

# ART HUMANITIES: PRIMARY SOURCE READER

## Section 3: Raphael

### Art Humanities Primary Source Reading 9

#### *Leon Battista Alberti*

##### EXCERPTS FROM *ON PAINTING*, 1436

Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) was a poet, scholar and architect, painter, and mathematician. He arrived in Florence in the 1430s, at a time when the city was a veritable hotbed of learning, scientific study, and artistic production. For this text, the first systematic study of painting, his agenda was twofold: "On Painting" is at once a celebration of the art itself and a practical manual for working painters. In the best Renaissance tradition, Alberti sought to combine his own studies with his extensive classical learning, hence the frequent references to the art and artists of the ancient world. In the end, Alberti describes no single painting, but he imagines a new kind of artist. No longer a mere craftsman, the ideal artist is now an erudite individual possessing both manual and intellectual skills.

Alberti drew upon principles of geometry and balance to describe an artificial system of "perspective," a term whose etymology reveals its origins in Renaissance efforts to "see through" the picture plane. The intricacies of the outline, the reception of light, and the necessity for a varied, yet balanced, composition are given detailed treatment. Nothing if not thorough, Alberti even prescribes the most pleasing way to depict branches, leaves, hair and clothing when a gentle breeze is blowing.

Alberti's treatise was an immediate success, and the author quickly made a translation from his original Latin into Italian to reach a still larger audience of academics, patrons and artists. Even a cursory examination of Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin* will reveal many of Alberti's principles at work.

## BOOK II

25. As the effort of learning may perhaps seem to the young too laborious, I think I should explain here how painting is worthy of all our attention and study. Painting possesses a truly divine power in that not only does it make the absent present (as they say of friendship), but it also represents the dead to the living many centuries later, so that they are recognized by spectators with pleasure and deep admiration for the artist. Plutarch tells us that Cassandrus, one of Alexander's commanders, trembled all over at the sight of a portrait of the deceased Alexander, in which he recognized the majesty of his king. He also tells us how Agesilaus the Lacedaemonian, realizing that he was very ugly, refused to allow his likeness to be known to posterity, and so would not be painted or modelled by anyone. Through painting, the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time. We should also consider it a very great gift to men that painting has represented the gods they worship, for painting has contributed considerably to the piety which binds us to the gods, and to filling our minds with sound religious beliefs. It is said that Phidias made a statue of Jove in Elis, whose beauty added not a little to the received religion. How much painting contributes to the honest pleasures of the mind, and to the beauty of things, may be seen in various ways but especially in the fact that you will find nothing so precious which association with painting does not render far more valuable and highly prized. Ivory, gems, and all other similar precious things are made more valuable by the hand of the painter. Gold too, when embellished by the art of painting, is equal in value to a far larger quantity of gold. Even lead, the basest of metals, if it were formed into some image by the hand of Phidias or Praxiteles, would probably be regarded as more precious than rough unworked silver. The painter Zeuxis began to give his works away, because, as he said, they could not be bought for money. He did not believe any price could be found to recompense the man who, in modelling or painting living things, behaved like a god among mortals.

26. The virtues of painting, therefore, are that its masters see their works admired and feel themselves to be almost like the Creator. Is it not true that painting is the mistress of all the arts or their principal ornament? If I am not mistaken, the architect took from the painter architraves, capitals, bases, columns and pediments, and all the other fine features of buildings. The stonemason, the sculptor and all the work-shops and crafts of artificers are guided by the rule and art of the painter. Indeed, hardly any art, except the very meanest, can be found that does not somehow pertain to painting. So I would venture to assert that whatever beauty there is in things has been derived from painting. *Painting was honoured by*

our ancestors with this special distinction that, whereas, all other artists were called craftsmen, the painter alone was not counted among their number. Consequently I used to tell my friends that the inventor of painting, according to the poets, was Narcissus, who was turned into a flower; for, as painting is the flower of all the arts, so the tale of Narcissus fits our purpose perfectly. What is painting but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool? Quintilian believed that the earliest painters used to draw around shadows made by the sun, and the art eventually grew by a process of additions. So we say that an Egyptian Philocles and a certain Cicanthes were among the first inventors of this art. The Egyptians say painting was practised in their country six thousand years before it was brought over into Greece. Our writers say it came from Greece to Italy after the victories of Marcellus in Sicily. But it is of little concern to us to discover the first painters or the inventors of the art, since we are not writing a history of painting like Pliny, but treating of the art in an entirely new way. On this subject there exist today none of the writings of the ancients as far as I have seen, although they say that Euphranor the Isthmian wrote something about symmetry and colors, that Antigonos and Xenocrates set down some words about paintings, and that Apelles wrote on painting to Perseus. Diogenes Laertius tells us that the philosopher Demetrius also wrote about painting. Since all the other liberal arts were committed to writing by our ancestors, I believe that painting too was not neglected by our authors of Italy, for the ancient Etruscans were the most expert of all in Italy in the art of painting.

27. The ancient writer Trismegistus believes that sculpture and painting originated together with religion. *He addresses Asclepius with these words: 'Man, mindful of his nature and origin, represented the gods in his own likeness.'* Yet who will deny that painting has assumed the most honored part in all things both public and private, profane and religious, to such an extent that no art, I find, has been so highly valued universally among men? Almost incredible prices are quoted for painted panels. The Theban Aristides sold one painting alone for a hundred talents. They say that Rhodes was not burned down by King Demetrius lest a painting by Protogenes be destroyed. So we can say that Rhodes was redeemed from the enemy by a single picture. Many other similar tales were collected by writers, from which you can clearly see that good painters always and everywhere were held in the highest esteem and honor, so that even the most noble and distinguished citizens and philosophers and kings took great pleasure not only in seeing and possessing paintings, but also in painting themselves. L. Manilius, a Roman citizen, and the nobleman Fabius were painters. Turpilius, a Roman knight, painted at Verona. Sitedius, praetor and proconsul, acquired fame in painting. Pacuvius, the tragedian, nephew of the poet Ennius, painted Hercules in the forum. The philosophers Socrates, Plato, Metrodorus and Pyrrho achieved distinction in painting. The emperors Nero, Valentinianus and Alexander Severus were very devoted to painting. It would be a long story to tell how many princes or kings have devoted themselves to this most noble art. Besides, it is not appropriate to review all the multitude of ancient painters. Its size may be understood from the fact that for Demetrius of Phalerum, son of Phanostatus, three hundred and sixty statues were completed within four hundred days, some on horseback and some in chariots. In a city in which there was so large a number of sculptors, shall we not believe there were also many painters? Painting and sculpture are cognate arts, nurtured by the same genius. But I shall always prefer the genius of the painter, as it attempts by far the most difficult task. Let us return to what we were saying.

28. The number of painters and sculptors was enormous in those days, when princes and people, and learned and unlearned alike delighted in painting, and statues and pictures were displayed in the theatres among the chief spoils brought from the provinces. Eventually Paulus Aemilius and many other Roman citizens taught their sons painting among the liberal arts in the pursuit of the good and happy life. The excellent custom was especially observed among the Greeks that free-born and liberally educated young people were also taught the art of painting together with letters, geometry and music. Indeed the skill of painting was a mark of honor also in women. Martia, Varro's daughter, is celebrated by writers for her painting. The art was held in such high esteem and honor that it was forbidden by law among the Greeks for slaves to learn to paint; and quite rightly so, for the art of painting is indeed worthy of free minds and noble intellects. I have always regarded it as a mark of an excellent and superior mind in any person whom I saw take great delight in painting. Although, this art alone is equally pleasing to both learned and unlearned; and it rarely happens in any other art that what pleases the knowledgeable also attracts the ignorant. You will not easily find anyone who does not earnestly desire to be accomplished in painting. Indeed it is evident that Nature herself delights in painting, for we observe she often fashions in marble hippocentaurs and bearded faces of kings. It is also said that in a gem owned by Pyrrhus the nine Muses were clearly depicted by Nature, complete with their insignia. Furthermore, there is no other art in whose study and practice all ages of learned and unlearned alike may engage with such pleasure. Let me speak of my own experience. Whenever I devote myself to painting for pleasure, which I very often do when I have leisure from other affairs, I persevere with such pleasure in finishing my work that I can hardly believe later on that three or even four hours have gone by.

29. This art, then brings pleasure while you practise it, and praise, riches and endless fame when you have cultivated it well. Therefore, as painting is the finest and most ancient ornament of things, worthy of free men and pleasing to learned and unlearned alike, I earnestly beseech young students to devote themselves to painting as much as they can. Next, I would advise those who are devoted to painting to go on to master with every effort and care this perfect art of painting. You who strive to excel in painting, should cultivate above all the fame and reputation which you see the ancients attained, and in so doing it will be a good thing to remember that avarice was always the enemy of renown and virtue. A mind intent on gain will rarely obtain the reward of fame with posterity. I have seen many in the very flower, as it were, of learning, descend to gain and thereafter obtain neither riches nor distinction, who if they had improved their talent with application, would easily have risen to fame and there received both wealth and the satisfaction of renown. But we have

said enough on these matters. Let us return to our purpose. We divide painting into three parts, and this division we learn from Nature herself. As painting aims to represent things seen, let us note how in fact things are seen. In the first place, when we look at a thing, we see it as an object which occupies a space. The painter will draw around this space, and he will call this process of setting down the outline, appropriately, circumscription. Then, as we look, we discern how the several surfaces of the object seen are fitted together; the artist, when drawing these combinations of surfaces in their correct relationship, will properly call this composition. Finally, in looking we observe more clearly the colours of surfaces; the representation in painting of this aspect, since it receives all its variations from light, will aptly here be termed the reception of light.

Therefore, circumscription, composition and reception of light make up painting; and with these we must now deal as briefly as possible. First circumscription. Circumscription is the process of delineating the external outlines on the painting. They say that Parrhasius the painter, with whom Socrates speaks in Xenophon, was very expert in this and studied these lines very closely I believe one should take care that circumscription is done with the finest possible, almost invisible lines, like those they say the painter Apelles used to practise and vie with Protogenes at drawing. Circumscription is simply the recording of the outlines, and if it is done with a very visible line, they will look in the painting, not like the margins of surfaces, but like cracks. I want only the external outlines to be set down in circumscription; and this should be practised assiduously. No composition and no reception of light will be praised without the presence of circumscription. But circumscription by itself is very often most pleasing. So attention should be devoted to circumscription; and to do this well, I believe nothing more convenient can be found than the veil, which among my friends I call the intersection, and whose usage I was the first to discover. It is like this: a veil loosely woven of fine thread, dyed whatever colour you please, divided up by thicker threads into as many parallel square sections as you like, and stretched on a frame. I set this up between the eye and the object to be represented, so that the visual pyramid passes through the loose weave of the Veil (Fig. 12). This intersection or the veil has many advantages, first of all because it always represents the same surfaces unchanged, for once you have fixed the position of the outlines, you can immediately find the apex of the pyramid you started with, which is extremely difficult to do without the intersection. You know how impossible it is to paint something which does not continually present the same aspect. This is why people can copy paintings more easily than sculptures, as they always look the same. You also know that if the distance and the position of the centric ray are changed,

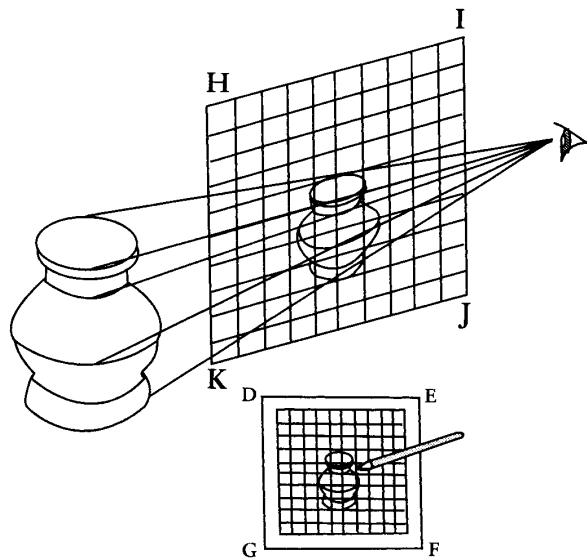


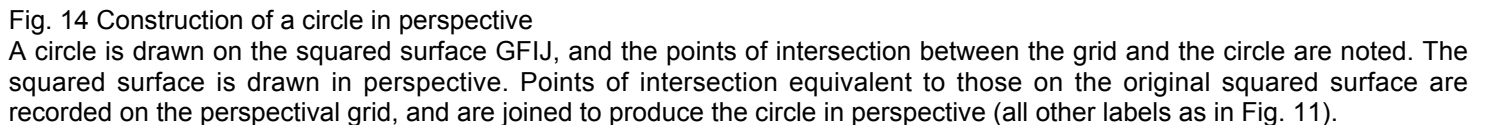
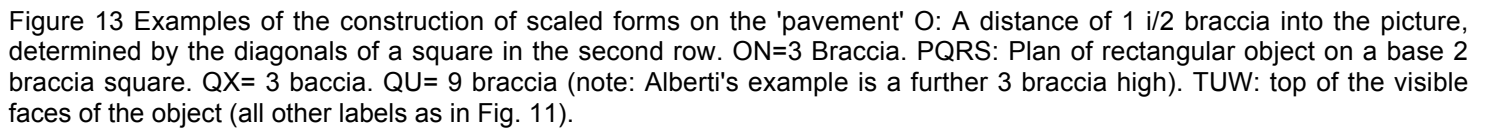
Figure 12: The 'intersection' or 'veil'

HIJK: veil divided into squares by thicker threads. DEFG: drawing surface divided into the same number of squares as in the veil. The points at which the image of the object intersects the squared grid are noted, and equivalent points are transcribed on to the squared drawing surface.

the centric ray are changed, the thing seen appears to be altered. So the veil will give you the not inconsiderable advantage I have indicated, namely that the object seen will always keep the same appearance. A further advantage is that the position of the outlines and the boundaries of the surfaces can easily be established accurately on the painting panel; for just as you see the forehead in one parallel, the nose in the next, the cheeks in another, the chin in one below, and everything else in its particular place, so you can situate precisely all the features on the panel or wall which you have similarly divided into appropriate parallels. Lastly, this veil affords the greatest assistance in executing your picture, since you can see any object that is round and in relief, represented on the flat surface of the veil. From all of which we may appreciate by reflection and experience how useful the veil is for painting easily and correctly.

32. I will not listen to those who say it is no good for a painter to get into the habit of using these things, because, though they offer him the greatest help in painting, they make the artist unable to do anything by himself without them. If I am not mistaken, we do not ask for infinite labour from the painter, but we do expect a painting that appears markedly in relief and similar to the objects presented. I do not understand how anyone could ever even moderately achieve this without the help of the veil. So those who are anxious to advance in the art of painting, should use this intersection or veil, as I have explained. Should they wish to try their talents without the veil, they should imitate this system of parallels with the eye, so that they always imagine a horizontal line cut by another perpendicular at the point where they establish in the picture the edge of the object they observe. But as for many inexpert painters the outlines of surfaces are vague and uncertain, as for example in faces, because they cannot determine at what point more particularly the temples are distinguished from the forehead, they must be taught how they may acquire this knowledge. Nature demonstrates this very clearly. Just as we see flat surfaces distinguished by their own lights and shades, so we may see spherical and concave surfaces divided up, as it were, in squares into several surfaces by different patches of light and shade, are therefore to be treated as single surfaces. If the surface seen proceeds from a dark colour gradually lightening to bright, then you should mark with a line the mid-point between the two parts, so that the way in which you should colour the whole area is made less uncertain.

33. It remains for us to say something further about circumscription, which also pertains in no small measure to composition. For this purpose one should know what composition is in painting. Composition is that procedure in painting whereby the parts are composed together in a picture. The great work of the painter is the 'historia'; parts of the 'historia' are the bodies, part of the body is the member, and part of the member is a surface. As circumscription is the procedure in painting whereby the outlines of the surfaces are drawn, and as some surfaces are small, as in living creatures, while others are very large, as in buildings and giant statues, the precepts we have given so far may suffice for drawing the small surfaces, for we have shown that they can be measured with the veil. For the larger surfaces a new method must be found. In this connection one should remember all we said above in our rudiments about surfaces, rays, pyramid and intersection. You will also recall what I wrote about the parallels of the pavement, and the centric point and line. On the pavement that is divided up into parallels, you have to construct the sides of walls and other similar surfaces which we have described as perpendicular. I will explain briefly how I proceed in this construction. I begin first from the foundations. I draw the breadth and length of the walls on the pavement, and in doing this I observe from Nature that more than two connected standing surfaces of any square right-angled body cannot be seen at one glance. So in drawing the foundations of the walls I take care that I outline only those sides that are visible, and I always begin from the nearer surfaces, and particularly from those that are equidistant from the intersection. I draw these before the rest, and I determine what I wish their length and breadth to be by the parallels traced on the pavement, for I take up as many parallels as I want them to be 'braccia.' I find the middle of the parallels from the intersection of the two diagonals, as the intersection of one diagonal by another marks the middle point of a quadrangle (Fig. 13). So, from the scale of the parallels I easily draw the width and length of walls that rise from the ground. Then I go on from there without any difficulty to do the heights of the surfaces, since a quantity will maintain the same proportion for its whole height as that which exists between the centric line and the position on the pavement from which that quantity of the building rises. So, if you want this quantity from the ground to the top to be four times the height of a man in the picture, and the centric line has been placed at the height of a man, then it will be three 'braccia' from the foot of the quantity to the centric line; but, as you wish this quantity increased to twelve 'braccia,' you must continue it upwards three times again the distance from the centric line to the foot of the quantity. Thus, by the methods I have described, we can correctly draw all surfaces containing angles.



34. It remains for us to explain how one draws the outlines of circular surfaces. These can be derived from angular surfaces. I do this as follows. I draw a rectangle on a drawing board, and divide its sides into parts like those of the base line of the rectangle of the picture (Fig. 14). Then, by drawing lines from each point of these divisions to the one opposite, I fill the area with small rectangles. On this I inscribe a circle the size I want, so that the circle and the parallels intersect each other. I note all the points of intersection accurately, and then mark these positions in their respective parallels of the

pavement in the picture. But as it would be an immense labour to cut the whole circle at many places with an almost infinite number of small parallels until the outline of the circle were continuously marked with a numerous succession of points, when I have noted eight or some other suitable number of intersections, I use my judgement to set down the circumference of the circle in the painting in accordance with these indications. Perhaps a quicker way would be to draw this outline from a shadow cast by a light, provided the object making the shadow were interposed correctly at the proper place. We have now explained how the larger angular and circular surfaces are drawn with the aid of the parallels. Having completed circumscription, we must now speak of composition. To this end, we must repeat what composition is.

35. Composition is the procedure in painting whereby the parts are composed together in the picture. The great work of the painter is not a colossus but a 'historia,' for there is far more merit in a 'historia' than in a colossus. Parts of the 'historia' are the bodies, part of the body is the member, and part of the member is the surface. The principal parts of the work are the surfaces, because from these come the members, from the members the bodies, from the bodies the 'historia,' and finally the finished work of the painter. From the composition of surfaces arises that elegant harmony and grace in bodies, which they call beauty. The face which has some surfaces large and other small, some very prominent and other excessively receding and hollow, such as we see in the faces of old women, will be ugly to look at. But the face in which the surfaces are so joined together that pleasing lights pass gradually into agreeable shadows and there are no very sharp angles, we may rightly call a handsome and beautiful face. So in the composition of surfaces grace and beauty must above all be sought. In order to achieve this there seems to me no surer way than to look at Nature and observe long and carefully how she, the wonderful maker of things, has composed the surfaces in beautiful members. We should apply ourselves with all our thought and attention to imitating her, and take delight in using the veil I spoke of. And when we are about to put into our work the surfaces taken from beautiful bodies, we will always first determine their exact limits, so that we may direct our lines to their correct place.

36. So far we have spoken of the composition of surfaces. Now we must give some account of the composition of members. In the composition of members care should be taken above all that all the members accord well with one another. They are said to accord well with one another when in size, function, kind, colour and other similar respects they correspond to grace and beauty. For, if in a picture the head is enormous, the chest puny, the hand very large, the foot swollen and the body distended, this composition will certainly be ugly to look at. So one must observe a certain conformity in regard to the size of members, and in this it will help, when painting living creatures, first to sketch in the bones, for, as they bend very little indeed, they always occupy a certain determined position. Then add the sinews and muscles, and finally clothe the bones and muscles with flesh and skin. But at this point, I see, there will perhaps be some who will raise as an objection something I said above, namely, that the painter is not concerned with things that are not visible. They would be right to do so, except that, just as for a clothed figure we first have to draw the naked body beneath and then cover it with clothes, so in painting a nude the bones and muscles must be arranged first, and then covered with appropriate flesh and skin in such a way that it is not difficult to perceive the positions of the muscles. As Nature clearly and openly reveals all these proportions, so the zealous painter will find great profit from investigating them in Nature for himself. Therefore, studious painters should apply themselves to this task, and understand that the more care and labour they put into studying the proportions of members, the more it helps them to fix in their minds the things they have learned. I would advise one thing, however, that in assessing the proportions of a living creature we should take one member of it by which the rest are measured. The architect Vitruvius reckons the height of a man in feet. I think it more suitable if the rest of the limbs are related to the size of the head, although I have observed it to be well-nigh a common fact in men that the length of the foot is the same as the distance from the chin to the top of the head.

37. Having selected this one member, the rest should be accommodated to it, so that there is no member of the whole body that does not correspond with the others in length and breadth. Then we must ensure that all members fulfil their proper function according to the action being performed. It is appropriate for a running man to throw his hands about as well as his feet. But I prefer a philosopher, when speaking to show modesty in every limb rather than the attitudes of a wrestler. The painter Daemon represented an armed man in a race so that you would have said he was sweating, and another taking off his arms, so life like that he seemed clearly to be gasping for breath. And someone painted Ulysses in such a way that you could tell he was not really mad but only pretending. They praise a 'historia' in Rome in which the dead Meleager is being carried away, because those who are bearing the burden appear to be distressed and to strain with every limb, while in the dead man there is no member that does not seem completely lifeless; they all hang loose; hands, fingers, neck, all droop inertly down, all combine together to represent death. This is the most difficult thing of all to do, for to represent the limbs of a body entirely at rest is as much the sign of an excellent artist as to render them all alive and in action. So in every painting the principle should be observed that all the members should fulfil their function according to the action performed, in such a way that not even the smallest limb fails to play its appropriate part, that the members of the dead appear dead down to the smallest detail, and those of the living completely alive. A body is said to be alive when it performs some movement of its own free will. Death, they say, is present when the limbs can no longer carry out the duties of life, that is, movement and feeling. So the painter who wishes his representations of bodies to appear alive, should see to it that all their members perform their appropriate movements. But in every movement beauty and grace should be sought after. Those movements are especially lively and pleasing that are directed upwards into the air. We have also said that regard should be had to similarity of kind in the composition of members, for it would be ridiculous if the hands of Helen or

Iphigenia looked old and rustic, or if Nestor had a youthful breast and soft neck, or Ganymede a wrinkled brow and the legs of a prize-fighter, or if we gave Milo, the strongest man of all, light and slender flanks. It would also be unseemly to put emaciated arms and hands on a figure in which the face were firm and plump. Conversely, whoever painted Achaemenides discovered on an island by Aeneas with the face Virgil says he had, and the rest of the body did not accord with the face, would certainly be a ridiculous and inept painter. Therefore, every part should agree in kind. And I would also ask that they correspond in colour too; for to those who have pink, white and agreeable faces, dark forbidding breasts and other parts are completely unsuitable.

38. So, in the composition of members, what we have said about size, function, kind and colour should be observed. Everything should also conform to a certain dignity. It is not suitable for Venus or Minerva to be dressed in military cloaks; and it would be improper for you to dress Jupiter or Mars in women's clothes. The early painters took care when representing Castor and Pollux that, though they looked like twins, you could tell one was a fighter and the other very agile. They also made Vulcan's limp show beneath his clothing, so great was their attention to representing what was necessary according to function, kind and dignity.

39. Now follows the composition of bodies, in which all the skill and merit of the painter lies. Some of the things we said about the composition of members pertain also to this, for all the bodies in the 'historia' must conform in function and size. If you painted centaurs in an uproar at dinner, it would be absurd amid this violent commotion for one of them to be lying there asleep from drinking wine. It would also be a fault if at the same distance some men were a great deal bigger than others, or dogs the same size as horses in your picture. Another thing I often see deserves to be censured, and that is men painted in a building as if they were shut up in a box in which they can hardly fit sitting down and rolled up in a ball. So all the bodies should conform in size and function to the subject of the action.

40. A 'historia' you can justifiably praise and admire will be one that reveals itself to be so charming and attractive as to hold the eye of the learned and unlearned spectator for a long while with a certain sense of pleasure and emotion. The first thing that gives pleasure in a 'historia' is a plentiful variety. Just as with food and music, novel and extraordinary things delight us for various reasons but especially because they are different from the old ones we are used to, so with everything the mind takes great pleasure in variety and abundance. So, in painting, variety of bodies and colours is pleasing. I would say a picture was richly varied if it contained a properly arranged mixture of old men, youths, boys, matrons, maidens, children, domestic animals, dogs, birds, horses, sheep, buildings and provinces; and I would praise any great variety, provided it is appropriate to what is going on in the picture. When the spectators dwell on observing all the details, then the painter's richness will acquire favour. But I would have this abundance not only furnished with variety, but restrained and full of dignity and modesty. I disapprove of those painters who, in their desire to appear rich or to leave no space empty, follow no system of composition, but scatter everything about in random confusion with the result that their 'historia' does not appear to be doing anything but merely to be in a turmoil. Perhaps the artist who seeks dignity above all in his 'historia,' ought to represent very few figures; for as paucity of words imparts majesty to a prince, provided his thoughts and orders are understood, so the presence of only the strictly necessary numbers of bodies confers dignity on a picture. I do not like a picture to be virtually empty, but I do not approve of an abundance that lacks dignity. In a 'historia' I strongly approve of the practice I see observed by the tragic and comic poets, of telling their story with as few characters as possible. In my opinion there will be no 'historia' so rich in variety of things that nine or ten men cannot worthily perform it. I think Varro's dictum is relevant here: he allowed no more than nine guests at dinner, to avoid disorder. Though variety is pleasing in any 'historia,' a picture in which the attitudes and movements of the bodies differ very much among themselves, is most pleasing of all. So let there be some visible full-face, with their hands turned upwards and fingers raised, and resting on one foot; others should have their faces turned away, their arms by their sides, and feet together, and each one of them should have his own particular flexions and movements. Others should be seated, or resting on bended knee, or almost lying down. If suitable, let some be naked, and let others stand around who are half-way between the two, part clothed and part naked. But let us always observe decency and modesty. The obscene parts of the body and all those that are not very pleasing to look at, should be covered with clothing or leaves or the hand. Apelles painted the portrait of Antigonus only from the side of his face away from his bad eye. They say Pericles had a rather long, misshapen head, and so he used to have his portrait done by painters and sculptors, not like other people with head bare, by wearing his helmet. Plutarch tells how the ancient painters, when painting kings who had some physical defect, did not wish this to appear to have been overlooked, but they corrected it as far as possible while still maintaining the likeness. Therefore, I would have decency and modesty observed in every 'historia,' in such a way that ugly things are either omitted or emended. Lastly, as I said, I think one should take care that the same gesture or attitude does not appear in any of the figures.

41. A 'historia' will move spectators when the men painted in the picture outwardly demonstrates their own feelings as clearly as possible. Nature provides-and there is nothing to be found more rapacious of her like than she -that we mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh, and grieve with the grief-stricken. Yet these feelings are known from movements of the body. We see how the melancholy, preoccupied with cares and beset by grief, lack all vitality of feeling and action, and remain sluggish, their limbs unsteady and drained of colour. In those who mourn, the brow is weighed down, the neck bent, and every part of their body droops as though weary and past care. But in those who are angry, their passions aflame with ire, face and eyes become swollen and red, and the movements of all their limbs are violent and agitated according to the fury of their wrath. Yet when we are happy and gay, our movements are free and pleasing in their

inflections. They praise Euphranor because in his portrait of Alexander Paris he did the face and expression in such a way that you could recognize him simultaneously as the judge of the goddesses, the lover of Helen and the slayer of Achilles. The painter Daemon's remarkable merit is that you could easily see in his painting the wrathful, unjust and inconstant, as well as the exorable and clement, the merciful, the proud, the humble and the fierce. They say the Theban Aristides, the contemporary of Apelles, represented these emotions best of all; and we too will certainly do the same, provided we dedicate the necessary study and care to this matter.

42. The painter, therefore, must know all about the movements of the body, which I believe he must take from Nature with great skill. It is extremely difficult to vary the movements of the body in accordance with the almost infinite movements of the heart. Who, unless he has tried, would believe it was such a difficult thing, when you want to represent laughing faces, to avoid their appearing tearful rather than happy? And who, without the greatest labour, study and care, could represent faces in which the mouth and chin and eyes and cheeks and forehead and eyebrows all accord together in grief or hilarity? All these things, then, must be sought with the greatest diligence from Nature and always directly imitated, preferring those in painting which leave more for the mind to discover than is acutely apparent to the eye. Let me here, however, speak of some things concerning movements, partly made up from my own thoughts, and partly learned from Nature. First, I believe that all the bodies should move in relation to one another with a certain harmony in accordance with the actions. Then, I like there to be someone in the 'historia' who tells the spectators what is going on, and either beckons them with his hand to look, or with ferocious expression and forbidding glance challenges them not to come near, as if he wished their business to be secret, or points to some danger or remarkable thing in the picture, or by his gestures invites you to laugh or weep with them. Everything the people in the painting do among themselves, or, perform in relation to the spectators, must fit together to represent and explain the 'historia.' They praise Timanthes of Cyprus for the painting in which he surpassed Colotes, because, when he had made Calchas sad and Ulysses even sadder at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and employed all his art and skill on the grief-stricken Menelaus, he could find no suitable way to represent the expression of her disconsolate father; so he covered his head with a veil, and thus left more for the onlooker to imagine about his grief than he could see with the eye. They also praise in Rome the boat in which our Tuscan painter Giotto represented the eleven disciples struck with fear and wonder at the sight of their colleague walking on the water, each showing such clear signs of his agitation in his face and entire body that their individual emotions are discernible in every one of them. We must, however, deal briefly with this whole matter of movements.

43. Some movements are of the mind, which the learned call dispositions, such as anger, grief, joy, fear, desire and so on. Others are of the body, for bodies are said to move in various ways, as when they grow or diminish, when they fall ill and recover from sickness, and when they change position, and so on. We painters, however, who wish to represent emotions through the movements of limbs, may leave other arguments aside and speak only of the movement that occurs when there is a change of position. Everything which changes position has seven directions of movement, either up or down or to right or left, or going away in the distance or coming towards us; and the seventh is going around in a circle. I want all these seven movements to be in a painting. There should be some bodies that face towards us, and others going away, to right and left. Of these some parts should be shown towards the spectators, and others should be turned away; some should be raised upwards and others directed downwards. Since, however, the bounds of reason are often exceeded in representing these movements, it will be of help here to say some things about the attitude and movements of limbs which I have gathered from Nature, and from which it will be clear what moderation should be used concerning them. I have observed how in every attitude a man positions his whole body beneath his head, which is the heaviest member of all. And if he rests his entire weight on one foot, this foot is always perpendicularly beneath his head like the base of a column, and the face of a person standing is usually turned in the direction in which his foot is pointing. But I have noticed that the movements of the head in any direction are hardly ever such that he does not always have some other parts of the body positioned beneath to sustain the enormous weight, or at least he extends some limb in the opposite direction like the other arm of a balance, to correspond to that weight. When someone holds a weight on his outstretched hand, we see how, with one foot fixed like the axis of a balance, the rest of the body is counterpoised to balance the weight. I have also seen that the head of a man when standing does not turn upwards further than the point at which the eye can see the center of the sky, nor sideways further than where the chin touches the shoulder; and at the waist we hardly ever turn so far that we get the shoulder directly above the navel. The movements of the legs and arms are freer, provided they do not interfere with the other respectable parts of the body. But in these movements I have observed from Nature that the hands are very rarely raised above the head, or the elbow above the shoulders, or the foot lifted higher than the knee, and that one foot is usually no further from the other than the length of a foot. I have also seen that, if we stretch our hand upwards as far as possible, all the other parts of that side follow that movement right down to the foot, so that with the movement of that arm even the heel of the foot is lifted from the ground.

44. There are many other things of this kind which the diligent artist will notice, and perhaps those I have mentioned so far are so obvious as to seem superfluous. But I did not leave them out, because I have known many make serious mistakes in this respect. They represent movements that are too violent, and make visible simultaneously in one and the same figure both chest and buttocks, which is physically impossible and indecent to look at. But because they hear that those figures are most alive that throw their limbs about a great deal, they cast aside all dignity in painting and copy the movements of actors. In consequence their works are not only devoid of beauty and grace, but are expressions of an



extravagant artistic temperament. A painting should have pleasing and graceful movements that are suited to the subject of the action. In young maidens movements and deportment should be pleasing and adorned with a delightful simplicity, more indicative of gentleness and repose than of agitation, although Homer, whom Zeuxis followed, liked a robust appearance also in women. The movements of a youth should be more powerful, and his attitudes marked by a vigorous athletic quality. In old men all the movements should be slow and their postures weary, so that they not only hold themselves up on their two feet, but also cling to something with their hands. Finally, each person's bodily movements, in keeping with dignity, should be related to the emotions you wish to express. And the greatest emotions must be expressed by the most powerful physical indications. This rule concerned movements is common to all living creatures. It is not suitable for a plough-ox to have the same movements as Alexander's noble horse Bucephalus. But we might appropriately paint the famous daughter of Inachus, who was turned into a cow, running with head high, feet in the air, and twisted tail.

45. These brief comments must suffice regarding the movement of living creatures. Now I must speak of the way in which inanimate things move, since I believe all the movements I mentioned are necessary in painting also in relation to them. The movements of hair and manes and branches and leaves and clothing are very pleasing when represented in painting. I should like all the seven movements I spoke of to appear in hair. Let it twist around as if to tie itself in a knot, and wave upwards in the air like flames, let it weave beneath other hair and sometimes lift on one side and another. The bends and curves of branches should be partly arched upwards, partly directed downwards; some should stick out towards you, others recede, and some should be twisted like ropes. Similarly in the folds of garments care should be taken that, just as the branches of a tree emanate in all directions from the trunk, so folds should issue from a fold like branches. In these too all the movements should be done in such a way that in no garment is there any part in which similar movements are not to be found. But, as I frequently advise, let all the movements be restrained and gentle, and represent grace rather than remarkable effort. Since by nature clothes are heavy and do not make curves at all, as they tend always to fall straight down to the ground, it will be a good idea, when we wish clothing to have movement, to have in the corner of the picture the face of the West or South wind blowing between the clouds and moving all the clothing before it. The pleasing result will be that those sides of the bodies the wind strikes will appear under the covering of the clothes almost as if they were naked, since the clothes are made to adhere to the body by the force of the wind; on the other sides the clothing blown about by the wind will wave appropriately up in the air. But in this motion caused by the wind one should be careful that movements of clothing do not take place against the wind, and that they are neither too irregular nor excessive in their extent. So, all we have said about the movements of animate and inanimate things should be rigorously observed by the painter. He should also diligently follow all we have said about the composition of surfaces, members and bodies.

46. We have dealt with two parts of painting: circumscription and composition. It remains for us to speak of the reception of light. In the rudiments we said enough to show what power lights have to modify colours. We explained that, while the genera of colours remain the same, they become lighter or darker according to the incidence of lights and shades; that white and black are the colours with which we express lights and shades in painting; and that all the other colours are, as it were, matter to which variations of light and shade can be applied. Therefore, leaving other considerations aside, we must explain how the painter should use white and black. Some people express astonishment that the ancient painters Polygnotus and Timanthes used only four colours, while Aglaophon took pleasure in one alone, as if it were a mean thing for those fine painters to have chosen to use so few from among the large number of colours they thought existed, and as if these people believed it the duty of an excellent artist to employ the entire range of colours. Indeed, I agree that a wide range and variety of colours contribute greatly to the beauty and attraction of a painting. But I would prefer learned painters to believe that the greatest art and industry are concerned with the disposition of white and black, and that all skill and care should be used in correctly placing these two, just as the incidence of light and shade makes it apparent where surfaces become convex or concave, or how much any part slopes and turns this way or that, so the combination of white and black achieves what the Athenian painter Nicias was praised for, and what the artist must above all desire: that the things he paints should appear in maximum relief. They say that Zeuxis, the most eminent ancient painter, was like a prince among the rest in understanding this principle of light and shade. Such praise was not given to others at all. I would consider of little or no virtue the painter who did not properly understand the effect every kind of light and shade has on all surfaces. In painting I would praise-and learned and unlearned alike would agree with me-those faces which seem to stand out from the pictures as if they were sculpted, and I would condemn those in which no artistry is evident other than perhaps in the drawing. I would like a composition to be well drawn and excellently coloured. Therefore, to avoid condemnation and earn praise, painters should first of all study carefully the lights and shades, and observe that the colour is more pronounced and brilliant on the surface on which the rays of light strike, and that this same colour turns more dim where the force of the light gradually grows less. It should also be observed how shadows always correspond on the side away from the light, so that in no body is a surface illuminated without your finding surfaces on its other side covered in shade. But as regards the representation of light with white and of shadow with black, I advise you to devote particular study to those surfaces that are clothed in light or shade. You can very well learn from Nature and from objects themselves. When you have thoroughly understood them, you may change the colour with a little white applied as sparingly as possible in the appropriate place within the outlines of the surface, and likewise add some black in the place opposite to it. With such balancing, as one might say, of black and white a surface rising in relief becomes still more evident. Go on making similar sparing additions until you feel you have arrived at what is required. A mirror will be an excellent guide to knowing this. I do not know how it is that

paintings that are without fault look beautiful in a mirror, and it is remarkable how every defect in a picture appears more unsightly in a mirror. So the things that are taken from Nature should be emended with the advice of the mirror.

47. Let me relate here some things I have learned from Nature. I observed that plane surfaces keep a uniform colour over their whole extent, while the colours of spherical and concave surfaces vary, and here it is lighter, there darker, and elsewhere a kind of in-between colour. This variation of colour in other than plane surfaces presents some difficulty to not very clever painters. But if, as I explained, the painter has drawn the outlines of the surfaces correctly and determined the border of the illuminated portions, the method of colouring will then be easy. He will first begin to modify the colour of the surface with white or black, as necessary, applying it like a gentle dew up to the borderline. Then he will go on adding another sprinkling, as it were, on this side of the line, and after this another on this side of it, and then another on this side of this one, so that not only is the part receiving more light tinged with a more distinct colour, but the colour also dissolves progressively like smoke into the areas next to each other. But you have to remember that no surface should be made so white that you cannot make it a great deal whiter still. Even in representing snow-white clothing you should stop well on this side of the brightest white. For the painter has no other means than white to express the brightest gleams of the most polished surfaces, and only black to represent the deepest shadows of the night. And so in painting white clothes we must take one of the four genera of colors which is bright and clear; and likewise in painting, for instance, a black cloak, we must take the other extreme which is not far from the deepest shadow, such as the color of the deep and darkening sea. This composition of white and black has such power that, when skillfully carried out, it can express in painting brilliant surfaces of gold and silver and glass. Consequently, those painters who use white immoderately and black carelessly, should be strongly condemned. I would like white to be purchased more dearly among painters than precious stones. It would be a good thing if white and black were made from those pearls Cleopatra dissolved in vinegar, so that painters would become as mean as possible with them, for their works would then be both more agreeable and nearer the truth. It is not easy to express how sparing and careful one should be in distributing white in a painting. On this point Zeuxis used to condemn painters because they had no idea what was too much. If some indulgence must be given to error, then those who use black extravagantly are less to be blamed than those who employ white somewhat intemperately; for by nature, with experience or painting, we learn as time goes by to hate work that is dark and horrid, and the more we learn, the more we attune our hand to grace and beauty. We all by nature love things that are distinct and clear. So we must the more firmly block the way in which it is easier to go wrong.

48. We have spoken so far about the use of white and black. But we must give some account also of the kinds of colours. So now we shall speak of them, not after the manner of the architect Vitruvius as to where excellent red ochre and the best colours are to be found, but how selected and well compounded colours should be arranged together in painting. They say that Euphranor, a painter of antiquity, wrote something about colours. This work does not exist now. However, whether, if it was once written about by others, we have rediscovered this art of painting and restored it to light from the dead, or whether, if it was never treated before, we have brought it down from the heavens, let us go on as we intended, using our own intelligence as we have done up to now. I should like, as far as possible, all the genera and species of colours to appear in painting with a certain grace and amenity. Such grace will be present when colours are placed next to others with particular care; for, if you are painting Diana leading her band, it is appropriate for this nymph to be given green clothes, the one next to her white, and the next red, and another yellow, and the rest should be dressed successively in a variety of colours, in such a way that light colours are always next to dark ones of a different genera. This combining of colours will enhance the attractiveness of the painting by its variety, and its beauty by its comparisons. There is a kind of sympathy among colours, whereby their grace and beauty is increased when they are placed side by side. If red stands between blue and green, it somehow enhances their beauty as well as its own. White lends gaiety, not only when placed between grey and yellow, but almost to any colour. But dark colours acquire a certain dignity when between light colours, and similarly light colours may be placed with good effect among dark. So the painter in his 'historia' will arrange this variety of colours I have spoken of.

49. There are some who make excessive use of gold, because they think it lends a certain majesty to painting. I would not praise them at all. Even if I wanted to paint Virgil's Dido with her quiver of gold, her hair tied up in gold, her gown fastened with golden clasp, driving her chariot with golden reins, and everything else resplendent with gold I would try to represent with colours rather than with gold this wealth of rays of gold that almost blinds the eyes of the spectator from all angles. Besides the fact that there is greater admiration and praise for the artist in the use of colours, it is also true that, when done in gold on a flat panel, many surfaces that should have been presented as light and gleaming, appear dark to the viewer, while others that should be darker, probably look brighter. Other ornaments done by artificers that are added to painting, such as sculpted columns, bases and pediments, I would not censure if they were in real silver and solid or pure gold, for a perfect and finished painting is worthy to be ornamented even with precious stones.

50. So far we have dealt briefly with the three parts of painting. We spoke of the circumscription of smaller and larger surfaces. We spoke of the composition of surfaces, members and bodies. With regard to colours we have explained what we considered applicable to the painter's use. We have, therefore, expounded the whole of painting, which we said earlier on consisted in three things: circumscription, composition and the reception of light.

### *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*

EXCERPT FROM *ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN*, 1495-96

Now the highest Father, God the master-builder, had, by the laws of his secret wisdom, fabricated this house, this world which we see, a very superb temple of divinity. He had adorned the supercelestial region with minds. He had animated the celestial globes with eternal souls; he had filled with a diverse throng of animals the cast-off and residual parts of the lower world. But, with the work finished, the Artisan desired that there be someone to reckon up the reason of such a big work, to love its beauty, and to wonder at its greatness. Accordingly, now that all things had been completed, as Moses and Timaeus testify, He lastly considered creating man.<sup>1</sup> But there was nothing in the archetypes from which He could mold a new sprout, nor anything in His storehouses which He could bestow as a heritage upon a new son, nor was there an empty judiciary seat where this contemplator of the universe could sit. Everything was filled up; all things had been laid out in the highest, the lowest, and the middle orders. But it did not belong to the paternal power to have failed in the final parturition, as though exhausted by childbearing; it did not belong to wisdom, in a case of necessity, to have been tossed back and forth through want of a plan; it did not belong to the loving kindness which was going to praise divine liberality in others to be forced to condemn itself. Finally, the best of workmen decided that that to which nothing of its very own could be given should be, in composite fashion, whatsoever had belonged individually to each and every thing. Therefore He took up man, a work of indeterminate form; and, placing him at the midpoint of the world, He spoke to him as follows:

"We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, have as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire. A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by Us. In conformity with thy free judgment, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself. I have placed thee at the center of the world, that from there thou mayest more conveniently look around and see whatsoever is in the world. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine."

O great liberality of God the Father! O great and wonderful happiness of man! It is given him to have that which he chooses and to be that which he wills. As soon as brutes are born, they bring with them, "from their dam's bag," as Lucilius says, what they are going to possess.<sup>2</sup> Highest spirits have been, either from the beginning or soon after, that which they are going to be throughout everlasting eternity. At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him. If he cultivates vegetable seeds, he will become a plant. If the seeds of sensation, he will grow into brute. If rational, he will come out a heavenly animal. If intellectual, he will be an angel, and a son of God. And if he is not contented with the lot of any creature but takes himself up into the center of his own unity, then, made one spirit with God and settled in the solitary darkness of the Father, who is above all things, he will stand ahead of all things. Who does not wonder at this chameleon which we are? Or who at all feels more wonder at anything else whatsoever? It was not unfittingly that Asclepius the Athenian said that man was symbolized by Prometheus in the secret rites, by reason of our nature sloughing its skin and transforming itself; hence metamorphoses were popular among the Jews and the Pythagoreans. For the more secret Hebrew theology at one time reshapes holy Enoch into an angel of divinity, whom they call malach hashechina, and at other times reshapes other men into other divinities.<sup>3</sup> According to the Pythagoreans, wicked men are deformed into brutes and, if you believe Empedocles, into plants too.<sup>4</sup> And copying them, Maumeth [Mohammed] often had it on his lips that he who draws back from divine law becomes a brute. And his saying so was reasonable: for it is not the rind which makes the plant, but a dull and non-sentient nature; not the hide which makes a beast of burden, but a brutal and sensual soul; not the spherical body which makes the heavens, but right reason; and not a separateness from the body but a spiritual intelligence which makes an angel. For example, if you see a man given over to his belly and crawling upon the ground, it is a bush not a man that you see. If you see anyone blinded by the illusions of his empty and Callypso-like imagination, seized by the desire of scratching, and delivered over to the senses, it is a brute not a man that you see. If you come upon a philosopher winnowing out all things by right reason, he is a heavenly not an earthly animal. If you come upon a pure contemplator, ignorant of the body, banished to the innermost places of the mind, he is not an earthly, not a heavenly animal; he more superbly is a divinity clothed with human flesh.

Who is there that does not wonder at man? And it is not unreasonable that in the Mosaic and Christian

holy writ man is sometimes denoted by the name "all flesh" and at other times by that of "every creature"; and man fashions, fabricates, transforms himself into the shape of all flesh, into the character of every creature.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, where Evantes the Persian tells of the Chaldaean theology, he writes that man is not any inborn image of himself, but many images coming in from the outside: hence that saying of the Chaldaeans: enosh hu shinuy vekamah tevaoth baal chayim, that is, man is an animal of diverse, multiform, and destructible nature.

But why all this? In order for us to understand that, after having been born in this state so that we may be what we will to be, then, since we are held in honor, we ought to take particular care that no one may say against us that we do not know that we are made similar to brutes and mindless beasts of burden.<sup>6</sup> But rather, as Asaph the prophet says: "Ye are all gods, and sons of the most high," unless by abusing the very indulgent liberality of the Father, we make the free choice, which he gave to us, harmful to ourselves instead of helpful toward salvation.<sup>7</sup> Let a certain holy ambition invade the mind, so that we may not be content with mean things but may aspire to the highest things and strive with all our forces to attain them: for if we will to, we can. Let us spurn earthly things; let us struggle toward the heavenly. Let us put in last place whatever is of the world; and let us fly beyond the chambers of the world to the chamber nearest the most lofty divinity. There, as the sacred mysteries reveal, the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones occupy the first places. Ignorant of how to yield to them and unable to endure the second places, let us compete with the angels in dignity and glory. When we have willed it, we shall be not at all below them.

But by what method? or by doing what? Let us see what they are doing, what life they are living. If we too live that life-for we can-we shall equal their lot. The seraph burns with the fire of charity; the cherub shines with the radiance of intelligence; the throne stands in steadfastness of judgment. Hence, if, dedicated to an active life, we undertake the care of lower things with a right weighing of them, we shall be made steadfast in the fixed firmness of the thrones. If, being tired of actions and meditating on the workman in the work, on the work in the workman, we are busy with the leisure of contemplation, we shall flash on every side with cherubic light. If by charity we, with his devouring fire, burn for the Workman alone, we shall suddenly burst into flame in the likeness of a seraph. Upon the throne, that is, upon the just judge, sits God, the judge of the ages. He flies above the cherub, that is, the contemplator, and warms him, as if by brooding over him. The Spirit of the Lord is borne above the waters-I mean those waters which are above the heavens, the waters which in job praise the Lord with hymns before daybreak.<sup>8</sup> He who is a seraph, that is, a lover, is in God; and more, God is in him, and God and he are one.

But in what way can anyone either judge or love things which are unknown? Moses loved God whom he saw, and as judge, he administered to the people what he formerly saw as contemplator on the mountain. Therefore with his own light the cherub in the middle makes us ready for the seraphic fire, and at the same time illuminates us for the judgment of the thrones. He is the bond of the first minds, the order of Pallas, the ruler over contemplative philosophy.<sup>9</sup> We must first rival him and embrace him and lay hold of him. Let us make ourselves one with him and be caught up to the heights of love. And let us descend to the duties of action, well instructed and prepared.

But if our life is to be shaped after the model of a cherub's life, it is well worth while to have in readiness and before our eyes what that life is and what sort it is, what actions and what works are theirs. Since we may not attain to this through ourselves, because we are flesh and our wisdom is of the earth, let us go to the ancient fathers who can give us a very substantial and sure faith in these things as things familiar and akin to them.<sup>10</sup> Let us consult the Apostle Paul, the vessel of election, because, when he was lifted up to the third heaven, he saw the armies of the cherubim in action. According to Dionysius' interpretation, he will answer that the cherubim are being purged, then are being illuminated, and lastly are being perfected.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, by rivaling the life of a cherub upon the earth, by confining the onslaughts of the affections by means of moral science, and by shaking off the mist of reason by means of dialectic, as if washing off the filth of ignorance and vice, let us purge the soul, that the affections may not audaciously run riot, nor an imprudent reason sometime rave. Then, over a soul which has been set in order and purified, let us pour the light of natural philosophy, that lastly we may perfect it with the knowledge of divine things.

And lest our Christians be insufficient for us, let us consult the patriarch Jacob, whose image flashes forth, carved in the seat of glory. That very wise father will give us advice by showing himself asleep in the lower world and awake in the upper. But his advice will be given figuratively; that is the way all things happen there. A ladder stretching from the lowness of earth to the heights of heaven and divided by the succession of many steps, with the Lord sitting at the top: the angels, contemplating, climb, by turns, up and down the steps.<sup>12</sup> But if we who are in pursuit of an angelic life must try to do this same thing, I ask, who can touch the ladder of the Lord with dirty feet or unwashed hands? As the mysteries put it, it is sacrilegious for the impure to touch that which is pure. But what are these feet, and what are these hands? Naturally, the feet of the soul are that most despicable portion which alone rests upon matter as upon the earth, I mean the nutritive and the foodtaking power, kindling-wood of lust and teacher of voluptuous softness. As for the hands of the soul, we might as well have spoken of anger, which struggles as a defender for appetite and, like a robber under the dust and sunshine, carries off the things

which will be squandered by the appetite, which is dozing away in the shade. But, so as not to be hurled back from the ladder as profane and unclean, let us wash these hands and these feet in moral philosophy as in living water-that is, the whole sensual part wherein the allurements of the body resides, the allurements from which, they say, the soul gets a twisted neck, while being held back.<sup>13</sup> But, if we want to be the companions of the angels moving up and down Jacob's ladder, this will not be enough, unless we have first been well trained and well taught to move forward duly from rung to rung, never to turn aside from the main direction of the ladder, and to make sallies up and down. When we have attained that by means of the speaking or reasoning art, then, besouled by a cherub's spirit, philosophizing along the rungs of the ladder of nature, and penetrating through everything from center to center, we shall at one time be descending, tearing apart, like Osiris, the one into many by a titanic force; and we shall at another time be ascending and gathering into one the many, like the members of Osiris,<sup>14</sup> by an Apollonian force; until finally we come to rest in the bosom of the Father, who is at the top of the ladder, and are consumed by a theological happiness.

Let us inquire too of Job the just, what covenant he entered into with the God of life before he was begotten into life, the covenant which, among those million who stand before him, the highest God most strongly desired.<sup>15</sup> He will doubtlessly answer, Peace. Accordingly, since we read in Job that God makes peace in the highest<sup>16</sup> and that the middle order interprets the prophecies of the highest order to the lower orders-let Empedocles the philosopher interpret for us the words of Job the theologian: he signifies to us that two natures are planted in our souls; by the one nature we are lifted upward to the heavens, and by the other, shoved downward to the lower world; and this by strife and friendship or by war and peace, according to his songs, in which he complains that, driven by strife and discord like a madman and banished from the gods, he is tossed upon the deep.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, fathers, there is multiple discord in us, and we have severe, intestine, and more than civil wars at home: if we are unwilling to have these wars, if we will strive for that peace which so lifts us up to the heights that we are made to stand among the exalted of the Lord, moral philosophy alone will still those wars in us, will bring calm successfully.<sup>18</sup> First, if our man will seek a truce with the enemy, he will subdue the uncurbed forays of the multiple brute, the quarrelings of the lion, and the feelings of wrath. Then if we take the right counsel, and desire for ourselves the security of everlasting peace, it will come and will fulfill our prayers liberally. The slaying of both beasts, like stuck sows, will establish most solemnly a most holy treaty between the flesh and the spirit. Dialectic will calm the turmoils of a reason shoved about between the fistfights of oratory and the deceits of the syllogism. Natural philosophy will calm the strifes and discords of opinion, which shake the unquiet soul up and down, pull her apart, and mangle her. But natural philosophy will bring calm in such a way as to command us to remember that, according to Heraclitus, our nature is born of war, and therefore is called a struggle by Homer; and hence, that in natural philosophy true quiet and lasting peace cannot offer themselves to us, and that this is the office and prerogative of their mistress, most holy theology.<sup>19</sup> Theology herself will show the way to that peace and be our companion and guide; and, as from afar she sees us hurrying, she will cry out, "Come unto me, ye that labor. And I will refresh you. Come unto me, and I will give unto you peace which the world and nature cannot give unto you!"<sup>20</sup> As we are called so sweetly and are invited with such kindness, let us fly on winged feet like earthly Mercuries into the embrace of our most blessed mother and enjoy the longed-for peace: the most holy peace, the indivisible bond, the friendship which is one soul, the friendship whereby all minds do not merely accord in one intellect that is above every intellect but in some inexpressible fashion become absolutely one. This is that friendship which the Pythagoreans say is the end of all philosophy. This is that peace which God makes on his heights and which the angels descending to earth announced to men of good will, that by this peace the men themselves ascending into heaven might become angels.<sup>21</sup> Let us desire this peace for our friends, for our age. Let us desire this peace for every house into which we enter. Let us desire it for our soul, that through this peace she may become the house of God; that after she has, through morals and dialectics, cast off her meanness and has adorned herself with manifold philosophy as with a princely garment, and has crowned with garlands of theology the summits of the gates, the King of Glory may descend, and, coming with the Father, may make his residence in her. If she shows herself worthy of such a great guest, as his mercy is great, then, in a golden gown as in a wedding dress, wrapped in a multiple variety of teachings, she will welcome her beautiful guest not as a guest but as a bridegroom. That she may never be divorced from him, she will long to be divorced from her own people and, forgetful of the house of her father, nay, forgetful of herself, she will long to die in herself that she may live in her bridegroom, in whose sight the death of his saints is surely precious-I mean death, if that should be called death which is the fullness of life, the meditation upon which the wise have said is the study of philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

Let us also cite Moses himself, scarcely inferior to the fountain fullness of holy and inexpressible intelligence, whence the angels are drunken on their own nectar. We shall hear the venerable judge promulgating laws to us who dwell in the desert solitude of this body: "Let those who are still unclean and in need of moral knowledge dwell with the people outside of the tabernacle in the open sky, and let them meanwhile purify themselves like Thessalian priests. Let those who have by now set their lives (mores) in order be received into the sanctuary. But let them not yet handle the sacred things; but first, as deacons assiduous in the service that is

dialectic, let them minister to the sacred things of philosophy. Then, after they have been admitted to the sacred things, let them in the priesthood of philosophy contemplate sometimes the many-colored, that is, the star-constellated royal decoration of the higher palace of God, at other times the celestial candelabra divided by seven lights, and at other times the skin-covered elements, that finally they may be received through the merits of sublime theology into the sanctuary of the temple and may enjoy the glory of divinity without the veil of any image coming in between."<sup>23</sup> Moses gives us these direct commands, and in giving them he advises us, arouses us, urges us to make ready our way through philosophy to future celestial glory, while we can.

But in truth, not only the Mosaic or Christian mysteries but also the theology of the ancients show the advantages for us and the dignity of these liberal arts about which I have come here to dispute. For what else is meant by the degrees of initiation that are customary in the secret rites of the Greeks? First, to those who had been purified by moral and dialectic arts, which we have called, as it were, purgative, befell the reception of the mysteries. And what else can this reception be but the interpretation of more hidden nature by means of philosophy? Then lastly, to those who had been thus prepared, came that         that is, a vision of divine things by means of the light of theology. Who does not seek to be initiated into such rites? Who does not set all human things at a lower value and, condemning the goods of fortune and neglecting the body, does not desire, while still continuing on earth, to become the drinking companion of the gods; and, drunken with the nectar of eternity, to bestow the gift of immortality upon the mortal animal? Who does not wish to have breathed into him the Socratic frenzies sung by Plato in the Phaedrus, that by the oarlike movement of wings and feet he may quickly escape from here, that is, from this world where he is laid down, as in an evil place, and be carried in speediest flight to the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> We shall be possessed, fathers, we shall be possessed by these Socratic frenzies, which will so place us outside of our minds that they will place our mind and ourselves in God. We shall be possessed by them if we have first done what is in us to do. For if through morality the forces of the passions will have been so stretched to the [proper] measure, through due proportions, that they sound together in fixed concord, and if through dialectic, reason will have moved, keeping time in her forward march, then, aroused by the frenzy of the muses, we shall drink in the heavenly harmony of our ears. Then Bacchus the leader of the muses, in his own mysteries, that is, in the visible signs of nature, will show the invisible things of God to us as we philosophize, and will make us drunk with the abundance of the house of God. In this house, if we are faithful like Moses, holiest theology will approach, and will inspire us with a twofold frenzy. We, raised up into the loftiest watchtower of theology, from which, measuring with indivisible eternity the things that are, will be, and shall have been, and looking at their primeval beauty, shall be prophets of Phoebus, his winged lovers, and finally, aroused with ineffable charity as with fire, placed outside of ourselves like burning Seraphim, filled with divinity, we shall now not be ourselves, but He himself who made us.

The sacred names of Apollo, if anyone examines their meanings and hidden mysteries, will sufficiently show that that god is no less philosopher than prophet. Since Ammonius has followed this up sufficiently,<sup>25</sup> there is no reason why I should handle it in another way. But there come to mind, fathers, three Delphic precepts, very necessary for those who are to enter into the sacrosanct and very august temple of the true, not the invented Apollo, who illuminates every soul coming into this world. You will see that they give us no other advice than to embrace with all our strength this three-fold philosophy which the present disputation is about. For that       that is, nothing too much, rightly prescribes the measure and rule of all virtues through the principle of moderation, with which morals is concerned. Then that          that is, know thyself, arouses us and urges us towards the knowledge of all nature, of which man's nature is the medium and, as it were, the union. For he who knows himself, knows all things in himself, as first Zoroaster, and then Plato wrote in the Alcibiades.<sup>26</sup> At last, illuminated by this knowledge through natural philosophy, now near to God, saying   that is, Thou art, we shall address the true Apollo with a theological greeting, familiarly and so happily.

Let us also consult the very wise Pythagoras, who was wise especially in that he never thought himself worthy of the name of wise. First, he will warn us not to sit too much, that is, not to let go the rational part, by which the soul measures, judges, and examines everything, and relax in idle inactivity. But let us direct it diligently and arouse it by dialectical exercise and rule. Then he will signify that we are to pay special attention to two things, not to make water against the sun nor trim our nails during the sacrifices. But after we have, through morals, relieved ourselves of the appetite for overflowing sensual pleasures and, as it were, trimmed the tips of our nails, the sharp pricks of anger and the stings of animosity, only then may we begin to take part in the aforementioned sacred mysteries of Bacchus, and to be at leisure for our contemplation, whose father and leader is rightly said to be the Sun. At last, he will advise us to feed the cock, that is, to nourish the divine part of our soul with knowledge of divine things as with solid food and heavenly ambrosia.<sup>27</sup> This is the cock at the sight of which the lion, that is, every earthly power, feels fear and awe. This is that cock to which intelligence was given, as we read in Job.<sup>28</sup> At the crowing of this cock, erring man returns to his senses. In the morning dawn this cock daily crows in harmony with the morning stars praising God. Socrates at the point of death, when he hoped to unite the divinity of his soul to the divinity of a greater world, said that he owed this cock to Asclepius, that is, to the physician of souls, now that he was placed beyond all danger of sickness.<sup>29</sup>

Let us also examine the records of the Chaldaeans. We shall see, if we can believe them, that through these same arts, the way to happiness is opened to men. The Chaldaean interpreters write that it was a saying of Zoroaster that the soul has wings; when the leathers fall off, she is borne headlong into the body, when they sprout again, she flies up to the heights.<sup>30</sup> When his students asked him how they might obtain souls flying with well feathered wings, he said "You moisten the wings with the waters of life." When they again questioned him where they might seek these waters, he answered them figuratively (as was the custom of the man), "The paradise of God is washed and watered by four rivers. From the same place you may draw healthful waters for yourselves. The name of the river from the north is Pischon, which means straight, that from the west is Dichon, which signifies atonement, that from the east is Chiddekel, which means light, that from the south is Perath, which we can translate as piety."<sup>31</sup> Give close attention, fathers, and consider carefully that these doctrines of Zoroaster really mean nothing else than that by moral science, as by western waters, we may wash dirt from our eyes; by dialectic, as by a ruler pointing north, we may direct our eyesight along a straight line. Then, let us accustom our eyes in natural contemplation to bear the still weak light of truth, the beginning of the rising sun, as it were, so that finally by theological piety and the most sacred worship of God, we may, like the eagles of heaven, endure bravely the very radiant brightness of the midday sun. These are perhaps those morning, noon, and evening knowledges sung first by David and explained more fully by Augustine.<sup>32</sup> This is that midday light, which, perpendicular, inflames the Seraphim, and at the same time illuminates the Cherubim. This is that land toward which old father Abraham was always setting out. This is that place where there is no room for unclean spirits, as the doctrines of the Cabalists and Moors teach. And if it is right to make public, even enigmatically, something from more hidden mysteries, after the sudden fall of man from heaven has condemned our heads to dizziness, and, according to Jeremiah, death has entered through the windows and stricken liver and breast, let us call Raphael the heavenly physician to free us by morals and dialectic as by saving medicines. 3 When we are restored to good health, Gabriel, the strength of God, will now dwell in us. Leading us through the wonders of nature, and pointing out the virtue and power of God everywhere, he will finally hand us over to the high priest Michael, who will distinguish the veterans in the service of philosophy with the priesthood of theology, as with a crown of precious stones.

These are the reasons, most reverend fathers, that have not merely inspired me but compelled me to the study of philosophy...

#### NOTES

1. Plato, *Timaeus* 418 ff.
2. Lucilius, *Satyrarum* VI (22), in Nonius Marcellus, *De compendiosa doctrina* II (Lindsay, 1,109).
3. Book of Enoch 40:8.
4. Empedocles, fr. 117 (Diels).
5. Genesis 6:12; Numbers 27:16; Mark 16:15.
6. Psalms 48:21 (King James version, Psalms 49:20).
7. Psalms 81:6 (King James, 82:6), cf. John 10:34.
8. Compare Job 38:7, and Genesis 1:2.
9. Macrobius, *In Somnium Scipionis* I. 6, 11, 54-55.
10. Romans 8:5.
11. Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, *Caelestis hierarchia* VI-VII. The writings attributed to the unknown Dionysius, probably of the late 5th century A.D., contain a blend of Christian, Greek, and Jewish elements; they had an enormous influence on subsequent Christian theology.
12. Genesis 28:12-13.
13. Asclepius 1.12.
14. Osiris, Egyptian god, was cut to pieces by Seth, and put together again by his wife, Isis.
15. Daniel 7:10; cf. Jeremiah 1:5.
16. Job 25:2.
17. Empedocles, fr. 115 (Diels).
18. Cf. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1. 1.
19. Heraditus, fr. 53 (Walzer).
20. Matthew 11:28; John 14:27.
21. Jamblichus, *Vita Pythagoras* 230-233; Luke 2:14.
22. Plato, *Phaedo* 81.
23. Cf. Exodus 25-26.
24. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244 ff.
25. Plutarch, *De El Delphico* 2, 385b, in *Moralia*.
26. Plato, *Alcibiades* 1, 132c.
27. Porphyry, *Vita Pythagoras* 42; Jamblichus, *Protrepticus* 21.
28. Job 38:36.
29. Plato, *Phaedo* 118a. Asclepius, or Aesculapius, the god of medicine.

30. Cf. Psellus and Pletho, In Oracula Chaldaica (Amsterdam, 1688), pp. 81 and 91.
31. Cf. Genesis 2:10-14.
32. Psalms 54:18 (King James, 55:17). Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram IV, 29-30.
33. Jeremiah 9:21.

Excerpt from *On the Dignity of Man* by Pico della Mirandola, Charles Glenn Wallis, trans., are Copyright ©1965 Bobbs-Merrill.



## Art Humanities Primary Source Reading 11

### Giorgio Vasari, "Preface to Part Three"

Although Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) was a prolific 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian painter, he is best known for his writings, particularly his book, *Lives of the Artists*, which contains biographical accounts of 133 Italian and Netherlandish artists from the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with Cimabue and ending with Michelangelo. It is most likely through his training in the Florentine workshops of the painters Andrea del Sarto and Baccio Bandinelli that he was exposed to the artistic community in that city. At this time, he also found patrons among members of the Medici family, and he dedicated the *Lives* to Cosimo I de Medici. The second and enlarged edition of the text, from which these passages are drawn, contains the general preface shown here, an introduction to architecture, sculpture, and painting, and the biographies, which are divided into three parts. In these final sections, Vasari did not restrict himself to descriptive accounts of the artists' lives; he evaluated the merits of each individual, and in so doing established the foundation for the idea of a critical historiography of art. Vasari believed that art had risen to its highest form with the work of ancient Greek and Roman artists, and subsequently declined in the Middle Ages. He stated that, beginning with Cimabue and Giotto in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Italian artists enacted a "rebirth" of the great ideals of classical art, specifically the imitation of nature. The second group of artists improved and built upon the achievements of the first, and finally, it was through the artists of the third group, who were mostly Tuscan by birth, and Michelangelo, in particular, that perfection of ancient art was again attained and even exceeded. Overall, by highlighting the particular talents of each artist in turn, Vasari demonstrated a strong and innovative interest in the individual, and in the nature of his artistic style, works, and character. (Introduction by Christine Sciacca)

#### EXCERPT FROM *LIVES OF THE ARTISTS* 2ND ED., 1568

The distinguished artists described in the second part of these *Lives* made an important contribution to architecture, sculpture, and painting, adding to what had been achieved by those of the first period the qualities of good rule, order, proportion, design, and style. Their work was in many ways imperfect, but they showed the way to the artists of the third period (whom I am now going to discuss) and made it possible for them, by following and improving on their example, to reach the perfection evident in the finest and most celebrated modern works.

But to clarify the nature of the progress that these artists made, I would like to define briefly the five qualities that I mentioned above and discuss the origins of the excellence that has made modern art even more glorious than that of the ancient world.

By rule in architecture we mean the method used of measuring antiques and basing modern works on the plans of ancient buildings. Order is the distinction made between one kind of architectural style and another, so that each has the parts appropriate to it and there is no confusion between Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Tuscan. Proportion is a universal law of architecture and sculpture (and also of painting) which stipulates that all bodies must be correctly aligned, with their parts properly arranged. Design is the imitation of the most beautiful things in nature, used for the creation of all figures whether in sculpture or painting; and this quality depends on the ability of the artist's hand and mind to reproduce what he sees with his eyes accurately and correctly on to paper or a panel or whatever flat surface he may be using. The same applies to works of relief in sculpture. And then the artist achieves the highest perfection of style by copying the most beautiful things in nature and combining the most perfect members, hands, head, torso, and legs, to produce the finest possible figure as a model for use in all his works; this is how he achieves what we know as fine style.

Now the work of Giotto and the other early craftsmen did not possess these qualities, although they did discover the right principles for solving artistic problems and they applied them as best they could. Their drawing, for example, was more correct and truer to nature than anything done before, as was the way they blended their colours, composed their figures, and made the other advances I have already discussed. However, although the artists of the second period made further progress still, they in turn fell short of complete perfection, since their work lacked that spontaneity which, although based on correct measurement, goes beyond it without conflicting with order and stylistic purity. This spontaneity enables the artist to enhance his work by adding innumerable inventive details and, as it were, a pervasive beauty to what is merely artistically correct. Again, when it came to proportion the early craftsmen lacked that visual judgement which, disregarding measurement, gives the artist's figures, in due relation to their dimensions, a grace that simply cannot be measured. They also failed to realize the full potentialities of design; for example, although their arms were rounded and their legs straight, they missed the finer points when they depicted the muscles, ignoring the charming and graceful facility which is suggested

rather than revealed in living subjects. In this respect their figures appeared crude and excoriated, offensive to the eye and harsh in style. Their style lacked the lightness of touch that makes an artist's figures slender and graceful, and particularly those of his women and children, which should be as realistic as the male figures and yet possess a roundness and fullness derived from good judgement and design rather than the coarseness of living bodies. Their works also lacked the abundance of beautiful clothes, the imaginative details, charming colours, many kinds of building and various landscapes in depth that we see depicted today. Certainly many of those artists, such as Andrea Verrocchio, Antonio Pollaiuolo, and others who followed, endeavoured to refine their figures, to improve the composition of their works, and to make them conform more closely to nature. None the less, they fell short of perfection, although indubitably they were going in the right direction, and what they produced certainly invited comparison with the works of the ancient world. This was evident, for instance, when Verrocchio restored the legs and arms of the marble Marsyas for the Casa Medici in Florence, although even so his work lacked polish, and absolute perfection escaped him in the feet, hands, hair, and beard. All the same what he did was consistent with the original and was correctly proportioned. If those craftsmen had mastered the detailed refinements which constitute the greatest achievement of art they would have created strong and robust work, with the delicacy, polish, and superb grace essential to the finest painting and sculpture. However, for all their diligence, their figures lacked these qualities. Indeed, it is not surprising that they never achieved these elusive refinements, seeing that excessive study or diligence tends to produce a dry style when it becomes an end in itself.

Success came to the artists who followed, after they had seen some of the finest works of art mentioned by Pliny dug out of the earth: namely, the Laocoon, the Hercules, the great torso of Belvedere, as well as the Venus, the Cleopatra, the Apollo, and countless others, all possessing the appeal and vigour of living flesh and derived from the finest features of living models. Their attitudes were entirely natural and free, exquisitely graceful and full of movement. And these statues caused the disappearance of the dry, hard, harsh style that art had acquired through the excessive study of Piero della Francesca, Lazzaro Vasari, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, Pesello, Ercole Ferrarese, Giovanni Bellini, Cosimo Rosselli, the abbot of San Clemente, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Sandro Botticelli, Andrea Mantegna, Filippino Lippi, and Luca Signorelli. These artists forced themselves to try and do the impossible through their exertions, especially in their ugly foreshortenings and perspectives which were as disagreeable to look at as they were difficult to do. Although the greater part of their work was well designed and free from error, it still lacked any sense of liveliness as well as the harmonious blending of colours which was first seen in the works of Francia of Bologna and Piero Perugino (and which made the people run like mad to gaze on this new, realistic beauty, as if they would never see the like again).

But how wrong they were was then demonstrated for all to see in the work of Leonardo da Vinci. It was Leonardo who originated the third style or period, which we like to call the modern age; for in addition to the force and robustness of his draughtsmanship and his subtle and exact reproduction of every detail in nature, he showed in his works an understanding of rule, a better knowledge of order, correct proportion, perfect design, and an inspired grace. An artist of great vision and skill and abundant resources, Leonardo may be said to have painted figures that moved and breathed. Somewhat later followed Giorgione of Castel Franco, whose pictures convey a gradual blending of tones and a tremendous impression of movement achieved through the finely handled use of shadow. In no way inferior to his in strength, relief, charm, and grace were the paintings of Fra Bartolommeo of San Marco. But the most graceful of all was Raphael of Urbino, who studied what had been achieved by both the ancient and the modern masters, selected the best qualities from all their works, and by this means so enhanced the art of painting that it equalled the faultless perfection of the figures painted in the ancient world by Apelles and Zeuxis, and might even be said to surpass them were it possible to compare his work with theirs. His colours were finer than those found in nature, and his invention was original and unforced, as anyone can realize by looking at his scenes, which have the narrative flow of a written story. They bring before our eyes sites and buildings, the ways and customs of our own or of foreign peoples, just as Raphael wished to show them. In addition to the graceful qualities of the heads shown in his paintings, whether old or young, men or women, his figures expressed perfectly the character of those they represented, the modest or the bold being shown just as they are. The children in his pictures were depicted now with mischief in their eyes, now in playful attitudes. And his draperies are neither too simple nor too involved but appear wholly realistic.

Raphael's style influenced Andrea del Sarto; and although Andrea's work was less robust and his colours softer, it was remarkably free from error. Similarly, it is almost impossible to describe the charming vivacity of the paintings executed by Antonio Correggio: this artist painted hair, for example, in an altogether new way, for whereas 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 in real life. Similar effects were achieved by Francesco Mazzola of Parma (Parmigianino), who in several respects-as regards grace and ornamentation, and fine style -even surpassed Correggio, as is shown by many of his pictures, in which the effortless facility of his brush enabled him to depict smiling faces and eloquent eyes, and in which the very pulses seem to beat. And then anyone who examines the wall-paintings done by Polidoro and Maturino will discover figures that are incredibly expressive and will be astonished at how they were able to

describe not in speech, which is easy enough, but with the brush scenes that demonstrate tremendous powers of invention, skill, and ingenuity, showing the deeds of the Romans as they occurred in life. There are countless other artists, now dead, whose colours brought to life the figures they painted: Rosso, Sebastiano, Giulio Romano, Perino del Vaga, not to speak of the many outstanding artists still living. What matters is that these artists have brought their art to such fluent perfection that nowadays a painter who under stands design, invention, and colouring can execute six paintings in a year, whereas the earliest artists took six years to finish one painting. I can vouch for

this, both from observation and personal experience: and I would add that many works today are more perfect and better finished than were those of the great masters of the past.

But the man whose work transcends and eclipses that of every other artist, living or dead, is the inspired Michelangelo Buonarroti, who is supreme not in one art alone but in all three. He surpasses not only all those whose work can be said to be superior to nature but also the artists of the ancient world, whose superiority is beyond doubt. Michelangelo has triumphed over later artists, over the artists of the ancient world, over nature itself, which has produced nothing, however challenging or extraordinary, that his inspired genius, with its great powers of application, design, artistry, judgement, and grace, has not been able to surpass with ease. He has shown his genius not only in painting and colouring (in which are expressed all possible forms and bodies, straight and curved, tangible and intangible, accessible and inaccessible) but also in the creation of sculptural works in full relief. And his fruitful and inspiring labours have already spread their branches so wide that the world has been filled with an abundance of delectable fruits, and the three fine arts have been brought to a state of complete perfection. He has so enhanced the art of sculpture that we can say without fear of contradiction that his statues are in every aspect far superior to those of the ancient world. For if their work were put side by side, the heads, hands, arms, and feet carved by Michelangelo being compared with those made by the ancients, his would be seen to be fashioned on sounder principles and executed with more grace and perfection: the effortless intensity of his graceful style defies comparison. And the same holds true of Michelangelo's pictures: if it were possible to place them beside the paintings of those celebrated Greeks and Romans they would be even more highly valued and regarded as being as much superior to the antiques as is his sculpture.

We rightly admire the celebrated artists of the past who created great work, knowing their prize would be a happy life and a generous reward. How much more, then, should we praise and exalt those rare men of genius who create priceless work and who live not merely unrewarded but in circumstances of wretched poverty! It is undeniably true that if the artists of our own time were justly rewarded they would produce even greater works of art, far superior to those of the ancient world. Instead, the artist today struggles to ward off famine rather than to win fame, and this crushes and buries his talent and obscures his name. This is a shame and disgrace to those who could come to his help but refuse to do so.

But that is enough on this subject, for it is time to return to the Lives and give separate accounts of all those who have done distinguished work in the third period. The first of these, with whom I shall now start, was Leonardo da Vinci.

Excerpts from *Lives of the Artists* by Giorgio Vasari, G. Bull, trans. Copyright ©1986 Penguin Books.

### Giorgio Vasari, "*Life of Raphael*"

Vasari placed Raphael among the artists described in Part III of the *Lives of the Artists*, the portion of the text that made up two thirds of the entire work. As with all artists whom he looked upon with the most favor, Vasari begins his account by suggesting the divine nature of the artist. He then returns to the earthly realm in order to outline Raphael's childhood and early artistic training. In these early passages, Vasari concerns himself with Raphael's personal character, noting that the artist also possessed the qualities and manners of a gentleman. From here Vasari launches into a lengthy series of brief, and sometimes confused, descriptions of Raphael's major works, set into the context of events in the artist's life that surrounded their creation. Overall, Vasari praises Raphael for the grace of his figures, which he attributed to Raphael's careful study of ancient and modern masters, and his combining of their best features. The elements that Vasari favors are apparent in Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin*, which the writer admires particularly for its skillful depiction of a temple painted in perspective. (Introduction by Christine Sciacca)

EXCERPT FROM *LIVES OF THE ARTISTS*, 2ND ED., 1568

#### RAPHAEL OF URBINO, PAINTER AND ARCHITECT (1483-1520)

The liberality with which Heaven now and again unites in one person the inexhaustible riches of its treasures and all those graces and rare gifts which are usually shared among many over a long period is seen in Raphael Sanzio of Urbino, who was as excellent as gracious, and endowed with a natural modesty and goodness sometimes seen in those who possess to an unusual degree a humane and gentle nature adorned with affability and good-fellowship, and he always showed himself sweet and pleasant with persons of every degree and in all circumstances. Thus Nature created Michelangelo Buonarroti to excel and conquer in art, but Raphael to excel in art and in manners also. Most artists have hitherto displayed something of folly and savagery, which, in addition to rendering them eccentric and fantastical, has also displayed itself in the darkness of vice and not in the splendour of those virtues which render men immortal. In Raphael, on the other hand, the rarest gifts were combined with such grace, diligence, beauty, modesty and good character that they would have sufficed to cover the ugliest vice and the worst blemishes. We may indeed say that those who possess such gifts as Raphael are not mere men, but rather mortal gods, and that those who by their works leave an honoured name among us on the roll of fame may hope to receive a fitting reward in heaven for their labours and their merits.

Raphael was born at Urbino, a most important city of Italy, in 1483, on Good Friday at three in the morning, of Giovanni de' Santi, a painter of no great merit, but of good intelligence and well able to show his son the right way, a favour which bad fortune had not granted to himself in his youth. Giovanni, knowing how important it was for the child, whom he called Raphael as a good augury, being his only son, to have his mother's milk and not that of a nurse, wished her to suckle it, so that the child might see the ways of his equals in his tender years rather than the rough manners of clowns and people of low condition. When the boy was grown, Giovanni began to teach him painting, finding him much inclined to that art and of great intelligence. Thus Raphael, before many years and while still a child, greatly assisted his father in the numerous works which he did in the state of Urbino. At last this good and loving father perceived that his son could learn little more from him, and determined to put him with Pietro Perugino, who, as I have already said, occupied the first place among the painters of the time. Accordingly Giovanni went to Perugia, and not finding Pietro there he waited for him, occupying the time in doing some things in S. Francesco. When Pietro returned from Rome,<sup>1</sup> Giovanni being courteous and well bred, made his acquaintance, and at a fitting opportunity told him what he wished in the most tactful manner. Pietro, who was also courteous and a friend of young men of promise, agreed to take Raphael. Accordingly Giovanni returned joyfully to Urbino, and took the boy with him to Perugia, his mother, who loved him tenderly, weeping bitterly at the separation.<sup>2</sup> When Pietro had seen Raphael's method of drawing and his fine manners and behaviour, he formed an opinion of him that was amply justified by time. It is well known that while Raphael was studying Pietro's style he imitated him so exactly in everything that his portraits cannot be distinguished from those of his master, nor indeed can other things, as we see in some figures done in oils on a panel in S. Francesco at Perugia for Madonna Maddalena degli Oddi.<sup>3</sup> It represents an Assumption, Jesus Christ crowning the Virgin in heaven, while the twelve Apostles about the tomb are contemplating the celestial glory. The predella contains three scenes: the Annunciation, the Magi adoring Christ, and the presentation in the Temple. This work is most carefully finished, and anyone not skilled in style would take it to be the hand of Pietro, though there is no doubt that it is by Raphael. After this Pietro returned on some business to Florence, and Raphael left Perugia, going with some friends to Città di Castello. Here he did a panel in S. Agostino in that style, and a Crucifixion in S. Domenico, which, if not signed with Raphael's name, would be taken by everyone to be a work of

Perugino. In S. Francesco in the same city he also did a Marriage of the Virgin,<sup>4</sup> which shows that Raphael was progressing in skill, refining upon the style of Pietro and surpassing it. This work contains a temple drawn in perspective, so charmingly that it is a wonder to see how he confronted the difficulties of this task. Raphael had thus acquired a great reputation in this style when the library of the Duomo at Siena was allotted by Pope Pius II. to Pinturicchio<sup>5</sup> As he was a friend of Raphael, and knew him to be an admirable draughtsman, he brought him to Siena, where Raphael drew some of the cartoons for that work. He did not finish it because his love for art drew him to Florence<sup>6</sup>, for he heard great things from some painters of Siena of a cartoon done by Leonardo da Vinci in this Pope's Hall at Florence of a fine group of horses, to be put in the hall of the palace, and also of some nudes of even greater excellence done by Michelangelo in competition with Leonardo. This excited so strong a desire in Raphael that he put aside his work and all thought of his personal advantage, for excellence in art always attracted him.

Arrived in Florence, he was no less delighted with the city than with the works of art there, which he thought divine, and he determined to live there for some time. Having struck up a friendship with Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, Aristotele S. Gallo, and other young painters, he was well received, especially by Taddeo Taddei, who was always inviting him to his house and table, being one who loved the society of men of ability. Raphael, who was courtesy itself, in order not to be surpassed in kindness, did two pictures for him in a transitional style between the early manner of Pietro and of the other which he learned afterwards, and which was much better, as I shall relate. These pictures are still in the house of the heirs of Taddeo.<sup>7</sup> Raphael was also very friendly with Lorenzo Nasi, and as Lorenzo had newly taken a wife, he painted them a picture of a babe between the knees of the Virgin, to whom a little St. John is offering a bird, to the delight of both. Their attitude displays childish simplicity and affection, while the picture is well coloured and carefully finished, so that they appear to be actual living flesh.<sup>8</sup> The Madonna possesses an air full of grace and divinity, the plain, the landscape and all the rest of the work being of great beauty. This picture was greatly valued by Lorenzo Nasi in memory of his close friend and for its excellent workmanship. But it was severely damaged on 17 November, 1548, when the house of Lorenzo was crushed, together with the beautiful houses of the heirs of Marco del Nero and many others, by a landslip from Monte S. Giorgio. However, the pieces were found among the debris, and were carefully put together by Battista, Lorenzo's son, who was very fond of the arts. After these works Raphael was forced to leave Florence and go to Urbino, because, owing to the death of his father and mother, all his things were in disorder. While staying there he did two small but very beautiful Madonnas in his second manner for Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, then captain of the Florentines.<sup>9</sup> These are now the property of the illustrious Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino. For the same captain he did a small picture of Christ praying in the Garden, the three Apostles sleeping in the distance. This painting is as delicately finished as a miniature. After remaining for a long time in the possession of Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino, it was given by his illustrious consort, Leonora, to Don Paolo Giustiniano and Don Pietro Quirini, Venetians, hermits of the Camaldoli. They placed it in a principal chamber of the hermitage, as a thing of rare virtue, a work of Raphael, and the gift of so great a lady, and there it is held in the esteem which it merits.

After settling his affairs, Raphael returned to Perugia, where he painted for the Ansidei Chapel, in the church of the Servites, a picture of Our Lady, St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas.<sup>10</sup> In the Lady Chapel of S. Severo, in the same city, a small Camaldolite monastery, he painted in fresco a Christ in Glory, God the Father surrounded by angels, with six saints seated, three on either side, St. Benedict, St. Romuald, St. Laurence, St. Jerome, St. Maur and St. Placidus.<sup>11</sup> To this fine fresco he put his name in large letters, easily seen. The nuns of S. Antonio da Padova, in the same city, employed him to paint a Madonna with a clothed Christ, as they desired, with St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Cecilia and St. Catherine, the heads of the two holy virgins being the sweetest and purest imaginable, with their varied attire, a rare thing in those days. Above this he painted a fine God the Father in a lunette, and three scenes of small figures in the predella of Christ praying in the Garden, bearing the cross, the soldiers driving Him being very vigorous, and dead in the lap of His Mother.<sup>12</sup> This is a marvellous work, greatly valued by the nuns and much admired by all artists. It is well known that after his stay in Florence Raphael greatly altered and improved his style, through having seen the works of the foremost masters, and he never reverted to his former manner, which looks like the work of a different and inferior hand.

Before Raphael left Perugia, Madonna Atalanta Baglioni begged him to do a panel for her chapel in the church of S. Francesco. But not being able to do so then, he promised that he would not fail her when he returned from Florence, where he had affairs. At Florence he devoted infinite pains to the study of his art, and did the cartoon for this chapel, intending to carry it out as soon as he had the opportunity, as he did. Agnolo Doni was then in Florence, and though sparing in other things, spent willingly upon paintings and sculpture, of which he was very fond, though he saved as much as he could. He had portraits of himself and his wife done,<sup>13</sup> which may be seen in the house of his son Gio. Battista, built by Agnolo, a fine structure and most convenient in the Corso de' Tintori, near the corner of the Alberti in Florence. For Domenico Canigiani Raphael did a Madonna with the Child Jesus playing with a St. John held to him by St. Elizabeth, who is regarding St. Joseph, leaning with both hands on a staff and bending his head towards Elizabeth, as if marvelling and praising the greatness of God that so old

a woman should have a little child.<sup>14</sup> All of them seem to be marvelling at the attitude of the children as they play, one reverencing the other, the colouring of the heads, hands and feet being faultless, and the work of a master. This noble picture is now the property of the heirs of Domenico Canigiani, who value it as a work of Raphael deserves.

This excellent artist studied the old paintings of Masaccio at Florence, and the works of Leonardo and Michelangelo which he saw induced him to study hard, and brought about an extraordinary improvement in his art and style. While at Florence Raphael became very friendly with Fra Bartolommeo of S. Marco, whose colouring pleased him greatly, and this he tried to imitate. On his part he taught the good father the methods of perspective, which he had previously neglected. In the midst of this intimacy Raphael was recalled to Perugia, where he began by finishing the work for Atalanta Baglioni, for which he had prepared the cartoon at Florence, as I have said. This divine picture represents Christ carried to burial, so finely done that it seems freshly executed.<sup>15</sup> In composing this work Raphael imagined the grief of loving relations in carrying to burial the body of their dearest, the one on whom all the welfare, honour and advantage of the entire family depended. Our Lady is fainting, and the heads of the figures in weeping are most graceful, especially that of St. John, who hangs his head and clasps his hands in a manner that would move the hardest to pity. Those who consider the diligence, tenderness, art and grace of this painting may well marvel, for it excites astonishment by the expressions of the figures, the beauty of the draperies, and the extreme excellence of every particular.

On returning to Florence after completing this work, Raphael was commissioned by the Dei, citizens there, to paint a picture for the chapel of their altar in S. Spirito.<sup>16</sup> He began this and made good progress with the outline. Meanwhile he did a picture<sup>17</sup> to send to Siena, which at his departure he left to Ridolfo del Ghirlandajo to finish some blue drapery in it. This was because Bramante, who was in the service of Julius II., wrote to him on account of a slight relationship, and because they were of the same country, saying that he had induced the Pope to have certain apartments done, and that Raphael might have a chance of showing his powers there. This pleased Raphael so that he left his works at Florence and the picture of the Dei unfinished (but so far complete that M. Baldassarre da Pescia had it put in the Pieve of his native place after Raphael's death), and went to Rome.<sup>18</sup> Arrived there, Raphael found a great part of the chambers of the palace already painted, and the whole being done by several masters. Thus Pietro della Francesca had finished one scene, Luca da Cortona had completed a wall, while Don Pietro della Gatta, abbot of S. Clemente, Arezzo, had begun some things. Bramantino da Milano also had painted several figures, mostly portraits, and considered very fine. Raphael received a hearty welcome from Pope Julius, and in the chamber of the Segnatura he painted the theologians reconciling Philosophy and Astrology with Theology, including portraits of all the wise men of the world in disputation.<sup>19</sup> Some astrologers there have drawn figures of their science and various characters on tablets, carried by angels to the Evangelists, who explain them. Among these is Diogenes with a pensive air, lying on the steps, a figure admirable for its beauty and the disordered drapery. There also are Aristotle and Plato, with the Ethics and Timaeus respectively, and a group of philosophers in a ring about them. Indescribably fine are those astrologers and geometers drawing figures and characters with their sextants. Among them is a youth of remarkable beauty with his arms spread in astonishment and head bent. This is a portrait of Federigo II., Duke of Mantua, who was then in Rome. Another figure bends towards the ground, holding a pair of compasses in his hand and turning them on a board. This is said to be a life-like portrait of Bramante the architect. The next figure, with his back turned and a globe in his hand, is a portrait of Zoroaster. Beside him is Raphael himself, drawn with the help of a mirror. He is a very modest-looking young man, of graceful and pleasant mien, wearing a black cap on his head. The beauty and excellence of the heads of the Evangelists are inexpressible, as he has given them an air of attention and carefulness which is most natural, especially in those who are writing. Behind St. Matthew, as he is copying the characters from tablets, held by an angel, is an old man with paper on his knees copying what Matthew dictates. As he stands in that uncomfortable position, he seems to move his lips and head to follow the pen. The minor considerations, which are numerous, are well thought out, and the composition of the entire scene, which is admirably portioned out, shows Raphael's determination to hold the field, without a rival, against all who wielded the brush. He further adorned this work with a perspective and many figures, so delicately and finely finished that Pope Julius caused all the other works of the other masters, both old and new, to be destroyed, that Raphael alone might have the glory of replacing what had been done. Although the work of Gio. Antonio Sodoma of Vercelli, which was above the scene of Raphael's, was to have been destroyed by the Pope's order, Raphael decided to make use of its arrangement and of the grotesques. In each of the four circles he made an allegorical figure to point the significance of the scene beneath, towards which it turns. For the first, where he had painted Philosophy, Astrology, Geometry and Poetry agreeing with Theology, is a woman representing Knowledge, seated in a chair supported on either side by a goddess Cybele, with the numerous breasts ascribed by the ancients to Diana Polymastes. Her garment is of four colours, representing the four elements, her head being the colour of fire, her bust that of air, her thighs that of earth, and her legs that of water. Some beautiful children are with her. In another circle towards the window looking towards the Belvedere is Poetry in the person of Polyhymnia, crowned with laurel, holding an ancient instrument in one hand and a book in the other. Her legs are

crossed, the face having an expression of immortal beauty, the eyes being raised to heaven. By her are two children, full of life and movement, harmonising well with her and the others. On this side Raphael afterwards did the Mount Parnassus<sup>20</sup> above the window already mentioned. In the circle over the scene where the holy doctors are ordering Mass is Theology with books and other things about her, and children of no less beauty than the others. Over the window looking into the court, in another circle, he did Justice with her scales and naked sword, with similar children of the utmost beauty, because on the wall underneath he had represented civil and canon law, as I shall relate. On the same vaulting, at the corners, he did four scenes, designed and coloured with great diligence, though the figures are not large. In one of them, next the Theology, he did the sin of Adam in eating the apple, in a graceful style. In the one where Astrology is, he represented that science putting the fixed and moving stars in their appointed places. In the one of Mount Parnassus he did Marsyas flayed at a tree by Apollo; and next the scene of the giving of the Decretals is a judgment of Solomon. These four scenes are full of feeling and expression, executed with great diligence in beautiful and graceful colouring.

I must now relate what was done on the walls below. On the wall towards the Belvedere, containing the Mount Parnassus and Fountain of Helicon, he made a shady laurel grove about the mount, so that the trembling of the leaves in the soft air can almost be seen, while a number of naked cupids, with lovely faces, are floating above, holding laurel branches, of which they make garlands and scatter them over the mount. The beauty of the figures and the nobility of the painting breathe a truly divine afflatus, and cause those who examine them to marvel that they should be the work of a human mind, through the imperfect medium of colours, and that the excellence of the design should make them appear alive. The poets scattered about the mountain are remarkable in this respect, some standing and some writing, others talking, and others singing or conversing in groups of four or six according to the disposition. Here are portraits of all the most famous poets, both ancient and modern, taken partly from statues, partly from medals, and many from old pictures, while others were living. Here we see Ovid, Virgil, Ennius, Tibullus, Catullus, Propertius and Homer, holding up his blind head and singing verses, while at his feet is one writing. Here in a group are the nine Muses, with Apollo, breathing realities of wonderful beauty and grace. Here are the learned Sappho, the divine Dante, the delicate Petrarca, the amorous Boccaccio, all full of life; Tibaldeo is there also, and numerous other moderns, the whole scene being done with exquisite grace and finished with care. On another wall he did Heaven, with Christ and the Virgin, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles, Evangelists, martyrs in the clouds, with God the Father above sending out the Holy Spirit over a number of saints who subscribe to the Mass and argue upon the Host which is on the altar. Among them are the four Doctors of the Church, surrounded by saints, including Dominic, Francis, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, Scotus, Nicholas of Lyra, Dante, Fra Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara, and all the Christian theologians, including a number of portraits. In the air are four children holding open the Gospels, and it would be impossible for any painter to produce figures of more grace and perfection than these. The saints in a group in the air seem alive, and are remarkable for the foreshortening and relief. Their draperies also are varied and very beautiful, and the heads rather celestial than human, especially that of Christ, displaying all the clemency and pity which divine painting can demonstrate to mortal man. Indeed, Raphael had the gift of rendering his heads sweet and gracious, as we see in a Madonna with her hands to her breast contemplating the Child, who looks incapable of refusing a favour. Raphael appropriately rendered his patriarchs venerable, his apostles simple, and his martyrs full of faith. But he showed much more art and genius in the holy Christian doctors, disputing in groups of six, three and two. Their faces show curiosity and their effort to establish the certainty of which they are in doubt, using their hands in arguing and certain gestures of the body, attentive ears, knit brows, and many different kinds of astonishment, various and appropriate. On the other hand, the four Doctors of the Church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, solve, by means of the Holy Scriptures, all the questions of the Gospels, which are held by children flying in the air. On the other wall, containing the other window, he did Justinian giving laws to the doctors, who correct them; above are Temperance, Fortitude and Prudence. On the other side the Pope being a portrait of Julius II., while Giovanni de' Medici the cardinal, afterwards Pope Leo, Cardinal Antonio di Monte, and Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, afterwards Pope Paul III., are also present, with other portraits. The Pope was greatly delighted with this work, and in order to have woodwork of equal value to the paintings, he sent for Fra Giovanni of Verona from Monte Oliveto of Chiusuri, in the Siena territory, then a great master in marquetry. He not only did the wainscoting, but the fine doors and seats with perspectives, which won him favour, rewards and honours from the Pope. Certainly no one was ever more skilful in design and workmanship in that profession than Giovanni, as we see by the admirable perspectives in wood in the sacristy of S. Maria in Organo in his native Verona, the choir of Monte Oliveto di Chiusuri and that of S. Benedetto at Siena, as well as the sacristy of Monte Oliveto of Naples, and the choir in the chapel of Paolo di Tolosa there. Thus he deserves to be held in honour by his order, in which he died at the age of sixty-eight in 1537. I have mentioned him as a man of true excellence, because I think his ability deserves it, for he induced other masters to make many rare works subsequently, as I shall say elsewhere.

But to return to Raphael. His style improved so greatly that the Pope entrusted to him the second chamber towards the great hall. His reputation had now become very great, and at this time he painted a portrait of Pope Julius in oils so wonderfully life-like and true that it inspired fear as if it were alive. This work is now in S.

Maria del popolo,<sup>21</sup> with a fine painting of Our Lady done at the same time, and containing a Nativity of Christ, the Virgin covering the Child with a veil. This is of great beauty, the air of the head and of the whole body showing the Child to be the veritable Son of God. The head and face of the Madonna are of equal beauty, and also display her joy and pity. Joseph leans with both hands on a staff in pensive contemplation of the King and Queen of Heaven, in the wonder of a most holy old man. Both these pictures are shown on solemn festivals.

At this time Raphael had acquired great renown at Rome. But although his graceful style commanded the admiration of all, and he continually studied the numerous antiquities in the city, he had not as yet endowed his figures with the grandeur and majesty which he imparted to them henceforward.

It happened at this time that Michelangelo caused the Pope so much upset and alarm in the chapel, of which I shall speak in his Life, whereby he was forced to fly to Florence. Bramante had the keys of the chapel, and, being friendly with Raphael, he showed him Michelangelo's methods so that he might understand them. This at once led Raphael to do over again the Prophet Isaiah in S. Agostino above the St. Anne of Andrea Sansovino, which he had just finished. Aided by what he had seen of Michelangelo, he greatly improved and enlarged the figure, endowing it with more majesty. When Michelangelo saw it afterwards he concluded that Bramante had played him this bad turn to benefit Raphael. Not long after, Agostino Chisi, a wealthy merchant of Siena and patron of men of genius, allotted to Raphael a chapel, because shortly before he had painted in the sweetest manner, in a loggia of the merchant's palace, now called i Chisi in Trastevere, a Galatea in the sea on a car drawn by two dolphins, surrounded by tritons and many sea gods.<sup>22</sup> After making a cartoon for this chapel, which is on the right-hand on entering the principal door of the church of S. Maria della Pace, Raphael carried it out in fresco in a new style, considerably finer and more magnificent than his first. Here he did some prophets and sibyls, before the chapel of Michelangelo was opened publicly, though he had seen it, which are considered the best of his works and the most beautiful among so many others, because the women and children are represented with great vivacity and perfect colouring. This work established his renown for ever, as being the most excellent that he produced in his life. At the prayers of a chamberlain of Julius<sup>23</sup> he painted the picture of the high altar of Araceli, representing Our Lady in the air, a beautiful landscape, St. John, St. Francis and St. Jerome as a cardinal. Our Lady shows the humility and modesty proper to the Mother of Christ, the Child is very prettily playing with his Mother's cloak. St. John shows the effect of fasting, his head expressive of great sincerity and absolute certainty, like those who are far removed from the world, who speak the truth and hate falsehood. St. Jerome raises his head and eyes to Our Lady in contemplation, indicative of the learning and wisdom displayed in his writings; with both hands he is presenting the chamberlain, who is very life-like. Raphael was equally successful with his St. Francis, who kneels on the ground with one arm stretched out, and with his head raised he regards the Virgin, burning with love and emotion, his features and the colouring showing his consuming love and the comfort and life which he derives from regarding her beauty and that of the Child. Raphael did a boy standing in the middle of the picture under the Virgin, looking up to her and holding a tablet. For his beautiful face and well-proportioned limbs he cannot be surpassed. Besides this there is a landscape of remarkable perfection and beauty. Continuing the rooms in the palace, Raphael did the miracle of the Sacrament of the Corporale of Orvieto, or Bolsena, as it is called.<sup>24</sup> We see the priest blushing with shame in saying Mass at seeing the Host melted into blood on the Corporale owing to his incredulity. Fear is in his eyes, and he seems beside himself in the presence of his auditors, as he stands irresolute. His hands tremble, and he shows other signs of terror natural on such an occasion. About him are many varied figures, some serving the Mass, some kneeling on the steps in beautiful attitudes, astonished at the event, showing the many various effects of the same emotion, both in the men and women. There is one woman seated on the ground in the lower part of the scene, holding a child in her arms. She turns in wonder at hearing someone speak of what has happened to the priest with a very charming and vivacious feminine grace.

On the other side Raphael represented Pope Julius hearing the Mass, introducing the portrait of the cardinal of S. Giorgio and many others. In the part interrupted by the window he introduced a flight of steps, shown entire, so that the story is uninterrupted, and it seems that if this gap had not been there the scene would have suffered. Thus we see that in inventing and composing scenes no one ever excelled Raphael in arrangement and skill. This appears opposite in the same place where St. Peter is represented guarded in prison by armed men, by Herod's order.<sup>25</sup> Here his architecture and his discretion in treating the prison are such that beside him the work of others seem more confused than his are beautiful, for he always endeavoured to follow the narrative in his scenes and introduce beautiful things. Thus, for example, in the horrible prison we see the aged Peter chained between two armed men, the heavy sleep of the guards, the shining splendour of the angel in the darkness of the night, showing all the details of the cell and making the armour glisten so that it appears to be burnished and not a painted representation. No less art and genius is displayed in the scene where Peter leaves the prison, freed from his chains, accompanied by the angel, the Apostle's face showing that he believes himself to be dreaming. The other armed guards outside the prison are terror-stricken as they hear the sound of the iron door. A sentinel holds a torch in his right hand, the light of which is reflected in all the armour, and where this does not fall there is moonlight. Raphael did this above the window, and thus makes the wall darker. But in looking at



the picture, the painted light and the various lights of the night seem due to Nature, so that we fancy we see the smoke of the torch, the splendour of the angel, and the deep darkness of the night, so natural and true that it is hard to believe they are only painted, where every difficult thing that he has imagined is so finely presented. Here in the darkness we see the outlines of the armour, the shading, the reflections, the effects of the heat of the lights, showing Raphael to be the master of the other painters. No better representation of the night has ever been made, this being considered the divinest and most remarkable of all. On one of the bare walls Raphael further did the Divine worship, the ark of the Hebrews and the candlestick, and Pope Julius driving Avarice from the church, scenes of beauty and excellence like the night just mentioned. They contain portraits of the bearers then living, who are carrying the Pope in a chair, for whom some men and women make way to allow him to pass.<sup>26</sup> An armed man on horseback, accompanied by two on foot, is fiercely striking the proud Heliodorus, who, by the command of Antiochus, intended to despoil the Temple of all the deposits of widows and orphans. We see the property and treasures being taken away, but all thrown to the ground and scattered at the fall of Heliodorus, beaten to the earth by the three, whom he alone sees, those engaged in carrying them being seized with sudden terror like all the other followers of Heliodorus. Apart from these kneels the High Priest Onias in his pontificals, his eyes and hands turned to heaven in fervent prayer, filled with compassion for the poor who are losing their possessions, and with joy at the succour sent by Heaven. By a happy idea of Raphael the plinths of the pedestals are filled with many who have climbed up by the columns, and are looking on in their uneasy postures, while the astonished multitude, in various attitudes, is awaiting the event. This work<sup>27</sup> is so marvellous in every particular that even the cartoons for it are greatly prized. Some parts of them belong to M. Francesco Alasini, a nobleman of Cesena, who, without the help of any master, but guided from his childhood by an extraordinary natural instinct, has himself studied painting and produced pictures which are much admired by connoisseurs. These cartoons are among his designs with some ancient reliefs in marble, and are valued by him as they deserve. I must add that M. Niccolo Masini, who has supplied me with these particulars, is a genuine admirer of our arts as he is distinguished in every other particular.

But to return to Raphael. In the vaulting of this chamber he did four scenes: the appearance of God to Abraham, promising the multiplication of his seed, the sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's ladder, and the burning bush of Moses, displaying no less art, invention, design and grace than in his other works. While he was engaged in producing these marvels, envious Fortune deprived Julius II. of his life, removing that patron of talent and admirer of every good thing. On Leo X succeeding<sup>28</sup> he wished the work to be continued. Raphael's abilities ascended to the heavens, and he was much gratified at meeting so great a prince, who inherited the love of his family for the arts. Accordingly he was heartened to continue the work, and on the other wall did the coming of Attila to Rome, and his meeting with Leo III. at the foot of Monte Mario, and being driven away with a simple benediction. In the air are St. Peter and St. Paul with drawn swords coming to defend the Church. Although the history of Leo III. does not relate this, the artist no doubt wished it to be so, just as the poets often introduce some fresh matter to their work as an ornament, and yet do not depart from the main idea. The Apostles show a valour and celestial ardour that the divine judgment often puts into the faces of its servants to defend the most holy religion. Attila, mounted on a horse of the utmost beauty with a white star on his forehead, betrays great fear in his face as he takes to flight. There are other very fine horses, notably a dappled Spanish jennet, ridden by a man whose bare parts are covered with scales like a fish. He is copied from Trajan's Column, where the men are armed in this way, and it is supposed to be made of crocodile skin. Monte Mario is burning, showing that on the departure of soldiers their quarters are always left in flames. Raphael also drew some mace-bearers accompanying the Pope, who are very life-like, and the horses they ride, with the court of the cardinals and other bearers, holding the hackney, upon which the man in pontificals is mounted who is a portrait of Leo X., as fine as the others, and many courtiers. This is a truly charming thing, thus adapted to such a work, and most useful to our art, especially for those who delight in such things. At the same time Raphael did a panel for Naples which was placed in S. Domenico in the chapel containing the crucifix which spoke to St. Thomas Aquinas. It represents the Virgin, St. Jerome dressed as a cardinal, and the Angel Raphael accompanying Tobias.<sup>29</sup> He did a picture for Leonello da Carpi, lord of Meldola, who is still alive, though over ninety. This was a marvel of colouring and of singular beauty, being executed with vigour and of such delicate loveliness that I do not think it can be improved upon. The face of the Madonna expresses divinity and her attitude modesty. With joined hands she adores her Child, who sits on her knees and is caressing a little St. John, who adores him, as do St. Elizabeth and Joseph. This picture belonged to the Cardinal di Carpi, son of Leonello, a distinguished patron of the arts, and it must now be in the possession of his heirs. When Lorenzo Pucci, cardinal of Sante Quattro, was appointed chief penancer, Raphael obtained a commission from him to do a picture for S. Giovanni in Monte at Bologna. It is now placed in the chapel containing the body of the Blessed Elena dall' Olio.<sup>30</sup> In this work we see the full power of the delicate grace of Raphael joined to art. St. Cecilia listens entranced to a choir of angels in heaven, absorbed by the music. Her face is abstracted like one in an ecstasy, on the ground musical instruments are scattered, which look real and not painted, as do her veil and vestments of cloth of gold and silk, with a marvellous haircloth beneath. St. Paul rests his right arm on a naked sword and his head on his hand, showing his knowledge and his fiery nature

turned to gravity. He is bare-footed and dressed like an apostle in a simple red mantle, with a green tunic beneath. St. Mary Magdalene lightly holds a vase of precious stone in her hand, and turns her head in joy at her conversion; these are of unsurpassable beauty, and so are the heads of St. Augustine and St. John the Evangelist. While we may term other works paintings, those of Raphael are living things; the flesh palpates, the breath comes and goes, every organ lives, life pulsates everywhere, and so this picture added considerably to his reputation. Thus many verses were written in his honour in the vulgar and Latin tongues. I will quote the following only, not to make my story too long:

*Pingant sola alii referantque coloribus ova  
Cxciliae os Raphael aique animum explicuit.*

After this Raphael did a small picture of little figures, also at Bologna, in the house of Count Vincenzo Ercolani, containing Christ, as Jove, in heaven, surrounded by the four Evangelists as described by Ezekiel, one like a man, one as a lion, one as an eagle and one as an ox, with a landscape beneath,<sup>31</sup> no less beautiful for its scale than the large works. To the counts of Canossa at Verona he sent a large picture of equal excellence of a Nativity, with a much-admired Dawn, and a St. Anne. Indeed, the whole work is fine, and to say that it is by Raphael is to bestow the highest praise, and it is greatly prized by the counts. Though offered great sums by many princes they have refused to part with it. For Bindo Altoviti Raphael did his portrait as a young man,<sup>32</sup> considered most wonderful. He also did a picture of the Virgin which he sent to Florence.<sup>33</sup> This is now in the palace of Duke Cosimo in the chapel of the new apartments built and painted by myself, where it serves as the altarpiece. It represents an aged St. Anne seated, offering the Christ-child to the Virgin, the baby being a beautiful nude figure with a lovely face that gladdens all beholders by its smile. Raphael in painting this Madonna shows with what beauty art can endow the aspect of a Virgin, with her modest eyes, her noble forehead, her graceful nose and her virtuous mouth, while her dress displays the utmost simplicity and virtue. Indeed, I do not think a better can be seen. There is a nude St. John, seated, and a very beautiful female saint. The background is a house with a window lighting the room in which the figures are. At Rome Raphael did a picture with the portraits of Pope Leo, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici and the Cardinal de' Rossi.<sup>34</sup> The figures seem to stand out in relief; the velvet shows its texture, the damask on the Pope is shining and lustrous, the fur lining soft and real, and the gold and silk look like the actual materials and not colours. There is an illuminated parchment book, of remarkable realism, and a bell of chased silver of indescribable beauty. Among other things is the burnished gold ball of the seat, reflecting, such is its clearness, the lights of the windows, the Pope's back, and the furniture of the room like a mirror, so wonderfully done that it would seem that no master can improve upon it. For this work the Pope largely rewarded him, and the picture is still in Florence in the duke's wardrobe. He also painted Duke Lorenzo and Duke Giuliano as finely as these, with equal grace in the colouring. These are in the possession of the heirs of Ottaviano de' Medici in Florence. Thus the glory and the rewards of Raphael increased together. To leave a memory of himself he built a palace in the Borgo Nuovo at Rome, decorated with stucco by Bramante.

By these and other works the fame of Raphael spread to France and Flanders. Albert Diirer, a remarkable German painter and author of some fine copper engravings, paid him the tribute of his homage and sent him his own portrait, painted in water-colours, on cambric, so fine that it was transparent, without the use of white paint, the white material forming the lights of the picture. This appeared marvellous to Raphael, who sent back many drawings of his own which were greatly valued by Albert. This head was among the things of Giulio Romano, Raphael's heir, in Mantua.

Having seen the engravings of Albert Diirer, Raphael was anxious to show what he could do in that art, and caused Marco Antonio of Bologna to study the method. He succeeded so well that he had his first things engraved: the Innocents, a Last Supper, a Neptune, the St. Cecilia<sup>35</sup> boiled in oil. Marco Antonio then did a number of prints which Raphael afterwards gave to Il Baviera, his boy, who had the charge of one of his mistresses whom Raphael loved until his death. He made a beautiful life-like portrait of her which is now in Florence in the possession of the most noble Botti, a Florentine merchant, the friend and intimate of all distinguished men, especially painters. He keeps it as a reminder of his love for art and especially of Raphael. His brother Simone Botti is not behind him in his love of art, and besides his reputation among artists as one of the best patrons of their profession, he is especially esteemed by me as the best friend I have ever had, while he possesses a good artistic judgment.

But to return to engravings. The favour of Raphael to Il Baviera quickened the hand of Marco da Ravenna so that copper engravings from being scarce became as plentiful as we now see them. Then Ugo da Carpi, a man whose head was full of ingenious ideas and fancies, discovered wood engraving, so that by three impressions he obtained the light and the shade of chiaroscuro sketches, a very beautiful and ingenious invention. Quantities of these prints may now be seen, as I shall relate more in detail, in the Life of Marco Antonio of Bologna. For the monastery of Palermo, called S. Maria della Spasmo, of the friars of Monte Oliveto, Raphael did Christ bearing the Cross, which is considered marvellous, seeing the cruelty of the executioners leading Him to death on Mount

Calvary with fierce rage.<sup>36</sup> The Christ in his grief and pain at the approach of death has fallen through the weight of the cross, and, bathed in sweat and blood, turns towards the Maries, who are weeping bitterly. Here Veronica is stretching out her hand and offering the handkerchief with an expression of deep love. The work is full of armed men on horse and foot, who issue from the gate of Jerusalem with the standards of justice in their hands, in varied and fine attitudes. When this picture was finished, but not set up in its place, it was nearly lost, because on its way by sea to Palermo a terrible storm overtook the ship, which was broken on a rock, and the men and merchandise all perished, except this picture, which was washed up at Genoa in its case. When it was fished out and landed it was found to be a divine work, and proved to be uninjured, for even the fury of the winds and waves respected such painting. When the news had spread, the monks hastened to claim it, and no sooner was it restored to them through the influence of the Pope than they handsomely rewarded those who had saved it. It was again sent by ship, and was set up in Palermo, where it is more famous than the mountain of Vulcan. While Raphael was at work on these things, which he had to do, since it was for great and distinguished persons, and he could not decline them in his own interest, he nevertheless continued his work in the Pope's chambers and halls, where he kept men constantly employed in carrying on the work from his designs, while he supervised the whole, giving assistance as he well knew how. It was not long before he uncovered the chamber of the Borgia tower. On every wall he painted a scene, two above the windows and two others on the sides. During a fire in the Borgo Vecchio at Rome, which could not be put out, St. Leo IV had gone to the loggia of the palace and extinguished it with a benediction. This scene<sup>37</sup> represents various perils. In one part we see women whose hair and clothes are blown about by the fury of the wind, as they carry water to extinguish the fire in vessels in their hands and on their heads. Others endeavouring to cast water are blinded by the smoke. On the other side is a sick old man, beside himself with infirmity and the conflagration, borne as Virgil describes Anchises to have been borne by Aeneas, the youth showing his spirit and putting out his strength to carry his burden. A lean, bare-footed old woman follows them, fleeing from the fire, with a naked child before them. From the top of some ruins is a naked, dishevelled woman, who throws her child to one who has escaped from the flames and stands on tip toe in the street, with arms stretched out to receive the little one in swaddling clothes. The desire of the woman to save the child and her own fear of the approaching fire are well depicted, while the one receiving the child is disturbed by fear for his own safety while anxious to save his charge. Equally remarkable is a mother, dishevelled and ragged, with some clothes in her hand, who beats her children to make them run faster from the fire. Some women kneeling before the Pope seem to be begging him to cause the fire to cease.

The other scene is also of St. Leo IV, where he has represented the port of Ostia, occupied by the Turks, who came to make him prisoner. We see the Christians fighting the fleet at sea, a number of prisoners already taken to the port, coming out of a boat led by soldiers by the beard, the attitudes being very fine. In their varying costumes they are led by galley-slaves before St. Leo, who is a portrait of Leo X., the Pope standing in his pontificals between Bernardo Divizio of Bibbiena, the Cardinal S. Maria in Portico, and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, afterwards Pope Clement. I cannot relate at length the numerous fine devices employed by the artist in representing the prisoners, and how, without speech, he represents grief, fear and death. There are two other scenes, one<sup>38</sup> of Leo X. consecrating the Most Christian King Francis I of France, singing the Mass in his pontificals and blessing the anointing oil, with a number of cardinals and bishops in pontificals assisting, including the portraits of several ambassadors and others, some dressed in the French fashion of the time. The other scene is the coronation of the king, the Pope and Francis being portraits, the one in armour and the other in pontificals. All the cardinals, bishops, chamberlains, squires, grooms of the chamber, are in their robes, and seated according to rank, after the custom of the chapel, and are portraits, including Giannozzo Pandolfini, bishop of Troyes, a great friend of Raphael, and many other noted men of the time. Near the king is a boy kneeling and holding the royal crown. This is a portrait of Ippolito de' Medici, who afterwards became cardinal and vice-chancellor, and a great friend of the arts and other talents. To his memory I acknowledge my indebtedness, for it is to him that I owe my start on my career, such as it has been. I cannot enter into every minute detail concerning the production of this artist whose very silence is like speech. Beneath these scenes are figures of the defenders and benefactors of the Church each surrounded by a different border and everything carried out with spirit, expression and good ideas, with a harmony of colours that cannot be described. As the vaulting of this room was painted by Pietro Perugino, his master, Raphael would not efface it, from respect for the memory of him who had taught him the first elements of his art.

Such was the greatness of this man that he kept draughtsmen in all Italy, at Pozzuolo, and as far as Greece, to procure everything of value to assist his art. Continuing his series, he did a room with some figures on the ground-level of apostles and saints in tabernacles, and employed Giovanni da Udine, his pupil, unique in drawing animals, to do all the animals of Pope Leo: a chameleon, the civet cats, apes, parrots, lions, elephants, and other curious creatures. He further decorated the palace with grotesques and varied pavements, designing the papal staircases and other loggia begun by Bramante the architect, but left unfinished at his death. Raphael followed a new design of his own, and made a wooden model on a larger scale and more ornate than Bramante's. As Pope Leo wished to display his magnificence and generosity, Raphael prepared the designs for the stucco

ornaments and the scenes painted there, as well as of the borders. He appointed Giovanni da Udine head of the stucco and grotesque work, and Giuliano da Romano of the figures, though he did little work on them. Gio. Francesco,<sup>39</sup> also Il Bologna, Perino del Vaga, Pellegrino da Modana, Vincenzio da S. Gimignano, and Polidoro da Caravaggio, with many other painters, did scenes and figures and other things for that work, which Raphael finished with such perfection that he sent to Florence for a pavement by Luca della Robbia. Certainly no finer work can be conceived, with its paintings, stucco, disposition and inventions. It led to Raphael's appointment as superintendent of all works of painting and architecture done in the palace. It is said that his courtesy was so great that the builders, to allow him to accommodate his friends, did not make the walls solid, but left openings above the old rooms in the basement, where they might store casks, pipes and firewood. These openings enfeebled the base of the structure, so that it became necessary to fill them up owing to the cracks which began to show. For the gracefully finished inlaid work of the doors and wainscoting of these rooms Raphael employed Gian Barile, a clever woodcarver. He prepared architectural designs for the Pope's villa, and for several houses in the Borgo, notably the palace of M. Gio. Battista dall' Aquila, which was very beautiful. He did another for the bishop of Troyes in the via di S. Gallo in Florence. For the black monks of S. Sisto at Piacenza he did the high-altar picture representing the Madonna, with St. Sixtus and St. Barbara, a rare and unique work<sup>40</sup> He did many pictures for France, notably a St. Michael fighting the devil,<sup>41</sup> for the king, considered marvellous. He represented the centre of the earth by a half-burned rock, from the fissures of which issue flames of fire and sulphur. Lucifer, whose burned members are coloured several tints, exhibits his rage and his poisoned and inflated pride against Him who has cast him down, and his realisation of his doom of eternal punishment. Michael, on the other hand, is of celestial aspect, in armour of iron and gold, courageous and strong, having already overthrown Lucifer, at whom he aims his spear. In fine, this work deserved a rich reward from the king. He drew portraits of Beatrice of Ferrara and other ladies, including his own mistress.

Raphael was very amorous, and fond of women, and was always swift to serve them. Possibly his friends showed him too much complaisance in the matter. Thus, when Agostino Chigi, his close friend, employed him to paint the first loggia in his palace, Raphael neglected the work for one of his mistresses. Agostino, in despair, had the lady brought to his house to live in the part where Raphael was at work, contriving this with difficulty by the help of others. That is why the work was completed. Raphael did all the cartoons of this work, and coloured many figures in fresco with his own hand. In the vaulting he did the council of the gods in heaven, introducing forms and costumes borrowed from the antique, with refined grace and design. Thus he did the espousal of Psyche, with the ministers who serve Jove, and the Graces scattering flowers. In the lower part of the vaulting he did many scenes, including Mercury with the flute, who seems to be cleaving the sky in his flight. In another, Jove, with celestial dignity; is kissing Ganymede. Beneath is the chariot of Venus and Mercury, and the Graces taking Psyche to heaven, with many other poetical scenes. In the arched space between the corbels he did a number of cherubs, beautifully foreshortened, carrying the implements of the gods in their flight: the thunderbolts and arrows of Jove, the helmet, sword and target of Mars, the hammers of Vulcan, the club and lion's skin of Hercules, the wand of Mercury, the pipe of Pan, the agricultural rakes of Vertumnus, all with animals appropriate to their nature, a truly beautiful painting and poem. As a border to these scenes he caused Giovanni da Udine to make flowers, leaves and fruits in festoons, which could not be better. He designed the architecture of the stables of the Ghigi, and Agostino's chapel in the church of S. Maria del Popolo, where, besides the painting, he designed a marvellous tomb, directing Lorenzetto, a sculptor of Florence, to make two figures, which are still in his house in the Macello de' Corbi at Rome; but the death of Raphael, followed by that of Agostino, led to the work being given to Sebastiano Viniziano.

Raphael had become so great that Leo X. ordained that he should begin the large upper hall, containing the Victories of Constantine, which he began. The Pope also desired to have rich tapestry hangings of gold and silk. For these Raphael made large coloured cartoons of the proper size, all with his own hand, which were sent to weavers in Flanders,<sup>42</sup> and, when finished, the tapestries came to Rome. The work is so marvellously executed that it excites the wonder of those who see it that such things as hair and beards and delicate flesh-colouring can be woven work. It is certainly a miracle rather than a production of human art, containing, as it does, water, animals, buildings, all so well done that they seem the work of the brush and not of the loom. It cost 70,000 crowns, and is still preserved in the papal chapel. For the Cardinal Colonna Raphael did a St. John<sup>43</sup> on canvas, greatly prized by its owner, who, falling sick, gave it to the physician who healed him, M. Jacopo da Carpi, feeling under a great obligation, and it is now in Florence in the hands of Francesco Benintendi. For Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the vice-chancellor, he painted the Transfiguration, to be sent to France. He worked steadily at this with his own hands, bringing it to its final completion. It represents Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor with the eleven disciples at the foot, awaiting their Master. A boy possessed by a devil is brought so that Christ when he has come down from the mount may release him. The sufferings of this boy through the malignity of the spirit are apparent in his flesh, veins and pulse, as he thrusts himself forward in a contorted attitude, shouting and turning up his eyes, while his pallor renders the gesture unnatural and alarming. An old man is embracing and supporting him, his eyes shining, his brows raised, and his forehead knit, showing at once his resolution and fear. He steadily

regards the Apostles, as if to derive courage from them. A woman there, the principal figure of the picture, kneels in front of the Apostles, and is turning her head towards them, while she points out the misery of the boy possessed. The Apostles, standing, sitting and kneeling, show their great compassion for this great misfortune. Indeed, the figures and heads are of extraordinary beauty, and so new and varied that artists have commonly reputed this work the most renowned, the most beautiful and the most divine. Whoever wishes to imagine and realise the transfiguration of Christ should examine this work, where the Lord is in the shining air, with Moses and Elias illuminated by His splendour. Prostrate on the ground lie Peter, James and John in varied and beautiful attitudes. One has his head on the ground, one shades his eyes with his hands from the rays of light of the splendour of Christ, who, clothed in snow white, opens His arms and lifts His head, showing the Divine Essence of the three persons of the Trinity thus displayed in the perfection of Raphael's art. The artist seems to have gathered all his force to worthily present the face of Christ, which was the last thing he did, as death overtook him before he again took up the brush.

Having hitherto described the works of this great man, I will make some observations on his style for the benefit of our artists, before I come to the other particulars of his life and death. In his childhood Raphael imitated the style of Pietro Perugino, his master, improving it greatly in design, colouring and invention. But in riper years he perceived that this was too far from the truth. For he saw the works of Leonardo da Vinci, who had no equal for the fashion of the heads of women and children, and in rendering his figures graceful, while in movement he surpassed all other artists; these filled Raphael with wonder and amazement. As this style pleased him more than any he had ever seen, he set to work to study it, and gradually and painfully abandoning the manner of Pietro, he sought as far as possible to imitate Leonardo. But in spite of all his diligence and study he could never surpass Leonardo, and though some consider him superior in sweetness, and in a certain natural facility, yet he never excelled that wonderful groundwork of ideas, and that grandeur of art, in which few have equalled Leonardo. Raphael, however, approached him more closely than any other painter, especially in grace of colouring.

But to return to Raphael himself. The style which he learnt of Pietro when young became a great disadvantage to him. He had learned it readily because it was slight, dry and defective in design, but his not being able to throw it off rendered it very difficult for him to learn the beauty of nudes, and the method of difficult foreshortening of the cartoon of Michelangelo Buonarroti for the Hall of the Council at Florence. Another man would have lost heart at having wasted so much time, but not so Raphael, who purged himself of the style of Pietro, and used it as a stepping-stone to reach that of Michelangelo, full as it was of difficulties in every part. The master having thus become a pupil again, applied himself to do as a man in a few months the work of several years, at an age when one learns quickly. Indeed, he who does not learn good principles and the style which he means to follow at an early age, acquiring facility by experience, seeking to understand the parts and put them in practice, will hardly ever become perfect, and can only do so with great pains, and after long study. When Raphael began to change and improve his style, he had never studied the nude as it should be studied, but had only done portraits as he had seen his master Pietro do them, assisted by his own natural grace. Accordingly he studied the nude, comparing the muscles of dead men with those of the living, which do not seem so marked when covered with skin as they do when the skin is removed. He afterwards saw how the soft and fleshy parts are made, and graceful turnings and twists, the effects of swelling, lowering and raising a member or the whole body, the system of bones, nerves and veins, becoming excellent in all the parts as a great master should. But seeing that he could not in this respect attain to the perfection of Michelangelo, and being a man of good judgment, he reflected that painting does not consist of representing nude figures alone, but that it has a large field, and among the excellent painters there were many who could express their ideas with ease, felicity and good judgment, composing scenes not overcrowded or poor, and with few figures, but with good invention and order, and who deserved the name of skilled and judicious artists. It was possible, he reflected, to enrich his works with variety of perspective, buildings and landscapes, a light and delicate treatment of the draperies, sometimes causing the figure to be lost in the darkness, and sometimes coming into the clear light, making living and beautiful heads of women, children, youths and old men, endowing them with suitable movement and vigour. He also reflected upon the importance of the flight of horses in battle, the courage of the soldiers, the knowledge of all sorts of animals, and, above all, the method of drawing portraits of men to make them appear life-like and easily recognised, with a number of other things, such as draperies, shoes, helmets, armour, women's head-dresses, hair, beards, vases, trees, caves, rain, lightning, fine weather, night, moonlight, bright sun, and other necessities of present-day painting. Reflecting upon these things, Raphael determined that, if he could not equal Michelangelo in some respects, he would do so in the other particulars, and perhaps surpass him. Accordingly he did not imitate him, not wishing to lose time, but studied to make himself the best master in the particulars mentioned. If other artists had done this instead of studying and imitating Michelangelo only, though they could not attain to such perfection, they would not have striven in vain, attaining a very hard manner, full of difficulty, without beauty or colouring, and poor in invention, when by seeking to be universal, and imitating other parts, they might have benefited themselves and the world. Having made this resolution, and knowing that Fra Bartolommeo of S. Marco had a very good method of painting, solid design and pleasant colouring, although he sometimes used the shadows too

freely to obtain greater relief, Raphael borrowed from him what he thought would be of service, namely a medium style in design and colouring, combining it with particulars selected from the best things of other masters. He thus formed a single style out of many, which was always considered his own, and was, and will always be, most highly esteemed by artists. This is seen to perfection in the sibyls and prophets done in the Pace, as has been said, for which he derived so much assistance from having seen the work of Michelangelo in the Pope's chapel. If Raphael had stopped here, without seeking to aggrandise and vary his style, to show that he understood nudes as well as Michelangelo, he would not have partly obscured the good name he had earned, for his nudes in the chamber of the Borgia tower in the Burning of the Borgo Nuovo, though good, are not flawless. Equally unsatisfactory are those done by him on the vaulting of the palace of Agostino Ghigi in Trastevere, because they lack his characteristic grace and sweetness. This was caused in great measure by his having employed others to colour from his designs. Recognising this mistake, he did the Transfiguration of S. Pietro a Montorio by himself unaided, so that it combines all the requisites of a good painting. If he had not employed printers' lampblack, through some caprice, which darkens with time, as has been said, and spoils the other colours with which it is mixed, I think the work would now be as fresh as when he did it, whereas it has now become rather faded.

I have entered upon these questions at the end of this Life to show how great were the labours, studies and diligence of this famous artist, and chiefly for the benefit of other painters, so that they may rise superior to disadvantages as Raphael did by his prudence and skill. Let me also add that everyone should be contented with doing the things for which he has a natural bent, and ought not to endeavour out of emulation to do what does not come to him naturally, in order that he may not labour in vain, frequently with shame and loss. Besides this, he should rest contented and not endeavour to surpass those who have worked miracles in art through great natural ability and the especial favour of God. For a man without natural ability, try how he may, will never succeed like one who successfully progresses with the aid of Nature. Among the ancients Paolo Uccello is an example of this, for he steadily deteriorated through his efforts to do more than he was able. The same remark applies in our own day to Jacopo da Pontormo, and may be seen in many others, as I have related and shall relate again. Perhaps this is because when heaven has distributed favours it wishes men to rest content with their share.

Having spoken upon these questions of art, possibly at greater length than was necessary, I will now return to Raphael. A great friend of his, Bernardo Divizio, cardinal of Bibbiena, had for many years urged him to take a wife. Raphael had not definitely refused, but had temporised, saying he would wait for three or four years. At the end of this time, when he did not expect it, the cardinal reminded him of his promise. Feeling obliged to keep his word, Raphael accepted a niece of the cardinal<sup>44</sup> for wife. But being very ill-content with this arrangement, he kept putting things off, so that many months passed without the marriage taking place. This was not done without a purpose, because he had served the court so many years, and Leo was his debtor for a good sum, so that he had received an intimation that, on completing the room which he was doing, the Pope would give him the red hat for his labours and ability, as it was proposed to create a good number of cardinals, some of less merit than Raphael.

Meanwhile Raphael continued his secret pleasures beyond all measure. After an unusually wild debauch he returned home with a severe fever, and the doctors believed him to have caught a chill. As he did not confess the cause of his disorder, the doctors imprudently let blood, thus enfeebling him when he needed restoratives. Accordingly he made his will, first sending his mistress out of the house, like a Christian, leaving her the means to live honestly. He then divided his things among his pupils, Giulio Romano, of whom he was always very fond, Gio. Francesco of Florence, called "il Fattore," and some priest of Urbino, a relation. He ordained and left a provision that one of the antique tabernacles in S. Maria Rotonda should be restored with new stones, and an altar erected with a marble statue of the Madonna. This was chosen for his tomb after his death. He left all his possessions to Giulio and Gio. Francesco, making M. Baldassarre da Pescia, then the Pope's datary, his executor. Having confessed and shown penitence, he finished the course of his life on the day of his birth, Good Friday, aged thirty-seven. We may believe that his soul adorns heaven as his talent has embellished the earth. At the head of the dead man, in the room where he worked, they put the Transfiguration, which he had done for the Cardinal de' Medici. The sight of the dead and of this living work filled all who saw them with poignant sorrow. The picture was placed by the cardinal in S. Pietro a Montorio, at the high altar, and was always prized for its execution.<sup>45</sup> The body received honoured burial, as befitted so noble a spirit, for there was not an artist who did not grieve or who failed to accompany it to the tomb. His death caused great grief to the papal court, as he held office there as groom of the chamber, and afterwards the Pope became so fond of him that his death made him weep bitterly. O happy spirit, for all are proud to speak of thee and celebrate thy deeds, admiring every design! With the death of this admirable artist painting might well have died also, for when he closed his eyes she was left all but blind. We who remain can imitate the good and perfect examples left by him, and keep his memory green for his genius and the debt which we owe to him. It is, indeed, due to him that the arts, colouring and invention have all been brought to such perfection that further progress can hardly be expected, and it is unlikely that anyone will ever surpass him. Besides these services rendered to art, as a friend he was courteous alike to the upper, the middle and the lower classes. One of his numerous qualities fills me with amazement: that Heaven endowed him with the power

of showing a disposition quite contrary to that of most painters. For the artists who worked with Raphael, not only the poor ones, but those who aspired to be great-and there are many such in our profession-lived united and in harmony, all their evil humours disappearing when they saw him, and every vile and base thought deserting their mind. Such a thing was never seen at any other time, and it arose because they were conquered by his courtesy and tact, and still more by his good nature, so full of gentleness and love that even animals loved him, not to speak of men. It is said that he would leave his own work to oblige any painter who had known him, and even those who did not. He always kept a great number employed, assisting and teaching them with as much affection as if they had been his own sons. He never went to court without having fifty painters at his heels, all good and skilful, who accompanied him to do him honour. In short, he did not live like a painter, but as a prince. For this cause, O Art of Painting, thou mayest consider thyself fortunate in having possessed an artist who, by his genius and character, has raised thee above the heavens. Blessed indeed art thou to have seen thy disciples brought together by the instruction of such a man, uniting the arts and virtues, which in Raphael compelled the greatness of Julius II. and the generosity of Leo, men occupying the highest dignity, to treat him with familiarity, and practise every kind of liberality, so that by means of their favour, and the wealth they gave him, he was able to do great honour to himself and to his art. Happy also were those who served under him, because all who imitated him were on a safe road, and so those who imitate his labours in art will be rewarded by the world, as those who copy his virtuous life will be rewarded in heaven. Bembo wrote the following epitaph for Raphael:

D.O.M.  
 RAPHAELI SANCTO IOAN. F: VRBINATI  
 PICTORI EMINENTISS. VETERVMQ. AEMVLO.  
 CVIVS SPIRANTEIS PROPE IMAGINEIS  
 SI CONTEMPLERE  
 NATVRAE ATQVE ARTIS FOEDVS  
 FACIELE INSPEXERIS.  
 IVLII II. ET LEONIS X. PONT. MAX.  
 PICTVRAE ET ARCHITECT. OPERIBVS  
 GLORIAM AVXIT  
 VIXIT AN XXXVII. INTEGER INTEGROS  
 QVO DIE NATVS EST EO ESSE DESIIT  
 VII. ID APRIL MDXX.

The Count Baldassare Castiglione wrote of his death as follows:

*Quod lacerum corpus medica sanaverit arte,  
 Hippolytum Stygiis et revocarit aquis,  
 Ad Stygias ipse est raptus Epidaurius undas;  
 Sic precium vitae mors fuit artifici.  
 Tu quoque dum toto laniatam corpore Romam  
 Componis miro, Raphael, ingenio,  
 Atque Urbis lacerum ferro, igni, annisque cadaver  
 Ad vitam, antiquum jam revocasque decus;  
 Movisti Superum invidiam, indignataque mors est,  
 Te dudum extinctis reddere posse animam;  
 Et quod Tonga dies paullatim aboleverat, hoc te  
 Mortali sprete lege parare iterum..  
 Sic miser heu ! prima cadis intercepte juventa,  
 Deberi et morti nostraque nosque mones.*

#### NOTES

1. Perugino was in Perugia in 1490 and again in 1499.
2. Raphael's mother died in 1491 when he was only eight years old. His father remarried and himself died in 1494.
3. Painted 1502; now in the Vatican Gallery.
4. The Sposalizio of the Brera, Milan painted in 1504.
5. In 1502, but by the nephew of Pius II, Francesco Piccolomini, who afterwards became Pope as Pius III.
6. In 1504.
7. The Madonna del Giardino in the Vienna Gallery is one, the other is possibly that of Bridgewater House.
8. Now in the Uffizi, known as the Madonna del Cardellino.
9. Captain from 1495 to 1498.

10. Painted 1506; now in the National Gallery.
11. In 1505.
12. Now in the Naples Museum.
13. Now in the Pitti Gallery.
14. Now at Munich.
15. Borghese Gallery, Rome; painted 1507.
16. The Madonna del Baldacchino, now in the Pitti Gallery.
17. Either La Belle Jardiniere of the Louvre or the Colonna Madonna of Berlin.
18. In 1508.
19. In the following description Vasari has confused in the most astonishing manner the "Disputà" and the "School of Athens."
20. Finished in 1511.
21. Now in the Uffizi Gallery.
22. In the Farnesina; painted in 1514.
23. Segismondo do' Conti. This picture, known as the Madonna di Foligno, is now in the Vatican Gallery.
24. In 1512.
25. Painted in 1514.
26. Painted in 1512.
27. Finished in 1514.
28. 13 February 1513.
29. Madonna del Pesce, now in the Prado, Madrid.
30. Now in the Bologna Academy; painted 1513.
31. Pitti Gallery.
32. Pinakothek, Munich, ascription doubtful.
33. Madonna dell' Impannatta, Pitti Gallery.
34. Pitti Gallery; painted in 1518.
35. It should be St. Felicita.
36. The "Spasimo di Sicilia," now at Madrid; Vasari is wrong about Veronica.
37. Begun in 1514.
38. Dated 1517, the scene represents the coronation of Charlemagne.
39. Giovanni Francesco Penni.
40. The Sistine Madonna, now at Dresden.
41. Now in the Louvre; dated, 1518.
42. The cartoons were done in 1515 or 1516. They were bought by Charles 1. in 1630 and are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
43. Uffizi Gallery.
44. Maria Bibblena; but she seems to have died before the artist.
45. Now in the Vatican Gallery.

Excerpts from *Lives of the Artists* by Giorgio Vasari, G. Bull, trans. Copyright ©1986 Penguin Books.



### *Appointment of Raphael as Inspector of Antiquities in Rome*

1518

*On August 1, 1514, Raphael was appointed chief architect of Saint Peter's. The papal brief which made the appointment specified that Bramante had named his successor to the office before dying. Raphael certainly considered this his most onerous duty. The other letter of nomination which we translate here is intended to facilitate Raphael's work on Saint Peter's by providing stone from the Roman ruins. Using ancient materials for building was current practice through the 16th century (Sixtus V had the Septizonium, one of Rome's most famous ancient ruins, destroyed for this purpose). Yet, the terms of Raphael's appointment showed an advance over previous practice in that it made an effort to avoid outrageous destructions. In this context one will notice the humanist attitude which gave precedence to inscriptions rather than reliefs.*

#### TO RAPHAEL OF URBINO<sup>1</sup>

It is of the utmost importance for the work on the Roman temple of the Prince of the Apostles [St. Peter's], that the stones and marble, of which a great quantity are needed, be easily obtained in the neighborhood rather than imported from afar. And since we know that the Roman ruins provide them abundantly, and that all sorts of stones are found by almost anybody who starts to build in or around Rome, or digs up the ground for some other reason, we create you, because we have entrusted you with the direction of the work, inspector in chief of all the marble and all the stone which will be excavated from now on within Rome or within ten miles around it, so that you can purchase them if they are modest, and low origin and rank, that they should first of all inform you, in your position as head supervisor, of all the marble and stones of all kinds discovered in the above-mentioned precincts. Whoever will not have complied within three days will be punishable by a 100 to 300 gold ducats fine, as you should decide. Since we have been informed that masons unheedingly cut and use ancient pieces of marble and stone that bear inscriptions or other remains which often contain things memorable, and which deserve to be preserved for the progress of classical studies and the elegance of the Latin tongue, but that get lost in this fashion, we order all stone quarries of Rome not to break or saw stones bearing inscriptions without your order and permission, liable to the same fine if they disobey our orders.

1. Rome, August 27, in the 3rd year of our Pontificate [1518].

"Letter Appointing Raphael Inspector of Antiquities in Rome," is reprinted from A Documentary History of Art edited by Elizabeth Holt, ed. Copyright ©1981 Princeton University Press.

## Art Humanities Primary Source Reading 14

### Baldesar Castiglione

Baldesar Castiglione (1478-1529) was an Italian writer and humanist who worked and was educated at the courts of the Dukes of Milan and Urbino. It was within this context that he met such artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, with whom he was to forge a lasting friendship. Castiglione's interest in art and antiquities eventually led to his employment in acquiring works of art for Isabella d'Este and Federico II Gonzaga, and producing reports on ancient Roman archaeological sites. In 1528, he published *The Book of the Courtier*, which outlined the proper type of behavior and education for an aristocrat through a series of fictional dialogues between various historical figures and members of the court of Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino. Although at the time drawing and painting were not considered appropriate activities for the nobility, Castiglione devoted Book I of his text, from which these passages are drawn, to recommending that courtiers should learn both skills, so as to appreciate ancient and modern art, and to be able to record the images of landmarks and the proper proportions of living creatures. He also had his characters engage in a debate over the relative merits of sculpture versus painting, a popular discussion in Renaissance Italy, referred to as the *paragone*. Raphael painted portraits of his friend Castiglione on two occasions: once in 1514-1515, depicting him with the clothing and demeanor of a courtier, and once in the guise of the Persian prophet, Zoroaster, in the *School of Athens*. (Introduction by Christine Sciacca)

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER, 1528

26. "Therefore he who wishes to be a good pupil, besides performing his tasks well, must put forth every effort to resemble his master, and, if it were possible, to transform himself into his master. And when he feels that he has made some progress, it will be very profitable to observe different men of the same calling, and governing himself with that good judgment which must ever be his guide, to go about selecting now this thing from one and that thing from another. And as the bee in the green meadows is ever wont to rob the flowers among the grass, so our Courtier must steal this grace from all who seem to possess it, taking from each that part which shall most be worthy praise; and not act like a friend of ours whom you all know, who thought he greatly resembled King Ferdinand the Younger of Aragon, and made it his care to imitate the latter in nothing but a certain trick of continually raising the head and twisting one side of the mouth, which the king had contracted from some infirmity. And there are many such, who think they gain a point if only they be like a great man in some thing; and frequently they devote themselves to that which is his only fault.

"But having before now often considered whence this grace springs, laying aside those men who have it by nature, I find one universal rule concerning it, which seems to me worth more in this matter than any other in all things human that are done or said: and that is to avoid affectation to the uttermost and as it were a very sharp and dangerous rock; and, to use possibly a new word, to practise in everything a certain nonchalance that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought. From this I believe grace is in large measure derived, because everyone knows the difficulty of those things that are rare and well done, and therefore facility in them excites the highest admiration; while on the other hand, to strive and as the saying is to drag by the hair, is extremely ungraceful, and makes us esteem everything slightly, however great it be.

"Accordingly we may affirm that to be true art which does not appear to be art; nor to anything must we give greater care than to conceal art, for if it is discovered, it quite destroys our credit and brings us into small esteem. And I remember having once read that there were several very excellent orators of antiquity, who among their other devices strove to make everyone believe that they had no knowledge of letters; and hiding their knowledge they pretended that their orations were composed very simply and as if springing rather from nature and truth than from study and art; the which, if it had been detected, would have made men wary of being duped by it.

"Thus you see how the exhibition of art and study so intense destroys the grace in everything. Which of you is there who does not laugh when our friend messer Pierpaolo dances in his peculiar way, with those capers of his, legs stiff to the toe and head motionless, as if he were a stick, and with such intentness that he actually seems to be counting the steps? What eye so blind as not to see in this the ungracefulness of affectation, and in many men and women who are here present, the grace of that nonchalant ease (for in the case of bodily movements many call it thus), showing by word or laugh or gesture that they have no care and are thinking more of everything else than of that, to make the onlooker think they can hardly go amiss?"

27. Messer Bernardo Bibbiena here said, without waiting:

"Now at last our friend messer Roberto has found someone to praise the manner of his dancing, as all the

rest of you seem to value it lightly; because if this merit consists in nonchalance, and in appearing to take no heed and to be thinking more of everything else than of what you are doing, messer Roberto in dancing has no peer on earth; for to show plainly that he is not thinking about it, he often lets the cloak drop from his shoulders and the slippers from his feet, and still goes on dancing without picking up either the one or the other."

Then the Count replied:

"Since you insist on my talking, I will speak further of our faults. Do you not perceive that what you call nonchalance in messer Roberto, is really affectation? For it is clearly seen that he is striving with all his might to seem to be taking no thought, and this is taking too much thought; and since it passes the true limits of moderation, his nonchalance is affected and unbecoming; and it is a thing that works precisely the reverse of the effect intended, that is the concealment of art. Thus in nonchalance (which is praiseworthy in itself), I do not think that it is less a vice of affectation to let the clothes fall from one's back, than in care of dress (which also is praiseworthy in itself) to hold the head stiff for fear of disarranging one's locks, or to carry a mirror in the peak of one's cap and a comb in one's sleeve, and to have a valet follow one about the streets with sponge and brush: for such care in dress and such nonchalance both touch upon excess, which is always offensive and contrary to that pure and charming simplicity which is so pleasing to the human mind.

"You see how ungraceful a rider is who strives to sit bolt upright in the saddle after the manner we are wont to call Venetian, as compared with another who seems not to be thinking about it, and sits his horse as free and steady as if he were afoot. How much more pleasing and how much more praised is a gentleman who carries arms, if he be modest, speak little and boast little, than another who is forever sounding his own praises, and with blasphemy and bluster seems to be hurling defiance at the world! This too is naught but affectation of wishing to appear bold. And so it is with every exercise, nay with everything that can be done or said in the world."

28. Then my lord Magnifico said:

"This is true also with music, wherein it is a very great fault to place two perfect consonances one after the other, so that our very sense of hearing abhors it and often enjoys a second or seventh, which in itself is a harsh and intolerable discord. And the reason is that repetition of perfect consonances begets satiety and exhibits a too affected harmony; which is avoided by introducing imperfect consonances, and thus a kind of contrast is given, whereby our ears are held more in suspense, and more eagerly await and enjoy the perfect consonances, and sometimes delight in that discord of the second or seventh, as in something unpremeditated."

"You see then," replied the Count, "the harmful effect of affectation in this as in other things. It is said also to have been proverbial among some very excellent painters of antiquity, that over diligence is harmful, and Protogenes is said to have been censured by Apelles because he did not know when to take his hand from the tablet."

Then messer Cesare said:

"Methinks our friend fra Serafino has this same fault, of not knowing when to take his hands from the table, at least until all the food has been taken from it too."

The Count laughed, and continued:

"Apelles meant that in his painting Protogenes did not know when he had finished, which was the same thing as reproving him for being affected in his work. Thus this excellence, which is the opposite of affectation and which for the present we call nonchalance, besides being the true fountain from which grace springs, carries with it another ornament, which, in accompanying any human action whatever and however trifling it be, not only at once reveals the knowledge of him who performs it, but often leads us to rate his knowledge as much greater than in fact often it is; because it impresses upon the minds of the bystanders the idea that he who does well so easily, knows much more than he does, and that if he were to use care and effort in what he did, he could do it far better.

"And to multiply like examples, here is a man who handles weapons, either about to throw a dart or holding a sword in his hand or other weapon; if he nimbly and without thinking puts himself in an attitude of readiness, with such ease that his body and all his members seem to fall into that posture naturally and quite without effort, although he do no more, he will prove himself to everyone to be perfect in that exercise. Likewise in dancing, a single step, a single movement of the person that is graceful and not forced, soon shows the knowledge of the dancer. A musician who in singing utters a single note ending with sweet tone in a little group of four notes with such ease as to seem spontaneous, shows by that single touch that he can do much more than he is doing. Often too in painting, a single line not laboured, a single brush-stroke easily drawn, so that it seems as if the hand moves unbidden to its aim according to the painter's wish, without being guided by care or any skill, clearly reveals the excellence of the craftsman, which every man appreciates according to his capacity for judging. And the same is true of nearly everything else.

"Our Courtier then will be esteemed excellent and will attain grace in everything, particularly in speaking, if he avoids affectation; into which fault many fall, and often more than others, some of us Lombards; who, if they have been a year away from home, on their return at once begin to speak Roman, sometimes Spanish or French, and God knows how. And all this comes from over zeal to appear widely informed; in such fashion do men devote

care and assiduity to acquiring a very odious fault. And truly it would be no light task for me, if I were to try in these discussions of ours to use those antique Tuscan words that are quite rejected by the usage of the Tuscans of to-day; and besides I think everyone would laugh at me."

49. Then the Count said: . . . ,

"Before we enter upon that subject, I wish to discuss another matter, which I deem of great importance and therefore think our Courtier ought by no means to omit: and this is to know how to draw and to have acquaintance with the very art of painting.

"And do not marvel that I desire this art, which to-day may seem to savour of the artisan and little to befit a gentleman; for I remember having read that the ancients, especially throughout Greece, had their boys of gentle birth study painting in school as an honourable and necessary thing, and it was admitted to the first rank of liberal arts; while by public edict they forbade that it be taught to slaves. Among the Romans too, it was held in highest honour, and the very noble family of the Fabii took their name from it; for the first Fabius was given the name Pictor, because, being indeed a most excellent painter, and so devoted to painting that when he painted the walls of the temple of Health, he inscribed his own name thereon;" for although he was born of a family thus renowned and honoured with so many consular titles, triumphs and other dignities, and although he was a man of letters and learned in the law, and numbered among the orators, yet he thought to add splendour and ornament to his fame by leaving a memorial that he had been a painter. Nor is there lack of many other men of illustrious family, celebrated in this art; which besides being very noble and worthy in itself, is of great utility, and especially in war for drawing places, sites, rivers, bridges, rocks, fortresses, and the like; since however well we may keep them in memory (which is very difficult), we cannot show them to others.

"And truly he who does not esteem this art, seems to me very unreasonable; for this universal fabric that we see, with the vast heaven so richly adorned with shining stars, and in the midst the earth girdled by the seas, varied with mountains, valleys and rivers, and bedecked with so many divers trees, beautiful flowers and grasses,-may be said to be a great and noble picture, composed by the hand of nature and of God; and whoever is able to imitate it, seems to me deserving of great praise: nor can it be imitated without knowledge of many things, as he knows well who tries. Hence the ancients greatly prized both the art and the artist, which thus attained the summit of highest excellence; very sure proof of which may be found in the antique marble and bronze statues that yet are seen. And although painting is different from sculpture, both the one and the other spring from the same source, which is good design. Therefore, as the statues are divine, so we may believe the pictures were also; the more indeed because they are susceptible of greater skill."

50. – Then my lady Emilia turned to Giancristoforo Romano, who was sitting with the others there, and said:

"What think you of this opinion? Do you admit that painting is susceptible of greater skill than sculpture?"

Giancristoforo replied:

"I, my Lady, think that sculpture needs more pains, more skill, and is of greater dignity than painting."

The Count rejoined:

"In that statues are more enduring, perhaps we might say they are of greater dignity; for being made as memorials, they fulfil better than painting the purpose for which they are made. But besides serving as memorials, both painting and sculpture serve also to beautify, and in this respect painting is much superior; for if less diuturnal (so to speak) than sculpture, yet it is of very long life, and is far more charming so long as it endures."

Then Giancristoforo replied:

I really think that you are speaking against your convictions and that you are doing so solely for the sake of your friend Raphael; and perhaps too the excellence you find in his painting seems to you so consummate that sculpture cannot rival it: but consider that this is praise of an artist and not of his art."

Then he continued:

"It seems clear to me that both the one and the other are artificial imitations of nature; but I do not see how you can say that truth, such as nature makes it, is not better imitated in a marble or bronze statue, wherein the members are round, formed and measured, as nature makes them,-than in a painting, where we see nothing but the surface and those colours that cheat the eyes; nor will you tell me, surely, that being is not nearer truth than seeming. Moreover I think sculpture is more difficult, because if a slip is made, it cannot be corrected (since marble cannot be patched again), but another statue must be made anew; which does not happen with painting, for one may change a thousand times, and add and take away, improving always."

51. – The Count said, laughing:

"I am not speaking for Raphael's sake; nor ought you to repute me so ignorant as not to know the excellence of Michelangelo in sculpture, your own, and others.' But I am speaking of the art, and not of the artists.

"You say very truly that both the one and the other are imitations of nature; but it is not true that painting

seems, and sculpture is. For while statues are round as in life and painting is seen only on the surface, statues lack many things that paintings do not lack, and especially light and shade. Thus flesh has one tone and marble another; and this the painter imitates to the life by chiaroscuro, greater or less according to the need, which the sculptor cannot do. And although the painter does not make his figure round, he presents the muscles and members rounded in such fashion as so to join the parts which are not seen, that we can discern very well that the painter knows and understands these also. And in this, another and greater skill is needed to represent those members that are foreshortened and grow smaller in proportion to the distance by reason of perspective; which, by means of measured lines, colours, lights and shades, shows you foreground and distance all on the single surface of an upright wall, in such proportion as he chooses. Do you really think it of small moment to imitate the natural colours, in representing flesh or stuffs or any other coloured thing? The sculptor certainly cannot do this, or express the grace of black eyes or blue, with the splendour of their amorous beams. He cannot show the colour of fair hair, or the gleam of weapons, or a dark night, or a storm at sea, or its lightnings and thunderbolts, or the burning, of a city, or the birth of rosy dawn with its rays of gold and purple. In short, he cannot show sky, sea, earth, mountains, woods, meadows, gardens, rivers, cities, or houses, all of which the painter shows.

52. – "Therefore painting seems to me nobler and more susceptible of skill, than sculpture. And I think that it, like other things, reached the summit of excellence among the ancients: which still is seen in the few slight remains that are left, especially in the grottoes of Rome; but much more clearly may it be perceived in the ancient authors, wherein is such honoured and frequent mention both of works and of masters, and whereby we learn how highly they were always honoured by great lords and by commonwealths.

"Thus we read that Alexander loved Apelles of Ephesus dearly, -so dearly, that having caused the artist to paint a portrait of his favourite slave undraped, and hearing that the worthy painter had become most ardently enamoured of her by reason of her marvellous beauty, he gave her to Apelles without hesitation: -munificence truly worthy of Alexander, to sacrifice not only treasure and states but his very affections and desires; and sign of exceeding love for Apelles, in order to please the artist, not to hesitate at displeasing the woman he dearly loved, who (we may believe) was sorely grieved to change so great a king for a painter. Many other signs also are told of Alexander's favour to Apelles; but he very clearly showed how highly he esteemed the painter, in commanding by public edict that none other should presume to paint his portrait.

"Here I could tell you of the rivalries of many noble painters, which filled nearly the whole world with praise and wonderment. I could tell you with what solemnity ancient emperors adorned their triumphs with pictures, and set them up in public places, and how dearly bought them; and that there were some painters who gave their works as gifts, esteeming gold and silver inadequate to pay for them; and how a painting by Protogenes was prized so highly, that when Demetrius laid siege to Rhodes and could have gained an entrance by setting fire to the quarter where he knew the painting was, he refrained from giving battle so that it might not be burned, and thus did not capture the place; and that Metrodorus, a philosopher and very excellent painter, was sent by the Athenians to Lucius Paulus to teach his children and to adorn the triumph that he was about to receive. Moreover many noble authors have written about this art, which is a great sign of the esteem in which it was held; but I do not wish to enlarge further upon it in this discussion.

"So let it be enough to say that it is fitting for our Courtier to have knowledge of painting also, as being honourable and useful and highly prized in those times when men were of far greater worth than now they are. And if he should never derive from it other use or pleasure than the help it affords in judging the merit of statues ancient and modern, of vases, buildings, medals, cameos, intaglios, and the like, it also enables him to appreciate the beauty of living bodies, not only as to delicacy of face but as to symmetry of all the other parts, both in men and in every other creature. Thus you see how a knowledge of painting is a source of very great pleasure. And let those think of this, who so delight in contemplating a woman's beauty that they seem to be in paradise, and yet cannot paint; which if they could do, they would have much greater pleasure, because they would more perfectly appreciate that beauty which engenders such satisfaction in their hearts."

53. – Here messer Cesare Gonzaga laughed, and said:

"Certainly I am no painter; yet I am sure I have greater pleasure in looking upon a woman than that admirable Apelles, whom you just mentioned, would have if he were now come back to life."

The Count replied:

"This pleasure of yours is not derived wholly from her beauty, but from the affection that perhaps you bear her; and if you will say the truth, the first time you saw that woman you did not feel a thousandth part of the pleasure that you did afterwards, although her beauty was the same. Thus you may see how much more affection had to do with your pleasure, than beauty had."

"I do not deny this," said messer Cesare; "but just as my pleasure is born of affection so is affection born of beauty. Thus it may still be said that beauty is the cause of my pleasure."

The Count replied:

"Many other causes also inflame our minds, besides beauty: such as manners, knowledge, speech, gesture, and a thousand other things which in a way perhaps might also be called beauties; but above all, the consciousness of being loved. So it is possible to love very ardently even without that beauty you speak of; but the love that springs from the outward bodily beauty which we see, will doubtless give far greater pleasure to him who appreciates it more than to him who appreciates it less. Therefore, to return to our subject, I think that Apelles enjoyed the contemplation of Campaspe's beauty far more than Alexander did: for we may easily believe that both men's love sprang only from her beauty; and perhaps it was partly on this account that Alexander resolved to give her to him who seemed fitted to appreciate her most perfectly.

"Have you not read that those five maidens of Crotona, whom the painter Zeuxis chose above the others of that city for the purpose of forming from them all a single type of surpassing beauty, were celebrated by many poets as having been adjudged beautiful by one who must have been a consummate judge of beauty?

Excerpts from *The Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione, Leonard Eckstein Opdycke, trans. published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.