understood to have occurred well before the 1630s, when such a link became more apparent.[157] The influence of the market on Reni's working methods will be examined in chapter four.

Alternative explanations are given for lightening in artists' palettes. While Scannelli cites patrons' desires as a reason for Guercino's move toward *chiarezza* in his second manner, he gives a more general explanation for the tendency amongst other artists (Reni included), writing that "It was observed by Guido Reni himself, who noticed in the works of the great masters, and particularly in those by the very thorough Carracci, that, even soon after they were painted, they became more than a little dark and ruined" and, as a result, Reni decided "to compensate for the eventual lack of brightness and such long-range problems with extreme lightness, since in the long run time would reduce the work to its proper balance."[158] This explanation from Scannelli is more consistent with Malvasia's description of Reni's increased use of the pigment lead white in his *ultima maniera* (which would contribute to *chiarezza* or a lightened palette). This suggests that, in the case of Guercino, the lightening of palette was a requirement from patrons related to the clarity and expressiveness of his narrative, while in the case of Reni it is for longevity in his works. Such desires for longevity in his artworks as put forth by Malvasia relate to the "fame" of the artist and his lasting legacy, and may be part of a literary motif. However, this ambition to "future-proof" works is noted elsewhere in the sources' commentary regarding Reni's materials, specifically regarding his use of silk, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

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[156] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 21, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 211: "Lavorandole di botte, di tratti, con certa sprezzatura da gran maestro."
[157] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 211.
[158] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 114, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 294: "L'havere osservato lo stesso Guido Reni l'opere de'primi Professori, ed in particolare quelle de gli studiosissimi Carracci, ancorche fossero poco avanti dipinte, ritrovarsi non poco oscurate, e guaste, e però havea in tanto pensato di supplire a simili accidenti coll'estremo del chiaro alla successiva mancanza a fine, che il tempo co la maggior durata riducesse l'opera alla convenevole mediocrita."

Reni is said to have used large quantities of lead white in his late works, resulting in a lighter palette. Malvasia reasons that this was in attempt to prevent the paintings from aging badly, in the belief that it would maintain the integrity of his colours. The biographer suggests that this was a successful endeavor, and writes that Reni's practice of using large quantities of white lead resulted in his paintings aging better than those by other artists. Though apparently being advised against the use of this material in excess by one of his masters, Ludovico Carracci, and "contrary to the good masters of the past", Guido "ventured to use an immoderate quantity of white lead", and as a result his paintings were said not to have darkened over time in the same manner as some of those of contemporary painters.[159] In making this observation, Malvasia suggests that he observed other paintings by *seicento* artists darkening or deteriorating within his own lifetime. Vasari makes similar claims regarding the darkening of Raphael's works, noticing darkening in his *Transfiguration* fifty years after it was painted.[160] By claiming that Reni chose to use lead white contrary to the practice of his Renaissance predecessors, and that, as result, his works did not darken as Raphael's reportedly did, Malvasia not only encourages comparison with the Renaissance master but elevates Reni's technical skill beyond that of Raphael.

Malvasia continues to say that "while paintings of others lose a great deal with time, [Reni's] improve, the white lead becoming yellow and acquiring a certain patina that makes the color look true and natural, whereas the others' works become too darkened."[161] Of the increase in the use of lead white in Reni's *ultima maniera*, Malvasia writes that the artist is not using lead white exclusively as a method to discourage his works from darkening, but that this was also part of his newly emerging style, where he "did not wish to use formidable and forced shadows" or shadows that "are caused by the light that is too artificial" but "instead he used soft and pleasant shadows such as those produced by a clear and open light, such as that

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[159] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 137: "Dirò di più e con ogni ingenuità (accomodandomi in ciò alla comune opinione) che nel numero delle prime e più tremende neanche si deggiano riporre quell' altre che chiamano di seconda maniera...", "Al contrario de'buoni Maestri passati s'è arrischiato opar smoderatamente la biacca."

[160] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori,* (Florence: I Giunti, 1568), II, 86, cited by Paul Taylor, *Condition: The Ageing of Art* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015), 161.

[161] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 137: "Che dove le pitture de gli altri perdono tanto col tempo, le sue acquistariano, ingiallendofi quella biacca, e pigliando una certa patena, che riduce il colore ad un vero, e buon naturale; oue l'altre annerendosi troppo, ed in quella affumicata oscurità uguagliandosi."

which we see almost every day in the street."[162] These statements might imply familiarity with Leonardo's notes on painting, where the artist wrote about contrast and harmony of colour, and wrote that harmony and grace could be achieved in painting by mixing colours with white.[163] Leonardo also mentions using "white lead and Naples yellow" in instructions on "How to paint a Picture that will last almost forever", which is notable given the apparent link between Reni's use of the pigment and longevity in his works.[164] Scannelli, however, apparently disapproved of the practice of "future-proofing" works, and wrote that painters should concern themselves with depicting the present reality, instead of preparing for "the uncertainties of future effects".[165] The use of lead white as a pigment and its effects on Reni's works will be examined further in chapter two, where Malvasia's claims will be measured against the artist's paintings.

Similar to Scannelli's preference with regards to Guercino's work, Malvasia is said to have appreciated Reni's first manner more than the lighter-toned, more classicising works of the artist's later career. Malvasia writes that "the group of tremendous early works should not take second place to those paintings that are done in what they call the second manner", and argues that the later works do not show "great inventive power", nor "the rich composition, that felicitous use of passages of light and shadow, nor the appropriateness in the figures and the expression of emotions which in the paintings that were done earlier were so excellent." Malvasia cites *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* (fig. 1.1), *The Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 1.2), and the *Pietà dei Mendicanti* (fig. 1.3), all of which date to the first and second decades of the seventeenth century as examples of this "excellent" phase in Reni's career.[166]

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[162] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 137: "Non volle ... usar l'ombre terribili, e forzate ... o di torchio acceso, artifiziose troppo .. ma dolci, e piacevoli, come partorite da un lume chiaro ed aperto, quali cotidianamente si veggono nelle strade."
[163] Leonardo da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting*, translated by Jean Francis Rigaud (New York: Dover Publications, 2005), chap. CCLXXI.
[164] Leonardo, *On Painting,* chap. CCXXX.
[165] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 114, cited by Margriet van Eikema Hommes, *Changing Pictures: Discoloration in 15th-17th-Century Oil Paintings* (London: Archetype, 2004), 25: "Mà lasciamo una tal ragione per insufficiente, perche deve chi opera dopo la debita preparatione sodisfare con ogni potere in ordine alla presente prima veduta, e poi tralasciare alla prima causa del tutto gl'incerti effetti del futuro."
[166] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 95: "...ove ancorchè a parte a parte ogni cosa sia tanto bella e sì ben fatta, tutte assieme nondimeno non mostrano quella grande invenzione, quella ferace composizione, que' giudiziosi ripieghi di sbattimenti favorevoli e di trapassi di lume; quella proprietà nelle figure ed espressioni di affetti, che ho detto fatte di prima, e tanto eccellenti."

Despite Malvasia's comments regarding the relative lack of invention in the compositions of Reni's late works, Scannelli argues that the "second manner" of Guido Reni does not mark a decline in the artist's ability to create a composition, and the works from this period display "similarly good proportions and symmetry ... and a strong practice and ease of working ... with dignity and grace."[167] While other sources on occasion view Reni's late works as technically lacking, Scannelli maintains that his technical abilities remain strong, despite the obvious change in his technique. Scannelli does, however, concede that Reni's methods declined somewhat in the final stages of his career, and that "often, especially toward the end of his life, not being able to satisfy himself with his concept, he would more than once paint out what he had begun, so that only with great effort was he able to finish the work in the way that he wished."[168]

Malvasia says that the change in Reni's later works was brought about by "extreme necessity" caused by "excessive [gambling] losses which exceeded any possibility of paying his debts." He describes Reni's late painting methods, writing that the artist "set out to paint half-figures and heads without a painted ground; to finish his religious paintings, his mythologies, and his most important works with little care; to take money in exchange for anything, not refusing any loan from his friends, and to sell ... like a miserable mercenary, his paintings and his time at so much an hour, no longer bothering to rely on an appraisal of his work, which was already established by his name alone."[169] The importance of artistic technique is highlighted in passages describing Reni's late works, where the biographer shows clear disapproval of practices like "painting without a ground". This demonstrates a concern for good technique and an awareness of the techniques employed by Reni throughout his career, in that Malvasia recognises specific changes in the artist's working methods.

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[167] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 116: "Come Guido Reni, oltre la conservata simetria ... opere di tal forte la maggior pratica, e facilita d'operare insieme con la più vaga, e bella idea ... con più decoro, e gratia."

[168] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 299-300: "Non potendo allo spesso sodisfare, massime giunto nell'ultima età, annullava più volte il principiato, e con gran fatica riduceva l'opere al desiato compimento."

[169] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89: "Il maggior danno però l'ebbe sempre dal giuoco, a cui datosi egli più che mai in preda in questi ultimi anni, gli se' poco meno che perdere il primiero affetto alla virtù e la riputazione tanto da lui stimata, poichè ridottosi in estreme necessità per le perdite eccessive, ed eccedenti la sua possibilità, per pagare i debiti, ponevasi a lavorare mezze figure e teste alla prima, e senza il letto sotto; a finire inconsideratamente le storie e le tavole più riguardevoli; a predere denari a cambio da tuttil a non ricusare ogni imprestito dagli amici; a vendere, quasi dissi, vil mercenario, l' opra sua e le giornate a un tanto l'ora, non ad altro più curandosi di fidare la stima dell'opre, che a solo nome già stabilitosi."

Malvasia (as a friend of the artist and advocate of Bolognese art in general) does not, however, completely dismiss the worth of Reni's late works. In describing Reni's *Magdalene* (fig. 1.4) painted for the artist's friend Cesare Rinaldi, he says that it and "similar ones were among Reni's most beautiful paintings, although not very vigorous in their execution." The biographer continues in saying that "although many other works that were painted in his more vigorous manner were esteemed ... every day a deeper understanding, an incomparable delicacy emerged in these new works."[170] The biographer is of the belief that despite some recognisable decline in technique, Reni's late works possess other redeeming qualities, a deeper understanding of his subjects and a "delicacy" that is certainly apparent in softness with which the artist paints in this period, and the lack of heavily delineated forms or complex detail, as seen in this *Penitent Magdalene* mentioned by Malvasia, which was painted in 1635 and is now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

1.10. The artist and his contemporaries

The sources provide information on interactions between Reni and contemporary artists, and compare Reni's painting with that of others, noting occasions when the artist was influenced by work that he encountered. Reni was highly regarded in the *seicento* art world and other artists are said to have admired his painting technique. For example, Malvasia recounts the contents of a letter written by Domenichino from Bologna to his friend Francesco Poli, dated 6th May 1612, in which Domenichino writes that he has "seen the works of the great Guido in San Domenico and in San Michele in Bosco. What heavenly things, painted by the hand of an angel! Oh, what airs of paradise, what expression of emotions! Oh, what truth and liveliness! Now this is real painting!"[171]

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[170] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 86: "Queste dico, e simili furono delle più belle, se non tanto vigorose; perche, molte altre si stimarono di più bassa maniera, ancorche si scuoprano poi ogni dì d'un più profondo sapere, di una inarrivabile finitezza."
[171] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* translated by Summerscale (2013), 81: "Ho veduto ... le opre del gran Guido in San Domenico ed in San Michelle in Boschi: che cose dicese dal Cielo e dipinte per mano di uno angiolo! Oh che arie di paradiso! Oh ch'espressioni di affetti! Oh che verità e che vivezza! Oh questo è dipingere! etc."

Malvasia also describes less positive interactions with contemporary artists – specifically, Reni's encounter with Caravaggio, who Reni was influenced by in the initial years of his first visit to Rome, from 1601, culminating with his altarpiece of the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (fig. 1.1), which borrows from Caravaggio in composition and style. Bellori mentions this work in his description of Caravaggio's influence on Reni, writing that the artist's fame "was very great at the time, and many were enchanted with that new coloring based on nature, so that Guido wished to experiment with that same mode of painting, altering his beautiful idea for a brief interval for the purpose of demonstrating his talent."[172] In this explanation, Bellori is suggesting that Reni does not borrow from Caravaggio because he lacks in creativity or methods of his own, but rather to exhibit his own talent and to demonstrate superiority and mastery over his contemporaries. Reni showcases his technical skill by painting successfully in another artist's *maniera.*

Passeri's *Vite* has not previously been cited due to a lack of original information on our topics. Nonetheless, the author makes contributing comments on the topic of Caravaggio's influence on Reni. Passeri writes that Reni was "enchanted by Caravaggio's style, and did several *mezze-figure* in imitation of it, and that at this time, Reni's style gained "a certain rigorous imitation of reality."[173] With regards to the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* commission, Passeri writes that artist Cavaliere D'Arpino convinced the Cardinal Borghese to give this commission to Reni, even though it was initially intended for Caravaggio.[174] D'Arpino apparently acknowledged the differences between the artists' techniques, saying that he would teach Reni the "*stile di chiaro scuro*" necessary to carry out a work in Caravaggio's *maniera*, and adding (as Bellori concludes) that Reni's painting would be superior to work by Caravaggio. D'Arpino's words as recounted by Passeri imply that Reni's abilities were such that he could

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[172] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 351: "Era grandissima allora la fama del Caravaggio, invaghitisi molti di quel nuovo colorito dal naturale, onde Guido volle sperimentarsi nell'istesso modo di dipingere, alterando la sua bella idea per breve intervallo con fine di mostrare il suo talento..."

[173] Passeri *Vite*, 59, cited by Durkan, *Della Natura*, 106: "Guido era in istato già di colorire le tele, e vedute le opere di Michel Angelo da Caravaggio che appunto in quel tempo s'avanza in credito, s'invaghi di quello stile gagliardo, ed osservante del naturale con un forte imposto di colore ... e ad una certa imitazione rigorosa del vero."

[174] Passeri, *Vite,* 67, cited by Durkan, *Della Natura*, 106: "...gli fortì il suo intento, procurando che Guido avesse il quadro della Crocifissione ... Avuta che Guido ebbe tale incombenza fu pregato dal Cavalier Giuseppe che s'ingegnasse di dipingere nello stile del chiaro scuro, e che procurasse con la nobilità della sua idea di superar quello nella maestà, e nel decoro. S'adoprò Guido con ogni diligenza per fervire il Cavaliere, e per fare a se medesimo un maggior vantaggio; e veramente in quel quadro si portò assai bene tingendolo con gran forza, e maestria..."

learn Caravaggio's painting technique, and could use it to produce better results than Caravaggio himself.

Upon completion of this work, Caravaggio's response, according to Malvasia, was not flattery, but rather threatening – that he would "split Reni's skull", asking why the artist stole his style and colour.[175] Though Caravaggio had an infamously violent character, it is nonetheless noteworthy that an artist should feel so strongly about Reni borrowing from his technique and style. Reni's response to Caravaggio after their initial unpleasant encounter, as again recounted by Malvasia, was to say that he did not want "to compete with anyone, knowing and admitting that he was inferior to all."[176] This modesty seems typical of the artist's personality as described by the sources. Bellori determines that the "power and invention of Guido's brush" far surpasses that of Caravaggio's in his own version of the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, and that "in painting this work Guido made more use of nature than of his noble idea."[177] Since Reni's work was considered to be more successful than Caravaggio, the artist's modesty was perhaps misplaced. Such self-effacing remarks were, however, related to Reni's attempts to elevate his social status (which will be discussed further later in the thesis) and to portray himself as a "virtuous" character – it would not be appropriate for him to engage in arguments, nor to gloat in his achievements.

Reni and Domenichino are regularly compared to one another and portrayed as rivals by the sources. Malvasia gives a balanced comparison of the two artists (despite having had a closer relationship with Reni). In comparing the artists, the biographer writes that "Guido Reni was wanting in conceits and erudition, and Domenichino, as we will now observe, lacked bold resolution and facility. Accordingly, as much as Guido showed tenderness and daring, Domenichino showed circumspection and polish. And even as the first was a more profound draftsman, and more refined and noble in the parts of painting, Domenichino was more expressive in rendering the

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[175] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 13, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 288: "Rispose che badasse a' fatti suoi, nè gli stresse a rompere il capo ... Perchè nel quadro di S. Pietro Crocefisso alle tre Fontane rubargli la maniera e 'l colorito?"

[176] Ibid.: "Stimare il suo valore al pari d' ogn' altro, nè competere con alcuno, conoscendosi e confessandosi a tutti inferiore."

[177] Bellori, *Lives*, trans. by Wohl, 351: "Nel dipingere Guido quest'opera, servissi piú del naturale che della sua nobile idea ... con forza di penello ed invenzione molto superiore all'istesso Caravaggio, che dipinse il medesimo..."

emotions, more fertile in invention, and more erudite."[178] Malvasia is seen on other occasions to be less favourable toward Domenichino, writing of when the artist returned to Bologna from Rome from the second time, and painted "the beautiful altarpiece of the most Holy Rosary in San Giovanni in Monte for the Signori Ratta", he says that this was "a work that did not have a big impact, nor did it catch the eye of the public, which was too much accustomed to the loveliness of Guido's art and completely captivated and ravished by its nobility and ease."[179]

Malvasia departs from the measure of the two artists as equals of sorts by saying that "Guido was put ahead of everyone else, Guido alone acclaimed and well treated, while he [Domenichino] himself, on the contrary, was either not recognized or constantly mistreated in the fees he got, so that he was left without commissions and rejected."[180] Malvasia portrays Reni as absolutely unique and talented to a point entirely unattainable by his contemporaries, and says that the public "themselves realized" that Reni's work "was inimitable" by either Guercino or Domenichino, who were competing with Reni for major commissions, and could only concede that his "way of working was an individual trait, innate to him alone."[181] According to Malvasia, even the Carracci were unable to deny Reni's technical superiority over Domenichino. With regard to the rival artist's frescoes in the Oratory of San Gregorio Magno in Rome, Annibale is quoted as describing Reni's paintings as "truly the work of a master" while Domenichino's is the work "of a student, but a student who knows more than the master", the implication possibly being that Domenichino was more learned,

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[178] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 41: "Guido che mancò ne' concetti e nella erudizione, così potrem ora osservarlo nel Domenichino, che non ebbe gran risoluzione e facilità. Quanto però mostrò quegli tenerezza ed ardire, ostentò questi circospezione e limatura. Più profondo nel disegno, più scelto nelle parti e più nobile si mostrò il primo; più espressivo ne gli affetti, più ferace nell'invenzioni e più erudite palesossi il secondo."

[179] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 66: "Quando vi tornò dunque 'morto papa' fu la seconda volta, e fu allora che vi formò la bella tavola del Santissimo Rosario in San Giovanni in Monte per i signori Ratta, che non fece gran colpo e non ferì l'universal vista, avvezza troppo alle vaghezze di Guido, e da quella nobilità e disinvoltura attratta totalmente e rapita."

[180] Ibid., 65: "Guido ad ogn'altro preposto, acclamato solo e ben trattato; egli, al contrario, o non conosciuto o mutilato sempre ne' prezzi, restarsene per lo più anche poi non adoprato e reietto."

[181] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed. II, 21, cited by Schaefer, '*Io Guido Reni Bologna*', 7: "Vi furono insomma, oltre gli altri, li suddetti Barbieri, e 'l Menichino; nè saziandosi di contemplarla, vi tornarono più volte, standovi l'ore intere ad esaminarlo; e concludendo dopo estremi applausi il primo, che quel modo di fare fosse un carattere proprio, e connaturale a lui solo, e però inimitabile: il secondo esser quella la più perfetta maniera, ma più per natura, che per istudio, od arte."

but Reni more technically adept and talented.[182] Malvasia recounts Scannelli's opinions on Domenichino and Reni from the *Microcosmo della pittura*, where Scannelli makes a similar statement about the artists, who he places amongst "the three greatest painters of the Carracci school", alongside Giovanni Lanfranco. Scannelli maintains that "although in terms of grace and delicacy, Domenico obviously cannot be compared to Guido, he probably surpassed everyone after the Carracci in the fundamental principles of painting" and goes on to describe Domenichino as "the most knowledgeable painter to have issued from the famous school of the Carracci."[183] Both Malvasia and Scannelli consider Domenichino the better educated artist of the pair, but are in no doubt that Reni is a master of technique, and possesses an innate talent.

Bellori provides an anecdotal account of the unveiling of the two San Gregorio frescoes as judged by Annibale, writing that because the frescoes were unveiled at the same time, "everyone flocked to see them as to a duel between two most excellent artists, in which it was not Apelles and Protogenes competing on the basis of a line but Guido and Domenico on the basis of painting."[184] Bellori goes on, like Malvasia, to portray Reni as the superior artist (despite acknowledging Domenichino's talent), writing that "all eyes turned to Guido for the delicacy and grace of his brush, designed to afford immediate pleasure, which gave far more satisfaction than Domenico's many marvellous qualities."[185] Such a description of a "competition" between two artists is an acknowledged biographical device, as is the concept of the artists as "rivals" as described by the other sources. This device has been used since ancient times, in the competition mentioned by Bellori between Apelles and Protogenes of who could draw the thinnest line, and between Zeuxis and Parrhasios over whose works had the greater deceptive power. Vasari utilises this *topos* in his

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[182] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 287: "Interrogato sopra l'opre di Guido, e del Menichino fatte a S. Gregorio del martirio di S. Andrea, rispose: quella di Guido veramente parergli da Maestro, e quella del Menichino da Scolare, ma da Scolare, che ne sapea più del Maestro."

[183] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 347, 354, cited by Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 119: "*...tre primi e maggiori soggetti della odierna scuola de' Carracci*", "Se bene nella grazia e delicatezza non si palesasse a Guido pareggiabile, riuscì però ne' fondamenti dell'arte.", "...il più fondato soggetto che sia derivato dalla famosa scuola de' Carracci."

[184] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 246: "Concorse ciascuno a vederle, come un duello di due eccellentissimi artefici, nel quale combattevano non Apelle e Protogene di una linea, ma Guido e Domico di tutta la Pittura."

[185] Ibid.: "Volgevansi nondimeno gli occhi di tutti a Guido, per la gentilezza e leggiadria del pennello, accomodato subito a piacere, ed il quale soddisfaceva più molto, che tante maravigliose parti di Domenico."

own *Lives,* in recounting the story of Brunelleschi and Donatello competing to make the better crucifix.[186] Kris and Kurz note that while stories of rivals in competition "can safely be considered a biographical device", this does not deny that rivalries between artists did not exist.[187] Our sources use the story of Domenichino and Reni's rivalry, which likely was based on reality to some extent, to compare the artists and highlight aspects of their style and artistic careers.

1.11. Painting technique and technical skill

Bellori emphasises the importance of technical skill with the following words: "No talent, however great and highly favoured by genius, has ever of itself inspired wonder for excellence without the skill of art, which is acquired through application and hard work."[188] This was in line with Reni's own methods, who by all accounts practiced at length to acquire the technical skill required to produce his paintings. Scannelli states that Reni's skills were the result of hard work, that the artist "composed with studious and time-consuming effort."[189] Bellori writes that Reni used to "complain with reason that others should describe his vigils, the days and nights that he robbed from amusements and from sleep, as innate talent ... calling his beautiful manner of painting good natural aptitude", voicing the artist's frustrations at not having his hard work recognised, and quoting Reni in saying "What aptitude? These gifts are acquired by dint of labors ... I have studied more than anyone ever did."[190] This study certainly included the practice of drawing – the inventory taken of Reni's possessions on his death listed almost nine-hundred drawings stored in the artist's home, more than double those identified to date, illustrating the artist's dedication to his work.[191]

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[186] Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architetti* (Florence: 1878-85), II, 333, 398, cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 121.
[187] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 121.
[188] Bellori *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 367: "...nel vero che niuno ingegno quantunque grande e favoritissimo dal genio, mai di se stesso rese maraviglia per eccellenza alcuna senza l'industria dell'arte, che con attenzione e fatica s'acquista."
[189] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 47: "...compose anch'egli a forza di tempo, e di studiosa fatica..."
[190] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 367: "Lagnavasi però egli con ragione che altri attribuissero a virtù infusa ed a dono delle stelle le sue vigilie, li giorni e le notti da esso tolte alle ricreazioni ed al sonno, chiamondo bel carattere il suo bel modo di dipingere ... Che carattere? diceva, questi doni s'acquistano a forza di fatiche ... Ho studiato quanto altri mai ebbe fatto."
[191] Spike, 'L'inventario dello Studio di Guido Reni', 46.

An aspect of artistic technique that is mentioned repeatedly by the sources is brushwork. Mancini, in his advice to collectors, writes that the brushstrokes of a master are inimitable and can serve as a method of attribution for paintings, alongside the manner in which a master paints drapery folds and light.[192] This is relevant particularly to Reni's studio, where assistants and students were trained to imitate his style, so, for the collectors whom Mancini addresses, copies would have been particularly difficult to discern from the master's own work. Malvasia describes Reni's technique in painting "old men", and says that the artist's subjects were "not left smooth and unified like those of other artists, but with masterful strokes, full of a thousand subtleties, he depicted their sagging skin, which he derived from his famous sculpture of *Seneca* (fig. 1.5), generally called Guido's *Seneca.*"[193] In contrasting Reni's technique with that of other artists, Malvasia suggests that the painter's brushwork was unique to him. This passage also suggests that Reni's brushwork provides an element of naturalism in his paintings. However, Malvasia's reference to *Seneca* implies that Reni is not using a real old man as a model, like Caravaggio might have, but an antiquity. Bellori likewise praises Reni's ability to paint "not only ... the graceful beauty of youth but also ... those forms that are proper to mature beauty", specifically mentioning "wrinkles of the skin".[194] This was a skill attributed also to Raphael, who was able to convey decorum while depicting "old age".[195]

Malvasia continues by talking about Reni's methods in painting hair and beards, to say that he did not use "a sketchy technique in the manner of Cavedone to indicate their beards with quick loose strokes and their hair like softest feathers" but rather, "he made use of the ground paint almost as if were a space to play on, rapidly sketching in with great brio and equal skill in a manner never before practiced by anyone else ... the locks turned in various directions, toned down and highlighted in relation to the relative position, giving then the finishing touches at the top with the principal

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[192] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134: "Il medesimo ancor si deve osservare in alcuni spiriti e botti di lumi a luogo, che dal mastro vengon posti a un tratto e con resolution d'una pennellata non immitabile; così nelle pieghe di panni e lor lume, quali pendono più dalla fantasia e resolution del mastro che della verità della cosa posta in essere."
[193] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 134: "Quelle anche de' vecchi non lasciò liscie ed unite, come l'altre, ma con botte maestre, piene di mille gentilezze osservate in quelle pelliccivole cadenti, quali s'imparano dal rilievo famoso detto comunemente il suo Seneca."
[194] Bellori *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 367: "...non solo nella venustà diovanile, ma ancora in quelle forme che sono proprie della beltà matura...", "...contrafacendo bene ... le rughe della pelle..."
[195] Vasari, *Lives,* trans. by Bull, I, 295.

highlights."[196] Malvasia also cites the painting of hair as a specific area of instruction that Reni includes in teaching his students, owing to the difficulty in the brushwork technique involved in depicting such areas. Malvasia describes methods that Reni employed in teaching his students to paint hair, demonstrating to them "on pots and basins, using false hair made of hemp or silk, the rules and the different ways of arranging hair imaginatively, knotting and loosening them strangely, leaving them with a certain negligence which, as that great poet said, is studied, and letting them fall in blond wavy masses, as we see done marvelously in his *Magdalenes* and his *Sybils*."[197]

Mancini, too, writes about the painting of hair and beards, citing this as the most difficult element for copyists to reproduce when imitating a work. Mancini writes that in recognising the hand of a master (as opposed to that of a copyist), the manner in which they paint hair, beards and eyes are aspects of a painting's composition which, in particular, he believes to be more difficult to imitate. Mancini suggests that connoisseurs might look at these specific areas of brushwork as means of identifying a master's hand, and to ensure a work is indeed by the name under which it is being sold.[198] Mancini continues in saying that "when a copyist tries to imitate a ringlet of hair, they do so with difficulty, and this appears in the copy, and, if the copyist does not imitate this well, then the work will not have the perfection of the master" – the implication being that an "imperfect" ringlet of hair might indicate to the connoisseur that a work is a copy.[199] Bellori writes that Reni "also studied how to accommodate hair ... and beards ... [and] how to reproduce curls well", further asserting the

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[196] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 134: "Nè con certa abbreviatura Cavedonesca mostrò di prima macchia le barbe loro, e capelli, come di tenerissima piuma ... ma al contrario si servì di quel primo colore, quasi di letto, per scherzarvi sopra, gettandovi con gran brio appoggiato ad altrettanta intelligenza, prima d'ogn'altro ... da lui praticata, i peli girati per varii versi, mortificati, e vivi, conforme il loro sito di sotto, e di sopra, dandovi poi nella prima somità compimento co primi, e principali lumi a suo luogo."

[197] Ibid., 133: "Mostrando a'scolari sù cocchi e sù pile, con trecce finte di canape, ò di seta, le regole, e'l modo di raccoglierle con bizzarria, raffettarle, e stranamente annodarle; lasciarle con certe negligenza, che, come disse quel gran Poeta, siano artificii, cadere in biondi, & ondeggianti volumi, quali maravigliosamente si osservano nelle sue Maddalene, e nelle Sibille."

[198] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134: "Con tutto ciò, chi ha pratica, scopre tutti questi inganni: prima se nella pittura proposta vi sia quella perfettione con la quale operava l'artefice sotto nome del quale vien proposta e venduta; di più se vi si veda quella franchezza del mastro, et in particolare in quelle parti che di necessità si fanno di resolutione nè si posson ben condurre con l'immitatione, come sono in particolare i capelli, la barba, gl'occhi."

[199] Ibid.: "Che l'anellar de' capelli, quando si han da imitare, si fanno con stento, che nella copia poi apparisce, et, se il copiatore non li vuol imitare, allhora non hanno la perfettione di mastro."

importance of this aspect of technical skill and demonstrating Reni's efforts in perfecting it.[200] Given that this specific area of brushwork is addressed by three of our sources, it seems logical that Reni is said to have given specific lessons on painting hair in his studio. In that this area of brushwork seems to have been widely accepted as difficult to master, it was a necessary aspect of technique for the artist to teach his students, so as to enable them create copies in his likeness and imitate even the most unique characteristics of his manner.

The sources' attention to the depiction of hair may be explained by the nature of hair and the challenges involved in painting it. The nature of hair as a subject for painting is complex. Given that it made up of tens of thousands of strands, which are dynamic and unpredictable in their movement, it is impossible for an artist to depict each one individually, which means they have to devise a manner, through brushwork, to represent all of the strands without painting them individually. The sources evidently thought that achieving this showed great skill. The subject of brushwork and hair also has historical precedents, and is addressed by Vasari. For example, the biographer specifically refers to hair in praising Antonio Correggio's abilities, writing that he painted hair in "an altogether new way, for where as in the works of previous artists it was depicted in a laboured, hard, and dry manner, in his it appears soft and downy, with each golden strand finely distinguished and coloured, so that the result is more beautiful than real life."[201] To truly distinguish each strand through painting would be near impossible, so Vasari must be implying that Correggio has developed a technique that *appears* to distinguish each strand – through his brushwork. A magnified image of Correggio's *Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist* (figs. 1.6 and 1.7) illustrates that while from a distance, the hair of the Madonna appears to be painted strand by strand, Correggio has used his brush to create subtle, parallel highlights which imply individual strands of hair.

In his letter describing the methods of a successful painter, Giustiniani lists brushwork as an important trait, and makes specific reference to Reni. The writer talks about the ability of a good artist to "recapture some fine thing such as a façade, an ancient monument, or a near or distant landscape" and describes two ways of doing this - one being to "paint landscapes with greater care, studying every detail of each object",

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[200] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 367: "Si studiava ancora d'accomodar ... i capelli e le barbe ... contrafacendo bene le crespe..."
[201] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 253.

and the other to "depict minute objects without taking pains, but rather to suggest them by dabs and blobs, but with the fine skill of a man well grounded in painting, or to express each object boldly" and notes that "this is the manner of landscapes by Titian, Raphael, the Carracci, and Guido Reni, and others."[202] Presumably the landscapes that Giustiniani is referring to are those in the background of Reni's pictures – he was not a landscape painter. Giustiniani's description is illustrated in the background of *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness,* where the foliage in the background has been painted in "dabs and blobs" (fig. 1.8). This painterly brushwork as described by Giustiniani is also mentioned by Mancini, who speaks about "those touches and dabs of highlights, scattered here and there" and describes them as unique to the artist, in that "the master places them [on the canvas] instantly and decisively, with brushwork that cannot be imitated."[203]

Mention of Reni's skill in brushwork is made by Bellori in reference to his drapery painting, who writes that "in addition to his beautiful ideas, Guido knew how to regulate draperies in a noble manner, with ample folds and with elegance, not only in woolens and plain cloths, but also in fine, light silks of soft and changeable colors, and white linen cloths as well, in which he would appropriately adorn angels and the Virgin, tempering excessive whiteness with a little yellow or the color of roses and violets, which harmonize with other intense and strong colors, and as in all the other parts of painting, he had facility in handling outlines and movements."[204] This is another area of painting in which Mancini says a master's brushwork is "inimitable" writing that "the same thing [as with scattered, painterly brushstrokes] can be seen in

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[202] Giustiniani in *Raccolta,* 249, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 18: "Settimo saper ritrovare una cosa grande, come una facciata, un'anticaglia, o paese vicino, o lontano; il che si fa in due maniere, una senza diligenza di far cose minute, ma con botte, o in confuso come macchie, però con buon artificio di pittura fondata, o con franchezza esprimendo ogni cosa; nel qual modo si vedono paesi di Tiziano, di Raffaelle, de' Caracci, di Guido, ed altri simili."

[203] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 35: "Il medesimo ancor si deve osservare in alcuni spiriti e botti di lumi a luogo, che dal mastro vengon posti a un tratto e con resolution d'una pennellata non immitabile."

[204] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 368: "Ma oltre le belle idee Guido sapeva regolar bene i panni nobilmente con ampiezza di pieghe e con eleganza non solo di panni lani e drappi, ma di sete sottili e lievi, di colori soavi e cangianti, ed insieme di panni lini bianchi, de' quali adornava a tempo gl'angeli e la Vergine, temperando la soverchia bianchezza con un poco di giallo o di colore di rose e di viole, che s'accordano con gl'altri colori veementi e di forza, e come in tutte l'altre parti della pittura fu egli facile ne' dintorni e ne' moti..."

the folds and highlights of cloth, which depend more on the imagination and the fantasy of the master than on the actual appearance of the object."[205]

Reni is said to have surpassed even the Carracci in the brushwork of his drapery painting, evidenced by an anecdote recounted by Malvasia, which was mentioned briefly in the introduction, where the biographer describes an occasion when Reni was under the tuition of Annibale Carracci. Malvasia writes that one day Annibale was struggling with painting the drapery around a "certain" figure, and erased and repainted his work repeatedly before giving up on his task, ordering Reni to complete the drapery painting for him. Malvasia tells his readers that "when Annibale returned he saw the resolution and execution of the order which Guido had been able to accomplish so quickly and without difficulty, moreover, noting the intelligence and mastery with which he adapted the draperies over the nude form, and the surrounding areas as well, and the fluttering of the mantle, Annibale could not but openly praise him to the skies."[206] This anecdote supports the notion given by Mancini that drapery painting is an innate talent, unique to a specific artist, and "dependent more on the imagination and fantasy of the master" – in this case Reni, who created the drapery that was causing trouble for Annibale with apparent ease. Here, another *topos* is evoked – related to that of the "rivalry" between Domenichino and Reni – of the student outdoing his master. Accounts of rivalry between teacher and pupil can be traced back to antiquity – for example, Daedalus is supposed to have killed his nephew and pupil Talus out of envy.[207] Vasari writes about Raphael vastly improving on the style of his master Pietro Perugino, and that the young Leonardo surpassed his master Andrea del Verrocchio's work to such an extent that he "would never touch colours again, he was so ashamed that a boy understood their use better than he did."[208]

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[205] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134, cited by Janson et al., Italian and Spanish Art, 35: "Così nelle pieghe di panni e lor lume, quali pendono più dalla fantasia e resolution del mastro che della verità della cosa posta in essere."
[206] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 41: "Tornato Annibale, e veduto la risoluzione, con che avea saputo eseguir ben tosto, e senza difficoltà veruna il comando; ma più la intelligenza, e la maestria, con che sì bene avea, adattato al nudo sotto le piazze sopra, i recinti attorno, e gli suolazzi di quel manto, non potè, come non apertamente lodarlo in estremo."
[207] Georg Wissowa, *Paulys Realenzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft,* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1894), 4, col. 1996, cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic,* 123.
[208] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 315, 258.

1.12. Reni's study and preparation

As mentioned previously, Reni is described by the sources as an artist who prepared for his paintings with diligent study. Scannelli writes that "in the case of Guido Reni", the artist devoted "time-consuming" study, "in accordance with his own extraordinary talent, in his own individual manner, and with the unique concepts [idea] that he extracted from examples of the rarest beauty."[209] The writer cites "scholarly effort" as the reason for Reni's "extraordinary talent", in keeping with the idea posited by other writers of the time that Reni studied particularly hard in his endeavours as a painter. Scannelli writes that these efforts produced truly unique ideas and rare beauties in Reni's work.

Being well versed in drawing is one of the traits cited by Giustiniani that demonstrates an artist "who dedicates themselves to painting, especially if they teach themselves by copying antique statues, or good modern ones, or paintings by worthy masters" – and certainly this seems to be applicable to Reni's practice.[210] The artist is reported by both Malvasia and Scannelli to have keenly studied Greco-Roman art; Malvasia quotes Reni himself as saying that he had studied "the beautiful heads of antique statues ... for eight continuous years", adding that the painter also found models in Greek medals and ancient cameos.[211] Scannelli says Reni went to Rome to advance his studies, where he made drawings of "all" antiquity in *pietra amatite*, or red chalk, and pen.[212] Malvasia quotes Reni again in saying that he had created a large number

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[209] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 47: "...nella persona di Guido Reni, in quale, come poco dianzi hò accennato, compose anch'egli a forza di tempo, e di studiosa fatica conforme al proprio straordinario talento particolar maniera con idea veramente singolare, estratta dalle più rare bellezze."

[210] Giustiniani in *Raccolta,* cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 17:
"Il quale modo serve come scuola a quelli, che si applicano alla pittura, massime se si eserciteranno a copiare statue antiche, o moderne buone, o pitture di autori insigni."

[211] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 22, 57, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido",* 290-291: "...e non le scuoprono ad ogn'altro le belle teste delle statue antiche, studiandovi sopra, come per otto anni continui ho fatto io, per ogni veduta...", "Nè solo contentossi delle teste antiche per forificarsi in quelle belle idee, ma procacciò ancora effigie nuove e caricatelle dalle medaglie greche antiche più singolari e da'più reconditi camei."

[212] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 349: "...incitato dal desiderio d'avanzarsi col maggior studio procurò di portarsi a Roma, e quivi oltre haver dissegnato più volte le più rare operationi, dissegnò replicataméte il tutto dell'Antichità spettante alla Professione, prima colla pietra amatite, e poi colla penna..."
Presumably *amatite* is related to the modern Italian word *ematite*, which refers to the stone "hematite". Hematite is formed of iron oxide, and would have been an ingredient of sanguine, or red chalk, giving the material its colour. These red chalks or crayons, made from sanguine clay, were regularly used by draftsmen in *seicento* Italy, as well as the centuries preceding and

of drawings over the course of his career – though apparently, they remained in his studio, where he had filled "a large wardrobe and two chests full of them", which he claimed, if sold, would have provided him with enough money to live without working again – and, as noted previously, there were indeed almost nine hundred included in his death inventory.[213] The biographer mentions Reni's methods and preferred drawing materials, writing that Reni used "blue paper", "charcoal and chalk", and that this was his usual manner in drawing.[214] A drawing in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art illustrates this method (fig. 1.9). Two unrelated drawings have been pasted together, likely after leaving Reni's possession by a collector. The larger sheet depicts *The Reclining Headless Body of Holofernes*, while the smaller is a *Study of Female Semi-Nude Figure*. Both use black chalk, in keeping with Malvasia's description. The female nude is on blue paper, while the *Holofernes* study is, according to the museum's description, "on brownish paper that may have been originally blue".[215] A drawing entitled *The Head of a Woman Looking Up (Judith)* from the same collection (fig. 1.10), which is drawn in a combination of red and black chalk, again is "on originally blue paper now faded to light brown-gray".[216] The suggestion that the "brownish" paper which many of Reni's drawings appear upon today may have originally been blue implies that the use of blue paper may have been more common than is now apparent, and Malvasia may be correct in suggesting that this was Reni's "usual manner". Reni began to use chalk on tinted papers from about 1597 onwards, under the influence of Ludovico Carracci, who emphasised colouristic effects over contour and form in drawing.[217] Using a tinted blue background enabled Reni to add another dimension to his drawings, in the form of white highlights.

It is apparent from the sources not only that Reni was diligent in his studies, but also that he wished for this to be recognised, and resented the notion amongst

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following. Marjorie B. Cohn, (ed.), *Old Master Prints and Drawings: A Guide to Preservation and Conservation*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997) 68.

[213] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 48: "Con I miei disegni solo (de' quali avea pieno un grande armario e due cofani) mi darebbe l'animo vivere senza più oprar altro."

[214] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 122: "... fattosi ben presto recare carta turchina (era questo il suo modo più frequente di disegnare) carbone, e gesso..."

[215] Guido Reni, *The Reclining Headless Body of Holofernes; Study of Female Semi-Nude Figure,* 1625–40, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 62.123.1, Accessed 27th June 2016.
http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/340614

[216] Guido Reni, *The Head of a Woman Looking Up (Judith),* 1625-26, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 1992.70, Accessed 27th June 2016.
http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/340618

[217] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', *Master Drawings*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1968), 372.

contemporaries that his talents were purely innate. That Malvasia quotes Reni himself on the subject of preparation suggests that this was a topic of personal importance to the artist. Scannelli describes an experience, in which the writer found himself "with others in his [Reni's] room", which the writer says he is recounting on Reni's behalf, "in order to avoid the impression that the creation of beautiful paintings came easily to him [Reni]."[218] Scannelli describes a scene in which some "cavaliers" in Reni's studio were criticising the artist for painstakingly rearranging an unsatisfactory composition repeatedly, which they decided, must have been a "game" on his part. Scannelli writes that to this Reni quickly replied "that only persons who did not know how difficult the art of painting was would speak in this way", but he could only say that "he always gave his greatest effort, now [it reportedly being later in his career] more than ever, to satisfy both himself and others."[219] Scannelli goes on to say that only "as a result of intensive study and training" do artists "paint works that are well proportioned and beautiful in concept, being composed with extraordinary skill."[220] It has been noted that Bellori reaffirms this desire for the artist's hard work to be recognised in his own accounts, writing about the link between excellence and hard work, and recounting Reni's frustration with those who assume his artistic achievements were entirely effortless and unrelated to his learning.[221]

Malvasia writes that Reni studied from live models, and identifies a number of them specifically. The writer mentions a "Sansone" who posed nude for Reni in Rome and "whose body was no less well-proportioned than awe-inspiring", a porter in Bologna named Giacommazzo dall'Olle, and, "at the end Battistone, who was commonly called the model, whose figure was unfortunate, with little muscle tone, but enough to serve

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[218] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 47: "...e ciò per non dare a credere i di lui facili, e belli dipinti, una volta frà l'altre, che mi ritrovavano nella sua stanza..."

[219] Ibid.: "...ad alcuni Cavalieri d'esclamare, *che tal'operationi venivano fatte dal Maestro a quei giorni per gioco;* al che rispose immediatamente; *che solo le persone, che non conoscono la difficoltà della Professione, parlano in tal maniera: mà egli, che sperimentava, il tutto, non potea in tal proposito alto soggiungere, se non che in ogni tempo havea faticato in estremo, e pure all'hora più che mai per sodisfare se stesso, e gli altri insime.*"

[220] Ibid., 359-360, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 48: "Et al certo in tal guisa si palesa il talento di somiglianti Maestri, i quali dimostrano nell'opere con la pratica, e gran studio la buona proprotione, & una tale più bella idea, benche composta dall'eccellente artificio..."

[221] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 367: "...nel vero che niuno ingegno quantunque grande e favoritissimo dal genio, mai di se stesso rese maraviglia per eccellenza alcuna senza l'industria dell'arte, che con attenzione e fatica s'acquista."

to refresh his memory."[222] Malvasia also knew a 105-year-old man whose head Reni had painted eight times.[223] This is in contrast with the paintings of old men Malvasia described which were "derived" from his sculpture of Seneca, rather than painted from models. Interestingly, while numerous male models are given specific identities, only a few female counterparts are identified by the sources. Malvasia recounts a conversation between Count Filippo Aldrovandi and Reni, when the count asked the artist which woman served as his model for the beautiful faces of his *Madonnas* and *Magdalenes*. Reni is said to have responded by saying "tell your man from Cento [Guercino, for whom the Count was asking the question] that you need to have beautiful ideas here in your head and then any model will serve."[224] This discourse is taken directly from a letter presented by Lodovico Dolce in 1554 as written by Raphael to Baldassare Castiglione, regarding the artist's *Galatea* fresco in the villa of Agostino Chigi.[225] The letter, Raphael writes that "to paint a beautiful woman", he avails himself of "a certain Idea" that comes to his mind, that is, as in Malvasia's account, the model was not important to an artist with *"belle idée"*.[226] The letter has a long critical history, and both Giovanni Battista Agucchi (whom Malvasia quotes in his *Felsina*) and Bellori borrowed from its phrasing in their respective writings on the *Idea,* so it is likely that Malvasia was familiar with the letter and is drawing on it to give authority to Reni's reply to Guercino.[227] Reni's words do not deny the use of live

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[222] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 57, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 34: "Suoi nudi famigliari furono in Roma un tal Sansone di corporatura non men giusta, che terrible. In Bologna un Giacomazzo dall'Olle, facchino, ed in ultimo poi un Battistone, detto comunemente il modello, ch'era di corporatura infelice, e di muscoli bassi, ma che abbastanza a lui serviva, valendosene in quest'ultimo per rinfrescamento di memoria."

[223] Ibid., 52: "...bellissimo e robusto vecchio di centocinque anni, del quale ben otto volte copiò la veneranda testa."

[224] Ibid., 57-58, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 32: "Pregato un giorno dal Sig. Co. Filippo Aldovrandi, ad istigazione, si crede, del Guercin da Cento, del quale tanto era parziale quel Signore, a conferirgli, e palesargli di qual donna ei si valesse a ricavare quelle sue bell'arie di Madonne, di Maddalene, e simili ... Sig. Co. mio, soggiuse, dite pure al vostro Centese, che le belle idee bisogna averle qui in testa, che ogni modello poi serve."

[225] Ludovico Dolce, 'Lettera di M. Rafaello da Urbino al Conte Baldasar Castiglione', in *Lettere di diversi eccellentiss. huomini, raccolte da diversi libri: tra le quali se ne leggono molte, non piu stampate* (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1554), 226–228, cited by John Shearman, 'Castiglione's Portrait of Raphael', *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz,* 38, no. 1 (1994), 70.

[226] Ludovico Dolce, 'Letter purported to have been written by Raphael to Baldassare Castiglione, composed c.1522', in *Lettere di diversi eccellentiss. huomini, raccolte da diversi libri: tra le quali se ne leggono molte, non piu stampate,* cited and translated by K. Christian (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1554), 226–228.

[227] Giovanni Battista Agucchi, *Trattato,* passages reprinted by Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art,* 242-243, and Bellori, 'L'Idea del pittore, dello scultore e dell'architetto, scelta dalle bellezze naturali superiore alla Natura' in *Le vite* (Mascardi, 1672), 6, cited by John Shearman, 'Castiglione's Portrait of Raphael', *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 38, no. 1 (1994), 69.

models for his female figures, but he suggests that "any" model would do. Reni is known to have suffered from a fear and suspicion of women; this is a topic addressed in detail by his biographers, and this might provide explanation for less frequent naming of female models. Given the historical context of this account, however, it is likely that Malvasia is using this anecdote to allude to Reni's abilities in drawing on the ideal in his painting.

1.13. Palette and painting materials

While the sources devote much discussion to Reni's application of paint (that is, his brushwork), more rare are mentions of Reni's painting materials. Only on occasion are specific materials identified, usually with the purpose of illustrating a wider point – for example, Reni's use of lead white as related to his desire to protect his works against aging. The sources abstain from listing the pigments or other materials used by Reni, which would align them with those writers of recipes and artists handbooks, like Cennini, which were aimed at craftsmen, and were not considered literary artworks. As a result, while the information from the sources on this topic is scant, it is revealing with regards to Reni's reasoning for using certain materials, or regarding changes in the artist's methods.

With regards to Reni's colours, as has been noted, some discussion is devoted to the manner in which the artist's palette changed from darker colours with deeper shadows in his early works, to a lighter palette with lesser contrasts in his later work. Mancini discusses painting materials with regards to the preference that particular schools or nationalities hold for specific materials – though he does not give direct information on Reni's school. He writes, more generally, for example, about preferred flesh tone pigments, stating that "Northerners liked white with a "bit of redness in the cheeks."[228] Bellori writes about Reni's treatment of white in agreement with Mancini's words, saying that he "properly adored angels and the Virgin" by "tempering excessive

[228] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 128: "Quant'al colore, appresso diverse nationi è stato diversamente stimato, perchè li settentrionali preferiscono il bianco, ma però con un po' di rossezza delle parti che si vedono e godono, come è la faccia et in particolare le guancie."

whiteness with a little yellow or the color of roses and violets, which harmonize with other intense and strong colors".[229]

Malvasia gives a detailed description of Reni's method of colouring flesh, writing that the artist "used certain grays and blues mixed with half-tones and blended into the flesh tones". Malvasia goes on to cite this use of colours as effective in making his works more *delicata*, writing that this manner of colouring "can be observed in his delicate flesh tones, which take on a certain diaphanous quality, but they can be seen even more clearly when the light falls on them, particularly when it passes through closed windows, especially those of glass, as anyone can easily observe."[230] Examples of such effects observable in Reni's paintings will be discussed in chapter two.

While none of our sources give exhaustive accounts of the materials that Reni employed in his studio, they on occasion give information regarding specific painting materials of note, as seen when Malvasia describes Reni's "immoderate use" of lead white, a pigment mentioned multiple times by the biographer in reference to Reni.[231] Malvasia also mentions that in Reni's studio there was "a quantity of ultramarine and fine lacquers."[232] Both Malvasia and Bellori speak specifically about Reni's use of silk supports. Bellori describes Reni's wish "to experiment with painting on ormuzine, having had some large canvases woven of reinforced silk". The biographer gives the artist's reasoning behind his choice, noting that Reni "considered them more durable, judging by the example of the opening of a marble tomb, for which when it was being moved in a church on account of construction, the skeleton was found reduced to dust together with the linen shirt while the silk robe was preserved sound and intact; in this manner he painted the great altarpiece of the city [of Bologna], the Saint Michael of the Capuchins in Rome, and other pictures."[233] While this evidence is anecdotal, it

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[229] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 368: "...temperando la soverchia bianchezza con un poco di giallo o di colore di rose e di viole, che s'accordano con gl'altri colori veementi e di forza..."
[230] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans, by Enggass and Enggass, 136: "...con certi lividetti, e azzurrini mescolati fra le mezze tinte, e fra le carnagioni ... quali si osservano nelle carni delicate, che rendono un certo diafano, ma più poi, e evidentemente, qualora il lume cade sopra di esse, passando in particolare per finestre chiuse, massime di vetro, come ciascuno può molto bene osservare..."
[231] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans, by Enggass and Enggass, 137: "Al contrario de'buoni Maestri passati s'è arrischiato opar smoderatamente la biacca."
[232] Ibid., 104: "Oltramari poi in quantità, e lacche fine."
[233] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 368: "Volle Guido fare esperienza di colorire sopra ormesino, avendo fatto tessere tele grandi di seta rinforzata, stimandoli piú durabili con l'esempio

demonstrates a desire within Reni for longevity of his materials, which is relevant to the study of his technique. Malvasia also informs his readers that Reni "had certain lengths of silk made expressly for him" to paint on."[234]

In describing methods by which paintings can be attributed, or deemed originals or copies, Mancini outlines various aspects of a work which should be examined in this process. He mentions painting materials, writing that whether a work is "tempera, fresco, oil, tarsia or mosaic is easy to know."[235] The suggestion that differentiating between painting media is an interesting one – since Vasari was apparently unable to differentiate between oil and fresco in his description of Lippo's work in San Procolo, and was corrected by Malvasia.[236] It seems that painting materials have gained a renewed importance in seventeenth-century literature on art, in line with the growing interest in connoisseurship.

1.14. Conservation and longevity of materials

The sources also deal on occasion with the deterioration of painting materials – specifically, in Reni's case, regarding some of his frescoes. While this thesis deals primarily with Reni's easel paintings, the sources' discourse on problems arising with works in fresco is nonetheless relevant in that it shows both concern and awareness of materials and painting technique. Bellori recounts an example which provides evidence that Reni struggled with fresco technique. He describes decoration painted on the façade of the Palazzo del Reggimento (that is, the Palazzo Comunale or Pubblico, Bologna's town hall), which Reni painted in commemoration of the visit of

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dell'apertura d'un sepolcro di marmo, che nel trasportarsi in chiesa in occasione di fabbrica fu trovato lo schelatro disfatto in polvere insieme con la camicia di lino, conservatasi la veste di seta sana ed intatta; nel qual modo dipinse il pallione della città, il San Michele de' Cappuccini in Roma ed altri quadri."

[234] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "...onde sopra certi terzonelli di seta forzati e pieni, fatti da esso fabbricare apposta, e della necessaria larghezza..."

[235] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 133: "...se sia a tempera, a fresco, o a olio, o tarsia, musaico è facile a reconoscerlo..."
"Tarsia", a medium mentioned by Vasari in the introduction to his *Lives* which addresses painting technique, was also known as a "mosaic of wood", "tarsie" work, or "tarsiatura". The technique, similar to mosaic, involved the use of stained or painted pieces of wood, inlayed to create a composition 23; Mary P Merrifield, *Medieval and Renaissance Treatises on the Arts of Painting* (1849; New York: Dover Publications, 1999), viii.

[236] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Foster (1850), 278.

Pope Clement VIII to Bologna in 1598. Bellori suggested that, in this case, Reni's lack of experience in the medium of fresco led to the need for restoration. This fresco work is no longer in place, but prints by Reni in the British Museum collection record the Pope's visit, and describe the decorations in place as "temporary".[237] Perhaps their temporary nature was decided when they were seen to deteriorate rapidly. Bellori says that even though he "completed [the fresco] successfully, he nevertheless had much to suffer over, for at the time he lacked experience of fresco concerning the use of plaster and changes in the colors, so that he was obliged to repaint the colors in oil, which also happened with the *istoria* of Saint Benedict, and it is a great pity that he painted it this way, owing to his deficiency in fresco."[238] It must be noted that the fresco's deterioration may not have been entirely owing to Reni's inexperience in the medium – given that the work was on the façade of a building and therefore exposed to the elements, it would be expected to degrade over time.

Malvasia also recounts problems associated with Reni's fresco technique. The biographer writes a passage regarding the state of a scene from aforementioned *Life of St. Benedict* fresco cycle, in the cloister of San Michele in Bosco – which is also outdoors – painted by Reni, and describes the work as "on the way to ruin". He continues by writing that Reni himself "unwittingly hastened its decay, as many years afterwards he varnished it in order to preserve it where it had been damaged by time, which further dried out the remains of the old pigments, and this resulted in its drying and flaking more rapidly and disappearing more and more."[239] This work, *Saint Benedict Receiving Gifts from the Farmers* (which is now lost and known only from prints, and a copy by Giovanna Maria Viani), was painted in 1604 as a part of an

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[237] Guido Reni, 'Decoration for the entry of Pope Clement VIII in Bologna 1598', print series in the British Museum, London, museum number: 1862,0712.524. Description reads "Façade of the Palazzo del Senato in Bologna, with its temporary decorations. 1598 Etching". http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1459566&partId=1&subject=16361&page=1

[238] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 349: "Ma ancorché le terminasse felicemente, v'ebbe nondimeno a penar molto, mancandoli allora la pratica del fresco nell'uso della calce e mutazioni delle tinte, onde su costretto, rifarle ad olio, come gl'avvenne ancora nell'istoria seguente di San Benedetto, essendo gran danno che egli cosí la dipingesse per mancanza del fresco."

[239] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 49: "Ma fra tutte le più insigni fu la storia di S. Benedetto fatta, ancorchè a olio, con non minor freschezza, nel famoso cortile di S. Michele in Bosco ... questa opra anch'essa vadasi perdendo, e che l'autore medesimo inavvertitamente gli affrettasse una cotal ruvina, dandogli molti anni dopo per acconciarla ove s'era guasta dal tempo, una vernice che maggiormente inaridendo il residuo di quel vecchio colore, fu cagione che cartocciandosi e scrostandosi più velocemente, vada sempre più cadendo..."

extensive cycle illustrating the life of Saint Benedict, overseen by Ludovico Carracci who executed seven of the scenes himself. This work was painted following Reni's brief return to Bologna from Rome, but because it was executed in oil rather than buon fresco it deteriorated, and Reni was obliged to restore it at no charge in 1632.[240] Malvasia's account that, in an attempt to save the work, Reni's application of varnish in fact encouraged further degradation implies that in certain cases when working in fresco, Reni did not have an absolute understanding of the materials he was using and the long-term effects they may have on his works.

Bellori also writes on the subject of the San Michele in Bosco fresco, and agrees with Malvasia's statements regarding Reni's later restoration of the work – that it did in fact deteriorate more rapidly due to the addition of a varnish. Bellori cites this mishap as the reason for Reni learning more about fresco technique – a testament to his efforts to maintain a good painting practice. The biographer describes the specific methods employed by Reni in painting this fresco, writing that "he painted this *istoria* in oil on a glue made with a mixture of brick dust bound with egg white" and it was due to the dryness of these materials that the paint began to separate, "at great risk of being lost."[241] Bellori continues by describing Reni's restoration efforts, writing that in 1632 "Guido resolved to retouch it, in order not to see it disappear completely, and he retouched it to the satisfaction of the whole city ... Although Guido took every care in restoring this work, nevertheless the restoration did not turn out to be beneficial, and his diligent efforts were of no avail, because in retouching it he applied a varnish that dried out the paint even more, causing greater damage than before, so that it is disappearing more every day", again in agreement with Malvasia – that Reni's restoration work failed.[242] However, according to Bellori, "wishing not to encounter such a difficulty again, [Reni] sought urgently to gain experience in the technical means of fresco, in which he then proved as successful as anyone who ever painted in that medium"– demonstrating Reni's desire to become technically skilled in the

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[240] Linda Wolk-Simon, *An Italian Journey: Drawings from the Tobey Collection: Correggio to Tiepolo* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 137.

[241] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 350: "Colorí egli, come si disse, quest'istoria ad olio sopra la colla, fatta di mistura di polvere di mattoni incorporata di chiara d'uova, dalla quale per l'aridità si distaccava il colore con gran detrimento di perdersi..."

[242] Ibid.: "Con tutto che Guido s'impiegasse con ogni cura in restaurare quest'opera, non però la restaurazione riuscí di profitto, e non servirono le diligenze, poiché nel ritoccarla gli diede una vernice che disseccò maggiormente il colore con piú danno di prima, in modo che ogni giono piú va mancando."

medium.[243] Malvasia writes that it was Gabrielle Ferrantini whom Reni looked to for advice, when he ran into difficulty while painting the *quadratura* of Pope Clement VIII's memorial in Bologna in 1598. Malvasia describes Ferrantini as a "fine fresco painter" who was, according to the writer, very generous in his instruction, and "demonstrated to him the way to mix the paints, keep them fresh and regulate the drying time of the lime so as to control the mutations and effects."[244] Malvasia notes that Reni went on to have success with many fresco projects after this, including depictions of the six *Virtues* in the Palazzo Pubblico, and a fresco of *The Separation of Darkness and Light* in Palazzo Zani in Bologna (currently occupied by Consorzio della Bonifica Renana, a government organisation).[245] Bellori writes that, having learned the correct technique, Reni "then proved as successful as anyone else who ever painted in that medium" – though, as previously noted, Malvasia writes that Reni sought out this information after his problems with the Palazzo Reggimento fresco, executed several years before the San Michele in Bosco scenes (of 1604), the failed restoration of which took place in 1632, so perhaps Ferrantini's teaching did not help Reni to fully master the technique.

Malvasia goes on to recite an inscription by Luigi Manzini (which is also recounted by Bellori), "a monk and a scholar of the most noble Order", on the subject of the San Michele in Bosco fresco which read:

"INGENS HOC ARTIS SUAE MIRACULUM
TEMPORIS INIURIA AC FERE INVIDIA LACERUM
MAGNUS GUIDO RHENUS SPONTE MISERATUS
UT AMORI GENIO GLORIAE SUAE CONSULERET
FAMAE OCULIS PERENNATURUM RESTITUIT
ANNO SALUTIS MDCXXXII"

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[243] Ibid.: "...non volendo egli incontrar piú simile difficoltà procurò sollecitamente di sperimentarsi ne' modi di fresco, che poi gli riuscirono cosí bene quanto altri mai v'abbia dipinto."
[244] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 47: "Gli mostrò dunque il modo di comporre le mestiche, di oprarle con freschezza, pigliar il tempo della calce, e assicurarsi delle mutazioni ed effetti."
[245] Ibid., 47-48.: "...e fù allora, che operò poi con tanto brio, e facilità le belle sei Virtù ... che sopra la prima scala del Palagio pubblico.. Fece successivamente nel Palagio de'Signori Conti Zani ... le trè figure, grandi al naturale, rappresentanti, quando vien Separata la Luce dalle tenebre..."

("The great Guido Reni, having grieved that this great miracle of his art had decayed through the injuries, and, as it were, through the jealousy of time, so as to better represent his glory and his talent, he restored it to a state where it might endure before the eyes of fame in 1632."[246])

Similar issues to those encountered in Reni's frescoes have been associated with Leonardo's *Last Supper,* painted c. 1495. Analysis of paint cross sections from Leonardo's work in 1976 determined that, like the San Michele in Bosco fresco, the artist painted this mural in oil.[247] Only a few years after the work was completed, the painting reportedly began to deteriorate. In 1517 Antonio de Beatis visited the *Last Supper* and wrote that the work is "excellent though it is beginning to deteriorate". [248] A little over fifty years later, in 1568, Vasari was even more derogatory in his *Life of Girolamo da Carpi,* describing the work as "a mass of blotches".[249] As with Reni's works, this deterioration can be related to environmental factors as much as to the artist's choice of materials.

Despite Malvasia's statement that the presentation of Luigi Mancini's inscription was "futile" (considering what became of the work after Reni's intervention), it is informative in that it shows that Reni was praised for the care he gave to his work, and for his desires to maintain its material quality.[250] It must be stressed, that in the case of both the Palazzo del Reggimento and the San Michele in Bosco frescoes, that being outdoors and subject to varied weather conditions would have caused deterioration in any circumstance. Therefore, the degradation of these works that is lamented in both biographies cannot exclusively be related to Reni's technique, but perhaps, in Malvasia's words, his technique "hastened their decay". It is also important to note that many of Reni's frescoes were greatly celebrated; in response to Francesco Albani's criticism of Reni's inability to "meet the challenge" of large fresco

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[246] Ibid., 49.
[247] H. Travers Newton, 'Leonardo Da Vinci as Mural Painter: Some Observations on His Materials and Working Methods'. *Arte Lombarda*, Nuova Serie, no. 66, 3 (1983), 71.
[248] Antonio de Beatis, *The Travel Journal of Antonio De Beatis: Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, France and Italy, 1517-1518*, edited by J.R. Hale (London: 1979), cited by Michael Ladwein, *Leonardo da Vinci, the Last Supper: a cosmic drama and an act of redemption* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge, 1996), 94.
[249] Vasari, *Vite,* 2nd ed. (Florence: 1568), chap. 'The life of Girolamo de Carpi', cited by Michael Ladwein, *Leonardo da Vinci, the Last Supper: a cosmic drama and an act of redemption* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge, 1996), 16.
[250] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 49: "...inutile si renda ... la stupenda eloquenza del gran Luigi Manzini."

commissions, Malvasia defends Reni in listing some of his great achievements in the medium – including "the *Aurora* ... [and] the papal chapels in Santa Maria Maggiore and at Monte Cavallo", proving that "projects on such a great scale could not intimidate him."[251] Many of these works are today in excellent condition, and the last listed "at Monte Cavallo" – the Annunciation Chapel in the Quirinal Palace, Rome, is examined in the following chapter.

Fresco was considered by Mancini as the highest mode of painting, and to be preferred due to its difficulty, and the precision needed by the artist when working in the medium. Although Mancini includes oil paint in his list of what should be considered "good painting", the author explained that it was to be considered '*molto minore*' (very minor, low) due to the fact that it was easy to learn, and could easily be corrected or altered by the artist. Furthermore, he writes that it had a tendency to become '*sordide*' (soiled) and '*non godibili*' (unenjoyable) over time, referring to the manner in which varnish layers darkened and colours faded – though such deteriorations seem more so associated with Reni's fresco work than that in oil.[252] Giustiniani, however argues that an artist's talent should not be dismissed if he is deficient in a particular technique, as Reni is said to have been (at times) in fresco. He writes that the talents and abilities of good painters vary, and that "some have painted better in fresco than in oil and others better in oil than in fresco. Some painted in oil without having painted in fresco, whereas others have painted in fresco but not in oil. We must not be prejudiced against those who failed to work in certain areas, although in others they were excellent, equaling the splendid painters of antiquity and surpassing those of their own day."[253]

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[251] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 127: "Divulgava nondimeno ch'egli era un uomo così fatto: riputato per buono perché non praticato ... e che non datogli il cuore e l'animo di affrontare quella gran Cappella del Tesoro ... come se mai più a suoi giorni non avesse calcato i ponti e dipinte l'Aurore al palaggio oggi Mazzarino, le cappelle pontificie in Santa Maria Maggiore e a Monte Cavallo ... e così dato a conoscere se da simili macchine lasciasse farsi paura."

[252] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 22, cited by Durkan, *Della natura,* 89: "Stando dunque che il vero depinger sia il colorito a fresco, quazzo, et olio, non è da dubitar che quello a fresco deve esser preferito, ricercando maggior e più perfetta formatione articiosa dell'opera da farsi, e maggior resolutione dell'esseguire et operare, dovendo mettere subbito...", "Quello a olio, ancorchè voglia maggior pazienze nell'operare, ricercando più tempo o fatiga nel distender il colore, nondimeno, quanto alla formazione, è più facile, potendosi fare e disfare tante volte quanto che sodisfaccia; e per tal rispetto, quanto all'artifitio, come credo, è molto minore."

[253] Giustiniani, in *Raccolta,* cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 19: "...altri hanno fatto meglio a fresco, che ad olio, ed altri meglio ad olio, che a fresco: taluno ha fatto ad olio senza aver fatto a fresco: taluno a fresco, e non ad olio; ma non si pregiudicare a chi ha

Problems pertaining to painting materials and technique are cited on occasion with regards to Reni's easel paintings also. Malvasia describes a specific case where an easel painting underwent considerable deterioration, with regards to a "*Europa* commissioned to Guido by the Duke of Guastalla for seven-hundred scudi" which had been brought to Venice, "bought in 1660 by the ambassador of the Republic at an advantageous price with the hope of restoring it and repairing the paint surface which had begun to separate from the canvas and fall off."[254] This is the only example given by sources of paint falling off canvas, and therefore presumably was not a regular occurrence or association with Reni's technique.

As previously mentioned, a general decline in technique and quality of work is associated more often with Reni's late works, and is mentioned frequently in the sources discussions of Reni's *ultima maniera*. The artist developed a gambling problem later in life, which eventually had a negative effect on the quality of his work. As noted earlier in the chapter, Reni reportedly began painting on unprimed canvas and finished his works with "little care." Malvasia attributed the artist's mounting debt, which at one point he had no possibility of paying off, as the cause for the artist to denounce his beliefs in maintaining structural integrity and longevity of his works, and sacrifice the quality of his paintings in favour of speed.[255] When his gambling problem took hold, Reni's prior interest in good quality execution was lost, and he is said to have worked on many canvases at once in a confused and frantic manner, with little love for his work. Malvasia describes how "for amusement and to give himself heart", Reni "had a quantity of canvases put up and he set about sketching all of them, as well as finishing all the many canvases in the room which he had already begun". The biographer and friend of Reni says that this practice and "their great number wearied

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mancato d'operare in alcuna cosa, mentre in altra sia stato eccellente, ed abbia agguagliato gli antichi eccellenti pittori, e superato in quel'opera tutti del suo tempo..."

[254] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 84: "L'Europa commessagli dal Duca Guastalla, per regalarne, come fece, gran personaggio in Ispagna; pagandogliela settecento scudi, oggi forse in Venezia, avendola cosa comprata del 1660 l'Ambasciadore di quella Republica con gran vantaggio, con isperanza di ristorarla, e rimediare al colore, che cominciana a staccarsi dalla tela e cadere..."

[255] Ibid., 89-90: "...poichè ridottosi in estreme necessità per le perdite eccessive, ed eccedenti la sua possibilità, per pagare i debiti, ponevasi a lavorare mezza figure e testa alla prima, e senza il letto sotto; a finire inconsideratamente le storie e le tavole più riguardevoli; a prendere denari a cambio da tutti..."

and confused him, and, increasingly besieged by his creditors, he felt his courage failing and that he himself was weakening."[256]

1.15. Inside Reni's studio

Aside from information on the artist's techniques and materials, the sources offer insight into the inner workings of Reni's studio. Passages in this regard are particularly interesting when given by Malvasia, who presumably is providing much of this kind of information from first-hand, insider experience. The biographer describes specific aspects of the working of Reni's studio, for example, of the use of pre-primed canvases, with a*bozze,* or oil sketches, painted on them depicting various subjects, which were said to fill the workshop, ready to be painted – implying an "industrial" aspect to his studio practice. Malvasia describes these canvases when he recounts an occasion when Reni and Angele Michele Colonna were trying to decide upon a painting to gift to Francesco Barberini, and visited the "secret rooms upstairs and turned around various *bozze* leaning against the wall; he asked [Colonna's] advice regarding which would be appropriate and both decided on a half-figure of the Christ Child, whose right hand gave blessing and whose left was on the globe. Setting it up on the easel, [Guido] finished it in a few hours, to the astonishment of Colonna at his great speed of working."[257] That Reni had "secret rooms" in his studio might be related to problems the artist was experiencing with unapproved copying by his students – which will be addressed later in this chapter, and again later in the thesis. The onlooker's "astonishment" at the artist's speed, as described by Malvasia in reference to Colonna, is an anecdote which has been used by biographers previously. Luca Giordano, for example, was famous for his rapidity which was described by Vasari, earning him the nickname "Luca Fa' Presto".[258] Malvasia again mentions Reni's speed in reference to the altarpiece of the *Holy Family* for Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini in

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[256] Ibid., 93: "Fece ben egli porre all'ordine quantità di tele, e si pose a sbozzarle tutte per divertirsi e farsi animo, come anche a finirne molte delle già comincate ch'erano per le stanze; ma dalla loro moltiplicatà stancato e confuso e maggiormente da creditori assediato, senti mancarsi l'animo, ed infiacchirsi."

[257] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 28, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 251-252: "...[Guido] condusse il Colonna sulle stanze segrete di sopra, e voltando varie bozze poggiate a' muri, si consigliò con lo stesso di quella, fosse stata più a proposito, ed ambidue conclusero in una mezza figura d'un Signorino, che con la destra dava la benedizione, posta la sinistra sul mondo. Raccomandatolo dunque allo trepiedi, in poche ore il diede finito, con maraviglia dello stesso Colonna di si gran velocità di operare.."

[258] Vasari, *Vite,* II, 52, cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 95.

Rome, which was reportedly executed in twenty-seven days.[259] This information is not necessarily a direct record of Reni's production – it is part of the wider convention noted by Kris and Kurz, who relate the speed of an artist's output to the artist's mastery of the subjects he depicts; the artist's speed is illustration of his special abilities and talent as a painter.[260]

The artist's workshop practices are described by Bellori as mysterious, who recounts that the artist "would not allow himself to be seen painting except with his cloak on", apparently using it to hide his technique from visitors, "banishing every mechanical act".[261] It is difficult to determine whether Bellori is here using a colloquialism, or if he is telling the reader that Reni was literally painting while hidden beneath his *mantello.* The latter would, imaginably, present difficulties for the artist. This could be a figure of speech – like a person being "under the cloak of darkness" – to imply discretion, though no idiomatic expression relating directly to Bellori's words has been identified. Alternatively, the artist may have painted with his cloak draped over the arm with which he held his brush, obscuring his hand movements to his viewer. Malvasia similarly notes that the artist "never allowed himself to be seen painting without his mantle draped around ... his left arm".[262] The direction of the hatching in many of Reni's drawings (from top right to bottom left) implies, however, that the artist was right-handed, and therefore a mantle draped around his left arm would necessarily not have made his "mechanical acts" invisible to visitors as Bellori describes.

"Banishing every mechanical act" may have been part of Reni's effort to elevate his status from a craftsperson to an artist and a nobleman who was not seen working manually, only presenting fine paintings when the working process was complete. This maintained an air of mystery around Guido's art. Bellori describes Guido as "carrying the nobility of his art with dignity and decorum", and attributes the act of hiding his work from visitors as "increasing the dignity of his hand and person when the colors could be seen coming to life from his brushstrokes to the amazement of those present, particularly when he created his beautiful *arie di testa*, which was a

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[259] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 69: "...per l'Altar maggiore della Trinità di Ponte Sisto, fatta in 27 giorni, e perciò tanto delicata..."
[260] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 95.
[261] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 366: "...visitato da signori e gente foestiera, non altrimenti si lasciò veder dipingere che col mantello indosso, togliendo ogn'atto meccanico..."
[262] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 114: "...nè mai vedersi operare, che col mantello attorno, raccolto con graziosa, e pittorica, maniera sul braccio sinistro."

wonder."[263] Bellori's mention of Reni's ability to paint beautiful heads may again be a reference to Vasari's praise of Raphael, who he says was similarly "endowed by nature with the ability to paint heads with wonderfully sweet and gracious expressions."[264]

1.16. Reni's use of assistants

Malvasia is our primary informant regarding the assistants employed within Reni's studio at various points in time, as well as the roles they undertook in the production of Reni's works. Presumably his superior knowledge comes from his contact with Reni as a personal friend, and his familiarity with local members of the artistic community in Bologna who might have worked in Reni's studio. Malvasia details pupils and assistants who worked for Reni on different commissions, as well as providing information on Reni's favoured or more trusted assistants and those who possessed specific traits. Malvasia names the four assistants who Reni favoured in his studio as Antonio Carracci, Giacinto Campana, and Francesco Albani, "but above all [Giovanni] Lanfranco."[265] The writer also cites Monsù Pietro Lauri, a Frenchman, Monsù Bollanger of Troa (also known as Jean Boulanger), Lorenzo Loli, Giuliano Dinarelli, Giovanni Giacomo Sementi, Francesco Gessi, and Giovanni Andrea Sirani as pupils trusted by Guido. Sirani, Sementi and Francesco Gessi are specifically named as pupils of talent, who assisted Reni most in his commissions during busy periods. Malvasia writes that Reni favoured Sirani for his "fidelity and discretion" and because he showed "sufficient promise to relieve Guido from the tiring work that he could not do alone."[266]

Malvasia says that "more than all the rest, however, he made use of Giovanni Giacomo Sementi and Francesco Gessi, who were two of his best pupils and who

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[263] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 366: "Portava Guido con dignità e decoro la nobilità della sua arte...", "...accrescendo dignità alla mano ed alla person, metre da quei tratti si vedevano prender vita i colori con maraviglia di quelli erano presenti, particolarmente quando egli dava le sue bell'arie alle teste, che era uno stupore."
[264] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 295.
[265] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 54: "Furono questi Anton Carracci, il Campana, l'Albini, una più di tutti il Lanfranchi."
[266] Ibid., 73: "Ritenne solo presso di se Monsù Pietro Lauri Francese, Monsù Bollanger di Troa, il Loli, il Dinarelli ... e il Sirani, della fede e discretezza assicurarsi, come altresi della sufficienza promettersi, in alleggerirsi di quella fatica, alla quale rendeasi impossibile potesse egli solo resistere."

later became great men."[267] Guido valued them and boasted that he had two persons, who, given the drawings, were able to "undertake and quickly dispose of what was a great deal of work."[268] Of the assistants' role within Reni's workshop, Malvasia tells his readers that "when Guido undertook the project of decorating the famous chapel of the Holy Sacrament in Ravenna commissioned by Cardinal Aldobrandini, archbishop of the city, he made use of both assistants [Gessi and Sementi], and especially had them paint all the frescoes after his cartoons."[269] Malvasia writes that Reni made use of the assistants "especially" to execute fresco on his behalf, which is in keeping with the sources' reports that Reni's technique in fresco, at least early in his career, was not described as particularly strong; perhaps he used his assistants to avoid frequently painting in the medium. It should be noted here that several of these names are pupils who trained under Reni, who may have fulfilled the role of assistants – clear distinctions are not always made between the two in the sources. Many more students and assistants have been identified through other *seicento* sources, and by modern scholars, and this topic will be addressed more fully in chapter three.

Despite Reni's studio having been famously large, Malvasia's writing suggests that he only used assistants out of necessity, as opposed to convenience. In writing on Sirani's role as an assistant in Reni's studio, Malvasia says the artist relieved his master from the work that he could not do alone in his studio in Bologna, since the "number of commissions was enormous" after his return from Rome, and that even during his stay in Rome, around the time of the completion of his *St. Andrew Being Led to Martyrdom* at San Gregorio of c. 1608, Reni was "distressed about being unable to withstand such fatigue, and he protested about the excessive exertion necessary for this work", and spent nights making drawings for assistants to execute various works from the following day.[270] Malvasia recounts that Guido had Sirani carry out preliminary work based on his drawings, "just as all those great masters who

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[267] Ibid.: "Più di tutti però si valse egli sul principio di Gio. Giacomo Sementi, e di Francesco Gessi, che furono duo' de' suoi più bravi allievi, e riuscirono poi grand' uomini."
[268] Ibid.: "Pregiavasene Guido, e vantavasi aver duo' soggetti da poter intraprendere qual si fosse stato gran lavoro, e ben presto uscirne, dando loro i disegni."
[269] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 125: "Nel lavoro perciò della famosa Cappella del Santissimo, da lui presa a fare in Ravenna al cardinal Aldobrandini arcivescovo di quella città, di ambiduo' si valse, facendo loro massime dipingere tutti i freschi su' suoi cartoni."
[270] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 54: "Dolevasi perciò di non poter resistere a tal fatica, e protestava lo strapazzo necessario dell'opra ... non gli restando altro tempo che la nottè ... in formarne gli schizzi, disegnare i cartoni, perchè fossero in pronto il giorno vegnente per quei medesimi, de' quali convennegli valersi in simile operazione."

undertook to paint so many works found it necessary to do."[271] Spear notes that of Reni's leading assistants of the last decade, only Sirani stayed until Reni's death, later becoming Malvasia's principal informant about the artist's studio procedures, "passing on to him precious details from the perspective of first-hand experience."[272] It seems from Malvasia's words that he supports Guido's decision to use assistants during busy periods, and sees it as a practice the artist had in common with other great painters of the age, for example, his northern counterpart Rembrandt, who is said to have had a studio which was comparable to Reni's in size.

Relevant to the examination of Reni's studio practice is information regarding the level of involvement pupils and assistants are known to have had in specific commissions. While in the anecdote recounted by Malvasia about the Pope's opinion on the Annunciation Chapel, Reni implies that it is of importance to provide drawings for and oversee the production of a work, as well as to perform retouching upon completion. However, in another instance, Malvasia writes that Reni gives Gessi and Sementi "only advice" regarding the execution of a commission for the Decoration of the Villa Favorita in Mantua for Ferdinando Gonzaga. The biographer implies that they undertook everything from the planning to the painting of the work entirely on their master's behalf, because apparently in this case Reni "decided that it was superfluous" to give them drawings and "helped them only with verbal advice and discussion."[273] Malvasia writes "when the most Serene Duke of Mantua repeatedly invited Guido to paint a gallery in his palace, begging him in the end to deliver at least a design for it to be executed by two of his best assistants, Guido wrote to His Highness that he was sending him not two students, but two masters, therefore fully qualified to satisfy him, without even so much as his own drawing" – demonstrating Reni's faith in the abilities of these assistants.[274]

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[271] Ibid., 73: "...la quantità delle commissioni, che troppo soprabbondavangli... Facevali però sbozzare su' suoi dissegni, e tirar avanti le fatture, sgrossandole, come di far convenne sempre a tutti que' maestri grandi, che tante opre intrapresero."

[272] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 246.

[273] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 24, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 227: "Pregato egli perciò dall'Altezza di Mantova ad andare a dipingere colà certi freschi, vi mandò questi, quali anche stimò superfluo accompagnar co' schizzi, aiutandoli col consiglio in voce solo, e col discorso."

[274] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 125-127: "...e più volte inutilmente invitato, anzi pregato dal Serenissimo di Mantova a portarsi a dipingergli una galeria, ed in fine a fargli almeno il disegno e mandargli duo' de più bravi suoi giovani ad eseguirlo, gl'inviò i duo' compagni, scrivendo a Sua Altezza mandarle duo' maestri, non duo' scolari, a' quali però, senza tanto suo disegno, ben avria dato l'animo di contentare pienamente Sua Altezza."

Ercole de Maria, also known as Ercole de Guido or Ercolino, was an assistant who is described specifically by Malvasia as having held a primary role within the studio as a copyist (as opposed to having undertaken entire commissions or portions of commissions himself, as Gessi and Sementi reportedly did). De Maria is said to have been unique as an assistant in that he was not capable of undertaking any original work whatsoever. The artist is said to have created copies for Signor Barberini and the Pope after Reni's painting of the Archangel Michael commissioned by Cardinal Sant'Onofrio for the Church of the Capuchins, a job which other assistants were unwilling to undertake, "saying they did not understand Guido's technique and handling of the brush."[275] This suggests that not all assistants were able to imitate Reni's painting technique, and it required a high level of knowledge and skill as a painter. It is reported by Malvasia that having created these copies, de Maria was invited by Urban VIII to paint a work of his own for St. Peter's because "he carried out his work so well that he astonished everyone", but he was stunned by the offer, which was "definitely exceeding his feeble talents."[276] In order to free himself from this obligation, Ercolino told the Pope that his mother was dangerously ill, and he must leave Rome, but would return promptly.[277] This implies that despite being highly skilled technically, Reni's assistant had no creative skills (or, at least, no confidence in his creativity). Malvasia describes Ercole as "not a great figure and on his own he knew little, but he copied well [Reni's] things in such a way that no one in the whole studio knew how to distinguish them from the master's."[278]

Malvasia writes that Ercole de Maria "learned the rudiments of painting from Gessi but then moved on to Guido Reni and turned into a complete imitator of his style" and that "the great Guido himself would sometimes put Ercolino's copies on the easel to add the final touches, thinking they were his own originals and, even when alerted, was

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[275] Ibid., 147: "...altri pittori per non capire, dicevano, il modo di quell'operare e l'andare di quel pennello."
[276] Ibid.: "...se ne portò in modo che fe' stupir tutti ... a segno Sua Santità gli destinasse uno de' quatri per la chiesa di San Pietro ... così trascendente e di tanto superiore alle sue debili forze..."
[277] Ibid.: "Fintosi dunque necessaria la sua partenza di Roma per la pericolosa infermità di sua madre, ch'altro non chiedea prima di morire che di veder quest'unico figlio, con sigurtà di presto ritorno ottenne la tanto bramata licenza."
[278] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 253, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 232: "No fu egli grand'uomo, e da se poco far seppe, ma copiava ben poi le cose di quest'ultimo in modo, che nissuno di quella gran scuola da quelle del maestro distinguerle talor sapea..."

unable to tell them apart with certainty."[279] Accounts suggest that de Maria is not the only assistant so well trained in the master's technique that his paintings are hard to distinguish from Reni's. Malvasia writes also that Simone Cantarini quickly learned to imitate Reni's late style so thoroughly that his way of handling oil can be confused with the master's.[280] Malvasia reports that Cantarini's work was sold as Reni's in Venice and that even he himself would have difficulty distinguishing between a portrait painted by Cantarini and one by Reni, writing that he would have no difficulty in finding a head by Cantarini that would pass as a Guido.[281]

Of these copies which are indistinguishable from their originals, Mancini quotes the Grand Duke Cosimo de' Medici as saying "in such cases the copy should be preferred to the original because it contained both skills, that of the originator and that of the copier."[282] Mancini maintains that regardless of the extent one goes to in attempting to distinguish a copy from the original, it "sometimes happens that a copy is so well done" that, even if both the artist and the buyer are intelligent, they are deceived, and sometimes even having both the copy and the original, it is impossible to distinguish which is which.[283] Even Reni was supposedly impressed by the quality of the copies produced by his students and the closeness with which they imitated his manner. Francesco Gessi is said to have painted copies that were carried out so well "that Guido himself was made to marvel." Malvasia writes that "Guido could not believe that Gessi had done it, and after examining it several times, confessed that he had never

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[279] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 147: "... Ercole che dal Gessi ebbe i principi, ma poi passatosene a Guido, di questi si fece totalmente imitatore e seguace.", "...l'istesso gran Reni pose talvolta sul trepiedi le di costui copie per darvi gli ultimi ritocchi, credendole i suoi propri originali..."

[280] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 246.

[281] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Le Carte di Carlo Cesare Malvasia; Le "Vite" di Guido Reni e di Simone Cantarini dal manoscritto B. 16-17 della Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio di Bologna* (Bologna: Edizioni ALFA, 1980), 70, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 246: "...ne facesse dispaccio massime a Venezia sotto nome di Guido che facilmente passava [e non senza discapito perché credo che ogn'uno, e anch'io non avrebbe avuto difficoltà a prendere una testa di sua mano quanto se fosse stata di Guido]..."

[282] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 35: "Che in tal caso intesi il serenissimo granduca Cosmo di f. m. haver detto simil copie dover essere preferite all'originali per haver in sè due arti, e quella dell'inventore e quella del copiatore."

[283] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134-135: "Con tutte queste osservanze distenguendo / la copia dall'originale, nondimeno alle volte avviene che la copia sia tanto ben fatta che inganni, ancorchè l'artefice e chi compra sia intelligente, anzi, quello che è più, havendo la copia et l'originale, non sappia destinguere."

before seen anyone who was better at imitating his manner and who showed as much promise of becoming a great painter."[284]

Domenichino's studio and use of assistants seems to contrast starkly with Reni's. Domenichino's assistants are said to have included Francesco Cozza, Antonio Barbalonga and Andrea Camassei, but Malvasia tells his reader that "all of these painters, it seems to me, had a manner that was very different from that of their master."[285] Unlike Reni, Domenichino is not seen to employ exacting copyists, or to train painters to imitate his manner. Domenichino's studio differed also to Reni's in that while Reni's was busy and filled with people, Domenichino's was said to have been relatively quiet. Malvasia cites the inability to work in the presence of others, and the fact that while he was working "not even a whisper was allowed" as the reason "for the small number of students who stayed in his [Domenichino's] studio."[286] The artist apparently could not stand noise or disturbance of any kind, and his students "either quickly got tired of the many constraints, or got thrown out for the slightest bit of noise. In consequence there were only a few students who in bearing with him patiently and handling him adroitly succeeded in making a name for themselves."[287]

1.17. Copies, attribution and autograph

It is unusual to encounter writing on Reni that does not mention the large number of studio copies produced by his workshop. Both assistants and pupils within Reni's studio regularly produced copies after his more popular compositions (as was the role of Ercole de Maria), which he may or may not have subsequently retouched before sale. Copying was central to a pupil's education in Reni's studio. As has been described in the case of Gessi and Sementi, occasionally Reni is said to have given entire commissions to his assistants without having a hand in them at all. This has

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[284] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 125: "...se ne portò così bene che arrecò maraviglia all'istesso Guido allora che...", "...non potea credere che fatto l'avesse il Gessi, più volte considerandolo e confessando non aver mai veduto sino a quell'ora chi più di costui la sua maniera imitar sapesse e di avr a divenire un grand'uom dimostrasse."
[285] Ibid., 113: "...che tutti tennero, parmi, unad maniera molto da quella del loro maestro diversa."
[286] Ibid., 111: "...quando era egli in casa e che lavorava, non si zittiva ... Quindi è che pochi si contano i giovani che nella sua stanza continuassero..."
[287] Ibid.: "...stuccandosi di tanta soggezione ben presto, o cacciandoli per ogni po' di romore egli fuore, e pochi in conseguenza furono gli allievi che, pazientando e destreggiando, riuscissero di buon nome..."

given rise to issues of attribution, which continue to be associated with Reni's works today. The sources deal with the subject of studio copies and the attribution of artworks generally, as well as giving specific accounts regarding the production and sale of copies by Reni's studio. The material presented in this section will be interpreted further in chapter four, when the subject of Reni's copies is discussed in more detail.

Malvasia recites an anecdote which suggests that certain patrons took displeasure in the fact that Reni used assistants in the production of some of his commissions, which is informative regarding patrons' concern for "original" and autograph works, as opposed to studio works or copies. The author describes an event in which the Pope, having commissioned Reni to complete frescos depicting the life of the Virgin in the Annunciation Chapel of the Quirinal Palace, finds that it is being worked on by his assistants. Malvasia writes that the Pope had found Lanfranco "there busy painting the draperies of a certain figure" one afternoon during his daily visits, and "said that what he had always supposed was now clear: that Guido applied to that operation as much money as he did little work". The Pope continued to say that Reni "had been given that work so that it would be by his hand, that otherwise he would have taken into account such temerity and carelessness."[288] Reni replied to the Pope as follows; "Most Holy Father ... the drawing, sketching and background painting are not the things that make up the work. They are just like a simple contract which before you place your hand on it and sign it is worthless. Besides the ideas and designs, which are mine. I oversee everything. I refinish it and redo it to the extent that if a work given to me does not turn out to be my hand I will be content to incur your indignation, which would bring me as much grief as, so to speak, the loss of a thousand lives."[289] Reni's response is of interest because it provides an insight into the definition of an autograph work as considered by the artist himself – that which follows the design of

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[288] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "Sopraggiungendo un dopo pranzo sul lavoro Sua Santità (come per lo più dimesticamente degnavasi praticare ogni giorno) e coltovi il Lanfranco attorno a'panni di certa figure, disse, restar in chiaro di quanto gli era sempre stato supposto; che Guido altrettanto avrebbe in quella operazione applicato al denaro, quanto poco al lavoro. Che a lui si era dato quell'opra, perchè di sua mano ella fosse, altrimenti avrebbe tenuto conto di simile arditezza e poca cura."

[289] Ibid.: "Beatissimo Padre, soggiunse, il graffire, sbozzare e campire non sono, che fanno il lavoro: sono appunto come un chirografo di Vostra Santità, che prima ch'ella vi ponga la mano e lo firmi, serve a nulla. Oltre che i pensieri e disegni sono i miei, il tutto ricopro, finisco e rifaccio in modo, che quando l'oprea a me data non riesca di mia mano, mi contento d'incorrere l'indignazione sua, che sarebbe quanto dire per me il dolore della perdita di mille vite."

the artist himself, and is overseen and retouched by him, is, in Reni's belief, a work by Guido Reni. The "drawing, sketching and background painting" may all be done by assistants, a practice with precedents in the Renaissance (in the studio of Raphael, amongst others), as well as being conventional practice within many contemporary workshops (for example, those of Rembrandt and Rubens).

In his *Considerazioni sulla pittura,* Giulio Mancini writes quite extensively on methods by which a copy can be distinguished from an original, highlighting a concern amongst the seventeenth connoisseurs (who were Mancini's intended audience) regarding the authorship of works. Mancini lists instructions, which he suggests a viewer follow in order to determine if a painting is a "copy" or an "original". He writes that "the first thing to consider is whether the painting in question has the degree of perfection that is characteristic of the artists under whose name the work is offered and sold", implying that the master might be more technically skilled and therefore able to create a "perfect" work, that is, that the master creates a work of higher quality. Mancini continues in saying that "moreover, one should consider whether the painting reveals the assurance of the master himself, above all in those parts that are executed with a degree of boldness that cannot be well imitated", that is to say that the master's work will display higher levels of dexterity.[290] While presumably Reni's technical skills were superior to those working under him, instances of copies being of such quality that they are indistinguishable from the master's work are cited amongst the work of Reni's assistants, including, as has been discussed, de Maria and Cantarini. Both Mancini and Giustiniani observe this. Mancini writes that "sometimes the originals are so well imitated that it is difficult to tell."[291] In agreement, Giustiniani says that "the more excellent the painter is, provided he has patience, the better the copy will turn out to be", and, echoing the words of Mancini, that this may result in a copy that "is indistinguishable from the original, and sometimes will even surpass it."[292] There are precedents for these passages in Vasari, who wrote that "it was impossible to

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[290] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 34: "...prima se nella pittura proposta vi sia quella perfettione con la quale operava l'artefice sotto nome del quale vien proposta e venduta..."

[291] Ibid.: "E sopra tutto se sia copia o originaria, perchè alle volte avviene che sia tanto ben imitata che è difficile riconoscerla..."

[292] Giustiniani in *Raccolta,* cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 17: "...che si richiede molto diligenza, e pratica nel maneggiare i colori, per imitar bene gli orginali; e quanto più eccellente sarà il pittore, purchè abbia pazienza, tanto migliore riuscirà la copia, a segno che talvolta non sarà conosciuta dall' originale, e talvolta anco lo supererà..."

distinguish clearly between Raphael's own original works and [his master] Pietro's".[293] This is related to the *topos* of the student surpassing the master, but also may be linked to imitation being a key aspect to artistic training in both the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. Giustiniani praises the practice of copying, citing it as absolutely necessary in the practice of any good artist, in that it "demands much care and experience in the handling of colors in order to imitate the originals well."[294] Mancini underlines the problems associated with the production of high quality copies, noting that artists occasionally "have their works sold as by the hand of the famous painter", as was evidently the case in Reni's workshop.[295]

Malvasia describes the production of "non-official" copies of Reni's works in secret. The biographer recounts an occasion when a student, Vignati, "in three nights copied the *Abduction of Helen* ... by bribing the guard at the room of the Accademia delle Porte where it had been transported while still unfinished, in order to protect it from their avidity."[296] Students were also have said to have copied and published early, unseen preliminary drawings of Reni's, making prints after them without the artist's permission. Malvasia describes the students' practice of making "etchings from his early sketches, which were filled with *pentimenti* and modifications, such as Abbot Gavotti's *Goddess of Fortune*, which Scarselli published without saying anything about it."[297] These problems may account for his apparent emphasis on discretion, as noted earlier in Malvasia's mention of Reni's "secret rooms" and Bellori's description of the artist painting beneath a cloak, and also in his practice of carefully choosing assistants to work alongside him. Moreover, Malvasia describes how later in his career, as his studio grew in numbers, he separated his students into different rooms

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[293] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 285-286.
[294] Giustiniani in *Raccolta,* cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 17.
[295] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 35: "...faccino sì che le lor cose sian vendute per mano di quel tal pittore di grido..."
[296] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Gli copiarono i più gelosi, come fu il ratto di Elena, ricavato in tre notti dal Vignati, corrotto con denari il custode della stanza all'Accademia delle Porte."
The Engass and Engass translation describes those students who create unauthorised copies as "the most zealous", which arguably should translate as "most jealous", in that the original text reads *gelosi.* This would also make more sense in the context; it was jealousy that drove students to secretly copy their master's compositions, as opposed to enthusiasm.
[297] Ibid.: "Gli tagliarono all'acqua forte le prime bozze, capaci di pentimento e mutazione, come la Fortuna dell'Abbate Gavotti, pubblicata con la stampa dallo Scarselli, senza fargliene un semplice motto."

and "kept by his side only Monsù Pietro Lauri, a Frenchman, Monsù Bollanger of Troa, Loli, and Dinarelli."[298]

Malvasia notes that the sale of student copies as originals was not a practice only associated with deceitful pupils, but occasionally even the master himself took part. The biographer describes how some copies were retouched by Reni and then sold as originals, at "no less profit" than Reni's own work. Malvasia does not consider assistant work retouched by Reni as "original" and criticises the terms of sale of these works, writing that "they were many times sold as originals, I do not know with what awareness on the part of the sellers, but I do know with what small honor to the master whose work they were frankly declared to be."[299] That is, not unlike the Pope on his visit to the Annunciation Chapel, Malvasia felt that "ultimately there was a difference, particularly between originals and those retouchings that Reni had not consciously sanctioned but which came about through calculated manoeuvres."[300] The biographer similarly claims that not all works sold under Reni's first master, Denys Calvaert's name, are his own, and that some works are more recognisably (or more clearly) by the master's students than others, and those presumed to be by Guido and Albani are often seen to contain "a more beautiful character" than those by Calvaert alone, and are painted with "more knowledge and ease."[301]

The reader gets the distinct impression that Malvasia, in the case of Calvaert at least, disapproves of the sale of works under the name of a master that have been painted by students. While the biographer voices mild distaste at the sale of studio works under Reni's name, it does not seem to be the case that Malvasia absolutely refutes such a practice, and he defends Reni in saying that the artist "certainly did not give freedom to those copyists with that [their sale under the master's name] in mind."[302] In

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[298] Ibid.: "Ritenne solo presso di se Monsù Pietro Lauri Francese, Monsù Bollanger di Troa, il Loli, il Dinarelli..."
[299] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 24, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 256: "Minore ancora non su il guadagno, che si se ne' suoi ritocchi, che molte volte spacciaronsi per originali, non so con qual conscienza de' venditori, ma so con poco onore bene spesso del maestro, de quale francamente asserironsi..."
[300] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 256.
[301] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 256: "Quindi è che non tutte le divote tavoline, i rametti, e le mezza figure, di tante e tante che veggonsi, sue sono, ancorche per tali tutto di spacciate, e credute; come ben' anche è poi vero, che riconosconsi alle volte migliori, per contenere un più bel carattere, come avviene in quelle massime delli sudetti Albani, e Guido che mostano piuù risoluzione, più sapere, più facilità."
[302] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Con tale intenzione egli certo non diede ogni libertà a questi copisti."

contrast, when similar behaviour is recounted with regards to Calvaert, the biographer seems to suggest that this practice is inappropriate and deceitful. Perhaps it is the case that because Reni was thought to be a master of unparalleled skill, who could not possibly be bettered by his students, he was not deceiving the public regarding his talent by selling retouched studio copies as his own, while Calvaert is said to have been selling works that were "more beautiful and knowledgeable" than his own, leading his patrons to believe he was of greater talent than he necessarily possessed, causing Malvasia to take issue with his practice in particular. Malvasia also describes how Calvaert kept the profits from the sale of his students' works for himself. It seems that while the resale of retouched studio pictures was commonplace, it was only morally objectionable when the students were being exploited by their less talented master.

Malvasia writes that Reni only retouched copies when he felt it necessary, and that occasionally he sold the work of his assistants with little or no revision by his own hand. The biographer cites a case in which Pietro Lauri created a copy after Reni's *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion*, which Reni retouched at the request of Pinchiari, a member of clergy at San Petronio "without touching the head of the Blessed Virgin, which he said was well done and did not need retouching, unlike the head of Saint John, to which he gave many additional brush strokes."[303] It is interesting that in retouching an assistant's painting at the request of a patron, Reni would have neglected to revise an area as fundamental to the composition as the head of the Virgin. This demonstrates a high level of competency in his assistants, but also a limited amount of responsibility regarding his personal involvement in the production of a copy.

While Malvasia informs the reader that the Pope was heard voicing concern when he noticed assistants working with Guido on a fresco, the artist later reportedly refused to delegate more work to assistants in order to increase the speed of his execution of a work. The Pope complained that "the work was taking a long time", and suggested "that if it had been distributed among other Bolognese artists it would have already been finished", to which Reni apparently replied that "it would be finished, but it would

[303] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 2nd ed., II, 50: "Avendo ritoccato a sua requisizione una copia del Cristo de'Cappuccini, fatta da Monsù Pietro, che andava fuori di Bologna, senza far nulla alla testa delle B. V. che dicea star benissimo e non averne di bisogno, come quella del S. Giovanni, si risolvette poi di dare ad essa ancora molte pennellate..."

not be by Guido."[304] Here, Reni is said to have insisted that he needed to take his time to ensure that the work was "by Guido" (as opposed to, presumably, "by his assistants"). This shows that Reni, in certain circumstances, considered there to be limits in terms of the amount of assistant intervention in a work for it to remain an autograph work by him. This also makes a revealing account because it suggests that Reni refused to be rushed when working on paintings (against even the Pope's wishes, arguably his most important patron), a personality trait which is explored further in chapters three and four.

The accounts on Reni's use of assistants and production of copies are revealing in that they convey the inconsistency with which works might have been considered "by" Reni, or "by" an assistant, even in the seventeenth century. That the artist's practice in using assistants is not consistent throughout his career, and his own definition of an original work seems to vary, provides explanation for the issues regarding the attribution that are associated with works from Reni's studio today. These issues will be addressed in more detail in chapter four.

The *seicento* writers, despite their varying personal knowledge of Reni and his studio, provide valuable accounts of the workings of the artist's workshop and analysis of the artist's style, painting technique and materials. They also present an overview of seventeenth-century thought regarding the production of studio copies and use of assistants. The chapters that follow will refer back to the information that has been obtained from the sources and presented here, occasionally introducing additional information, and will contextualise it through the visual and scientific analysis of Reni's paintings. It is the hope of the author that the use of literary sources in the study of technique will enrich our understanding and interpretation of visual analysis and scientific facts.[305]

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[304] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "Un altro giorno disse il Papa, che l'operazione andava in lungo, e che s'ella si fosse distribuita agli altri paesani ancora, saria già finita: saria finita, rispose ben presto egli, ma non saria poi stata di mano di Guido."

[305] Leslie A. Carlyle, 'Beyond a Collection of Data: What We Can Learn from Documentary Sources on Artists' Materials and Techniques, in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials and Studio Practice*, *Symposium of the Getty Conservation Institute at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, 26-29 June 1995,* by Wallert, Arie, Hermens, Erma, and Peek, Marja (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1995), 4.

Chapter 2: Reni's Painting Technique and Materials in Context

This chapter examines the painting techniques employed by Guido Reni at various stages of his career. It will begin with an examination of the painter's style and brushwork, two topics which are closely linked, before addressing other techniques employed by Reni. To follow, the steps involved in the creation of a composition will be examined, as well as changes made to compositions during the painting process (also known as *pentimenti*). The chapter will continue by addressing the material structure of Reni's works, that is, what the paintings are made from; their supports, ground layers and pigments. This information will be drawn from a variety of sources; including modern scholarship on artistic practice, and the analyses of conservators and conservational scientists. Technical information will be used alongside the source material introduced in chapter one, placing the modern sources into the context of the seventeenth-century writing where appropriate. The concluding section of this chapter will discuss the condition of Reni's paintings and the degradation (or lack thereof) of his materials. Evidence for this section comes from to seventeenth-century accounts on the subject, condition reports made by conservators over the past number of decades, and the appearance of the paintings today.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, a number of unpublished technical reports on Reni's work that have been created by painting conservators in a variety of institutions worldwide have been shared with the writer. These documents contain information regarding analysis or restoration work performed on a particular painting, as well as the restoration history of a work, notes on its condition, and sometimes observations on the artist's technique. These documents are particularly useful primary sources in that they provide specific, detailed information or data on the materials and techniques employed in a painting, which has been interpreted by the writer and placed into an art-historical context. The material accompanying these reports sometimes includes X-radiographs, infrared imagery and analysis of pigment cross sections performed using micro-reflectance spectrometry. Where available, these imaging techniques can provide information on underdrawings, *pentimenti*, support structure, paint layer structure, pigments and other painting materials.

While chapter one addressed the limitations associated with literary sources, it would be misleading to assume that the scientific sources provide information that is the antithesis to that found in our *seicento* texts. Technical reports and publications are also influenced by their authors; the results of scientific analysis can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Therefore, this chapter will utilise its sources with their origins and functions in mind, and attempt to contextualise the scientific within the literary, and vice versa. The limitations of scientific data as a source has been acknowledged by scholars previously, with analysis occasionally presenting incorrect results. Van de Wetering, writing on Rembrandt, gives an example of the potential shortcomings of scientific analysis by describing an instance where, in 1968, conservator Richard Buck interpreted "the great variation in the results of scientific investigation of the grounds found on Rembrandt's panels and canvases" as supporting the artist's image as a "rebel and nonconformist." This interpretation led Buck to conclude that "Rembrandt seems to have been a nonconformist quite free from the more rigid technical disciplines followed by the other great masters", when, as it turns out, this variation in the identified ground materials turned out to be a result of several mistakes in the interpretation of paint samples.[306] For this reason, it is not possible to accept all analysis presented as absolute fact, nor can conclusions be drawn from scientific data in isolation. In order to draw conclusions on an artist's practice, it is necessary to interpret such data in context. A significant sample of the artist's work needs to be examined and viewed as a whole, taking into account not only scientific data, but also historical information and visual analysis. For the purpose of this writing the author has collected a substantial amount of scientific data (including twenty-two unpublished conservation reports, numerous unpublished X-radiograph, ultraviolet, cross-section and infrared images, as well as a multitude of published technical literature), has made analysis of art works personally in so far as possible, and, as demonstrated in chapter one, has researched the history of Reni's technique and materials extensively.

The examination of paintings from collections in Dublin, Rome, New York, Bologna and London has facilitated visual interpretations of the techniques and materials used in specific paintings. The visual analysis of paintings' surfaces has provided information on the textural qualities of surface layers (for example, impasto or lack

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[306] Richard Buck, in *Rembrandt after Three Hundred Years: A Symposium, Rembrandt and his followers* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1973), 94, cited by van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 6-7.

thereof), brushwork patterns, support structure (where, for example, canvas weave is visible through the paint layer), as well as the condition of the paintings and the manner in which they have aged. Many of the photographs used to illustrate these observations are the author's own.

In the following section, details of Reni's painting technique and style will be discussed. Distinctive traits will be identified regarding Reni's style of painting, brushwork and use of materials. It is rare for a discussion to be undertaken about any artwork without mention of the artist's "style". Identification of a consistent or recurring set of characteristics by which an artist's style can be defined is often times a difficult endeavour. In many cases, as in Reni's, style changes and evolves at different points in an artist's life.

2.1. Reni's style

An artist's style is linked with their technique. Artists make use of technique in order to achieve a specific aesthetic which, in turn, is associated with the artist's style. Technique, therefore, is the procedure followed by an artist, which ultimately results in visual traits that are associated with the artist's style. Style is determined by identifying patterns in the artist's compositions, colours, contrast between shadow and light, use of line, brushwork – any distinctive visual qualities that can be related to an individual's works. These qualities are achieved through the practice of technique. In a discussion of Reni's depiction of *Samson's Feats of Strength* in three *istorie*, in the apartment built by Paul V in the Vatican palace, Bellori says that "it is not possible to express the delicacy, the grace, and the knowledge displayed by Guido's brush in these three *istorie*, befitting their celestial subject."[307] These words directly link the stylistic qualities of delicacy and grace with technique – in that Reni displays them with his brush. The importance of artistic style is recognised in the *seicento* literature in the passages describing Reni's work, where the authors attribute similar adjectives in the definition of Reni's style.

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[307] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 353: "...non è possibile d'esprimere la gentilezza, la grazia e 'l sapere del penello di Guido in queste tre istorie, correspondente al soggetto loro celeste..." The word "knowledge" (*sapere*) could also be translated as "ability", and relates to the quality of *facilità,* that is, ease in working. Bellori's choice to use *sapere* rather than *facilità* might be deliberately highlighting his belief in the importance of learning – that is, through the practice of *disegno.*

As noted in chapter one, the *seicento* literature on Reni consistently repeats two terms in describing the artist's style; "*bellezza*" (beauty) and "*grazia*" (grace). It is difficult to conceive of more appropriate language to describe Reni's style. Even the portrait of the artist's mother in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (fig. 2.1), with her intimidating, cold expression, has an air of gracefulness and beauty in the flow of the artist's brushstrokes and the texture of the sitter's clothing that only Guido Reni could bring to such an austere figure. While the artist's technique changes quite drastically in some ways from his early career to his late, these terms can, in the writer's opinion, be applied to all of his works, and therefore prove to be defining aspects of Reni's style. The definitions of these terms, however, are very subjective, and their definitions require examination, with reference to Reni's paintings.

Scannelli, as previously mentioned, said that in "gratia, facilità, e vaghezza", Reni was "truly unparalleled."[308] Even other *seicento* artists acknowledged these qualities in Reni's work; Bernini said of Reni's *Abduction of Helen* in Paris that "truly, no one had more grace, or had given to faces more divine expressions, than Guido (*véritablement personne n'avait eu plus de grâce, ni n'avait donné aux têtes des airs plus divins que le Guide*)".[309] Grace and beauty are overlapping terms in some cases and are in need of definition in order to comprehend their role in Reni's style and technique. Richard Spear has attempted to define "grace" as it appears in Reni's paintings. He insists that "for us to understand why Reni's paintings had such enduring power at least until Ruskin's day (that is, until the end of the nineteenth century, after which point Reni's paintings lost some popularity) it is essential to explain first what grace meant to earlier audiences and how it could have contributed to their spiritual needs." Spear defines grace as "a certain beauty and elegance of form, an ease of movement, a charm, a suavity, that is, an attribute that is the very antithesis of awkwardness and affectation".[310] Certainly, the synonyms of grace are endless; finesse, poise, refinement, even "style".

Reni's works are also quite commonly described as "beautiful". While beauty and grace might seem synonymous, a distinction between the terms is made by writers on

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[308] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 349, "...nella gratia, facilità, e vaghezza veramente impareggiabile."
[309] Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Diary of the cavaliere Bernini's visit to France*, edited by Anthony Blunt (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 288, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 303.
[310] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 102.

Reni, and there is an understanding that while beauty and grace are related, they are not one and the same. The seventeenth-century French painter and art critic Roger de Piles explains this distinction by stating that paintings are not perfect "if beauty be not accompany'd with *Grace*" and that "Grace and Beauty are two different things, Beauty pleases by the Rules only, and Grace without them. What is beautiful is not always Graceful; but Grace join'd with Beauty is the height of Perfection."[311] Beauty and grace were qualities that were not only appreciated in painting, but also in social life. In *The Book of The Courtier,* Baldassare Castiglione writes that the perfect courtier "must be endowed by nature with a beauty of countenance and person, and with a grace that shall make him agreeable."[312]

As discussed in chapter one, Scannelli describes a number of stylistic attributes related to specific works by Reni; his *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints* (fig. 2.2), painted in 1596, and the *Pala della Peste* (fig. 2.3), painted around thirty-five years later, after the plague of 1630. Scannelli says the *Coronation* displays *maestria*, *grazia,* and *straordinario talento*, while the *Pala della Peste* illustrates *grazia, facilità*, and *vaghezza.*[313] Scannelli's descriptions suggest that *grazia* was a common stylistic feature of work from Reni's early and later career. Therefore, similarities in these works might illustrate the features of *grazia,* and by comparing them the meaning of the term in reference to Reni's *maniera* can be interpreted. Both of these works include a compositional balance achieved by the symmetry of the figures in the lower half of the paintings. Similar also is the detailed, flowing, colourful drapery, created with gently graduated tone and little use of heavy shadow in both compositions. The facial expressions and gestures of Reni's figures are also comparable; in both paintings one figure points to heaven, and another has hands in prayer. Several figures are portrayed with eyes upturned to heaven. All portray an air of piety and devotion. These may be the stylistic qualities that the sources linked to Reni's *grazia.*

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[311] Roger de Piles, *Abregé de la vie des peintres: avec des reflexions sur leurs ouvrages, et un traité du peintre parfait, de la connoissance des dessins, & de l'utilité des estampes* (Paris: 1699), trans. 1706, in Samuel H. Monk, 'Grace beyond the Reach of Art', in *JHI,* V (1944), 131-32, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 102.

[312] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (E-Book: Dover Publications, 2012), 28.

[313] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 349: "...un Quadro in S. Bernardo ... dimostrano Maestria, gratia, e straordinario talento; & al didentro del ... Palazzo publico si può vedere il bellissimo Stendardo, che fece dipingere la Città allo stesso Guido Reni per Voto ... nella gratia, facilità, e vaghezza..."

Reni's change in style from early to late works is mentioned by the *seicento* sources and discussed in chapter one. Both Scannelli and Malvasia show preference for Reni's earlier style, though Malvasia is more critical of the late works. Malvasia describes the late works as lacking in invention and rich compositions, and with less successful use of light and shadow and poor expression of emotions.[314] Examination of the late paintings illustrates some of these criticisms. That Reni lacked in invention and rich compositions is not an unfounded criticism; many of Reni's late works were repeated single-figure compositions of *The Head of Christ, Lucretia, Cleopatra* and *The Magdalene.* These compositions were considerably more simple (and less rich) in their formula than many of Reni's earlier works, and by repeating them the artist fails to show his *invenzione.* The practice of repeating compositions will be addressed further in chapter four. With regard to his light and shadow, the tonal variety and contrast between light and dark in his later works is reduced, bringing them closer to *chiarezza*, which was, apparently, not to the liking of the literary sources. Whether the expression of emotions in Reni's late works, is, in fact, reduced, is objective. While his subjects late in his career don't show the dramatic emotion present in scenes like *Massacre of the Innocents* of 1611 (which Malvasia cites as good example of one of Reni's better, earlier works), they react appropriately to their context. For example, the facial expressions of Reni's late *Lucretias* and *Cleopatras* are evocative of pained, despairing women at the moment of their suicide. Scannelli's defence of Reni's late *maniera* says that these works maintained good proportion and symmetry, strong practice and ease of working.[315] The accurate proportions developed by Reni in his early works remain present in his late paintings; Dulwich Picture Gallery's *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* provides a naturalistic rendering of the young man's anatomy. The "strong practice and ease of working" in Reni's late paintings might best be illustrated by his brushwork, which will be examined presently.

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[314] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 95: "...ove ancorchè a parte a parte ogni cosa sia tanto bella e sì ben fatta, tutte assieme nondimeno non mostrano quella grande invenzione, quella ferace composizione, que' giudiziosi ripieghi di sbattimenti favorevoli e di trapassi di lume; quella proprietà nelle figure ed espressioni di affetti, che ho detto fatte di prima, e tanto eccellenti."

[315] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 116: "Come Guido Reni, oltre la conservata simetria ... opere di tal forte la maggior pratica, e facilita d'operare insieme con la più vaga, e bella idea ... con più decoro, e gratia."

2.2. Reni's brushwork

Style and brushwork are closely linked areas in the study of painting. The term "*maniera*", derived from the word *mano* meaning hand, developed a second meaning in the fifteenth century in tandem with the growing concern for individual style and implied just that; style or *maniera*. This brought about a new appreciation for the artist's self, and an understanding that good painting involved more than skill or brushwork, but concerns the artist's talent or brilliance, his *ingenium*, and resultant invention of a personal style.[316] That the origin of the word *maniera* links it to working by hand supports the link between style and technique, specifically style and brushwork. Style became formally identified with brushwork in the early seventeenth century.[317] The link between brushwork and style is made clearer when, in the mid to late seventeenth-century, when a shift in taste occurs, from preference for a "finished" style to preference for a "painterly" one. These styles are directly associated with artists' brushwork. Sohm presents evidence for this change in his interpretation of Malvasia's writing. Malvasia writes that Count Filippo Fava did not appreciate Annibale Carracci's style in his early frescoes, because they seemed more like sketches than "true paintings" (that is, they were "painterly"). Filippo's grandson Alessandro, however, encouraged painters to look closely at the frescoes by providing them with moveable scaffolding – implying an appreciation for the "sketchy" quality which displeased his grandfather.[318] This suggests that the painterly style with its "sketchy" quality was not appreciated by Filippo, but was enjoyed two generations later by his grandson. That Alessandro encouraged artists to view the frescoes closely implies that Annibale's brushwork was an important element in the study of his style.

Brushwork carries an expressive quality, and brushstrokes can provide identifying traits for an artist's work. María Álvarez-Garcillán Morales of the Prado, Madrid, writes that "brushstrokes are a mark of authenticity; they are in effect the artist's handwriting and signature. As in graphology, their style can tell us a great deal about an artist's

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[316] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting and On sculpture: The Latin texts of De pictura and De statua*, trans. by Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), 97-99, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 258.

[317] Philip Sohm, *Pittoresco: Marco Boschini, his critics, and their critiques of painterly brushwork in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11.

[318] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., I, 273-274, cited by Sohm, *Marco Boschini,* 160-161: "...onde quelle storie in tale guisa non ben terminate e finite, tenessero più dello schizzo e forma di primo sbozzo, che di veri quadri aggiustati e compiti..."

individual 'personality'."[319] Using brushwork as an identifying trait within Reni's studio proves difficult at times – Reni's assistants were trained in his manner, to emulate his brushwork, and individual hands are often difficult to discern. However, certain distinguishable features of Reni's brushwork can be determined. As noted in chapter one, Malvasia praises Reni's brushwork, saying that the artist used brushstrokes to provide an element of naturalism in his works (even those derived from antique models), particularly in painting hair, and the wrinkles and sagging skin of old men.[320] The "subtleties" of Reni's brushwork can be observed in the wrinkled forehead of the Capitoline Museum's *St. Jerome* (fig. 2.4), and similarly The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's *St Joseph and Christ Child* (fig. 2.5), where the artist has represented the folds of the old men's skin by building up highlights and shadows using short horizontal brushstrokes (figs. 2.6 and 2.7). The brushstrokes are visible when examined in close proximity, and multiple shades of flesh tint have been applied in layers, using these irregular, loose, short strokes, which, from a distance give a very naturalistic impression. The surface texture or impasto created by these layered brushstrokes also lends itself to the impression of sagging skin. Caravaggio, in contrast, paints the wrinkled forehead of Abraham in his *Sacrifice of Isaac* of 1603-1604 (fig. 2.8) in exacting detail – each wrinkle is separated from the next by carefully painted shadows, and neither impasto nor the artist's brushwork is visible. Guercino's depiction of St. Matthew's aging skin is different to that of both Caravaggio's and Reni's old men (fig. 2.9). Guercino's brushstrokes are, like Reni's, looser and more visible than those of Caravaggio – though Guercino goes further than Reni in the freedom of brushwork. While Reni applies delicate, short, horizontal strokes, Guercino's are longer and harsher. Reni's white highlights appear to be formed by wet, semi-translucent dabs of a soft brush, while Guercino's are created with more opaque paint, apparently applied with a stiff bristled brush, using drier paint.

As noted in chapter one, Bellori, Malvasia and Mancini all cite the painting of hair and beards as distinctive personal trait which, Mancini states, was difficult for copyists to

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[319] María Álvarez-Garcillán Morales, in *Annibale Carracci's Venus, Adonis & Cupid,* edited by Andrés Úbeda de Los Cobos, María Álvarez-Garcillán Morales and Ana González Mozo (Madrid: Museo nacional del Prado in association with Paul Holberton Publishing, London, 2005), 56.

[320] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 134: "Quelle anche de' vecchi non lasciò liscie ed unite, come l'altre, ma con botte maestre, piene di mille gentilezze osservate in quelle pelliccivole cadenti..."

imitate.[321] Reni's brushwork in his treatment of hair and beards is distinctive throughout the course of his career, particularly in his depiction of curls. The twists and turns with which he paints a figure's ringlets, despite their irregularity, are clearly not an exact representation of a model's hair, but a formulaic method in depicting curls which the artist utilises regularly and with apparent ease. This is observable in the hair and beards of many Reni's male figures from various decades of his career. Examples of this method are found in the beard and hair of *Saint Peter Penitent,* dated c. 1600 (fig. 2.10), the hair and beard of Saint John in Vienna's *The Baptism of Christ* dated 1622-1623 (fig. 2.11), in the beard of *Saint James the Greater* from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, dated c. 1636-1638 (fig. 2.12), and the hair and beard of Saint Matthew in *Saint Matthew and the Angel* of 1635-40 in the Pinacoteca, Vatican (fig. 2.13). Though the formations of the curls remains very similar, in works from the late 1630s the highlights of the curls were brushed in using a very thin line, and are more distinct from the rest of the hair than in earlier works. Even later works, from Reni's *ultima maniera*, such as *Christ and the Infant Saint John* show a similar method in painting curls (fig. 2.14). Though the artist's brushwork has loosened considerably, the formation of the locks of hair remains the same; a series of sweeping curves intersect to create the curls of the young Saint John. Reni has replaced the highlights in his earlier curls with dark line to emphasise the individual locks of hair. The artist's use of sweeping, intersecting arcs to form curls is made clearer through examination of some of his drawings. A *Head of an Old Man* from Windsor Castle's collection (fig. 2.15), though not linked directly to a painting, illustrates this technique well. What appear as highlights in an early painted work form lines in the artist's drawing.

Malvasia's description of Reni's technique in using his ground layer as "a space to play on", upon which he applied rapid brushstrokes giving finishing touches and "principal highlights" with great "brio" and skill suggests an innate talent and ability to paint; he could paint rapidly and apply highlights and shadow with ease.[322] Sarah Hillary and Mary Kisler of the Auckland Art Gallery identify the brushwork in areas of

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[321] Mancini, *Considerazioni*, I, 134. "in particolare in quelle parti che di necessità si fanno di resolutione nè si posson ben condurre con l'immitatione, come sono in particolare i capelli, la barba, gl'occhi."

[322] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 134: ""...ma al contrario si servì di quel primo colore, quasi di letto, per scherzarvi sopra, gettandovi con gran brio appoggiato ad altrettanta intelligenza, prima d'ogn'altro ... da lui praticata, i peli girati per varii versi, mortificati, e vivi, conforme il loro sito di sotto, e di sopra, dandovi poi nella prima somità compimento co primi, e principali lumi a suo luogo."

both the Auckland (fig. 2.16) and Dulwich (fig. 2.17) paintings of *Saint Sebastian* as having been applied rapidly. Evenly-placed parallel brushstrokes – not dissimilar to those on *St. Jerome's* forehead, but more regular – are readily visible on the saints' thighs, building up highlights (figs. 2.18 and 2.19).[323] Similar parallel brush marks are identifiable the arm of Christ (fig. 2.20) in the *Baptism of Christ* (fig. 2.21), as well as more obviously in the figures lying on the ground on the right of *Victorious Samson* in the Pinacoteca in Bologna (figs. 2.22 and 2.23). These works are said to mark the period when Reni's handling was at its most robust.[324] Reni built up highlights with these thinly painted rows of tightly zigzagging strokes, and they become increasingly visible on the surface in his works in the 1630s, for example in *The Fall of the Giants* (c. 1636-1637, Pesaro, Museo Civico, fig. 2.24), and on the chest of *Portrait of Girl with a Crown* (fig. 2.25). This kind of brushwork suggests speed and ease in working method, and might also have served to give the skin a textural quality by diffusing light hitting the surface of the raised impasto.

The biographical sources do not impart information on the kinds of paintbrushes used by Reni, but other sources provide insight into what brushes were available and commonly used. In his writing on the Venetian *vendecolori,* Roland Krischel notes that, from the inventories of the sellers, the most common hair sold for use by painters was pigs' hair. Also described are the various size of brush available, ranging from large brushes ("*peneli grosi*"), medium brushes ("*peneli mezani*"), and brushes for miniature painting ("*peneli da miniar*"). Roland also notes mention of brushes in goose quills ("*in pena de occha*"), brushes in the form of blades ("*peneli in lama*") for decorative work and some particularly big and wide brushes more suitable for painting walls – the "*masoche*", "*peneli da mazo*", and "*da mezo mazo*".[325] The notebooks of Richard Symonds, written during his travels in Italy, observe the various types of brushes employed by *seicento* artist Canini. The books note that large bristle brushes of pigs' hair were used to apply ground layers.[326] Polecat-hair brushes were also popular, softer than "hog's bristle" and suitable for blending colours together. Flat-

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[323] Sarah Hillary and Mary Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian* by Guido Reni', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation,* vol. 32, no. 2 (2009), 211.
[324] Ibid., 211-212.
[325] Roland Krischel, 'The inventory of the Venetian Vendecolori Jacapo de' Benedetti: The Non-Pigment Materials', in *Trade in Artists' Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, edited by Jo Kirby, Susie Nash, and Joanna Cannon (London: Archetype Publications, 2010) 259.
[326] MS Harley 6376 f88, cited by Mary Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds: His Italian Notebooks and Their Relevance to Seventeenth-Century Painting Techniques* (New York: Garland, 1984), 75.

ended brushes, made of badger hair, were also used for this purpose.[327] "Miniver" brushes – thought to have been a mixture of ermine and weasel hair – were made in various sizes but were often pointed and used for delicate or detailed work.[328] In Reni's paintings, the use of brushes with both fine and stiff bristles can be identified. For example, in Reni's *Madonna and Child* of 1628-1630 (fig. 2.26), the Virgin's blue robes have been executed using a large, stiff bristled brush (likely hogs' hair), and the bristles have left a distinctive texture on the paint surface, indicting the artist's strokes (fig. 2.27). The white drapery surrounding the Christ Child has been created using a smaller, softer brush, the bristles of which have not left indentations in the paint surface, and which produced more fluid brushstrokes (fig. 2.28) – these were perhaps polecat hair. The hair of the Christ Child has been painted with a noticeably smaller, more pointed brush, allowing the artist to pick out the detail of the Child's soft curls, and add delicate highlights to them (fig. 2.29). In Reni's latest works from the 1640s, he makes a more extensive use of stiff bristled brushes than in the earlier works. The texture of the bristles is readily visible throughout the painting, with less frequent use of soft brushes, and is not isolated to specific passages as in earlier work. The use of these brushes enabled the artist to apply larger, sweeping brushstrokes to indicate forms in a summary fashion, rather than painting individual passages in detail, and contributed to the painterly style associated with Reni's late works. Several paintings from the Capitoline Museum serve as examples for this; *Portrait of a Girl with Crown* (fig. 2.30), *Magdalene with the Jar of Ointment* (fig. 2.31) and *Lucretia* (fig. 2.32).

A condition report on Reni's *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* of 1640-42 in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (fig. 2.33) by conservator Helen Glanville, March 1988, describes the work as "extremely freely painted, in some areas wet-in-wet, concurrently with the sky."[329] The report also outlines that there is a "very sketchy tree on the right of the figure which consists almost entirely of ground, roughly outlined in black, and loosely applied highlights, with the sky painted around it" – in agreement with Malvasia's statement that Reni used the ground as an area upon which to "play". This area gives an indication as to the order of the painting employed by Reni; the figure and tree appear to have been painted first, then the sky, followed by some additions later to the foliage. The report also notes that the detail with which the

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[327] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 76-77.
[328] Ibid., 77.
[329] Helen Glanville, Notes for Treatment for Guido Reni, "St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness", Dulwich Picture Gallery, no. DPG 262 (March 1988).

background figures have been depicted is minimal, and they have been painted in a summary fashion, that is, their forms are implied by loose brushwork rather than rendered precisely. This is a technique that is repeated in many of Reni's works, for example, the background figures in his various depictions of *Saint Sebastian.* In the drapery of Dulwich's *St. John*, form and volume are achieved through brushstroke rather than colour – while the palette is very limited, Reni uses diagonal brushstrokes in varying directions to imply texture and create the impression of folds in the drapery (fig. 2.34).

Malvasia's description of Reni's "rapid" application of brushstrokes is somewhat at odds with an account given by Bellori, who describes a response given by Reni to problems he encountered in obtaining payment for work in the Quirinal chapel. Bellori quotes Reni as saying that "if [patrons] knew how much it takes and how one has to rack one's brains to apply a brushstroke well to the canvas, they would not talk this way" – that is, they would have no issue with accommodating Reni's high fees.[330] French art critic Roger de Piles agrees with Reni's statement, writing that, despite its appearance, Reni's brushwork was more controlled than spontaneous. He wrote that the artist's handling "was light and flowing, and this Painter was so convinced that freedom of the hand was necessary for a pleasing result that, after having sometimes toiled on a work, he would splatter a few bold and free strokes [*des coups hardis*] over it to remove all hint of the time and great effort it had cost him."[331] This suggests that the seemingly spontaneous brushstrokes in many works were a deliberate effect, and that Reni used them to convey an impression that he had painted quickly and with inspiration, despite spending considerable time on a work. An example of such a "splatter" included in a work so as to convey a sense of spontaneity might exist on the chest of Reni's *Christ Crowned with Thorns* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (figs. 2.35 and 2.36). A similar technique in applying "a few bold and free strokes" so as to give the impression of spontaneity is recorded in the working method of both Titian and Rembrandt. According to the Florentine biographer Filippo Baldinucci, Titian laboured over his pictures "with great accuracy and care, but as he neared completion he gave them several bold strokes (*colpi*), or *strapazzati*, and this he did to

[330] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 356: "...e quanto bisogna stillarci il cervello a metter bene una pennellata su la tela, non parlerebbero in questa forma."
[331] de Piles, *Abregé de la vie des peintres,* 322, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 300.

cover the labor and make them appear more masterly."[332] Sources on Rembrandt describe him as going a step further than this – biographer Baldinucci puzzles over the "almost incomprehensible" process by which Rembrandt "could work so slowly and at such length by throwing paint."[333] In light of the recognised literary conventions discussed in chapter one, perhaps this should not be understood to mean that the artist literally pitched paint at his canvases, but rather, had similar methods to Reni in applying paint in confident and seemingly spontaneous *colpi*.

Perhaps Malvasia's perception of ease and speed in Reni's application of paint is a quality gained by the artist only after much study and preparation. It has been noted in chapter one that Reni valued diligent study as part of his development as an artist, and that, in Scannelli's words, Reni created his works "with studious and time-consuming effort."[334] It is important to note that not all of Reni's works are painted with the sense of rapidity noted with those mentioned above, and, particularly in the case of the artist's early works, some are painted with a high degree of finish and exacting detail. His *St. Francis comforted by Angel Musicians* of c. 1606/1607 (fig. 2.37) provides an excellent example of this. It is painted with careful, fine brushwork, which appears tight and controlled. This painting is highly finished – it has an even, smooth surface with no visible impasto and few visible brushstrokes. Though this effect is partly a result of the painting's copper support (the implications of which are discussed in further detail later in this chapter), it is still apparent that every aspect of the composition is rendered in meticulous detail. His brushwork in this early period shows similarities with that of Domenichino, perhaps given that the artists' training (with Calvaert and the Carracci) and travels (to Rome) have followed a similar trajectory to this point. However, while Domenichino's brushwork remains tight and controlled for much of his career, Reni's is seen to evolve. The angels in Domenichino's *Saint Ignatius of Loyola's Vision of Christ and God the Father at La Storta* (fig. 2.38) show brushwork that is comparably tight and controlled as the angel in Reni's *St. Francis* – but Domenichino's work is dated 1622 – over fifteen years later

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[332] Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua, per le quali si dimostra come, e per chi le bell' arti di pittura, scultura e architettura, lasciata la rozzizza delle maniere greca e gotica, si siano in questi secoli ridotte all'antica loro perfezione* (Florence: Gio. Batista Stecchi, 1767), III, 264, trans. and cited by Sohm, *Marco Boschini,* 16.
[333] Filippo Baldinucci, *Cominciamento e progresso dell'arte di tagliare in rame* (Florence: 1686), 79, trans. and cited by Sohm, *Marco Boschini,* 16.
[334] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 299-300: "...compose anch'egli a forza di tempo, e di studiosa fatica..."

than Reni's *St. Francis.* By 1622, Reni's brushwork had departed considerably from Domenichino's.

Reni's brushwork over the second decade of the seventeenth century characteristically varied between tight and detailed to loose and painterly within each individual painting. In his *Portrait of a Lady (Mother)* of 1610 (fig. 2.1) in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, the brushwork is very fine around the sitter's face, but quite loose and visible around her collar (fig. 2.39). Rendering the sitter's head in detail seems to have been important to Reni, perhaps to make the portrait recognisable, and to maintain elements of naturalism in his work, despite loosening his handling of paint in areas. Maintaining detail in the sitter's face also brings the viewer's focus to the face, an effect often use by modern portrait photographers. His treatment of *Victorious Samson* (fig. 2.40), also in Bologna, is similar – the brushwork used to paint Samson and the other figures in the foreground is relatively fine, though it becomes less so in the background figures. Again, this variation allows the artist to draw attention to aspects of the composition most essential to the narrative; in this case, Samson himself. It also creates the impression of distance and depth to the painting. This might be contrasted with the work of Raphael, who in many works apply almost as much detail to background figures as to those in the foreground, as can be seen, for example, his famous *Transfiguration* (figs. 2.41 and 2.42). Domenichino, however, does adjust his brushwork to imply distance to background figures – the faces of the two men standing in the background of his *Saint Ignatius of Loyola's Vision of Christ and God the Father at La Storta* are painted with very little detail (fig. 2.43). The size of Domenichino's figures implies that they are much further away from *St. Ignatius* than Reni's background figures are from *Samson,* suggesting that Reni made much more dramatic use of this effect to imply lesser distances in his paintings.

Victorious Samson is traditionally dated around 1611 on the basis of the classical aesthetic it shares with the famous *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 1.2), but the *Samson* has been assigned a later date by Pepper, primarily on the softer and broader brushwork, closer to that found in works painted between 1617 and 1619.[335] Works are still found from this decade which display relatively tight handling, for example, *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom* (fig. 2.44), dated to around 1615-16. The brushwork in this painting is consistently tight and detailed in all areas, with none

[335] Pepper, *Guido Reni: A Complete Catalogue,* 29.

of the loose brushwork that are seen in *Victorious Samson.* Every aspect of the painting, from Lot's beard to his daughter's plaited hair and the subjects' drapery is depicted in exacting detail. This is in keeping with the suggestion that during the years between 1610 and 1620, Reni's brushwork varied from tight to more painterly, depending on the work and within different areas of the same painting. From 1620 onwards, however, Reni began to develop his *ultima maniera*, a painterly style which would continue to progress until his death in 1645. This late manner becomes more obvious from 1630 onwards, where brushwork becomes very free, loose and visible. Late in his career, Reni modelled the surface of some figures with extensive parallel and zigzag hatching that recalls his handling of chalk, as illustrated in works such as in the *Fall of the Giants* of c. 1638 in the Museo Civico, Pesaro (fig. 2.24).[336] In Bologna's *Saint Sebastian,* c. 1640 (fig. 2.45), there are areas of especially painterly, visible brushwork and impasto, particularly in the saint's robes. The brushwork on the left side of the painting is loose and visible, and unlike that of the trees in the background on the opposite side. Cristina Casali Pedrielli argues that this work is typical of Reni's very late style, with "brushwork so free and fluid" that it gives the impression that "the subject is only sketched."[337] Areas of the painting certainly do have a "sketchy" appearance, for example, the linear detailing given to the subject's foot in the foreground. Reni has "sketched" in the toes and nails, delineating them with dark paint, rather than building them up using highlights and shadow (fig. 2.46). During the painting's restoration for the 1954 Reni exhibition, it was demonstrated that "its execution reveals no lacunae and was guided from top to bottom by the same imaginative impulse", implying that, despite this "sketchy" appearance, the painting would seem to be finished and this loose brushwork was a deliberate stylistic effect on Reni's part.[338]

Such loose, "sketchy" brushwork is typical of Reni's late manner, or *ultima maniera*; in the last years of the artist's life his brushwork makes his paintings almost unrecognisable when compared to those of his early style. The culmination of this late style can be found in Reni's *Flagellation of Christ* (fig. 2.47) in Bologna, where areas of the painting are merely suggested as opposed to fully formed. Christ's face in this

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[336] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 311.
[337] Cristina Casali Pedrielli in *Guido Reni: 1575 – 1642*, edited by Susan L. Caroselli (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1988), 310.
[338] Gian Carlo Cavalli, Andrea Emiliani, Lidia Puglioli Mandelli, and Cesare Gnudi. 1954. *Mostra di Guido Reni: catalogo critico* (Bologna: Edizioni Alfa, 1954), no. 59, cited by Pedrielli, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 310.

painting is rendered without detail, in what looks like dead colour (fig. 2.48). When compared to the face of Christ in Reni's *Cappuccini Crucifixion* of around 1617 (figs. 2.49 and 2.50), one would be disinclined to attribute the two works to the same artist. Works produced late in Reni's career are often described as "unfinished" because of their sketchy, loose brushwork, muted palette and lack of detail, though it has been argued by many sources that these works are, in fact, finished, and the contrast in technique from Reni's earlier paintings was caused by a sharp change in the artist's thinking. The Capitoline Museum's *Christ and the Infant Saint John* (fig. 2.51) provides an example of one such work with passages which appear unfinished. The robes of the kneeling Saint John fade into the green background, and have not been outlined in the brown brushwork that Reni has treated the rest of the figure with. Close examination of the paint surface in this area suggest that this was deliberate (fig. 2.52). The green background paint has been blended with the flesh of Saint John using a large, stiff bristled brush, while both colours remained wet. No other area of either figure sees this kind of blending with the background paint. Were it the case that Reni simply left the painting unfinished, this passage would presumably see the figure's flesh blocked out, without the detail of the brown outline. That the background paint has been blended with the flesh while still wet also suggests that the work was painted quickly. There is evidence of flesh-coloured paint in the background paint supporting this, suggesting that the artist was not concerned with cleaning his brushes between passages. There is a disorganised, even frenzied appearance in the irregular, zigzagging brushstrokes with which Reni has blended the two passages which might suggest a frustration with this part of the composition. To give this passage a "finished" appearance Reni would have needed only to make the robe more distinct from the background and add a brown outline. It appears as though the artist has "scribbled out" this part of the composition, rather than left it unfinished. It is possible that Reni deliberately blurred the boundary between the Saint's robe and background to make it appear softer and less stark. It is equally possible that this passage forms an example of the irresoluteness of Reni in the latter years of his life, in which Scannelli says he struggled to complete compositions to his satisfaction.[339]

Brushwork changes according to the materials involved in the paintings production – this is most readily seen in the difference in the artist's brushwork when Reni uses

[339] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359: "Non potendo allo spesso sodisfare, massime giunto nell'ultima età, annullava più volte il principiato, e con gran fatica riduceva l'opere al desiato compimento."

copper supports. While a relatively clear progression in Reni's works over the course of his career has been identified, from tight to looser, more painterly handling, the artist maintains the fine brushwork that might be associated with his early works on canvas throughout his career when painting on copper. Both the working methods and pigments used on copper supports were broadly in line with those used by the artist on canvas supports, and the characteristics of the working method on copper is generally not related specifically to the copper support, but rather to the scale of the painting, that is, copper supports were often of small dimensions.[340] However, as noted in the artist's *St. Francis Comforted by Angel Musicians,* Reni's works on copper are so fine, detailed and immaculately finished that it is difficult not to make a distinction between his working method on this support versus that of others. Reni has certainly altered his handling when working on copper, though this is likely to be a result of the generally small size of a copper support and by the fact that tighter brushwork is facilitated by the smooth surface that it provides.

In Reni's works on copper, like his *Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia* (fig. 2.53) the smoothness of the support is used to create a highly refined image, where the artist's brushwork is very controlled, detailed and carefully blended to obscure any visible strokes of the brush.[341] As copper does not absorb any of the oil medium and the preparatory layers on these supports are very thin, maximum richness of colour and saturation can be achieved within extremely thin layers of paint, with economical use of pigments.[342] The support does not lend itself to the painterly style, providing none of the opportunity for creating the soft lines that are afforded by an absorbent canvas. Even later in Reni's career, works on copper that were created at a time when he was known to have adopted looser handling are tighter and more refined than their contemporary canvases. One of Reni's late works was the large copper plate of *Christ Crowned with Thorns* in Dresden's Gemäldegalerie, painted in c. 1636-1637 (fig. 2.54). In an early inventory from the gallery in Dresden, the work was attributed to a pupil of Guido Reni's, Flaminio Torre, an attribution that was maintained into the for several centuries. However, during a visit to the storerooms of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in 1998, Stephen Pepper decisively challenged this attribution. Given what he recognised as the "extraordinary quality of the painting", Pepper determined it

[340] Isabel Horovitz, 'The Materials and Techniques of European Paintings on Copper Supports', in *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775*, edited by Michael Komanecky, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 74.
[341] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 77.
[342] Ibid., 76.

to be the work of Reni himself.[343] Certainly, brushwork in this late work is unlike Reni's technique on canvas at the time; it is much tighter and more detailed as a result of his use of copper support, and this may have led to its incorrect attribution. Copper supports have proved problematic in the practice of attribution for scholars of many artists; the material demands a change in handling which alters the artist's recognised "style".

Reni's brushwork is one aspect of his technique that progresses in stages throughout his career. While it is not possible to determine exact dates for works on the basis of levels of "tightness" or "looseness" in the painter's brushstrokes, a progression to a more painterly style as the artist ages is certainly apparent. While brushwork and style are certainly linked as terms, the "grace" of Reni's work is not lessened by the obvious change in his brushwork, and, ergo, style. According to Castiglione (who is speaking about personal traits rather than aesthetic ones, but provides interesting discourse on the concept of *grazia* nonetheless), "he who has grace, finds grace", and perhaps some of Reni's late works, such as his *Lucretia* (fig. 2.55) in the Capitoline Museum, could even be seen by some as *more* graceful in style than the earlier work.[344] This painting, with its delicate, light palette, gentle, gradual contours and shadow, and flowing, visible brushstrokes, exudes a sense of delicacy and ease. This might relate to Scannelli's assertion that the artist's late works illustrated "a strong practice and ease of working."[345] Reni's late works imply a sense that the artist is more comfortable with his painting media and more natural in his application of it. Malvasia writes that Reni's late works showed a decline in his ability to create a good composition – a quality which was attained through study and practice.[346] Scannelli maintains, however, that the works still maintained *grazia.*[347] If indeed, *grazia* is a trait that is "not to be learned", but is "received by nature", that is, it is an innate quality that a person is gifted with, then perhaps the move away from a focus on invention and compositions provided an opportunity for the artist's natural *grazia* to move to the fore in his work.[348]

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[343] Andreas Henning, 'The New Technique of Painting on Copper', in *Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575-1725,* edited by Andreas Henning, and Scott Schaefer (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 26.
[344] Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* 33.
[345] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 116: "...opere di tal forte la maggior pratica, e facilita d'operare..."
[346] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 95: ""...non mostrano quella grande invenzione, quella ferace composizione..."
[347] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 116: "...con più decoro, e gratia."
[348] Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* 33.

To continue, the following section attempts to discern the steps Reni took in working up a canvas and arranging his composition. It will first examine the role of Reni's preparatory drawings in the creation of compositions, before moving on to discuss the artist's initial underdrawings on his supports – parts of which are occasionally visible on the paint surface, and can also be determined from infrared images. Sometimes the order in which an artist has worked up a painting, or painted the various layers of his composition are visible to the naked eye, by examining the contours for evidence of overlapping paint. The interpretation of X-ray imagery can also provide information on the sequence of paint layers applied in the creation of a composition. This section will also address the artist's *pentimenti* (where alterations to the composition of a work have been made by the artist during the painting process), which, again, are sometimes visible on the paint's surface, and at other times are evidenced from X-ray or infrared images, and offer the art historian an insight into the creative process and working methods of the artist.

2.3. Drawings

Relatively few drawings attributed to Guido Reni survive in modern collections; most of them are thought today to be lost or misidentified.[349] Pepper has suggested that this is because the artist "was careless with his drawings", and gave many away, and more still were sold by his heirs after his death.[350] This explanation seems lacking when figures are compared – less than two-hundred of Reni's drawings are known in modern collections, a miniscule amount when compared to the numbers attributed to the artist's contemporaries.[351] The examples we are left with, however, show the role that Reni's drawings played in the development of his compositions. Some drawings directly map out compositions and illustrate the steps in the development of the composition – like those related to the *Pietà dei Mendicanti,* while others cannot be

[349] Ann Sutherland Harris, 'Guido Reni's "First Thoughts"', *Master Drawings,* vol. 37, no. 1 (1999), 3.
[350] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II: The Commissions', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 113, no. 820 (1971), 380, note 31.
[351] Ann Sutherland Harris, 'Guido Reni's "First Thoughts"', 3.
The author records roughly fifty Reni drawings at Windsor Castle, while in the same collection there are over seventeen hundred drawings by Domenichino, and three hundred and forty-eight by Guercino.

directly related to known works and instead serve as practice, or are used in fragmented form in different compositions.

Many of Reni's drawings evidence his study of the live model, a practice which underpinned his training in the Carracci Academy. Agostino Carracci taught pupils by having them repeatedly draw parts of the body, and through this practice, he encouraged familiarity with the details of the human anatomy which artists could draw from with ease.[352] Reni fragments and recombines studies of anatomy, combining his *idea* with *natura* in the formation of compositions. A signed sketch in the Uffizi, Florence (fig. 2.56), illustrates one such anatomical study where the artist has repeatedly drawn legs and torsos in various poses. None of these elements can be exactly identified with a known composition – though Pepper suggests that one of the legs in the upper right hand corner of the sheet might be connected with the figure of Christ in the *Ressurection,* from the altar in the Basilica of San Domenico, Bologna.[353] Another example of a detailed but fragmented study of anatomy is a black and red chalk drawing, *Study of Forearms with Hands Crossed* from 1613-14 (fig. 2.57), which has no direct link to a composition despite the exceptional detail in the hands. Similarly, full figure drawings from models in the Uffizi (fig. 2.58) probably did not relate to any work in progress.[354] Many of Reni's drawings were created without intention for use in specific compositions; Reni is practicing and using his knowledge to draw upon in later paintings. The existence of such studies with no definitive link to a composition, alongside the number of paintings for which no preparatory drawings are known, would seem to suggest that Reni practiced drawing from live model until he gained sufficient familiarity with anatomy to create elements of a composition from memory, altered or improved by his own imagination. These studies from life could be reused in compositions, where *natura* would be improved by *idea.* Malvasia writes that Reni indeed continued to use live models later in his career, but they served to "refresh his memory and for a starting point, since by then he knew well how to make corrections and adjustments so that the result would be most perfect."[355]

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[352] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', 367.
[353] Ibid., 368.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 135: "...valendosene in quest' ultimo per rinfrescamento di memoria, e per un certo appoggio, sapendo ben poi correggerlo, aggiustarlo, e ridurlo al più perfetto..."

Reni was influenced more in Carraccesque naturalism in his drawing than in his painting, and discourse between *natura* and *idea* can be readily observed in many of Reni's drawings.[356] In a study for the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the British Museum (fig. 2.59), for example, there exists a distinct difference in the way drapery has been sketched between the lower and upper halves of the drawing. The fluid lines in the heavenly upper half might be suggestive of intuitive drawing from imagination. The lower half seems to have more overlapping lines, as well as indication of the anatomies beneath the drapery, traits which are perhaps suggestive of drawing from life. Depiction of naturalistic figures in earthly realms and ideal in heavenly is a characteristic of Reni's which he repeated throughout his career.[357] Reni's later drawings show less emphasis on life drawing, and become more painterly and less linear. This, according to Pepper, followed Agostino Carracci's departure to Rome in 1597, after which point Reni was under the tuition of Ludovico Carracci, who, of the three Carracci, placed least emphasis on drawing from life.[358] This move toward the ideal is illustrated by a *Study for an Annunciation* in the Uffizi (fig. 2.60), where, like in the heavenly realm of the *Coronation of the Virgin* drawing, the drapery of the figures does not reveal anatomical detail or give a sense of the figures' form. Reni is still drawing from a model, evidenced by the naturalistic proportions of the figures, but he elaborates the drapery surrounding them according to his own imagination.[359]

Preparatory sketches for the *Pietà de Mendicanti* illustrate Reni's use of drawings in his development of compositions. Three chalk and ink drawings in the Palazzo Rosso, Genoa, as published by Pepper, provide detailed studies for the altarpiece (figs. 2.61, 2.62 and 2.63).[360] A more basic, seemingly cursory drawing for the work exists in a private collection in New York (fig. 2.64), in which Reni has made rough sketches suggesting four different possibilities for the layout of the composition. The composition seems to evolve before our eyes; the drawing on the left is most basic, indicating the figures only as lines with circles for heads. Reni then moves to a second drawing, where the figures are given a second line indicating the mass of their bodies, and some background figures and landscape are implied. The next drawing, directly below the second, develops the positions of the figures further, showing some of them

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[356] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Early Drawing Style', 365.
[357] Ibid., 365-366.
[358] Ibid., 372.
[359] Ibid., 376.
[360] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 441.

kneeling, and giving others arms to imply gesture. The drawing on the far right is the most developed of the four, where more background detail and clouds have been added, the kneeling figures have been drawn more distinctly, and Christ's body can be seen being laid out before the onlookers. While the simplicity of the drawing might suggest that it predates all three Palazzo Rosso studies, Pepper proposes that the New York drawing is intermediary, representing the development of the composition between the earliest Palazzo Rosso drawing and the later two.[361] Regardless of its position chronologically, it evidences the artist's thought process, his manner in working out compositions through drawing.

The three drawings in the Palazzo Rosso collection show the artist going through a process of trial and error, altering the composition in each one; eliminating the figure of Saint Gregory, changing the number of *putti* and saints included, the positions and gestures of the figures, the amount of space devoted to landscape in the background and the basic layout of the composition. Only one of the three Palazzo Rosso drawings (fig. 2.62) shows the composition bisected, as it is to appear in the painted composition, and the final painting omits the *putti* from the sky and adds them instead to the steps at the bottom of the composition.[362] This evolution of ideas through trial and error in numerous sketches is considered characteristic of Reni's practice in creating a composition.[363]

It has been noted that considerably fewer drawings are known from the latter part of Reni's career (1630 and thereafter) than from the earlier decades.[364] This is contrary to what might normally be the case, where larger numbers of drawings by famous artists survive from late in their careers, when collectors came to appreciate them more. It has been suggested that the lack of drawings from late in Reni's career might be the result of a change in practice in developing compositions; he was omitting the drawing stage and working out compositions directly on canvas.[365] Such a practice might be a with Reni's technique in his *ultima maniera*; paintings from the 1630s onwards saw departure from line to looser, more painterly brushwork, and

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[361] Ibid., 442.
[362] Trude Krautheimer-Hess, "A Sheet of Sketches by Guido Reni", *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 104, no. 714 (1962), 386.
[363] Ibid, 385.
[364] Sutherland Harris, 'Guido Reni's "First Thoughts"', 25.
[365] Ibid.

compositions became more simplistic and may have required less preparation in their execution.

2.4. Underdrawings and compositions

An underdrawing is a drawing applied directly to a ground layer of a painting support in preparation for subsequent paint layers, illustrating the planned composition for that work. In some instances, underdrawings are made visible by using infrared imaging techniques, depending on the pigment used in creating the underdrawing. Where carbon black or other infrared-absorbent materials are used, the pigment is made visible through infrared photography. This is because where the pigment absorbs the infrared light, it registers as dark line on the photographic image. Infrared photography is limited by the range of infrared light it can record (and, therefore, the number of pigments it can penetrate), but longer wavelengths (which can penetrate more colours) can be recorded by infrared reflectography. Reflectography often gives a clearer, unobscured image of the underdrawing beneath the paint surface. Reflectograph images are produced using a special infrared camera sensitive to longer wavelengths of light, and this system constitutes the basis of most infrared imaging today.[366] If the priming of a work is made up of a dark ground then often it is impossible to tell if there are underdrawings through infrared imaging techniques. Therefore, the absence of visible underdrawings in infrared images does not mean that there is no underdrawing present.[367] Similarly, if there is infrared-absorbent material in the upper layers of paint, it will appear on the infrared image and obscure any underdrawing beneath.

Several of Reni's paintings in the collection of the Prado, Madrid, have been subject to infrared analysis, the resulting images of which reveal some of Reni's underdrawings.[368] An infrared reflectograph image was made of the Prado's *Apostle Saint James the Greater,* dated 1618-1623 (fig. 2.65), which shows an underdrawing in the form of freehand brushstrokes, in black paint. The underdrawing is not very

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[366] Bomford, David (ed.), Introduction to *Underdrawings in Renaissance Paintings* (London: National Gallery Company, 2002), 15

[367] Ibid., 16.

[368] The writer has had the opportunity to consult these images thanks to a meeting with Ana González Mozo, researcher in the Prado Museum's technical documentation, but it was not possible to gain permission to reproduce these images in this thesis.

clear from the infrared image, but is visible nonetheless. The drapery of this underdrawing is formed very loosely compared to that of the finished surface layer. This underdrawing appears similar to the apparently unfinished painting of *Moses before the Pharaoh* in the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh (fig. 2.66), and two in the Capitoline Museum, Rome – *Portrait of a girl with crown* (fig. 2.67) and the *Suicide of Lucretia* (2.55), in terms of the manner in which the drapery is modelled. This is in agreement with the theories some scholars that Reni's late works such as these are "unfinished" and have only reached *abbozzo* stage – if these paintings were to be worked up further, it is conceivable that the finished product may be similar visually to what is visible in the Prado's *The Apostle Saint James the Greater.* This suggests that Reni's late brushwork is not a departure from his earlier technique, but rather a simplification of it. The artist's initial handling remains the same as in earlier work, but he adds less and less detail as decades progress, leaving works in what might be viewed as *abbozzo* form.

The underdrawing visible through infrared analysis of the Prado's *Cupid* (fig. 2.68) is similar to that of *Saint James*, though somewhat more linear. Both underdrawings are considerably freer than the finished painting – they give a sense of Reni quickly applying paint to canvas to get a "feel" for his planned composition. Annibale Carracci's underdrawings are also much freer than his finished paintings – Carracci uses preparatory drawings but they are never an exact transfer to canvas. In contrast, Raphael was very meticulous about transferring his drawings to canvas, sometimes freehand and on other occasions using pouncing or incision. Infrared images of his *Garvagh Madonna* in the National Gallery show very detailed underdrawings, which in places is "often careful and even rather schematic".[369] However, freehand underdrawings were not unusual in the Renaissance and have been evidenced by infrared analysis on numerous works.[370]

Infrared images for both the Auckland (fig. 2.69) and Dulwich (fig. 2.70) paintings of *Saint Sebastian* do not make visible any obvious underdrawings – they match what is seen on the paint surface almost exactly. This may be due to the pigments used in Reni's underdrawings or paint layers, or may also suggest the absence of an

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[369] Jill Dunkerton and Nicholas Penny, 'The Infra-red Examination of Raphael's "Garvagh Madonna"', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 14 (1993), 8.
[370] Jill Dunkerton and Carol Plazzotta, 'Drawing and Design in Italian Renaissance Painting', in *Underdrawings in Renaissance Paintings*, edited by David Bomford, (London: National Gallery Company, 2002), 73.

underdrawing completely. Reni's style is more painterly in these works than in the Prado's *Saint James*, so if there is indeed an *abbozzo* or oil sketch underdrawing for the *Saint Sebastian* works, it may not be a perceivable step from the finished surface and therefore not clearly visible as a separate series of brushstrokes in the infrared image. Alternatively, given that these compositions have been repeated numerous times, the absence of an underdrawing could suggest that these paintings are both replicas of an original composition, and were transferred to canvas without the requirement of an underdrawing to guide the artist. The subject of the production of replicas and copies will be addressed in chapter four.

Examination of compositions to attempt to identify the order in which the various layers have been painted can provide insight into the artist's thought process and working method. One of the easiest ways to discern the order in which an artist has painted the various layers of his composition, as pointed out by van de Wetering, is to examine the contours and look for evidence of overlapping paint.[371] Overlapping layers can be identified by looking at the direction of the brushstrokes, which in the upper layer will form a continuous contour while in the lower they are intersected abruptly by this contour. The texture of brushwork of the underlying layer is quite often to some extent visible in relief beneath the overlapping layer. Often (because of the abrasion of the upper layer) such areas of overlap also show the colour of the lower layer at some points in the surface.[372] The layers of the composition can also be defined by X-ray imagery. Van de Wetering describes how X-ray images can be used to discern the order in which layers of a painting are worked up. Writing that "figures towards the front [of the paint layers] quite often appear in the radiograph image as dark spaces left in reserve, at least in those cases where the artist used radioabsorbent paint in the background or middle ground", van de Wetering continues in saying that "...these reserves correspond to areas of the monochrome dead colour that remained visible at this stage of the work" and that "the reason why they can often be seen in the X-ray is that these shapes were not, or were only partially, filled in with radioabsorbent paint when their turn came to be worked up."[373] However, X-rays can pick up a miscellany of information, and radioabsorbent paint (which includes lead white, lead tin yellow and vermillion) is not always conveniently confined to the ground layer. Reni is said to have used large quantities of lead white, a

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[371] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 33.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid., 36-37.

radioabsorbent material. As a result, reading X-rays using the method described by van de Wetering may not always be possible in relation to Reni's works – figures that are painted using lead white will not appear in "reserve".[374] With this in mind, however, it is still possible to interpret X-ray images of Reni's works, and several will be examined in the following sections.

The X-ray images of both the Auckland (fig. 2.71) and Dulwich (fig. 2.72) paintings of *Saint Sebastian* display quite the opposite of what might be expected, as outlined by van De Wetering. In the X-ray of Auckland Art Gallery's *Saint Sebastian*, the saint is illuminated brightly against a dark background, which implies the use of lead white in the figure of the saint, but little radioabsorbent material in the background. While the background of the X-ray of *Saint Sebastian* in the Dulwich Picture Gallery is slightly brighter than that in Auckland's painting (suggesting the use of some radioabsorbent materials in the background areas or ground layer) and the contrast between the background and main figure of this image is less than that in the Auckland image, the saint still remains illuminated in white, suggesting, once again, that Reni has used more lead white in the figure of the saint than elsewhere. It would be highly unlikely that Reni would have first painted the figure of the saint in detail before adding the background around him, and close examination of the painting's surface (from a photograph) in the Auckland work shows that some areas of the saint's body certainly overlap areas of the blue sky of the background, while in other parts the layers are separated by areas of exposed ground (fig. 2.18). We know that Reni dead coloured most of his works, that is, blocked in various aspects of his composition with flat colours to suggest shapes before adding colour, tone and detail later.[375] It would appear that he made most use of lead white in the final stages of his painting, rather than, as van de Wetering writes is often the norm, for the initial preparatory layers.[376] This theory is supported by an X-ray image of Reni's *Saint Cecilia* from the Norton Simon Museum (fig. 2.73 and 2.74), where the white finishing highlights which Reni has applied appear in the image in luminous white, suggesting that they were painted using lead white.

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[374] Taylor, *Condition*, 56
[375] Personal correspondence with Ana González Mozo, Prado Museum, Madrid, September 2014.
[376] Ibid.

Areas of exposed ground between elements of a composition, as seen in Auckland's *Saint Sebastian*, suggest that the composition has been carefully planned. It implies that Reni painted each aspect individually, rather than layering them over one another. Similar treatment is given to Reni's *Victorious Samson* in the Pinacoteca, Bologna (fig. 2.22), where around Samson's left leg, rather than overlapping paint, an area of dark red ground is visible, which has been left just marginally exposed, providing delineation between the figure and the background (fig. 2.75). The ground is left visible in areas of many of Caravaggio's works, including the *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (fig. 2.76 and 2.77), where it provided the artist with a "ready-made middle tone in much of the painting of flesh and hair" and created "much of the half-shadow in the modelling of the inner shoulder and collarbone, chin and shadowed cheek".[377] Raphael often left similar areas of ground exposed, for example in the *Mond Crucifixion* (fig. 2.78), the *imprimitura* can be seen between passages of paint, as in the junction of the top of Saint Jerome's head with the landscape (fig. 2.79), and at the right of Saint John the Evangelist's shoulder (fig. 2.80).[378] That areas of ground were left exposed by Reni to form areas of delineation between elements of the composition in his *Samson* suggest that the painting was not worked up in overlapping layers, and other observations can be made to support this theory. Between the legs of Bologna's *Saint Sebastian*, for example, rather than seeing intersecting brushstrokes which might suggest one layer having been painted under or on top of another, the brushstrokes of the saint's leg flow in the same direction as the background (fig. 2.81). This also suggests that detail was added to both the saint and the background as individual elements, rather than one layer being placed on top of another.

In agreement with what has been noted in the above works, Malvasia says that all of the figures of the altarpiece that Reni painted for the Leoni family for their chapel in San Tommaso in Stra' Maggiore are "brushed in at once with great ease". Malvasia suggests that this technique of painting all of the figures in at one time is more or less exclusive to Reni's working method, writing that the figures are painted all at once "in his manner that is unique, unless it is at times to be observed in *The Transfiguration of Christ* in San Salvatore in Venice (painted by Titian as a replacement cover for the

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[377] Larry Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 19 (1998), 38.

[378] Ashok Roy, Marika Spring and Carol Plazzotta, 'Raphael's Early Work in the National Gallery: Paintings before Rome', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* vol. 25 (2004), 8.

altar of San Salvatore) and in a few other works by Tintoretto."[379] This is a technique which has been used by painters since – Cézanne has been quoted in saying "*Je mè comprenez un peu, toute ma toile à la fois, d'ensemble* (You see, I work on my painting as a whole, all at once)".[380] The Church of San Tommaso to which Malvasia refers was demolished in 1844, making the work difficult to identify. However, a book by English botanist Thomas Martyn, written in 1787, lists paintings that hung in churches in Bologna, and notes a "S. Andrew and S. Francis, with Christ above, by Guido" in San Tommaso.[381] While a painting which fits this description has not been identified, the composition is suggestive, perhaps, of one of Reni's *Crucifixions,* given Christ's position "above" two saints. Reni and his studio made variations on his *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion* (fig. 2.49) to include different figures (for example, the version at Alnwick Castle, painted in 1625, fig. 2.82), so it is possible that the lost painting may have been similar to this work, with Saints Andrew and Francis at the foot of the cross. The presence of *pentimenti* in the *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion* (which will be discussed in the next section) preclude the work from having been "brushed in all at once", given that the artist has made alterations to the composition after his initial attempt. If the painting at San Tommaso was indeed a variant of the *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion,* this might have lent itself to Reni being able to paint the familiar composition in without pause or *pentimenti.* The surface texture of the Alnwick Castle variation of the *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion* appears quite smooth and even (unlike the *'Cappuccini' Crucifixion* which has several *pentimenti* evidenced on the paint surface and a thick, uneven paint layer suggestive of much compositional change), and the handling more assured than that of the original composition, with confidently delineated forms. This perhaps better illustrates the working method that Malvasia describes.

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[379] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 69: "...toccati con gran sprezzo tutti di colpi, con quel suo modo singolare, se non quanto l'osservai talora in Tiziano nella trasfigurazione del Signore sul Taborre, in S. Salvatore in Venezia, ed altre poche cose del Tintoretto..."

[380] Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne* (Paris: Éditions Bernheim-jeune, 1921), 130, cited by van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 33.

[381] Thomas Martyn, *The gentleman's guide in his tour through Italy* (London: G. Kearsley, 1787), 105.

2.5. *Pentimenti*

Pentimenti (where alterations to the composition of a work have been made by the artist during the painting process) offer the art historian insight into the working methods of an artist. Occasionally these *pentimenti* may be visible to the naked eye, and in other instances these changes are noted through X-ray images, where layers of paint can be isolated and changes in composition can be observed. Preparatory drawings can also potentially give indications of *pentimenti* in the work for which they were created. However, few preparatory drawings are followed exactly at the painting stage, and many artists – Reni included – would appear to paint from just a sketch or a general idea. Therefore many preparatory sketches will not indicate *pentimenti,* but will likely have been developed in more detail either in another drawing or while working on the painting itself. In certain circumstances, drawings exist which were used to incise, pounce, trace or grid a composition onto a painting support (often apparent from damage the process has done to the drawing). In these instances, where the final painted surface differs in composition from that of the drawing, it more strongly implies that the artist has made changes to the composition during the painting process. Such techniques were more common in the work of Renaissance artists, for example, Raphael, and are not associated at any point with Reni's working method. Drawings can, however, provide supporting evidence for *pentimenti* which have been otherwise identified (with the use of X-ray or infrared images).

Pentimenti are found in many of Reni's works, implying that he routinely made changes to compositions during the painting process. In the National Gallery's *Christ Embracing St. John the Baptist* (fig. 2.83), X-ray images reveal that this canvas was initially used for an entirely different composition and also reveal some *pentimenti.* The condition report for this work reads that "X-rays suggest traces of a face (?) upper right and unrelated to the present composition. It is possible that Christ's left arm was originally placed lower down across the composition."[382] *Pentimenti* which evidence a change in position of arms or legs are common in Reni's work (as well as in the work of many artists), and suggest that the artist is making alterations where the original pose looks awkward or unnatural. The *pentimenti* in London's *Christ Embracing St. John the Baptist* indicate that there was originally an entirely different composition on

[382] Michael Levey, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Italian Schools* (London: National Gallery Company, 1971), 186.

the support. This reveals that, on occasion, Reni abandoned works which he had begun, and also that he, rather economically, reused the canvas supports of these abandoned paintings. This work was painted around 1640, late in Reni's life, and the abandoned composition is consistent with accounts of Reni's frame of mind around this time. As noted in chapter one, having amassed gambling debts and finding himself "besieged by creditors", the artist is said to have had numerous canvases set up in his studio which he worked at all at the same time, a practice that "wearied and confused him."[383] This frantic behaviour could have led to dramatic changes of mind, causing the artist to abandon one painting and begin an entirely different one on the same support. The reuse of canvas was, however, not so unusual; X-rays of Caravaggio's *Lute Player* from the Barberini collection reveal that the canvas had been previously used for a vertical composition showing two male figures, parts of which were scraped clean by the artist to avoid interference with his new composition, and there are other instances in which the artist re-used canvases for unrelated compositions.[384]

The National Gallery's *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom* of c. 1615-16 (fig. 2.44) shows evidence of a *pentimento* in the left hand of the woman on the right hand side of the painting, visible in the texture of the paint surface and further confirmed by infrared reflectography. Conservators in the National Gallery have also identified *pentimenti* in the same figure's hair and head-cloth.[385] These *pentimenti* are minor and suggest a rethinking of the composition that would be usual in an artist's creative practice and served to make the figure's body parts, clothing and gestures appear more natural or suited to the composition. It may be that the figure on the right, being closest to the foreground, received most attention from the artist given her proximity to the viewer. *Pentimenti* are sometimes created to make a composition more balanced, as may have been the case with those evidenced from infrared imagery of Reni's *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 1.2). There are many minor *pentimenti* to be observed in this painting, which is to be expected from such a large and complex composition –

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[383] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 93: "Fece ben egli porre all'ordine quantità di tele, e si pose a sbozzarle tutte per divertirsi e farsi animo, come anche a finirne molte delle già comincate ch'erano per le stanze; ma dalla loro moltiplicatà stancato e confuso e maggiormente da creditori assediato, senti mancarsi l'animo, ed infiacchirsi."
[384] Keith Christiansen, 'Some Observations on the Relationship between Caravaggio's Two Treatments of the "Lute-Player"', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 132, no. 1042 (1990), 24.
[385] Maclaren, Neil, and Brommelle, N. S., Condition Report for Guido Reni, "Lot and His Daughters Leaving Sodom", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 193 (28th June 1956).

Reni took some time to work out aspects of the work, like the hands of the woman kneeling in the foreground to the right-hand side (fig. 2.87). A more major *pentimento* appears in the figure on the extreme right (fig. 2.88) – her face has been repainted, changing its position within the painting significantly. This brings it more in line with the corresponding female figure whose hair is being pulled on the left of the work, creating a more symmetrical composition.

In Reni's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 2.84), a dark area of paint is present in the background surrounding the head of Salome, and the gallery's conservators suggest that there may be a *pentimento* in the background, appearing as a band of approximately ½ an inch wide around her head, as well as other revisions around the figure's left arm and neck which have been revealed by X-ray.[386] This darkened area of paint is readily visible and suggests that Reni revised the area with a different pigment, or, given the propensity of oil to darken, one containing more oil (fig. 2.85). In another treatment by Reni of this subject in the Galleria Corsini, dated to a year or so previous to the Chicago work, the artist depicts *Salome* wearing a large, ornamented turban (fig. 2.86). The darkened area around the head of the Chicago *Salome* is similar in shape to this turban, suggesting that Reni may have originally painted her with a headpiece, only to revise the composition to show her without. The result is a more feminine figure, distinct from the women standing to her right, with her hair is exposed and braided intricately. This highlights the central importance of the *Salome* in this narrative, and her superior position as royalty. This was a revision not deemed necessary in the earlier picture where *Salome* is depicted alone with the head of *St. John,* without the additional female figures who appear in the Chicago painting.

Reni's *Crucifixion* for the Capuchin church near Bologna, now in Bologna's Pinacoteca Nazionale (fig. 2.49), has some textural differences in the paint surface that suggest compositional changes. Emiliani states that a preparatory drawing for this work (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), demonstrates that the position of the Virgin was originally meant to be considerably higher up in the composition than where Guido finally decided to place her, observing from the drawing that "the Virgin was designed to loom with the enormous stature and the same dramatic quality

[386] Examination Report for Possible Treatment for Guido Reni, Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist", Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, Museum no.: 1960.3 (19th December 1986).

already present in the upper zone of the *Pietà* (Mendicanti). In the painting, as can be seen in the very visible *pentimento*, she rose so tall that the painter had to reduce her height by a good four inches."[387] It is indeed clear from the painting, which has been examined by the writer, that the decision to change the Virgin's position was not made until the painting itself had been begun, as there is a visible change in texture in the painting above the head of the Virgin, which provides further evidence for this pentimento (fig. 2.89). A tiny representation of the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* (fig. 2.90) appears in an oval in the foreground of Reni's *Madonna of the Rosary* (fig. 2.91) for the high altar in the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca in Bologna. In this representation, dated to 1598, Reni has depicted the Virgin and Saint John at a much larger scale comparatively; this is perhaps indicative of the artist's initial intentions for the later full-scale work. Like the Alnwick *Crucifixion* (fig. 2.82), this miniature representation omits the figure of the Magdalene. The result, however, shows the figure of Christ dwarfed by the figures that flank him, who look disproportionally large given their apparent proximity to the cross.

A similar *pentimento* is found in Reni's *Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin* of 1602-03 in the collection of the Prado in Madrid (fig. 2.92). An infrared image (as examined by the writer) shows an obvious *pentimento* on the figure of the Virgin – again, the figure was originally intended to be much larger. This, according to the Prado's website, is a reduced-scale version of a large-scale work, and is of somewhat similar composition and dimensions as Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the National Gallery, dated to approximately five years later.[388] Changing the composition to make the figure of the Virgin smaller appears to be a *pentimento* which occurs repeatedly in Reni's work, and is in keeping with the artist's known devotion to the Virgin who, besides Reni's beloved mother, was, according to sources, the only female figure of influence in the artist's life. Malvasia writes that "[Reni] was very devoted to Our Lady the Virgin Mary. In his youth he went every Saturday to gaze with reverence on her image in Monte della Guardia, and every evening without fail as long as he lived he offered devotion to her image in the Church of the Vita ... No painter of any century

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[387] Andrea Emiliani, 'The Life, Symbolism and Fame of Guido Reni', in *Guido Reni: 1575 – 1642*, edited by Susan L. Caroselli (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1988), 74.

[388] Website of Museo del Prado; https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/asuncion-y-coronacion-de-la-virgen/0cbc0618-1ef7-42bc-b114-62abf968c07d Accessed 04/03/2016

ever knew how to represent her with a greater combination of beauty and modesty."[389] Reni's love for the Virgin Mary seems to have led him to give depictions of her extra attention within his compositions, and, in these cases, he initially depicts her as disproportionately large. Perhaps giving the Madonna extra emphasis in the composition seemed appropriate to the devout Reni, but, upon finishing these works, it became apparent that her size puts the composition out of balance, leading to his revisions.

Scannelli's assertion that late in Reni's life, he struggled to "satisfy" himself with his concepts, and to finish his works, might be backed up by the presence of certain *pentimenti.*[390] The artist's *Blessed Soul* in the Capitoline Museum serves as good illustration of this (fig. 2.93). There are a number of *pentimenti* visible on the paint's surface (mostly due to the transparency that the thin layers of paint have gained over time). These revisions are indicative of an artist who could not commit to his composition. Reni has made alterations to the thickness of the arms and position of the drapery, but more significant are the drastic changes in the figure's wings (fig. 2.94), also evidenced from an unusual preparatory oil sketch for this work (fig. 2.95). That Reni created an oil sketch for this work, which was considerably more detailed than his usual preparatory drawings, and continued to make revisions to the main work while he was painting it suggests that he had particular difficulty in working out this composition. Dated to 1640-42, this is a good example of a late work in which Reni's inability to execute his designs with the same assurance and resolve that has been encountered in works from decades previous.

Pentimenti are sometimes used to support the identification of an "original" composition amongst the plethora of autograph replicas and copies in Reni's oeuvre. The argument surrounding Reni's paintings of *Saint Sebastian* is an example of this and shows the manner in which different *pentimenti* may be read. Both the Dulwich and Auckland *Saint Sebastian* paintings were found to have *pentimenti* when examined. Neither picture, however, has been accepted as the "original" composition. Stephen Pepper accepted the Dulwich painting as one of two autograph replicas (the other being in the Louvre), while identifying the original *Saint Sebastian* as that in the

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[389] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 126: "Fù devotissimo di Maria Vergine nostra Signora, andando in gioventù a riverirne ogni Sabbato la sua Immagine sul Monte della Guardia ... non avendo mai Pittore d'alcun secolo saputo rappresentarla più bella insieme, e modesta..."

[390] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 359: "Non potendo allo spesso sodisfare..."

Prado, Madrid of 1617-18. In the Dulwich version, there are *pentimenti* in broad brushstrokes which show that when the design for the loin cloth was first planned it was to be higher on the hips than in the final painting. These brush strokes have been revealed by abrasion (fig. 2.96), and served as a summary indication, or *abbozzo*, used as a rough initial guide for placing the forms. An apparent *pentimento* is also evident in the Auckland *St. Sebastian.* While the face of the *St. Sebastian* in X-radiograph image of the Auckland work is that of a man in pain, the final paint layer displays a softer, more serene expression (fig. 2.97). This change is not visible in the X-rays of the Dulwich (fig. 2.98), Prado or Louvre paintings, which are much more like the visible image of Auckland's painting rather than the X-ray.[391] This *pentimento* may be considered more relevant in terms of "originality" than that encountered in the Dulwich *St. Sebastian*, and yet this is not widely accepted as the original composition. The change of expression in the saint's face in the Auckland painting might be alluding to his status as a Christian martyr. *Sebastian* does not wallow in pain and self-pity, but instead is overcome by a sense of the divine, with an expression reminiscent of his fellow martyr in Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa.*

Where *pentimenti* can be distinguished in a work, showing that the composition has been altered in a significant way from the final result – and other versions of the painting are identical in composition to that work but without *pentimenti* – it is sometimes inferred that the work with *pentimenti* is the "original". However, it must be noted that slight variations exist in all of the *Saint Sebastians*, for example, differences in background figures, or in the positioning of the saint's hand. Therefore, it must be assumed that the artist allowed both himself and his assistants or pupils some freedom to change compositions slightly when copying them. This suggests that *pentimenti* are not necessarily indicative of originality, as some creative freedom was allowed when recreating compositions in copies. It is known, in fact, that one of Reni's patrons, Cardinal Gessi, in requesting a copy of the famous *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion*, explicitly stated that he did not expect the artist to repeat the original composition exactly, as this would be tiresome and stifling to his creativity. The copy that Reni produced, now at Alnwick Castle (fig. 2.82), does indeed deviate from the original composition – according to Bellori it is "by Guido's own hand", and appears as "the

[391] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian*' 214. The only comparative X-ray image which has been available for examination by the writer is that of the Dulwich *Saint Sebastian.*

same invention, but without the Magdalene".[392] Reni has also altered the background of the work and changed the positions of the hands of the Virgin and Saint John.

The *pentimenti* identified imply that, despite being known to prepare for works through careful drawings and studies, Reni still altered compositions while working, and was very critical of his compositions as he painted. As previously stated, they may not necessarily be indicative of "originality" in a composition, as often is suggested. Another argument against *pentimenti* and their relevance to "originality" lies in the manner in which Reni taught his students. Reni is said to have retouched and altered his pupils' works so as to teach them, sometimes quite extensively, which would create a painting which on the surface may appear to be by Reni, with his characteristic brushstrokes, and with a series of *pentimenti* formed through Reni's corrections, but may have been in the first instance simply a student exercise. Bellori outlines Reni's practice of retouching works in this way, informing the reader that "[Reni] did not refrain from teaching by retouching with his hand in order to demonstrate his teaching in practice, from which it transpired that when he let himself be carried away in retouching their pictures, the young men managed to make large profits out of this by passing off the retouched copies as originals."[393] Reni's methods in teaching students will be discussed further in the next chapter, and the subject of copies attribution in chapter four.

The usual imaging methods of examining revisions to a composition are not always appropriate for paintings on copper and sometimes require adaptation. Examination of paint changes using X-radiography, for example, tends not to be successful since the copper support absorbs the radiation and dominates the image produced.[394] Electron emission radiography allows the thin paint films to be seen without the interference of the copper plate.[395] The nature of painting technique on copper, however, with usually fine brushwork and thin layers of paint, often allows *pentimenti* to be evidenced by the eye on the surface of the work, without further analysis necessary. No such textural changes of the paint layer that might imply compositional changes have been

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[392] Bellori, *Lives,* trans by Wohl, 361: "In Roma, nella cappella del cardinal Gessi alla Vittoria vedesi l'istessa invenzione in un quadretto piccolo di mano di Guido ... senza però la Madalena..."
[393] Ibid., 366: "...non s'asteneva d'insegnare con la mano ritoccando per dimostrare in pratica gl'insegnamenti, dal che nacque che lasciandosi poi trasportare nel ritoccare i quadri, i giovani venivano a cavarne molto profitto, facendo passar le copi ritoccate per originali..."
[394] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 75.
[395] Ibid., 75-76.

witnessed by the writer in the copper plates that have been examined – Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the National Gallery, and a painting after Reni, *The Virgin and Child with the Protector Saints of the City of Bologna (Saints Ignatius of Loyola, Petronius, Procolus, Francis of Assisi, Francis Xavier, Dominic and Florianus)* in the National Gallery of Ireland, which implies careful planning in the production of these works.[396] This does not, of course, preclude the possibility of *pentimenti* in other works on copper. However, often works on copper are scaled-down versions of larger paintings, for example, the painting in the National Gallery of Ireland (fig. 2.99), which is a smaller version of Reni's *Pala della Peste* in Bologna (fig. 2.3). *Pentimenti* in works that replicate an earlier composition tend to be less common than those in original compositions, as they copy directly from a prearranged design.

2.6. Palette and pigments

This section will attempt to identify the range of colours that are routinely used by Reni in his work, and the specific pigments with which they were created. An artist's palette, or selection of colours, is often distinctive to their artistic style. In terms of materials, the contents of Reni's palette does not change notably over the course of his career. Correspondence with Helen Howard of the National Gallery informed the writer that the Reni paintings in its collection contain more or less the same pigments throughout, and that Reni's palette is consistent with a typical seventeenth-century palette. It is also consistent with the palettes of his contemporary Northern Italian painters. Larry Keith writes that "whereas study of technique in the Renaissance, broadly speaking, shows that the more complex and transitional painting materials and techniques are often more locally characterisable, in Spanish and Italian seventeenth-century painting, where a relatively simple range of materials is found, technical distinctions are generally based on handling".[397] This is certainly the case with Reni's work.

The painting materials generally available for use in the seventeenth century are identified by Jo Kirby as including the natural mineral blue pigments, ultramarine and azurite; the yellow, red and brown earth pigments; the manufactured pigments, such

[396] Despite its title, Florianus does not actually appear in this version of the picture, though the saint is present in the original Pala della Peste.
[397] Larry Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', 50.

as vermilion (also seen to occur naturally), lead white, red lead, lead-tin yellow, smalt and verdigris; the red and yellow lake pigments; the insoluble blue plant dyestuff, indigo; and, finally, a number of different blacks. Kirby also notes "a greatly increased use of artificially prepared blue and green copper pigments."[398] In a study of the Italian notebooks of Richard Symonds, Beal notes that Symonds refers to twenty-seven different pigments, all of which had been in use since the Middle Ages.[399] While the contents of Reni's palette are largely standard and remain consistent throughout his career, the manner in which he uses his palette changes in different works. Examination of the colours in Reni's paintings displays the range of effects that the artist was able to produce from what was supposedly a limited range of pigments. His earth pigments would appear to be Italian in origin - very good quality earth pigments were produced in Italy.[400] His cochineal pigments and ultramarines would have been imported.[401] The materials used in the seventeenth century were not particularly innovative; it was a change in technique that brought about a new visual quality; in agreement with Keith's aforementioned comments, Kirby notes that "the differences observed between the mid-to-late sixteenth century painter and one working fifty or sixty years later lie more in the way the materials are used, not in the materials themselves."[402]

An artist's flesh tones are often characteristic of his style. Reni's flesh tones vary quite drastically within his oeuvre, and, interestingly, sometimes even within individual works – particularly those from the 1610s and 1620s. In Bologna's *Christ adored by the Madonna and Saints Petronius, Francis, Dominic, Procolo and Carlo Borromeo*, more famously known as the *Pietà dei Mendicanti*, of 1616 (fig. 1.3), the colour of his figures' skin is very varied, from the dull grey of the body of Christ to the flushed pink tone of the face of Saint Proculus. Similar variation of palette is seen in the flesh tones of Reni's *Massacre of the Innocents* of 1611 (fig. 1.2), also in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. The skin tones in this painting also differ from figure to figure. Diversity in flesh colours is also seen in the National Gallery's *St. Jerome* (fig. 2.100), painted c. 1624-25, where the flesh tint of face of the saint is notably warmer and

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[398] Jo Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade in the Seventeenth Century: Theory and Practice', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 20 (1999), 30.
[399] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 90.
[400] Personal correspondence with Helen Howard of the Scientific Department of the National Gallery, London, April 2014.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 30.

redder than body, and in *Susannah and the Elders,* 1620-25 (fig. 2.101), where the flesh tints of the male figures are a very deep earthy orange (almost matching their robes), contrasting greatly with the creamy, almost greenish-white of Susannah's body.

In a condition report on Reni's *Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl* (fig. 2.102) painted between 1638 and 1639 (Birmingham Museums Trust), it is noted that "green paint [has been] applied over warmer tones within the sitter's face and neck area (surprisingly)."[403] Malvasia writes in support of this unusual practice of applying cooler colours over flesh tones (though he notes the use of greys and blues as opposed to green), as has been noted in his comments that Reni used these cool coolers "mixed with half-tones and blended into the flesh tones", producing delicate skin tones, "which take on a certain diaphanous quality."[404] Paint sample analysis of the flesh paint on the torso of Dulwich's *Saint Sebastian* showed the use of green earth as a cool under layer – in keeping with the observation made previously on Reni's *Portrait of a Woman, Perhaps Artemisia* – of what appeared to be a green tint mixed into the flesh tones. In Reni's *Susannah and the Elders*, Susannah's flesh is painted using lead white, green earth and black pigments, again, producing the cool, green tones that were previously noted. In contrast, the flesh of the men are painted using earth pigments and lead white, giving their faces a much warmer, ruddy tone, contrasting with the purity of Susannah's skin.[405] This combination of pigments provides the variation in flesh tones that are seen in these works.

Malvasia's explanation of this practice of adding cool colours to his flesh tones so as to give them a "diaphanous" quality is a plausible one.[406] While the writer has not had the opportunity to view Reni's *Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl* or the Dulwich *St. Sebastian*, the National Gallery's *Susannah and the Elders* has been examined in person. This painting is especially useful in that it

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[403] H. Lank, Alec Cobbe, Haydn Roberts and Claire Daly, Conservation History and Treatment Report for Guido Reni, "Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl", Conservation Department, Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, Acc. no.: 1961P30 (1961-2003).

[404] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 136: "...con certi lividetti, e azzurrini mescolati fra le mezze tinte, e fra le carnagioni ... quali si osservano nelle carni delicate, che rendono un certo diafano..."

[405] Personal correspondence with Helen Howard of the Scientific Department of the National Gallery, London, April 2014.

[406] Malvasia here uses the word *diafano,* which means diaphanous, or transparent.

has contrasting flesh tones; the figure of Susannah includes cool pigments while those of the elders do not. It is not immediately evident in viewing the work that Reni has used green or black pigments in Susannah's flesh. Her skin colour, however, has a radiant quality to it, that could indeed be described as "diaphanous"; a luminous paleness that is associated with skin which is semi-transparent, through which the blue veins of a persons hands and wrists would be visible. The radiance and clearness of Susannah's skin gives her a purity which contrasts with the ruddy faces of the men who surround her. This may be a rhetorical device used by Reni, the bright paleness of Susannah alluding to the character's purity and innocence, contrasting with the lustful, lecherous men surrounding her, emphasising the erotic nature of the scene. Other artists, including Vincent Sellaer, Cornelis van Cleve and Luis de Morales, employed glazes to create translucent flesh tones to give female figures in their paintings an "alabaster" appearance, which had both erotic and upper class connotations.[407]

The practice of adding blue or green tones to flesh colours seems to have been engaged in by Reni's contemporaries also. Richard Symonds notebooks record that Canini included various grades of ultramarine in his flesh, and, when painting Robert Spense, he remarked that ultramarine was "good in a face".[408]According to Beal, Italian Jesuit Padre Lana recommended adding ultramarine to the flesh tint to give it "un cert'aria, e lume celeste, che la rende suave e dolce", that is "a certain air, and heavenly light, making it gentle and sweet" – not dissimilar to Malvasia's explanation of the effects of this technique in making Reni's works more *delicata*.[409] Rubens also made occasional use of black pigments and azurite in the shadows of his flesh tints.[410]

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, Reni's palette was bright and intense. The *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 1.2) of 1611 utilises opaque, highly pigmented primary colours – the blue of the sky contrasting with the deep red and bright yellow of the foreground figures' drapery. Similar colouring is seen into the 1620s, in Reni's

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[407] Nico Van Hout, 'Reconsidering Rubens's flesh colour', *Boletín Del Museo Del Prado/ Ministerio De Cultura* (2001), 9.
[408] MS Egerton 1636 f141, cited by Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 96.
[409] Francesco Lana, *Prodromo, overo saggio di alcune inventioni nuove premesso all'Arte Maestra, opera che prepara ... F.L. per mostrare li piu reconditi principij della naturale philosofia...* (Brescia: 1670), 152, cited by Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 97.
[410] Ashok Roy, 'Rubens's "*Peace and War*"', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 20 (1999), 94.

Lucretia (fig. 2.103), again with bright, bold primary colours dominating, especially in the drapery. The artist's palette begins to lighten considerably in the 1630s, when compared to these earlier works, and he makes use of a palette consisting of lighter, cool, pastel colours, as seen in *The Rape of Europa* of 1637-39 (fig. 2.104). In Reni's later works, such as the *Adoration of the Shepherds* painted around 1640 (fig. 2.105), there has been no identifiable change in the pigments and binders that Reni is using. The artist's painting materials remain unchanged from those used in his earlier works, but his palette develops to use these materials in different ways, employing increased amounts of lead white, and painting in a heightened key. Reni's late palette continues to evolve, becoming cooler, more restricted and, at times, dark, when compared to that utilised in his early works. In his *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* of 1640-42, Reni uses a limited palette of cool tones. Use of colour in within the group of people in the background of the painting is restricted to the outlines of the drapery, with the pinks, greens and pale blues of his late palette.

As noted in chapter one, both Scannelli and Malvasia attribute the lightening of Guido's palette to his desire for longevity in his colours. Scannelli recorded Reni's concern for colours becoming dark over time, and said that the artist lightened his palette to compensate for the darkening he saw as an eventuality.[411] Malvasia wrote that Reni used large quantities of lead white in his works in order to prevent them from aging badly, in the belief that the white lead would "retain the harmony of balance that he had originally intended", citing Reni's use of lead white as reason for his paintings aging well.[412] Malvasia says that "certainly we observe more clearly every day the truth of his prediction", decidedly stating that Reni's colours do not darken to their detriment, but acquire a *patina* that makes them appear "true and natural" with age.[413] The extensive use of lead white has already been noted from the examination of X-rays of Reni's work when discussing his compositions. The bright white areas that are visible in these X-rays are likely indicative of the use of lead white. Lead white (also known as *biacca, ceruse,* and *biacca di venetia*) is a pigment that has been used

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[411] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 114, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 294: "L'havere osservato lo stesso Guido Reni ... ancorche fossero poco avanti dipinte, ritrovarsi non poco oscurate, e guaste, e però havea in tanto pensato di supplire a simili accidenti coll'estremo del chiaro alla successiva mancanza a fine, che il tempo co la maggior durata riducesse l'opera alla convenevole mediocrita."

[412] Schaefer, '*Io Guido Reni Bologna*', 5.

[413] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 137: "Al contrario de'buoni Maestri passati s'è arrischiato opar smoderatamente la biacca."

since antiquity, and can be classed among the oldest manufactured pigments.[414] This pigment has been credited with such qualities as "excellent covering power, durability and lightfastedness" and a capacity for rapid drying.[415] When this pigment is used in oil, it produces a durable and resistant paint film when dry, which tended not to crack and maintained its opacity well because of its high refractive index.[416]

While some of Reni's pigments have inevitably suffered darkening over time, for the most part, his paintings have indeed retained their colour, and his paintings are generally cited as being in excellent condition by conservators who examine them. Indeed, lead white as a material is said to maintain a fresh appearance, and resists moisture damage, therefore creating a durable paint surface. This pigment has a very low absorption value when compared to darker pigments – that is, when preparing the pigment for painting it does not require as much binding medium as would darker pigments. The darkening of artworks is often associated with the darkening of oils rather than of the pigments themselves, and therefore pigments with high absorption values which require a lot of oil binder will be obscured more quickly than pigments with low absorption values, like lead white.[417] Reni's *Rape of Europa,* in the National Gallery of Art, Canada (fig. 2.106), is described as a work which makes "conspicuous" use of lead white, and absence of darker pigments (and, therefore, less oil) has successfully preserved its balance of tone.[418] Such insight on Reni's part implies a good understanding of painting materials.

Lead white, did, however, have disadvantages. It is responsible, in some cases, for speeding up the rate at which light-sensitive colours, such as yellow and red lakes, might fade.[419] In a study of the fading of red and yellow lake pigments, Kirby and Saunders observed a higher proportion of lead white added to a lake pigment led to a greater fading in colour.[420] Reni's *Rape of Europa* in the National Gallery is known to incorporate a significant amount of lead white, and red lake (cochineal lake) has been

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[414] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 123.
[415] Daniel Fabian and Giuseppino Fortunato, 'Tracing White: A Study of Lead White Pigments found in Seventeenth-Century Paintings using High Precision Lead Isotope Abundance Ratios', in *Trade in Artists' Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700,* edited by Jo Kirby, Susie Nash and Joanna Cannon (London: Archetype Publications, 2010), 426.
[416] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 124.
[417] Taylor, *Condition,* 178.
[418] Ibid., 178-179.
[419] Eikema Hommes, *Changing Pictures,* 25.
[420] Jo Kirby and David Saunders, 'Light-induced Colour Changes in Red and Yellow Lake Pigments', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin,* vol. 15 (1994), 90.

identified in the shadows of the pink robe.[421] Red lake, regardless of the use of lead white, is prone to fading to pink, but was also often deliberately combined with white to make pink, and therefore it is difficult to tell if it was meant to be pink from the outset, or may have originally been a more vibrant red.[422] This potential to cause fading may be the reason for Scannelli's position that painters should not use lead white as a preventative measure, but should concern themselves with the present rather than "the uncertainties of future effects".[423]

While Reni remains relatively consistent in his choice of pigments throughout his career, and uses materials in keeping with those of his seventeenth-century contemporaries, it is important to note the diverse visual effects he produces by varying the quantities of certain materials at different times and the method in which he uses them. Reni's priority in his choice of palette seems to have been the longevity of his works; he was concerned about retaining a freshness of colour, and this desire for longevity seems to have, in part, encouraged the development of his late style or *ultima maniera*. Reni's "limited" late palette culminates in works like his *Flagellation of Christ* (fig. 2.47) of c. 1640, in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. Reni's palette is sombre and dark in this work. The palette is dominated by pale browns and greys, reinforcing Christ's pallor. The restricted colours produce a hazy quality within the work; every aspect of the composition seems to be shrouded in a light brown atmosphere, making the painting look like a sepia photograph. Similarly limited tonality is seen in Bologna's *Saint Sebastian* (fig. 2.45), also dated to c. 1640, which is dominated by pale blues and greys, with the saint's flesh looking comparably pale to Christ's in the *Flagellation*. Pepper wrote that the effect of this limited range of colour was "to heighten the viewer's sensitivity to even slight changes of colour and light", that is to say, the viewer is not distracted by the bright colours found in Reni's earlier palette, and instead carefully follows the gentle graduation of shadows and highlights.[424] Of the use of colour (or lack thereof) in this work, Pedrielli says that "in Reni's painting the physical presence of the four men seems to be almost moderated by the free brushwork, and the figure of Christ in the centre of the composition is marked by a lighter, almost transparent chromatic tonality that emphasizes its intense

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[421] Taylor, *Condition*, 134.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 114, cited by Eikema Hommes, *Changing Pictures,* 25: "...gl'incerti effetti del futuro."
[424] Stephen Pepper, 'A New Late Work by Guido Reni for Edinburgh and His Late Manner Re-Evaluated', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 121, no. 916 (1979), 421.

spirituality."[425] By this, the writer might again be suggesting that the limited colour palette is suitable to the painting's subject matter; it encourages the viewer to focus on the religious theme of the picture, and allows them to engage with the emotional intensity of the subject.

Reni's blues seem to vary quite considerably from painting to painting. The blue palette in some works is bright and bold – for example, the blue of the Virgin's robes in the National Gallery's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, versus the duller blue robes of Christ in *Christ Embracing Saint John the Baptist*. The difference in these colours may not have been as readily noticeable when they were first applied; Reni is using different pigments for his blues, and they have aged differently over time. The blue of the robes in the *Adoration of the Shepherds* is ultramarine, while that in *Christ Embracing Saint John* is a mixture of ultramarine and smalt. While the ultramarine has retained a fresh, bright appearance, smalt is a pigment known for becoming dull and over time, leading to the difference in appearance when viewing these works today. The cost of the pigment ultramarine varied according to quality – in the *Adoration of the Shepherds,* the Virgin's robe is an expensive ultramarine while the sky is painted in a cheaper variety of the pigment – which accounts for the brightness of her robe, contrasting with the duller blue of the sky. The Virgin's robes in the *Immaculate Conception* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art are similarly painted using ultramarine.[426] The use of more expensive ultramarine pigment for the robes of the Virgin appears not only to be related to Reni's known devotion to her, but was also a convention in painting. A contract made in 1408 for the Florentine Gherardo Starnia to paint a (now lost) fresco cycle depicting the *Life of the Virgin* in San Stefano at Empoli, specifies the use of ultramarine of a higher quality (two florins per ounce) for Mary, while the rest of the picture may be painted in a cheaper variety of the pigment (costing one florin per ounce).[427] The instructions contained in this contract illustrate a theological distinction between the Virgin and other subjects, and a material expression of value of which Reni was apparently aware. Baxandall describes the "three levels of adoration", *dulia, hyperdulia,* and *latria,* with *hyperdulia* representing the penultimate level of worship, reserved for the Virgin alone. The expensive

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[425] Pedrielli, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 314.
[426] Dorothy Mahon, Examination and Treatment Record for Guido Reni, "The Immaculate Conception", Conservation Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 59.32, (1987).
[427] Michael Baxandall, *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11.

ultramarine in Starnina's frescoes represents *hyperdulia,* while *latria* – the ultimate worship due only to the Holy Trinity – is expressed using the only painting material of higher value than ultramarine; gold.[428]

Paint sample analysis of the *Saint Sebastian* in Dulwich Picture Gallery confirmed that the blue pigment used in the sky is azurite, which is ground quite coarsely. Azurite is a cooler, duller blue than ultramarine – it has been suggested that there may be two layers in the sky with some red lake pigment added to the lower layer, presumably to add warmth to the cool azurite. Similarly, analysis of *Saint Jerome* (1624-25, National Gallery, London) shows the blue pigment used to be azurite. A sample from *Susannah and the Elders* (also from the National Gallery) shows that just to the right of the second elder's head is a patch also containing azurite, but in this case it is mixed with a little lead white. Similarly, the small patch of blue in Lot's sleeve (which constitutes the only blue in the painting) in *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom* of c. 1615-16 is azurite.

In the sky of Auckland's *St Sebastian* a transparent blue layer of ultramarine was applied over a more opaque grey-blue layer of ultramarine, lead white, and scattered black and red particles, creating a deep blue, which has retained its colour and contrasts with the dark skies in the Dulwich painting – the result of the aforementioned coarsely ground azurite mixed with only a little lead white over an orange-brown ground.[429] The pigment azurite was supposedly in short supply in the seventeenth century, meaning Reni's use of this and ultramarine constitute two difficult pigments to obtain, in terms of both scarcity and expense.[430] While ultramarine is recorded as the most expensive pigment to purchase, even the least costly types of azurite were often more expensive than the other pigments on an artist's palette.[431] Reni's extensive use of both ultramarine and azurite despite this expense shows a concern for quality in his works – both of these pigments kept their colour better than smalt, which Reni seems to have used less frequently.

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[428] Ibid., 82.
[429] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian'*, 213.
[430] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 30.
[431] Susanne Kubersky-Piredda, 'The Market for Painters' Materials in Renaissance Florence', in *Trade in Artists' Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, edited by Jo Kirby, Susie Nash and Joanna Cannon (London: Archetype Publications, 2010), 225.

The binding media of the pigments that have been noted are also relevant to the study of the artist's materials and can affect the appearance of a painting's colours (especially, as noted in the discussion on lead white, regarding the manner in which binders age). It is not possible at present to create a complete overview of Reni's use of binding media or his reasons for chosing specific materials, due to the lack of scientific or literary data available on this topic, but some interesting observations can be made with reference to specific works. For the most part, Reni's choice of binding medium appears to have been linseed oil, though in some works he also used walnut. The National Gallery's *Adoration of the Shepherds* presents a useful study of Reni's binding media; here, the artist has employed a combination of both linseed and walnut oil as binders. The artist has used walnut oil for most of the paint layers, but linseed oil in the ground layers and specifically in the blue of the sky. Walnut and linseed oil were both common binders and it was not unusual for artists to mix different binding media with specific pigments. However, Reni's choices in binding media for the *Adoration of the Shepherds* seem strange – it is, in fact, the exact opposite of what might be expected. Due to the propensity of linseed oil to yellow, walnut oil was preferred by most artists for use as a binder in blue pigments, which were considered particularly vulnerable to the yellowing of binders. Beal specifically notes that artists in the seventeenth century were aware that a "yellowing oil medium [such as linseed] could obscure the rich colour of ultramarine", and therefore nut or poppy oils were preferred for use with the expensive blue.[432] Kirby similarly determines that walnut oil "yellowed less initially during drying", and therefore "it was traditionally recommended for use with pigments whose colour was particularly affected by yellowing of the medium, such as whites and blues; in practice it is quite often found in light-coloured paint in general, including flesh-colour and pale yellow."[433] Rubens's preferred binding material was also linseed oil, but, again, he occasionally used walnut oil. However, contrary to what is found in the aforementioned work by Reni, Rubens's use of walnut oil was usually confined to whites and blues – in his *Abbé Scaglia adoring the Virgin and Child* linseed oil was used for the Virgin's robe, while walnut oil was used for the sky.[434]

It is difficult to explain Reni's reasoning in his use of linseed with his blue sky in the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (which has been identified as ultramarine). It is possible,

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[432] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 94.
[433] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 32.
[434] Ibid.

however, to note the results of this practice. The robes of the Virgin have also been painted in ultramarine – though a more expensive variety of the pigment than that used in the sky – but in the robes, Reni has used a walnut oil binder. While a more expensive ultramarine would, naturally, be a brighter blue than its cheaper counterpart, the contrast between the blue of the sky and the Virgin's robes are suggestive of different pigments entirely. The robes are a vivid, deep blue (fig. 2.107), while the sky appears as a duller, greenish, sea-blue (fig. 2.108). This difference, for the most part, is more likely to be a result of the effect of the aging of the linseed oil, rather than the original appearance of the pigments themselves.

The topic of Reni's use of varnish is difficult to address in writing on his painting media. This is the case for a number of reasons. It is unusual to encounter a painting from the seventeenth century that has not undergone some form of cleaning, during which old, discoloured varnish is removed, followed by re-varnishing during the course of its lifetime; most varnishes over a century old are normally removed and replaced.[435] This seems to have been the case with all of the Reni paintings for which the restoration history has been made available. Therefore, the varnish now visible on the surface of the paintings is not original, and nothing can be inferred regarding Reni's use of materials through its examination. To identify the composition of the original varnish used by the artist would require a special set of circumstances – one, for there to have been original varnish still present below layers of subsequent newer varnish (traces often remain present unless overcleaning has occurred), and two, for conservators to take samples of and examine this original varnish to determine its ingredients. The results of such analysis have not been available to the writer, if it has in fact been performed.[436] It is possible, however, to make more indirect comments about the use of varnish in seventeenth-century Italy, thanks to the source texts, and an informative article by Helen Glanville.[437] Bellori refers to varnish only in his criticism of Reni's misuse of it, in an ill-fated attempt to rescue a deteriorating fresco at San

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[435] Taylor, *Condition,* 50.

[436] The writer has not encountered any conservation reports detailing such analysis. Personal correspondence with Dr. Helen Howard of the Scientific Department in the National Gallery, London stated that the gallery's organic analyst, David Peggie, has confirmed that no such analyses of original varnishes from paintings by Reni (or others from the Bolognese school) have yet been undertaken there.

[437] Helen Glanville, 'Varnish, Grounds, Viewing Distance and Lighting: Some Notes of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painting Technique', in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials and Studio Practice*, *Symposium of the Getty Conservation Institute at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, 26-29 June 1995,* by Wallert, Arie, Hermens, Erma, and Peek, Marja (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1995): 12-19.

Michele in Bosco, where he applied a varnish over the wall paint; an event which is also recounted by Malvasia.[438] This restoration attempt suggests that Reni believed varnish had the propensity to seal paint and prevent it from flaking, from his knowledge of oil painting on canvas. Malvasia refers to the "protective" quality of varnish in his *Lives of the Carracci*, when, in reference to Annibale's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (fig. 2.109, signed and dated 1593, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) the biographer notes that the artist maintained the paintings "vivid and flesh-like impasto" by retouching it and putting on a "protective layer of varnish".[439] The composition of varnishes historically has varied greatly; there are hundreds of different varnish recipes from the Middle Ages onwards, most of which were intended, as Malvasia suggests, to protect the paint layers from environmental damage, and to give saturation and depth to the colours.[440]

2.7. Supports

The artist's choice of painting support is usually made on the basis of the textural quality desired for the finished painting, the availability of support materials, and the cost of these materials. The choice of support provides information on the overall visual impression that an artist hoped to achieve. Support material can alter the texture of the paint surface considerably; for example, in fabric supports, depending on the type of canvas weave used and how coarse or open it may be, the light will hit the canvas fibres differently. Each type of support served different functions – they provided varying textural effects, some may be more suitable for transport or for specific locations than others, some were more suited to large scale altarpieces or small scale devotional works, and occasionally more expensive supports might be chosen if they were to be presented to important patrons or for the longevity of the material. This section will examine Reni's choice of painting support, and the reason for his choice in certain cases. Reni's choice of support seems to have been given

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[438] Bellori, *Lives*, trans. by Wohl, 350, "...poiché nel ritoccarla gli diede ina vernice che disseccò maggiormente il colore con più danno di prima...", and Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 49, "...una vernice che maggiormente inaridendo il residuo di quel vecchio colore, fu cagione che cartocciandosi e scrostandosi più velocemente..."

[439] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 140: "...quell'impasto così vivo, e di vera carne, con che tanto teneramente la sua contigua colorito avea Annibale, massime che ricoprendola, e ritoccandola è rimasta freschissima..."

[440] Taylor, *Condition,* 46.

great consideration in some instances, especially in those where he uses alternatives to linen.

Reni's primary choice in support was fabric, namely linen canvas, though he also uses hemp, copper, silk and wood as supports during his career. Canvas was a natural choice as a support for the most part in the seventeenth century – it proved cost effective, accessible, easy to prepare and transport, and could cater for large-scale compositions. Canvas as a support for paintings in oil was introduced in Italy by the end of the fifteenth century.[441] Initially, this change from panel to canvas was simply a response to an increase of large-scale altarpiece commissions.[442] Canvas was cheaper than wood and available in large dimensions – or could be pieced together with relative ease to form a larger support. Vasari notes as an advantage of canvas that it is "of little weight and, when rolled up, easy to transport" – these reasons are likely to have contributed to Reni's choice of canvas as his most regularly used support.[443] When Reni deviates from linen canvas as a support, it seems he had special reasoning behind his choice of an alternative. Flax, from which linen is manufactured, is thought to be the first plant fibre to be used by man for making textiles in the Western hemisphere.[444] The manufacture of linen from Lombardy for export is thought to have begun in the twelfth century. This is quite possibly where Reni sourced his canvas from, though by the fourteenth century, production trade in linen was well established in a variety of towns across Europe. [445] While the choice of canvas as a support may have been both a conventional and an economical one for Reni, the use of canvas "suggested aesthetic possibilities that were gradually integrated into painterly styles."[446] Canvas, as a support, receives paint unevenly (when compared to the polished, uniform surface of a wood panel or copper plate) and therefore leaves an imprint of its weave even through various layers of priming and paint. Light striking a woven surface does not reflect back evenly as it would off a smooth wood panel but is fractured by the rough surface, thereby rendering the light

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[441] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 91.
[442] Sohm, *Marco Boschini,* 4-5.
[443] Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique*, trans. by Louisa S. Maclehose (New York: Dover Publications Ltd., 1960), 236.
[444] James Gordon Cook, *Handbook of Textile Fibres*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (Watford, Hertfordshire: Merrow Publishing Co., 1968), 4.
[445] Christina Young, 'History of Fabric Supports', in *The Conservation of Easel Paintings,* edited by Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Rushfield (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012), 122.
[446] Sohm, *Marco Boschini,* 5.

diffuse and soft.[447] Reni makes frequent use of coarse canvas weaves, the fibres of which are often visible on the paint surface and disperse the light as it hits them – adding to the *grazia* of Reni's paintings by softening hard contours in his compositions.

Large canvases demanded appropriate working methods; that is, thinner paint layers than panels or smaller canvas counterparts. A thick paint layer, which might obscure canvas weave and provide the painting with a polished surface, would be prone to cracking on a large canvas. This is because large pieces of canvas experienced more movement and could not provide the necessary rigidity. Therefore, as Sohm points out, "at least for large scale compositions, the presence of weave embedded in the image should be recognised more as a necessary precondition of large canvas paintings than a calculated artistic effect."[448] While most of Reni's small scale works (that is, with dimensions of less than fifty centimetres per side) are on copper, this observation is certainly true of some of Reni's works on canvas. For example, while the canvas weave has been obscured on the surface of Reni's *Bacchus and Ariadne* of c. 1619-1620 (figs. 2.110 and 2.111), this has been facilitated by the painting's relatively small size. With dimensions of 96.5 x 86.4 centimetres, this canvas is one of the smaller multi-figure compositions produced by Reni. Its size enabled the artist to apply enough material to the canvas surface to obscure the weave, without rendering the surface layer unstable. The smaller the work, the less the canvas will move or suffer shrinkage or bulging. As a result, this painting has not cracked and remains in stable condition, despite its thick surface layer. Reni's *Victorious Samson* (fig. 2.22) has comparably large dimensions, of 260 x 233 centimetres. The paint layer of this work is noticeably thinner than that of *Bacchus and Ariadne,* and the canvas weave is clearly visible on the surface (fig. 2.112). While leaving the canvas weave visible so as to encourage the diffusion of light may be a deliberate effect on the artist's part, it should certainly be pointed out that applying thick ground or paint layers to a painting of this size would be unwise and would have almost certainly have led to cracking.

Reni's choice of weave varies somewhat from painting to painting. There are some problems inherent with analysing canvas weave – the majority of old paintings have been lined, rendering it impossible to see the canvas from the *verso*. However, the weave of the canvas is at times readily observable on the paint surface (as in

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[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.

Victorious Samson and many other works by Reni, especially large scale works), and in X-radiographs. However, as previously noted, this legibility through X-ray is entirely reliant on the presence of radioabsorbent painting materials – the organic fibres of the canvas do not absorb X-rays. To see canvas weave on X-ray images, the viewer is dependent on an imprint being left on a radioabsorbent ground that provides an image of the canvas structure.[449] Since Reni was known to use a great deal of lead white, which is radio-absorbent, several X-rays reveal his canvas weave. Condition reports which identify Reni's canvas weave structure show an inclination toward coarse canvas. The Dulwich Picture Gallery's *Saint Sebastian* (fig. 2.17) is reportedly painted on a "broad weave tabby linen canvas".[450] X-ray images of this painting illuminate the underlying canvas fibres quite clearly, implying the use of a radioabsorbent material in the priming layers of this work, presumably lead white, which has come in contact with the canvas (fig. 2.113). The X-ray image agrees with the description of the canvas in the condition report; the linen is plain weave, and quite broad, with interstices visible as dark areas between the threads on the X-ray, where no radioabsorbent material has been absorbed between the canvas fibres. The X-ray also suggests that the canvas is one piece of linen, with no joining seams present.

The condition report for *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (fig. 2.33) of 1640-42 describes the support as a "very coarse and open weave canvas, rather like a sack-cloth".[451] The Art Institute of Chicago's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (fig. 2.84) is described as having been painted on a closed weave linen canvas, "heavy, and of variable thickness"; demonstrating that while Reni often opted for open weave canvases, this was not always the case. The X-ray for Auckland Art Gallery's *Saint Sebastian* (fig. 2.71) also exposes the canvas weave, though it illuminates it more clearly in certain areas than others, for example in the saint's body, but less so in the background, implying that Reni used a significant amount of radioabsorbent material (probably lead white) in the central figure and little elsewhere. The weave here is not plain weave as seen in the Dulwich *Saint Sebastian*, but twill weave, and it is closed, that is, there are no interstices visible between the fabric's fibres. Despite the canvas in the Dulwich work being apparently coarser than that of the Auckland, the diagonal pattern of the twill weave canvas of the Auckland work is considerably more visible on

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[449] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 93.
[450] Tabby weave is the most basic kind of canvas weave, also known as plain weave, where the warp and weft threads are laid over one another to form a criss-cross pattern.
[451] The term "open weave" implies that interstices are visible between threads in the fabric.

the paint surface than that of the plain weave of the Dulwich. This is evident particularly around the left thigh of the saint, where in the Auckland painting the canvas weave is rather exposed, while in the Dulwich picture the weave has been saturated with paint on the surface layer and rendered less visible (figs. 2.18 and 2.19).

The support of the National Gallery's *Toilet of Venus* (fig. 2.114, attributed to "Reni and Studio") is a hemp canvas, as opposed to a more common linen one.[452] Hemp produced a canvas of coarse texture, and may have been exported to Italy from France.[453] Hemp and linen produce a similar visual effect as supports, and when woven into canvas are very difficult to distinguish from one another without scientific analysis. The use of hemp here as a support material is somewhat surprising in light of the painting's attribution to "Reni and Studio". Given that hemp was an uncommon material that may have required importation, it was potentially more difficult and more expensive to acquire than readily available linen canvas. It may be considered unusual that a less common material would be given over to Reni's studio for their use, rather than solely for the use of the master himself. However, the use of hemp canvas is observed elsewhere in the seventeenth century, suggesting it was not altogether rare; Caravaggio's *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 2.115), for example, painted around 1602-3 (now in the Capitoline Museum, Rome) is painted on a coarse canvas, which, based on its appearance and thread count, is possibly made of hemp rather than linen. Jo Kirby writes that "hemp was certainly cultivated in parts of Italy at that time and it has been suggested that Caravaggio used heavy hemp canvases quite frequently."[454]

Reni made use of silk as an alternative fabric support for a select number of his paintings. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Lucca, one of the closest cities to the south of Bologna, was the key silk weaving location in Western Europe. The raw silk was imported from Asia Minor although some was produced locally in Tuscany. These fabrics were exported all over Europe and, by the fifteenth century, Italian silks had become substitutes for those from the Middle East and China. Silk workers from Lucca emigrated in 1314 and settled in various northern Italian towns,

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[452] Condition Report of 6th October 1954, A. Lucas and W. Percival-Prescott, National Gallery, London.
[453] Young, 'Fabric Supports', 123.
[454] Prisco Bagni, *Guercino a Cento: le decorazioni di Casa Pannini* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1984), 117, cited by Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 25.

thereby encouraging the silk industry in their new hometowns.[455] Bologna itself became a leading silk producer starting in the fifteenth century thanks to technological and process innovations that brought it to prominence on international markets. By the second half of the fifteenth century, both Venice and Florence were also key silk producing cities.[456]

Malvasia suggests that "Reni was perhaps the first to paint on silk."[457] However, as noted in chapter one, the declaration that Reni introduced the technique of painting on silk is inaccurate, and likely part of a literary convention. The use of silk as a painting support was not exclusive to Reni. Other contemporary artists, including Guercino, made occasional use of the medium, though Reni exploited it more frequently and at a larger scale. Bellori's aforementioned anecdote regarding Reni's discovery of silk as a painting support, in which the biographer initially describes the fabric as "ormuzine", and said Reni had some "large canvases woven of reinforced silk, for he considered them more durable", and Malvasia's similar account that it was Reni's belief that "silk was more durable than canvas."[458] These anecdotes, as recounted by both biographers, in which Guido encountered silk in perfect preservation in a tomb and then deigned to experiment with it as a painting support suggests that Reni aspired to create works that were durable, and that would outlive the artist himself. Bellori's statement that Reni "had some large canvases woven of reinforced silk" advises his readers that Reni was having silk supports custom-woven for his paintings, a practice that does not seem to have been employed with regard to his linen supports, signifying the special status of this material. Malvasia also makes reference to the fact that Reni's silk supports were custom made; that Reni "had certain lengths of silk made expressly for him, which were then stretched and backed and cut to the necessary width."[459]

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[455] Shauna Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis: Bologna During the Black Death* (Leidon; Boston: Brill, 2009), 77.
[456] Condition Report of 6th October 1954, A. Lucas and W. Percival-Prescott, National Gallery, London.
[457] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "...essendo egli forse stato il primo, che sopra vi pingesse..."
[458] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl 368: "Volle Guido fare esperienza di colorire sopra ormesino, avendo fatto tessere tele grandi di seta rinforzata, stimandoli piú durabili...", and Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 42: "...crederli più durabili delle tele..."
[459] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "...certi terzonelli di seta forzati e pieni, fatti da esso fabbricare apposta, e della necessaria larghezza..."

The *ormesino* or "ormuzine" mentioned by Bellori is a fabric sourced from Ormuz, near the entrance of the Persian Gulf, which was a famous mart of the Portuguese in the 16th century. It was probably the same originally as Armozeen (also known as 'armazine' or 'armoisin'), which is a heavy plain silk, usually black and used for clerical gowns and for mourning scarves and bands.[460] This fabric is also specified by Malvasia, who writes that in Reni's studio "there was also an infinite number of canvases that were only primed, and of *ormesini*".[461] It is more likely that Reni sourced his silks from Italy than Portugal, given that his own home town housed a thriving silk industry, and that Bellori is using the word "ormuzine" as a generic term applied to the heavy silk in which the body of Tartagna was shrouded. In his instructions for painting on silk, Cennini does not mention "Ormuz" silk or *ormesino* as Bellori and Malvasia specify in relation to Reni's work, but rather describes methods for painting on *zendado*, which translates as "sendal", which is a sheer, rich silk – possibly very different as a support to *ormesino*.[462] Examination of the *Pala della Peste* suggests that the support was very tightly woven and certainly not sheer or thin like sendal, though the specific type of silk used has yet to be identified.

Silk was an extremely expensive material, implying that the decision to use it must have been very deliberate and important enough to spend a large amount of money on. It is not clear whether the use of silk was a personal choice on Reni's part, or a stipulation made by the patrons of the work. Often, documentary evidence (in the form of contracts) will include information on those materials paid for by the patron, implying that certain materials were used by request of the person commissioning the work, rather than at the discretion of the artist. Given its expense, such a list might well include silk, but no such details are available with regards to the *Pala della Peste* commission. On the topic of the high price of silk, Morselli cites Malvasia, noting that the silk alone for Reni's *Fable of Latona* for the King of Spain, left unfinished at the artist's death, cost 40 *scudi*.[463] To contextualise this, the total cost for all of the materials that would have been used in the production of an average easel painting – stretchers, canvas, and pigments (with the exception of expensive ultramarine) – was

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[460] Doreen Yarwood, *The Encyclopedia of World Costume* (New York: Scribner, 1978), 372.
[461] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 42: "...una infinità di tele imprimite solo, e d'ormesini..."
[462] Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook,* 106-107.
[463] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 42, cited by Raffaella Morselli, 'Bologna', in *Painting for Profit: The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painters*, edited by Richard E Spear and Philip Sohm (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 146: "Rimase insomma un immenso telone, che costò quaranta scudi, in cui andava rappresentato la favola di Latona pe'l Re di Spagna..."

estimated by Spear as no more than 5 to 10 *scudi* per picture, depending on its size, so to pay 40 *scudi* for silk canvas alone was considerable.[464] Schaefer agrees with the theory that Reni's choice of silk support was linked to his desire for longevity in his works, stating that the artist experimented with supports and paints in an effort to discover a combination of materials which would best preserve the painting and ensure its longevity, and says that Bellori's account of the preserved silk shroud in a marble tomb provided Reni with "incontrovertible evidence that silk withstood the ravages of time better than linen."[465] The expense of silk as a material was evidently of little consequence to Reni, who apparently deemed the cost worthwhile if it meant a long life for his paintings.

Reni's famous *Pala della Peste,* painted in 1630, now on display in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, is, as noted, painted on silk (fig. 2.3). This work's original function was as a votive processional banner – Malvasia tells the reader that Reni in fact got his inspiration to paint on silk "from processional banners", believing it to be more durable than canvas for such purposes, which provides one explanation for Reni's reasoning in choosing a silk support for this special commission.[466] Some other reasons have been suggested to explain the choice of silk as a support for the *Pala della Peste*; for example, it would have been light for transport. This painting served as a banner in an annual civic procession celebrating the end of the 1630 plague. Every year it was carried in a procession from the Palazzo Pubblico to the church of San Domenico. It is difficult to determine how the banner might have been carried. It seems unlikely (given its excellent condition today) that it flew freely in the air attached to a singular pole, as did some processional standards, as this would have been a damaging practice. Instead, it might have been carried mounted on a stretcher and in a frame, hoisted on the shoulders of the walking procession, like Cimabue's *Madonna* depicted being carried in a fictional procession on the streets of Florence in Lord Leighton's painting of 1853-5 (fig. 2.116). Lightweight silk would have been ideal for carrying in procession – Cennini specifically recommends it for "banners and ensigns".[467] A linen canvas of similar dimensions (382 x 242 centimetres) would have

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[464] Richard E. Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi: Notes on Painters' Earnings in Early Baroque Rome', *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 85, no. 2 (2003), 314.

[465] Schaefer, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 14-15: "Reni's interest in his own profession was also manifested directly in the manner in which he painted and the means by which he prepared his canvases. He seems to have been determined that art, his art, should last far longer than the mortal who created it."

[466] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 104: "...di certe palliole da processione..."

[467] Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook,* 106-107.

been considerably heavier; probably too heavy to comfortably parade with. More so, however, the silk's durability made it ideal for this purpose. Silk had a history of use for nautical banners because it was a material that was considered to be resistant to moisture, and the historical resilience of the material might have been known to Reni from such usage. Silk is a very strong fibre, and its tensile strength when wet is as much as eighty-five per cent of that when dry.[468] While excessive moisture might not have been an issue for the Bolognese artist, fabric supports can be susceptible to damage from even small changes in humidity, and silk experiences less of this kind of environmental harm. The wear and tear caused by the use of votive banners, often aggravated by the fragility of their supports, reduce their survival rate; Pietro da Cortona's processional banner commissioned by the city of Rome as a votive offering following the 1630 plague is known only through a contemporary description – it has not survived into the modern day.[469] The *Pala della Peste*, on the other hand, survives in surprisingly good condition today. Not only has it suffered prolonged use but has also reportedly been the victim of various accidents – Malvasia recounts that, in one of the brawls frequent among the pupils in Reni's workshop, it was ripped by Cavazza, but it is still in excellent condition.[470] This is clear affirmation that Reni's hopes for this support to be incorruptible and give a long life to his paintings were well placed.

Silk as a support also provides a distinctive surface effect on the final paint layer. The surface of the *Pala della Peste*, like that of the *St. Michael* in the Church of Santa Maria della Concezione, Rome (fig. 2.117) and the *Assumption* (fig. 2.118), painted in 1642 for the high altar of the Church of the Brotherhood of Santa Maria degli Angioli in Modena, has a particularly delicate appearance because of the silk support. The tight, smooth weave of silk is the antithesis of the kind of coarse, open weaves evident in some of Reni's other paintings on canvas, which create rough textures by interacting with the brushstrokes and light.[471] The choice of silk as a support may also have been a symbolic gesture on the part of the artist. This banner was a representation of the resilience of the Bolognese people in overcoming the plague, and, as Morselli writes,

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[468] Cook, *Handbook of Textile Fibres,* I, 159.

[469] Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano* (Rome: Tumminelli, 1958), 128-29, cited by Catherine R. Puglisi, 'Guido Reni's *Pallione del Voto* and the Plague of 1630', *The Art Bulletin* (1995).

[470] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 2nd ed., II, 24, cited by Emiliani, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 277: "Gli ruppero i più ragguardevoli quadri, come fu il pallione del Voto, sfondatogli dal Cavazza..."

[471] Richard E. Spear, 'Notes on Renaissance and Baroque Originals and Originality', in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies and Reproductions,* Centre for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Symposium Papers VII, Studies in the History of Art, vol. 20 (Washington: National Gallery of Art; Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1989), 372, no. 82, and Spear, *The "Divine"* Guido, 305.

"one thing ties together the plague, the city's government, and its hopes for economic rebirth: silk." Morselli suggests that silk did not simply serve "a stylistic or functional feature" but that the material actively reaffirmed "the Bolognese identity."[472] For Bologna, the silk industry became a dominant force in the late medieval and Renaissance economy as a major employer and source of the city's wealth and fame.[473] The industry had become an important part of Bolognese life and silk was a symbol of the power of Bologna as a city. The variety of explanations for the choice of this support is testament to the fact that it is often impossible to determine an artist's singular reason for his choice in materials; often there is a multitude of reasoning behind any one choice. However, in the case of the silk support of the *Pala della Peste*, it would seem that the durability of the material was foremost in Reni's reasons for using it.

Copper is another material which Reni employed as a support during his career. Denys Calvaert, Reni's first teacher with whom he was apprenticed from 1585 to 1595, was a particularly important advocate of painting on copper in Bologna, and was the person who taught Reni the technique. Roughly fifteen paintings on copper by the Flemish painter have survived. There are also a large number of works on copper by the Carracci. And in the following generation, not only Reni, but Francesco Albani, and Domenichino, who also studied under Calvaert before entering the Carracci Academy, made considerable use of the medium.[474] While copper plates were used quite often in the seventeenth century, particularly in Italy and the Netherlands, it has been noted that Reni's contemporary Rubens (with whom his workshop practices are often compared) did not seem to favour the use of metal plates as a support, with only four paintings by Rubens on copper known today.[475]

Reni began to exploit the technique of painting on copper in the early 1590s and was considered especially successful in it. It has been noted that copper supports seem to have been used extensively, although not exclusively, for paintings to be given as gifts; when Reni was introduced to Pope Paul V, he in fact gave the Pope two small paintings on copper, *The Virgin and Child with Saint John* (fig. 2.119) and *The Virgin*

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[472] Morselli, 'Bologna', 146.
[473] Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis*, 77.
[474] Henning, 'The New Technique of Painting on Copper', 26.
[475] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 26.

Sewing with Three Angels (known only through engravings).[476] However, unlike silk, the use of copper for symbolic purposes is highly unusual. As Bowron points out, the basic reason that copper is selected as a support is due to the meticulous effects obtainable on its hard, smooth, non-absorbent surface.[477] The surface effects that could be rendered on copper made it suitable for small-scale compositions, and therefore, for portable gifts. Copper was often employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for reduced copies of easel paintings and altarpieces, as seen in the *Virgin and Child with Saints* (fig. 2.99) in the National Gallery of Ireland, painted after the *Pala della Peste*. The scale of most of Reni's paintings on copper is small, and the smooth surface of the plate allowed a fine brush to capture the tiniest detail of the original.[478] Great Roman family collections such as the Barberini, Aldobrandini, Ludovisi, Doria-Pamphilij, and Borghese contained small-scale paintings on copper by many Italian artists. Bowron says that the appeal of these works is in "their jewel-like brilliance and delicate brushwork", which "imparted a special vividness to the imagery of the cults of the Virgin, saints, and angels."[479] This is certainly a description applicable to Reni's works on copper.

A common misconception exists that paintings on copper are inherently fragile, though there is evidence to support the notion that well-prepared and soundly executed paintings on copper are actually more durable than comparable works on wood panel or canvas.[480] Under dry or commonly encountered indoor conditions copper does not readily corrode. Moreover, copper is not sensitive dimensionally to changes in relative humidity. Thinly applied oil paint generally adheres well to a properly prepared copper plate, and corrosion of the plate itself usually does little harm to the paint later because the paint film isolates the copper from the air.[481] This accounts for the minimal amount of stress-induced craquelure that is found on paintings on copper.[482] Some paintings on copper are, in fact, in pristine condition, especially when compared to paintings on wooden panel or canvas, where

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[476] Schaefer, '*Io Guido Reni, Bologna*' 7.
[477] Edgar Peters Bowron, 'A brief history of European oil paintings on copper, 1560-1775', in *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775*, edited by Michael Komanecky, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.
[478] Ibid., 23.
[479] Ibid., 14.
[480] Michael K. Komanecky, Introduction in *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775*, edited by Michael Komanecky, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.
[481] Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 10-11.
[482] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 85.

deterioration of the support and interventions to the structure by restoration, such as lining, distort the image.[483] Although some paintings on copper can suffer from adhesion problems of the paint to the plate, many survive in extremely good if not excellent condition.[484] This durability is in keeping with Reni's apparent desire for longevity in his work – as previously noted, his use of lead white pigment has been linked to his hope to maintain freshness in his colours, and his use of silk is again associated with this attempt at achieving longevity in his works. Reni's copper plates certainly remain in excellent condition, such as his *Coronation of the Virgin* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 2.120), which, despite being painted over four hundred years ago, is still startlingly bright in its colouring, and the image is not obscured by cracking or flaking of the paint surface.

Copper supports were not as expensive as their silk counterparts (though another common misconception exists to the contrary), which means that their regular use would not have required as much investment as the "infinite" number of custom made silk canvases might have to Reni's studio. Economic historian Ekkehard Westermann indicates that thousands of tons of copper were produced annually in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary from the fifteenth century onward.[485] A thorough but not exhaustive survey of paintings (conducted by Michael Komanecky and Karen Hodges of the Phoenix Art Museum) on copper primarily in American and European museums has revealed more than two thousand extant paintings, excluding the larger number of portrait miniatures on copper by lesser-known, unknown, or unidentified artists. Seen from this perspective, it seems sure that copper was valued as a useful material and that copper sheets were indeed plentiful.[486]

One of Reni's late works was the aforementioned large copper plate of *Christ with the Crown of Thorns*, now in Dresden's Gemäldegalerie (fig. 2.54). The detail employed in this work is striking when compared to those paintings on canvas from the same period – Reni seems to have given it special attention. The choice of copper support does not lend itself to the painterly brushwork which Reni had come to develop in his

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[483] Ibid., 64.
[484] Ibid., 84.
[485] Ekkehard Westermann, 'Tendencies in the European Copper Market in the 15th and 16th Centuries', in Hermann Kellenbenz, *Precious metals in the age of expansion: papers of the XIVth International Congress of the Historical Sciences* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 71-77, cited by Komanecky, Introduction in *Copper as Canvas*, 4.
[486] Komanecky, Introduction in *Copper as Canvas,* 4-5.

ultima maniera, and one must ponder his decision to use copper during this period of his career. As Horovitz describes it, "copper was not an obvious choice when artists wanted to suggest rather than describe form, using a broader and more 'painterly' technique to create an impression of form that is better viewed at a distance."[487] It seems that Reni had both the ability and the inclination to revert to tight, controlled brushwork when painting on copper, and he recognised the necessity to adjust his technique depending on the materials he was using.

Copper plates were commonly used as part of furnishings of a devotional nature and were used as supports for the pictorial decoration of liturgical objects.[488] They may have been decorations on objects such as ciboria or tabernacles, or portable altars. This was possibly the function of the work on copper "After Reni" in the National Gallery of Ireland (fig. 2.99) – it has small holes surrounding its margin, implying that it had once been tacked to something (fig. 2.121). It may have simply been attached to a wooden panel (either by the artist or by subsequent owners) in an attempt to prevent the copper from flexing), or the possibility remains that it was tacked into place as part of a liturgical object. The even spacing of the holes suggest that they were created carefully and deliberately, and they surround the entire margin of the work (as opposed to being confined to the four corners of the painting) implying an attempt to securely fasten it to something. It is impossible to say exactly what the function of this plate was without further knowledge of its provenance, which will be investigated by the writer in the near future.

While copper supports are generally used for works of small dimensions, instances have been recorded of large-scale copper commissions. In 1632 the Deputies of the Cappella del Tesoro in Naples commissioned one of Reni's competitors Domenichino for the six altarpieces in the chapel, which were to be painted in oil on copper.[489] Richard Spear suggested two purposes behind this choice of support: that the weight would prevent removal later on, and that the paintings would last longer.[490] It seems that deviating to alternative support materials for the purposes of durability and longevity was not a practice exclusive to Reni. A potential third consideration is suggested by Bowron in writing on this commission. The chapel for which these works

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[487] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 85.
[488] Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 14.
[489] Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 15-16.
[490] Spear, *Domenichino*, 287, 296-299, cited by Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 16.

were destined was a shrine for the relics of the Neapolitan religious community. Carlo Borromeo's *Instructions for ecclesiastical buildings and furnishings* stresses the symbolic importance of precious metals such as gold, silver and bronze – materials of an eternal nature – in the decoration of such shrines.[491] Domenichino's paintings are surrounded by gilt-bronze frames inset with lapis lazuli, and the largest of the altarpieces measures more than 355 x 220 centimetres in height. The manufacturing of six supports of this size and weight would have taken some skill and would have come at a high cost, and in this instance the choice of copper over canvas may very well have had a symbolic nature related to the advice given in Borromeo's text. This, however, is a highly unusual, if not unique, example of copper as a support.

Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin* of c. 1607 is, as noted previously, oil on copper plate. The brushwork in this painting is fine and detailed, with a translucent finish. Again, the copper support has facilitated the painting of minutely fine detail in this work. The painting's copper support has been coated with a layer of pewter.[492] Bowron attributes the luminosity of this work to the use of this pewter layer, which he describes as "a silver-coloured metallic coating", and cites the *Coronation of the Virgin* as a reason why Reni "was one of the superlative practitioners of the genre [of painting oil on copper]."[493] Horovitz discusses the practice of coating copper with silver-coloured alloys, noting that despite references in catalogues to "silvered" copper, when analysed, these coatings have been found to consist of tin or lead-tin alloys, not silver. She identifies the coating of Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin* as a lead-tin alloy, identified by energy-dispersive X-ray analysis in the scanning electron microscope (pewter is an alloy, made up for the most part of tin, while the remainder can be composed of a variety of other metals, including lead). According to Horovitz, the practice of applying metal-alloy coatings to copper plates was unusual, and "relatively few paintings on copper appear to have been executed on coated sheets", though certain artists favoured them, including Reni and his contemporaries, Guercino and Domenichino, as well as Adam Elsheimer and Claude Lorrain.[494]

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[491] Carlo Borromeo, *Instructionum fabricae, et supellectilis ecclesiasticae* (Milan: Apud Pacificum Pontium, 1577).
[492] Personal correspondence with Helen Howard of the Scientific Department of the National Gallery, London, April 2014.
[493] Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 14.
[494] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 68.

Reni's reasoning behind using such coatings may be related back again to his desire for longevity in his materials – such "tinning" apparently provides resistance to corrosion with minimal increase in thickness or weight.[495] Artists may have thought that an interlayer would prevent reactions occurring between the copper and the oil paint, or ensure good adhesion. In paintings examined, however, there is nothing to suggest that adhesion is influenced by the presence of coatings.[496] Another effect of the use of these silver-coloured alloy layers is the luminosity in the paint surface that is achieved. An unusual tonal quality is created by the metallic brightness beneath the ground and paint, which intensifies the clarity and brilliance of these masterpieces.[497] The recently discovered *Saint Jerome* (fig. 2.122) was described by Carlo Giuseppe Ratti as "a beautiful painting on marble of Saint Jerome", despite being painted on copper.[498] This apparent mistaken identification may have been associated with the similar reflective properties of Reni's coated coppers and marble as a support.[499] However, it seems that Reni's technique was better able to achieve such effects through the process of "tinning". Domenichino's aforementioned altarpieces in the Cappella del Tesoro in San Gennaro in Naples were coated, but apparently suffered from adhesion problems, while though Guercino's *St. Sebastian Succored by Two Angels* (fig. 2.123) is also "tinned", it shows none of the luminosity that we associate with Reni's silvered coppers, though part of this can certainly be attributed to the artist's darker palette.[500]

2.8. Preparatory layers

An artist's preparation consists of layers of materials applied to their support in order to provide a uniform surface upon which to paint, often referred to as a ground layer. It is important to note that the terminology used to describe preparatory layers is frequently inconsistent in literature. The preparation of a canvas, for example, frequently involved the application of a glue size directly to the canvas fibres, followed

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[495] Ibid., 67.
[496] Ibid., 68.
[497] Spear, *Domenichino,* 297, and Bowron, 'European oil paintings on copper', 16, cited by Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 68.
[498] Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, *Instruzione di quanto può vedersi di più bellow in Genova in pittora, scultora ed architettura* (Genoa: 1766), 300, cited by Mattia Biffis, 'A rediscovered 'St Jerome' on copper by Guido Reni and its early provenance', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 158, no. 1361 (2016), 613.
[499] Biffis, 'A rediscovered 'St Jerome' on copper', 613.
[500] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 68.

by a series of layers of material, including oil paint or gesso. These layers are interchangeably referred to as primings, *imprimatura,* grounds, or, in combination, double grounds. While "priming" is frequently used to refer to the combination of the glue size and ground layers, *"imprimatura"* usually refers to a coloured layer applied over a ground layer. However, ground layers can also be toned, so occasionally a ground layer covered by an *imprimatura* layer is referred to simply as a "double ground". Bomford describes Rembrandt's preparatory layers, refers to them as "coloured grounds", and writes that the definition of a ground is a preparatory layer which covers the "entire area of the support", that is, it comes a step before the "blocking in" of restricted areas of colour relating to specific elements of a composition.[501] For the purpose of this discussion, I will use the term "ground layer" to mean the uniformly coloured underlayer upon which the artist paints his composition. The preparatory layers allow paint to bind with its support and also controls the absorbency of the surface of the support. Grounds may be light or dark, and vary in colour and texture, depending upon medium and the artist's intent. Guido Reni used coloured grounds, ranging from brown to dark red. There is a fundamental difference between painting on a light ground and on a tinted, darker ground - while on a light ground all tonal shades have to be applied deliberately, a tinted ground acts as a middle tone by itself.[502] When working on a light ground, every insufficiently covered part of the ground would function as a highlight, while with a tinted ground it can remain partly uncovered without the tonal unity of the painting being distorted.[503]

In the Auckland painting of *St. Sebastian* the ground is a thick pigmented chalk layer, and is "composed of large pale cream particles with areas of brick red, orange and black, surrounded by granular brown, black and white particles floating in a clear medium".[504] Particles of these pigments can be identified in a magnified image of a cross section of a fragment of paint taken from the sky of *St. Sebastian* (fig. 2.124). Chalk mixed with earth pigments, charcoal black and lead white was frequently used as a ground layer at the time, and is similar to the composition of the lower ground in Reni's *David Holding the Head of Goliath* (c.1604–1606, Louvre), as well as many of

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[501] Ashok Roy, "Rembrandt's Materials and Technique - The Ground Layer: Function and Type", in *Rembrandt: Art in the Making,* edited by David Bomford (London: National Gallery Company, 2006), 27.
[502] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 22.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian'*, 210.

the paintings which will be examined in this section.[505] Reni's *Saint Sebastian* in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (1620s-30s) has a dark red ochre coloured ground, which is "moderately thick".[506] The painting has undergone examination of paint samples of the ground structure (by Ashok Roy of the Scientific Department at the National Gallery) which shows two layers of orange-brown which appear to consist of calcium carbonate, reddish-brown ochre and a little lead white. This mixture is typical of many seventeenth-century canvas grounds, including those of Reni.[507] This ground composition is similar to those found in Caravaggio's *Boy bitten by a Lizard* (late 1590s), and *Supper at Emmaus* (1601) of the National Gallery. These works were painted on a red-brown ground made up predominantly of calcite, earth pigments and a little lead white.[508] Rubens's *Peace and War* in the National Gallery similarly makes use of a double ground consisting of a red-brown lower layer of calcium carbonate and a red earth, with a very thin warm mid-grey-brown on top.[509] Keith reaffirms the statement that such a ground is not unusual in seventeenth-century Italian painting.[510] The canvas of Auckland's *St. Sebastian* is coated with a "generous" amount of animal glue - this was applied to canvas to prevent the fibres from absorbing the subsequent paint layers. While many of Reni's grounds are double-layered, as was more common in Italy and was the case in the Dulwich Picture Gallery work of the same subject, the Auckland *Saint Sebastian* ground is composed of a single layer. The artist may have been influenced by his time in Rome between 1601 and 1613, where preparations were often single-layered, and reddish or brownish in colour.[511] Reni also used a single ground for *Christ Giving the Keys to St Peter* (1620–1625, Musée du Louvre) and *The Abduction of Helen* (c.1628, Musée du Louvre).[512]

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[505] Helen Glanville, 'Varnish, Grounds, Viewing Distance and Lighting', 12–19, and E. Martin, A. Jarry, M. Jeanne, C. Mancuso and N. Volle, 'Les Muses de Baglione: Restauration et Contexte Technique', *Technè,* 17 (2003), 28–36, cited by Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian'*, 210.

[506] Sophia Plender, Conservation Record for Guido Reni, "St. Sebastian", Dulwich Picture Gallery, no. DPG 268 (December 1998).

[507] Ibid.

[508] Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', 38.

[509] Roy, 'Rubens's "*Peace and War*"', 94.

[510] Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', 38.

[511] Martin et al., 'Les Muses', 28–36, and Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 28, cited by Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St Sebastian'*, 209-210.

[512] E. Martin, 'Grounds on canvas 1600–1640 in various European artistic centres', in *Preparation for Painting: The Artist's Choice and its Consequences,* edited by J. H. Townsend, T. Doherty, G. Heydenreich and J. Ridge (London: Archetype Publications, 2008), 59–67, and Martin et al., 'Les Muses', 28–36, cited by Hillary and Kisler 'Auckland's *St Sebastian',* 210.

The National Gallery's *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom* of c. 1615-16 is painted on a dark ground, which is based on siliceous earth, chalk and white lead. Reni's *Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl*, Birmingham Museums Trust, of 1638-39 is painted on a red ground, which the condition report for this work suggests is "probably oil", and "extends to all edges of the picture."[513] The use of an oil ground (which is presumably mixed other materials such as gypsum and white lead) would require the canvas to have first been sized with animal glue, to prevent the organic oil from rotting the canvas fibres. The ground layer of *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness,* of 1640-42 (fig. 15) has undergone scientific analysis, which reveals that "under magnification, the warm red ground layer which is visible to the naked eye as part of the composition in the tree trunks and sky, can be seen to be really quite thick, with large red particles, probably of haematite. Reni makes great use of the ground in optical effects in the sky, employing widely streaked grey scumbling through which the ground can be seen. The group of background figures to the left of *St. John* "consist almost entirely of the ground roughly outlined with coloured strokes."[514]

In each case, Reni shows a distinct preference for a dark brown or red ground. This provides him with, to use Malvasia's words, "a space to play on", in which he can leave areas uncovered to create shadow or delineate forms. Van de Wetering pinpoints the potential for a ready-made middle tone which the artist could leave exposed as the primary reasoning behind the use of coloured grounds in the seventeenth century; "it is because of this function of the ground as a 'safety net' that working with a tinted ground was self-evident in the Baroque period when the organisation of light and shadow had a vital function in a painting's composition."[515] Coloured grounds also increased the potential for a range of tenebristic effects in a work; "the opacity of lighter colours is increased by the darker underlayer, while thinner and more transparent darker paints is given increased depth and luminosity by the relative lightness of the same ground."[516] This technique of leaving ground layers deliberately exposed to act as a middle tone is not unique to Reni and was employed

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[513] Hadyn Roberts, Conservation History and Treatment Report for Guido Reni, "Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl", Conservation Department, Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, Acc. no.: 1961P30 (7th March 1988).
[514] Helen Glanville, Notes on Condition and Recommendation for Treatment for Guido Reni, "St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness", Dulwich Picture Gallery, no. DPG 262 (March 1988).
[515] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 22-23.
[516] Keith, 'Three Paintings by Caravaggio', 39.

by many of his contemporaries; most famously Caravaggio. In many of Caravaggio's works, the ground is clearly visible in areas, and was of great importance in providing a ready made middle tone in the painting of flesh and hair.[517]

While the examiner is often reliant on scientific analysis to reveal the materials used in an artist's ground layer, occasionally circumstances allow the ground layer to be visible on the surface of the painting; where the artist has left the ground exposed as a deliberate effect, or where areas of paint have been abraded and exposed the ground. Though it is not possible to use visual identification to determine the specific materials involved in the composition of the ground layer, the colour of the ground can be recorded in this way. In Reni's *Victorious Samson* of c. 1617-1619, for example, the paint layer is abraded in areas, exposing a red ground layer (fig. 2.125). The paint layer of *Portrait of a Widow (The Artist's Mother)* of c. 1610 also appears to be abraded in parts, possibly due to overcleaning. This leaves the ground layer visible in places, which is a similar red to that of *Victorious Samson*. Heavy rebate abrasion around the edges of Bologna's *Saint Sebastian* (fig. 2.126) exposes a darker, reddish-brown ground. These visual observations agree with the notes and analysis of painting conservators, suggesting that Reni's preference was for a coloured ground ranging from red to darker reddish-brown.

Thus far our discussion on Reni's grounds has been limited to those on canvas support, which can differ considerably to ground layers which would have been applied to panels or metal supports. The ground materials and their method of application for the copper plates which Reni employed varied somewhat to his practice on canvas. Artists using copper plates seem to dispense with an initial glue size and chalk ground layer, having no need to isolate the wood or canvas fibres from the oil, or to fill interstices of a textured fabric or panel grain.[518] Most paintings on copper appear to have a thin, pale-toned preparatory layer between the paint film and copper support. In almost all paintings examined, this layer covers the copper completely, but the metallic nature of the support is still evident. [519] In Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin* there appears to be a pale layer covering the lead-tin (pewter) alloy coating over the copper. However, there are areas where the sheen of the coating is just apparent, in the red-brown shadow in some of the *putti* in the lower

[517] Ibid., 38.
[518] Horovitz, 'European Paintings on Copper Supports', 69.
[519] Ibid., 71.

half and in the background of the upper half.[520] This coating is far thinner than the ground layers applied to Reni's canvases. The smooth surface of copper plates required far less ground material to create a suitable texture upon which to paint. The lack of absorbency of the material meant that the preparation necessary in cloth supports to prevent the fibres from absorbing the paint unevenly and to provide saturation of colour was unnecessary; copper allowed paint to be administered smoothly and highly saturated.

2.9. Condition and conservation

It may be concluded from previous sections regarding Reni's choice of materials that the artist was at times in his career preoccupied with the longevity of his materials and creating works that would stand the test of time. This section seeks to examine the condition of Reni's works today, in an effort to determine whether the artist's endeavour to create lasting works, which would not suffer from deterioration, was a successful one. The section will combine reports on the condition of works made by conservators, as well as personal observations of paintings made by the writer. It will also note any issues regarding the condition of Reni's works outlined by the seventeenth-century sources. Reni's technique in oil painting is considered to be very sound, and his oil paintings on both panel and canvas remain generally in excellent condition. Many display *craquelure* or cracking patterns, which are a normal effect of the aging of oil paint and not necessarily associated with poor technique or materials. While the varying environments that Reni's works would have been subject to over their history may be the biggest contributing factor to their current condition, a summary of the condition of the paintings is interesting as it demonstrates conservational problems that are commonly associated with Reni's works – or, as the case may be, the lack thereof.

A report for Reni's *St. Jerome* (c. 1624-25) in the National Gallery (fig. 2.100), notes that where cleaning tests have been made on the work the paint appears to be well preserved, though there may be some wearing or thinness in the background. It goes on to note that "although there are many small flake losses on the body of St.

[520] Ibid., 78.

Jerome", "the paint was generally in good condition".[521] This positive assessment of the work is testament to the fact that some degree of degradation to a painting's surface is expected over time, and that conservators recognise this. As these works are almost four hundred years old, some flaking and cracking is unsurprising, and the quality of the condition can be appreciated nonetheless. A treatment proposal for *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* in the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 2.84) similarly describes the work as being in "exquisite condition" despite noting "general age cracks" and "scattered lifting paint."[522] Reni's *Lot and his Daughters leaving Sodom* of c. 1615-16 (fig. 2.44) is also described as being "in very good condition generally", despite some minor wearing of the paint surface in areas.[523]

In Reni's *Portrait of a Woman* of 1638-39 (fig. 2.102), there is some apparent fading of colours. The condition report for this work notes that the purple/red glazes used in sitter's turban and garment worn around her neck appear to have faded. The ribbing of yellow in the same area also appears to have faded, possibly due to abrasion. This abrasion may be a result of past cleaning of the work, which sometimes accidentally removes colour from the paint's surface. The report also notes faint age cracks, most notably in the area of sitter's left cheek.[524] Fading of colour is not regularly noted as an issue encountered in Reni's works; in fact, many paintings are said to retain their colour well, for example, the paint surface of Reni's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* in Chicago is said to be "well preserved" and "the paint retains its freshness, both in terms of color and surface texture."[525]

The *"Ecce Homo" (Head of Christ crowned with thorns)* in the National Gallery, after Reni (fig. 2.127), is painted on wood panel; conservation reports suggest the wood may be poplar. The paint and ground layers of this work are described as in similarly

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[521] Kenneth Malcolm, Conservation History and Treatment Proposal for Guido Reni, "St. Jerome", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 11 (18th June 1984).
[522] Frank Zuccari, Examination Report for Possible Treatment for Guido Reni, Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist", Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, Museum no.: 1960.3 (19th December 1986).
[523] Maclaren, Neil, and Brommelle, N. S., Condition Report for Guido Reni, "Lot and His Daughters Leaving Sodom", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 193 (28th June 1956).
[524] Hadyn Roberts, Conservation History and Treatment Report for Guido Reni, "Portrait of a Woman, perhaps Artemisia or Lady with a Lapis Lazuli Bowl", Conservation Department, Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham, Acc. no.: 1961P30 (7th March 1988).
[525] Zuccari, Frank, Examination Report for Possible Treatment for Guido Reni, Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist", Conservation Department, Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, Museum no.: 1960.3 (19th December 1986).

good condition to many of Reni's works on canvas. The condition report for this work notes that "there are some indentations in the surface, upper left, and there is some cracking in the paint, caused by a knot in the panel, to the right of the mouth."[526] Reni's works on copper, such as *The Coronation of the Virgin*, in the National Gallery, remain also in good condition (if not even better preserved than those painted on other supports). The condition of these works suggests that Reni's technique on both wood panel and copper plate was sound.

While for the most part the condition of Reni's works is very good and any cracking patterns noted are faint and stable, some instances of more excessive cracking in Reni's work are encountered, for example, in *The Magdalene* in the National Gallery (fig. 2.128). Photographs of this work pre-restoration reveal considerable cracking which exposes the painting's ground layers, and paint damage around the Magdalene's neck, which has since been repaired.[527] A 1931 report describes the condition of the painting as "much cracked".[528] It is difficult to establish the cause of this cracking, which seems to be more excessive than that noted in other paintings; it may be a product of the environment in which the painting was previously hung, or due to damage it suffered at some point in its lifetime. There is, of course, also the possibility that the cracking was caused by flawed painting technique. While the painting has been carefully restored so that most of these cracks are no longer visible, some long, irregular cracks can still be seen clearly in the background on the left-hand side of the figure of the saint. The National Gallery's *Jesus Embracing Saint John* reports similar cracking. An 1855 report notes that the "surface [is] cracked in parts, for example at back of head of St. John and in background next to it".[529] A later report describes the condition of the painting as follows: "There is some heavy cracking vertically through the paint layer in the area of S. John's hair. There are old damages with dark retouchings on S. John's chest, and small paint losses round Christ's head."[530]

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[526] Kenneth Malcolm, Conservation History and Treatment Proposal for Guido Reni, "St. Jerome", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 11 (18th June 1984).
[527] The writer was afforded the opportunity to consult these photographs in the National Gallery, London's archives, but could not gain permission to reproduce them here.
[528] Condition Report for Guido Reni, "The Magdalene", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 177 (1931).
[529] Condition Report for Guido Reni, "Jesus Embracing Saint John", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 191 (1855).
[530] Malcolm, Kenneth and Potterton, Homan, Condition and Treatment Report for "Christ Embracing St. John", Conservation Department, The National Gallery, London, no. 191 (3rd February 1977).

Though much praise is given to Reni's technical skill in the source material, and in general his paintings are praised for remaining in excellent condition, chapter one noted Malvasia's unusual account of an occasion where one of Guido's works on canvas - the *Europa,* commissioned from Reni by the Duke of Guastalla, suffered major deterioration just a decade and a half after his death. The biographer recounts that the "paint surface had begun to separate from the canvas and fall off" after it had been transported to Venice in 1660.[531] This instance of paint dramatically falling off a canvas is unheard of in any other work by Reni, and it seems unlike Reni to paint a work which was so inherently fragile – especially one for "great personage". Little detail is given regarding the conditions the painting were stored in or the treatment it suffered, and therefore it is very possible that this incident of paint falling from a canvas was not a result of poor technique or misused materials on Reni's part, but a result of mishandling during transportation (especially if rolled) or while in storage. Unfortunately, the *Europa* that Malvasia refers to is now lost, though the composition is known through the version commissioned by King Wladislaw of Poland shortly before 1640, which was later part of the collection of Denis Mahon, and is now on display in the National Gallery. This work, unlike its lost counterpart, does not appear to have suffered from any of the structural issues described by Malvasia.

Reni developed a gambling problem later in life, which eventually had a negative effect on the quality of his work – the previous chapter noted Malvasia's descriptions of the artist painting directly on to canvas without a painted ground and finished his paintings with "little care", claiming that his technique, and his concern for producing durable, long lasting artworks was dismissed as his debts amassed, leading him to produce lesser quality works.[532] When this gambling problem took hold, prior interest in good quality execution is said to have been lost, and with the artist described as having worked on many canvases at once in a confused and frantic manner, with little care for what he produced.[533] Despite this reported loss of passion for his work and of interest for the structural integrity of his materials, paintings from the last five years of

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[531] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 84: "L'Europa commessagli dal Duca Guastalla, per regalarne, come fece, gran personaggio in Ispagna; pagandogliela settecento scudi, oggi forse in Venezia, avendola cosa comprata del 1660 l'Ambasciadore di quella Republica con gran vantaggio, con isperanza di ristorarla, e rimediare al colore, che cominciana a staccarsi dalla tela e cadere..."
[532] Ibid., 89-90.
[533] Ibid., 93.

Reni's life still seem to remain in relatively good condition, with no major adverse effects noted by conservators to coincide with the artist's change in style and technique. The artist's *Madonna and Child appearing to St. Francis* (fig. 2.129) of c. 1640 in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, has a matte, even, finish, and while its surface shows a fine cracking pattern, it appears to remain stable. Reni's *St. Sebastian* in the Pinacoteca, Bologna (fig. 2.45), also painted around 1640, similarly displays a fine pattern of cracking visible throughout the surface layer, which is consistent throughout the work and also stable. Reni's *Suicide of Cleopatra* of c. 1639-30 in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (fig. 2.130), does show evidence of some age related cracking, but nothing so dramatic or novel so as to suggest that the late paintings are inherently more fragile than the early ones. The *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* of 1640-42 (fig. 2.33) shows impasto and brush work in very good condition. The condition report for this painting describes paint film and ground as having "extensive craquelure, much of which is raised." However, it also notes that "the craquelure is mostly even over the painting and is not isolated to any particular pigment or feature of the painting."[534] Craquelure of this sort, which is not isolated to specific areas of a work, and does not disturb the image in a significant way, is usual and associated with the natural aging of oil paints on canvas.

Reni's *Immaculate Conception* (fig. 2.131), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, provides an unusual example of the quality of Reni's canvas paintings. A condition report for this work describes the painting's history.[535] The work is recorded as having been part of the Duke of Bridgewater's collection in 1823, which was fire bombed in World War II, leaving the painting badly damaged. According to Denis Mahon, who saw the painting being sold at auction before it reached the Metropolitan Museum's collection, the work was "entirely black with paint falling off everywhere", and appeared "totally unsalvageable".[536] Having been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1959, it was lined, cleaned and restored, and while the work is, as the report phrases it, "peppered with losses", it remains in remarkable condition given its history. Dorothy Mahon, the author of the report, noted that "durability" of the painting

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[534] Helen Glanville, Notes for Treatment for Guido Reni, "St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness", Dulwich Picture Gallery, no. DPG 262 (March 1988).
[535] Dorothy Mahon, Examination and Treatment Record for Guido Reni, "The Immaculate Conception", Conservation Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 59.32, (1987).
[536] Denis Mahon, cited by Dorothy Mahon, Examination and Treatment Record for Guido Reni, "The Immaculate Conception", Conservation Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 59.32, (1987).

was "a testament to a well crafted product, very directly executed with paints containing a large admixture of lead white." That the conservator attributes this painting's survival directly to Reni's technique and his use of lead white demonstrates the soundness of the artist's practice, and supports his beliefs that the use of *biacca* would give a long life to his paintings.

While evidence thus far has suggested good technical facility in painting in oils, which have maintained these works in generally stable condition, Reni evidently experienced a number of problems with fresco techniques. This is somewhat surprising, given that the artist studied under both Calvaert and the Carracci, who were competent painters in the medium of fresco. As described in chapter one, both Malvasia and Bellori provide some evidence of problems experienced with the degradation of works in fresco during the artist's own life. The biographers, writing about the frescoes in San Michele in Bosco, and the facade of Palazzo del Reggimento, describe Reni's technique and use of materials as very lacking. Malvasia talks about the San Michele frescoes "drying and flaking" because he had painted the work in oil, rather than working *buon fresco.*

That Reni used, according to Bellori, "oil on a glue made with a mixture of brick dust bound with egg white", rather than painting *buon fresco*, shows that Reni was uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the practice of wall painting.[537] Again, with regards to the Palazzo del Reggimento frescoes, Bellori notes, Reni reverts to his preferred medium of oil, with which he was so much better acquainted, showing a clear preference for the medium, "owing to his deficiency in fresco."[538] The biographers also write of Reni's failed attempts at restoring the decaying work using varnish, which only served to cause further damage. This suggests that, despite Reni's desire to use incorruptible materials and create paintings which would stand the test of time, in the initial phases of his career he did not possess such understanding of technique and materials of fresco, and his works in this medium deteriorated rapidly. Though, according to Bellori, Reni attempted to gain experience in fresco, and then became "as successful as anyone" in the medium, Spear points out that while Reni had become the leading muralist in the papal city by 1615, he gave up the prestige of Rome and frescoes for Bologna and canvases. Once settled in Bologna, he undertook

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[537] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 350: "...olio sopra la colla, fatta di mistura di polvere di mattoni incorporata di chiara d'uova..."
[538] Ibid., 349: "...per mancanza del fresco."

almost no new narrative cycles.[539] An exception is the commission in Ravenna, which was painted from high scaffolding, but chiefly by assistants, and in tempera.[540] Reni apparently sought out the expert advice of Gabrielle Ferrantini on painting in fresco, who showed him the right way to mix the paints, keep them fresh and regulate their drying time.[541] In 1627, when he finally agreed to return to Rome to work in St. Peter's, he was "unprepared to execute fresco, which apparently did not come easily".[542]

Despite these accounts, Reni was not entirely unsuccessful in the medium of fresco, though he showed clear preference for painting with oil on canvas or panel. Bellori describes Reni's work for an apartment built by Paul V in the Vatican palace, where he painted Samson's feats of strength in three *istorie* in fresco on the ceiling of two chambers, and of this work the biographer says that "it is not possible to express the delicacy, the grace, and the knowledge displayed by Guido's brush in these three *istorie*, befitting their celestial subject."[543] While Reni's biographers provide several accounts of the technical problems associated with his fresco technique, this is only in reference to a select number of early commissions – Malvasia later praises Reni's fresco technique, writing that if Albani's fresco work "had been executed using a good fresco technique as were those by Guido, would not have become so faded and worn."[544] In response to the aforementioned criticisms of Reni's student Albani, who said that the artist "lacked the heart and courage to meet the challenge of the great Cappella del Tesoro", Malvasia defends Reni's technical skill in fresco by praising the works that he created in the Paoline Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, the Annunciation Chapel in the Quirinal Palace, his work at Ravenna and Bologna, and his famous *Aurora* in the Casino dell'Aurora.[545] The biographer redeems the artist from his earlier criticisms of technique by praising him highly on a number of successful works. Visual examination of Reni's frescoes both in the Annunciation

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[539] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 31.
[540] Ibid., 31-32.
[541] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. By Enggass and Enggass, 47: "[Gabrielle Ferantini] mostrò dunque il modo di comporre le mestiche, di oprarle con freschezza, pigliar il tempo della calce, e assicurarsi delle mutazioni ed effetti..."
[542] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 32.
[543] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 353: "...non è possibile d'esprimere la gentilezza, la grazia e'l sapere del penello di Guido in queste tre istorie, correspondente al sogeetto loro celeste..."
[544] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 65: "...e le quali se fossero state operate a buon fresco come quelle di Guido, non diverriano, come fanno, così mizze e peste."
[545] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 127: "...quella gran Cappella del Tesoro ... l'Aurore al palaggio oggi Mazzarino, le cappelle pontificie in Santa Maria Maggiore e a Monte Cavallo ... e così dato a conoscere se da simili macchine lasciasse farsi paura."

Chapel (figs. 2.132 and 2.133) and in Santa Maria Maggiore presents works that can be described as high quality. These fresco cycles do not show signs of the structural problems described by Bellori and Malvasia as associated with the artist's earlier frescoes, and remain in very fine condition.

The writers make comparatively few negative observations on Reni's technique in oil painting. One might assume that were there any notable struggles on Guido's part when painting in oil, that Bellori and Malvasia would have noted these and reported them as they have done with regards to fresco. Therefore, it might be inferred that the biographers believed Reni to be a very sound technician when painting in oil, which is in keeping with the generally good condition of his works today, and the observations by modern art historians and conservators alike. Reni was a master of his preferred medium, that is, oil, and has created works that have survived remarkably well for hundreds of years, to tell of Reni's excellent technical skill in painting; "the Bolognese Apelles, to whose brush the world bows."[546]

[546] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 141: "Il bolognese Apelle, a cui pennel fa riverenza il Mondo..."

Chapter 3: The Workshop as a School

Having examined Reni's painting technique and materials in some detail, attention will now move to a study of the workings of the artist's studio. The chapter will begin by providing an account of the artistic training that Guido Reni received, both in the studio of Denys Calvaert and later in the Carracci Academy. It will assess the nature of this training based on descriptive accounts from the seventeenth-century sources. This will provide a backdrop for investigation of the artist's workshop, by noting the manner in which Reni's training influenced the artist's painting techniques and studio practices, as well as his own teaching methods. The chapter will continue by examining the genesis of Reni's studio, its location, size, and other notable characteristics, as well as the artist's personality and his behaviour while working in the studio and when dealing with its day-to-day running. The chapter will conclude with an investigation of Reni's workshop as a place of learning and his methods in teaching his own students, again using analysis of the seventeenth-century sources, and examination of works by both Reni and his students.

3.1. Reni's training under Calvaert

At the age of nine, Reni left his studies in the *Scuola di Grammatica* to enter the studio of the Flemish painter Denys Calvaert. This was a normal age for an artist to begin his professional training, if perhaps a little early – artists would usually begin apprenticeships between the ages of 11 and 17 years, with the latter considered quite late.[547] Denys Calvaert was born in Antwerp but lived in Italy for most of his life. Having had some formal artistic training in his native city, he moved to Italy around 1560 and studied as a painter under Prospero Fontana in Bologna, and, later, Lorenzo Sabatini in Rome, and in 1575, opened a successful workshop and place of learning for young artists, with Reni joining him in 1584. Reni studied here until he was around nineteen, alongside Domenichino and Francesco Albani.

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[547] Cropper, Elizabeth, *The Ideal of Painting: Pietro Testa's Düsseldorf Notebook* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 12, cited by Patrizia Cavazzini, *Painting as Business in Early Seventeenth-Century Rome* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 64.

Malvasia describes Calvaert's workshop, comparing it with those of the Renaissance masters, and writes that he was an excellent teacher, who practiced by "teaching with love, correcting patiently, encouraging with praise, and rewards, keeping in check by fear, and with punishment", and through this method of teaching, Calvaert produced some excellent subjects, "among them the most famous and renowned, granted success seen our century, like Guido, Albani, Domenichino, and the like."[548] This practice of "correcting patiently" is one that Reni carried on with his own students, for whom, as Malvasia later tells us, he retouched works in order to demonstrate correct methods of painting. However, the description of Calvaert as a master who "taught with love" and "encouraged with praise and rewards" is somewhat at odds with Malvasia's other accounts from the artist's studio, where it is described as a not so nurturing environment. That a master could have been loving in his teaching, while keeping students "in check by fear" is a paradox in itself; it is difficult to be nurturing and to incite fear at the same time.

While studying under Calvaert, Reni is described as having been a model student, who excelled in his training beyond his fellow pupils. Malvasia writes that, at just thirteen, Reni was "judged qualified" and was chosen by his master to supervise his peers in the studio while they created drawings and worked up canvases, and this experience at such a young age surely began to equip him to run what was to be one of the largest studios of the *seicento*, that is, his own.[549] These exercises – drawing and working up canvases – presumably were part of Reni's own training under Calvaert for the initial four years of his apprenticeship. Cavazzini notes that within the master-apprentice system, training might begin with colour grinding before being followed by a long period, measured in terms of years, during which an apprentice devoted himself to the practice of drawing, without touching paint or brushes.[550] This is in keeping with traditional master-apprentice structures in Renaissance studios, where the apprentice was taught through "a series of progressive steps from grinding colors, to making copies, to working on the master's design, to inventing one's own paintings or sculptures", and it was the apprentice's role to assist the artist in the

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[548] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 249: "Insegnando con amore, correggendo con pazienza, animando con lode, e cò premii, tenendo in freno col timore, e col castigo, ed insomma in tal guisa indefessamente insegnando, che dalla sua scuola parimente altrettanto bravi Soggetti ne uscissero, e frà questi i più celebri e rinomati, ch'abbia veduto il nostro secolo, come un Guido, un'Albani, un Domenichino, e simili."
[549] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 37: "...eletto dal maestro (appena compiva anni tredici) a dar l'esemplare agli altri condiscepoli..."
[550] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 64.

preparation of materials and, later, to help him execute the work by laying in the priming layers and beginnings of the composition according to the master's design.[551] The master would teach their apprentice to imitate their manner, for purposes of stylistic coherency when carrying out commissions collaboratively, and the influence of Calvaert's style is evident in Reni's early work, like his first public commission, *The Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints,* which will be examined in the next section of this chapter. This desire for uniformity of style was the basis for most artistic education in Renaissance studios, where apprentices would be trained and encouraged to make their master's style their own.[552] Training was based on imitation; drawing and painting from life, and from other artworks, especially that of the master – indeed, Bellori writes that Calvaert had Reni copy his paintings while the young artist studied under him.[553] In the seventeenth century much of this training through imitation focused on drawing, rather than painting; apprentices would be required to duplicate their masters' drawings, copy engravings, and reproduce famous works of art, generally with red chalk.[554] The training received in this traditional format, therefore, was in part self-serving for the master of a studio – they trained artists in the techniques of painting production and the imitation of their style so as to use them for commissions. This is evidenced in the Renaissance by the direct correlation between the number of apprentices and the number of commissions; the busier the master was, the more apprentices he needed.[555]

Reni's role in Calvaert's studio went beyond study when, before he turned eighteen, he had already been "promoted to painting in backgrounds, to making sketches for the paintings, and even to inventing some works."[556] This account suggests that in the later part of Reni's time in the Flemish master's studio, he had undertaken a role more akin to assistant than to pupil or apprentice. Reni's hand, according to Malvasia, can be "easily recognised" in some works which are attributed to Calvaert, "who, after retouching them, sold them as his own."[557] Some works on copper that are attributed

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[551] Bruce Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work: From Pisano to Titian* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1983), 33, 15.
[552] Ibid. 31.
[553] Ibid., and Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 348: "...facevagli copiare in rame gl'istessi suoi dipinti..."
[554] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 66.
[555] Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work*, 15.
[556] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 38: "...era stato gia promosso (accostandosi a diciotto anni) al campire, bozzare, anzi all'inventare qualche operetta..."
[557] Ibid.: "...de'quali molti tutto dì si vedono, e facilmente si riconoscono, benche ritenghino molto del fare di Dionigi, quali poi ritoccando egli spacciava per suoi."

to Calvaert display a softer and more naturalistic style than that which might usually be associated with the Flemish artist. An *Annunciation* on copper in the collection of Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine (fig. 3.1) is visually similar to many of Reni's works. This work is dated to circa 1595, so it is quite possible that it was created at a time when Reni was working in Calvaert's studio. The angel's wings in this *Annunciation* are painted with delicate, semi-transparent brushstrokes, carefully illustrating each feather individually, in two separate layers. This is similar to the angel's wings in Reni's *Angel Appearing to Saint Jerome* in Detroit (fig. 3.2), and also to those in his *Coronation of the Virgin* (which, like the work attributed to Calvaert, is on copper), in the National Gallery (fig. 3.3), though the wings of Reni's angels lack the colour added to Calvaert's. These wings differ considerably from Calvaert's treatment of those in his *Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist in a Landscape* in the Scottish National Gallery, which is also painted on a copper support (fig. 3.4), where the feathers appear thicker and heavier and are created using more opaque paint and with less emphasis on each individual feather. The robes of the Virgin in the *Annunciation* attributed to Calvaert are also very similar to those in Reni's *Coronation* (fig. 3.5), especially in the pink areas, where the folds of the drapery and gentle highlights and shadows appear closely related to Reni's later composition. The Virgin's robes in the Scottish National Gallery's *Holy Family,* though similar in colour, do not demonstrate the same folding patterns as those in Calvaert's *Annunciation* or Reni's *Coronation.* Examination of the sleeves of the Virgin in the *Holy Family* show wrinkled folds, bunched tightly together, which are separated by dark shadows. The sleeves in the other two paintings, in contrast, depict graceful, more regulated folds, with considerably fewer areas in shadow. This *Annunciation* on copper, though attributed to Calvaert, has the potential to be one of the works painted by Reni that Malvasia says were retouched and sold by Calvaert.

The suggestion that these retouched works were "easily recognised" implies that Calvaert did not succeed in teaching Reni to emulate his manner exactly, and Reni still retained characteristics of his own style of painting. This contrasts with what is noted later when Reni trains his own pupils – who on occasion reportedly produced works that were easily confused with Reni's own. However, if Calvaert had success repeatedly selling these works as his own as Malvasia reports, it is questionable to what degree Reni's works were "easily recognisable" from those of his master. It is possible that Malvasia is being critical of Calvaert in an attempt to diminish his role in

Reni's later successes, and to maximise the idea of Reni's talent, which could not be suppressed. In his *Vita di Dionisio Calvart*, Malvasia again describes Calvaert's practice of selling off works – reduced copper versions of large canvases – painted by his students, including that of "Reni, Francesco Albani and others" as by his own hand. Malvasia writes that having retouched the works, Calvaert sold them in "incredible amounts to merchants", who would in turn sell them in Flanders, where Calvaert's name was recognised, "sometimes doubling what they spent."[558] This would imply that the works of Reni (and Albani) even in the very earliest stages of training as an artist were of high quality, deeming them worthwhile for Calvaert to sell, and commanding high prices when resold on the Flemish market. The notion that Reni and Albani's work sold so well under their master's name when they were still young students suggest that they had an inherent artistic talent that was evident to Calvaert (who exploited it) from the beginning of their training. The act of selling students' copies for profit is written about in a seemingly negative light by Malvasia in this passage (the words "*spacciava per suoi*" might translate better as "passed off as his own" or "pretended to be his" rather than just "sold as his own" – the latter being Enggass and Enggass's translation), though it is similar to Reni's own later practice when teaching. However, when describing Reni's sale of retouched works as his own, Malvasia is considerably less critical. Reni's practice in this regard will be examined further shortly.

Though Reni never became an absolute imitator of his first master's style, his early training did have some influence on his work, and, when he initially approached the Carracci (to avail of their free drawing classes) this was both noticed and frowned upon. Ludovico told the young artist that though Calvaert was "a patient and good teacher", that Reni needed to renounce "that style which was ... too mannerist and overly smooth and foreign."[559] Calvaert's "smooth" style is illustrated in works like *Noli me tangere,* a version of which, painted around 1600, is in the National Museum, Warsaw (fig. 3.6). The figures appear highly polished and with shimmering luminosity,

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[558] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 256: "Così appunto successe col Reni, coll'Albani, e con altri, a' quali facendo ridurre le sue tavole grandi in piccioli rami; ad altri colorirne col suo disegno, acciò in tal guisa, diceva, s'avvezzassero a far animo, ad arrischiarsi, a svegliarsi, rittocchi poi che gli avesse, esitava per di sua mano, vendendone quantità incredibile a Mercatanti, che tenendone commissioni di Fiandra, ove stranamente risuonava il suo nome, colà mandavanli, guadagnandovi, e talora raddoppiandovi sopra lo speso."

[559] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 38: "Dionigi essere veramente ... un paziente e bravo direttore, e non aver pari; mancargli solo in abiurazione da quella maniera troppo manieroso appunto, leccata ed oltramontana..."

despite being surrounded by darkness. The faces show little naturalistic detail, with eyebrows reduced to tiny brushstrokes, and little expression in the eyes or mouth, or creasing in anywhere in the face or neck. The smoothness that the Carracci mention is visible in the flesh of Calvaert's figures; the Magdalene's face is painted in flat colour, undisturbed by contours. The background depicts an almost fantastical landscape, with dark blue mountains jutting upward, looming ominously above non-descript buildings below. Comparison with Annibale Carracci's *Christ appearing to Saint Peter on the Appian Way,* painted in 1601-1602 (fig. 3.7), just a year or two after Calvaert's *Noli me tangere,* illustrates the difference in approach between the two masters. Annibale's Christ appears with more defined musculature, and texture on his skin. The face of Christ has a more emotive expression, and his hair and beard is painted with naturalistic strokes implying real hair, contrasting with the soft blurry strokes on Calvaert's Christ. The landscape surrounding Annibale's figures is suggestive of a real rather than fantastical location. In the background details of grass and trees are visible, as well as some architectural elements painted with convincing naturalism. The overall effect of Annibale's work is one of a real human interaction in a natural landscape, as opposed to the somewhat supernatural scene created by Calvaert.

Malvasia later reports that in Calvaert's studio, "in the case of some small works that were directly commissioned to Guido", the master deceptively kept large portions of the payments for works painted by the young artist, secretly receiving "the payment of the price agreed upon" and giving his student "only a very small part of it." It is this activity that Malvasia associates with the beginning of Reni's discontent with his master, writing that such behaviour "thus began the erosion of Guido's affection for the master whom he had first so respected and obeyed."[560] Having become disheartened by Calvaert's teaching, Reni was said to have been enchanted by the work of the Carracci family. Malvasia describes a period during which Reni was still training with Calvaert, when the "Carracci also offered free access to what was then the Academy of the Natural which they founded." According to the biographer, "having seen their manner", Reni was enamoured and "therefore searched for ways and

[560] Ibid.: "...anzi di qualche operetta, che a lui direttivamente veniva commessa, riscuoteva con molto confidenza lo stabilito prezzo, con farne a lui pochissima parte: che fu il principio della alienazione del primiero affetto di Guido al tanto prima osservato e ubbidito maestro."

means to be their follower."[561] The death of his father, alongside the reported violence suffered at the hands of his teacher, gave Reni the incentive needed to leave Calvaert's studio. Scannelli suggests that Calvaert's teaching was average, as were the students he produced, telling the reader that "to achieve the desired success directed under the discipline of Dionisio Flamengo ['Denis the Fleming', that is, Denys Calvaert], painters ... must be practical and diligent, but were little more than ordinary."[562] If Calvaert's students generally can be described by the sources as average or ordinary, then it was Reni's training with the Carracci, as well as his own innate talent, which led him to success as a painter. The teaching of the Carracci family exemplifies the "ideal" in artistic education according to Malvasia, and it might be assumed that they had more to offer Reni as a young artist than his Flemish teacher.

Malvasia describes Reni's eventual departure from Calvaert's studio as a hostile one. It would seem that Reni became disillusioned with Calvaert's traditional teaching methods and dealings with money, but the biographer recounts a specific occurrence which solidified Reni's decision to leave. According to Malvasia, following an incident one day during which Reni was painting "a certain drapery" – quite possibly for one of Calvaert's own works – Reni accidentally used some of Calvaert's private painting materials ("a fine lake pigment from the cupboard which was forbidden"), and Reni "was attacked and exposed to blows" by Calvaert. Having been struck by his master, "Guido threw down his palette and fled, leaving Calvaert confused at an outcome that was so unexpected."[563] Reni left the studio never to return, despite apparently not having completed his agreed contract after ten years in Calvaert's studio. While ten years may seem like a long time, this was not unconventional. According to Bernini,

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[561] Ibid.: "Aveano altresì nello stesso tempo dato libero adito a chi che fosse nell'Accademia del naturale, da essi eretta, i Carracci. Guido, che veduta la loro maniera, se n'era totalmente invaghito, e perciò cercava modo e via di farsi loro seguace..."

[562] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 348: "...per ottenere la desiderata riuicita sù indrizzato sotto la disciplina di Dionisio Flamengo, Pittore a quei giorni pratico, e diligente, mà di sufficienza poco più che ordinaria."

[563] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 39: "...ma finalmente assalito da lui un giorno, con ardire di percuoterlo, per essersi servito in certo panno di una lacca fina, che riposta nell'armario era stata proibita a chi che fosse, gettando la tavolozza, se ne fuggi, lasciando confuso Dionigi per così improvvisa e non aspettata risoluzione."
Though Enggass and Enggass here translate "*una lacca fina*" as "a fine lacquer", "*una lacca fine*" in fact refers to a red lake pigment, likely red lake derived from an insect dye such as cochineal or kermes, or possibly even lac dye: Jo Kirby, Maarten R. van Bommel, André Verhecken, Marika Spring, Ina Vanden Berghe, Heike Stege, and Mark Richter, *Natural Colorants for Dyeing and Lake Pigments: Practical Recipes and their Historical Sources* (London: Archetype Publications, 2014), 69-71.

French painters went to Rome when they were around fifteen years of age, and, studying for nine or ten years, would be twenty-five years old before they started to work as a professional artist.[564] A decade of study seems to have been considered necessary for training.[565] On leaving Calvaert's studio, Malvasia recounts a conversation with Reni that suggests he took a deliberate departure from the Fleming's teachings. The biographer describes Reni, who was examining the chalk outline of a portrait he had created while in his first master's studio, erasing it with his hand, saying "while I was under him I worked in his manner, but now I work in my own way."[566]

3.2. Reni's training under the Carracci

Reni's father died in 1594, ten years after the young artist had joined his first master's studio, and Spear argues that this effectively released the artist from his obligation to his master. Reni left Calvaert's studio and moved to the Carracci Academy shortly afterwards, "not having yet attained his twentieth year."[567] Both Domenichino and Albani followed Reni in his transfer to the new, rival academy. The turn of events as recounted by Malvasia (when Reni was struck by Calvaert) as explanation for the artist's final decision to leave his master was not necessarily the catalyst in his departure, but rather, his father's death meant that he did not feel bound to the artist any longer, having been contracted to him at a young age. Spear's theory that it was Daniele Reni's passing that released Reni from his contract with Calvaert might be questioned when Malvasia's statement that Reni was "entrusted" to Calvaert at the "tender age of nine" is considered, with the stipulation that "if after ten years he had not become a master then he would return to music."[568] If Malvasia's timeline is taken to be correct, and Reni left Calvaert and joined the Carracci just before turning twenty,

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[564] Chantelou, Paul Fréart de, *Diary of the Cavalier Bernini's Visit to France,* edited by Anthony Blunt (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 51-52, 5th July, cited by Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 64-65.
[565] Chantelou, *Diary of Bernini,* 51-52, 5th July, and 280, 10th October, cited by Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 65.
[566] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 116: "...sono stato sotto di lui ho fatto a suo modo; adesso vo fare al mio."
[567] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 19, and Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 39: "Se ne passò dunque a' Carracci, che non compiva il vigesimo anno..."
[568] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 37: "...qual'era quella di nove anni ... a lui consegnato il figlio, e pattuito, che quando in dieci anni non fosse riuscito Maestro, al primo impiego della parte musicale ritornato si fosse..."

then the ten years had passed without Reni becoming a master – and his time under Calvaert was officially complete – though Reni showed no desire or intention to return to music as per the wishes of his late father.

The Carracci Academy was founded in 1582 on a different set of ideals than those of Calvaert's studio. The family named their academy the "*Accademia degli Incamminati*" or "Academy of those Moving Forth"; an indication of their intentions for their new learning institution, one that would be forward thinking and innovative. The academy was initially named the "*Accademia dei Desiderosi",* that is, "Academy of the Eager" or "Academy of the Desirous" – which, based on the reputation of the Carracci as enthusiastic about their work and teaching, might have been equally appropriate. Scannelli describes the Carracci school as having "flourished" many painters of excellence from Lombardy, and particularly Bologna, including "the most famous Guido Reni", as well as "Domenico Zampieri and Giovanni Lanfranchi [Domenichino and Lanfranco] who painted laudably in all sorts of works." Evidently, Scannelli credits the Carracci with Reni's education, as opposed to Calvaert.[569]

Scannelli says that Reni joined the school of the Carracci to "make himself a worthy follower of many Masters". This suggests that the Carracci offered a broader education than that which Reni was receiving in Calvaert's studio, where the structure was such that his primary educator was Calvaert himself. The direction of the Carracci Academy was instead determined by the three masters collectively, as opposed to by a singular master, providing a more varied training.[570] There are indications also that artists other than the Carracci served as teachers in the academy, including, possibly, Ercole and Camillo Procaccini.[571] Scannelli writes that Reni obtained the skills to portray "beautiful perfection" in his paintings from the Carracci studio, and that this

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[569] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 347: "Dalla fiorita scuola de gli eccellentissimi Carracci pare fra i molti, che germogliarono quasi aduno tempo nella Lombardia, ed in particolare nella medesima Citta di Bologna, e parti circonvicine riuscirono a nostri giorni piu' immediati nella virtu', e maggiormente famosi Guido Reni, Domenico Zampieri, e Giovanni Lanfranchi, che dipinsero laudabilmente in ogni sorte d'operatione."

[570] Gail Feigenbaum, 'Practice in the Carracci Academy', *Studies in the History of Art,* vol. 38 (1993), 61.

[571] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., I, 405, cited by Feigenbaum, 'Practice in the Carracci Academy', 62: "Del medesimo anno [1583]. Una castellata d'uva squisita, mandata a donare ad Ercole Procaccini e Camillo suo figliuolo, per le fatiche ch'usano nell'insegnare a Gio. Paolo suo figlio, nell'Accademia. Dell'anno stesso un altro regalo à medesimi, per l'istessa cagione."

was something which could not have been taught to him by Calvaert.[572] The training Reni received in Calvaert's studio versus that in the Carracci Academy seems to have contrasted in several ways. Though Ludovico apparently maintained a more traditional notion of workshop training for the "artisan-artist", upon which Calvaert's studio was based, his cousins Agostino and Annibale strove to create an academy which gave students an opportunity to study painting and drawing in a formal, but less constricting, environment than that of the master-apprentice arrangement.[573]

The differences between the training an artist received in a traditional master-apprentice arrangement like that between Reni and Calvaert, versus that received in the Carracci Academy are not always clear, but some distinctions can be observed. The Carracci Academy offered much of the same training that was provided in a workshop setting, but there is some indication that the academy offered more intellectual training than might have been received as a workshop apprentice.[574] Pope Gregory XIII and, later, Sixtus V both recommended that artists attend an academy for their education in addition to that which they received with a master, implying that the academy offered additional training beyond what would be received in a studio setting.[575] Though Reni would have studied drawing in Calvaert's studio, the diversity of the artistic exercises performed under the direction of the Carracci was great. In an oration for Agostino Carracci's funeral, Lucio Faberio said that in the teachings of the Carracci "nothing was overlooked that had been admired in the most famous painters" and described some of the activities which took place in the academy, in which "virtuous emulation was the means toward perfection", and students studied anatomy, "drawing the bone structure of the body" and learned about body parts through the dissection of corpses, about proportion and perspective, and about the qualities of "grace and loveliness", studied architecture, and practiced drawing "living persons in the nude, or partly draped, military weapons, animals, fruit, and in short all created things."[576] Alongside studies of human anatomy as mentioned by Faberio, students of

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[572] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 348: "...come repugnante dal solo Flamengo l'estraere la bellissima perfettione dell'operare, che mirabilmente ottenne da' studiosissimi Carracci."
[573] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 17.
[574] Feigenbaum, 'Practice in the Carracci Academy', 60.
[575] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 9.
[576] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 201: "In quella Academia si vedeva una comendabil'emulatione, per la quale tutti facenano à gara nel disegnar l'offature de corpi, nel imparar i nomi, le posature, e legature dell ossa, i muscoli, i nervi, le vene, & l'altre parti, facendosi perciò spesse volte Anotomia... disegnar' persone vive, ignude in tutto, ò in parte, armi, animali, frutti & insomma ogni cosa creata."

the Carracci also received instruction in astronomy, geography and optics, an education far beyond the practicalities of painting.[577]

It has previously been noted that the master-apprentice format of training had precedents in Renaissance studios, and that there was correlation between the master's business and the teaching of apprentices. The education provided within this traditional arrangement was directly linked to the use of the trainee for the master's commissions – young apprentices were educated in their masters' style and technique to participate as a functioning member of the masters' businesses. This seems not to have been the case within the Carracci Academy, where the family were less concerned with the potential for commercial gain through teaching, but were instead seeking to train a group of artists who might later become their legacy.[578] The training that artists received in the academy was not a means to an end; that is, it was not simply learning to produce paintings within the master's studio and to later become a master themselves, but was part of the artist's lifelong pursuit of perfection in his work, and therefore not limited to artists of a certain age or level of experience.[579] The Carracci Academy set itself apart perceptibly from traditional workshops in Bologna, offering an alternative in artistic education.[580] Unlike the traditional workshop apprenticeships, where artists were encouraged to begin training at a young age, many artists joined the Carracci Academy as adults, and many had been trained previously under other artists, as was the case with Reni.[581] The academy offered artists the opportunity to learn fundamental skills in painting without entering a formal apprenticeship with a master.[582] The structure of the Carracci Academy was such that it attempted to unite students and masters, whereas pupils were considered more subordinate in traditional studios, such as that run by Calvaert, as evidenced by the contractual arrangement by which Reni was "entrusted" to Calvaert. Calvaert was Reni's master in a stricter sense than the Carracci, and with the Fleming Reni trained in a more traditional manner.

The *seicento* sources suggest that the Carracci Academy was a more nurturing environment for the young artist than that of Calvaert's studio. While Calvaert was

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[577] Carl Goldstein, *Visual fact over verbal fiction: a study of the Carracci and the criticism, theory, and practice of art in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 55.
[578] Feigenbaum, 'Practice in the Carracci Academy', 59.
[579] Ibid., 61.
[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 80.

reportedly exploitative of Reni in keeping large portions of profits from the sale of his works, Reni's new masters are said to have given Reni the entirety of the payments received for works commissioned directly from him – further supporting the theory that the academy's training was less focused on commercial concerns than masters of workshops were in their training of apprentices. Malvasia writes that the Carracci gave to Reni "directly the entire price of the works that were directly ordered from him." The biographer also writes, however, that "it was advantageous for [the Carracci] to obtain and leave minor orders for him to carry out", and to give him full payment for these orders.[583] That it was "advantageous" to the Carracci to do so suggests that this might not be their regular practice as masters, but that they recognised that Calvaert's practice of withholding payment from Reni was an influential factor in Reni's decision to depart from the Fleming's studio. Owing to the Carracci's desire to keep Reni in their academy, and to keep him happy (which presumably was the only "advantage" of giving him these payments), perhaps they altered their usual procedure to cater to Reni's needs and to make him feel valued.

Malvasia wrote of the virtues of the Carracci's teaching methods, quoting Reni and Albani in saying that "one could not help but make progress under the Carracci, because studying in their school was done for fun, and learning was a matter of play, and so it was no surprise that even the gentlemen who came to visit could not do otherwise than try their hand at some piece of work."[584] This description sounds entirely at odds with that of the Flemish painter's teaching methods, which, in the biographer's words, included instilling fear in his students, and responding to misbehaviour with "punishment".[585] Reni's work within the Carracci studio seems to have been similar in nature to that which he carried out under Calvaert's instruction, that is, "blocking-out work for them, filling in the background and getting on with the work they assigned him without receiving any compensation."[586] That Reni was also given minor orders for himself, for which he received payment, likely made the academy a more satisfying working environment for the artist.

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[583] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 39: "convenendo essi di procurare, e lasciargli le fatture di minor conto, e 'l prezzo intero di quelli, che a lui direttamente venissero ordinate."

[584] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 274: "...dir Guido, e l'Albani, ch' era impossibile il non far profitto sotto i Carracci, studiandosi in quella scuola per ischerzo, & imparandovisi per giuoco; onde non era maraviglia se gli stessi Cavalieri, capitandovi, non potean non oprar qualche cosa anch' essi..."

[585] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., I, 250: "...tenendo in freno col timore, e col castigo..."

[586] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 39: "...e si obbligò di sbozzare per essi, campire, e tirare avanti l'opre da loro assegnategli, senza alcun premio..."

Ludovico Carracci was of the belief that "through the study and observation of a good natural manner", Reni would rid himself of Calvaert's style – and evidently, Reni's new course of study became evident quickly to Calvaert.[587] It is important to note that Ludovico apparently encouraged the study and observation of *a* natural manner, as opposed to the *Carracci* manner – he is promoting a broader education than Reni received with Calvaert and not the imitation of a specific artist's style. The Carraccesque style is, however, said to have impacted Reni's work noticeably even while he was under Calvaert's tuition, and Calvaert is said to have been scornful of this new manner, feeling that Reni's new works "lacked all polish and refinement."[588] Reni's *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints* (fig. 2.2), one of the artist's earliest works in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna, can be dated to around the time when Reni left Calvaert's studio, and is cited by Malvasia as one of the first works where Reni moved away from the *maniera* of his first master and toward that of the Carracci.[589] Malvasia writes that this work shows the manner of Calvaert in its upper half (in passages depicting "the Blessed Virgin crowned by the Eternal Father and the Son, with the Angels in Glory"), while the figures in the lower half – the four Saints – yielded to the *pastoso,* or softness, of Annibale. The figures in the lower half (fig. 3.8) are comparable to Annibale's figures in his *Samaritan Woman at the Well* (fig. 3.9) in their facial expressions, drapery and gestures. The upper half of the painting contrasts with brighter highlights and heavier shadow, and less naturalistic detail in the faces, though this can be partially accounted for by the implied distance of the figures, who are in the background of the painting. The upper half of the painting (fig. 3.10) is reminiscent of that in Calvaert's *Annunciation* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (fig. 3.11). Similarities are readily evident in the colour and formation of the clouds surrounding the heavenly figures in both compositions. The palette and drapery folds of the upper half of Reni's composition are more akin to Calvaert's painting also; less naturalistic than that of the Carracci, with more complex folds and dramatic highlights. Pepper notes that, despite Malvasia's observation, Calvaert's influence remains

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[587] Ibid., 38: "...ma benchè bevuta da lui col latte de'primi ammaestramenti, facile però ad evacuarsi ... con ogni prontezza sullo studio ed osservazione di un buon naturale."
[588] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 39: "...che mancavano d'ogni pulizia e finitezza..."
[589] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., II, 7: "Quì cominciò a staccasri egli affatto dalla prima maniera, e ad accostarsi a quella de nuovi, ma prima osservati sempre Maestri; e fù allora, ch'ei fece fra le altre la tavola, ch'oggi anche si vede nella Chiesa di S. Bernardo, nel muro laterale a mano a mano destra, ove nella parte superiore che rappresenta la Beata Verg. coronata dal Padre Eterno e dal Figlio, con gloria d'Angeli, mostrò aver anche ritenuto del far di Dionigi, la dove nelle figure sotto de' quattro Santi diede in un più grande, e pastoso di Annibale."

evident in the lower half of the painting, with the figure of Saint Catherine is based on Calvaert's Saint in the Galleria Nazionale, Parma, and another in the Galleria Pallavicini.[590]

Ludovico Carracci in particular seems to have been an instrumental figure in young Reni's artistic training. The oldest of the three academy founders, Ludovico maintained somewhat more traditional ideals than those of his cousins, which may have helped in easing Reni's transition from Calvaert's studio to the new academy. In his *Life of the Carracci,* Malvasia writes that Ludovico "before anyone else attempted and brought about the harmonizing of the distinctive qualities of all the different schools" and that "it was he who first accomplished the union of the finest drawing with the finest color, an achievement despaired of up to that time, and it was he who knew how to bring together all the concordant elements from the best styles and to compose an unheard of and marvelous harmony, which was to be carried on thereafter not only by his cousins but by all his students."[591] Malvasia's words suggest that Ludovico was the best teacher of the three artists, and that he refined the academy's teaching methods. The eldest of the Carracci masters is described as having been a generous and patient teacher, who gave a lot of time to his students. He is said to have been "so warm-hearted and kind that he not only advanced his students by helping them obtain minor commissions for pictures and altarpieces ... but would also supply them with drawings to work from which were all highly finished."[592] He is seen to have been generous to Reni with his time even prior to the young man's entry to his academy, telling him that "he was always ready to assist him in any situation" – though perhaps this was in part a ploy to draw the promising artist to their academy.[593] Malvasia continues to write about Ludovico, that he "taught Guido, and he also taught Albani and Domenichino, nor was he ever heard to complain that the last two, who had become masters under him, turned out in the end to be more partial to Annibale" – the suggestion being that Ludovico was not influenced in his teaching

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[590] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 156.
[591] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 310: "Egli avanti ad ogn'altro delle doti particolari di cias cheduna scuola il reciproco cambio, con felice successo, ha tentato, e concluso: ha sortito la fino a quell'hora disperata unione del più gran disegno al più gran colorito; e di tutte le consonanze de' stili migliori ha saputo unir' assieme, e formare un non più udito, e maraviglioso concerto, seguito poi da' Cugini non solo, ma da tutti gli altri allievi."
[592] Ibid., 257: "Era egli tanto buono Lodovico & amorevole, che promovena non solo, come si disse, i suoi scolari a' lavori, e tavole di poco prezzo, ch'anche il disegno loro di tutto punto facea finitissimo..."
[593] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 38: "Esser sempre pronto egli a sovvenirlo in ogni occorrenza..."

by jealousy, and also, more importantly, while Albani and Domenichino became close to Annibale, Reni remained more loyal to Ludovico.[594] Supposedly it was Reni's talent that Annibale found so irritating – and intimidating. Malvasia recounts an occasion in which Annibale was struggling with the drapery painting of a figure, and left the completion to young Reni, who resolved it "quickly and without any difficulty", and with "intelligence and mastery", causing his teacher not only to praise him, but also "lament that the fellow knew too much."[595]

Reni's respect for Ludovico as an artist and a master is demonstrated in an account given of the events after the eldest Carracci's death in 1619. Subsequent to hearing the bad news, Reni "threw down his palette and his brushes, gave his students permission to stop work", and said "Let us go to pay our respects to the best painter the world has ever known, whose equal it will never again see."[596] While the drama of this account might have been exaggerated somewhat by Malvasia, it is telling of the admiration that Reni had for his master, who, of the three Carracci and Calvaert, seems to have been most instrumental in his education. Malvasia's writing further supports this when he writes that "Annibale did not look kindly upon Guido, and would lose patience with Ludovico for teaching him so much" while Ludovico taught his students "with loving devotion, made corrections kindly and generously, and always with complete openness, and this was done out of dedication, and came straight from the heart."[597] Malvasia does write that despite Annibale's distain for Reni, the three brothers were responsible for numerous "courteous gestures and acts of kindness" toward their students, "helping them all by doing countless drawings, sketches and

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[594] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Summerscale (2000), 310: "...insegnò a Guido, instrusse l'Albani, e'l Domenichino, ne fù inteso mai dolersi, che gli ultimi duo, Maestri già sotto di lui fatti, più di Annibale parziali in fine fi dimostrassero."

[595] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 40-41: "Lavorando un giorno Annibale in un quadro, e datosi a farvi un panno attorno a certa figura, quanto più cassava e rifaceva quelle pieghe, che di suo gusto non riuscivano ... lasciandone l'esecuzione ed il compimento a Guido ... Tornato Annibale, e veduto la risoluzione, con che avea saputo eseguir ben tosto, e senza difficoltà veruna il comando; ma più la intelligenza e la maestria .. non apertamente lodarlo in estremo, così non dolersi dopoi con questa frase: che costui sapea troppo."

[596] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2000), 233-234: "...buttando la tavolozza e pennelli, e licenziando i Giovani, andiam, disse, andiamo a pagar l'ultimo tributo di ossequio e di pietà al primo Pittore che mai sia stato al Mondo, e mai più sia per venirci..."

[597] Ibid., 251, 250: "e malignotto Annibale; onde di poco buon' occhio vedeva Guido, sgirdando che tanto gl'insegnasse...", "Insegnana con ameore, correggeva con carità, senza risparmio, senza doppiezze, tutto affetto, tutto cuore."

retouchings, and indeed they would do the same for anyone else."[598] The generosity of the Carracci family in their teaching is not dissimilar to the way in which Malvasia describes Reni as a master, as will be noted when examining Reni's own teaching practices.

While Reni, Albani, and Domenichino all studied under Calvaert and the Carracci, their contemporary Guercino reportedly did not receive formal artistic training of any sort. According to Malvasia's account, the artist told the biographer directly that he was entirely self-taught, without a tutor, and Malvasia praises the artist for his "great natural talent" (*il suo grande natural talento*).[599] Malvasia writes that Guercino learned from "following the Carracci and learning to imitate them", and particularly from the study of Ludovico Carracci's *Madonna and Child with Saints John and Francis and Patrons* (which was in the Capuchin Church in the artist's hometown of Cento, and is now in the Pinacoteca Civica, Cento). Guercino learned from this work how to paint with "robust light and shadow".[600] Scannelli writes about Guercino's great talent and "innate inclination" (*naturale inclinazione*). The writer explains that given there was no one "sufficient" in Cento to teach the young artist, he was led to painting "by instinct alone, and with the imitation of prints."[601] Despite lacking a formal training himself, later in Guercino's career the artist taught at the *Accademia del Nudo*, training around twenty-four students.

While Reni's eventual departure from the Carracci Academy was partly the result of building jealousy amongst its members (both on the part of Annibale and also his fellow students), the issue that finally forced his decision was a financial one. Like those problems that the artist encountered with Calvaert, who withheld earnings from him, Ludovico decided that for an altarpiece that Reni painted for Signor Camillo Bolognetti of the *Adoration of the Magi*, he should only be paid ten *scudi* of the thirty he requested, though the painting's composition was complex and time-consuming to create, containing "thirty or more figures." As a result of the injustice and betrayal of

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[598] Ibid., 255: "Delle cortesie poi loro & amorevolezza, non solo co' Scolari, a' quali tutti disegnavano, schizzavano, ritoccavano, ma con si fosse altro, tante e tante se ne contano..."
[599] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 1st ed., II, 360: "Quando perciò si è vantato, non avere avuto Precettore che l'indrizzi, e gli assista, non ha potuto tacitamente in tal guisa negare, essersi egli eletto per esemplare quel modo di fare, in tal guisa seguendo il Carracci, e d'imitarlo ingegnandosi."
[600] Ibid.: "Da una tavola posta ne'RR. PP. Capuccini di Cento di Lodovico Carracci, e che chiamò poi sempre ... trass'egli il suo strepitoso, e robusto chiaro ed ombra."
[601] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 360: "Egli a pena riconobbe di vivere fanciullo, per altro quasi del tutto insufficiente, che dipinte portato dal solo istinto, forsi coll'imitatione d'ordinaria stampa."

Ludovico's actions, Reni took his leave.[602] The contrasting forms of training the artist encountered during his education might have given Reni a good understanding of the different relationships between teacher and student and may have contributed to the way in which Reni ran his own studio and taught his own students. The relationship between Reni and his young pupils and assistants will be explored later in this chapter and the influence of his own training on his teaching methods will be considered, after a brief discussion of the formation of his studio in Bologna, following his return from Rome.

3.3. Reni's Bolognese studio

Having undertaken a number of independent commissions in Bologna upon his departure from the Carracci Academy, the artist's fame grew. Two such commissions were for Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, which gained Reni some renown in Rome, where he then travelled together with Albani to work for Annibale Carracci on the Farnese Palace frescoes. Reni was in Rome from around 1602 to 1613, and worked under a number of important patrons there, including the Pope and the Borghese family. It was in Rome that Reni hired his first "assistants" to work on a number of fresco campaigns, including Antonio Carracci (son of Agostino), Giacinto Campana, Francesco Albani, and Giovanni Lanfranco.[603] Despite apparent success in Rome, Reni pined for his hometown, and returned there in 1613 or 1614. From the time of his return, the artist remained and practiced in his studio in Bologna more-or-less permanently until his death in 1645. Reni's Bolognese studio was housed in a number of adjoining rooms on the upper stories of the Via delle Pescherie, which was, quite literally, the "street of the fishmongers", and remains so today. For oversized works he rented rooms elsewhere, in the *Ospedale della Morte* or in patrician palaces, as was common at that time.[604]

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[602] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 45-46: "Aveva egli in questo tempo fatto a requisizione del Sig. Camillo Bolognetti ... una tavolina, entrovi l'Adorazione de' Magi, con trenta e più figure ... che insisteva per ultimo prezzo in trenta scudi ... che si stesse al giudicio ed alla stima di Ludovico, che concluse, essere ella finalmente di mano di uno scolare, e però venire ben pagata dieci scudi."
[603] Ibid., 54: "Furono questi Anton Carracci, il Campana, l'Albini, ma più di tutti il Lanfranchi..."
[604] Emiliani, 'The Life, Symbolism and Fame of Guido Reni', 24.

Despite the rooms of his studio being of somewhat modest size, Reni is said to have housed innumerable students there. Malvasia provides estimates of these figures, based, according to the biographer, on the days when he had visited the studio. He writes that "one day in Reni's studios on the Pescherie, eighty students were counted, coming from almost all the Nations of Europe." The biographer also notes also that Reni's studio housed a large number of pupils even before he had returned to Bologna permanently, writing that "sixty were counted the last time he was in Rome, being called there for the painting of *St. Peter.*"[605] When this number is considered in comparison to contemporary seventeenth-century studios – or even the larger of their Renaissance counterparts – the figures Malvasia gives are all the more striking, and provide an understanding of the magnitude of Reni's operation in Bologna. For example, Rubens's students and assistants have been estimated to total around twenty-three people.[606] Vasari wrote that Raphael continually kept a large number of artists employed and that "he was never seen leaving his house to go to court but that he was accompanied by fifty painters."[607] That Raphael employed fifty artists exactly sounds a convenient, rounded number, but even if both Vasari *and* Malvasia are indeed exaggerating their figures based on approximate knowledge, eighty supposes a significantly larger studio than fifty. Spear cites more figures that further contextualise the magnitude of Reni's studio, writing that thirty or so artists are known to have worked with Titian, and only a dozen or so with Domenichino.[608] Malvasia says that Reni thrived in this busy environment, and that "what pleased him most was to have a great many rooms with work going on in many of them at the same time."[609] Even if Malvasia's figures are exaggerated, his claims serve to illustrate the popularity of Reni's studio as a place of learning, surely a result of the artist's great fame.

While scholars question Malvasia's unusually high estimates regarding the number of pupils Reni taught, evidence exists to support the great popularity attributed to Reni's studio. Chapter one noted Malvasia's description of the primed canvases, painted with

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[605] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 107: "Si contarono un giorno sulle stanze delle Pescherie ottanta scolari di tutte quesi le nazioni di Europa; e sessanta se ne numerò l'ultima volta che fu in Roma, chiamatovi per la pittura di S. Pietro..."

[606] Mols archives, cited by Arnout Balis, 'Rubens and His Studio: Defining the Problem', in *Rubens: A Genius at Work*, edited by Joost vander Auwera (Tielt: Lannoo Uitgeverij, 2007), 31.

[607] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 322.

[608] Charles Hope, *Titian* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) 153, and Spear, *Domenichino,* 100, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 225.

[609] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 109: "Ciò di che più dilettossi, fu la diversità delle stanze, conducendone molte nello stesso tempo..."

abozze of various subjects, which the biographer says lined the walls of the workshop, awaiting painting.[610] This is in keeping with claims of Reni's Via delle Pescherie residence being an active and busy place, and the biographer's description is supported by comparison with Reni's death inventory as published by John Spike in 1988. The inventory confirms that the six or seven rooms of Reni's residence in Bologna were filled with unfinished works, with more than one hundred paintings recorded in total, alongside a number of canvases prepared but not painted.[611]

3.4. The artist's personality

Reni's behaviour in his established Bolognese studio is described as having been rather haughty and immodest. His personality is relevant to a study of his workshop because it is seen to affect a number of aspects of his practice; his teaching, his dealing with patrons and securing of commissions and, not least, his pricing, all of which will be examined in due course. It is said that Reni regarded himself quite highly and demanded a level of respect from those around him beyond that usually afforded to artists. He broke a multitude of social conventions once by supposedly refusing to remove his hat in the presence of "a great prince".[612] For many artists, this kind of behaviour might have resulted in a loss of commissions, but it is apparent that Reni, who attracted large numbers of customers, could afford to act this way. His work was held in such regard that potential patrons seemed to overlook what could have been considered rudeness and disrespect on the part of the artist. Over the remainder of this chapter, it will be demonstrated how Reni's personality and the behaviour which surrounded his business and artistic dealings succeeded in elevating the status of the artist. Instead of being confined to the status of a mere craftsperson at the mercy of patrons, this elevated position gave the artist the freedom to act as equal, if not better, to those who visited the studio in the hope of commissioning work.

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[610] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 28, cited by Spear, The "Divine" Guido, 251-252: "...voltando varie bozze poggiate a' muri..."

[611] John T. Spike, 'L'inventario dello Studio di Guido Reni (11 Ottobre 1642)', in *Accademia Clementina: Atti e memorie,* vol. 22 (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1988), 44.

[612] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 117: "Standolo a veder dipingere un gran Principe, e ritiratisi due cortigiani in disparte ed in modo che non potevano mai essere intesi, a discorrere della franchezza con che si era egli subito coperto e lavorava in quel modo..."

Mancini describes Reni quite generally as "of affable manners, pleasant and born for conversation."[613] Malvasia gives a similar portrayal, writing that "Guido was always affable and polite, tractable and courteous."[614] Some of Malvasia's other descriptions are somewhat at odds with this characterisation – given that Reni was considered "difficult" by the Papal treasurer, and apparently did not enjoy the "retinue of pupils ... or stream of friends" to his studio, and when invited to take walks with "cavaliers", he preferred to remain in his rooms – suggesting that he did not enjoy conversing with others.[615] The many anecdotes recounted by Malvasia in which Reni is seen to have witty replies for criticism does imply, perhaps, that Reni was in fact "born for conversation" – but preferred not to engage in it socially, or considered himself superior to certain company.

Reni's behaviour as reported by the *seicento* sources is consistent with someone who considers themselves a nobleman, certainly above the accepted status of the artist in early seventeenth-century Bologna. He did not regard himself subject to the usual social conventions applied to artists and craftspeople. Malvasia describes an occasion when Reni was visited by a prince and two courtiers, with the later commenting on the fact that, upon the prince's entrance, Reni had "quickly put his hat on and ... continued to work with it on." In response, Reni told them that he knew "as well as anyone what is proper and what isn't", that is, in normal circumstances, convention would dictate that an artist remove his hat in the presence of great personage. He continued in his explanation by informing them that he "thought there was some difference between a mechanic and a virtuoso."[616] This comment illustrates Reni's perceived place in society – he is much more than a mere craftsperson, and as Bellori describes, he has a desire to remove focus from any mechanical aspect from his practice. Reni continues in his explanation by telling the courtiers that "it's the fault of Paul V" who "trained" him to leave his hat on – and Malvasia recounts this incident slightly earlier in the biography. When Reni spoke of his intention from then on to keep his hat on while working, regardless of those in his presence, he was met with disapproval, to

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[613] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 241: "È di costumi affabili, piacevoli e nato per la conversatione."
[614] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 121: "...più affabile, e manieroso, il più trattabile, e cortese."
[615] Ibid., 109: "Odiò il corteggio de' scolari, le feste, e 'l seguito degli amici ... Tentarono più volte cavalieri di andare a levarlo, che passeggiando ... ed ei con maniera cercò sottrarsene, restando più tosto nella stanza..."
[616] Ibid., 117: "...che si era egli subito coperto e lavorava in quel modo... so quanto ogn'altro i termini e ciò che converriasi; ma io credeva vi fosse qualche differenza da un virtuoso ad un meccanico..."

which he replied that being bareheaded "was not fitting for people in our profession."[617] These conversations and witty retorts as recounted by Malvasia, as well as the notion that Reni was "born for conversation" are part of a recognised literary convention. They are used to express the artist's superiority over his contemporaries – and these conversations, as well as the other anecdotes recounted, are not necessarily directly connected with Reni's activities as an artist.[618] There are many examples in Malvasia's *Life of Reni* of the artist's wit in conversation. Regarding his humour, the biographer recounts at length an occasion when, in Ravenna, Reni served his pupils a feast where everything was comprised entirely of pine nuts, including the furniture, as a joke in response to comments made by Bartolomeo Marescotti about a place nicknamed *Ravenna of the pine nuts* having a distinct lack thereof.[619] Kris and Kurz note that witty remarks and jokes were attributed to leading artists as a literary embellishment for the purposes of illustrating the artist's special status. That is not to say absolutely that the reports have no basis in Reni's deeds, but rather, generally speaking, "the quick retort and the joke" are used by biographers as devices to demonstrate a superiority over the public which shows the great character of the artist, and also places him in line with many prominent personalities of the past.[620]

Malvasia describes Reni's appearance and his dress. The artist is described as wearing "clothing that was of the most aristocratic", donning "silk in the summer", "velvet and Spanish cloth in the winter." This is reminiscent of a passage in Vasari, where, in reference to Luca Signorelli, the biographer notes that "he lived splendidly, and always dressed in silk."[621] Vasari himself associates clothing (specifically, velvet) with status – he refers to his own personal elevation of rank in the Life of Bastiano San Gallo, when he says "I used to wear such clothes as we painters are glad to put on when we are poor, but now I am clothed in velvet."[622] Malvasia notes that "in [Reni's] account book I find that he paid fifty or sixty *scudi* for each of his outfits" – an

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[617] Ibid., 113: "...io non vorrei star scoperto alla presenza loro, che non conviensi alla nostra professione."
[618] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 99.
[619] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 74-75: "ho udito sempre chiamarla Ravenna da' pignoli, e dopo tanto tempo io sono anche a vederne un solo in tavolo ... Fece egli perciò la mattina ... finta di pignoli e zucchero: la minestra con latte de' stessi: agliata, e saporetti de' medesimi: crostate, e offelle de' stesse ripiene; e in ultimo un gran bacino di confettati, sedendo ciascuno sopra un mezzo sacco de' suddetti ben colmo..."
[620] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 100.
[621] Vasari, *Lives,* II, trans. by Foster (1850), 355, note.
[622] Ibid., IV, 491.

exorbitant amount, considering that average annual wage at the time for a field worker in Italy was rarely more than the cost of a single outfit.[623] Reni's dress is relevant because it is linked to his construction of an elevated status in society, which in turn is linked to his dealings with patrons and the prices of his paintings. The importance of dress in distinguishing the artist from a manual worker of lower status is noted by Spear, who recounts Pliny's description of Zeuxis wearing a cloak that had his name woven into it in gold; it is upon these great masters of the past that Reni is modelling his self-image.[624]

Reni's *Self-portrait* in the Uffizi, Florence, dated to around 1635 (fig. 3.12), gives little away regarding the artist's dress – he portrays himself in a black hat with a large rim, and black cloak with a protruding white collar. There is insufficient detail in the painting to attest to the quality of his clothing. The inclusion of a hat might be related to the artist's perceived or desired social status. Spear notes that the hat is indicative of a person who wanted "to be seen as someone of sufficient rank that he could leave his hat on" – and therefore might be linked to the aforementioned account by Malvasia of the artist's refusal to remove his hat in the presence of a prince.[625] Simone Cantarini's portrait of Reni in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna is dated to 1635-36 (fig. 3.13) and depicts the artist in similar attire – though, notably, with a bare head. Cantarini's portrait, despite being of similar date, shows the artist in a considerably less noble light. His age shows in Cantarini's portrait; thinning hair is evident in the absence of the hat, and wrinkles appear around the artist's worried eyes and on his forehead. Cantarini's portrait is of a thin, meek, older man. The self-portrait omits any of these signs of age, here, the artist has no wrinkles, his face is full, his expression more authoritative, his gaze aimed directly at the viewer. Even the facial hair in Reni's self-portrait has been styled to imply some sense of a well-groomed, stylish man. The obvious discrepancies between these works which are of similar date show that the artist was trying to convey an image of himself that may not have necessarily reflected reality, and this self-fashioning is supported by the *seicento* sources.

Reni not only deigned to ignore certain guests in his studio but – as mentioned in chapter one – Bellori recounted measures the artist took to hide his painting process

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[623] Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 312.
[624] Pliny, *Natural History,* XXXV, 62, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 24.
[625] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 23, and Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 117.

from visitors, by working beneath his cloak and "banishing every mechanical act."[626] Perhaps this again was in an effort to elevate his status from a craftsperson, who worked with his hands, to an artist, a nobleman who was not seen working manually. He did not allow visitors to see his hands physically working, so that all they observed were the paintings "coming to life from his brushstrokes to the amazement of those present."[627] The artist attempted to increase "the dignity of his hand" by hiding his process, which increased the "nobility" and "decorum" of his art. Malvasia's aforementioned description of Reni painting with a mantle draped over one arm seems also to have been related to such a display of status.[628] The desire to be recognised for artistic talent over technical skill, and Reni's attempt to elevate his status beyond that of a craftsperson by hiding his process has precedents in the Renaissance period and is related to the desire – of both Reni and of the sources – to create a link between the artist and the Renaissance masters.

Malvasia's choice of words for Reni when describing how certain social conventions did not apply to the artist are interesting, in that Reni is quoted as saying "our profession", that is, he believed all artists, not only himself, were above the societal rank often ascribed to them. Reni is seen actively promoting the elevation of the status of the artist in society. Despite Annibale's attempt to pit the young artists against one another, Reni is seen to speak very highly of Domenichino, for example, and seeks to raise his status (and prices) as well as his own, when he appraises his competitor's painting of *The Martyrdom of Saint Agnes*, far beyond what Domenichino might have requested.[629] In the sources, Reni is described as having displayed the utmost confidence in his talent and abilities, and thereby did not seem to perceive any threat (besides a rather physical one by Caravaggio at one point in time) from his contemporaries (though most of them would have considered him their main rival). Reni seems sufficiently confident in his position that he felt comfortable to praise other artists. Malvasia wrote that he had "never heard Guido speak of Domenichino except in terms of the highest praise and veneration, commending him as the best among all

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[626] Bellori, *Lives*, trans. by Wohl, 366: "...dipingere che col mantello indosso, togliendo ogn'atto meccanico..."
[627] Ibid.: "...vedevano prender vita i colori con maraviglia di quelli erano presenti..."
[628] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 114: "...nè mai vedersi operare, che col mantello attorno, raccolto con graziosa, e pittorica, maniera sul braccio sinistro."
[629] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 79: "...rimessone quegli il giudicio a Guido, non meno di mille scudi di paoli sentenziò doversegli, e dugento di più poi per avervi a di lui istanza mutata la gloria di sopra..."

his contemporaries."[630] Reni even voiced the highest praises perceivable for Domenichino's work – in speaking to Brunetti about the *Martyrdom of Saint Agnes*, Reni is quoted as having described the painting as "ten times lovelier" than anything by Raphael, and that the work demonstrated "the highest point of excellence that modern painters can attain."[631] Malvasia writes that "by giving Domenico his protection, Annibale could oppose him to Guido, whose fame was rising above everyone else's, arousing some jealousy even in Annibale", and "so Annibale undertook to promote him against Reni, and by spreading the word that he was Reni's superior in many parts of painting, he sought to recommend and support Domenichino for as many commissions as he could.[632] Despite apparently being pitted against one another, Reni remains courteous and even kind towards Domenichino. It could be supposed that Reni understood that to engage in rivalries or petty feuds might be damaging to his status, or perhaps he possessed such confident in his artistic skills that he did not feel the necessity to indulge in badmouthing his competitors.

While Reni used his words to elevate Domenichino's status, he is seen to disapprove of arrogance in fellow artists, and, in the case of Albani, who spoke quite poorly of Reni publically, he undermines him, asserting his dominance by making him look foolish. An occasion is described when Albani was in Rome, and saw Reni playing chess "and, while looking over his shoulder, began giving him advice, even though he knew nothing and had never even tried his hand at the game", advising him "to make the worst blunders imaginable." Reni decided to make fun of the arrogant young artist by playing chess with him, and letting him win, leading Albani to believe that he was "a top master of chess", and apparently the artist held this delusion for years, thinking that "the attempts to disabuse him were made out of envy and malice."[633] This kind of humiliation as orchestrated by Reni for his own amusement again relates back to the

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[630] Ibid., 81: "...non ho mai udito parlare a Guido del Domenichino che con somma laude e venerazione, celebrandolo per lo meglio d'ogn'altro che a' suoi tempi vivesse..."
[631] Ibid., 79: "Dieci volte più bella [delle cose di Rafaelle] ... questo è quell'ultimo termine d'eccellenza a che gionger possano i moderni pennelli."
[632] Ibid., 49: "...mosso a proteggerlo ancora per far contraposto a Guido, il cui nome, con qualche gelosia anche di lui, sopra ogn'altro avanzavasi."
[633] Ibid., 135: "Quando trovossi in Roma con Guido e che, vedendolo giocare a scacchi e standogli sopra, si pose ad insegnargli, ancorché nulla ne sapesse né mai a simile passatempo provato si fosse, e perciò consigliandolo a più altri spropositi che dir si possano, postosi Guido a muover le tavole a suo modo ed a fingere per tal via vincere i giochi ... così s'impresse di saperne che si tenea pe 'l primo uomo che si trovasse in quell'esercizio ... e fu sì fiero questo e costante che si durò fatica e vi vollero anni ineri a farglilo distorre, credendosi ciò venirgli detto per invidia e per malignità."

literary device described by Kris and Kurz, and is telling of his superior intelligence, and also his distaste for cockiness or bravado amongst fellow artists.

At times Reni's personality is seen to have bearing on his painting technique – particularly regarding his handling of certain subjects. Reni is known to have been a deeply religious man, with a profound devotion to the Virgin Mary, who he always depicts with the utmost respect and beauty. It has been noted previously the artist's use of expensive pigments in the robes of the Virgin and the evidence of *pentimenti* relating to depictions of the Virgin, this aspect of his personality seems to be intrinsically linked to his painting methods. His devotion to the Madonna was comparable only to his relationship with his mother – with whom he was extremely close, and lived with alone for the remainder of her life following his stepfather's death, which was some time in the 1620s. Despite holding these women in great reverence, Reni was infamous for his irrational fear of and animosity toward *all* other women. As a result of this fear, the artist was averse to having women in his studio for use as models, despite being a conventional practice since the Renaissance. Spear describes Reni's women as "looking like putty" – that is, boneless, gelatinous, shapeless figures, that "seem to want that materiality that results from familiarity, if not with a model, then with a lover or wife."[634] This contrasts with Raphael's use of lovers as live models, illustrated by Vasari's account of one of the artist's mistresses, who Raphael "loved until he died", and made a "beautifully lifelike portrait of".[635] Reni did make use of some female models, and while his female faces are painted with mastery and beauty, his ability to paint naked bodies comes across as lacking. The breasts of his *Cleopatra* in the Pitti Palace have been painted with so little shading or tonality that they seem to be merging with the rest of her soft, ill-formed torso, which has been denied any definition in collarbones or shoulders (fig. 3.14). The figure's breasts appear to have been painted by someone who resented the necessity to include feminine anatomy in his composition, and so instead barely painted the breast as a tiny nipple and a small shadow on the skin.

Other theories have been posited about Reni's personal identity and its influence on his choice of subject matter – that is, the artist's sexuality. Reni remained a bachelor until his death in 1642, and no mention is made by the sources of any romantic

[634] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 77.
[635] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 307.

relations with women or men – Malvasia writes that "it was generally thought that he was a virgin" and that while observing the young girls who served as his models "he was like marble" and "never wanted to be alone" with them.[636] That is not to say, as noted, that Reni did not make use of female models – Malvasia names two of the "most beautiful women of the time" whom Reni used as models for his paintings of *Lucretia* and *Cleopatra,* and drawings exist from the Carracci Academy to suggest the use of female nude models, so it is likely Reni was somewhat practiced in representing the female form.[637] However, his outward dislike and fear of women as reported by the *seicento* sources have led some scholars to suggest that the artist may have been experiencing some sort of latent homosexuality, perhaps repressed because it would not have been in keeping with his ardent Catholic beliefs. It is important to note, however, that there is no evidence in the sources to suggest that Reni identified as homosexual – this has only been inferred from descriptions of his unmarried lifestyle and misogynistic tendencies. In fact, accounts by the seventeenth-century sources might be more suggestive of asexuality than homosexuality. His subject matter might agree with the supposition of modern scholars that Reni was homosexual – for example, the artist's attention in detailing every contour of the muscular body of his *Victorious Samson* – but the same could be said of many artists who painted male nudes. His practice of repeating certain compositions might also be related to the origin of this speculation. Richard Spear wrote about Reni's multiple versions of *Saint Sebastian* (which were the inspiration for Yukio Mishima's autobiographical novel, describing his "homosexual self-discovery") as depictions of a "passive nude male body" which was "relatively uncommon in art" when compared to the eroticisation of the female body in painting.[638] That such a reportedly unusual treatment of this subject should be repeated dozens of times within Reni's oeuvre might be linked to theories of the artist's latent desires. Some of the other compositions repeated multiple times during the artist's career, his *Suicide of Lucretia* and *Suicide of Cleopatra*, may stem from his personality traits also. While the desire for these works within the art market is linked to pervading misogyny in *seicento* society, it has proved difficult for modern scholarship to separate Reni's repeated

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[636] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 126: "Fu comunemente tenuto per vergine ... essendosi sempre mostrato una marmo alla presenza e contemplazione di tante belle giovani, che gli servirono di modello, ed in ritrar le quali mai volle ridursi solo e rinserrarsi."

[637] Ibid., 135: "Osservò anche e ritrasse la sig. Contessa de' Bianchi, e la sig. Contessa Barbezzi, che furono due delle più belle dame di que'tempi, e se ne valse in Lucrezie, Cleopatre e simili..."

[638] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 70.

depictions of dying women from his reported hatred of that sex, and the enjoyment he seemed to derive from modelling beautiful male forms. It would be inappropriate, however, to assign a sexual identity to the artist based on subject matter and reports of misogyny. Such an identity has also been ascribed to Reni's contemporary, Caravaggio, in twentieth-century scholarship, but, according to John Varriano , the concept of "homosexuality" as an identity was only recognised fully in 1870, with the publication of Westphal's article on "contrary sexual sensations".[639] In the seventeenth century, while sodomy was understood as a sin, the concept of "homosexuality" had not yet developed, so to identify Reni as such would be a conlusion based on modern concerns. Despite this, the link between Reni's apparent dislike for women proves relevant to the study of his subject matter, and to his practice of repeating compositions, which is discussed in chapter four.

3.5. Teaching in the Via delle Pescherie

Reni's studio served not only as an area of painting production, but, like that of his first master and most others, also a place of learning. Reni trained many students during the course of his career, several of whom also served as assistants. Here, these students and their positions in Reni's studio will be identified (where possible) and the training they received from their master examined. Malvasia writes that it is Reni's renown as a great master, bestowing "great fortune on his pupils" that led him to consider it appropriate to provide "observations about the purpose and organisation of his studio", which has proved a valuable account in this investigation.[640] Malvasia describes Reni's workshop as one of such acclaim that "no one could be judged to be a good painter during this period if he had not had the honour of being his pupil."[641] He describes the majority of students as "reasonable and open" and a curious and delightful "compendium", made up of "all the nations under one roof", with a variety of

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[639] David M. Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality", in *Representations,* no. 63 (1998), 93, cited by John Varriano, *Caravaggio: The Art of Realism* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 66.

[640] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 107: "...facendogli gran fortuna il solo nome di un tanto maestro, del quale però non stimerò fuor di maestro, del quale però non stimerò fuor di proposito, per una giovevole forse non meno, che dilettevole informazione, spiegar qualche osservazione circa i termini del suo studio..."

[641] Ibid.: "...che a suoi tempi non fosse stimato buon pittore chi d'esser stato suo scolare non si fosse potuto pregiare..."

languages and costumes.[642] It seems that Reni's reputation for teaching extended beyond his locality, and attracted students from many countries. Bellori writes that "the young flocked to Guido's school from all parts, not only from the cities of Italy, but from foreign nations as well, and he welcomed them kindly, distributing them in various rooms according to the level of their training, some to draw, some to paint."[643] These reports by both Bellori and Malvasia evidencing the popularity Reni's "school" of painting serve as testament to the artist's eminence in the *seicento* art world as painter and a teacher. The difference between a "school" and a "workshop" is, as Cavazzini points out, unclear. While here, Bellori refers to Reni's "school", Cavazzini suggests that the difference between the two might occur in their educational focus – while a "school" stressed instruction from a theoretical point of view, a "workshop" focused on production.[644] By this logic, the term "workshop" might be considered more appropriate in describing Reni's premises on the Via delle Pescherie, but the word *scuola* is used regularly by the sources to describe Reni's residence as a place of learning.

Reni's training with the Carracci contrasted somewhat with the training he provided to his own students, in that when Reni entered the Carracci academy he paid no fees, while Reni was said to have charged most of his students for their training.[645] Reni's reasoning in charging students is explained by Malvasia, who writes that "just as it was custom in grammar school" for students to pay for tuition, the same "should apply to schools of design, since [Reni] had taught them rightly with love", and so the artist charged his students one *doppia* (three *scudi*) per month.[646] The artist also reasoned that having a fee in place would encourage students to study hard, so as not to let their parents down, and that fees would encourage a higher calibre of students to enter his school and "noble profession" – that is, only the more wealthy in society.[647]

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[642] Ibid., 73: "Fra questi il più ragionevole, e manifesto era poi sempre la moltitudine degli scolari, che come di tutti i paesi, formavano con la varietà delle lingue, e de' costumi un curioso, e dilettevole compendio di tutte le nazioni in una sola casa..."
[643] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 366: "Concorrevano i giovani da tutte le parti alla scuola di Guido, non solo delle città d'Italia, ma d'altre nazioni forastiere che egli riceveva amorevolmente, distribuendoli in diverse stanze conforme l'abilità de'loro principii, chi a disegnare, chi a dipingere."
[644] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 54.
[645] Morselli, 'Bologna', 158.
[646] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 127: "...che come s'usa alla scuola di Grammatica, così in quella del disegno dovrebbero pagare gli scolari al Maestro una doppia il mese; perch' egli con qualche amore e per debito avria insegnato loro..."
[647] Ibid.: "...che non potendo tutti pagar tanto, la canaglia non si saria posta a sì nobile professione..."

Not all artists charged for tuition, nor could many maintain such a practice; according to Passeri, in imposing fees for his lessons, Lanfranco got very few students.[648] This would support the notion of Reni's school as extremely popular, and suggest that only artists of particular talent or fame could afford to impose fees on their pupils. The practice of charging students was more traditional in Northern Europe than it was in Italy, where the master often paid pupils a wage, rather than vice versa.[649] Reni did, however, occasionally pay students a small wage when they act as his assistants, as will be observed later in this chapter.

Bellori praises Reni for his abilities as a teacher, who, the biographer tells us, possessed "a facility for demonstrating correctness in drawing as well as that blessed style of his which his pupils were also invited to learn from the beauty of his paintings".[650] This accounts for the basis for Reni's teaching, which was in line with that of Calvaert – the practice of drawing, and the assimilation of the master's style. Bellori provides some evidence of Reni's teaching methods, whereby the painter retouched his pupils' works "in order to demonstrate his teachings in practice", though the writer notes that this teaching method resulted on occasion in Reni "letting himself be carried away in retouching their pictures, the young men managed to make large profits out of this by passing off the retouched copies as originals", which has led to some of the challenges associated with the attribution of Reni works today.[651] Bellori's reports of students passing off their paintings as Reni originals, and selling them for personal profit is similar to accounts of situations which arose in Rembrandt van Rijn's studio. In Rembrandt's case, paintings were produced by students that were so similar to their master's hand that they were passed off as Rembrandt works. It was said of Rembrandt's student Govaert Flinck that he managed to imitate his master's hand "so well that various of his paintings were believed to have been made by

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[648] Giovan Battista Passeri, *Die Künstlerbiographien Von Giovanni Battista Passeri,* edited by Hess, Jacob (Rome: Worms am Rhein, 1995), 162, cited by Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 54: "Si rese poco atto a fare allievi, o perché non havesse comunicativa bastante per suggerire insegnamenti, o che si rendesse esoso nel dare precetti, hebbe più sufficienza d'insegnare con le opere che con la lingua."

[649] Martin Wackernagel, *The world of the Florentine Renaissance artist: projects and patrons, workshop and art market* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 333, and Gabrielle Bleeke- Byrne, 'The education of the painter in the workshop', *Children of Mercury* (1984), 28-29, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 225.

[650] Bellori, *Lives*, trans. by Wohl, 366: "Era egli facile nel dimostrare la purità del disegno e quella sua felice maniera che invitava anco i discepoli ad apprenderla nella bellezza de' suoi dipinti..."

[651] Ibid.: "...dal che nacque che lasciandosi poi trasportare nel ritoccare i quadri, i giovani venivano a cavarne molto profitto, facendo pasar le copie ritoccate per originali..."

Rembrandt himself – and were sold as such!"[652] Vasari recounts similar instances of copies being indistinguishable from originals with reference to Andrea del Sarto's copy (of 1525, now in Naples) after Raphael's *Portrait of Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi Rossi*, painted around 1517). The copy was reportedly secretly painted, which draws further parallels with the studio of Reni, where students apparently made unauthorised copies in secret. The work was given to the Duke of Mantua, Federigo Gonzaga, who thought he was getting the original. Vasari, who had apparently seen del Sarto make the copy, later visited Mantua where Giulio Romano, Raphael's former assistant, displayed the picture to him as the treasure of the Gonzaga collection, and was sure that it was a Raphael original.[653]

The sale of works painted by assistants and retouched by the master is reminiscent of Calvaert's reported practice of retouching Reni's paintings and selling them, "passing them off" under his own name for profit. However, in the case of these particular accounts, Bellori is suggesting that these works were sold unbeknownst to Reni. In a discussion of Reni's prices, Malvasia writes that "no less profit was made from the paintings that Guido retouched. They were many times sold as originals, I do not know with what awareness on the part of the sellers."[654] While the biographer refutes this practice in Calvaert's studio, he continues by defending Reni, writing that this likely happened because "under the pretext of making a correction or of giving instruction, [Reni] was innocently persuaded to improve something and to add more than one brush stroke."[655] Malvasia maintains the artist's innocence, and claims that these retouchings were a product of Reni's generosity in teaching his pupils, rather than, as with Calvaert, a result of greediness. Later in the *Felsina pittrice*, however, in the *Vite di Simone Cantarini*, Malvasia writes that, for his own advantage, Reni sold works by Cantarini under his own name, like a "little copper Madonna made by the

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[652] Arnold Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen,* vol. 3 (Amsterdam: Weduwe des Autheurs, 1721), 206, cited by Ernst van de Wetering, 'Principaelen' and Satellites: Pupils' Production in Rembrandt's Workshop', in *Rembrandt? The Master and his Workshop* (Denmark: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2006), 108.
[653] Vasari, *Lives* (1906), vol. 5, 43, cited by Muller, *Measures of Authenticity*, 144.
[654] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 24, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 256: "Minore ancora non su il guadagno, che si se ne' suoi ritocchi, che molte volte spacciaronsi per originali, non so con qual conscienza de' venditori..."
[655] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 72: "Minore ancora non fu il guadagno, che si fe ne' suoi ritocchi, che molte volte spacciaronsi per originali, non so con qual conscienza de' venditori..."

same and retouched afterward by Reni, and sold as his own work."[656] That Reni sold this work himself, "for his own advantage", is contradictory to the idea Malvasia attempts to portray in his *Life of Guido Reni*, where he describes Reni as naively retouching works for the benefit of his students. The sale of Cantarini's work as Reni's own brings Reni much closer in his practices to his first master Calvaert, who is criticised by the biographer for his deception in sales such as these.

Though Reni's studio is described as having been extraordinary in size, large studios were not unusual in the seventeenth century – the size of a workshop was not always fixed, and often directly related to the scale and quantity of the master's commissions.[657] Rubens, to meet his patron's demands, was also said to have an "unusually large studio" in which, similar to Reni's own studio, "positions ... were much coveted."[658] The Flemish artist's studio parallels Reni's in its apparent popularity. A letter written by the artist in Antwerp on the 11th May 1611 to Jacob de Bie notes a similar demand for places in Rubens's studio as that outlined by Malvasia and Bellori in reference to Reni's studio. Rubens writes that it is impossible for him to accept a young man recommended by de Bie as a pupil because he is being flooded with applications, and has "had to refuse over one hundred [students], even some of my own relatives..."[659] It has been noted, however, that archival records estimate Rubens' studio as housing considerably fewer members than Reni's, approximately twenty-three pupils. However, this might have been a choice that the artist made, as opposed to a reflection of his studio's popularity. If, in his letter to de Bie, Rubens is accurate in his claim that he turned down over one hundred applications from potential students (and he stresses to the recipient that he is "not exaggerating"), then it may be that Reni's studio was much larger in size because he openly accepted more pupils, while Rubens seems to have made the conscious decision to limit himself to fewer, perhaps so that they could be given proper attention from their master during their education. As a result, it seems misleading to judge the popularity

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[656] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 2nd ed., II, 376: "...avvantaggiosamente rivendute per di Guido, fra le quali picciola Madonna in rame fattagli fare dall'istesso, ritoccata poscia, e donata come opra sua."

[657] Tiarna Doherty, Mark Leonard and Jørgen Wadum, 'Brueghel and Rubens at Work: Technique and the Practice of Collaboration', in *Rubens & Brueghel: A Working Friendship,* edited by Anne T. Woollett and Arian van Suchtelen (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006), 217.

[658] Doherty, Leonard and Wadum, 'Brueghel and Rubens at Work', 217.

[659] Peter Paul Rubens, Letter 22, Antwerp, 11th May 1611, To Jacob de Bie, cited and translated by Ruth Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), 55.

of a studio or the quality of the tuition offered within from the number of students it housed at one time.

It seems, in fact, that there were problems associated with the large numbers accepted as pupils to Reni's studio. Both his house and studio were located on the Via delle Pescherie, but he was forced to rent other rooms in the neighbourhood to accommodate an overflow of students and to preserve some semblance of privacy.[660] Not only was space an issue, but Reni also encountered problems controlling his students. Malvasia wrote that the "throng" of students frequently wound up in fights and revelries, and damaged some of his important works ("such as the great votive painting which was staved in by Cavazza").[661] Problems have been noted regarding students taking retouched works from the studio and selling them without the knowledge of their master, but there are also accounts of instances in which students gained access to incomplete works by Reni and copied the compositions without his permission. According to Malvasia, Reni was forced to keep any of his major works that were in progress in a location outside his studio (he rented a room in the Accademia delle Porte) in an effort to prevent this illicit copying. Despite his efforts, a pupil named Vignati reportedly copied an *Abduction of Helen* over the course of three nights, by bribing the guard at the Accademia.[662] That Reni was not only forced to transport his paintings to a different location to "protect them from the avidity" of his students, but also had to maintain a guard at the door suggests that he had little control over those he taught. Despite Reni's students being seemingly difficult to control, Malvasia writes that he garnered respect from Francesco Gessi, who was previously known for his raucous behaviour, and was thrown out of Calvaert's studio. According to the biographer, "only in the school of Guido did [Gessi] seem to moderate his behaviour somewhat, because he was moved by the general respect in

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[660] Massimo Pirondini, 'Guido Reni: La Bottega e la Scuola', in *La Scuola di Guido Reni*, edited by Emilio Negro and Massimo Pirondini (Modena: Artioli Editore, 1992), 11, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 225.

[661] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Così con indiscreto miscuglio, che terminava per lo più in contrasti, bagordi ed insolenze ... Gli ruppero i più ragguardevoli quadri, come fu il pallione del Voto, sfondatogli dal Cavazza..."

[662] Ibid.: "...gli copiarono i più gelosi, come fu il ratto di Elena, ricavato in tre notti dal Vignati, corrotto con denari il custode della stanza all' Accademia delle Porte, ove per disenderlo dalla avidità di costoro, non finito l'avea fatto trasportare."

which so stern a master was held and instructed by the example of his wisdom and modesty."[663]

In a conversation with Scannelli, recounted in *Il microcosmo,* Reni "confers" to the writer the requirements of a good teacher for young artists. Reni says that a good master should have "a natural talent to understand emotions, a good foundation in theory, and to teach beginners the principles of painting", and that beginners needed to be "instructed with patience, love, and charity."[664] This finds parallels with Vasari's description of Raphael's teaching of the "vast number of artists" in his studio whom he "instructed with a love that belonged rather to children of his own than to his fellow craftsmen."[665] Reni's teaching methods as described by the sources seem to be in keeping with his aspirations. Malvasia's aforementioned description of the methods that Reni employed in teaching his students to paint hair, using a variety of objects, demonstrating different formations by "using false hair made of hemp or silk", "knotting and loosening them strangely", "and letting them fall in blonde wavy masses, as we see done marvelously in his *Magdalenes* and his *Sybils.*"[666] When viewing the National Gallery, London's *St. Mary Magdalene* in light of this information, this method of arranging hair appears evident. The hair falls from the saint's scalp in defined locks, similar to the manner in which silk pieces may sit were they attached to a mannequin. It would seem that Reni was quite inventive in his teaching methods, and went to some length to impart his knowledge and skill to his pupils. This may be a display of genuine generosity toward the young artists (though not entirely selfless considering the fees they were said to have paid), or it may be that Reni was training them specifically with the aim that they work for him. It is known that many of Reni's pupils went on to work as his assistants, and with a good knowledge of his painting style and working methods, these assistants could produce high quality copies for his studio.

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[663] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 125: "Solo nella scuola di Guido parve moderarsi alquanto, dal rispetto che comunemente portavasi ad un sì grave maestro e dall'esempio di sua saviezza e modestia mosso ed istrutto."
[664] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 348: "...dal natural talento per dar a conoscere i propri sentimenti, col fondamento di theorica, e pratica intorno al debito indirizzo de'principianti nella Pittura ... che questi tali hanno bisogno d'esser instrutti con patienza, amore, e carità."
[665] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 322.
[666] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 133: "...mostrado a' scolari su cocchi e su pile, con trecce finte de canape, o di seta, le regole e 'l modo di raccoglierle con bizzarria, rassettarle, e stranamente annodarle; lasciarle con certe negligenze, che, come disse quel gran poeta, siano artificii, cadere in biondi, e ondeggianti volumi, quali maravigliosamente si osservano nelle sue Maddalene, e nelle Sibille."

While noted for his generosity in teaching, in other manners Reni might have been considered quite strict as a master. Malvasia writes that Reni "repressed while they were still young their love of comfort and repose" so that they would not waste their youth (or their time in his studio) on "nonsense", and wouldn't "laze about." Reni's inspiration for this policy came from his first master, Calvaert – whose demands, Reni acknowledges, "seemed to him to be too hard and too heavy" at the beginning of his training, "later on he began working so that it was a comfort and satisfaction to him."[667] It is noteworthy that though Calvaert could not offer Reni the artistic training he desired as a youth, he instilled in him a work ethic which he carried on to his own students. Indeed, Scannelli writes that Reni said of his students that it was "through much effort, and long study [that they] had followed in his footsteps."[668]

Though Reni was, reportedly, in some ways strict with pupils, the overall impression given of the artist as a teacher is positive. Reni's contemporary and rival Domenichino, in contrast, was said to be considerably less partial toward the practice of teaching, and less nurturing towards his pupils. His studio was said to be a boring environment where pupils were subject to much restraint, with the artist favouring those who did not pose a threat to him, and producing few persons who made a name for themselves as artists in their own right.[669] Domenichino's teaching practices contrast quite starkly with Reni's. As noted in chapter one, Domenichino was not very active as a teacher, and is said not to have worked well in the presence of others, and therefore there were only a "small number of students who stayed in [Domenichino's] studio."[670] Malvasia names Domenichino's students as Giovanni Battista Ruggieri, Antonio Barbalonga, Francesco Cozza, Andrea Camessei and a man named "Pellegrino" who is otherwise unknown.[671] Passeri adds to this list to include Alessandro Fortuna, Pietro Testa, Giovanni Angelo Canini, Francesco Raspantino, Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, Nicolas Poussin, and the biographer himself.[672] Spear

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[667] Ibid., 128: "Che lo scolare non dovria perdere il più bel vigore dell' età per bagattelle, o stare in ozio; esser meglio riserbarsi ciò in quella età, che ama più il sollievo e 'l riposo ... per la insaziabilità del Calvart, che quanto al principio gli parve dura troppo e di peso, pigliando poi buon gusto nell'operare, gli fu di sollievo e contento..."

[668] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo*, 111-112: "...che mediante il molto di fatica, e longhezza dello studio havesse seguite le sue pedate..."

[669] Spear, *Domenichino*, 100.

[670] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 111: "...quando era egli in casa e che lavorava, non si zittiva ... Quindi è che pochi si contano i giovani che nella sua stanza continuassero..."

[671] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 233, cited by Spear, *Domenichino,* 100.

[672] Passeri, *Vite,* 70-71, 65, 305-06, 326, 62, cited by Spear, *Domenichino,* 100.

notes the absence only of Bellori and Algardi in this list, and writes that most of these artists spent only brief periods with Domenichino.[673] Those whom he did train – fourteen named in total – frequently grew impatient and left because of their master's antisocial nature while teaching. While Reni, in obvious contrast, thrived in a studio overflowing with students, that is not to say that the artist did not enjoy some solitude. Malvasia writes that to prevent unauthorised copying, "it was necessary for Guido to work in a room apart, dividing the youngsters into various classes in the other rooms."[674] Therefore, despite having a large student base, Reni may have maintained some of the privacy and seclusion favoured by Domenichino. Cortona said of Domenichino that the artist "wished he was the only painter on earth. He never wanted to produce followers, and when a student advanced too far, he would get rid of him", further affirming this master's reputation as an unsuitable and impatient teacher.[675] When compared to Reni, who, to his students, "he gave of himself unstintingly", it is apparent that Domenichino lacked the enthusiasm for teaching attributed to his contemporary.[676] It is notable that there should be such stark contrast between Reni and Domenichino as teachers, given that both men trained first under Denys Calvaert and later under the Carracci. Despite receiving what can only be presumed to have been very similar artistic educations, the training that these artists provided to their own students with was notably different.

While Reni, according to Bellori, taught pupils with varying levels of experience, "distributing them in various rooms according to the level of their training", his Dutch contemporary Rembrandt is said to have only accepted pupils after they had received some training elsewhere.[677] Sources provide evidence that, as a rule, Rembrandt's trainees had already been taught the foundations of art and painting outside his studio prior to entry, and "were supposed to be able to produce more or less full-blown, saleable paintings as well as etchings not long after entering his workshop".[678] Reni, in contrast, did not seek out artists who had already developed a style, but rather put

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[673] Spear, *Domenichino,* 100.
[674] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass: "In diversa stanza dunque fu necessitato ritirarsi a lavorare, distribuendo nell'altre in varie classi i giovani..."
[675] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 83: "non avrebbe volsuto vedere altro pittore al mondo che se stesso. Non volle mai fare allievi e, quando qualcuno si tirava avanti, lo si cacciava d'attorno."
[676] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "...nei quali si fosse pienamente sfogato."
[677] Bellori, *Lives*, trans. by Wohl, 366: "...distribuendoli in diverse stanze conforme l'abilità de' loro principii..."
[678] van de Wetering, 'Principaelen' and Satellites', 108.

a lot of time and effort into teaching his students to follow his own manner. That is not to say, however, that some of his students did not enter his workshop having had prior masters – many did – but this is not reported as a prerequisite. Rubens seems to have accepted students on a similar basis – during the time that Van Dyck was likely to have been working in the painter's studio, the majority of Rubens's pupils seem to have received their basic training elsewhere, though, like Reni (and unlike Rembrandt), there is no information to suggest whether this was a common practice or that it was a prerequisite for entry.[679]

As has been previously noted, though Reni was generally seen to be very confident in his abilities and did not indulge in rivalries, he apparently showed some jealously towards certain students – like that Annibale had felt towards him. Malvasia recounts a incident when his pupil, Francesco Gessi, "painted a *Judith* that was so lovely and so charming that Guido Reni, overcome with wonder, begged and implored him not to touch a thing, as it was the most exceptional work that had come – or would ever again come – from his hand" and that Reni "could not believe how quickly Gessi deployed his brush, confessing he was envious of such facility and boldness."[680] However, Reni's jealousy seems more complimentary than malevolent, and, unlike Annibale, Reni is not reported to have attempted to foster any rivalries between Gessi and other students, or to taint his career in any way.

3.6. Reni's students

Thus far, Reni's teaching methods and abilities have been described, only mentioning a few of his pupils by name. It has already been noted that Reni's studio in Bologna supposedly housed an extraordinary number of students – eighty at one point in time, and an estimated total figure to have trained under Reni over the course of his career of "more than two hundred", as observed by Malvasia.[681] The biographer deems it "impossible to put together even an inadequate list of Guido's pupils" – which makes

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[679] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 8.

[680] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 123: "Fatta una Giuditta così bella e vezzosa che Guido, soprafatto per maraviglia, a braccia in croce lo pregò a non la muover punto essendo riuscita la più rara fattura che mai fosse uscita e per uscir più fosse dalle sue mani...", "...non potendosi dar pace della velocità del pennello e confessando invidiargli una tanta prontezza ed ardire."

[681] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 106: "...perchè talora fu che ne contammo sino a dugento di ben cogniti..."

the modern writer's task all the more challenging – but he compiles a list of sorts anyway, writing that he has not listed the names in any order, but "called them to mind haphazardly" and adds several more at different points in his text.[682] Some of these names are explicitly referred to as students, while others are mentioned in the context of their role within the studio. While attempting to come up with a complete list of approximately two hundred students has proved be an impossible task in itself, this is made more complex by the differentiation – or lack thereof – between students and assistants. There is a crossover between certain students and assistants who are identified by Malvasia in his biography. It is not clear when Reni's pupils ceased their education and became formally recognised as studio assistants – that is, if this did indeed occur. Perhaps the differentiation was made when he paid certain pupils, as opposed to receiving a tuition fee from them – though in many instances, Malvasia continues to describe those receiving money for their work in Reni's studio as "pupils".

Among Reni's students, Malvasia explicitly identifies Francesco Gessi, Giovanni Giacomo Sementi, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, Simone Cantarini (Pesarese), Giovanni Battista Ruggieri, Michele Desubleo (Michele Flammingo), Bollanger of Troa, the Cittadini (Pier Francesco and his son, Carlo), Antonio Randa, Domenico Maria Canuti, Giovan Battista Bolognini, Venanzio, "and many, many others."[683] Other students mentioned by Malvasia in Reni's biography include Cagnacci, Brunetti, Giovanni Giacomo da Mano, Pietro Lauri, Lorenzo Loli, Flaminio Torre, Bartolomeo Marescotti, Ruggieri, Ercolino (Ercole de Maria), Bartolomeo Coriolano, Emilio Savonanzi, Giacinto Dissegna (Siboga), Bernardino Cervi, Giovanni Maria Tamburini, Giacinto Bellini (Cavaliere), and "members of the Violini family". Several other students are known to have worked under Reni, though they are not named explicitly by his biographers. Armanda Pellicciari came up with a total of fifty names of students of Reni, published in her article entitled in *La bottega di Guido Reni*, which included all those identified by Malvasia, except one name – the Cittadini.[684] Many of those names have been excluded from a list of Reni's students by Negro and Pirondini in their research on Reni's *scuola,* based on various items of historiographical evidence. Negro and Pirondini exclude Domenico Maria Canuti, for example, classifying him an artist who only had association with Reni's studio, based on the fact that he was just

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[682] Ibid.: 106-107: "...non pongo per ordine, raccordandomene in confuso..."
[683] Ibid., 106: "...il Lanfranchi, il Gessi, il Sementi, il Sirani, il Pesarese, il Rugieri, il Desubleo, Bolanger, i Cittadini, il Randa, il Canuti, il Bolognini, Venanzio, e tanti, e tanti..."
[684] Armanda Pellicciari, 'La bottega di Guido Reni', in *Accademia Clementina: Atti e memorie,* vol. 22 (1988), 119-141.

sixteen when Reni died and therefore was unlikely to have been a pupil.[685] However, given that Reni himself was said to have been just nine years old when he reportedly entered Calvaert's studio, and it was recommended for artists to begin their studies at a young age, it does not seem implausible that Canuti was taught by Reni. Negro and Pirondini's list totals twenty-eight names; only four of these are not named explicitly by Malvasia as students in his Life of Reni. They are Giacinto Gilioli, Enrico Kaiel, Ludovico Lana, and Elisabetta Sirani.

Malvasia differentiates pupils from those artists who worked with Reni from the start purely as assistants, but not those who enter his studio as pupils and subsequently take on responsibility that would be suggestive of a higher status. It might have been thought that artists who had studied previously under other masters would be described as assistants upon entering Reni's studio, but a great many of Reni's pupils are in fact known to have trained under alternative masters prior to Reni; for example, Brunetti under Lucio Massari, Sementi and Gessi (like Reni) under Calvaert, Michele Desubleo under Abraham Janssens, Sirani under Cavedoni. Despite having previously received some formal training, these artists are still described by Malvasia – throughout their time in Reni's studio – as students or pupils, as opposed to assistants. Of the students named by Malvasia, special mention is afforded to "Monsù Pietro Lauri, a Frenchman, Monsù Bollanger of Troa, Loli, and Dinarelli", who were some of the only artists that Reni "kept by his side" after being forced to move other students into separate rooms due to overflow and problems with unauthorised copying.[686] Bellori gives a similar list of Reni's "principal pupils" as Sementi, Gessi, Emilio Savonzani, Simone Cantarini, and Sirani, "all of whom proved to be good artists."[687] Malvasia also mentions Giovanni Andrea Sirani, who showed "sufficient promise to relieve Guido from the tiring work that he could not do alone" when the artist was very busy in the studio – implying that Sirani was one pupil who took on a role within Reni's studio as an assistant, working on commissions to "relieve" his

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[685] Massimo Pirondi, 'Guido Reni: La Bottega e la Scuola', in *La Scuola di Guido Reni*, edited by Emilio Negro and Massimo Pirondini (Modena: Artioli Editore, 1992), 9.
[686] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Ritenne solo presso di se Monsù Pietro Lauri Francese, Monsù Bollanger di Troa, il Loli, il Dinarelli..."
[687] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 366: "Li suoi principali allievi furono Gio. Giacomo Sementi, Francesco Gessi, Emilio Savonanzi, Simone Cantarini detto il Pesarese e ultimamente Gio. Andrea Sirani, li qualli tutti riescirono buoni artefici..."

master. He also mentions that Reni valued Sirani for his "fidelity and discretion."[688] Evidently, alongside ability to paint, discretion was one of Guido's priorities in choosing artists to work with him. Presumably this is due to the reported sale of unofficial paintings retouched by the artist in studio by his pupils, as well as unofficial copies being made of works he had not yet unveiled to his customers.

Reni is quoted describing Sirani not just as a pupil, but as his "friend", and "praised him among all his students", given that the artist was one of few who remained in Reni's studio until his death, along with Loli, Pietro Lauri and his personal assistant, Marchino.[689] Giacomo Sementi and Francesco Gessi are identified as "two of [Reni's] best pupils, who "were able to undertake and quickly dispose of a great deal of work."[690] These pupils certainly seem to have acted, for a time, as studio assistants to Reni. As noted in the first chapter, Malvasia describes an occasion when Reni was requested to paint frescoes for the Duke of Mantua – but "dispatched [Sementi and Gessi] instead", without any drawings, "helping them only with counsel and discussions."[691] That two pupils would complete an important commission on their master's behalf only with verbal direction implies a status beyond student; this must make Gessi and Sementi studio assistants, and valuable ones at that.

Reni is said to have paid some of his pupils – though the amounts were meagre – affording them superior status to those pupils who were fee-paying in Reni's workshop. It may be possible that this is a method of differentiating those students who also act as studio assistants from those who were only under tuition. To Dinarelli, for example, "he gave one *scudo* a month and his meals."[692] Morselli measures this payment against another average wage – writing that it equated roughly to seventeen times the amount a silk weaver would have earned, though it constituted a low salary overall, as will become more apparent in the following chapter where Reni's own

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[688] Malvasia *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "...e il Sirani, della fede e discretezza ... della sufficienza promettersi, in alleggerirsi di quella fatica, alla quale rendeasi impossibile potesse egli solo resistere..."
[689] Ibid., 102, 121: "...in particolare al suo Sirani, che fece atto come di caramente stringersi al seno, lodandolo fra tutti i suoi allievi...", "...Marchino, il Loli, Monsù Pietro, il Sirani vi si mantennero sino alla sua morte."
[690] Ibid., 73: "...Pregiavasene Guido, e vantavasi aver duo' soggetti da poter intraprendere qual si fosse stato gran lavoro, e ben presto uscirne..."
[691] Ibid., 74: "Pregato egli perciò dall'Altezza di Mandova ad andare a dipingere colà certi freschi, vi mandò questi, quali anche stimò superfluo accompagnar co' schizzi, aiutandoli col consiglio in voce solo, e col discorso."
[692] Ibid., 73: "...al quale poi in ultimo dava una scudo il mese, e la tavola..."

earnings are examined.[693] Francesco Gessi also received payment from Reni while in the studio. Gessi was apparently promised payment for work in the Chapel of San Gennaro in Naples, where Reni took him to work, but reportedly the master was unprepared for the commission and it "came to nothing", and Reni "did not settle up with him for the provisions which had been agreed upon for those months."[694] Despite not having been paid, it is noteworthy that Gessi and Reni had an agreement of sorts for "provisions" (whether that be monetary payment or lodgings and food is not specified), which implies a status beyond that of a student. Given that other students in fact paid Reni for their education, to be paid by the master must have accorded both Gessi and Dinarelli special status within the studio – perhaps for their work as assistants.

Malvasia determines that all of Reni's pupils (as well as some other artists) followed his manner, "or always tried to approach it", implying that the master's style was very influential on his pupils.[695] This can be supported by a number of works attributed to Reni's students. When creating copies or versions of Reni's compositions, many of his students were very successful in imitating his manner. A version of *Fortune and Cupid* painted by Sirani around 1660 (fig. 3.15) is a copy of a composition by Reni now in the Accademia San Luca (fig. 3.16), and still shows close affinity to Reni's style, despite having been created about fifteen years after his death. While it appears that Sirani has used lesser quality blues – possibly smalt or azurite where Reni might have used ultramarine – and less lead white, leading to darkening in his work, the copy's similarities with Reni's composition are readily apparent. Sirani's faces lack the colour and expression of Reni's, but this apparent pallor may again be a result of fading. The softness with which the flesh of both bodies is painted is very similar, and characteristic of Reni's female nudes. It is apparent that Reni's time spent teaching his students to paint hair was not in vain; the flowing hair of *Fortune* in Sirani's painting is created using brushwork almost identical to Reni's (fig. 3.17 and 3.18). Even when painting new compositions, stylistic similarities can be found in the work of Reni's students. Francesco Gessi's *Temptation of San Tommaso d'Aquino* (fig. 3.19) is one such example. The composition of Gessi's work, as well as the manner in

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[693] Morselli, 'Bologna', 158.
[694] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 75-76: "Del Gessi parimenti ebbe pensiero valersi nella cappella di S. Gennaro a Napoli, conducendolo seco, se ben poi inutilmente...", "...non saldargli la pattnita provigione per que' mesi..."
[695] Ibid., 140: "Seguirono la sua maniera, o cercarono accostarvisi sempre, non solo suoi allievi..."

which the artist has painted the figures' drapery is reminiscent of Reni's *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (fig. 3.20). The tense interactions between the figures in both works show similarity, as do their gestures and expressions. Close examination of the drapery in these works show that Gessi's brushwork is very close to Reni's. Both artists have painted drapery that folds and bunches up, created by painting in blocks of colour using a large stiff bristled brush using strong strokes to imply the direction and texture of the folds, and adding highlights using a smaller, softer brush, using white paint that follows the contours of the folds.

The ability to imitate style would have been a requirement for any artist working in the studio of an eminent master – to achieve any status within the studio, it was necessary for a pupil to be able to closely imitate his master so as to be used for commissions, especially fresco cycles. The artist is seen to have greatly valued those assistants who could perform tasks to a brief set by their master – like Gessi and Sementi – allowing him to maintain full control over pieces while delegating the physical work to others. Reni's practice of using pupils as assistants is sure to have shaped his teaching methods. Given that he is seen to have used pupils such as Gessi and Sementi in important commissions with minimal instruction, his interests as a *caposcuola* may not have been in providing young artists with an education with a view to them becoming masters, but rather, to becoming his assistants. He achieved this by teaching his pupils to paint in his manner – evidenced by the multitude of copies produced by students within his studio, and the difficulty inherent in differentiating the hands of the master and the pupils or assistants. Ercole de Maria (as described in chapter one), or "Ercolino di Guido" as he was known, was a pupil whose primary role within Reni's studio was in producing copies of his master's work, with absolute imitation of his master's hand, but was, as a result, incapable of taking on commissions of his own.[696] Cavazzini notes that this was not a unique occurrence and cites a similar case in the Carracci circle regarding Lucio Massari, as an example of a student who, for lack of inventive ability, never progressed beyond the stage of copying his master's works.[697] De Maria differed from those in the studio of Reni's closest competitor Domenichino, whose assistants are described by Malvasia as

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[696] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 253, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 232: "Non fu egli grand'uomo, e da se pcoo far seppe, ma copiava ben poi le cose di quest'ultimo in modo..."

[697] Bellori, *Vite,* 105, cited by Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 69: "Lucio Massari in Bologna sua patria seguitò la scuola de' Carracci, né alcuno vi fu che meglio di lui copiasse l'opere loro..."

having painted in a style very distinct from their master.[698] A *St. Joseph* attributed to de Maria (fig. 3.21) appears to have been based on a composition by Reni from Brera, Milan (fig. 3.22), known only from photograph, and illustrates his ability to imitate his master's work. The student's *testa* is not quite as well-proportioned as Reni's and appears slightly lopsided, though his use of brushwork in depicting the aging skin of the saint comes very close to that of his master's own.

It was noted in chapter one that Simone Cantarini was trained closely in Reni's manner – so close, in fact, that Cantarini's work could pass for his master's – as with his "little copper Madonna" as described by Malvasia. Vasari makes similar claims about a young Raphael – writing that, in studying his master Pietro Perugino's style, "he imitated his work so exactly in every detail that it was impossible to tell the difference between the copies made and his master's originals."[699] It would seem that the ability to instil style upon a pupil was seen as the mark of a good master, as was the ability to imitate style the mark of a good student. While Cantarini's copper cannot presently be identified, examination of Cantarini's known works sufficiently illustrates Malvasia's point. Cantarini's *St. Jerome* (fig. 3.23) might easily be mistaken for a work by Reni. Reni painted *St. Jerome* numerous times during his career, and Cantarini's manner in his work comes very close to Reni's own treatment of the subject. The figure's facial features, beard and hair are visually similar to the saint in Reni's National Gallery picture (fig. 2.100). Cantarini's *St. Jerome* is also comparable to another version of *St. Jerome* by Reni in Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 3.24). Many elements of this work appear to have been borrowed from or inspired by Reni's composition, including the brushwork on the saint's aging limbs and his red drapery, as well as the skull next to him.

Even students who leave Reni's studio to pursue their own careers are marked by their training with him, and some find it difficult to depart from their master's manner, just as Ludovico said of Reni when he left Calvaert's studio. When Francesco Gessi opens his own studio with the intentions of "surpassing" his master, Malvasia says that he "made pictures so extremely close to Guido's manner that, if they lacked the great foundation and knowledge specific to this master, almost outdid him in a greater

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[698] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 113: "...che tutti tennero, parmi, unad maniera molto da quella del loro maestro diversa."
[699] Vasari, *Lives,* I, trans. by Bull, 285.

freedom and softness truly special to Francesco."[700] That Gessi *almost* outdid Reni – but failed to truly surpass him – is a statement on the biographer's behalf of Reni's superior talents. Malvasia notes especially Gessi's "very beautiful Saint Francis receiving the stigmata, unfailingly taken to be by Guido and so often copied as such, in the Venenti Chapel in the church of the reverend Zoccolanti fathers."[701] This is presumably the work now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (fig. 3.25), where Reni's influence is easily observable. Gessi has been inspired in his figure of St. Francis by Reni's *Pala della Peste,* adapting the figure's pose for the new composition (fig. 3.26). The angel to the left of the saint is reminiscent of Reni's *St. Michael* (fig. 2.117) in both the colours of the drapery and facial features, while the face of the angel on the right is visually similar to Reni's painting of *St. Sebastian* in Auckland, or to the figure of St. John in the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* (figs. 3.27 and 3.28).

The reports mentioned in chapter one regarding Reni's students copying his works in secret suggest that while Reni's pupils respected his talent and ability to teach, they lacked respect for him in other ways, in that they took advantage of his hands-on teaching methods and were said to have sold works he had retouched. There are precedents for such reports of "unofficial copies" being made and sold as the master's own work. Carlo Ridolfi's biography of Titian's student, Polidoro da Lanciano, describes occasions on which Titian left behind the keys to his private rooms, and his assistants gained entry and made copies from some of his paintings there, which Titian later "would unwittingly rework" and "would then pass for pictures from his own hand." Ridolfi goes on to say, that by this means "many works actually by the disciples have been credited to the master", a consequence of practices that the *seicento* sources describe similarly in relation to Reni's studio.[702] While initially Reni is lauded for gaining the respect of the young, unruly Francesco Gessi, and later making an assistant of him, ultimately he was betrayed by both he and Sementi, two of Reni's most valued pupils. Gessi, toward the end of his time in the master's service, openly

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[700] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 129: "...aperta stanza ... lasciavasi intendere volerlo anche trapassare un giorno, facendo allora quadri che veramente a quella maniera stranamente accostavansi e che, se non mostravano mai quel gran fondamento e sapere che in que' del Reni osservasi, lo superavan quasi in un certa maggior franchezza e pastosità che in quest'uomo veramente fu singolare."

[701] Ibid., 133-135: "...sì come per di Guido infallibilmente tenuto e per suo tante volte ricopiato il bellissimo San Francesco ricevente le stimmate all'altare de' signori Venenti entro la chiesa de' reverendi padri zoccolanti..."

[702] Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte; overo, Le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato,* 2 volumes, edited by Detlev von Hadeln (1915-24; Reprint, Rome: Società Multigrafica SOMU, 1965), I, 227, cited by Loh, *Titian Remade,* 20.

criticised Reni, describing him as "impossible to please", "an ingrate", and "one who did not keep his word", as well as criticising him for irresoluteness while working.[703] Sementi, who left Reni's service to go to Rome to work for the Cardinal of Savoy, also openly criticised Reni, "spreading through the papal court the story of Guido's procrastination."[704] Gessi's ultimate reason for leaving was reportedly twofold. Firstly, there was the lack of compensation received for his time in Naples with Reni, as previously noted. The second was that Reni "denied him payment for the many works he had painted and finished before his departure."[705] It is surprising that Reni should treat one of his "best pupils" in such a manner, denying him payment, considering that payments factored into his own departure from both Calvaert's studio and the Carracci Academy.

Malvasia also describes artists as students who were not known to have been under Reni's tuition at all – for example, Lanfranco. Though Malvasia counts him among a group of "distinguished men and great masters", he includes Lanfranco amongst a list of artists who formally trained under Reni, including Gessi, Sementi, Sirani and Cantarini. Lanfranco, on the other hand, worked for Reni as what might be would considered an assistant in Rome, on a number of fresco cycles. Malvasia even notes, earlier in the biography that Reni "used Lanfranco" for the frescoes in San Gregorio, "since Cavedoni, whom he had employed and to whom he gave twenty *scudi* a month ... wanted to return to Bologna."[706] Presumably, if Lanfranco was called forth to replace a paid employee, he was not working as Reni's student. It was not uncommon in the seventeenth century to hire competent painters for specific projects, but that they are identified in the sources as students seems problematic. Rubens, for example, is known to have brought in specialist painters for collaboration on specific works, but these artists were independent of his studio and not described as students of Rubens.[707] It is possible that Malvasia, who held Reni in such esteem, considered the artist's influence so far reaching that anyone with whom he worked would have learned from him, thereby making them a student, though perhaps not in the formal

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[703] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 75: "Incontentabile poi ... tareggiandolo d'ingrato ...mancator di parola."
[704] Ibid., 76: "...disse minar per la Corte le lunghezze di Guido, tutto datosi in preda al giuoco..."
[705] Ibid.: "...negargli anche le mercedi di molte opre fatte, e finite per lui prima del partire..."
[706] Ibid., 54: "...del quale con gran soddisfazione erasi anche valso in S. Gregorio; poi chè il Cavedoni, che pure colà avevalo servito e al quale dava venti scudi al mese ... volle tornarsene a Bologna..."
[707] Gregory Martin, *The Flemish School, circa 1600-circa 1900* (London: National Gallery Company, 1986), 238-239, cited by Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 17.

sense. Certainly, Lanfranco is influenced by Reni's style and technique – the loose brushwork and muted palette of his *Samson Skinning the Lion* of 1635-37 (fig. 3.29) owes considerably to Reni's late works, like *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (fig. 2.33). Even the unusual subject matter may have been inspired by a fresco by Reni painted in 1608 on the ceiling of the Aldobrandini Wedding Hall in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican in Rome.[708]

Malvasia names four artists "that it suited him to employ" while he was in Rome – presumably giving them the status of assistants. These, as previously noted, were Antonio Carracci, Giacinto Campana, Francesco Albani, and, "above all [Giovanni] Lanfranco."[709] These artists are distinctly described as employees as opposed to pupils (besides the previously discussed remark made about Lanfranco), and payments are recorded to them in Reni's Roman account book, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Campana is mentioned later again, as a "painter who assisted [Reni] in his work, and in whom he had confidence, to carry out the negotiations and receive payments", alongside Gotti.[710] This is further complicated by another occasion in which Reni describes Vincenzo Gotti as "a painter and also his companion, or rather his pupil."[711] However, Vincenzo Gotti was a pupil alongside Reni in Calvaert's studio and travelled with the artist in Rome, and he is not known to have trained formally under Reni. Presumably, this again is a looser use of the word "pupil", to mean that Gotti was influenced by or learned from Reni.

The description of Gotti and Campana as men Reni employed not only to paint, but to "carry out the negotiations and receive payments" opens up discussion on another somewhat confusing group of members within Reni's studio. Several assistants named by Malvasia are not described as painters, though some are known to have been, but rather are said to have dealt with Reni's business matters on his behalf, meeting patrons and reaching agreements for commissions. He names a man called Belcollare, who he describes as Reni's assistant, who acted as an intermediary between the artist and his patrons, but is not described as a painter in his own right,

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[708] http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/collezione/percorsi/percorsoEsp_A.php?IDSala=26&IDOpera=181#

[709] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 54: "Furono questi Anton Carracci, il Campana, l'Albini, ma più di tutti il Lanfranchi..."

[710] Ibid., 114: "...ne' quali faceva negoziare le opre e mandava a riscuotere i denari ad un Campana, ad un Gotti, pittori suoi confidenti e che l'aiutavano ne' lavori."

[711] Ibid., 122: "...al Dottor Gotti, figlio di Vincenzo Gotti, pittore anch'egli compagno..."

and doesn't seem to have had any artistic input in Reni's studio.[712] He also named Rognone, as "the first to enter his service", "a certain Alessandro" (Alessandro Barbieri), who succeeded Belcollare, and, "finally", Marchino (Marco Bandinelli), "who served him to his death."[713] Marchino is described as Reni's "master of the house, waiter, buyer, cook, housekeeper and model."[714] While Marchino is known to have painted compositions of his own and is generally considered to have been one of Reni's assistants, these men are not described by Malvasia as being active painters in Reni's studio, and might be thought of as personal assistants, while those pupils who worked on Reni's paintings may be referred to as studio assistants. Similar ambiguities of status are identified by Cavazzini in the studios of Roman painters – Benedetto Ricci was hired as domestic help in Agostino Tassi's household around 1619, and is referred to as "a servant in the parish records and *laborante* in trial records", reflecting a position which was similarly unclear to that of some employees in Reni's household.[715]

Malvasia writes that it was Reni's "wish to employ well-mannered, cultivated persons for each of his requirements", and therefore he availed of a number of artists to perform intermediary tasks, who he "jokingly" referred to as his "chamberlains."[716] This category of employee included members of all of the groups named above; some artists, personal assistants, studio assistants, and pupils. Campana and Gotti are named, as well as, in Rome, Ziamberlano (Luca Ciamberlano), Giardini and Marocco, in Bologna, "later on", Sig. Saulo Guidoti, Sig. Alessandro Barbieri, Speziale, Zanetti, Giulio Bonasone, as well as Francesco Gessi, Giacomo Sementi, Lorenzo Loli and Giovanni Andrea Sirani. Malvasia writes that Saulo Guidotti "painted under [Reni's] supervision for his own amusement and was not very good at it", implying an informal relationship between the artists.[717] The collaboration of "Sig. Luca Ciamberlano" is confirmed in Reni's account book, for his work with Reni on the frescos in Santa Maria

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[712] Ibid., 88: "Successe dunque Bartolomeo Belcollare, uomo destro molto, e avvenente..."
[713] Ibid., 88-89: "Il primo ch'entrò al suo servizio fu un certo Rognone...", "Entrò dunque in suo luogo un tale Alessandro...", "Marchino poi finalmente che lo servì sino alla morte..."
[714] Ibid., 105: "...servendolo da Mastro di Casa, da cameriere, da spenditore, da cuoco, da donna di governo, e da modello..."
[715] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 61.
[716] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 114: "Ambì d'impiegare in ogni sua occorrenza soggetti di proposito, manierosi e cittadini, servendosi di mercenari e salariati ne' servigi più bassi e dimestici.", "...suoi mastri di camera chamava egli, scherzando..."
[717] Ibid., 124: "...signor Saulo Guidotti, che dipinse per trattenimento sotto di lui e si portò mediocremente."

Maggiore, where the artist writes that Ciamberlano is to receive his payments while Reni is in Naples.[718]

Malvasia also identifies "the greatest students of them all" as "Albani and Domenichino – who again, were not formally under Reni's tuition - but to whom "Guido, then no more than a boy working under Denys Calvaert, gave the first principles of art."[719] Such a suggestion, that Reni was training his fellow artists while still a student himself, might indicate an innate ability for teaching. In his biography of Domenichino, Malvasia describes how at Calvaert's studio, "Guido – who was very soon to leave – was the first to give Domenico examples to copy", and considers the artist to have been Domenichino's first master.[720] Reni later overtook his own master in his skills as a teacher and came to instruct those who were previously under Calvaert's tuition, including Francesco Gessi and Giacomo Sementi who "moved to study under Guido, from whom [Gessi] profited greatly, as is seen in his works in Bologna, which arouse wonder and astonishment even today."[721] When the subject of the role of Reni's assistants is addressed in the next chapter, it is to studio assistants the account will refer – artists who may or may not have also been pupils, and undertook work on Reni's frescoes or easel paintings on the artist's behalf.

Reni's workshop as a place of learning came closer to those that the artist experienced in Calvaert's studio than that in the Carracci Academy. It has been noted that some of Reni's practices in selling retouched student works was very similar to Calvaert's, as well as the manner in which he withheld payments for works done by one of his most talented pupils, Francesco Gessi. The similarities between Reni and Calvaert as teachers continue, in that neither departed hugely from tradition. Reni maintained the typical relationship of students as subordinates to their master, rather than the more innovative methods introduced by the Carracci, who formed a space more open to independent thought and creative practice, which Reni apparently enjoyed during his time there. Considering Reni's apparent preference for the

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[718] Guido Reni, *Roman Account Book,* entry dated April 1612, cited by Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – I: The Account Book', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 113, no. 819 (1971), 316.

[719] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 106-107: "...come maggiori di tutti, l'Albani e il Domenichino, ai quali, anche putto, diede sotto Dionigio Fiammingo l'esemplare ed i primi principii..."

[720] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 43: "Qui ebbe sul principio da Guido (che poco poi stette a partirsene) il primo esemplare..."

[721] Ibid. 137: "...era passato anch'egli sotto la disciplina di Guido e fatto tal profitto che sono di stupore e recano maraviglia anch'oggi l'opre sue in Bologna..."

Carracci school as a student, it might be thought surprising that his own teaching came much closer to that of Calvaert, despite the academy having offered so much to young Reni. The explanation for Reni's decision not to follow this model this might lie in a major function of Reni's workshop – that of a successful business. The structure of the Carracci Academy did not lend itself to money-making, while the more traditional format of training students in one's own manner certainly did. In his teaching, Reni produced a number of artists who assisted him in a wealth of commissions, all the while maintaining creative control and stylistic coherency, the ultimate aim of which was to make money. The chapter that follows will discuss these commissions, and investigate just how profitable Reni's studio was as a business.

Chapter 4: The Workshop as a Business

Following discussion of Guido Reni's workshop as a place of learning in chapter three, this chapter will examine the artist's workshop as a business. It will consider the artist's studio as a commercial entity, beginning with Reni's use of assistants and their role within his studio – a topic closely related to that of Reni's teaching and his pupils. The chapter will include discussion of Reni's commissions, the manner in which he dealt with his patrons, and the influence that patrons exerted on the artist's working methods; that is, his use of assistants and the speed at which he executed works. Commentary on the pricing of paintings and Reni's earnings as an artist will also be introduced. Richard Spear has produced considerable research on this topic, as has Stephen Pepper in the publication of Reni's Roman account books. The information provided by these sources, as well as that by the *seicento* sources will be considered in the context of Reni's artistic and business practices. Prices will be examined in conjunction with the artist's use of assistants, and the artist's painting technique, to establish a potential link between studio practices and finances. Finally, the production of copies within Reni's studio and issues of attribution associated with Reni's work will be addressed. This will be approached both in terms of the physical creation of copies, and the thought processes and reasoning behind their creation and their attributional status. The artist's business practices will be measured in certain instances by comparison with Reni's contemporaries and his masters, to illustrate which of these were typical or atypical of his time.

The sources intended for use in this chapter include the *seicento* writers Mancini, Malvasia, Bellori and Scannelli (as well as, on occasion, Passeri and Baldinucci), as well as the aforementioned account book written by Reni during his time working in Rome, and published by Stephen Pepper in two parts in the Burlington Magazine in 1971. Useful, too, is a letter from the artist himself to a patron, published by Luisa Ciammitti in 2000. Also relevant to this subject are a number of modern sources which have investigated the "business" of painting and have been published in the last decade, including Haskell and Sohm's *Painting for Profit: The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painters* of 2010, especially the section dealing specifically with Bologna written by Raffaella Morselli, the 2010 publication entitled

Trade in Artists' Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700 and Patrizia Cavazzini's *Painting as Business in Early Seventeenth-Century Rome* (2008). Similarly informative are Michelle O'Malley's writing on Renaissance contracts, *The Business of Art* (2005), and, as noted in reference to Reni's pricing (and cited in previous chapters), Richard Spear's seminal publication *The "Divine" Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni* (especially the sections addressing the subjects of currency and Reni's earnings, and of artworks *di sua mano*), and his 2003 article, *Scrambling for Scudi*. The writing to follow intends to present much of the information previously published within a new framework, by relating it to the material presented in previous chapters on the artist's workshop practices and painting techniques. In doing so, it is the current writer's hope to illustrate a firm link between Reni's painting techniques and workshop output with his teaching practices and financial aims. This chapter will demonstrate that Reni's artistic pursuits, like those of many of his contemporaries, were driven by money – though his approach was, at times, more innovative and more successful.

4.1. The role of the studio assistant

The final section of chapter three formed an examination of the identity and status of Reni's students and assistants, noting that there was a frequent overlap between those who trained as students and worked as assistants in the Bolognese studio, and that there were also occasions on which Reni hired assistants from outside his studio for work on specific commissions. For the purpose of this discussion, "assistants" should be taken to refer to any painter who had a physical role in the creation of works commissioned directly to Reni, whether or not they also trained as students within his studio. The level of responsibility granted to assistants working for Reni seems to have varied from painter to painter. The use of studio assistants directly correlated with the financial objectives of an artist – when accepting numerous commissions, assistants became necessity. Reni, according to Malvasia, began making use of a multitude of assistants to overcome the fatigue associated with his new-found popularity upon his return to Bologna from Rome, because he was unable

to carry out the burden of work alone.[722] Domenichino's studio did not make use of a multitude of assistants until 1625-26, when he saw a large influx of commissions, and was forced to "expand his operation into what properly could be called a studio".[723] Similarly, Rubens's studio produced such a vast number of paintings which would have been impossible for the artist to complete alone and necessitated the use of assistants.[724] As noted in the preceding chapter, a considerable number of assistants and pupils are mentioned in the sources, though there are a select few whom Reni seems to have relied upon more than others, and whom therefore may have taken a more substantial role in the production of artworks. These assistants of note, as listed by Malvasia, included Giovanni Lanfranco, Francesco Gessi, Giacomo Sementi, Giovanni Andrea Sirani, Simone Cantarini, Lorenzo Loli and Giacinto Campana. It is through descriptions of the roles that these men fulfilled while in Reni's studio that accounts can be constructed of the part the assistant played in the production of Reni's works.

The seventeenth-century sources make many statements, which have been examined in chapter one, regarding the role of the assistant; Sirani, for example, roughed out his paintings on the basis of his drawings and carried out preliminary work.[725] The term "preliminary work" is vague and could imply very basic preparations which would have required considerable work from Reni to finish the painting, or more detailed preparations which would require only minor retouchings. Either is plausible, given that occasions are described in which Reni carried out only minor retouchings on the work of assistants or pupils.[726] Delegating preliminary work to assistants was conventional in many Renaissance and *seicento* studios, and would have included preparing canvases, "roughing out" the composition as described (that is, scaling up the drawing and sketching the composition onto the canvas in *abbozzo* form),

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[722] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "...quale rendeasi impossibile potesse egli solo resistere, per la quantità delle commissioni, che troppo soprabbondavangli..."
[723] Spear, *Domenichino,* 101.
[724] Jørgen Wadam, 'A Preliminary Attempt to Identify Rubens' Studio Practice', in *ICOM Committee for Conservation: 11th Triennial Meeting, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1-6 September 1996: preprints,* vol. 1 (London: James & James, 1996), 393.
[725] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Facevali però sbozzare su' suoi dissegni, e tirar avanti le fatture, sgrossandole..."
[726] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 2nd ed., II, 50: "Avendo ritoccato a sua requisizione una copia del Cristo de'Cappuccini, fatta da Monsù Pietro, che andava fuori di Bologna, senza far nulla alla testa delle B. V. che dicea star benissimo e non averne di bisogno, come quella del S. Giovanni, si risolvette poi di dare ad essa ancora molte pennellate..."

blocking in areas of colour in the composition, and perhaps painting the background and other areas, readying the work for details to be added later by the master.

The use of assistants for roughing out compositions and other preliminary work, as noted, was not unusual – nor frowned upon – in this period. The assistants in Rubens's studio had a similar level of involvement in the artist's work; not only in working up compositions, but also in making copies and replicas of finished paintings.[727] Dr. Otto Sperling, a visitor to the Rubens studio around 1620, gave a direct account of the role of the "young painters" who worked there, painting "different pieces of which Rubens had given them a chalk drawing touched here and there with colours", from which they had to "completely execute" works "which were then finished off with line and colour by Rubens himself."[728] In Rubens's unfinished work, *Henry IV in the Battle of Paris*, 1625 (Rubenshuis, Antwerp), the battle scenes in the background appear to be the work of an assistant, suggesting that, like Reni, Rubens had assistants carry out preliminary work in some of his paintings.[729] There is evidence that Rubens worked in a similar manner to Reni in retouching small areas on paintings that were primarily studio productions.[730] Wadam has suggested that two works in the Mauritshuis attributed to the "Studio of Rubens" – *Naiads Filling the Horn of Plenty* and *Venus and Adonis* (both painted c. 1612-1615) – were inspected and retouched by the master before leaving Rubens's studio, evidenced through the examination of infrared reflectogram images.[731] Wadam also notes that the underdrawing revealed by infrared analysis is typical of Rubens's own drawings, suggesting that the initial step in sketching the composition onto the primed support was carried out by the master himself, before pupils completed most of the remainder of the composition to be corrected by the master upon completion.[732] Van de Wetering claims that "the systematic production of paintings enabled the master to leave some parts of a painting to be executed by assistants", that is, having a "production line" and a fixed method for working up and finishing a work of art allowed assistants to complete certain "steps" as required, leaving the master to finish it.[733]

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[727] Keith, Larry, 'The Rubens Studio and the *Drunken Silenus supported by Satyrs*', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, vol. 20 (1999), 96.
[728] Max Rooses and Charles Louis Rubens, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents epistolaires concernant sa vie et ses oeuvres, publiés, traduits, annotés,* vol. II, (Soest, Holland: Davacao Publishers, 1898), 156, cited by Keith, 'The Rubens Studio', 89
[729] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 201.
[730] Wadum, 'A Preliminary Attempt to Identify Rubens' Studio Practice', 393.
[731] Ibid.
[732] Ibid., 394.
[733] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work,* 203.

Reni is known through the *seicento* sources for his practice, like Rubens, of having assistants carry out a work, only to have retouched it afterwards in preparation for sale. A case is described in which, in 1634, Reni was asked to paint a copy of his *Flight into Egypt.* Reni gave the commission to an assistant, Pietro Lauri, providing him with a drawing from which to work, and then retouched it upon his assistant's completion.[734] Lauri's picture, which was finished in 1635, apparently included some variation on Reni's original design, differing from other versions to include full-length figures, more *putti*, and elaborate palm trees (fig. 4.1). The original composition by Reni has not been identified, though a number of studio versions exist (figs. 4.2 and 4.3).[735] Lauri's version, in the Santurario della Madonna della Celletta, Argenta, differs from the studio pictures in Naples and Bradford not only in its compositional variation but also in Lauri's style. The face of Joseph in Lauri's work is less aged and wrinkled in appearance than the other studio works, and his brushwork appears more polished and highly finished. It would appear that Reni allowed Lauri some artistic license in giving him this commission; both to alter the composition and to deviate from his master's style and technique. Having only examined this work from photographic reproduction, it is difficult to ascertain the location of Reni's supposed retouchings. What can be determined, however, is that the composition is visually distinct from the other studio works. This suggests that Reni's retouchings were not a means necessarily of concealing an assistant's style, but rather, perhaps, to ensure that the work was of sufficient quality for sale. Wadam suggests that students of Rubens may have produced independent works of art, which, because they were created within the studio, were still scrutinised and retouched before leaving its confines – presumably to ensure they met the standards associated with their master's name.[736] The practice of passing compositions to assistants is not unique to the large studios of Reni and Rubens – Guercino is also known to have utilised assistants in a similar fashion. In correspondence between the artist and Cardinal Girolamo Colonna, Archbishop of Bologna, Guercino states that he would only design the work being commissioned to him – *The Martyrdom of St. Barnaba* – and that one of his students, Bartolomeo Gennari, would execute it.[737]

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[734] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 233.
[735] One *Flight in to Egypt* is located in the City Art Gallery, Bradford, and another in the Quadreria dei Girolamini, Naples, both attributed to "Studio of Reni": Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 233.
[736] Wadam, 'A Preliminary Attempt to Identify Rubens' Studio Practice', 394.
[737] David M. Stone, *Guercino: Master Draftsman works from North American collections*, XV-XVII (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Art Museums, 1991), cited by Daniel

Rembrandt's paintings saw fewer assistant interventions than that of Rubens or of Reni. This might be explained by the fact that Rembrandt generally worked on paintings of a smaller scale than Reni or Rubens (for whom large scale compositions were not unusual), making the regular or systematic use of assistants in the production of his works less of a necessity.[738] Van de Wetering also cites Rembrandt's concern for 'houding' as explanation of this. The author quotes Willem Goeree in defining the term 'houding', who states that it is "that which binds everything together in a drawing or painting", and places the various aspects of the composition in their proper location within a work, so that they can be perceived correctly by the eye, in their correct location within a fictive, three-dimensional space.[739] Put more simply, this is related to the concept of compositional unity – the desire for legibility in a work through a carefully planned design, with unified colour and style. That Reni was not concerned with the achievement of a sense of unity in his compositions would be a misleading conclusion. It was noted in chapter three that Reni went to considerable effort in teaching his pupils to be successful imitators of his style and technique, and it is via the assistants' familiarity with their master's work that Reni achieved such unity, even when producing works in collaboration with students. The success of Reni's endeavours can be evidenced in problems associated with attribution of his works today – modern scholars continue to struggle in identifying areas of certain compositions that may or may not have been painted by assistants. Rembrandt, as has been observed, required students to have received training elsewhere before joining his studio. This likely meant that those working in his studio were not competent imitators of the artist's technique and accounts for his concerns for 'houding' precluding him from making extensive use of studio assistants. Reni's concern for unity in his compositions and control over assistants is particularly evident with regards to his fresco commissions and will be discussed in a later section concerning the Annunciation Chapel frescoes in the Quirinal Palace, Rome.

Unger, *Guercino's Paintings and His Patrons' Politics in Early Modern Italy*, (Aldershot, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 22.

[738] van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 150.

[739] Willem Goeree, *Inleydinge tot de Al-ghemeene Teycken-Kons,* edited by Michael Kwakkelstein (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 1998), 128-129, cited by van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 150.

4.2. Identifying assistant intervention

The levels of assistant involvement in commissions vary from work to work and at different points in Reni's career. That the Villa Favorita decorations (mentioned in chapter one) were supposedly carried out entirely by Gessi and Sementi, who were only instructed verbally, seems to have been unusual and extreme case of delegation to assistants. It is possible, however, to presuppose some intervention by assistants both in Reni's fresco cycles and large-scale works, and also in certain repeated compositions, where multiple copies have been created following the master's original design. Quantifying how much assistant intervention a specific Reni work might have seen is a more difficult task. Reni's Roman account book provides unique evidence of the assistants who worked with Reni on a select number of works in Rome over a period from 1609-1612, but deals primarily with fresco commissions, for which the conventions of assistant involvement were different to that of the production of paintings in the studio. In the absence of evidence of this sort for the remainder of Reni's career or for his studio works, occasionally the *seicento* writers identify specific paintings on which named assistants carried out works, though often the paintings are difficult to locate today.

Where there is a lack of any documentary evidence whatsoever, scholars have at times attempted to make distinctions between master and assistant passages within works based on differences in style or technique. These distinctions may be based purely on the style of the passages or figures, or on differences in working methods, including, for example, discernible brushstroke patterns or different use of materials. Separating these hands based entirely on visual observation is a challenging exercise, given that, as has been previously noted, those working within Reni's studio were encouraged, if not trained, to paint in his manner, and many of his preferred assistants were those who could imitate him well. Similar problems arise in assessing assistant contributions within Rubens's paintings, where it has been suggested that attempts to separate the master's hand from others in the studio "intrude a notion of value inappropriate to his mode of production and to the commodity he produced."[740] Like Reni, Rubens produced paintings in which his students' hands were never intended to be identified, and the problem of how far Rubens personally intervened in

[740] Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 101, cited by Feigenbaum, 'Practice in the Carracci Academy', 73.

any particular painting is considered similarly complex and contentious an issue.[741] This is the logical result of both the Reni and Rubens studios being two of the most productive in *seicento* Europe; their size and the number of commissions they undertook created the need for more assistants than might be considered standard elsewhere, and levels of intervention vary according to the patron of a commissioned work and the time constraints that the master may have been under.

In criticism of methods in determining levels of assistant involvement within paintings, Dr. Stephen Pepper wrote that "it is even somewhat dubious on historical grounds to attempt such an individuation of assistants when Reni strove so hard to suppress distinctions where he could."[742] Despite this, Pepper himself has engaged in such a practice in other publications, though perhaps only regarding works where he considers assistant involvement particularly obvious. For instance, Pepper attributes a significant portion (at least the foreground figures) of the altarpiece of *Moses Striking the Rock* (or the *Israelites gathering Manna*, fig. 4.4) in Ravenna cathedral, to Reni's assistant, Francesco Gessi.[743] However, he does not provide information as to whether this is a distinction based on differing style, technique or materials used in the foreground figures.[744] The foundations of Pepper's attributions were instead based in connoisseurship and archival research. Some of Pepper's basis for his distinctions regarding *Moses Striking the Rock* comes from Malvasia, who names Francesco Gessi as one of the assistants who worked on this commission.[745] Gessi did, as observed in chapter three, become a successful imitator of Reni's style, so it is difficult to discern passages which might have seen his intervention. The composition of this work appears coherent and unified, suggesting that a design for the composition as a whole was determined by Reni. The foreground figures do not appear, however, to deviate from Reni's manner noticeably. Their faces are well executed and typical of those in some of Reni's other compositions. The woman carrying the urn in the foreground, for example, is not unlike one of the women in *Lot and His Daughters* (fig. 4.5), or the Prado Museum's *Girl with a Rose* (fig. 4.6). It is notable that the figure of Moses in his bright red robe looks almost superimposed onto the painting, and his

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[741] Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade', 17.
[742] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 381.
[743] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 27-28.
[744] It is difficult to measure the validity of Pepper's statements on the painting without having seen it personally, though some analysis has been made from images.
[745] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 74: "...il Gessi affrontava con tanto ardire, e fracasso l'imposto lavoro, che ne giubilava Guido e ne stupiva, rendendolo perciò più coraggioso..."

form is heavily delineated from the background. This may imply that Moses was painted by Reni himself after the completion of the background. This would create an overlap in paint between Moses and the remainder of the composition, and explain the distinct outline of the figure. If the work was painted in separate phases as this might suggest, it could allow for supposition of assistant involvement.

Michael Levey identifies an assistant's intervention in Reni's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 2.105). The writer bases this opinion on certain passages in the work being "weaker". While distinguishing the work as an autograph Reni and noting that a lot of the handling in this work is typical of Reni's late manner, Levey states that "some other passages in [*The Adoration of the Shepherds*] are weaker, especially the head of the Child, and it is reasonable to suppose studio assistance."[746] It is difficult to establish what Levey means by "weaker". Perhaps he is referring to some of the figures being less detailed than others – when taking the *putti* in the upper half of the painting as examples (fig. 4.7), the *putti* on the left are somewhat more robust and more heavily outlined than those set slightly back from them on the right, and their faces are more defined and detailed than those on the right. Perhaps it was the case that these *putti,* alongside some of the other background figures, were painted by assistants. With regards to the head of the Christ Child being "weaker", perhaps, again, it might be said that his features are less defined than those around him (fig. 4.8). The child lacks the flushed cheeks and gracefully defined face of his mother seen above him, though, given that this figure is a baby, it is reasonable to suppose that his facial features would be intentionally softer and less defined anyway, so this may not be reason to suppose assistant intervention. The large dimensions of this work (measuring 480 by 321 centimetres) and date, late in the artist's career when his studio is known to have been busy with commissions, would necessitate studio intervention. It seems unlikely, however, that such a focal point in the composition as the Christ child would be left for assistants, especially given the manner in which the viewer is drawn to the small figure by the light radiating from him. The brushwork of the child differs from the other figures in the composition but is similar to many of Reni's late works, for example, that of the cherubs in the *Madonna and Child Appearing to St. Francis* of 1640-1642 (fig. 4.9). Assistant intervention is more likely to have taken place in the surrounding, secondary figures. These all display distinctive traits of Reni's style, for example, his manner in painting hair and beards, which is

[746] Levey, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Italian Schools*, 189.

known to have been successfully imitated by many artists in his studio. Some faces, however, lack the correct proportions and naturalistic expression associated with Reni's abilities. The male figure, second to the right of the Virgin, for example, has a very slightly unbalanced and elongated face that is reminiscent of Ercole de Maria's version of Reni's *St. Joseph* (fig. 4.10). For these reasons, it might be more plausible to infer studio intervention in the figures surrounding the Christ child, rather than in the figure central to the composition.

This practice of attempting to decipher individual hands within Reni works plays into the issues of attribution that continue to arise in Reni scholarship. Observations regarding attribution which are based on stylistic grounds may prove misleading, given the way in which many of Reni's assistants were trained and the manner in which his workshop functioned. Writers on Reni also often attempt to differentiate between "original" and "copied" works, a subject which will be addressed in more detail at the end of this chapter. For the same reasons as outlined when trying to identify student intervention, distinguishing between the original and copy is frequently not a straightforward task. The purpose of this study of Reni's workshop is not to attempt to make or refute attributions, but rather to highlight the problematic nature of the subject, and to further the understanding of Reni's artistic practices, which may, in turn, assist with issues of attribution.

4.3. Assistants for fresco – The Annunciation Chapel

As noted previously, a rare instance of recorded assistant interventions comes from Reni's Roman account book, which covers the period 1609-1612 and provides details of work carried out on the frescoes in San Gregorio Magno (to which only the first two entries refer, as well as two payments in the second section where debits are recorded, made by Reni to Lanfranco), in the Annunciation Chapel in the Quirinal Palace and in the Cappella Paolina in Santa Maria Maggiore (both having been executed in their entirety during the period which the account book covers).[747] It is important to note that the account books deal almost exclusively with fresco commissions. The use of assistants in the execution of fresco cycles was traditional, conventional and necessary, because such commissions were both time consuming

[747] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 372.

and physically demanding for an artist; the medium of fresco presented significantly different requirements to that of oil. Therefore, the practices observed in Reni's use of assistants while painting fresco cannot be presumed true of his work in studio. This section of writing, therefore, like that on fresco in chapter two, discusses Reni's use of assistants – specifically within the Annunciation Chapel – as a separate entity to the processes within Reni's workshop.[748] The Annunciation Chapel commission is relevant in the study of Reni's use of assistants because, despite the use of artists who had been trained outside Reni's own studio, with their own individual manners, the master has maintained control over the work. The chapel is frequently lauded by modern scholars for its unity in composition; Stephen Pepper praises the fresco cycle in the chapel as "the first work of the new century in which the unifying style of a single artist prevails throughout a complex of decorations in which mature artists served as assistants."[749]

Reni is known to have worked with assistants who were hired in Rome and not regular members of his studio on the Annunciation Chapel frescoes, commissioned by Pope Paul V for the Quirinal Palace in Rome (figs. 4.11 and 4.12). This fresco commission is described by Malvasia in some detail, and also detailed by the account book. It is likely that the details of the activity of Reni's assistants provided by Malvasia were in fact derived from the account book, which he is thought to have owned.[750] Bellori notes that Reni's reason for using assistants in this papal commission was his patron's desire "to see the paintings and decorations of this chapel of his in a short time", which therefore led Pope Paul V to tell Guido "that he intended him to share the work with the other Bolognese", leading to the appointment of Antonio Carracci and Francesco Albani.[751] Bellori also notes that "Guido was not enamored of company in a work that he was preparing for his fame."[752] The use of assistants in fresco work regardless of time constraints imposed by a patron was, as

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[748] The *Annunciation Chapel* has been selected for discussion specifically for a number of reasons – it has been examined personally by the writer, it was decorated in its entirety by Reni and his assistants, and the account book provides more payment details for this commission than for the other frescoes it includes. It will also be referred to in discussions of Reni's pricing and payments.

[749] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 379.

[750] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – I: The Account Book', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 113, no. 819 (1971), 313.

[751] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 353: "Desiderava il papa veder presto le pitture e gl'ornmanenti di questa sua cappella dovendosene servire giornalmente... dichiarò però a Guido la sua intenzione che partecipasse il lavoro agl' altri bolognesi, onde egli da principio v'applicò l'Albano e Antonio Carrracci..."

[752] Ibid.: "Non amava Guido compagnia alcuna in un'opera ch'egli preparava alla sua fama..."

noted, conventional, but the Pope's apparent specification of "Bolognese" artists was perhaps less so. This might imply one of two things – that the Pope thought Reni might work better with artists from his locality and be more receptive to employing Bolognese assistants, or that the Pope himself had concerns regarding the stylistic unity of the chapel and thought that Bolognese artists might be better able to emulate Reni's manner. Whether the latter of these possibilities held true will be discussed shortly in examination of the fresco scenes.

During this fresco campaign, Reni showed a desire for stylistic coherency within the chapel, despite having four assistants working under him, which is comparable to the unity he later sought in his studio when teaching students to be imitators of his style. Malvasia writes that for the Annunciation Chapel fresco commission, Reni made a priority of creating cartoons for his assistants to work from (working through the night to do so), so as to ensure that he maintained control over the composition, drawing every night to have fresh cartoons ready for his assistants to work from in the morning.[753] That he provided his artists with drawings to work from daily implies commitment to controlling the work taking place, and an attempt to maintain unity throughout the composition. While these cartoons no longer survive, some of the preparatory drawings for the Annunciation Chapel have been identified by Pepper, and illustrate the artist's commitment to preparing for the compositions.[754] However, four of the five preparatory drawings identified are connected to *The Birth of the Virgin,* a scene which is attributed to Reni himself, and are therefore presumably not drawings created for use by his assistants. Antonio Carracci's study for the *Presentation in the Temple* (fig. 4.13), is more detailed than Reni's studies, and includes details such as the specific folds in the drapery and the shading between these folds. This could imply that the assistant was required to create his own preparatory drawings which might have been inspected by Reni to ensure their suitability for the scenes to be carried out. That Antonio appears to have focused on the resolution of the figure's drapery might be related to the association of Reni's *maniera* with his execution of drapery as mentioned in chapter two – the way in which the artist executed folds in cloth was a characteristic of his style which would have

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[753] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 54: "...la notte, che invece di recargli la solita quiete e risposo, lo necessitava al travaglio in ispeculare i pensieri, informarne gli schizzi, disegnare i caroni, perche fossero in pronto il giorno vegnente per que' medesimi, de' quali convennegli valersi in simile operazione."
[754] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 225.

been important for assistants to imitate correctly to maintain unity between the chapel's scenes.

That Reni is said to have supplied drawings to his assistants in the Annunciation Chapel but not to Gessi and Sementi in the Villa Favorita (where he was not even present) is not to say that he was not concerned with coherency in the Mantua frescoes. The artists working by his side in Rome were never formally under his tuition, and would have received their training in manners different from Reni's, which demanded the artist's presence during the commission. Given that Gessi and Sementi had been trained carefully to follow Reni's manner, he may have felt confident that they would work in a style and technique in keeping with his own, and produce works of high quality. The details of Gessi and Sementi's work on the Mantua frescoes suggest that Reni may have been familiar with Raphael's practices. Raphael's frescoes in the Villa Farnesina were, like those in the Villa Favorita, carried out entirely by assistants, and, though there are some preparatory drawings for the Villa Farnesina, several of these drawings have likewise been attributed to assistants.[755] Given the many parallels that have been drawn between Reni and Raphael previously, it is not too far-reaching to deduce that Reni is drawing sanction from the practices of the Renaissance master.

Malvasia writes that Reni assigned "various parts of the program to a number of well-established painters" – not only Antonio Carracci and Francesco Albani as mentioned by Bellori, but also Tommaso Campana and Giovanni Lanfranco (the latter of whom was not, as stipulated by the pope, Bolognese) – while keeping some of the "more important scenes for himself", and the account book substantiates this. The "important scenes" which Reni kept for himself included the altarpiece of *The Annunciation* (which is the only oil painting in the chapel), *The Birth of the Virgin* and *The Sewing Madonna* – for all of which he is the undisputed author.[756] These scenes might be considered "important" for their subject, all depicting the Virgin, their large sizes relative to some of the other scenes, and their prominent locations within the chapel – *The Annunciation,* for example, hangs directly over the altar and faces the main entrance to the chapel directly, while *The Sewing Madonna* is located in a recess in

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[755] John Shearman, 'The Organization of Raphael's Workshop', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 10 (1983), 57.
[756] Del Buono, Luciana (ed.), *The Quirinale Palace: The History, the Rooms and the Collections*, translated by Simon Jolley, (Bologna: FMR, 2010). 221.

the transept on the left of the altar, invisible when entering through the main chapel door, but, importantly, directly facing the second private entrance of the Pope, leading from his quarters.

While the names of the assistants who worked in the Annunciation Chapel have been recorded, their individual roles within the overall composition present a more complicated issue. Because of Reni's desire to maintain homogeneity of style and technique throughout the chapel's frescoes, it is difficult to ascertain individual hands within the work. In his description of the chapel frescoes, Malvasia attaches (somewhat) specific passages to Reni's assistants, including, a "*Presentation* by Antonio Carracci, the *Virtues* by Lanfranco, and the seven *puttini* by Albani."[757] Malvasia attributes some of the *Virtues* to Antonio Carracci also.[758] Pepper maintains that Malvasia's source for these attributions is the Roman account book, but notes that Lanfranco is not named in association with the twelve *Virtues,* while Antonio is, and that the attribution of the *Presentation* to Antonio does not appear in the account book, and Malvasia's source for it unknown.[759] Bellori agrees with Malvasia's account with the exception of Lanfranco's role in the chapel – he does not specify passages that were executed by Lanfranco, and writes that the *Virtues* "were painted on the pilasters" in collaboration between Reni and Albani. [760]

While this information is useful, problems remain present in identifying the precise roles of the assistants in these frescoes. Most of these passages are minor parts of the fresco cycle, as opposed to important scenes in the *Life of the Virgin*, which, as noted, Reni painted most of himself. The *Virtue* figures appear on the pilasters that decorate the chapel's piers and flank the door and windows, and act effectively as space-fillers between the narrative scenes. Albani's *puttini* likewise fill the space over the scene in Reni's *Sewing Madonna,* in the small lunette and on the underside of the transept vault, and are not a vital part of the fresco's narrative cycle. Therefore it is unsurprising that these passages might have been given over to assistants. The *Presentation,* unlike the aforementioned subjects, is a narrative scene, and therefore it might be thought more surprising that this be given over to Antonio Carracci.

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[757] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 56: "...le Virtù, che del Lanfranchi..."
[758] Ibid., 55.: "...certe virtù ne' pilastri a Tognino Carracci...."
[759] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 381.
[760] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 353: "...e dipinte alcune Virtù picciole ne' pilastri colorite in parte col medesimo Albano."

According to Malvasia, Reni was not able to exercise control over his assistants in every scene of the cycle, due to time constraints. At the Pope's request, Reni was required to speed up work on the Chapel and had Antonio Carracci paint one of the scenes "without retouching."[761] It is possible, as supported by the aforementioned preparatory drawing and account from Malvasia, that the scene that Antonio painted independently was the *Presentation* (fig. 4.14). Time constraints might provide explanation for Antonio undertaking a large narrative scene independently, while only minor passages are attributed by Malvasia to the other assistants. The theory that this scene went without retouching is made more plausible by examination of the fresco. The figures in the *Presentation* are almost all portrayed at a distance from the picture plane, and few faces are visible, meaning there would be few focal points that might necessitate correction from the master. Despite the lack of evidence for Antonio's part in this commission from the account book, the aforementioned chalk drawing, which relates to a figure in the foreground of this composition and has been attributed to Antonio, provides further evidence for Malvasia's claims. Figures of *Virtue* are attributed by Malvasia to both Lanfranco and to Antonio Carracci (and, by Bellori, to Albani) with other, unnamed passages also allocated to Lanfranco, making his contribution acknowledged, but still vague. Malvasia also describes Lanfranco spending time one particular day "painting the draperies of a certain figure", but again does not specify details.[762] There is no record within the account book of a payment to Lanfranco amongst other payments to assistants for these figures of Virtue, further complicating efforts to determine his involvement.[763]

Reni's determination to maintain control over his assistants and their involvement in his work is further evidenced by his early dismissal of Francesco Albani, having contributed just seven *putti* before he left. The account book specifically mentions Albani's contribution of these seven *putti* painted in the lunette and vault arch to the left end of the transept arm.[764] It is recorded within the account book that Albani was

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[761] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "...facendovi senza altro ritocco fare una delle storie..."
[762] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 381.
[763] Ibid.
[764] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 14, cited by Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 381: "...e all'Albani, contandogli venti scudi, per i sette puttini fattigli fare nel voltino della lunetta a mano ritta di detta Cappella, diede ben tosto licenza, per le continue doglianze di non aver tolto e lui, e'l Menichano a parti uguali di quel lavoro, come andava dicendo, esser stata la intenzione di Sua Santità."

paid twenty *scudi* for the *puttini,* and the book does not record any further payments to the assistant, corroborating Malvasia's statement that Albani ceased work on the frescoes at this point. These *putti* constitute an area in the composition in which it is strikingly obvious that a different artist's hand has intervened. Albani's *putti* are painted in his own manner, which is not apparent anywhere else in the chapel. The difference between the *putti* by Albani versus those by Reni on the opposite side of the altar is pronounced. Reni's *putti* look more like actual infants, with well-proportioned anatomies and gestures which appear natural to the figures. Albani's *putti,* meanwhile, look somewhat awkward in their gestures; their movements are not expressed with the same knowledge of anatomy conveyed by Reni's figures. The faces of Albani's *putti* (fig. 4.15) are very different to Reni's (fig. 4.16), with the former lacking the variety of expressions with which Reni portrays his *putti.* Albani's cherubs look less like real infants; their hair is painted with rows of tight corkscrew curls where Reni's is in soft, irregular waves, and their facial features – large eyes and well defined noses – lack the softness in features associated with infant children, which Reni illustrates so well. Pepper describes Albani as "more independent and developed than the other assistants, with the exception of Lanfranco, and unwilling, therefore, to conform to Reni's style."[765] It is surprising, then, that Lanfranco's contributions remain difficult to identify, when Albani's are readily apparent. It may be that Albani was less partial to Reni and therefore less willing to adapt to his way of painting. That Reni dismissed Albani after this contribution reaffirms his determination to maintain control over his assistants, and shows some concern for quality and compositional unity on Reni's part.

4.4. Speed and working method

An obvious advantage of, and reason for, the use of assistants was the ability to undertake more work, and to complete work more rapidly. The link between the need for the expeditious completion of a work and the use of assistants is seen readily in the seventeenth-century sources and is an important influencing factor in Reni's studio practices. The speed at which Reni worked seems to have been affected both by patrons – that is, their desires, or his desires to impress them – and his use of assistants, in that the more assistants employed, the quicker a work would reach

[765] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 381.

completion. These two factors were linked; Reni was required to employ more assistants when there were influxes of commissions, or to meet the patron's requested date for the completion of a work. For example, chapter one noted the Pope's apparent irritation at the length of time being taken for the Annunciation Chapel frescoes, in response to which Reni "speeded up the execution of the project", completing the entire commission "in seven months".[766] According to Pepper, even after initially dismissing Albani due to concerns for quality and coherency, Reni was again forced to employ additional assistants in order to complete the work quickly, cementing a link between timeframe, patrons and use of assistants.[767] The speed at which Reni worked is difficult to accurately establish. The number of *giornate* required in the decoration of the vault of the Loggia Pallavicini Rospigliosi (carried out between 1611 and 1612 in collaboration between Paul Bril and Guido Reni) totaled 198, over a surface of approximately 230 square metres, averaging a little over 1.15 square metres of painting per day. The pendentives attributed to Reni's studio specifically cover 84 square metres, and total 85 *giornate*, suggesting a working speed of just under one square metre per day.[768] This implies that the speed of Reni's studio was less than that of Bril's. Given that fresco work was carried out in conjunction with assistants, and the medium has different demands to oil, this figure cannot necessarily be applied to Reni's canvas paintings, but some observations can be made in which technique implies rapid execution. For example, Reni's *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (fig. 4.17), where examination of the paint surface implies that various passages of the composition have been painted while other paint layers are still wet. Combining this observation with the looseness of brushwork and lack of detail in this painting, it is logical to infer that it was painted quickly. Actual timeframes for its production, however, are not possible to create. The *seicento* sources occasionally provide timelines for the production of specific works, and reasons for the rate at which it was produced.

While in the case of the Pope and the Annunciation Chapel frescoes, Reni obliges his patron's demands for speed, at other times he is seen to be less accommodating.

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[766] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "...la diede compita in sette mesi..."
[767] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 25.
[768] Bordoni, Luciana, Colagrossi, Attilio, Martellotti, Giovanna and Seccaroni, Claudio, 'Clustering Techniques for the Analysis of the Execution of a Fresco', in CHArt Conference Proceedings, University of Glasgow on 24-25 September 1999, edited by Tanya Szrajber, vol. 2 (2002), n.p.

Reni's speed in working method related not to his ability, but to his pride. It is linked to the manner in which he engages with his patrons, and to his status as a painter – he is unwilling to bend to the patron's will or be swayed by monetary reward. In the case of the Cappella Paolina in Santa Maria Maggiore, papal officials offered a gold chain to the artist who finished his work first, whereupon Reni, justifiably unimpressed, responded by asking "are we but wild horses, the biggest and bravest of which is the one who comes first in the race?"[769] Such a witty retort is related to Reni's self-fashioning of his status and, as noted in the previous chapter, part of a literary convention demonstrating the superiority of mind of the artist. Reni's rate of speed in working method is not always related to demands by his patrons, nor did he necessarily require the intervention of assistants to speed up his production. Chapter one noted the case of a half-figure of the Christ Child for Francesco Barberini, which Reni placed on an easel and "finished it in a few hours, to the astonishment of Colonna at his great speed".[770] Other anecdotes from Malvasia describe the practice of speeding up work for important personages, in order to impress them. In the case of a portrait of Cardinal Spada, Reni was supposedly so flattered by the Cardinal's admiration for the work in progress that Reni "swore that he could not remove his hand from the painting while it was still unfinished."[771] When Prince Giovanni Carlo of Tuscany visited Reni's studio, the artist reportedly "had a small canvas out on the stand, and in a little more than two hours made a head of a *Hercules* which that eminence had requested."[772] Similarly, for Cardinal Cornaro, Reni created a *Blessed Virgin* in less than four hours.[773] Enggass and Enggass describe these works which are executed quickly as "virtuoso" paintings", which Reni could turn out in a matter of hours when working for an important patron whom he wanted to impress.[774] These anecdotes suggest that Reni allowed certain people to watch him work, and that there was an interest amongst the Bolognese people in watching artists work. Such interest in artistic technique in the seventeenth-century was demonstrable; many enthusiasts in the period, like Richard Symonds, wished to become connoisseurs of pictures, who

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[769] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 57: "...diceva Guido? siam noi cavalli barbari, maggior dei quali, e più bravo si stimi chi prima giunge al pallio?"
[770] Ibid., 81: "...in poche ore il diede finito, con maraviglia dello stesso Colonna di si gran velocità di operare..." The "half-figure of the Christ Child" here described cannot be identified from known works.
[771] Ibid., 82: "...che giurò non esser per levarvi le mani se non finito..."
[772] Ibid., 139.: "...ben presto allestire sul trepiedi una teletta, condusse in poco più di due ore una testa (così comandando quell' Altezza) di un Ercole..." The "*Hercules*" here described cannot be identified from known works.
[773] Ibid.: "...in meno di quattr' ore diede affatto compita alla prima una testa della B. Virgine..."
[774] Enggass and Enggass, Introduction to *The Life of Guido Reni,* 14.

paid attention both to the technical details and to the authorship of paintings and spent considerable time in the studio of Canini, observing him at work.[775] Malvasia wrote that *seicento* visitors to Bologna took particular interest in Reni's studio, and that "no person, no matter how grand, ever passed through the city without wanting to see him and watch him work, considering it to be a great privilege."[776]

These passages also illustrate Reni's ability to increase the speed of his operations to impress a patron. Such abilities have historically been attributed to other famous artists in illustration of their great abilities, such as Luca fa' Presto, mentioned in chapter one, and also to Reni's contemporary Rembrandt, who reportedly made an etching of Amsterdam "in less time than it took his servant to bring mustard to the country property of the mayor Six", earning the work the title *De la moutarde*.[777] It is possible that these pictures, painted at speed, were more desirable in a way, in that a painting created quickly might be less likely to have passages executed by assistants. This is evidenced by the reward received for his *Hercules* for Prince Giovanni Carlo, which included "a golden chain worth sixty doubloons inside a silver box with a medal attached", which had an inscription on the back reading "this, more than a gift, will be a pledge of love", demonstrating the client's gratitude.[778] Such works may serve as examples of how an artist's practice was altered depending upon the patron for whom he was working. If, in painting quicker, Reni's brushwork became looser and more painterly, such "virtuoso" works may prove misleading when using brushwork for dating.

Malvasia identifies the painting which so impressed Colonna as a "half-figure of the Christ Child", which had been partially worked up, awaiting completion. Half-figures, logically, are easier and therefore quicker to paint than full-figure or multi-figure compositions. A report of Tiepolo's "impressive" speed – in which the artist painted a picture "in less time than it took someone else to grind his colors" – was also

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[775] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 58.
[776] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 139: "Mai passò per questa città soggetto, per grande che fosse, che conoscerlo di vista, e vederlo operare a sommo favore non si recasse..."
[777] Georg K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexicon* (Munich: 1835-1852), cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 95.
[778] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 139: "...una collanna d'oro di valore di sessanta doppie, entro un scatola d'argento, appesavi una medaglia, nel cui rovescio era questo verso: *Hoc mage quam munus, pignus Amoris erit.*"

demonstrated in half-figure compositions, this time, of the twelve apostles.[779] It is understood from Malvasia that, toward the end of Reni's life, he painted half-figures and heads carelessly to make money when he was in need, furthering the link between working at speed and painting half-figures.[780] The large number of repeated half-figure compositions within Reni's oeuvre – *Lucretias, Cleopatras, Magdalenes* and others – support the notion that Reni had developed compositions for these subjects that could be executed rapidly. Malvasia praises the "speed with which [Reni] could dash off his half-figures, which number in the thousands", and links them to the artist's financial success, noting that this ability "could have amassed him an inestimable treasure."[781] The existence of partially worked up compositions in the form of *bozze* from which Reni and Colonna chose a composition is supported by Reni's studio inventory, which describes primed canvases with half figures, and specific paintings depicting half-figures of *Ecce Homo, Sibyls, St. Cecilia, St. Matthew, St. Sebastian,* a *Judith,* a *St. Joseph,* two *Magdalenes,* two *Cleopatras,* and several others.[782] This highlights the rate of production of these half-figures, and explains the artist's ability to execute them quickly for certain patrons – many were partially worked up in Reni's studio, and he was practiced in their creation. These repeated compositions are discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Chapter one noted Malvasia's description of a work that was "sent to Rome for the high altar of the Trinità at Ponte Sisto", which "was done in twenty-seven days, and was therefore very fragile."[783] The church to which Malvasia refers to here is Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini in Rome, which houses a large altarpiece by Reni of the *Holy Trinity* (fig. 4.18). The work was painted in 1625, and has remained in the church since – which has probably been advantageous to its preservation, if, as

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[779] Philipp Monnier, *Venedig im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1928), cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 95.

[780] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89: "...ponevasi a lavorare mezze figure e teste alla prima..."

[781] Ibid., 138: "La presetezza con che sapeva scaricare quelle sue mezze figure, che si contano a migliaia, potevanoo ammassargli un'erario inestimabile."

[782] Spike, 'L'inventario dello Studio di Guido Reni', 55, 57-59, 61, 63-64: "... un tellaro con tella impremita ... un altro detto con due meze figure ...", "Una meza figura d'un moro di scultura ...", "... un altro quadro con un Ecce homo meza / figura ... un altro quadro con una Madalena / meza figura ... due Sibille mezze figure quali fù detto ...", "... una Cleopatra meza figura ... una Sta. Cecilia meza figura ...", "... una Giudita meza figura ... un san Mattheo meza figura ... un quadro con una Belona meza figura ... un quadro d'una Deità meza figura / abbozzata ... un quadro con un san Sebastiano meza ...", "...una Cleopatra meza figura del sig. Guido ...", "... un quadro picolo con san Gioseffo meza..."

[783] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 69: "...per l'Altar maggiore della Trinità di Ponte Sisto, fatta in 27 giorni, e perciò tanto delicata..."

Malvasia claims, it is indeed *tanto delicata.* The work does not appear to have suffered any obvious deterioration as a result of its reported delicate nature. Reni's rapidity in the completion of this work is not readily evident, either – the composition is complex, his brushwork is very fine, and he has included a lot of detail which might be indicative of a time consuming process, like the pattern on God the Father's luxurious drapery. The painting measures an impressive 564 x 301 cm, which is why Malvasia's report that it was painted in twenty-seven days is surprising, if not improbable. A painting of this size on canvas would be inherently more fragile than its smaller counterparts anyway, because large canvases are more susceptible to damage due to movement on their stretcher. Spear cites information from documents pertaining to this commission which note that Reni received his first payment for the *Trinity* towards the end of November in 1624, and another in January 1626, and the last in July 1626 – the latter falling around a month after the canvas was known to have been shipped to Rome.[784] While the initial payment does not necessarily indicate the starting date for the work, the fact that there are almost eight months between the final two payments would imply that the work must have been carried out over a period longer than twenty-seven days. However, Malvasia's writing here should perhaps not be taken literally, but should be understood as the biographer praising Reni's skill and talent. The link being made by the biographer between speed and technique and the quality or durability in a work might reflect *seicento* art market values, and is further reinforced in Malvasia's comments on the late works that Reni created carelessly during times of financial struggle.[785]

The *Felsina pittrice* refers not only to the speed of Reni's execution of works, but also to that of Domenichino. In the latter's case, however, Malvasia refers more so to the artists "slowness of execution" (as opposed to the haste with which Reni completed certain works), portraying Domenichino as the antithesis to the masterful artist of literary convention, and emphasising Reni's superiority over him. The biographer writes that Domenichino's delay in completing a composition "completely destroyed the advantages obtained" through an advantageous agreement reached with a patron, who felt that the rate at which he worked meant "that he could not possibly live long enough to finish the work". This final prediction, according to the biographer,

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[784] Annick Lemoine, 'Caravage, Cavalier d'Arpin, Guido Reni et la confrérie romaine de la SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini', *Storia dell'arte,* no. 95 (1995), 428-29, docs. 4-7, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 197.
[785] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89-90.

eventually proved true.[786] Apparently Domenichino's lack of speed was notorious to the point that Lanfranco was prepared to complete the work, and "would boast publicly that in the end it would be up to him to finish the job."[787] Malvasia criticises the patron's wish for more haste from Domenichino, writing that in comparing his work to Lanfranco's, they were "valuing speed more than excellence", and goes on to defend Domenichino's slow working process and multiple reworkings of compositions, asking "what harm can it cause? No one ever asks the painter how long it took him to finish; rather, one looks at the painting to see whether it is well painted as a whole", again re-establishing the view that works which were created quickly might not prove to be "well painted".[788]

Malvasia then references Reni's ease and speed in execution, posing a hypothetical question again in defence of slow working method; if Reni "kept works in the studio for decades" after their quick completion, would it follow that the paintings lose any of their value, or that Reni should not be considered a great painter?"[789] Despite these justifications of Domenichino's unhurried manner, Malvasia seems to acknowledge that Reni's "greatness" in the seventeenth century was linked to his ability to "impress" visitors to his studio and complete works at speed where necessary.

4.5. Reni and his patrons

Reni's work was very attractive to seventeenth-century patrons both in Italy and elsewhere in Europe – his international fame is evidenced by a commission for the Spanish royal family.[790] The growth of his business undoubtedly affected workshop

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[786] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Summerscale (2013), 97: "...quando chiaramente vedeasi la sua solita lunghezza nell'eseguire distruggere totalmente l'effetto di sì vantaggioso accordo. Ché però con infelice presagio, che pur troppo avverossi, fu detto esser impossibile che tanto vivesse che dasse il lavoro finito..."

[787] Ibid.: "Gli mettevano quindi a fronte l'operar del Lanfranchi, considerandone la velocità più che l'eccellenza, e s'auguravano che questa cappella a principio a lui data si fosse, mentr'egli con ogni sicurezza pubblicamente vantavasi che finalmente a lui toccar dovesse il finirla."

[788] Ibid., 105.: "...né chiedersi mai al pittore in quanto tempo facesse, ma se il tutto sia ben fatto riguardasi?"

[789] Ibid.: "Perché Guido stesso ... tenessero le decine d'anni nella loro stanza le tavole, siegue che perdino elleno punto di credito e ch'essi stimati non vengano que' grand'uomini che sono?"

[790] Guido Reni, *The Immaculate Conception,* oil on canvas, executed in 1627 for the Spanish Infanta María, sister of Philip IV, and later housed in the Cathedral of Seville, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

practices – as illustrated by Malvasia's description of the exhaustion Reni suffered while working in Rome, and the resulting necessity to hire assistants. Bellori wrote of how commissions came to Reni's studio "in droves", and that his popularity was such that there "was no lord or man of high rank who did not wish to distinguish himself by having some stroke of his brush in his house or to preserve in some sacred place."[791] To keep up with these demands, in busy periods Reni would have been obliged to delegate more work than was standard to his studio assistants. This is particularly notable in cases of the reproduction of specific compositions, which will be discussed later in the chapter. That external factors such as patronage directly influence Reni's workshop practices make them worthy of examination. Workshop practices appear to have been regularly adapted in response to such factors.

Despite some patrons' desire for work to be executed promptly, which, in the case of the Annunciation Chapel, increased the need for the involvement of assistants, patrons are also seen at times to criticise assistant intervention. While the use of assistants in seventeenth-century workshops was, as has been observed, conventional, Reni's patrons are seen to have varying reactions toward the use of assistants. Some accepted it as the norm, while others protested against a work being attributed to Reni when carried out in part (or, on occasion, entirely) by assistants. An example of such protest was detailed in chapter one, where Malvasia describes the Pope's visit to the Annunciation Chapel fresco works in the Quirinal Palace, who, upon seeing Lanfranco working on the frescoes, voiced irritation at the assistant's contribution because he had given the commission to Reni.[792] The Pope's complaint raises the subject of the attribution of Reni works, which was not only a contentious issue for some of his patrons, but remains so amongst modern day art historians, and will be addressed in more detail in the closing section of this chapter.

On occasion, Reni is seen to adjust his practice to meet his patrons' demands – sometimes begrudgingly (as in the Annunciation Chapel), and other times with enthusiasm (in his rapid completion of his portrait of Cardinal Spada). At other times, however, Reni's dealings with his patrons shows a blatant lack of respect for the

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[791] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 363: "Concorrevano a Guido le opere; né v'era signore ed uomo elevato che non volesse segnalarsi con qualche colpo del suo pennello in casa, or per conservarlo in qualche luogo sacro."

[792] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "Che a lui si era dato quell'opra, perchè di sua mano ella fosse, altrimenti avrebbe tenuto conto di simile arditezza e poca cura."

people upon whom his business depended. Reni's manner in dealing with patrons is commensurate with the status which he created for himself – he behaved as if inferior to no one, and he was not afraid to offend important men. Reni seems to have exercised a degree of control, or at least leverage, over his patrons. At the height of his career he was important and desirable enough to work on his own terms. Malvasia recounts an occasion, for example, when Reni was summoned to France to paint a portrait of the king for "a thousand doubloons and another thousand for provisions for the journey" – a sizeable payment, and a very honourable commission. He reportedly replied to the king that "he was not a painter of portraits" (despite having painted several) and refused the commission, apparently with little concern for insulting royalty.[793]

Even Cardinal Spada, Papal legate of Bologna and an important patron of the arts whom Reni was close with, and eager to oblige and impress, considered it ill-advised to push the artist to speed up his working process. Malvasia writes that this is because Spada knew that the artist's nature was such that "he was the absolute enemy of threats of all sorts, and that when pressured he became ever more difficult and reluctant."[794] Clear indications of the attitude problems apparently noted by Spada come from reports regarding an *Immaculate Conception* commissioned to Reni by the (unnamed) Spanish ambassador, for the Infanta of Spain, María, sister of Philip IV. According to Malvasia, the ambassador sent someone daily to inspect and "speed up the work", before arriving at the studio himself. In response, Reni told the ambassador that it would be finished when it was finished, and that he was not going to work any faster. When Reni completed the work, he requested payment from the ambassador prior to sending it to him, but was told he would be required to wait. In response, Reni, packed up the painting and had it sent back to Bologna from Rome, and "wrote to say that it was no longer for sale."[795] On various other occasions, Reni is said to have returned to Bologna indignantly when he felt insulted by patrons.[796] Such accounts have historical precedents – reports of conflicts with those who commission work, and artists' reactions if they are late with payment, have been used to demonstrate the

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[793] Ibid., 113: "Chiamato in Francia a fare il ritratto di quel Re, coll'offerta di mille doppie, e mille altre pel viatico, rispose, non esser egli pittore da ritratti..."
[794] Ibid., 82.: "...e sapendo egli il genio del pittore, nemico affatto delle violenze, allo sprone della sollecitudine rendersi sempre più duro e restio..."
[795] Ibid., 84.: "Fra tante ambiguità, dece egli rimandarsi il quadro a Bologna, con iscrivere che non era più da vendere..."
[796] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 21.

artist's superiority - Donatello, for example, apparently destroyed a bronze head for which a Genoese merchant refused to pay the artist's full asking price.[797]

Such notions of superiority might be best illustrated in Reni's dealings with one of the most important patrons of the seventeenth-century, the Pope. Malvasia recounts a conversation during which Reni was confident enough to correct the Pope when he suggested the artist hire more assistants for the Annunciation Chapel, so that it would be finished quicker. Reni responded that "it would be finished, but it would not be by Guido".[798] Such a retort, considering the status of the Pope, would have been considered quite disrespectful. It is reminiscent of the famous story in which Apelles dismissed corrections from a cobbler on the basis that he was not himself an artist – though in taking a similarly dismissive approach with the Pope, Reni was considerably more brazen.[799] Malvasia notes that Reni's attitude did not damage relations with Pope Paul V, but further reinforced his superior status. The Pope reportedly once encouraged Reni to leave his hat on in his presence, indicating that he did not require the artist to pay him the usual respects.

Domenichino's attitude toward patrons seems to differ greatly from his closest competitor. While Reni comfortably turned down important commissions, Domenichino went to some length to please his patrons. When Domenichino was requested by the Ratta, a distinguished family in Bologna, to paint an altarpiece for the church of San Giovanni in Monte, he responded with great enthusiasm. Domenichino was paid 500 *scudi* for his painting, which was "a new and exceptional fee for him", and reportedly "took great pride in both the honor of such a prestigious commission and the large sum of money he received."[800] The commission had, however, been offered to Reni before Domenichino, but Reni refused to accept it for less than 1000 *scudi*.[801] Not only did Domenichino carry out the commission for half of what Reni was requesting from the Ratta, he in fact destroyed part of his home to ensure there was space for him to work on a large-scale canvas, "having floors ripped

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[797] Vasari, *Vite,* II, 407, cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 103.
[798] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "...saria finita, rispose ben presto egli, ma non saria poi stata di mano di Guido."
[799] Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art,* edited by E. Sellers, trans. by K. Jex-Blake (London: 1896), 35:85, cited by Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 103.
[800] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Summerscale (2013), 71: "...ricevendone cinquecento scudi, prezzo a lui nuovo ed insolito ... Onde solea pregiarsi dell'utile non meno di tanta mercede che dell'onore di sì stimabile elezione."
[801] Ibid.: "...pagandolo la metà meno di che ne chiese, anzi ne volle Guido, prima ricercatone."

up, walls broken open, and the entire household completely disrupted" to accommodate the commission.[802] Domenichino's altarpiece, the *Madonna of the Rosary*, was commissioned to him in 1617 and completed by 1625, and is now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna (fig. 4.19). That Domenichino was so obliging in performing the commission for 500 *scudi* when Reni refused it for less than double that price might be telling of the latter's perceived status in the art world, especially given the prominence of the Ratta family in the artists' hometown. However, the commission was large in scale – the altarpiece measures 498 by 289 centimetres and includes fourteen full-length figures, not including the numerous *putti.* Given that Reni has a number of significant works dating to the period in which this altarpiece was commissioned from Domenichino – including the *Pietà dei Mendicanti* which was, according to its contract, to be painted by Reni himself, and the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* – it is plausible that Reni was obliged to demand a higher fee given the pressure another large commission would exert on his studio.

Rather than discouraging potential commissions, this behaviour seemed to make Reni more attractive to buyers. Reni's dealing with patrons is linked to his status – which was elevated by his refusal to be seen as an inferior, and allowed him to behave in practically whatever manner he pleased when dealing with commissions. Reni's status allowed for what might be otherwise perceived as disrespectful behaviour; the Pope himself excused his attitude which one would assume to be unacceptable in regular circumstances, and attested to Reni's talent and value as an artist. Urban VIII excused Reni's behaviour by saying "Pictoribus, atque Poesis ... omnia licent" (to painters and poets, all things are permitted)."[803]

4.6. Contracts and negotiations

Reni's patrons reportedly voiced concerns regarding the levels of physical involvement of the master himself within a commission, and the status of attribution of the works they were purchasing. These concerns are in line with newly developing interest in connoisseurship in seventeenth-century society. Such interest was

[802] Ibid.: "...fatto rompere i palchi, aprire i muri e sconcertare tutta la casa propria acciocché la gran tela da dipingersi entrarvi intera..."
[803] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enngass and Enggass, 79.

demonstrated by Scannelli and Mancini in their writings, where both authors address issues relating to attribution. The practice of recognising different schools, hands and originals from copies was discussed not only by Mancini and Scannelli, but by other writers of the period including Frenchman André Félibien and the Englishman William Sanderson.[804] The interest in the subject of connoisseurship is also demonstrated in the notebooks of Richard Symonds, where on a number of occasions he notes whether a painting was an original or a copy.[805]

The level of involvement an assistant might have had in a specific work, as has been addressed, is difficult to assess for modern scholars, and sources suggest that this was equally problematic for the seventeenth-century art market. It has been noted that it was Reni's practice to perform *ritocchi* or retouchings on student or assistant works, which would then be sold under his own name. In comments on Reni's retouched works which were frequently sold as originals, Malvasia notes that he did not know if this was something that the "seller" was aware of.[806] Presumably, the "seller" in this context is either Reni himself, a member of his studio, or a third-party merchant, of whom there were many in Rome and Bologna who bought and sold paintings. Malvasia's suggestion that the works were wrongly sold as "original" implies that the biographer did not necessarily agree that a retouched work constituted as an "original" Reni. Malvasia highlights the fact that sellers (and, therefore, buyers) may have been unaware of the levels of student involvement in these works.

A study of contracts in the Renaissance period suggests that the art market at that time was developing concerns regarding the physical role a master played in works commissioned from them and a *di sua mano* clause was developed in response.[807] Many fifteenth-century contracts only obligated an artist to supply the commissioned work, but did not necessitate them to paint it themselves, or even to oversee its making within their workshop.[808] The artist could sub-contract another artist to paint the work, and occasionally, busy painters took advantage of this aspect of the

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[804] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, 58.
[805] Ibid.
[806] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 72: "Minore ancora non fu il guadagno, che si fe ne' suoi ritocchi, che molte volte spacciaronsi per originali, non so con qual conscienza de' venditori..."
[807] Michelle O'Malley, *The Business of Art: Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2005).
[808] O'Malley, *The Business of Art*, 3.

agreement.[809] This practice became known to patrons in the Renaissance, who, over subsequent centuries, began adding clauses regarding the hand which was to paint a work to prevent works being delegated entirely to another artist.

A contract between Reni and Senators Federico Guidotti and Camillo Ranuzzi, acting on behalf of the *reggimento* of Bologna, as overseers of work on the altarpiece of the Mendicant Church, details the kind of information that was stipulated between Reni and his patrons for public commissions. This contract, which refers to Reni's *Pietà dei Mendicanti,* includes the following information: the amount to be paid to the artist (400 *scudi*) and a timeline for payment, that the altarpiece is to follow a preparatory drawing by Reni and is to include the subjects outlined in the drawing (the Madonna in *pietà*, St. Charles, St. Gregory, and the four protector saints of Bologna), a commitment from the Bolognese authorities to provide both the canvas and ultramarine pigment for the work, at public expense, and that the work should be carried out within eight months by Reni's own hand (*di dipingere di sua propria mano*).[810] Domenichino's contract with Guido Nolfi of 1617 contained similar requirements; that the work would contain "figures well finished according to the custom of famous painters, by his own hand with quality pigments and ultramarine".[811] Typically, contracts between artists and patrons required the cost of materials be borne by the artist, but the stipulation that the price of ultramarine would be covered in this case was not very unusual. Patrons would often pay for ultramarine apart from the artist's fee given its huge expense.[812] That the canvas in this case was also paid for is presumably because its dimensions and shape made it expensive also – at a little over seven metres in height, with a rounded upper half, the canvas and stretcher would likely have required specialist means to acquire.

That the painting be created *di sua propria mano*, by Reni's own hand, apparently illustrates the patron's desire to negate the use of assistants in this large-scale commission; a labourous request for a work to be completed in eight months. Given Reni's practices, this kind of clause seems logical, but examples of contracts like these between Reni and his patrons are unusual. It might be that such stipulations

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[809] Ibid.
[810] Stephen Pepper, 'Guido Reni: New Documents for the Pietà Dei Mendicanti', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 133, no. 1060 (1991), 441: "...figure ben finite et terminate all'Usanza de pittori insigni di sua propria mano con colori fini et oltramare."
[811] Spear, *Domenichino,* 330.
[812] Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 314.

were made to Reni more often orally, for which no evidence exists. Similar terms are recorded between several of Reni's contemporary artists and their patrons. In contracts between Bolognese artist Tiarini and members of the Basilica della Ghiara in Reggio Emilia for a series of works between 1625 and 1629, a fixed condition was given that "Tiarini and only Tiarini would do the work (that it be *di sua mano*)".[813] Similarly, a contract made between Carlo Cignani and Francesco Orsi, a trustee for the sanctuary of the Madonna del Fuoco in Forlì Cathedral, in 1680, required that the work "be of [Cignani's] own hand and creation, so that it will be known as truly of his own hand and work; and for his companion and assistant, in order to create and perfect said work, and in the painting of it, he cannot and must not take anyone other than Signor Felice his son."[814]

It is important to note that to attempt direct translations of certain Italian expressions can be misleading, and the term *di sua mano* both within Renaissance and Baroque contracts and texts has been the subject of much scrutiny amongst modern scholars.[815] It has been observed that the expression "from his hand" had different connotations in the seventeenth century than it might have today when translated directly. It should not necessarily be taken literally to mean that an artist physically produced the work entirely himself, with his own "hand". *Fatto di sua mano*, it has been suggested, might imply moral responsibility equivalent to a notary's "hand" that draws up a contract, rather than in every case implying autograph status. "*Mano*" in this understanding expresses "personal obligation and authorial responsibility", and '*fatto*' means 'to make or to have made', "*fare o far fare*, as so many documents of the period read."[816]

Though notarised contracts were the preferred form of agreement for public commissions such as fresco paintings and altarpieces, for private buyers more casual agreements predominated.[817] This may account for the lack of documentation in

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[813] Nerio Artioli, Stanislao Farri, Franca Manenti Valli, and Elio Monducci, *Gli affreschi della Ghiara in Reggio Emilia* (Milan: Silvana, 1970), 177, doc. XXXIV, and 182, doc. XLIX, cited by Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.
[814] Andrea Emiliani, *La pittura, L'Accademia Clementina: Bologna, Palazzi del Podestà e di Re Enzo, 8 settembre-25 novembre 1979: Catalogo Critico* (Bologna: Alfa, 1979), 32-33, cited by Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.
[815] Spear, '*Saint Sebastian* and Reni's Multiple Versions', 48.
[816] Charles Seymour Jr., '"Fatto di sua mano": Another Look at the Fonte Gaia Drawing Fragments in London and New York', in *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf* (Berlin: 1968), I, 93-105, cited by Spear, '*Saint Sebastian* and Reni's Multiple Versions', 48.
[817] Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.

existence relating to Reni's commissions. Furthermore, a typical contract stipulated only that an artist supply a finished object at a particular time and perhaps to provide all the materials necessary for the job, while the sole requirement of the client was to pay the painter.[818] Therefore, not all contracts provide the detailed terms given by that for Ravenna Cathedral. Reni is said to have little respect for oral agreements with his customers. He was famous enough to "flaunt the imperatives implied by deposits and penalties", and seems to have regularly ignored the terms of his agreements, being forced to return many advanced payments because he defaulted on his obligations.[819] Amongst the works recorded in Reni's Roman account book, at least two were never completed, with the artist recording restitution of advance payments for them, further demonstrating this nullification of agreed contracts.[820] Just like his personal dealings with patrons, as discussed previously, it was his fame and status that allowed him to break the terms of his contracts and still maintain a thriving business. As Morselli points out, this is further demonstrated by the fact that after the artist's death, his cousin, Guido Signorini, resolved the problem of the abundance of incomplete orders which Reni had accepted but not delivered by offering to return unfinished paintings to their buyers or to reimburse them for their advances.[821] Many of the undelivered paintings were reportedly promised to eminent patrons, including the Dukes of Tuscany and Modena, the Kings of Spain, Poland and England, the Barberini, as well as other cardinals and princes.[822]

The terms in which Reni negotiated oral agreements with his patrons are difficult to discern, given the lack of documentary evidence. His biographers note that Reni did not like to handle money or deal with the negotiation of fees personally – he considered this kind of practice as ignoble. Malvasia wrote that Reni "abhorred" any mention of price, and "only with difficulty" could he bring himself to transact agreements in person.[823] Reni therefore often relied on middlemen to set prices on his behalf. These middlemen were in some cases professional appraisers, or at other times members of Reni's personal staff – those hired as housekeepers and

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[818] O'Malley, *The Business of Art,* 3.
[819] Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.
[820] Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – II', 385.
[821] Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.
[822] Spike, *L'inventario,* 44; "Alla fine fu dissuaso dal fatto che molti dei dipinti erano stati promessi ai Duchi di Toscana e di Modena, alle teste coronate di Spagna, Polonia e Inghilterra, ai Barberini e ad altri cardinali e principi. Malvasia racconta che il pittore, nella sua frustrazione, giunse a dichiarare di essere l'unico proprietario dei dipinti non ancora terminati."
[823] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 114: "...difficilimente riducendosi a trattar in persona propria d'accordo; abborrendo il nomen di prezzo..."

intermediaries between Reni and his patrons, such as Rognone, Bellocare and Marchino. The use of appraisers was a fairly conventional method of agreeing a fee, and Reni is seen to come to agreements using this process on occasion.[824] In Renaissance negotiations, it was more common to reach an agreement regarding fees prior to commencing work on a commission than to leave the appraisal until the end of the commission.[825] Reni, however, often negotiated payment prior to work being carried out. Records of advance payments sent to the artist prior to commencement of work on a commission evidence this. Salvator Rosa is known also to have negotiated his payments this way – though his practices in marketing paintings was somewhat unorthodox, and therefore not a useful measure of the norm.[826] O'Malley notes that, in the Renaissance, discussions of value held before a work was commissioned were based on different criteria than those appraisals performed upon the completion of a work, because prospective clients "considered the cost of a new work largely in terms of their own honour and prestige and in reference to the status of painters."[827] The appraisal held following the completion of a work was called a *lodo* or *stima,* and the use of appraisers to carry out this work was routine. Approximately forty-two per cent of the contracts for Renaissance altarpieces and frescoes that were surveyed provide for a "judgement of value" to be made upon completion of the work, though agreement prior to commencement of painting was more common.[828] Later, in the seventeenth century, according to Mancini, Reni's practice of having his paintings' worth assessed based on a *valore di stima* (as well as the practice of gifting paintings) often worked to the artist's advantage, with Reni receiving "extravagant" remunerations from great personages and prices, thanks to their "*liberalità*."[829]

Reni's methods of negotiation varied according to the client with whom he was dealing, and, more notably, depending on his financial situation – that is, major changes are observed later in his life, when he lost money to gambling. At the height of his career, in certain instances, Reni is said to have done away with appraisers entirely. In the case of his works for the King of Spain, Malvasia writes that there was

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[824] O'Malley, *The Business of Art*, 120.
[825] Ibid.
[826] Haskell, *Patrons and Painters,* 22-23, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 212.
[827] O'Malley, *The Business of Art*, 128.
[828] Ibid., 120.
[829] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 140: "Che in tal modo s'è visto di stravaganti prezzi e remunerationi per la la liberalità eroica di qualche grato personaggio o principe."

no one "who could or should appraise his works", that is, presumably the works were of such high standard that they were beyond an appraiser's abilities to value.[830] Toward the end of the artist's life, Malvasia reports that Reni did away with the process entirely, and "no longer bothered to rely on an appraisal of his work."[831] Rather than serving as testament to the quality of his output, as was the case with the Spanish royal family commission, Reni apparently does away with appraisers late in life to speed up the commission process, in an attempt to control his mounting gambling debts.

When it came to pricing his own works, rather than specifying a price, Reni would occasionally gift the work to the patron, who in turn would usually respond by paying him generously. This practice is linked to his confidence in his ability, as well as his perceived status as much more than a craftsperson. This practice had precedents – successful painters, when working for illustrious patrons, sometimes refused to specify a price, in the hope of getting a generous payment, and also to distance their activity from that of a manual labourer.[832] Reni too, believed that, as a nobleman, negotiations for payment should be carried out on the "basis of an honorarium or a gift", which helped to raise his status. Malvasia writes that when working "for great personages and men of means", Reni preferred "to give the paintings to them." The biographer notes that this indeed proved advantageous to the artist because "in this way he received much for them than was the custom or than he himself would have asked."[833]

In a letter between Guido Reni and an unidentified patron dated 8th April 1628, the artist described his method of appraising paintings – though explicitly notes that such a method was not fitting in pricing his own works.[834] Reni mentioned three grades of painter - *pittori più bassi*, or "lower painters", *pittori ordinario*, "ordinary painters", *pittori*

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[830] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 84: "...non conoscere egli chi potesse, o dovesse stimare le opre sue..."
[831] Ibid., 90.: "...non ad altro più curandosi di fidare la stima dell'opre..."
[832] Modesti, Adelina, 'Patrons as Agents and Artists as Dealers in Seicento Bologna', in *The Art Market in Italy, Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries,* edited by Fantoni, Marcello, *et al.,* (Modena: 2003), 375, cited by Cavazzini, *Painting as Business*, 123.
[833] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 114: "...diceva doversi negoziare con titolo di onorarlo e di regalo...", "...praticò il non voler chieder prezzo talora dei suoi quadri con Gradi e persone comode, piuttosto donarli loro ricevendone per tal via assai più di ciò ch'era in uso, ed avrebbe egli medesimo chiesto..."
[834] Luisa Ciammitti, '"Questo si costuma ora in Bologna": una lettera di Guido Reni, aprile 1628', *Prospettiva*, no. 98-99 (2000).

straordinario, "extraordinary painters". His method of pricing the works of "lower" and "ordinary" painters involved counting the number of figures in the work and multiplying by two or three *scudi* for painters of low reputation, or by fifteen *scudi* for ordinary painters.[835] The final category of painter mentioned, the extraordinary painter, which Reni included himself in, could not be appraised based on the number of figures, but was decided upon "according to the occasion", on completion of the work, based on the "quality" achieved. Despite his letter deeming the practice unsuitable for an artist of his rank, Reni did occasionally charge by figure – though at a higher price than fifteen *scudi*. Passeri writes that Reni initially charged 100 *scudi* for a full figure, fifty for a half figure, and twenty-five *scudi* for a "simple head", but later ceased to use this method of pricing, recognising the advantage to his profession and reputation.[836] An incident is described late in Reni's life where he initially valued each figure in his painting of the *Four Seasons* at 100 *scudi*, later increasing that to 200 *scudi* per figure, having heard criticism of the work by Pietro da Cortona, who disapproved of Reni's late manner. Though he apparently priced this composition per figure, the values here are infinitely higher than the fifteen *scudi* Reni recommended for an "ordinary painter", meaning he maintained his elevated ranking. Similarly, in his negotiations for work in the Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro in Naples, he quoted a price per figure.[837] These instances further evidence the varying nature of the artist's practice in relation to negotiations and valuations.

Though the system of pricing that Reni invented for various "levels" of artists suggests some sense of superiority on his part, he did not demean the efforts of his contemporaries. As mentioned in chapter three, upon completion of his *Martyrdom of Saint Agnes*, Domenichino left it up to Reni to make the appraisal of the work. Reni recommended that Domenichino "get no less than a thousand *scudi* in *paoli*, and two hundred more later on, after he had altered, at Guido's suggestion, the glory of the

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[835] Ciammitti, 'Una lettera di Guido Reni, aprile 1628', 194: "...che i prezzi sono di due tipi: uno come pittore ordinario, l'altro come pittore un poco straordinario. Il primo è di 15 scudi per figura grande al naturale: di tanto infatti si può contentare un pittore ordinario ... allora si può applicare il secondo prezzo per la vendita, secondo l'occasione ... così io, una volta finite, ne chiedo tanto quanto mi sembra di aver raggiunto in rapporto alla buona qualità ... Ma ci sono anche dipinti di altri pittori di qualità inferiore, a cui si deve pagare molto meno. E ce ne sono di quelli che chiederanno due o tre scudi per una figura grande al naturale."

[836] Passeri, *Vite de'pittori, scultori, ed architetti,* 76: "Avvedutosi egli di questi suoi vantaggi per riputazione propria, e della professione fermò il prezzo per ciascheduna dell sue figure in cento scudi di moneta ; mezza figura cinquanta, e venticinque per una semplice testa."

[837] Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit*, 27.

angels at the top."[838] By appraising Domenichino in the same manner in which he is appraised by others – that is, valuing his paintings at a high price with no mention of "figures" or "hours" – though he does reassert his superiority by suggesting improvements. Reni supports and elevates the status of his fellow artist, regardless of their being in competition.

There is some evidence that artistic technique was linked to appraisal – despite a deliberate move away from this manner of thinking in the Renaissance period in an effort to distance the artist from the craftsperson. Malvasia describes the valuation process of a work by Reni of a female saint for a Roman merchant, for which the artist did not want to set a price, "so it was submitted for appraisal which was made by well-established masters." Following examination by the master appraisers, they conceded that they could not determine the worth of the work since "they had no knowledge of how it had been done, and that they did not know how the brush had been used, since it seemed to have been inspired and infused rather than painted."[839] This account suggests that the "master" appraisers are using technical assessment to determine the value of a work, examining brushwork and trying to establish how it was painted. That this was impossible for the masters implies that Reni had succeeded in elevating his status from craftsperson to artist, by removing any sign of manual labour. That Reni's brush had been "inspired and infused" draws on discourses of the "divine" hand of the artist. Reni was apparently the only seventeenth-century artist who inherited the attribute of the "divine", which had previously belonged to Raphael, furthering Reni's link as heir to the Renaissance master.[840]

Mancini discusses how a painting should be appraised, listing factors which contribute to pricing and that would serve to help in disputes between experts, including the status of the artist, whether they are alive or dead, a comparison of the artist's earnings to those of "similar painters", how long it took to make, and the "excellence" of the work and the artist's other works (that is, their reputation and the quality of the

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[838] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Summerscale (2013), 79: "...rimessone quegli il giudicio a Guido, non meno di mille scudi di paoli sentenziò doversegli, e dugento di più poi per avervi a di lui istanza mutata la gloria di sopra..."

[839] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 115: "...della quale mai volle addimandarne cosa alcuna, rimettendosi alla stima che colà ne fosse stata fatta da maestri che dissero sempre non aver prezzo un' opera tale, che non si potea conoscere come fosse stat lavorata, non vi si conoscendo l'andar del pennello, parendo più tosto spirata, insuflata, che dipinta..."

[840] Tatiana Senkevitch, 'The Critical Reception of the Bolognese School', in *Captured Emotions,* 94.

artist's *oeuvre*).[841] That the *seicento* author includes quality and duration of work as aspects which should influence an appraiser's valuation implies that a link between value and technique was not entirely alien in the seventeenth century, though an artist's *grado* or rank was also important. The equation of time spent with payment was certainly a manner of thinking which Reni tried to distance himself from at times, in order to maintain a prestigious place in societal ranks, which ultimately resulted in him being paid more than his contemporaries, and more than he might have asked for.

4.7. Pricing

Before proceeding with discussion of the specifics of Reni's prices and various payments, an explanation of the currency used is necessary. Richard Spear has provided information on seventeenth-century currency in his *Economic lives of artists in Early Baroque Rome*, which can be extended also to a discussion of Reni while in Bologna. Prices in Rome in the seventeenth century were typically given in gold or silver *scudi*, with a gold *scudo* worth approximately 1.3 times a silver one. For the purpose of discussion, Spear uses the silver *scudo romano*, also known as the "Papal States *scudo*", which was "equivalent to ten *giuli* and one hundred *baiocchi* and contained approximately thirty-two grams of silver."[842] The *scudo romano*, which will from this point (as in preceding chapters) be referred to simply as the *scudo*, was the common currency not only in Rome, but in all of the Papal States until late in the nineteenth century, including Bologna, and is the currency that will be used in this discussion of Reni's prices.

Spear has produced a seminal study, estimating the value of this currency based on the average income of labourers, working 250 days per annum. Such evaluation proves particularly relevant in studies of Reni, whose earnings need to be understood in light of the average person's yearly income, to reveal their magnitude. Between the years 1605 and 1607, a field worker made about fifty *scudi* per year, while a skilled

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[841] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 141: "Che, in occasion di liti, sopra questi si danno i periti, quali prima devin costituir il grado / dell'artefice, se è vivo o morto, et, havendo costituito questo grado, determinar appresso quanto l'artefice meritasse guadagnarsi il giorno, con la comparatione del guadagno dell'artefice simile al pittore; dopo costituire le giornate che vi puol haver messo, e l'eccellenza dell'opera sopra l'altre sue opere."
[842] Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 311.

mason (*muratore*) in 1624 made eighty-five *scudi* annually, and a tailor in 1627 made around half as much as this per year.[843] The earnings of those high up in society increase exponentially; Pietro Aldobrandini's annual income in 1600 was recorded as 40,000 *scudi,* while the average income of a cardinal (based on nearly 100 late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples) was 20,000 *scudi* per year.[844]

Spear ascertains that an "ordinary" worker, who would have little (or no) excess income after paying for necessary living expenses, would never have been able to afford to buy an easel painting by a popular contemporary artist – like Reni – for it would have cost more than a year's income.[845] Mancini, however, gives recommendations for hanging paintings in modest surroundings which are noted in chapter one (writing with advice "for those who have only a bedroom, a living room and little more"), demonstrating that the purchase of art was not exclusive to the uppermost classes – Reni's prices were beyond reach for the average worker, but they were exceptionally high.[846] Many lesser-known seventeenth-century painters produced works of little expense, with prices ranging from less than a *scudo* to ten or fifteen *scudi*, in contrast to the hundreds of *scudi* often necessary to buy a canvas from Reni or another major artist.[847]

In Bologna in the seventeenth century, the price of paintings increased both over the course of Reni's career and following his death, with Reni instrumental in this change. As has been discussed previously, Reni's haughty behaviour sought to elevate the status of the artist from that of a craftsperson to a person of societal prestige, so that pricing for the most part was no longer based on an hourly rate, but on the eminence of the painter who produced the work. Reni is credited by many to have been personally responsible for the increase in prices in Bologna, which rose dramatically between 1590 and 1640. The aforementioned letter written by Reni in 1628 describes these changes in pricing in Bologna, where the artist states that the system of pricing a work based on quality "used in Bologna now."[848] Mancini writes about the pricing of artworks, but notes that true valuations are impossible to ascertain, because artworks

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[843] Ibid.
[844] Ibid., 312.
[845] Ibid.
[846] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art,* 35: "...essendovi solo camera e sala e poco più..."
[847] Cavazzini, *Painting as a Business*, 2.
[848] Ciammitti, 'Una lettera di Guido Reni, aprile 1628', 194: "Questo si usa ora a Bologna."

are not things of necessity, but of pleasure, so there is no valid measure of their worth. He notes a range of criteria which may influence the price of a work, the circumstances of those who sell and buy, the time and the place of the sale, and what is painted. The writer also emphasises that prices are determined by the taste and the means of the buyer, rather than by the artist.[849] Reni's patrons were plentiful and varied in their personalities and means, and therefore this certainly accounts for some of the variations in prices that are observed throughout his career.

Reni demanded (and received) rather large payments for his work in comparison to those sought by his contemporaries – so if paintings were priced by talent, as Reni himself suggests is customary, he was considered the most talented artist in Bologna. The prices that Reni's work demanded were so high that Giulio Rospigliosi, a Roman patron (and later Pope Clement IX), worried that Pietro da Cortona might "bring back here [to Rome] the prices prevailing in Bologna", having visited both Reni's city and Venice for study in 1637.[850] The cardinals at St. Peter's apparently had similar concerns. They were said to have concealed the magnitude of the sum they offered to Reni in temping him back to Rome – a massive 1,600 *scudi* instead of the customary 1000 – from their Roman artists, so that "the other painters will not feel encouraged to make similar claims."[851] With costs a concern for patrons, who wanted to discourage other artists from requesting high prices, it is noteworthy that Reni's prices were not discouraging to potential clients. For example, in competition for a commission for the *Assumption* in Genoa, Reni requested 1000 *scudi* while Ludovico "only asked for five hundred."[852] Reni ultimately received the commission, despite his asking price having been double that of Ludovico. This demonstrates Reni's desirability as a painter; patrons were willing to accept not only arrogant behaviour, but also high prices. It might be that, to an extent, wealthy patrons considered high prices indicative of more exclusive or better quality products, and by pricing high, Reni actively elevated the status and worth of his paintings.

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[849] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 9-10: "...non essendo le pitture cose di necessità assoluta, ma di diletto, nè meno hanno misura necessaria di lor valore e, se vi casca qualche misura per le circostanze di chi le vende e compra, del tempo e del luogo e della cosa immitata e dipenta sopra la quale si fa questo contratto, queste circostanze non le puol riconoscer l'artefice particolare, ma il prudente, il quale considera il gusto, possibilità et necessità di chi compra, e non già il pittore..."

[850] Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit,* 12.

[851] Angela Negro, *La collezione Rospigliosi* (Rome: Àrgos, 1999), 27-28 and 67, n. 47, 49, cited by Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit,* 12.

[852] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 66: "...ancorchè minacciato di darsi ella a Lodovico, che solo cinquecento chiesto ne avea; ottenuto l'opra per i mille..."

While Reni's prices fluctuated according to the commission, Guercino used systematic methods in pricing his work, which meant that there was no fluctuation in his prices, and therefore no real urgency or demand from patrons to purchase his work. Demand for Guercino's paintings peaked in the 1640s, after which his average price per figure fell, decreasing in the 1650s and 1660s. In Reni's case, demand for work continued to increase toward the end of his life, to a point where he was forced to begin turning down commissions, and feared that he would not complete those he had accepted before his death – a fear which was ultimately realised, as illustrated by his cousin's obligation to settle with those owed paintings.[853]

In the 1620 negotiations for the aforementioned Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro in Naples, Lanfranco and Ribera were apparently jealous of Domenichino, "who had reached an agreement to receive a fee of 500 *scudi* for each whole figure in this work, fifty for a half-figure, and twenty-five for each head, which they said was an unprecedented payment, an exorbitantly high price." These fees, according to Malvasia, were not unprecedented – but were *close* to what Caravaggio and Guercino received. According to the biographer "Guido ... got twice as much", thus placing him leagues apart from his major competitors in terms of the prices he commanded.[854] Sohm provides figures for this commission, noting that Domenichino was paid 105 *ducats* per figure by the deputies of the Cappella, while Reni received 130 *ducats* per figure, demonstrating that, at least in this instance, Reni was not quite earning double that of his competitor. However, twenty-five *ducats* were certainly significantly more for similar work, and asserted his superiority over Domenichino.[855] For one of Reni's last altarpieces, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* for the Certosa di San Martino in Naples, dated to the early 1640s, Reni was paid 3,000 *scudi.* This amounted to more, in Spear's estimate, than Guercino's total income for the last four years of his life.[856] Furthermore, the most that Caravaggio, one of Reni's biggest rivals and competitors,

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[853] Ibid., 105.

[854] Malvasia, Felsina pittrice, translated by Summerscale (2013), 97: "...ambiduoi invidiosi della fortuna dell'emolo, il di cui accordo in cento scudi per ogni figura intera di quel lavoro, cinquanta per la mezza e venticinque per ogni testa, chiamavano un no più praticato premio, un esorbitante prezzo, quasi lo stesso usato prima non si fosse col Caravaggio, non si praticasse allora col Guercino, e duplicato anche con Guido."

[855] Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit,* 27.
The ducat referred to closely equalled a Roman *scudo*, or five Bolognese *lire*, and was worth 25% more than the *scudo di Cento*, the bottom-line unit often used in Guercino's account book; Spear, The "Divine" Guido, 213.

[856] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 223.

supposedly ever earned from a single commission was 1,000 *scudi*, for his *Nativity* and *Resurrection of Lazarus* in Messina, which provides an idea of just how high Reni's earnings were comparatively.[857]

During the Renaissance, objects generally were priced based on the value of the materials and labour involved in the production of a work, as well as their rarity and desirability. This must also have influenced the manner in which paintings were priced, but, according to O'Malley, this is difficult to ascertain, owing to how little was written about the pricing of art.[858] However, a statement made by Sant'Antonino of Florence on the subject of the pricing of paintings specifically claims that the payments for artists were more dependent upon their skills and talents than they were upon the materials and labour evident within a specific work, thus placing artwork outside the judgement of use value.[859] This is the beginning of the attitude that is seen to flourish in the seventeenth century, in keeping with Reni's thinking (at least during the height of his career), when, for example, he actively refused at points to charge per hour or per figure.

Reni's contemporaries, Guercino and Domenichino, did however charge by figure; despite being eminent artists in Bologna, they did not consider this practice to be below them, as did Reni. Guercino was more renowned for this practice than Domenichino, and, with the help of his family, consistently utilised a predetermined formula of fixed prices, with cost per figure ranging between 100 and 190 *ducats* per full figure, 50 per half-length, and 25 for heads.[860] On other occasions, Guercino assessed his paintings' worth by *valore fatica*, the value of work expended, showing that he based his worth on physical labour and not on his "name", as Reni came to consider proper for men of their profession.[861] While Domenichino did at times negotiate prices based on number of figures, a review of his career shows that his fees varied from commission to commission and he had no fixed pricing system to compare with that of Guercino.[862]

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[857] Mia Cinotti, *Michelangelo Merisi detto il Caravaggio: Tutte le Opere* (Bergamo: Poligrafiche Bolis, 1983) cited by Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 312.
[858] O'Malley, *The Business of Art,* 100.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit*, 27, and Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 213.
[861] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 213.
[862] Ibid., 214.

O'Malley notes that the prices paid for individually commissioned Renaissance paintings differs enormously. There was often little correlation between the size and number of figures in works and their prices, and fees for similar commissions accepted only a few years apart varied widely.[863] This continues to be the case in the seventeenth century, particularly regarding Reni's work, which never followed a set method of pricing. For example, a *Europa* commissioned by the Duke of Guastalla commanded 700 *scudi*.[864] The "simple figure" of *St. Roch* in Carpi was worth, in Malvasia's estimation, 500 *scudi*, but only cost 200. The *Allegory of Fortune* of Abbot Gavotti, despite being unfinished, commanded 300 *scudi,* but could have been resold for double that.[865] That an unfinished painting sold for 100 *scudi* more than a completed composition demonstrates either a complex pricing system or lack thereof. Even replicated compositions at times fetched prices comparable to originals. Malvasia describes an "autograph copy by Reni" of a *Sleeping Cupid*, bought for the Duke of Modena by Count Rinaldo Areosti, his Bolognese agent, for 200 *scudi*.[866]

The payments recorded within Reni's Roman account book provide figures from which observations can been made regarding the artist's earnings over periods of time. The records refer mostly to Reni's fresco commissions, which were transferred to the artist in increments during his stay in Rome, from the 25th October 1609 to the 1st May 1612. The payments for work in Santa Maria Maggiore were made to Reni between September of 1610 and May of 1612, and amount to a total of 1,290 *scudi.* With the fifteen payments made over approximately twenty months, in amounts ranging from sixty to 150 *scudi* per payment, Reni's annual (gross) earnings from this fresco commission alone amounted to approximately 770 *scudi*.[867] The payments for the Annunciation Chapel of the Quirinal Palace, made over a seventeen-month period total 1,000 *scudi*, producing a similar estimated gross annual earning from this

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[863] O'Malley, *The Business of Art,* 99.
[864] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 84: "L'Europa, commessagli dal Duca di Guastalla ... pagadogliela settecento scudi..."
[865] Ibid., 85: "La Fortuna dell'Abbate Gavotti ... potè rivendere il doppio, cioè seicento scudi."
[866] Ibid., 89: "...il bellissimo Amore che dorme, tutto rifatto da Guido, essendo stato il primo e originale comprato per il Sig. Duca di Modana dal Sig. Co. Rinaldo Areosti, agente di quell'Altezza in Bologna, per dugento scudi."
[867] Guido Reni, *Roman Account Book*, entries dated 28th September 1610 – 1st May 1612, pertaining to Paoline Chapel, Santa Maria Maggiore, cited by Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – I', 315-316.

commission of around 705 *scudi.*[868] In the years 1610 and 1611, which the book seems to fully account for, Reni's gross earnings amounted to 1,417 *scudi* and 1,025 *scudi* respectively, for the various commissions that the artist undertook in Rome (including the aforementioned frescoes).[869] When compared to Spear's figures for the average incomes of other seventeenth-century workers, the magnitude of these payments becomes apparent. That a skilled mason would earn only eighty-five *scudi* a year on average, so that Reni was commanding fees of more than ten times that in the relatively early stages of his career sets the artist very far apart from the average craftsperson. An income of 1,000 *scudi* was supposedly "considered adequate for a Roman gentleman", while 3,000 or 4,000 a year allowed a nobleman "to live an eminently dignified existence."[870] Mancini reported that a good painter could earn three to six *scudi* a day, translating (as five days a week for fifty weeks) to well over 1,000 *scudi* a year.[871] This suggests that during Reni's time in Rome, he had achieved the status of a "gentleman" and a "good painter" based on his income – which only continued to increase with the growth of his business upon his return to Bologna. It must be noted, however, that the figures estimated for Reni's earnings at any given time illustrate only his gross income. Although it would be interesting to calculate the net annual profit of Reni's studio, sufficient information is not available on the costs of running his studio to permit this question to be answered. Nonetheless, the relative magnitude of the gross earnings Reni made for many commissions is easily observable. A decade or so after the completion of the work recorded in the Roman account book, in the mid-1620s, Reni was commanding the enormous sum of 1,600 *scudi* for a single altarpiece when the Congregation of St. Peter's hired him to paint an altarpiece of the *Trinity* for its basilica, offering him an advance payment of 400 *scudi*, followed by four monthly payments of 300 *scudi* each, a demonstration of how substantially the artist's earning power increased as his career went on.[872] Reni apparently abandoned this altarpiece by January 1628, where upon the job was taken

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[868] Guido Reni, *Roman Account Book*, entries dated 28th October 1609 -5th March 1611, pertaining to the Annunciation Chapel of the Quirinal Palace, cited by Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – I', 315-316.
[869] Guido Reni, *Roman Account Book*, entries dated 10th January 1610 – 22nd December 1611, cited by Pepper, 'Guido Reni's Roman Account Book – I', 315-316.
[870] Richard J. Ferraro, *The Nobility of Rome, 1560-1700: A Study of Its Composition, Wealth and Investment* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 244-246, cited by Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 313-314.
[871] Mancini, *Considerazioni*, 141, 250, cited by Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 314.
[872] Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 206, cited by Spear, 'Scrambling for Scudi', 313.

up by Pietro da Cortona.[873] That Reni could afford to dismiss a commission worth 1,600 *scudi* might be telling of the artist's wealth in this period; it could be suggestive of a person to whom money was no longer an object.

It has been noted that Mancini stated that a painting's price was to be determined by the buyer rather than the artist, but was based on the talent and fame of the artist as well as the relative excellence of the particular work, on the artist's investment of time in learning his trade and in making the object under consideration, and on its materials.[874] These factors are not all applicable to Reni. Certainly, his talent and fame were major determining factors in his prices, but, as has been noted, for the best part of his career Reni avoided appraisal based on his investment of time in a work. Furthermore, that the price is determined by the buyer rather than the artist seems also to have been a convention subverted by Reni. At times he is known to have demanded specific (and high) prices for his works; like the 1,000 *scudi* he requested in competition for the commission of the *Assumption.* In payment for the commission of a "female saint for a Roman merchant", which could not be appraised, the artist was apparently offered a sack of money to take from as much as he wished.[875] Mancini directly relates the aforementioned practice of "gifting" paintings with honour, associating it with good will, but also noting the advantage to be gained by the artist, because in donating works to patrons, "one sees extravagant prices and remunerations in the heroic generosity of some gracious person or prince."[876] Reni's practice of gifting works sometimes meant he was "paid" in gifts in response – for example, he was gifted a gold chain by Cardinal Barberini as thanks for his gift of an *Abduction of Helen* that the Cardinal had coveted. This was desirable for an artist who wished to elevate his social rank; remuneration was considered appropriate compensation for a craftsman, while an intellectual deserved a gift.[877] At other times he seems to have made organised exchanges of goods for his paintings; Malvasia

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[873] Louise Rice, 'A Drawing by Pietro Da Cortona for an Overdoor in St. Peter's', *Master Drawings,* vol. 36, no. 4 (1998): 418-419.
[874] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I 139-141.
[875] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 115: "...una testa di una Santina per un mercante di Roma ... quel mercante presentato dal Davia banchiere un borsone pieno di doppie, perchè si prendesse quanto volea, ed egli venti solo ne tolse."
[876] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 140: "Che in tal modo s'è visto di stravaganti prezzi e remunerationi per la la liberalità eroica di qualche grato personaggio o principe."
[877] Cavazzini, *Painting as a Business*, 123.

wrote that the artist was given a diamond worth 150 *scudi* by a goldsmith in exchange for a picture of *Venus.*[878]

Malvasia wrote that Reni made a habit of giving "works by his hand to whomever he found pleasing."[879] This included Saulo Guidotti, Alessandro Barbieri (as baptismal gifts for his children), a *Bacchus and Ariadne* for Signor Ippolito Boncompagni in Rome; the half figure of *St. Catherine* for a Doctor Sambuco, Rector of San Mammolo, the *Battle of Amoretti and Infant Bacchants* for the Marchese Facchenetti, an *Ecce Homo* for a merchant known as Gnicchi, and "a lovely little *Madonna*" for Bartoli of Villa di San Germano.[880] The variety in the subject matter implies very different timeframes for the completion of each composition – Reni might have produced a half-length *Ecce Homo* in a few hours, whereas a battle scene would presumably have taken him (or his assistants) considerably longer. This suggests that Reni's practice of gifting was not exclusive to token small-scale pictures, completed quickly, but occasionally included large-scale, complex compositions also.

Reni's relationship with clients regularly impacted his prices outside of his practice of gifting; for special patrons whose commissions were too significant to waive his entire fee, the artist practiced what Morselli describes as "a modified form of gifting." This is in keeping with Renaissance practices, where low fees were accepted for some works in relation to the social value of particular jobs; for example, Duccio donated a portion of his fee for the front of the *Maestà* to the Sienese people, and Cima produced the Conegliano altarpiece partly as a gift.[881] Reni made similar gestures in returning parts of his fees to his patrons, as with the *Crucifixion* for the Capuchins in Bologna, the payment for which he donated half of to the friars, "of whom he was a particularly devoted follower, and made the merchant Boselli pay the other 300 *scudi.*"[882] Another occasion in which Reni gave a partial gift of a painting to a patron was for the

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[878] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 86: "La Venere fatta all'Orefice, in contraccambio d'un diamante di valore di cento-cinquanta scudi..."
[879] Ibid., 124: "Donò anche opre tutte di suo pugno a chi gli andò a genio..."
[880] Ibid., 124-125: "...molte al signor Saulo Guidotti ... Molte al sig. Alessandro Barbieri, nel tenergli i figli al battesimo. Un Bacco ed Arianna al signor Ippolito Boncompagni a Roma. Una Santa Caterina, testa e mani al Dott. Sambuco Rettore di S. Mammalo. La famosa lotta di Amoretti e Baccarini al Marchese Facchenetti ... Un Ecce Homo al Gnicchi merchante ... un graziosa Madonnella ad un tal Bartoli della Villa di S. Germano..."
[881] Gaetano Milanesi, *Documenti per la storia dell'arte Senese*, I (Siena: Onorato Porri, 1969), 167 and Peter Humfrey, *Cima da Conegliano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 198 cited by O'Malley, *The Business of Art*, 113.
[882] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 234-235, n. 55, cited by Morselli, 'Bologna', 158.

commission of a *Madonna and Child with Saints* for the Leoni family in San Tommaso di Strada Maggiore, Bologna. In this case Reni "gifted" half of the painting to his clients by charging him for only two of the lower figures in the altarpiece, giving them the upper half as a gift, "in recognition of a favor they previously had done for him."[883]

Though the practices of gifting or discounting works might appear to be selfless and perhaps in certain instances they were, Reni did not necessarily lose out through these negotiations. While the act of gifting works or allowing others to name their price for a commission may initially appear to be generous or modest, this gifting worked to Reni's advantage, in that it served to further his reputation and status. When a price is not set for a work, it is no longer viewed as a commodity that could be simply bought and sold, increasing the sense of exclusivity associated with the work. This elevated the status of Reni's paintings beyond that of mere saleable objects, and endowed their owners with a sense of privilege. It has also been noted that in works like the *Madonna and Child with Saints* for the Leoni, that even where Reni offered works at discounted rates he still charged sizeable fees. Despite the discounted price for the San Tommaso commission, the painting was still extremely expensive, costing the Leoni "the exorbitant price of 1,200 Lire", or just over 173 *scudi.*[884]

Despite Reni's deliberate move away from the valuation of paintings as determined by the physical input in a work, Reni's pricing was linked at times to both technique and speed of execution. Some of what is described as Reni's best work was done over long periods of time; on the unveiling of Reni's work in Santa Maria Maggiore, the Pope complained that Reni was "too slow and too dear", to which Cavalier d'Arpino is quoted as saying that Reni "went along at his own speed, but one cannot do it this way and do it fast."[885] In Reni's later years, however, Guido Signorini, Reni's cousin and heir learned that "it was Guido's custom, once having accepted an order for a work, to start quickly sketching ... so that if overtaken by death his conscience would not be aggravated by thoughts of the restitution of earnest money or down payments", implying that, at least at this point in his career, he could establish how much work he needed to do in order to fulfil certain payments, and would create basic pieces of work

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[883] Morselli, 'Bologna', 158.
[884] Ibid.
The conversion of currency here is based on figures provided by Cipolla (1981), 69, who notes that in 1630, 7.5 *lire* = 1.08 *scudi.*
[885] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 64: "...è vero ... che d' ordine suo le andava sempre appresso, ma non si può fare in questo modo e far presto..."

equivalent in his estimation to the amount someone had paid him as a down payment.[886]

Guido Reni is counted amongst a number of famous painters who adjusted their technique according to their pay, including Titian, Andrea Schiavone, and Luca Giordano – all of whom "reputedly used painterly brushwork as shorthand to make cheap paintings quickly."[887] Evidence exists to suggest that the artist adjusted his style according to his payments. Malvasia writes that such practice was not exclusive to the latter part of Reni's career, but was first observed on Reni's return to Bologna from Rome, around 1612-14, when he created some works cheaply ("a half figure for fifteen *scudi*") in response to accusations of greed in his hometown. In the these works, he adjusted his technique, applying brushstrokes "with the sureness and ease of a great master" in a technique that was new to the "school of Rome or in Lombardy".[888] Spear notes that a "direct correlation between Reni's style and his economic objectives" which occurred well before the 1630s, at which point it is much easier to observe.[889] From the 1630s onwards, when Reni's gambling debts took hold, the artist's methods in pricing dramatically changed. Chapter one noted the changes in practice this brought about in Reni's work; reportedly the artist painted carelessly and quickly on unprimed canvases.[890] Francesco Albani's career was similarly marred by financial problems, while Guercino's economic life was much more stable, owing to his careful pricing system and bookkeeping.[891] The descent into gambling also affected the pricing of his works – gone were his previous notions of hierarchies in valuation, and he began charging by the hour, rather than by the appraisal of his work, a practice which was abhorrent to him earlier in his career. Malvasia writes that the artist was deeply in debt, and was "reduced to extreme necessity" by his excessive losses which, despite his sizeable earnings in years previous, exceeded

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[886] Ibid., 105.: "E perchè riseppe l'uso, e la premura di Guido negli ultimi anni esser stata questa, di porsi subito (accettata un' opra) a sbozzare, e farvi tanto di lavoro, che importasse la caparra, o denaro avuto a buon conto, acciò sopravenendogli la morte, non lasciasse aggravata la sua coscienza per la restituzione..."
[887] Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie De' Professori Del Disegno Da Cimabue In Qua: che contengono tre decennali dal 1580. al 1610,* III (Firenze: Garbo, 1702) cited by Sohm, *Pittoresco*, 16.
[888] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 17, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 211: "...che pròsi trova di quel tempo aver operato mezze figure a quindici scudi... Lavorandole di botte, di tratti, con certa sprezzatura da gran maestro... non usata nella scuola di Roma e nella Lombarda..."
[889] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 211.
[890] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89: "...ponevasi a lavorare mezza figure e testa alla prima, e senza il letto sotto..."
[891] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 220.

any possibility of repayment. The biographer goes on to say that it was then that Reni began to forego his traditional working method in favour of speed, and began taking "money in exchange for anything ... like a miserable mercenary, his paintings and his time at so much an hour."[892] One result of this "extreme necessity" saw Reni planning to auction all of the unfinished works in his studio. Many of the works had been promised to important patrons and he had already received advances for them, but apparently the stubborn artist pushed for the auction, and said that he would return any deposits to his clients, who were naturally displeased when they heard of the artist's plan. On the advice of his assistant Marchino and others around him, Reni instead made a deal with the merchant Giovanni Battista Ferri, who drew up a contract to sell "a selection of the least risky private paintings, drawings and prints" from his studio.[893] That deal reportedly proved troublesome with the angry patrons and later fell through, but upon Reni's death, Ferri handled the sale of thirteen large, unfinished history paintings left in the studio.[894]

The artist is described as having sold paintings that he created in just three hours for fifty *scudi* each, to buyers who then sold them for double that to the art market in France. He then began working for "a certain wise old man" for forty *scudi* a day, for no less than four hours, during which time he would produce at least two paintings.[895] Essentially, the artist was being hired to work for a measly ten *scudi* an hour, showing a substantial reduction from his previous earnings and a deviation from his noble practice to one he had always condemned – certainly not the actions of an artist who "said he would give up his life to save his reputation."[896] Baldinucci recognised this time working for the "old man" and charging per hour as a direct threat to the artist's status, which Reni had worked to elevate, for it meant working "like a labourer."[897] Reni's practice was linked to the status of *all* artists, his practice elevated more than

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[892] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89-90: "...a prendere denari a cambio da tutti ... a vendere, quasi dissi, vil mercenario, l' opra sua e le giornate a un tanto l'ora..."
[893] Ibid., 94.: "Fatto poscia una scelta dei quadri meno pericolosi e privati; di molti disegni e di tutte le stampe ... trovò il mercante Ferri, che vi attese e se ne fece il contratto..."
[894] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 220.
[895] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 90: "...lavorò loro molte teste a cinquanta scudi l'una ... il sagace vecchio ... levandone quante potea a cinquanta scudi l'una tutte mandando in Francia, cento vendeva alla meno...", "...s'aggiustò in quaranta scudi il giorno, pur che non s'intendesse minore di quatt'ore, si che dieci scudi per ora gliene venisse: perchè potendo, diceva egli, in tal tempo fargliene due..."
[896] Ibid., 116: "...poco curando in tal caso la vita medesima, che per salvare la riputazione vantavasi non curare di perdere."
[897] Baldinucci, *Notizie,* IV, 22, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 40.

just his own profession. This practice is described as having been of brief duration, owing to Reni's self-reflection and realisation that he was betraying his convictions. Malvasia wrote that it was gambling that almost caused the artist "to lose his initial love of virtue and the reputation he so esteemed."[898]

Reni's works are described as having appreciated in value quite dramatically in the years after they were painted. Malvasia lists numerous examples of such inflated prices, among which is an *Adoration of the Magi*, which was initially purchased for ten *scudi* by Bolognese aristocrat Camillo Bolognetti, and later sold by the broker Monsù Gazzino to a monastery for 400 *scudi.* A similar story is told regarding a painting of *Eurydice* for the Lambertini family, for which Reni was paid a similar amount, and was then sold to a Frenchman for 300 *scudi.* Two works, the *Magdalene* and *St. Cecilia* were painted on copper for Count Zambeccari, who paid Reni eighty *scudi* for his work, and were subsequently purchased by Cardinal Boncompagni, Archbishop of Bologna, for 430 *scudi*, over five times their original value.[899] Even those works in Reni's late manner, which were unappreciated by some of his critics, increased in value. A canvas with the head and hands of a *Weeping St. Peter*, which according to Malvasia was "painted with open brushstrokes", which was originally purchased from the artist for fifty *scudi*, and then resold for 100 to Machiavello, and resold yet again "by his heirs for 228 to the very eminent Vidoni in 1669" suggests that his late, looser technique was appreciated by the art market, commanding a high price well after the artist's death.[900] This appreciation is testament to the artist's incredible fame and popularity in *seicento* Italy, and to the success of his workshop as a business; his worth continued to increase throughout the seventeenth century, during which his paintings were much coveted.

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[898] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 89: "...gli fe' poco meno che perdere il primiero affetto alla virtù e la riputazione tanto da lui stimata..."
[899] Ibid., 71.: "...due teste sul rame di S. Maria Maddalena e S. Cecilia dattesi fare dal detto Co. Zambeccari per ottanta scudi, e adesso acquisate dal Sig. Cardinal Boncompagni Arcivescovo di Bologna per quattro cento trenta."
[900] Ibid., 72: "...una testa e mani di un S. Pietro piangente fatta tutta di colpi, che i PP. di S. Filippo Neri di Fano gli pagarono cinquanta scudi, venduta cento al Macchiavelli, e dagli eredi di qusti dugento ventotto all' Eminentissimo Vidoni del 1669."

4.8. Attribution and copies

The final section of this chapter will address the complex subject of the multitude of copies within Reni's *oeuvre*, and problems relating to the attribution of Reni's work. It is necessary not only to discuss the number of duplicate compositions produced within the workshop, but also problems associated with this practice. The subject of the production of copies is closely connected to the topics which have been addressed thus far in this thesis; Reni's painting technique, materials, and teaching, his use of assistants, and his patrons and pricing. The study of techniques and materials proves relevant in analysing copies and attempting to make or refute attribution. Reni's practice as a teacher, as noted, enabled him to train assistants, who could create high quality copies after his compositions. Furthermore, the subject of copies is related to that of Reni's workshop as a business, because he and his studio created numerous replicas of selected compositions in response to popular demand, and marketed them skilfully.

Concerns regarding the attributional status of works were voiced by the artist's patrons, who occasionally, as has been observed, objected to Reni's use of assistants in works commissioned from the artist. Modern scholars, too, have devoted considerable energy to the subject of the attribution of Reni's works. Many attributions of Reni's paintings are made based on a stylistic basis. However, this can be problematic. If certain discernable stylistic traits can be identified by modern viewers, it follows that Reni's students were taught to imitate these traits, and that they were used to generate copies which are now taken to be autograph works.[901] Information from art-historical sources and studies of provenance can provide further evidence to support the attribution of works, but only in some instances this leads to a solid attribution. The study of technique and use of scientific analysis, when used in conjunction with traditional methods of attribution, can prove invaluable both to support historical evidence, or attempt to solve issues of attribution where no such evidence exists. The purpose of this section is not, however, to produce a list of attributions of specific works, but to examine the workshop practices associated with the production of copies, and the resulting difficulties in differentiating autograph pictures from those by the artist's studio.

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[901] Krauss, *Retaining the Original*, 11

The authorship of copies from Reni's studio varies considerably. Reni himself produced copies of his own work, and copies were created by pupils and assistants which may or may not have subsequently been retouched by Reni, while others were created by artists outside his studio entirely, and many in the century after his death. The production of copies seems to have been uncontrolled and unregulated by the master, particularly when his studio was busy. As mentioned in previous chapters, Malvasia describes unpermitted copies of Reni's works, created by his students in secret, citing specifically a copy of an unfinished *Abduction of Helen,* created by Vignati by bribing the guard at the room of the Accademia delle Porte.[902] That, despite the artist's best efforts, unapproved copies were created further complicates what is already a problematic body of work with regards to attribution. Furthermore, the task of establishing whether a replica is autograph, a copy carried out by assistants, or by an artist entirely unrelated to the original studio becomes more difficult with the passing of time – as paintings age, paint surfaces deteriorate, colours fade and varnishes darken, making the defining visual characteristics of the artist less readily apparent.[903] This is why the close examination and use of technical analysis can prove invaluable in attribution.

This practice of producing copies was not exclusive to Reni's studio. Many Renaissance and seventeenth-century artists produced replicas of successful compositions.[904] Titian's workshop practices are described in comparable terms to Reni's; his students also reportedly copied his works without his knowledge, and he is also implicated in the passing off of studio copies as his own paintings. Titian and his workshop similarly produced multiple replicas of some of his successful compositions.[905] Perugino and Andrea del Sarto both repeated certain compositions, usually with some variations, for altarpieces and small devotional pictures.[906] Domenichino similarly produced copies of certain subjects, as illustrated by a study of his *Sibyls.*[907] Even Caravaggio, an artist not known to make extensive use of assistants, produced autograph variants after some of his compositions, apparently by

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[902] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 73: "Gli copiarono i più gelosi, come fu il ratto di Elena, ricavato in tre notti dal Vignati, corrotto con denari il custode della stanza all'Accademia delle Porte."
[903] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian*', 205.
[904] Ibid.
[905] Loh, *Titian Remade,* 20.
[906] Jill Dunkerton and Carol Plazzotta, 'Drawing and Design in Italian Renaissance Painting', 69.
[907] Hugh Brigstocke and Richard Spear, 'The Ratta "Sibyl": Replication in Domenichino's Studio', *Artibus Et Historiae,* vol. 17, no. 34 (1996), 45-52.

transferring the outline of a composition to a new canvas by some unknown mechanical means.[908] The creation of copies was therefore conventional in the Renaissance and seventeenth century, and the use of assistants in the production of commissioned copies and new compositions was both accepted and expected by an artist's patrons. In reference to the workshop practices of Rubens and Breughel, it is recognised that collectors in the seventeenth century did not base their value of a work on the master's physical participation, but rather on it belonging to the master's style.[909] This is certainly true of a number of Reni's patrons who happily accepted works that were partially completed by his assistants.

4.9. The concept of "originality"

The concept of "originality" in painting as it might be understood today, referring to a work which was invented and created by the master and was wholly unique and the first of its kind, is not necessarily in keeping with seventeenth-century thought. The definition of an original work in the *seicento* seems to vary. That originality is synonymous with the "authentic" and often associated with autograph status is a modern preconception that cannot be readily applied to a *seicento* context. For example, completely alien to modern thinking on originality are works by Sebastiano del Piombo, which were completely based on drawings by Michelangelo, but declared in the eighteenth century to be *by* del Piombo, because authorship existed in the production of a work, rather than its invention.[910] Copies were not necessarily considered in a negative light, and carried many useful functions. In a letter dated to 1681, Baldinucci wrote about the important functions of the copy; they preserved the appearance of lost originals, they delight the viewer through their feat of imitation, they augment the small and often inaccessible supply of paintings, and, particularly in reference to copies made after Raphael, they spread the master's style throughout Europe "like the rays of a new light".[911] Reni must have been part of this diffusion

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[908] Linda Freeman Bauer and Steve Colton, 'Tracing in Some Works by Caravaggio', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 142, no. 1168 (2000), 435.
[909] Doherty, Leonard and Wadum, 'Brueghel and Rubens at Work', 217.
[910] Krauss, *Retaining the Original*, 11.
[911] Filippo Baldinucci, *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (Florence: Santi Franchi, 1681), in Giovanni Gaetano Bottari and S. Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura scritte da' più celebri personaggi dei secoli XV, XVI, e XVII* (Milan: G. Silvestri, 1822-25), II, 527-530, cited by Muller, *Measures of Authenticity*, 147: "...le copie come gioie

described by Baldinucci; the artist's beginnings as a painter saw him producing copies of works by Renaissance masters on request, painting in 1600 a copy of Raphael's *St Cecilia* (which was then in the left transept of S. Giovanni in Monte, in Bologna) for Cardinal Sfondrato.[912]

Issues of authorship arise frequently in seventeenth-century scholarship, owing to a rapidly growing art market, and a newfound interest in the practice of connoisseurship. Reni apparently maintained that by retouching students' works, "or rather by redoing them completely, he made those paintings his own", though admitted to having some "qualms about having Dinarelli, Sirani and others work too much on his designs", implying awareness of issues of authenticity which arise with too much studio intervention.[913] It has been suggested that works by both Rubens and Breughel were often considered "original", regardless of levels of studio intervention, evidenced by the frequent inclusion of the master's signature.[914] However, correspondence between Rubens and collector Sir Dudley Carleton illustrate a different understanding amongst Rubens's patrons. In a letter dated 12th May, 1618, Rubens made a distinction between "originals", "mere copies", and works that are retouched by his hand, noting that the retouched works were of lesser monetary value than "originals".[915] Rubens noted in another letter to William Trumbull that even an assistant work which he had retouched heavily was worth half that of a work done entirely by his "own hand".[916] Guercino, however, had much different thinking on the

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rarissime eran mandate per tutta l'Europa, fino agli ultimi confini della quale, mediante le medesime, in un subito raggi di nuova luce si sparsero in queste belle art."

[912] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 22.

[913] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 127: "...e palesò ad un suo confidente il suo scrupolo in aver fatto lavorar troppo sui suoi disegni al Dinarelli, al Sirani e simili; ancorchè col ritoccare, anzi ricoprir tutto, facesse divenire que' quadri di sua mano."

[914] Doherty, Leonard and Wadum, 'Brueghel and Rubens at Work', 217.
Reni very rarely included a signature in his paintings. Pepper notes only two instances of the inclusion of Reni's name as an indication of authorship, in which the paintings include inscriptions as opposed to signatures – a *Portrait of Cardinal Ubaldini,* the current location of which is unknown, and *Venus and Cupid,* also known as *'Il Diamante',* dated 1626, Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio. Stephen Pepper, 'A New Late Work by Guido Reni for Edinburgh and His Late Manner Re-Evaluated', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 121, no. 916 (1979), 643.

[915] Rubens, Letter 29, Antwerp,12th May, 1618, To Sir Dudley Carleton, cited by Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, 61-62: "...Your Excellency has taken only the originals, with which I am perfectly satisfied. Yet Your Excellency must not think that the others are mere copies, for they are so well retouched by my hand that they are hardly to be distinguished from originals. Nevertheless, they are rated at a much lower price..."

[916] Rubens, Letter 45, Antwerp, 26th January 1621, To William Trumbull,
cited by Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, 76: "For if I had done the entire work with my own hand, it would be well worth twice as much. It has been gone over by my hand not lightly, but touched and retouched everywhere equally."

subject – while he differentiated between original works and autograph copies in his *Libro dei conti,* he charged the same for the repetition as he had for the prime version, implying that he placed little value on the concept of originality.[917] He did however, like Rubens, value his own work over studio copies, and reportedly voiced upset when a copy of one of his works by a student, Bartolomeo Gennari, was sold as an original.[918]

It is apparent from another letter written by Rubens to Trumbull that these discussions between originals and copies originated from Carleton's dissatisfaction with having been sent works produced by assistants.[919] Spear recounts similar observations regarding the attribution of Reni's works, voiced by Viscount Fielding in a letter to the third Marquis of Hamilton, dated to 1637. The Viscount wrote that "the Helenas head of Guido Reno is of his schoole, but thought to be touch'd by him, but for Saint Peeters head I am assur'd itt is an originall, and am promis'd a certifcat thereof from Guido Rheno, and that itt is of his most fierce and best way."[920] The *Saint Peter Weeping* that Viscount Fielding refers to as "originall" is now in Vienna and was painted around 1637 (fig. 4.20). The word "fierce" is derived from the Latin *ferus*, meaning "untamed", so perhaps in this context the Viscount refers to Reni's brushwork in this painting, which might be described as "untamed", in that it is loose and the strokes are readily visible. The brushstrokes in *St. Peter's* beard have a sense of movement that might be described as "fierce", in the manner in which the curves of each curl has been laid down in alternate directions. That this work is in Reni's "best way" might refer to his famous ability to portray old men; the *St. Peter* in this painting is similar in brushwork and composition to many of the artist's paintings of *St. Jerome.* The Viscount makes a distinction between a work by Reni's school, which was retouched by him, and one entirely by Reni's own hand – and only the latter is considered an "original". The work the Viscount refers to appears to be an autograph variant of a very similar canvas in the Prado (fig. 4.21), indicating that

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[917] Luigi Salerno, Salerno, *I dipinti del Guercino* (Roma: U. Bozzi, 1988), cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 215.
[918] Ibid.
[919] Rubens, Letter 46, 13th September 1621, To William Trumbull, cited by Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, 77: "I am very sorry that their should have been any dissatisfaction in this affair on the part of my Lord Carleton, but he never let me understand clearly, although I asked him to state whether this picture was to be a true and entire original or merely retouched by my hand."
[920] Paul Shakeshaft, 'To much bewiched with thoes intysing Things: the letters of James, Third Marquis of Hamilton and Basil, Viscount Feilding, concerning collecting in Venice 1635-1639', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 128 (1986), 126, letter no. xxxii, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 239.

Fielding's observations were accurate – though the composition is not the first and "original" of the series, its production is attributed to Reni.[921]

Rubens's letters to Sir Dudley Carleton clearly show a differentiation between "originals" and retouched copies, the latter of which was given a lesser price, demonstrating the value of the concept of originality.[922] Such value, however was not placed on originality by all seventeenth-century thinkers. The concept of an "original" work in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was usually founded upon its position as the first to have been made within a sequential series, from which follow copies, but this did not necessarily make the original preferable to a collector.[923] While Mancini wrote of the importance of distinguishing a "copy" from an "original", he also wrote that copies that are so well executed that are indistinguishable from their original, the copy is to be preferred over the original.[924] This has echoes in Vasari, where, upon discovering a work thought to be by Raphael, but in fact a student copy, Giulio Romano replied that he valued the copy more than the original "because it is extraordinary that one great artist should be able to imitate so well the style of another."[925] This implies that originals are often valued higher than copies because they are of better quality, but in instances where this is not the case, the copy is to be preferred. Originality, therefore, was not desirable for reasons of "authenticity" or a link to the master's genius, but because, since originals would be produced by masters and copies often by students or assistants, an original work might be of higher quality technically. Filippo Baldinucci noted in his definition of a copy that it was "a work that is not made of one's own invention but is drawn precisely from another's and may be better, poorer or equal to the original", reaffirming the theory that copies were not necessarily of lesser value than their original counterpart.[926]

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[921] Richard E. Spear, '*Saint Sebastian* and Reni's Multiple Versions', in *The Agony and the Ecstasy: Guido Reni's Saint Sebastians*, edited by Boccardo, Piero and Salomon, Xavier (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2007), 43.

[922] Rubens, Letter 29, Antwerp,12th May, 1618, To Sir Dudley Carleton, cited by Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, 61-62.

[923] Loh, *Titian Remade,* 21.

[924] Mancini, *Considerazioni,* I, 134-135: "Con tutte queste osservanze distenguendo / la copia dall'originale, nondimeno alle volte avviene che la copia sia tanto ben fatta che inganni, ancorchè l'artefice e chi compra sia intelligente, anzi, quello che è più, havendo la copia et l'originale, non sappia destinguere. Che in tal caso .... copie dover essere preferite all'originali per haver in sè due arti, e quella dell'inventore e quella del copiatore."

[925] Vasari, *Lives* (1906), vol. 5, 42, cited by Muller, *Measures of Authenticity*, 144-145.

[926] Filippo Baldinucci, *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno,* 39, cited by Loh, *Titian Remade,* 21.

The understanding of what constituted an original or autograph work seem to have varied from person to person, making it difficult to provide a consensus on the matter amongst seventeenth-century patrons. Even in modern terms, definitions for attribution are complex. A catalogue for Sotheby's Old Masters Sale gives definitions of such terminology, though as a precursor notes that their attributions must not be taken as "a statement of fact."[927] The auction house define a painting "by" a specific name as "a work by the artist", but make no reference to collaboration or studio involvement, though many works deemed to be "by" Old Masters are likely to have seen the hand of an assistant at some point. Works that fall into the "studio of" category are, according to the catalogue, "by an unknown hand in the studio of the artist which may or may not have been executed under the artist's direction." This definition seems to preclude works directed by the master as being "by" him, while Reni apparently believed differently. It also rules out any personal intervention from the master, though Reni is described as having taught many students by retouching their work, which then sold as paintings "by" Reni. While "circle of" maintains some proximity to the artist's studio and is not necessarily distinct from the preceding category, "style of", "follower of" and "manner of" are perceptively a degree removed, though "style of" might still involve students of the master. A work "after" a named artist simply identifies a "copy of a known work of the artist", without further stipulation on the specific hands involved or the timeframe. Given the ambiguities of these definitions, a better understanding might be gained from definitions as made by the artist himself. In Malvasia's description of the Pope's site visit to the Annunciation Chapel and complaints about use of assistants there, the Pope said that Reni "had been given that work so that it would be by his hand." It seems that the Pope's initial belief was that for something to be an autograph work, it was to be more or less in its entirety by the hand of the artist from whom it was commissioned. Reni apparently disagreed, and replied by informing the Pope that the ideas are all his own, and that drawing, sketching and background painting alone do not make up a work, and are worthless until retouched by the master, who refinishes until it "turns out to be" by his hand.[928] Though the artist is here referring to fresco, this information provides a valuable insight into the artist's beliefs on what constituted an "autograph" work. This

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[927] Sotheby's Old Masters Evening Sale Catalogue, 7pm BST, 6th July 2016, London. http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/old-master-british-paintings-evening-l16033.html

[928] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 55: "...il graffire, sbozzare e campire non sono, che fanno il lavoro: sono appunto come un chirografo ... che prima ch'ella vi ponga la mano e lo firmi, serve a nulla. Oltre che i pensieri e disegni sono i miei, il tutto ricopro, finisco e rifaccio in modo, che quando l'oprea ... di mia mano..."

account, as noted in chapter one, implies that Reni believed that if a composition is created by assistants but based on the drawings of a master, and is overseen and retouched by him, it is, in effect, a work by Guido Reni. The "drawing, sketching and background painting" may, in any case, all be done by assistants. Reni's criteria for the recognition of an "autograph" work, as laid out in this encounter with the Pope, are inconsistent with later accounts. For example, the case in which Gessi and Sementi created an entire fresco cycle in Naples on Reni's behalf, without drawings, and also the instance of Pietro Lauri's *Flight into Egypt*, which was commissioned to Reni but delegated in its entirety to his assistant, who changed aspects of the artist's design. In the latter case, despite the deviation from his drawings, Reni maintained still that the work was by his own hand because he had retouched it.

The manner in which payment for copies was divided between master and assistants provides further evidence for Reni's position on works being "by" himself. Payments involving works which were commissioned to Reni, carried out by assistants and only retouched by Reni prove particularly revealing. Morselli gives an example of this in the case of Reni's *Christ Bearing the Cross*. The original, now in the National Gallery, Valleta, Malta, was painted around 1620. A reduced copy was requested by the patrons and completed by early 1621, as a tabernacle cover for the church of San Salvatore in Bologna (now Musée des Augustins, Toulouse). The church paid Reni 50 *lire* for this reduced copy, work which Reni turned over to an assistant, Giacomo Castellini, paying him only 20 *lire*.[929] This division of payment, in which Reni receives sixty percent of the fee and his assistant only forty percent, suggests that despite the fact that the assistant performed more physical work on the copy, it was still considered more Reni's "work" as he created the composition, oversaw the painting and retouched it.

The contract between Reni and his patrons for the *Pietà dei Mendicanti* has already been mentioned in the context of Reni's negotiation process, noting that it contained a stipulation that the work be painted "*di sua mano*". This is not the only document related to Reni that contains such a clause. Records exist for the first payment made to Reni for the altarpiece of *Moses Striking the Rock* in Ravenna Cathedral, on the 9th August 1614, a commission made by Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini. Like the stipulations in the *Pietà dei Mendicanti* contract, the terms of this payment outlined

[929] Morselli, 'Bologna', 159.

that "...*a bon conto della pittora che deve fare nella nova cappella di Ravenna del principale Altare da farsi di sua propria mano*", that is, "a good portion of the painting of the main altar in the new chapel of Ravenna is to be done by his own hands."[930] The terms specified here refer only to the altarpiece, though the commission also included fresco decoration of the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in the cathedral. This implies an acknowledgement by Cardinal Aldobrandini of the necessity of assistant intervention when executing fresco, but concern that the work on canvas he has commissioned be at least in some part "by" Reni himself. Reni was not the first artist for whom the issue of authorship in commissioned works was brought up. Notarised contracts like those created in the Renaissance continued to be used in the seventeenth century and were the preferred form of agreement for public commissions like that of the *Pietà dei Mendicanti*.[931] In a similar instance, a payment receipt for one of Reni's final altarpieces, the *Assumption of the Virgin* for the Confraternity of S. Maria degli Angioli in Spilamberto, Modena (now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (fig. 4.22), acknowledged that it the work been painted "tutto di sua propria mano", all in Reni's own hand.[932] These documents provide an insight into the stipulations that some patrons may have explicitly made through contracts in an effort to ensure that the master had some amount of involvement in the execution of a commissioned work.

These contracts relating to the "hands" permitted to work on a painting may be an indication of the seventeenth-century patron's aforementioned interest of the practice of connoisseurship, and also their awareness of the growth of the artist's studio, which necessitated increased use of assistants. Such stipulations might in many cases relate to a desire for technical quality in a work, presuming superior skill in the master over his assistants. However, given the reported difficulty differentiating his works from those of assistants, it might be assumed that there was no significant reduction in quality in works painted by Reni's his studio. The patron's desire for the hand of the master to be involved in the production of work commissioned to Reni seems to have

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[930] Howard Hibbard, *The Architecture of the Palazzo Borghese* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1962), note, 508, cited by Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 57, n. 58.
[931] Morselli, 'Bologna', 162.
[932] Giovanni Galvani, *Cenni storici relativi alla B. V. Assunta in Cielo dipinta da Guido Reni per la verabile Confraternità di Santa Maria degli Angioli in Spilamberto* (Modena: 1864), cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 258.

been, therefore, a connoisseurial demand, that is, to possess an object that was physically touched by the master. The involvement of a famous name in a painting increased the perceived value of the work.

While it is maintained that, through Reni's retouchings, studio pictures by Reni's assistants were transformed into works from his hand ("*di sua mano*"), the difficulty in forming a direct translation of this expression must be taken into account. As previously mentioned, the term may be understood to imply the artist's responsibility to ensure a commission is carried out, rather than any physical input by the master in executing a work. This explanation suggests that when Guido claims a work to have been "by his own hand", this expression may simply refer to his responsibility over the project, and that the project, regardless of who carried it out, was overseen or approved by the artist himself. That the term "*di sua mano*" allows for a variety of interpretations means that Reni was not necessarily misleading clients in his use of assistants on commissions which stipulated this as a clause.

4.10. Reni's copies

To understand the complexities involved in the attribution of Reni's works, it is useful to examine the artist's practice of creating copies, how and why these copies were created, and some of the artist's frequently repeated compositions. While modern tastes value originality in compositions, there was a demand within the seventeenth-century market for copies of certain works, and requests are specifically made to Reni for replicas of compositions that patrons wanted for themselves. Pepper wrote that "once he [Reni] had arrived at a basic composition that satisfied the intent of the subject, Reni had no qualms about repeating it identically", and it is this practice that presents difficulties in authorship.[933] From the 1620s onward, Reni began to concentrate on single figure compositions, several of which were repeated by both the artist himself, his assistants, and followers unrelated to his studio.[934]

Reni's frequently repeated compositions became highly collectable. They came to be associated with his name, and therefore were recognisable, coveted works from a

[933] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 49.
[934] Howard Hibbard, 'Guido Reni's Painting of the Immaculate Conception' *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin,* vol. 28, no. 1 (1969), 21.

great master. Reni's ability to command high prices in the *seicento* implies not only that the artist was famous and talented, but that he had a good understanding of the demands of the art market. This understanding is linked to the compositions which he and his studio chose to create copies after. The artist appears to have identified those subjects which were most desirable to his patrons and marketed copies after them. Accounts are given regarding specific occasions where patrons request copies after compositions they particularly liked, for example, when Cardinal Spada was apparently moved by Reni's *Abduction of Helen,* he asked the artist to make a copy of it.[935] Reni's decisions to repeat other compositions in many cases, however, were not based on specific requests and must have come from a wider understanding of the prevailing attitudes and preferences of his clients. Caravaggio's production of copies, too, was related to the artist's "commercial possibilities" – it has been suggested that his early copies, which come closest in size and composition to his originals, were mostly un-commissioned works, and painted when the artist was interested in exploring the market and making money.[936]

Reni's copies were created to satisfy a demand within the seventeenth-century art market. According to Roger de Piles, in the *seicento* there was "hardly a single painter who has never repeated one of his works either because it pleased him or because someone asked him for a similar work."[937] This demand was related to the popularisation of collecting in the seventeenth century. Collecting was part of a culture that served to strengthen group identity, and paintings became objects that members of a certain social circle were expected to own.[938] Copies were not viewed in a negative light by clients; rather, they were desirable because they were familiar. There are precedents for such collecting practices in the Renaissance; several of Titian's compositions (particularly his female nudes) were replicated in his workshop, and had become "bravura pieces and prestige fetishes" which were coveted in aristocratic circles throughout Europe.[939] Titian's patrons are said to have enjoyed the "guarantee

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[935] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* 2nd ed., II, 28, cited by Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 265: "...se sariasi contentato lasciargline far cavare una copia..." The *Abduction of Helen* was originally commissioned for the King of Spain through the Spanish Ambassador in Rome, though difficulties in negotiations meant the work never reached Spain and is now in the Louvre, Paris. Spada's copy was created by Giacinto Campana and retouched by Reni, and is now in the Spada Gallery, Rome.
[936] Bauer and Colton, 'Tracing in Some Works by Caravaggio', 436.
[937] Roger de Piles, *L'idée du peintre parfait,* edited by Xavier Carrère (Paris: Le Promeneur, 1993), 107-8, cited by Loh, *Titian Remade,* 20.
[938] Loh, *Titian Remade,* 42.
[939] Ibid., 21.

of uniformity" assured to them by his workshop, which ensured that "the product was acceptable within the larger consumer group."[940] This must have been true, also of Reni's workshop. Given that Reni's assistants were excellent imitators of his style, and that many studio works could be mistaken for autograph (as is still the case today), Reni's patrons must have felt confident that control was being exercised in the production of copies, and therefore they could purchase them comfortable in the knowledge that their quality would be sufficient to satisfy and impress fellow collectors.

Titian's patrons have been described as having had an "emulative desire", that is, a desire to own a work by Titian which was similar to what others possessed, yet somehow unique in itself.[941] Reni's patrons, too, specifically requested copies of successful compositions, and allowed for some digression from the original compositions. Evidence exists to suggest that patrons recognised the tedium involved for an artist in producing copies, and, for this reason, Reni was not always expected to create copies identical to the originals. This explains the variety in the composition of copies, which may not necessarily imply the intervention of students or other artists. In fact, on the contrary, it is likely that Reni was more free to revise and alter his compositions when painting replicas than his students or assistants might have been – the case of Lauri's *Flight into Egypt* of 1635, in which the assistant made significant changes to Reni's original design, seems to have been an unusual one. As mentioned briefly in chapter two, Malvasia recounts one of Reni's patron's requests for a copy of the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion.* Cardinal Gessi wanted a small copy of the work, but "in order not to obligate such a great talent to undertake an exact replica, it was to be somewhat different", supposedly understanding the monotony and tedium that would be involved in repeatedly producing exact copies of a composition without some variation. The Cardinal's comments imply that he has respect for Reni's art in that he is not requesting him to carry out the purely mechanical act of copying, which might be stifling to the artist's creativity. The work has been identified today as the *Crucifixion* in *Alnwick* Castle, Scotland, and Reni has indeed altered the composition by omitting the figure of the Magdalene, though a skull remains at the base of the cross as a nod to her previous presence. The pose of the Virgin has been altered to show one hand outstretched, presumably to fill the space left in the absence of the

[940] Ibid.
[941] Ibid., 33.

figure of the Magdalene. The hands of St. John have been raised to his chest in prayer, rather than clasped at his waist. The background of the scene is depicted as closer to the picture plane in the copy, and a heavenly light radiates from a break in the clouds, where previously the sky was dark. Christ's torso is slightly more elongated and pale, and he is framed by the light radiating behind him, making the scene appear more serene and slightly supernatural, perhaps increasing its suitability as a work for the Cardinal to "contemplate in private". The changes other than those listed are minor – Reni has made some alteration to the folds of the clothing of the figures, demonstrating his skill in drapery painting.

The work certainly constitutes a "*copia piccolo*" as Gessi requested, measuring just 96 x 75 centimetres, while each dimension of the original measures almost four times that of the copy, at 397 x 266 centimetres. Bellori confirms the autograph status of this work by differentiating the work from a studio copy, citing the version of the composition painted for Cardinal Gessi as being of "the same composition" but '"by the hand of Guido himself".[942] Spear determines that "Cardinal Gessi's reduced 'copy' of the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* should be called an autograph variant", as opposed to an autograph *replica,* given that there is variation in the composition.[943] Though Cardinal Gessi apparently allowed Reni to make adjustments to this composition so as not to bore the artist, seems more probable that this request for a copy with some variety from the original was not a courtesy to the artist on the patron's behalf, but rather a desire for a work, as Loh phrased it, that was "similar" but "unique".[944]

One of the more mysterious aspects of Reni's artistic practice was how exactly copies after his works were produced. In 1999, Pepper wrote that "to this day we cannot explain exactly how he preserved the outlines of his compositions over long periods of time, when presumably the original works were no longer available" and that, while it was clear that somehow Reni preserved the outlines of his compositions "in sufficient detail to repeat them as precisely as he wished to", the problem remained open in the absence of cartoons or similar.[945] Over fifteen years later, this puzzle still remains open, with no documentary evidence from the sources to describe the procedures of the artist in replicating these compositions, or, indeed, surviving cartoons. Analysis of

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[942] Bellori, *Vite,* 517, cited by Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 233: "...vedesi l'istessa invenzione in un quadretto piccolo di mano di Guido..."
[943] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 238.
[944] Loh, *Titian Remade,* 33.
[945] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 49.

many of Reni's copies demonstrates the striking accuracy with which certain compositions were produced. In the case of Reni's paintings of *St. Sebastian,* conservators have demonstrated a direct correlation between the compositions of each work by using clear polyester film sheets to create an outline of the torso of the Auckland Art Gallery, Musée du Louvre, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Museo de Arte de Ponce and the Dulwich Picture Gallery works. These sheets were laid on top of one another, and showed that the outlines of all four works are almost identical, suggesting they have stemmed from the same cartoon or tracing of the prime version.[946] Purely from visual observation, Pepper made a similar observation earlier, writing that comparison between the Palazzo Rosso and Capitoline pictures "suggests that Reni sees the composition as a kind of mold or pattern from which he can produce as many replicas as he wishes" and that once the artist had "arrived at his basic composition he saw no reason to change it."[947]

From these studies, the use of some mechanical means of replicating Reni's compositions seems likely. This may have consisted of a drawing or cartoon, which was kept in the studio and traced as needed. Artists often made preliminary works known as *abbozzi* to show to potential clients. These may have been preparatory sketches of important elements of a composition, or occasionally a sketch of the whole design incorporating details such as light and shadows, which could then be squared up and copied to the canvas.[948] However, the process of squaring up a composition in a larger scale onto canvas would likely have brought about more discrepancies in the outlines than have been identified. Alternatively, a life-size image or cartoon might also be made to transfer the outline to fresco or canvas. It has been suggested that artists who ran busy studios may have created these traced cartoons routinely for the sake of convenience, as "a tracing taken from a successful composition kept in the studio could be reapplied whenever it was required..." – that is, if a well-executed drawing was taken from a work, it could be stored in the studio and retrieved whenever required for the purpose of making new copies.[949] The outline of this cartoon would be perforated with holes, and a pigment such as charcoal would be pounced through these onto the surface of the canvas, creating an outline for the

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[946] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 207.
[947] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 32.
[948] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 214.
[949] Linda Freeman Bauer, 'A Letter by Barocci and the Tracing of Finished Paintings', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 130 (1986), 355–57, cited by Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 214.

painting.[950] Such a procedure would fit well with the notion that Reni's studio became increasingly busy after his return to Bologna from Rome, and particularly after Ludovico Carracci's death in 1619. In Reni's case, none such cartoons are known exist, nor is there any evidence of pouncing or incision on his canvases, or description of such practices by his sources. Therefore, it seems more likely that the compositions were traced directly from a painting, using non-destructive means.

That there is no mention of tracing in accounts by Reni's biographers is perhaps unsurprising – the practice belonged to the "mechanical" side of art and therefore rarely surfaced in writings concerned with advancing the social and intellectual standing of the profession, as Bellori and Malvasia were.[951] The practice of tracing is, however, described by Cennini, who instructs the reader on making and using tracing paper "to copy a head, or a figure, or a half figure".[952] The process involved the creation of a large, transparent sheet, made either by oiling paper, or by drying fish glue in thin layers on porphyry or marble. The transparent sheet would then be pressed against the surface of a picture so that the underlying contours were visible and an outline could be created.[953] The tracing would then be turned over, and a second outline would be made in paint or charcoal, which would be pressed against a new canvas, leaving a visible transfer of the outline without evidence of pouncing or incision. Alternatively, a thin piece of black silk could be stretched on a frame (known as a *velo*) to make it semi-transparent, could be placed before the painting. The outline of the composition would then be copied in chalk and transferred to another support by rubbing.[954] Reproduction of compositions through tracing would have necessitated the artist to reserve paintings in his studio to use for the purpose for periods of time. Francesco Saverio Baldinucci, nephew of the *seicento* writer Filippo Baldinucci, reported that many painters followed the practice of Onorio Maniari, who often made two paintings of the same subject and composition, one for his client and the other "for those occasions when it was needed", implying that it would have been used for the production of still more paintings.[955] This may have been Reni's practice also. While no surviving evidence of cartoons for Reni's studio exists, there is,

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[950] Ibid.
[951] Freeman Bauer, 'A Letter by Barocci', 356.
[952] Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook,* 13-14.
[953] Freeman Bauer, 'A Letter by Barocci', 356.
[954] Bauer, 'A Letter by Barocci', 356.
[955] F. S. Baldinucci, *Vite di artisti dei secoli XVII-XVIII,* edited by A. Matteoli (Rome: 1975), 58, cited by Bauer and Colton, 'Tracing in Some Works by Caravaggio', 435.

perhaps, evidence to suggest that the artist maintained a stock of partially worked-up canvases. It is possible that, during the creation of an "original" composition, Reni simultaneously copied the outline onto another canvas by tracing, and kept the replica in his studio from which more copies could be produced. This practice is in keeping with that of Titian, who retained studio copies of his best works so that autograph copies could be issued from the workshop as required.[956] Reni's death inventory, as has been observed, records a number of unfinished canvases in the Bolognese workshop. Several of the canvases recorded depicted compositions after which numerous copies were created, including *Christ,* the *Magdalene* and *Lucretia,* subjects which will be examined later in this chapter.

That Reni's technique in reproducing compositions cannot be determined is less surprising when similar ambiguity is noted in the practices of his contemporaries. Domenichino also produced copies of certain subjects, as illustrated by a study of his *Sibyls.*[957] Examination of four versions of a *Sibyl* by Domenichino showed that the contours and principal features of the heads in three of the canvases corresponded so perfectly "that some means of transfer must have been involved."[958] While X-rays of the painting in the Wallace collection show freehand brushwork that implies the development of a new design, the others appear to have been working rigidly, directly from some kind of cartoon or tracing. Though not as prolific as Reni in his production of copies, Domenichino seems to have followed a similar practice to his contemporary, where likewise the method of creation of copies is not readily apparent. Several compositions by Caravaggio also seem to have been replicated by unknown mechanical means. X-radiographs of his *Lute Players* show that the composition for Cardinal Del Monte (now in the Wildenstein family collection) was intended to replicate certain essential features of the Giustiniani (Hermitage, Leningrad) *Lute-player*, and that aspects of the composition appear to have been transposed to the Del Monte canvas by mechanical means.[959] Versions of Caravaggio's *Ecstasy of St. Francis, Boy Bitten by a Lizard,* and *St. Francis in Meditation* also appear to be based

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[956] Erica Tietze-Conrat, 'Titian's allegory of "Religion"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* edited by E. H. Gombrich (London: 1951), 128, 130, and Miguel Falomir (ed.), 'Titan's Replicas' in *Tiziano* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2003), 63-64, cited by Maria H. Loh, *Titian remade: repetition and the transformation of early modern Italian art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 20.
[957] Hugh Brigstocke and Richard Spear, 'The Ratta "Sibyl": Replication in Domenichino's Studio', *Artibus Et Historiae,* vol. 17, no. 34 (1996): 45-52.
[958] Brigstocke and Spear, 'Replication in Domenichino's Studio', 52.
[959] Christiansen, 'Caravaggio's Two Treatments of the Lute-Player', 25.

on tracings; superimposing their outlines onto one another displays a conformity between the images "so close as to leave little doubt that a tracing had been used in their creation."[960]

Reni made copies of numerous subjects. Copies of large-scale compositions seem to have most often been made on specific request, while the single-figure compositions which, as noted, became the focus of Reni's work from the 1620s onwards, were repeated more frequently. The subjects of these compositions were both religious and mythological, and included the *Magdalene, Artemisia, St. Jerome,* the *Head of Christ, Sibyls, St. Sebastian, Lucretia, Cleopatra, St. Roch, Salome,* the *Head of the Virgin,* and *Sts. Peter and Paul,* among others. Reni repeated these subjects multiple times, in many cases making variations on his initial compositions, and at points reinventing the compositions entirely, which in turn became sources for repetition.[961]

Two of Reni's most frequently reproduced religious themes and one of the most reproduced mythological themes have been selected for discussion; *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (or *Ecce Homo,* or the *Head of Christ*), the *Penitent Magdalene,* and *The Suicide of Lucretia.* These subjects have been selected because they have been repeated many times by both Reni and his studio, and the composition in each case represents a single figure, which facilitates close visual comparison between each work. The reason for the repetition of these subjects appears to differ, and will be addressed for each individual case. Varying interpretations exist on each theme, and copies have been made of the same subject after several different compositions. The sources for the attributions upon which this discussion is based are Guido Reni's *Opera Completa,* published 1971, in conjunction with Stephen Pepper's 1988 catalogue of Reni's paintings, Richard Spear's *The "Divine" Guido,* exhibition and gallery catalogues published over the last fifty years, and paintings which have appeared in auctions in Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonhams over the last decade. Only paintings of Italian origin which are datable to the seventeenth century or shortly thereafter have been included. Copies after Reni continue to be produced into the nineteenth century, and by artists of other nationalities, but have been excluded in so far as possible for the purpose of this study of Reni's workshop practices. An attempt has been made to estimate the number of versions that have been created after each

[960] Linda Freeman Bauer and Steve Colton, 'Tracing in Some Works by Caravaggio', *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 142, no. 1168 (2000), 435.
[961] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 47.

composition, and what attributional category each version belongs to. Examination will be made of specific examples of paintings of each composition, in order to interpret the basis for the painting's attribution.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prominence and power of the Catholic Church in seventeenth-century Italy, one of Reni's most commonly reproduced subjects was Jesus Christ. Many of these compositions took the form of Crucifixion scenes, but more still focused solely on the head, or head and torso, of *Christ Crowned with Thorns* or *Ecce Homo.* Malvasia writes that the copies that have been made after Reni's *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* are "innumerable". The biographer attributes many of these copies directly to Reni's students; one by Monsù Bollanger, sent to Flanders, two by Gessi, one of which is with the Capuchins in Modena, one by Bolognini with the Capuchins in Parma, another in Confraternità delle Stimmate in Modena, and many others, which the biographer claims are "not his purpose to list."[962] The scaled-down autograph replica of this composition in Alnwick Castle has already been mentioned, but the innumerable copies to which Malvasia alludes must refer also to the numerous *Heads of Christ,* many of which were created after the *"Cappuccini"* Christ, painted by Reni and his studio.

Of the forty-five singular depictions of the *Head of Christ* recorded (including versions of *Ecce Homo, Man of Sorrows* and *Christ Crowned with Thorns*), fourteen have a generally accepted autograph status, while a further three are also potentially autograph. There are a total of twenty-six studio copies, and a further three paintings recorded with no solid attribution or information upon which attribution can be made, This theme therefore has a relatively high proportion of autograph works versus copies; approximately one in every three *Christs* recorded is of autograph status, versus one in every four *Cleopatras* recorded, and only one in every five *Magdalenes* and *Lucretias.* The *Magdalene* group formed a slightly larger sample size than others, with fifty-six versions recorded in total, which might account for such discrepancy. The lesser numbers of autograph *Lucretias* and *Cleopatras* might be accounted for by the fact that many of these works were created late in Reni's career, where financial

[962] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 70: "Le copie poi tuttodi ricavate, anche dai bravi maestri, sono innumerabili. Una di Monsù Bolanger mandato in Fiandra: due del Gessi, una delle quali è ne' Cappuccini di Modana: una del Bolognini nelle Cappuccine di Parma: una nella Confraternita delle Stimmate di Modana, mal fatta, cangiata la Maddalena un un S. Francesco; e tante altre, le quali non è mio fine registra qui tutte..."

pressure may have made it advantageous for his studio to produce and sell more assistant copies.

Nine compositions of the forty-five *Christs* can be identified as autograph originals, while five more are autograph replicas or variants. That there are so many autograph versions of *Head of Christ* might point to the special status of this subject in *seicento* Bologna, which may have led to clients specifically requesting autograph copies from Reni (as was the case with the Alnwick Castle *Crucifixion*). The image of Christ is one of the most frequently represented subjects in Catholic imagery from the Counter-Reformation to the present day, a result of an increasingly noble public, who came to favour images with "a noble pathos."[963] Portrayals of the suffering, naked, human body of Christ became increasingly popular in the post-Counter-Reformation society, as it imbued the viewer with empathy and devotion. One of the functions of seventeenth-century art was to instil an understanding of human experience, "which made man more conscious of his own existence", and Reni's expressive, close-up images of the suffering Christ did just that.[964] Reni's inclusion of Christ's blood in many of the compositions may allude to transubstantiation in the exclusively Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist.

There are several versions of *Christ Crowned with Thorns* that follow the same composition and are also painted on an oval, copper support. There is a version at the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 4.23), while there is another at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 4.24). A third replica was auctioned in Christie's, London on the 8th of July 2008 (fig. 4.25), and another is in Vienna's Kunshistorisches Museum (fig. 4.26). The Detroit work is widely accepted as autograph, and the Christie's work was also attributed as such by Andrea Emiliani.[965] The Rome work was attributed to Reni by Pepper, though Spear describes it as "studio of" with minimal retouching.[966] Another autograph composition painted on copper has been recorded; *Ecce Homo* in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, though this follows an entirely different composition to the other works mentioned. The only work on copper recorded that has no

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[963] Emiliani, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 274.
[964] Marcia B. Hall and Tracy Elizabeth Cooper, *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.
[965] http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/guido-reni-christ-crowned-with-thorns-5101816-details.aspx?from=searchresults&intObjectID=5101816&sid=778db7d0-666d-40e9-8f9d-40c3432c2679
[966] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 237.

autograph connection whatsoever is the studio copy in Vienna, attributed to Reni's workshop. There exists a fifth studio replica of the same composition in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 4.27), but it has been painted on canvas. This suggests that for the most part, copper supports were reserved for the master's personal use. That the Vienna work was painted on copper, despite being a studio piece, might be related to its provenance – it is recorded as part of the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani in 1800 in Rome, nephew of Pope Clement XI. This link to an important eighteenth-century collector and Pope might suggest that the commission was originally an important one, possibly for a patron of importance, who were explicit in their requests for a copy on copper. The copy itself is of very high quality and should not preclude retouchings from Reni. The brushwork is very similar to that in Detroit, though with a slightly more refined finish. The composition in the Vienna work follows that in Detroit in detail – even the curls of the beard are repeated exactly (figs. 4.28 and 4.29) – supporting its attribution to Reni's studio, as it is unlikely that the master would have reproduced his own works hair-by-hair. It is, nonetheless, a very high quality copy, by an assistant who was very familiar with Reni's manner, perhaps Ercole de Maria.

An unusual variation on the single figure of *Christ* resides in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden (fig. 4.30), dated to c. 1636-1637 and, as mentioned, oil on copper. Here, the composition is landscape in format and shows Christ looking to the floor reflectively, rather than with his eyes raised toward the ceiling, as was convention in those works drawing from the "*Cappuccini*" Christ. An examination of the gallery's inventories shows that during its first exhibition in Dresden, the copper was attributed not to Reni, but, as mentioned in chapter two, to his pupil, Flaminio Torre – an attribution that is repeated in the first printed catalogue of the royal Gemäldegalerie, published in 1765.[967] On first examination, Stephen Pepper maintained the attribution of this work as "a copy" and identified it with an entry in the inventory of Cardinal Antonio Barberini from 1672, but changed his mind during a visit to the gallery in 1998, when, "given the extraordinary quality of the painting", he recognised it as having been executed by Reni himself, dating it to the early 1630s.[968] The work has been related to the *Ecce Homo* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (fig. 4.31), but is even more closely so to a work on canvas which appeared at auction in Sotheby's, New York, on the 29th January 2015, which was previously unrecorded (fig. 4.32).

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[967] Henning, 'The New Technique of Painting on Copper', 26.
[968] Ibid.

Both works depict Christ as *Ecce Homo,* with a cane, seated at an angle to the viewer, with a halo of orange light and hands crossed over one another. There is some variation in the positioning of the cane and the hands; the Dresden *Christ* appears to be bound at the wrists, while the Sotheby's *Christ* rests his palms on what appears to be a slab of stone. The crown on the Dresden work is more elaborate, with more rows of thorns. The expressions of both figures are similar, head slightly bowed to one side, looking toward the floor. The face of the Sotheby's Christ is more elongated than that of Dresden but still in keeping with Reni's manner; his Detroit *Christ* has a similarly long nose. While both works are today considered autograph, the Dresden one might be dated slightly later than the Sotheby's work. To compare the brushwork in these works as a method of dating would prove misleading – the Dresden work's refined appearance is dependent on its copper support. The Sotheby's crown (fig. 4.33), however, can be linked to those in Detroit (fig. 4.34) and Bologna (fig. 4.35), both painted early in the 1630s. The more complex arrangement of the thorns in the Dresden work (fig. 4.36) is similar to that in the Fitzwilliam Museum work (fig. 4.37), dated to c. 1639, and a second *Ecce Homo* in the Dresden collection, dated to 1639 or 1640 (fig. 4.38).

Another unusual composition, dated to 1633-34 and recorded by Pepper as part of a private collection in Rome, has since come up at auction at Sotheby's, also in the sale on the 29th January 2015 (fig. 4.39). This work was painted for the altar of the Rosary in the church of Santa Maria degli Alemanni. In this composition, Christ is depicted directly facing the viewer, his gaze forward. There are no known copies after this work and its composition is distinctive amongst Reni's other versions of Christ. Pepper connects the "light tonality" and "fine modelling" with Reni's Pala della Peste.[969] Also unique in its composition is a *Christ as the Man of Sorrows,* which was listed for sale in Bonhams, London, on the 4th July 2007 (fig. 4.40). The work depicts Christ's head and torso, with his arms outstretched, looking upward. As in the work for Santa Maria degli Alemanni, Christ is surrounded by yellow light, but in this work the colour beyond the yellow background is a silvery grey, which is unusual. This work has been attributed to Reni – the Bonhams online catalogue notes that both Denis Mahon and Stephen Pepper confirmed this attribution.[970] Bonhams refer to a letter from Pepper dated 2nd January 2000, where the painting was dated to 1638 and compared to

[969] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 259.
[970] https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/14705/lot/46/

the *Virgin at Prayer* now in a private collection, Rome. Examination of the face of Christ in this work does not seem consistent with Reni's technique. The facial expression and pose are comparable with that in the *Christ Crowned with Thorns* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (fig. 4.41), and another in the Louvre (fig. 4.42), both accepted as autograph and derived from the *"Cappuccini" Crucifixion* (fig. 2.49), but the handling is decidely different. The proportions are skewed – the eyes are too big and placed too far up the forehead, and the mouth seems too small. The flat, stubbed nose is unlike those in any of Reni's other depictions of Christ; usually the figure is painted with a structured, well-defined nose. The brushwork in Christ's beard differs from Reni's usual technique; it is not painted in regular curls with delicate highlights made by a small brush, but rather appears to have been brushed in with larger strokes in a less regulated fashion.

Another of Reni's more frequently repeated subjects was that of *Mary Magdalene* in penance. Fifty-six individual single-figure compositions of the *Magdalene* related to Reni's studio have been counted, forty of which are generally accepted as studio copies, ten with autograph status, and six more which are known to exist but for which no information is available. Seven of the ten autograph paintings are considered originals, while there is one autograph replica after the *Magdalene* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper, and two autograph variants after the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica *Magdalene.* Reni's interpretation of the subject was apparently enormously successful; his paintings were popular amongst seats of religious power, aristocracy and wealthy middle class alike.[971] There exist several explanations for the popularity of images of the *Magdalene* amongst seventeenth-century viewers. The sacrament of penance, for example, had an important significance in post-Tridentine theology, and penitent saints were portrayed with frequency by *seicento* artists as examples for viewers to follow.[972] Spear theorises that the Magdalene's reputation as a sinner made her an "approachable" figure, with whom viewers could easily identify, making her a particularly useful subject for this purpose.[973] Reni's *Magdalenes* have been described as particularly sensual, successfully portraying the subject's ecstasy, another important theme in *seicento* Italy. The Magdalene's sexuality is also associated with her popularity as a subject; but Reni's paintings of the *Penitent Magdalene,* rather than being displayed as sexually inviting, illustrate the dangers of

[971] Emiliani, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 278.
[972] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 164-165.
[973] Ibid., 165-166.

temptation and bodily pleasure and the importance of penance, in the redemption of even the worst of sinners.[974]

The half-figure of the Magdalene in the National Gallery, London (fig. 4.43), has proved problematic in its attribution. While the online catalogue for the work lists it as autograph, Levey's 1971 catalogue recorded it as in the "Style of" Reni and "certainly not an autograph work."[975] Levey acknowledges, however, that the work is "not an exact copy" of any of Reni's existing paintings, but "could be derived" from a full length work in the Galleria Nazionale, Rome. That the composition seems not to have any direct model might support an autograph status, and both Pepper and Garboli agreed that it was painted by Reni. While the composition appears to be unique, the palette appears consistent with that used in the mid-1630s and is similar to that in the Capitoline *St. Jerome* (fig. 4.44). Given the absence of another version of the work, it seems unlikely that an assistant would invent a new composition that might have so many hallmarks of Reni's technique; the head of the *Magdalene* calls to mind the ancient *Niobe* sculptures upon which many of his female heads are based, intricate curls are highlighted delicately in brushwork that recognisable as Reni's.

A full-length version of *The Penitent Magdalene* in a cave has been replicated numerous times. There are two autograph versions of the composition; one in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 4.45), and was painted for Cardinal Valerio Santacroce about 1633 and was later sent as a gift to Cardinal Antonio Barberini, and an earlier version of 1627 which is in a private collection, painted in 1627 for Cardinal Francesco Barberini.[976] Both works appear in the same Barberini inventory of 1738.[977] The depiction of the *Magdalene* penitent in a cave, surrounded by symbols of death was conventional, and this composition seems to have been particularly successful.[978] There are several copies after the earlier composition, including studio works in Glasgow Art Gallery and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (fig. 4.46), Nîmes Musée and Fontainebleau, as well as copies recorded in various auctions; two most recently in Sotheby's London sales (10th April 2013 and 4th July 2013, figs. 4.47 and 4.48) and one in a Bonham's sale (fig. 4.49), in which the figure of the Magdalene is reversed and the angels are omitted, which, based on its very different handling, appears

[974] Ibid., 166.
[975] Levey, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Italian Schools*, 194.
[976] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 267, 258.
[977] Ibid.,
[978] Emiliani, *Guido Reni,* exh. cat., 278.

unconnected to Reni's studio. The complexity of this full-length composition compared to others depicting the Magdalene meant that it was not a particularly easy work to create copies after. It must be assumed, therefore, that the number of copies after it suggest that it was a particularly successful composition, and popular amongst Reni's clients. These works have not been available for personal examination, but photographs of both Sotheby's versions appear overly polished and refined, supporting their attribution as studio works. The Rijksmuseum version shows more evidence of Reni's personal intervention; the handling corresponds very closely with that of Reni, especially in the details of the Magdalene's face (figs. 4.50 – 4.53).

The composition of the three copies, from the Rijksmuseum and 2013 Sotheby's sales, appear to be identical to the 1627 version (fig. 4.54). All three copies omit the Crucifix and roots which appear next to the Magdalene in the 1633 version (fig. 4.45), and have an identical background which varies from that of the later Galleria Nazionale work. The 1633 variant excludes the rock behind the Magdalene's left hand, and alters the colour and composition of the drapery surrounding the *putti* in the corner, painting it in blue and using it to cover the genitals of the *putto* in the foreground – perhaps to accommodate the sensitivities of his patron. This variant seems to have been less successful than the original, give that only three copies are recorded after it, versus a total of twelve after the 1627 work. It seems that despite the inclusion of more iconographic detail related to the Magdalene's penance (roots to eat, a crucifix to reflect upon), the earlier composition was more popular with the art market. It may be that Reni included these details at the request of his later patron, who wished to have a painting of a similar composition but with details making it distinct from the earlier work. The extra detail would have made the creation of copies after this work more difficult, and their inclusion might have been seen as unnecessary given the popularity of the original work.

A variant of this composition, where the Magdalene is portrayed in half-length is in the Prado, Madrid (fig. 4.55). Garboli cites the Prado Catologue from 1963 in describing it as "between autographs"[979], Pepper describes the work as a "studio variant".[980] The modern online catalogue lists the painting as autograph. The brushwork of this painting is not unlike the Baltimore *Magdalene* (fig. 4.56), in that the face is refined

[979] Garboli, *Opera Completa di Guido Reni,* 102.
[980] Pepper, *Guido Reni*, 267.

and highly finished, while the brushwork of the figure's clothing is loose and visible. Some brushwork on the left-hand side of the painting, especially parts of the hair and the sleeve of the figure, appear to be inconsistent with the rest of the painting. The sleeve is rendered in a manner unlike the rest of the Magdalene's blouse, heavily defined with dark shadows, and lacking the fluid, textured brushwork of the rest of the fabric (fig. 4.57). The brushwork of the hair, similarly, seems to change; the passage on the left around the saint's hand (fig. 4.58) is darker and the locks of hair are defined with deeper shadows and more opaque paint, while the lower portions of the hair flowing across the Magdalen's bust appear lighter and more transparent (fig. 4.59), with an irridecence comparable with that of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica work (fig. 4.60). It may be that, in this painting, two distinct hands are visible, explaining the idea of the work being "between autographs."

While the two aforementioned themes were religious and therefore served some more obvious functions related to the Catholic faith, the popularity amongst seventeenth-century collectors of Reni's mythological women – particularly those dying women like *Lucretia* and *Cleopatra* are less readily explanatory. The most obvious explanation for the proliferation of such subjects was their sex appeal – like Titian's reclining nudes, these passive, partially naked figures were intended for the male viewer. The theme of *Lucretia*, however, was more complex than that of an outright sexual object; her story brought fourth both connotations of a chaste, loyal woman, a martyr whose self-sacrifice played a role in the formation of the Roman Republic, and that of a matron who had fallen from grace, succumbed to her rape and took pleasure in it, committing suicide out of guilt – a form of penance. Another potential reason for the popularity of *Lucretia* and *Cleopatra* as subjects is that they came to be associated with Reni's studio. The format of the later half-length works facilitated rapid copying and therefore were affordable to collectors. The more these themes were replicated by Reni's studio the more they came to be representative of his style, and recognisable to collectors who wanted to own a "Reni".[981] That Albani never treated the theme of Lucretia or Cleopatra, and Domenichino painted only one Lucretia which he left incomplete makes these subjects even more unique to Reni's studio.[982]

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[981] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 84.
[982] Ibid., 85.

Thirty-seven treatments of the theme of the *Suicide of Lucretia* have been identified as associated with Reni's studio, only seven of which were autograph, and five original or prime versions. Twenty-three Cleopatras were recorded, of which six are considered autograph. Spear determined that, because a large proportion of the works depicting these subjects are "relatively unambitious" (presumably referring to the later half-figures, in which little detail is afforded to the bare-chested women and the brushwork is loose), many were painted for the open market, as opposed to being directly commissioned.[983] This implies a demand for these subjects – Reni's inventory illustrates that he kept a number of these canvases in his studio, ready to be finished for sale, suggesting confidence that they would be purchased.

Of the five original autograph versions of the subject of *The Suicide of Lucretia* by Reni that have been identified, the earliest is a half-length composition dated to c. 1622-1623 and is in a private collection in New York. The canvas is inscribed Lucrece / Guido Reni / P. Altieri, and was likely commissioned as a gift for Cardinal Altieri when he became Pope Clement X in 1670. This work is inaccessible, and while a photograph of the work was reproduced by Pepper (fig. 4.61), it is black and white, and not of sufficient quality to make comments regarding brushwork or materials. It does, however, illustrate the form of the original composition in good detail. There is a copy of this work labelled "After Guido Reni" in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (fig. 4.62). Both compositions are the same length, but the original is slightly wider than the copy (98 x 74 centimetres versus 99 x 54.6 centimetres). The composition in the copy has been slightly reduced in size, so that it can be accommodated in the smaller width, and some extra drapery and a band of red paint has been added to the bottom of the painting to fill the excess space. The copy's composition is otherwise identical, and the slight reduction in size implies that the copy has been made by squaring it up from a smaller drawing, rather than through direct tracing. That the composition does not include any variation, and the excess space on the lower part of the canvas has been filled by relatively uninventive means, supports its attribution as a studio work. Another version of this composition, listed as a studio copy after Guido Reni's Lucretia, appeared at auction in Sotheby's on the 30th of January 2014 (fig. 4.63). Its dimensions are much closer to the original picture in New York, measuring 100.5 by 76.2 centimetres, though it appears to have additions to the lower and upper parts of the canvas, perhaps made in studio to adjust the dimensions to match those of the

[983] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 84.

original. The brushwork in this copy is more refined than that of the Dulwich work, and the composition appears very well delineated; Lucretia's hands, for example, appear to have been painted following careful outlines. These rigid lines, along with the dimensions of the work, might suggest that it has been traced directly from the original composition.

One of Reni's later *Lucretias,* in the Capitoline, Rome, dates to c. 1640-42 (fig. 4.64), is part of a series of single-figure female subjects painted for Cardinal Sacchetti, after which at least four studio variants have been painted. Pepper lists one such studio variant as that from the Viti Collection, "painted by a follower".[984] The work (fig. 4.65), now in the Genus Bononiae Collezioni, Museo della Città di Bologna, is listed as autograph in Garboli's *Opera Completa di Guido Reni,* based on a judgement by Cavalli in 1955, as well as on the museum's online catalogue, and, and appears to be an entirely different composition to that in the Capitoline, despite having the same dimensions as the painting listed by Pepper.[985] Another work which Pepper lists as a copy of the Capitoline *Lucretia* is that in the Galleria Borghese, attributed to Elisabetta Sirani, which again follows the composition of the Viti work (fig. 4.66). The Capitoline work is a significantly less complex composition, where the figure's torso is truncated by some kind of table, and her eyes are upturned with the dagger pointed toward her chest. The Viti painting, on the other hand, shows *Lucretia* sitting on a bed with the dagger next to her, with one arm leaning on two ornate pillows, swathed in sheets and looking to her left. The brushwork in the Viti painting is notably tighter and more refined than the Capitoline work; while the online catalogue dates it to c. 1640-41 (which in itself may preclude it from being a copy of the Capitoline work), it should perhaps be dated to a slightly earlier period, given its similarity to the Palazzo Pitti *Cleopatra,* dated 1638-39 (fig. 4.67). Several works have been created after the composition of the Viti painting, including one also attributed to Reni in the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, dated c. 1636-38 (fig. 4.68). Two further copies of this composition have been attributed to Reni's student, Giovanni Andrea Sirani; both of which appeared at auction in Sotheby's, London; one in December 2012 (fig. 4.69), and the other in July of 2014 (fig. 4.70). It is possible that the painting in the Galleria Borghese attributed to Elisabetta Sirani was a copy after one of these versions by her father, rather than by Reni. The works attributed to Sirani are distinct stylistically from

[984] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 291.
[985] Garboli, *Opera Completa di Guido Reni,* 113.

the Viti and Tokyo works; they lack the life-like soft flesh of those figures attributed to Reni. The face of the Tokyo work (fig. 4.71) is, however, distinct from the Viti painting (fig. 4.72) and, if autograph, dates stylistically to an earlier period again, corresponding with the face of the Hampton Court *Cleopatra,* dated to c. 1628 by Pepper (fig. 4.73). This implies that the Tokyo work is either the prime version, or painted by an assistant unfamiliar with Reni's later, looser brushwork technique.

The multiple versions of *Saint Sebastian* by Reni also serve as useful illustration for the discussion of this topic, given that the subject of these copies has been researched and debated extensively by modern scholars. Technical analysis has been performed on a number of the works from the *Saint Sebastian* series and documentation pertaining to both the Dulwich Picture Gallery and Auckland Art Gallery compositions has been made available to the writer. It has been suggested that the repetition of this specific composition may be related to the fact that St. Sebastian is the patron saint of the "plague-stricken", and therefore would have been a popular subject amongst the people Bologna, with the town losing a total of 15,000 inhabitants to plague between 1630 and 1631.[986] However, only the Bologna painting has been ascribed a date which was after the 1630 outbreak, and most were painted between 1615 and 1620. There had been many outbreaks of the disease in Bologna over several centuries, so perhaps Reni's choice to depict the saint was in memory of epidemics of the more distant past. St. Sebastian is also one of history's most famous martyrs; and Spear identifies a "renewed cult of Early Christian martyrs" in *seicento* Italy.[987] This is linked to the importance of the sacrament of penance; martyrdom, too, led to the absolution of sin.

The attribution of the versions of *Saint Sebastian* is the subject of constant scholarly argument. There are a number of versions of the composition which at different times have been attributed to Reni, although art historians have not been able to agree on their autograph status. The works are not all of the same composition, the versions at the Palazzo Rosso, Genova (fig. 4.74), and the Capitoline Museum, Rome (fig. 4.75), show a different model of the saint with his hands tied above his head, while the works at Auckland Art Gallery (fig. 4.76), Musée du Louvre, Paris (fig. 4.77), Museo del Prado, Madrid (fig. 4.78), Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico (fig. 4.79),

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[986] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian*', 208.
[987] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 88.

Dulwich Picture Gallery, London (fig. 4.80) and Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (fig. 4.81) all show the saint with his hands tied behind his back but with slight variations, in the position of loincloths, the canvas measurements, and in the number of small figures in the background of the paintings.[988]

While the aforementioned study of the tracings of the Louvre, Prado, Auckland, Ponce and Dulwich paintings might suggest that the works all originated from the same studio, the painting from Ponce has been distinguished from the others as having been created outside Reni's studio – its handling is demonstrably different from the others, with opaque paintwork producing flatter forms, and scholars have decided that it is likely to be an eighteenth-century copy.[989] From examination of photographs of the Ponce work, the brushwork is not consistent with Reni's other *Saints*. This is particularly notable in the smooth, marble-like flesh and the very finely painted drapery of the Ponce saint – in Reni's other *Saint Sebastians* that follow this composition, the drapery is modelled with flowing, loose brushwork, while here each fold is defined carefully with severe shadow, and does not look to be the work of Reni or his pupils. The *Saint Sebastian* in the Galleria Capitolina in Rome (fig. 4.75) has been presented as almost a twin of the work in Palazzo Rosso (fig. 4.74) and poses the question whether one of them must be considered as the "original" and the other its "copy"?[990] Stephen Pepper earlier drew a conclusion in this regard, suggesting that when no "autograph" painting can be easy identified then perhaps all of the paintings were created by Reni's studio rather than by the master himself, writing that, "when so many copies survive" yet none seems to be autograph, perhaps "the work was from the very start produced by an assistant."[991] Despite making a statement on the complexity of the attribution of Reni paintings, when considering the relative autograph status of various versions of the *Saint Sebastian* paintings in 1984, Pepper definitively judged the Prado version to be the original, and all the other versions to be copies.[992]

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[988] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 207.
[989] Ibid., 208.
[990] Boccardo and Salomon, Boccardo, Piero and Salomon, Xavier, 'Two Museums, Guido Reni, Seven *Saint Sebastians*', in *The Agony and the Ecstasy: Guido Reni's Saint Sebastians*, edited by Boccardo, Piero and Salomon, Xavier (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2007), 12.
[991] Spear, '*Saint Sebastian* and Reni's Multiple Versions', 39.
[992] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* cited by Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian',* 208.

Following cleaning of the Genoa work, which made its colours and brushwork more readily readable, Pepper argued that "the subtlety of the coloring and use of brushwork to counteract the appearance of relief modelling demonstrate that it belongs to the later date", in the 1630s, as opposed to 1615-1616. This suggests firmly that the Capitoline *Sebastian* predates the Genoa version, and is likely to be the "original" work. The writer has examined this painting, and it is certainly painted in fine brushwork suggestive of Reni's earlier manner, supporting its dating to c. 1615. Pepper theorises that it was Reni's habit, having developed a new style in painting from the 1620s onwards, to "redo" certain compositions in what is described as his "second manner", which would perhaps suggest that both of this works are autograph, while the Capitoline work is original.[993] This theory supports an autograph status for the Bologna *Sebastian* also (fig. 4.81). The earlier variations on the second *Saint Sebastian* composition (in the Prado, Louvre, Auckland and Dulwich) were all painted over a space of five or so years, while the Bologna work was painted around a decade later than the others, dated 1639-1640. This is in keeping with Pepper's suggestion that Reni revisited previous themes as his style developed, to recreate them in his new manner, and places the Bologna work in the same category as the Palazzo Rosso work; a later autograph replica in a newer style.

The exact extent of Reni's own contribution in the versions at Dulwich and Auckland is highly debated and the authorship and role of these works is still considered a controversial subject.[994] The versions in the Louvre and the Prado are often accepted as "autograph" works purely due to their provenance; they were part of the collection of prestigious patrons - Louis XIV of France and Philip IV of Spain – and therefore it is possible that Reni might have had a part in producing these works.[995] When the *Sebastian* in the Capitoline Museum was cleaned, it was discovered that it had a seal of the collection of Cardinal del Monte, which implies that the Cardinal was the original purchaser of this work, direct from Reni himself.[996] This likewise gave more authority to the Capitoline work for its potential to be autograph. The provenance of a picture may provide some suggestion as to the level of involvement Reni might have had in certain works; that is, it might be considered likely that Reni would have had more input in paintings for rich or important patrons than for obscure ones. However,

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[993] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 32.
[994] Boccardo and Salomon, 'Seven *Saint Sebastians*', 12.
[995] Ibid.
[996] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 30.

according to the *seicento* sources, this was not necessarily true of Reni, who is described as having delegated commissions for important clients to his assistants. Therefore, alternative considerations should be addressed when attempting to assess the authorship of Reni's work. In circumstances where establishing whether the status of a painting is autograph work or a studio copy proves difficult, the technical information provided by scientific analysis can prove very valuable. For example, the analysis of pigments can provide indications of authorship – if it is to be considered more likely that very expensive pigments would be reserved for use in original compositions, or at least for the use of the master as opposed to his pupils or assistants.

Using micro-reflectance spectrometry, John Seakins of the University of Auckland identified ultramarine blue in combination with lead white in abundance in the sky of the Auckland *St. Sebastian*, and also scattered in the shadows of the figure. As noted in chapter two, ultramarine has also been found in the blues of the *Adoration of the Shepherds, Christ Embracing St. John and the Rape of Europa.*[997] In comparison, azurite was used in the sky of the Dulwich *St. Sebastian*, a blue pigment of a greener hue, which was increasingly rare but not as expensive as ultramarine.[998] Natural ultramarine was made from the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli, imported from Afghanistan, and several grades of pigment were produced, with a very broad price range. Richard Symonds recorded that the best ultramarine cost seventy times the poorest grade in Rome in the 1650s – therefore its use is notable only where particularly refined grades of the pigment are found.[999] Auckland conservators argue that because the ultramarine identified in analysis of their *St. Sebastian* cross-sections has a "good colour" (that is to say, few impurities interrupt the vibrant blue) it would appear to be of reasonable quality, and, since ultramarine was the most expensive pigment in the seventeenth century, it was less likely in their estimations to be used for a studio copy.[1000] However, this does not necessarily led to the conclusion that the Auckland *St. Sebastian* is the "original" and Dulwich a copy. While Reni has been known to use ultramarine, he also made very frequent use of azurite. If the Reni paintings in the National Gallery of London's collection are considered, a good

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[997] Personal correspondence with Dr. Helen Howard, National Gallery London, March 2014.
[998] D. Plender, 'Cat. 4. Condition and Technical Analysis', in *The Agony and Ecstasy,* edited by Boccardo and Salomon, cited by Hillary and Kisler 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 213.
[999] Beal, *A Study of Richard Symonds*, cited by Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 213.
[1000] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 213.

number of them use of azurite rather than ultramarine in their blues – including *Lot and His Daughters leaving Sodom* and *Susannah and the Elders,* but the authorship of these works is undisputed.[1001] While ultramarine is a notably more expensive material, Reni uses both ultramarine and azurite in his works, and it may simply have been that the Auckland *St. Sebastian* was painted for a more important patron and therefore more luxurious materials were used, rather than it is necessarily the original work.

As discussed in chapter two, *pentimenti,* where an artist makes changes to a painting's composition while working on it, have also been used to make the argument for the status of a painting as "original" or prime version. *Pentimenti,* where evidenced in a work, are sometimes read as indications of the development of a new composition, implying that, if multiples exist of the work, the one with *pentimenti* is "original." This is considered especially true where other versions of the composition are absent of such corrections, but imitate the visible surface of the "original", following the composition that they see. The *pentimenti* that have been revealed by X-ray in the *Saint Sebastian* series involve changes in the loincloth of the Dulwich Picture Gallery composition (figs. 4.82 and 4.83), and in the face of the Auckland *St. Sebastian* (figs. 4.84 and 4.85). The change in the image of the Auckland work is that of a mature man in pain; in the finished work, the artist has altered the expression to depict a moment of ecstasy. The figure's features have softened and the face appears younger. This is perhaps linked to the narrative of martyrdom; the face has been changed from an expression of pain to one of serenity as *Sebastian* is redeemed through his suffering.

This change is not visible in the X-rays of the Dulwich, Prado and Louvre paintings, which are much more like the visible image of Auckland's painting rather than the X-ray.[1002] While the alteration in the Dulwich picture is in a relatively unimportant area of the composition, that is, the loincloth, the Auckland picture's *pentimento* is in the saint's facial expression, a vital and central part of the work. When painting copies, artists would have been free to make minor alterations to the original composition (for example, the varying numbers of background figures seen in each of the *Sebastians*), and this may be the case regarding Dulwich's *pentimento.* However, alterations to an

[1001] Personal correspondence with Dr. Helen Howard, National Gallery London, March 2014.
[1002] Hillary and Kisler, 'Auckland's *St. Sebastian'*, 214.

area as important as the face of the original composition might be thought less likely to have been made during copying, implying that this change to Auckland's *St. Sebastian* may have been made during the development of the original composition. In saying this, even the *pentimento* in the Auckland work is not so dramatic as to make attribution definite. *Pentimenti* can as easily ensue from the incompetence of an assistant as from the master revising his initial idea, and the facial expression could potentially have been altered by an assistant who simply got it wrong in his first draft, or retouched by Reni himself to correct it, as is known to have been the master's practice.[1003] *Pentimenti* which imply more definite changes to the composition in terms of scale or positioning of figures might be considered more indicative of an original composition, such as the face of the woman on the right of Bologna's *Massacre of the Innocents* (evidenced through infrared imagery, fig. 2.88) which has been moved considerably, or the textural *pentimento* visible on the surface of the "*Cappuccini" Crucifixion* (fig. 2.89), where the artist has clearly reconsidered his initial design and reduced the size of the Virgin drastically. It is less likely, when the figure is moved a considerable distance in a composition, that this has resulted from the mistake of an assistant, but more logical that the master is revising his composition to his satisfaction.

Pepper's previously referenced argument that Reni's repetition of certain subjects was linked to his desire to revisit or "redo" them in his later, evolved style has been used to support some of his attributions.[1004] This explanation seems to be a simplification of the complex subject of Reni's repetition. The artist's marketing strategies, as discussed, must have been responsible for many of these repetitions; for example, in those instances when patrons explicitly request certain subjects. The instances outlined of compositions being repeated many times close in date likewise cannot be explained by Pepper's argument. Pepper used this theory of "redoing" compositions in a late *maniera* to identify a *David with the head of Goliath* in the collection of Joshua Latner (fig. 4.86) as an autograph Reni.[1005] He dated the work to 1637, based on his equation of its style with Reni's *Fortuna* of the same date, and a vague description of a half-length *David* as given by Luca Assarino, writing that it "must surely be identical

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[1003] Christiansen, 'Caravaggio's Two Treatments of the Lute-Player', 23.
[1004] Pepper, 'Reni's Practice of Repeating Compositions', 33.
[1005] Pepper, D. Stephen, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath" by Guido Reni', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 1192 (2002), 429.

with the painting mentioned."[1006] However, this description also fits a composition in a Private Collection in Milan, and such unequivocal attribution based on mention of a subject in a *seicento* text seems problematic. Even when given a late date, to a time when Reni's style had undergone significant change, this work is difficult to place stylistically within Reni's oeuvre. Though the present writer has not had an opportunity to view the painting personally, many observations can be readily made from photograph. The hair of David has been painted in heavy, thick, carefully executed brushstrokes, that almost make the hair look static and as opposed to light and flowing, and is inconsistent with works from the late 1630s – see his *Saint Peter Weeping*, also dated to c. 1637 (fig. 4.20). The face is inconsistent with those of Reni's young men; the eyes and irises are too big, and the jawline is weak. Pepper made reference to two X-radiograph images (figs. 4.87 and 4.88) of the Latner *David,* and wrote that they illustrated a "sketchy" underlayer akin to the brushwork in Reni's *ultima maniera.*[1007] Such sketchy brushwork is difficult to discern in the X-radiographs; the drapery, for example, appears smooth and uniform and is nothing like that observed in that of Reni's last works, like his Capitoline *Lucretia* (fig. 4.64). Such underlying brushwork which might correspond with the handling of works from Reni's *ultima maniera* can, however, be identified in an X-ray of *Saint Cecilia* (fig. 4.89). The unevenness observed in David's torso and Goliath's face does not appear to correspond to brushwork and is likely an effect of the X-ray technique penetrating paint layers of various thickness to different degrees.

Pepper describes the painting as employing a "very light palette" like that in Reni's *Fortuna,* but many passages in this work, particularly around the head of Goliath, are decidedly dark.[1008] While some of this darkening can be attributed to age, comparison with the *Fortuna* Pepper used as reference (fig. 3.16) shows a huge contrast in colour – the bright blue sky and pale skin and drapery of *Fortuna* are painted in a significantly lighter key than the Latner *David and Goliath.* The *Europa* at the National Gallery of Canada, dated to 1636, demonstrates a similar contrast and better illustrates the artist's "very light palette" in this period. The Latner painting's palette, as well as its landscape and detail of the stone in the foreground is reminiscent somewhat of Reni's *Magdalene* from the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 4.45),

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[1006] Luca Assarino, *Sensi di umiltà e di stupore intorno la grandezza dell'Eminentissimo Cardinale Sacchetti e le pitture di Guido Reni* (Bologna: 1639), 30-31, cited by Pepper, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath"', 429.
[1007] Pepper, 'A New "David with the Head of Goliath"', 430.
[1008] Ibid., 429.

dated to earlier in the 1630s, though the handling, particularly that of David's face, appears more like the work of a follower; for example that of the Sotheby's *Magdalene*, auctioned in London, on the 4th July, 2013 (fig. 4.48).

The repetition of specific compositions is associated mainly with the latter half of Reni's career, when the artist was well established in Bologna and had a studio teaming with commissions. These series constitute evidence of Reni's studio as a business, a commercial enterprise – he frequently reproduced and cleverly marketed copies of his successful compositions, subjects which quickly became associated with his name, making them even more desirable to potential clients. This chapter has examined only a selection of what is a sea of replicas on a multitude of themes, in an attempt to illustrate the entangled attribution issues that Reni's studio practices present, and the usefulness of the study of technique and materials in unravelling these issues.

Conclusion

Reni died "at two o'clock at night on Monday the 18th of August, 1642, in his sixty-seventh year", following a short illness which had left him bedridden.[1009] The artist's death, according to Malvasia, was mourned widely in Bologna, where "the largest possible number of masses were celebrated for him."[1010] Reni is said to have "tried with all his might" to restore the pre-eminence of art, and for a time following his death, the artist seems to have achieved the legacy he had sought through his efforts to elevate artistic status and through his use of long-lasting materials.[1011] Scannelli writes of "the decline in the merit of painting" (that occurred, in his opinion, with the advent of the mannerist style), and redemption of painting by the Carracci and their followers, foremost Reni, who "made the School of Lombardy conspicuous to all and ... rendered it famous and immortal everywhere."[1012]

The high prices Reni demanded from patrons, as well as the artist's pricing strategies, proved a catalyst for a change in the *seicento* art market. After the artist's death, the activity of collecting grew and new practices which regulated the market emerged; this meant the appointment of specialist appraisers and dealers, who acted as middlemen in the sale of artworks.[1013] Paintings became a sound economic investment and this changed their status as objects.[1014] Bellori credits Reni with elevating the worth of paintings for artists after him, not only in Bologna, "but also throughout Italy", where the biographer writes that prices "had been reduced too much, for buyers had become accustomed to the lowest prices and cannot forget them."[1015] Soon after Reni's passing, Guercino, relocated from Cento to Bologna, to take his predecessor's

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[1009] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice,* trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 102: "...spirò l'anima benedetta sulle due ore di notte, alli diciotto d'Agosto, in Lunedì, l'anno 1642. Che fu il sessagesimo settimo di sua età."
[1010] Ibid., 103.: "...fatto celebrare quante Messe si poterono mai..."
[1011] Ibid., 112.: "...studiò a tutto potere di rimetterla nell'antico posto e decoro..."
[1012] Scannelli, *Il microcosmo,* 269, cited by Janson et al., *Italian and Spanish Art*, 45: "...si come dopo la riforma della declinante virtù l'opere numerose ... Reni ... ed altri molti hodierni, e degni Arteficie è stata a nostri giorni illustrata la Scuola di Lombardia in estremo nel cospetto dell'Universo, e resa per ogni parte celebre, ed immortale."
[1013] Morselli, 'Bologna', 152.
[1014] Ibid., 146.
[1015] Bellori, *Lives,* trans. by Wohl, 368: "Circa li prezzi si puol dire che egli rimunerasse la pittura, non solo nella patria e nella Lombardia, ma ancora in tutta l'Italia, dove erano troppo avviliti, assuefattisi li compratori alli piú bassi prezzi, de' quali non possono dimenticarsi..."

prominent position in the city, and in doing so, raised his prices to make them closer to those which Reni demanded, reaffirming the hierarchies in pricing which Reni's practices had led to.[1016]

Reni's posthumous influence was not confined to the artistic economy in the seventeenth century. Though greatest in Bologna, Reni's stylistic influence was seen in artists active all across Europe, who emulated the Bolognese master.[1017] Aspects of Reni's technique, too, were carried on into the latter half of the seventeenth century, particularly his use of large quantities of white lead. This was adopted not only by several of his past students, including Gessi, Sementi and Cantarini, but also, according to Malvasia, "artists in other cities and even those of opposing schools such as Andrea Sacchi, Cortona himself, Maratti and everyone else, enormously increased their use of white lead."[1018]

This research forms a new contribution to scholarship on Guido Reni, and on artists' workshop practices more broadly. The use of scientific information in conjunction with art-historical texts has created an account that is not constrained by the limitations of a particular variety of source material, but combines the advantages of both to form a more complete understanding of the subject. There were, however, some limitations associated with the creation of such an account. The timeframe to which the writer was confined during the doctoral programme naturally restricted the number of subjects that could be addressed in relation to Reni's workshop practices and the level of detail that could be included in discussions of such. The inclusion of further documentary and scientific evidence, should it become available, would allow for more detailed to be added to the topics already addressed in this thesis.
Though the limitations of each type of source material were partially negated by their combined use, the limitations exist nonetheless; that is, the likely use of narrative devices in the seventeenth-century sources, which was discussed at length in chapter

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[1016] Sohm, Introduction to *Painting for Profit,* 12, and Morselli, 'Bologna', 146.
[1017] Spear, *The "Divine" Guido,* 2. Spear names Domenichino, Sacchi, Bernini, Maratta, Batoni, Mengs, Ribera, Furini, Nuvolone, Van Dyck, Murillo, Vouet, Le Brun, Greuze and Ingres as artists who assimilate aspects of Reni's style after his death.
[1018] Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, trans. by Enggass and Enggass, 140: "...ma que' d' altre Citta e di contrarie anco scuole, come un Andrea Sacchi, lo stesso Cortona, il Marati ed ogni altro, caricando anch' essi sterminatamente di biacca..." Brief examination of some of these works illustrates this statement to be broadly correct – Pietro da Cortona's *Stoning of Saint Stephen* of c. 1660 in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg and Carlo Maratti's *Marchese Niccolò Maria Pallavicini Guided to the Temple of Virtue by Apollo* of 1705 in the National Trust, Stourhead, form good examples.

one, and the potential for incorrect results in scientific analysis. The potential for problems associated with inaccuracies in scientific data has been accentuated by difficulties in obtaining such data. While the writer was furnished with twenty-three conservation reports from seven different institutions, which detailed analysis of fourteen paintings by Guido Reni, this is a relatively small sample when compared to the number of works in Reni's oeuvre, and the number addressed in literary sources. The difficulties experienced in obtaining scientific data were at times acute. Many institutions that were contacted during the course of this research were unwilling, or prevented through institution policy, to share conservation reports. These reports were, however, supplemented by correspondence with a number of conservational scientists and researchers, and by the writer's visual analysis of a much larger number of paintings, and proved sufficient for the purposes of this doctoral research. The collection of further scientific data will be vital in the future progression of this work. More detail could be added to these accounts in the future upon obtaining such data, and will provide opportunity for further research on Guido Reni's workshop practices and painting techniques. It is hoped that opportunities will arise to collect more X-radiograph images, infrared and ultraviolet photographs, and cross-sections, as well as results from pigment analyses relating to both Reni's paintings, and to those of his pupils, assistants and contemporaries. The compilation of such a body of information will allow the author to strengthen the evidence already presented. It will also allow for the potential to expand on areas of Reni's technique which presented difficulties due to the lack of scientific data, for example, his use of binding media. Along with the addition of new data, it would be useful in the future to present the results of scientific analysis in a clearer and more systematic way. This would involve incorporating graphs and tables to make technical information readily comprehensible to the reader, allowing them, for example, to compare Reni's use of pigments, grounds, or particular canvas weaves throughout his career.

This body of work has the potential to be expanded or furthered in a number of other ways. The subject of Guido Reni's workshop would benefit significantly from thorough studies on the painting techniques and materials of Reni's studio assistants. Little is known about these artists as individuals, and a survey of their known works followed by research on their techniques would prove valuable to this research. With this information, the writer could further discussion on artists' education in the seventeenth century, by observing whether Reni's pupils carried forward elements of their master's

painting technique, and how this manifested in their own works. Detailed information on the individual painting techniques of each of Reni's pupils and assistants would also prove valuable in the study of his copies and their attributions, by aiding the researcher in the difficult task of making distinctions between the hand of the master and that of his assistants.

More research could be performed on the circulation of Reni's paintings in Europe, both in the seventeenth-century and beyond, and the dissemination of his style and painting technique outside Bologna. While it is clear that Reni was a popular name amongst *seicento* collectors, more study of his patrons and the manner in which his popularity spread would prove worthwhile. Similarly, in the future, more Renaissance and *seicento* literature on artists' workshops might be investigated, to further the comparisons between seventeenth-century information and modern scientific analysis. As the National Gallery of Art's Malvasia Project progresses, more detailed annotated translations of the *Felsina pittrice* will become available, which would be useful in this regard. Similarly, time might be spent analysing more near-contemporary Italian sources, like those by Giovanni Battista Armenini, Raffaello Borghini, and Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo.

The work would benefit from more thorough and detailed comparisons with the artists of seventeenth-century Europe. While occasional Renaissance counterparts are identified, and reference is made to the Carracci, Domenichino, Guercino, Caravaggio, Rubens and Rembrandt as points of comparison at times, such comparisons could be elaborated on to further contextualise Reni amongst his seventeenth-century peers. Other examples from the wider artistic community in Italy and Northern Europe might also be included in such discussion.

Given the numerous parallels that can be drawn between the studios of Guido Reni and Peter Paul Rubens, and the fact that they are frequently encountered in literature as reciprocal points of comparison, a more thorough, in-depth comparative study of the two seventeenth-century masters may be warranted. Such a study could combine the present body of work on Reni with studies on Rubens' workshop and painting technique, which includes several publications, such as the study of Flemish painting techniques entitled *Concept, Design & Execution in Flemish Painting, 1550-1700*, edited by Hans Vlieghe, Arnout Balis, and Carl Van de Velde, a publication on the

collaborative processes of Rubens and Brueghel edited by Anne T. Woollett and Arian van Suchtelen, and a study of Rubens' atelier by Hans Vlieghe.[1019]
Comparisons between Reni and Rubens also raises questions about the manner in which artistic practice spreads between schools, which may warrant future investigation. Such investigation would involve making detailed comparisons between the painting techniques and workshop practices in Bologna and those in the rest of Italy, as well as the rest of Europe, to determine how local traditions fuse with outside influences and similarities in artistic practice between centres with no geographical link. This could be tied in with research on the legacy of Guido Reni, the dissemination of his style, technique and works and his reputation internationally; a topic which the writer initially intended to address as part of this thesis but time constraints did not allow. This account of Reni's legacy in the art world planned to identify pupils of Guido Reni who continued to work after their master's death, and examining their artistic practices in comparison to Reni's. It would also attempt to identify later painters with no direct link with Reni's studio who took influence technically from the artist, considering how such influence presents itself. It also intended to investigate the manner in which Bologna's art industry was restructured after Reni's death, and the elevation of the artist in Bologna, both a result of the artist's achievements during his lifetime, all of which will prove valuable topics for future research.

During initial research on Reni's workshop practices, much of the artist's technique, and, more particularly, painting materials may seem broadly consistent with those of his contemporaries and his Renaissance predecessors. It is only in spending time examining pictures and *seicento* texts alongside technical data, that Reni's individuality becomes apparent. When Reni's methods are explored using this multidisciplinary approach, it is found that material and technique are linked absolutely to the artist as an individual. Distinctive traits appear in the artist's technique throughout his career. They are particularly evident in his brushwork, especially in drapery passages, hair and beards – elements which Mancini names as identifying traits in attribution of a painting. More distinct is the development of brushwork over

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[1019] Hans Vlieghe, Arnout Balis, and C. van de Velde (eds.), *Concept, Design & Execution in Flemish painting, 1550-1700* (Belgium: Brepols, 2000), Anne T. Woollett and Arian van Suchtelen (eds.) *Rubens & Brueghel: A Working Friendship* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006) Hans Vlieghe, 'Rubens's atelier and history painting in Flanders: a review of the evidence', in *The Age of Rubens*, edited by Peter C. Sutton (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1993), 159-170.

the course of his career. While brushwork in late works is sometimes considered a departure from his early technique, it might be better considered a simplification, given similarities with early underdrawings.

When observations on materials and technique are considered in conjunction with their historical context, special reasons for Reni's workshop practices often become evident. Reni was not always experimental in his use of pigments, but certainly makes very deliberate choices regarding materials for particular passages, as with ultramarine for the robes of the Virgin, and the addition of cool tones to the flesh of certain figures. His practice in using specific materials like lead white and copper was seemingly tied up with a desire for longevity in his paintings, works that would leave a legacy, similar to that legacy he created through the elevation of the status of the artist. His use of silk as a support was also associated with such interest in longevity, as well as with his experience of the fallout of the plague in his beloved hometown – just as his repeated portrayal of *Saint Sebastian*, patron saint of the plague, might be seen as a homage to Bologna and those who died in previous decades. The drastic loosening of brushwork in his last works of the 1640s show the artist adjusting his technique to increase his output at a time when money was a problem, and can be related back to an earlier period where such loose brushwork was used to impress patrons. His looser brushwork, and quicker execution, painting wet-in-wet with large, stiff brushes, serves as illustration not only of the aging artist's change in thinking, but also his lack of concern for the conventions of technique, having established himself successfully.

The name Guido Reni saw a fall in popularity from that of a highly admired figure in European art to one relegated to relative obscurity from the late nineteenth century into the first half of the twentieth.[1020] While this can be associated with changing tastes, Reni's workshop practices also contributed to the loss of his esteemed reputation in the art world. Rudolf Wittkower wrote that Reni's fame "was obscured by the large mass of standardized sentimental pictures coming from his studio during the last ten years of his life, the majority the product of assistants."[1021] The modern connoisseur's appreciation for "originality" affected the manner in which Reni's art was viewed. Despite having been redeemed in more recent scholarship, modern concepts

[1020] Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 49.
[1021] Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1600 to 1750* (London: Penguin, 1958), 50, cited by Pepper, *Guido Reni,* 49.

of originality continue to tarnish Reni's reputation today, with scholars describing practices as utilising a "system of mass production", in which paintings were "churned out" by his workshop.[1022]

The question, or problem, of originality and attribution is one that arises repeatedly in scholarship related to Guido Reni and his studio. The reasons for such questions have been demonstrated here through a discussion of the complex and multifaceted nature of Reni's working methods and studio structure. The answers, similarly, may lie in a close study of such working methods, using a combined historical and scientific approach. It is the hope of the writer that this thesis might facilitate a better understanding of the production of copies to Reni's studio, as well as the reasons for the complexity of issues of attribution surrounding Reni and the necessity for a close study of workshop practices and painting techniques in addressing such issues. Modern attributions of Reni works will remain problematic until an appreciation for the artist's individual practices are taken into account. In this investigation of Reni's studio practices, it has become apparent that, in a seventeenth-century context, art was often a collaborative process, and connoisseurship was in its very early stages. While the *seicento* viewer was aware to some extent of issues of originality and attribution, their understanding of these concepts was particular to their time. It should be noted that the concepts of authorship and originality prove complex and difficult to define throughout Europe in the seventeenth century, and not just in Bologna or Rome. This is in part illustrated by the aforementioned discussions of such between Rubens and British collector, Sir Dudley Carleton. The clear-cut definition of "original" as is understood in the twenty-first century proves an alien, if even unreasonable, set of criteria under which to measure the seventeenth-century painter. It is important to acknowledge that seventeenth-century viewers may not have had the same desire to discriminate between "originals" and copies as the modern historian, and whether the search for authenticity in the period is anachronistic is frequently debated in modern scholarship. When using the study of painting technique and studio practice to support attribution, historical context is of absolute importance. It is the hope of the present writer that such context has been provided in this writing, to advance the study of the "difficult" Guido.

[1022] Cavazzini, *Painting as Business,* 69, and Boccardo and Salomon, 'Two Museums', 11.

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