

ALESSANDRO NOVA

The drawings of Girolamo Romanino. Part I.*



23. *The king of Naples gives the banner to Nicolò Orsini*, by Girolamo Romanino. Detached fresco, 269 by 467 cm. (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest).

IN a seminal article published in 1970 Alessandro Ballarin announced that he was shortly to publish a book on the drawings of Girolamo Romanino.¹ Although no such book has appeared, Ballarin was evidently concerned about the state of affairs in this field, the two most systematic surveys – both published in 1965 – being somewhat inadequate.² Brief and valuable discussions of the problem had already been aired before Ballarin's essay, which concerned three drawings by Palma Vecchio, Lotto and Romanino, but his announcement seems to have inhibited any further broad investigations.³ Indeed, the most recent contributions to the subject are short notes on previously unknown sheets and entries in exhibition catalogues.⁴ The purpose of this two-part article is to outline Romanino's career as a draughtsman for the first time. No comprehensive catalogue raisonné is here attempted: only preparatory or fully documented drawings will be discussed, including recent attributions and previously overlooked evidence, in order to construct a plausible chronology

for Romanino's graphic *œuvre* and to consider some major changes in his working methods.

Romanino was born in Brescia between 1484 and 1487, but we know nothing of his first twenty years.⁵ The earliest painting convincingly attributed to him, the *Madonna and Child* purchased by the Louvre in 1984, was probably executed as late as 1507–08.⁶ In June 1508 Girolamo and his brother Giovan Giacomo hired an apprentice and promised to instruct him in the art of painting during the next six years:⁷ this means that by this date the brothers had already established an independent workshop; yet we have no clues about Girolamo's artistic education, nor has any painting produced before that date been identified.

The Louvre *Madonna* is an accomplished canvas, in which the results of Romanino's intense study of Giorgione's works are clearly visible; his early surviving *œuvre*, however, also shows traces of contacts with Lombard, specifically Milanese, sources; such a mixture might be expected in an artist

*Part II of this article will appear in a subsequent issue of the Magazine.

¹A. BALLARIN: 'Tre disegni: Palma il Vecchio Lotto Romanino (e alcune osservazioni sul ruolo del Romanino al Buonconsiglio)', *Arte Veneta*, XXIV [1970], p.50.

²H.A. PETERS: 'Bemerkungen zu oberitalienischen Zeichnungen des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, XXVII [1965], pp.129–90, is useful insofar as it made known a rare preparatory drawing and added some new items to Romanino's catalogue; but it is marred by several misattributions and does not give a clear picture of the artist's character as a draughtsman. Similarly, the catalogue of the memorable exhibition organized by Gaetano Panazza in 1965 is relatively weak from this point of view: he and his collaborators analysed the paintings with rigour, but the drawings were treated cursorily; furthermore, more than a third of the sheets exhibited were implausibly attributed to Romanino (see G. PANAZZA, A. DAMIANI and B. PASSAMANI: *Mostra di Girolamo Romanino*, exh.cat., Duomo Vecchio, Brescia [1965], pp.226–49).

³For brief essays on Romanino's drawings, see A. MORASSI: 'Alcuni disegni inediti del Romanino' in *Festschrift Karl M. Svoboda zum 28. Januar 1959*, Vienna and Wiesbaden [1959], pp.189–92; L. PUPPI: 'Novità e proposte per il Romanino grafico', *Arte veneta*, XIX [1965], pp.44–52; and F. KOSOFF in R. VAN N. HADLEY: *Drawings. Isabella*

Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston [1968], pp.20–22.

⁴J.Q. VAN REGTEREN ALTENA: 'Romanino's Sketch for "Augustus and the Sibyl"', *Master Drawings*, XVI [1978], pp.43–45. As examples of the best catalogue entries, see W.R. REARICK: *Tiziano e il disegno veneziano del suo tempo*, exh.cat., Uffizi, Florence [1976], pp.123–31; E. LUCCHESI RAGNI, in *Bergamo per Lorenzo Lotto*, exh.cat., Accademia Carrara, Bergamo [1980], pp.104–07; and F. VIATTE, in *Le siècle de Titien. L'âge d'or de la peinture à Venise*, exh.cat., Grand Palais, Paris [1993], pp.485–86.

⁵Romanino's approximate birthdate may be inferred from his tax returns, in which the artist declared that he was thirty-three, forty-seven, and sixty-two years old in 1517, 1534, and 1548 respectively (s. FENAROLI: *Dizionario degli artisti bresciani*, Brescia [1877], pp.282–85). The tax returns are in the Biblioteca Queriniiana, Brescia (Archivio Storico Civico, nos.38, 32, and 165).

⁶For this very damaged canvas, see the entry by S. BÉGUIN: 'Girolamo di Romano, dit Romanino' in J. FOUCAUT and M. LACLOTTE: *Nouvelles Acquisitions du Département des Peintures (1983–1986)*, exh.cat., Louvre, Paris [1987], p.197–98, and the entry by A. BALLARIN in *Le siècle de Titien* cited at note 4 above, pp.391–92.

⁷The document was published by C. BOSELLI: *Regesto artistico dei notai roganti in Brescia dall'anno 1500 all'anno 1560*, Brescia [1977], II, pp.80–81.



24. *Madonna and Child between Sts Louis of Toulouse and Roch with three angels*, by Girolamo Romanino. c.1517-18. Panel, 169 by 120 cm. (Destroyed; formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin).



25. *Head of St Roch*, by Girolamo Romanino. Black chalk on blue paper, heightened with white, 39.6 by 26.7 cm. (Uffizi, Florence).

from Brescia, which is approximately fifty-five miles east of Milan and some eighty miles west of Venice. This confluence of styles is what we see in Romanino's earliest fresco cycle of c.1509 (Fig.23), painted for the loggia of the *condottiere* Nicolò Orsini's palace at Ghedi,⁸ where Bramantinesque architecture provides a backdrop for Giorgionesque figures. But, for our present purposes, it is more significant that in these monumental fragments several outlines are incised with a stylus, suggesting that Romanino may have made use of large preparatory cartoons. This was a procedure then more common in Lombardy than Venice and one which he never used again on such a scale in his numerous fresco cycles. Romanino went on to fresco the walls of several large churches, such as S. Maria della Neve at Pisogne, and of many palaces, including the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trent, but after 1509 we rarely find evidence of pouncing or stylus incisions, and when they are present they are usually confined to minor decorative details.⁹ As we shall see, Romanino's drawings on

paper were created as flexible sources of inspiration: he found it not only possible but desirable to depart from them, and improvisation soon became his guiding principle. Red or ochre underdrawings have occasionally been found under the plaster of his frescoes, but caution is needed when interpreting this evidence as such sketches are sometimes simply fragmentary remains of fresco left by imperfect nineteenth-century *strappi* (for example in the two *Suppers* found at Rodengo Saiano during the 1979 restoration).¹⁰ But this is not always the case: Romanino did sometimes make true preparatory drawings on the wall, for example, in the chapel of St Roch at Villongo S. Filastrio around 1526-28, where the head of the Virgin in the drawing was made with the brush directly on the *intonachino* under the *Madonna and Child between Sts Roch and Sebastian*, tilted in the opposite direction from that painted in the final fresco; moreover, in the underdrawing the Child does not look in our direction, as he does in the fresco, but turns his gaze towards St Sebastian.¹¹

⁸The three surviving fragments from the loggia are now in the Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest (inv. nos.1234, 1235 and 1236). Their attribution is still controversial (see for example B. PASSAMANI: *Guida della Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo di Brescia*, Brescia [1988], p.53), but most experts now agree with Longhi's suggestion that they be ascribed to Romanino (see R. LONGHI: 'Di un libro sul Romanino', *L'Arte*, XXIX [1926], p.147).

⁹The only exception known to me is the vault of the loggia in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trent, where Romanino incised the general outlines of the composition directly on the plaster; but it is significant that he did not follow these marks during the execution of his fresco (see E. CHINI: 'Gli affreschi di Girolamo Romanino nella Loggia del Castello del Buonconsiglio dopo il restauro' in *Il Romanino a Trento*, ed. E. CHINI, Milan [1983], p.16).

¹⁰As Anelli has pointed out, the 'underdrawings' of the *Supper at Emmaus* and of the *Supper in the House of Simon* found in 1979 in the refectory of the Benedictine abbey at Rodengo (the frescoes were purchased by the Comune of Brescia for the Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo in 1882) are not sinopie but 'uno strato di pittura ad affresco saldamente impregnato all'intonaco, che resistette allo strappo' (L. ANELLI: 'Romanino e Moretto all'Abbazia. Pretesto per un primo profilo della decorazione pittorica del Monastero nei secoli XVI-XVII-XVIII' in *Atti delle 'Prime Giornate di Studio' sulla storia della abbazia di Rodengo*, Rodengo [1981], p.88).

¹¹For a detailed discussion of these frescoes, see G. PANAZZA: *Affreschi di Girolamo Romanino*, Milan [1965], pp.26-28, and A. NOVA: *Girolamo Romanino*, Turin [1994], pp.260-61.



26. *St Roch*, by Girolamo Romanino. Red chalk on beige paper, 25.1 by 13.2 cm. (Musée Bonnat, Bayonne).



27. *Scene of martyrdom (?beheading)*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink over red chalk, heightened with white, on blue paper, 26.7 by 19.2 cm. (Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth).

26.

27.

After the indirect evidence given by the cycle for Nicolò Orsini, the first surviving drawings by Romanino date from about 1517–18 when he was already approximately thirty years old. Unfortunately, the charcoal sketches on the back of his *Madonna and Child between Sts Bonaventure and Sebastian* (c.1517) in the Duomo of Salò have, to the best of my knowledge, never been photographed: they were discovered during the 1913 restoration, and show a frame in addition to four fighting figures.¹² Similar charcoal sketches appear on the backs of the *St Jerome* and *St Alexander* in the National Gallery in London: these two panels belong to the polyptych Romanino painted in 1524–25 for the church of S. Alessandro in Brescia.¹³

This rather meagre evidence of Romanino's early activity as a draughtsman is fortunately supplemented by the wealth of information on his working methods provided by his first surviving preparatory drawing on paper. The head of *St Roch* (Fig.25) in the Uffizi was once attributed to the Cremonese painter Altobello Melone,¹⁴ but in 1957 Mina Gregori recognised it as a preparatory drawing for the altar-piece of the *Madonna and Child between Sts Louis of Toulouse and Roch*

with three angels (Fig.24) of c.1517–18. In the sixteenth century this panel was in the church of S. Francesco, Brescia, where it was seen and praised by Vasari, and it was later purchased by Solly who left it to the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin, where it was destroyed during World War II.¹⁵ The Uffizi sheet is the earliest known preparatory drawing by Romanino, and also his only surviving study from a living model. The head is drawn with a soft black chalk on blue paper, a typically Venetian technique: indeed, Romanino made extensive use of coloured or tinted papers well into the 1530s, at which time he seems to have abandoned this practice in favour of rapid sketches in brown ink on white paper. In addition to his drawings on a red-tinted paper, which are all connected with his sojourn in Trent and will therefore be discussed later, one should at least mention his *St Roch* in Bayonne (Fig.26), drawn in red chalk on beige paper,¹⁶ his *Scene of Martyrdom (?beheading)* at Chatsworth (Fig.27), on blue paper,¹⁷ and a drawing of horsemen in Budapest on light brown-toned blue paper (Fig.30). The most unusual aspect of the Uffizi drawing, however, is its function. The sheet measures 39.6 by 26.7 cm. and the height of the lost altar-piece

and P. BAROCCHI, V, *Testo*, Florence [1984], p.429. For a detailed discussion of the provenance, original appearance, and chronology of this lost panel, see NOVA, *op.cit.* at note 11 above, pp.229–31. The drawing has been exhibited in Florence in 1976 (REARICK, *op.cit.* at note 4 above, p.127) and in Paris in 1993 (VIATTE, *op.cit.* at note 4 above, p.485).

¹⁶ Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, inv. no.1214: red chalk on beige paper; 25.1 by 13.2 cm. (see J. BEAN: *Les dessins italiens de la collection Bonnat*, Paris [1960], no.144).

¹⁷ Chatsworth, Duke of Devonshire, inv. no.759: pen and brown ink over red chalk, heightened with white, on blue paper; 26.7 by 19.2 cm. (see D. SCRASE in *The Genius of Venice*, exh.cat., Royal Academy, London [1983], p.275).

¹² See C. RICCI: 'Salò. Quadro del Romanino', *Bollettino d'arte*, VII [1913], p.388.

¹³ For the sketches on the backs of Romanino's *St Jerome* and *St Alexander*, see M. DAVIES: *Paintings and drawings on the backs of National Gallery Pictures*, London [1946], pls.2–5.

¹⁴ Florence, Uffizi, inv. no.2108F: black chalk on blue paper, heightened with white, a large brown blot on the left-hand side and several smaller ink blots on the entire surface of the sheet, a small hole in the middle; 39.6 by 26.7 cm.

¹⁵ M. GREGORI: 'Altobello e G.F. Bembo', *Paragone*, VIII [1957], no.93, p.38, note 2. The altar-piece was mentioned by Vasari in his life of Garofalo and Girolamo da Carpi (see G. VASARI: *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. R. BETTARINI



28. *Ecce Homo*, by Girolamo Romanino. Fresco. (Cremona Cathedral).

was 169 cm.: the sketch, which corresponds in almost every detail except for the halo to what was later executed, was therefore used as a lifesize *modello*.¹⁸ This was a highly unusual procedure for Romanino, indeed unique as far as we know from the surviving evidence. When we examine the artist's second surviving preparatory drawing (Fig.29),¹⁹ a sketch made in 1519 for the fresco of the *Ecce Homo* (Fig.28) in the nave of Cremona cathedral, we already notice certain differences between the project and the final product: such changes are typical of Romanino's working method.

Like the drawing in the Uffizi, this sketch is also in black chalk on a rather large sheet (33.8 by 24.4 cm.): however, the paper is white and the two figures are considerably smaller than their counterparts in the fresco. Romanino's paintings in the nave of Cremona cathedral are usually dated 1519–20 because the artist was hired in August 1519 and then dismissed in August 1520;²⁰ but an analysis of the documents in the *Liber Provisionum* in the Archivio della Curia Vescovile in Cremona suggests that he did no more work after the end of 1519. It is well known that on 31st December 1519 the administrators (*massari*) of the cathedral commissioned Romanino to paint the last six scenes of the Passion cycle and at the same time instructed two carpenters to build the scaffolding for his use. It has, however, not previously been noted that on the same day the *massari* drew up another contract with the same carpenters: according to this document, they undertook to build an enormous scaffolding the whole length of the nave (*in capite ad trevinam ad oculum porte platee magne*), so that the



29. *Two male figures*, by Girolamo Romanino. 1519. Black chalk, 33.8 by 24.4 cm. (Private collection, Milan).

dust could be removed from the figures '*pictis in parietibus seu muro dicti navis ab utroque latere*'.²¹ These works of maintenance had to be carried out between the feast of the Resurrection and that of the Assumption on 15th August 1520. It now becomes clear why Romanino was dismissed only on 20th August 1520, when he was replaced by Pordenone. The hard Lombard winter was too cold to paint frescoes inside the cathedral, and from Easter the workers were busy removing the dust from the frescoes: during the first seven and a half months of the year work on the cycle was probably halted, and only towards the end of the summer were the disputes over the artists involved in this affair settled. This means that Romanino must have finished his portion of the frescoes before 31st December and that the preparatory drawing therefore must also be dated to 1519, probably to the end of the summer.

The sketch is amazingly free and profoundly anticlassical in its eccentric figure-types. The man in the foreground is almost identical to what we see in the fresco, although his foot and right hand are slightly different; but the figure seen from behind has been changed and turned around: his rich garments have been replaced by a mantle, and his curious,

¹⁸I. KUNZE: *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Gemälde*, Berlin [1931], p.402, gives the measurements as 169 by 120 cm. J. MEYER and W. BODE: *Gemäldegalerie. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis*, Berlin [1878], p.318, give 139 by 120 cm., but this must be a misprint.

¹⁹Art market, Milan; black chalk on white paper; 33.8 by 24.4 cm. Later inscriptions: '49' and '86' in brown ink at the lower right, and '4' in pencil at the upper right. Sold Sotheby's, London, 21st June 1978, lot 2, as a preparatory drawing by Romanino for his *Ecce Homo* fresco in Cremona.

²⁰For the well-known documentation concerning these frescoes, see the transcription

by R. BARBISOTTI in M.L. FERRARI: *Il Romanino*, Milan [1961], pp.81–88. However, it has only recently been pointed out that the artist who evaluated Romanino's work was not the unknown Martino 'Tuclagnum' or Guadagni, as suggested by the old transcription, but Martino 'Tochagnum', that is Martino Piazza (see M. MARUBBI in *I Piazza da Lodi. Una tradizione di pittori nel Cinquecento*, ed. G.C. SCIOLLA, Milan [1989], p.353).

²¹Cremona, Archivio della Curia Vescovile, *Liber Provisionum* of the Cathedral, I.C.2243, 31st December 1519.



30. *Men on horseback riding to the right*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink, on brown-toned blue paper, 28 by 26.9 cm. (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest).

almost twisted face has been made more regular.

The next item (Fig.30), the vibrant sketch of horsemen now in Budapest, is less securely connected,²² but it is very difficult to resist associating it with a large canvas by Romanino mentioned in an early source. Marcantonio Michiel records in 1525 a tempera painting of a scene of cavalry by Romanino then in the celebrated collection of the Venetian nobleman Taddeo Contarini,²³ who was described as *'el richo'* in Sanudo's *Diarii* the same year.²⁴ 1525 is, of course, only a *terminus ante quem*; nevertheless, if the Budapest drawing is in fact connected with the lost work, the latter must have been painted around that date because the style of draughtsmanship is close to that of a drawing in Düsseldorf (Fig.31) which can be dated to the winter of 1524–25. Only two scholars have attempted to relate the Budapest sheet to specific works by Romanino, namely the fresco cycle in the loggia of the main courtyard in the Colleoni Castle at Malpaga near Bergamo and the *Crucifixion* on the interior façade of S. Maria della Neve at Pisogne.²⁵ However, none of the frescoes at Malpaga corresponds with the sketch; furthermore, in the view of the present writer the cycle must be dated to around

1535. As far as the *Crucifixion* in Pisogne is concerned, it should be noted that the group of riders is organised in a very different way. The Tietzes, who were the first to attribute the drawing to Romanino, gave it the straightforward title: *Men on horseback riding to the right*.²⁶ This is correct and revealing: they are neither standing in front of the cross nor engaging in battle; what we see is the animated confusion taking place before a battle or simply before a parade. Some horsemen are helmetless, and the assistance provided by the grooms (note the legs of one of them drawn behind the first horse) proves that we are witnessing the preliminaries of an event: indeed, the horsemen enter the scene from the left-hand side as if they were drawing up in fighting order, and this fits well the very unusual subject depicted by Romanino in his large canvas for Taddeo Contarini, which Michiel describes as an *'ordinanza di cavalli'*.

Romanino's style of drawing in 1524–25 is securely documented by a preparatory sketch (Fig.31) for one of the organ shutters in S. Andrea at Asola (Fig.32).²⁷ The differences between the sheet and the final product are so great that it might be questioned whether the sketch is in fact a prepara-

²²Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum, inv. no.1990: pen and brown ink on light brown-toned blue paper, several blots; 28.0 by 26.9 cm. (see I. FENYŐ: *Norditalienische Handzeichnungen aus dem Museum der Bildenden Künste*, exh.cat., Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest [1965], pp.48–49, and L. ZENTAI in *Leonardo to Van Gogh. Master Drawings from Budapest*, exh.cat., National Gallery, Washington [1985], p.32, no.8).

²³J. MORELLI: *Notizia d'opere di disegno*, ed. G. FRIZZONI, Bologna [1884], p.165: *'La tela grande a colla dell'ordinanza di cavalli fu de mano de Jeronimo Romanin Bressano'*.

²⁴M. SANUDO: *Diarii*, XXXVIII, c. 153 (quoted in S. SETTIS: *La 'Tempesta' interpretata. Giorgione, i committenti, il soggetto*, Turin [1978], p.148).

²⁵For the Malpaga proposal, see L. PUPPI: *Disegni veneti al museo di Belle Arti di*

Budapest', *Arte veneta*, XIII–XIV [1959–60], p.289; for the connexion with the *Crucifixion* in Pisogne, see ZENTAI, *loc.cit.* at note 22 above.

²⁶H. TIETZE and E. TIETZE CONRAT: *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, New York [1944], p.119: listed under Bordon, but then attributed to Romanino in the entry.

²⁷Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum, F.P. 4843; pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, on white paper, pasted on paper; 20.8 by 31.2 cm. Later inscriptions: '30' in pen and black ink at the bottom right, and 'Vinckboons/Romanino V R A' on the verso.



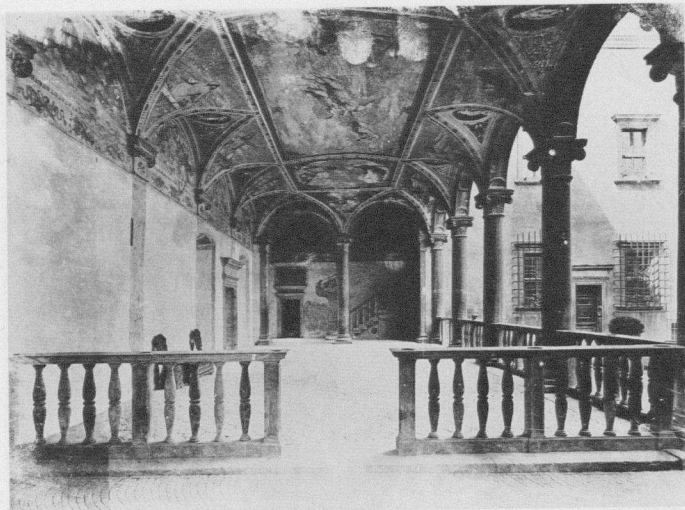
31. *Apparition of the Virgin to Augustus and the Tiburtine sibyl*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink with brown wash over black chalk, 20.8 by 31.2 cm. (Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf).



32. *Apparition of the Virgin to Augustus and the Tiburtine sibyl*, by Girolamo Romanino. Tempera. 500 by 230 cm. (Asola Cathedral).

tory drawing for this canvas. Although the relationship between the emperor and the sibyl is similar in both, the position and orientation of the groom in the organ shutter is quite different, and the picture field is filled up with additional figures replacing the splendid landscape of the drawing. Perhaps most importantly, the sheet is horizontal in format, whereas the shutter is vertical. It is therefore not impossible that Romanino reused a drawing previously produced for a different purpose. Yet I would not question the direct connexion between the Düsseldorf drawing and the organ shutter in Asola, first made fifteen years ago by I. Q. Van Regteren Altena.²⁸ The sketch, in pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk, is fairly small (20.8 by 31.2 cm.), especially if compared with the gigantic organ shutter (500 by 230 cm.), but if we analyse the canvas with care, the painter's mental process becomes clear. It is likely that from the project's inception the upper half of the shutter was to be occupied by the sky with the apparition of the Virgin; and this means that Romanino had to seek compositional ideas only for the bottom half of the canvas, which can more easily be related to the format of the drawing. The addition of the miraculous apparition in the upper left corner of the sketch had a purely decorative function, helping to complete the narrative and transforming the sketch drawing into an independent work. But this detail was not immediately germane to the problems that the artist was investigating in this sheet. Here Romanino reveals himself in his true dimension of improviser, jotting down the principal outlines of the composition which were then drastically reworked during the execution. In painting his canvas Romanino seems to have followed the impulse of the moment, and this unstructured approach is typical of him. The radical changes he introduced were undoubtedly stimulated by the particular type of work he was creating: organ shutters were painted on very

²⁸VAN REGTEREN ALTENA, *loc.cit.* at note 4 above.

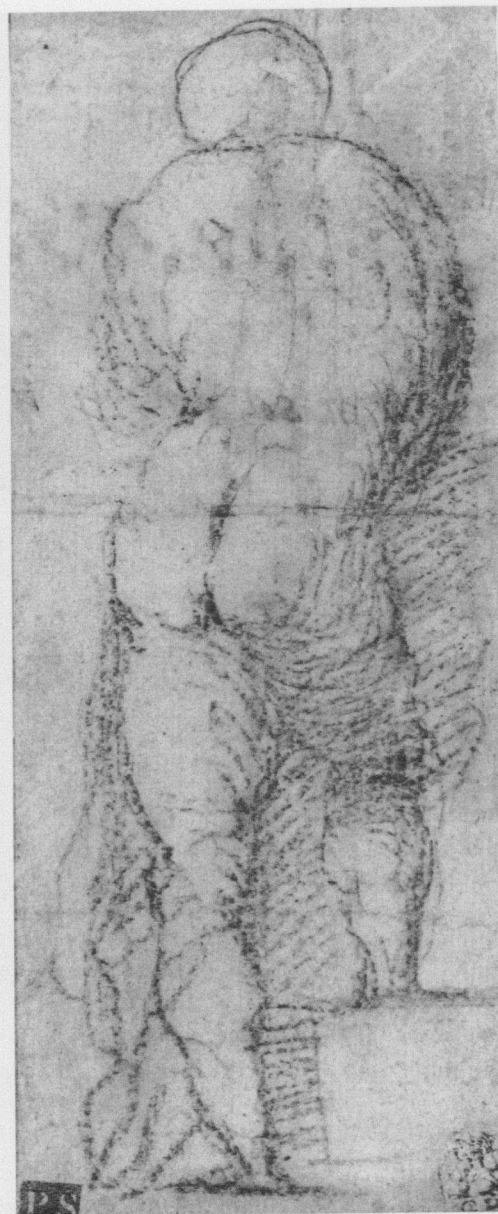


33. Loggia of the Cortile dei Leoni, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent.

thin linen canvases which required little priming and invited a free, *sprezzatura* style highly suitable to Romanino's improvisatory tendencies.

If we are correct in cataloguing this drawing as a preparatory sketch for the organ shutter, then this sheet is extremely important evidence in our quest for a reliable chronology, for the Asola commission is fully documented. The organ shutters were ordered by the Comunità on 1st December 1524: according to the contract, they should have been completed by Lent, but the artist did not respect the deadline, and the canvases, which were executed in Brescia, arrived in Asola only on 28th July 1525.²⁹

Six years later, during the summer of 1531, Romanino moved to Trent where he collaborated with the Dossi brothers, Marcello Fogolino and many other artists in the decoration of the majestic palace built by the powerful Cardinal Bernardo Clesio.³⁰ His most important contribution was to fresco the magnificent loggia in the *cortile dei leoni* (Fig.33):³¹ the vault is painted with the *Chariot of the Sun* surrounded by the four seasons, and the twenty spandrels are decorated with ovals containing monochrome figures in *trompe-l'œil* niches richly ornamented with fictive golden mosaics. It is highly characteristic of Romanino's way of working that a red-chalk drawing recently on the market in Milan (Fig.34)³² can be connected with no less than three of these monochrome figures without being preparatory for any in the technical sense of the word.³³ The same is true of two other sketches in brown ink (Figs.36 and 41);³⁴ probably made in preparation for two of the *ignudi* (Figs.38 and 39) in the pendentives, but this con-



34. *Nude seen from the back*, by Girolamo Romanino. Red chalk, 15.4 by 6.1 cm. (Present whereabouts unknown).

nexion can be made only by those who have a certain familiarity with the artist's *œuvre* and working method. Romanino painted very fast and enjoyed improvising on the plaster: the drawings and occasional incisions with the stylus served only as approximate guides. The rapidity of his execution has been confirmed by the analyses carried out during the restoration of the frescoes in the loggia: for example, in almost all cases the lunettes – in which the painter made a

nude flanked by two putti (Fig.41) is in the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts in San Francisco, inv. no.1969.21: pen and brown ink on red-tinted paper; 13.7 by 18.5 cm. (see w. VITZTHUM: *Italian Drawings from North American Collections*, exh.cat., Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, and Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal [1970], no.1). A third drawing often discussed in the Giorgione-Titian literature (Fig.35), a *Naked woman seen from behind* (Lausanne, Coll. Jacqueline Ströhl, pen and brown ink on cream-coloured paper, 19.9 by 12.7 cm.), has been convincingly connected with the loggia by U. RUGGERI: 'Due nuovi disegni di Tiziano', in J. MANCA, ed.: *Titian 500 (Studies in the History of Art, 45)*, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Symposium Papers XXV, Hanover and London [1993], p.85. See also c. HOPE: 'Tagungen. Titian 500', *Kunstchronik*, 44 [1991], p.251, who endorsed the attribution. However, the attribution to Romanino had already been made by A. MORASSI: 'Un disegno e un dipinto sconosciuti di Giorgione', *Emporium*, CXXI-CXXII [1955], p.159 note 1, as well as by PETERS, *loc.cit.* at note 2 above, p.155.

²⁹A. BESUTTI: 'La chiesa cattedrale di Asola', *Brixia Sacra*, VI [1915], p.133.

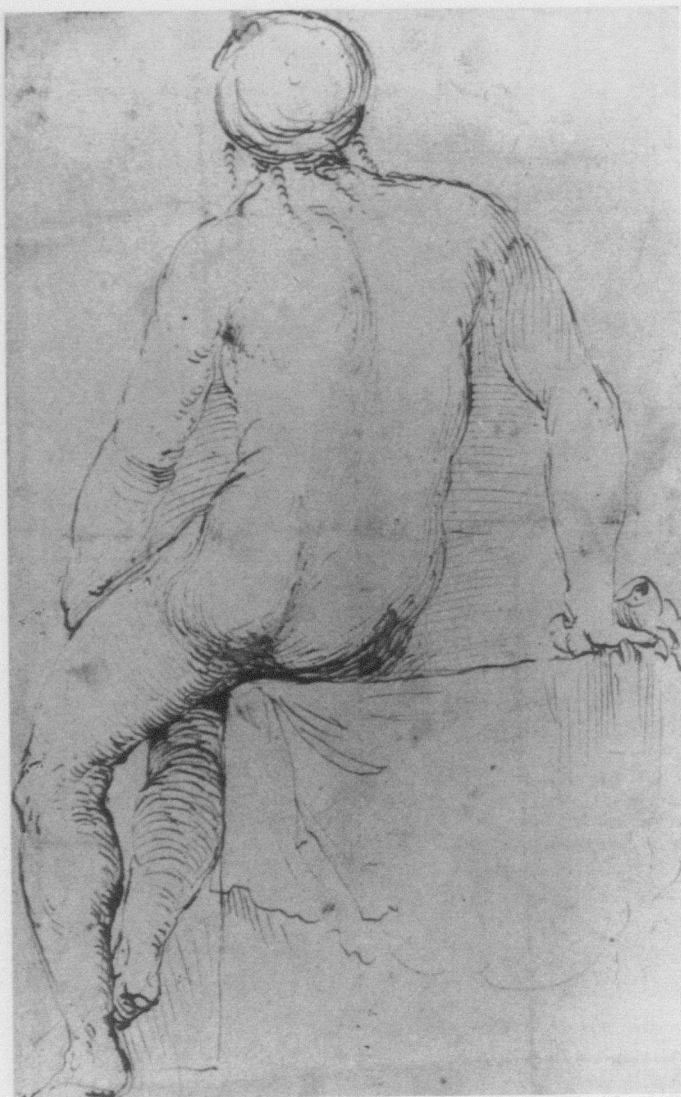
³⁰The bibliography on the fresco cycles executed by Romanino in this palace is extensive: for a comprehensive survey, see NOVA, *op.cit.* at note 11 above, pp.270–84. On Clesio, see P. PRODI, ed.: *Bernardo Clesio e il suo tempo*, Rome [1987].

³¹The frescoes were restored in 1985–86 by P. Cristani with the collaboration of the Studio E.F.P. (see E. GHINI and P. CRISTANI: *Gli affreschi del Romanino nella Loggia del Castello del Buonconsiglio. Documentazione grafica del restauro (1985–1986)*, Trent [1986]).

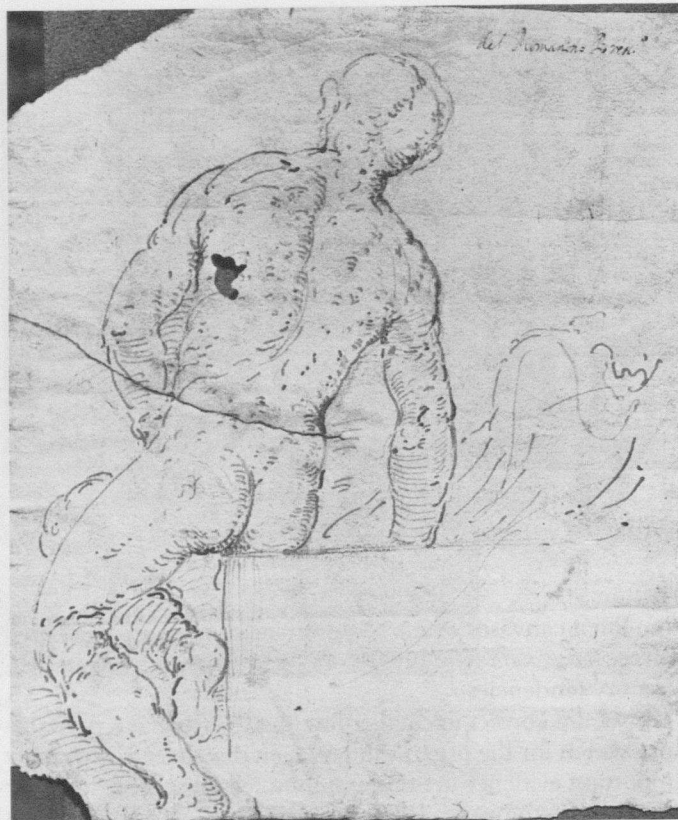
³²R. GILLI: *Disegni lombardi*, Milan [s.d., 1985], no.8: red chalk; 15.4 by 6.1 cm. Provenance: Counts Palatine of the Rhine (L. 620) (?); Paul Sandby (L. 2112); sold Sotheby's, London, 28th June 1979, lot 7.

³³The convincing connexion was first made in the Sotheby's auction catalogue (see note 32 above), and confirmed by R. BOSSAGLIA: 'Il ciclo di Trento nel percorso del Romanino' in PRODI, *op.cit.* at note 30 above, p.413.

³⁴The *Male nude seen from the back* was sold as Romanino at Finarte, Milan, 28th June 1977, lot 6: pen and brown ink on white paper; size unknown; inscribed 'Romanino' at the upper right corner (see LUCCHESI RAGNI, *loc.cit.* at note 4 above). The *Lying*



35. *Naked woman seen from the back*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and brown ink on cream-coloured paper, 19.9 by 12.7 cm. (Jacqueline Ströhlin collection, Lausanne).



36. *Male nude seen from the back*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink. (Size and present whereabouts unknown).

37. *Woman surrounded by putti*, by Girolamo Romanino. Brush and ink on red-tinted paper, 18.5 by 18.9 cm. (Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin).



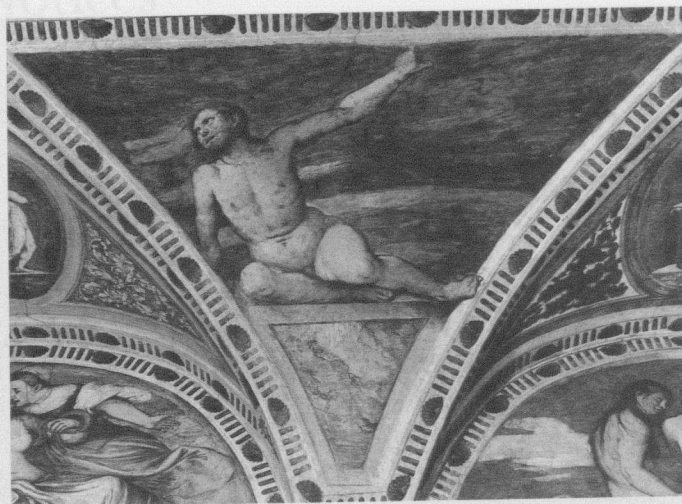
series of underdrawings in red and ochre directly on the *intonachino* – were executed in only one *giornata* each, though the area covered is almost three square metres. His frenzy reminds us of Michelangelo's rapidity in executing the Sistine lunettes and, like Michelangelo's sketches in Oxford, the drawings of the two *ignudi* made by Romanino were also generic guidelines which could be drastically altered during the execution of the fresco. The Achenbach sheet (Fig.41) is particularly revealing of the artist's working practice: it is related to the beardless figure (Fig.40) with his hair ruffled by the wind (note how his left arm is bent and the horizontal position of his legs), but there are two major variants: Romanino eliminated the *putti* and lowered the bent arm; moreover, the legs do not exactly match the legs of this *ignudo*, but are close to those of another figure (Fig.39) frescoed in the corresponding pendentive on the opposite side of the loggia. Romanino continued to elaborate his ideas until the very moment in which he mixed his pigments with the wet plaster.

Another remarkable aspect of the San Francisco sheet is that the white paper is tinted with red. This is also true of three other drawings which, in the present writer's view, also belong to Romanino's sojourn in Trent: a *Woman surrounded by putti* in Berlin (Fig.37);³⁵ a *Group of ignudi with a dog* in Vien-

³⁵Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no.25174: brush and brown ink on red-tinted paper, torn in the upper corners, some ink blots; 18.5 by 18.9 cm. On the mount: 'ROMANINO-WRR' [Rearick] and 'Kopie nach Romanino K.O.' [Oberhuber] (see A. NOVA: *Girolamo Romanino. Introduzione a un catalogo ragionato*, unpublished dissertation, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Milan, 1986, pp.312–13).



38. *Male nude seen from the back*, by Girolamo Romanino. Fresco. (Loggia, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent).



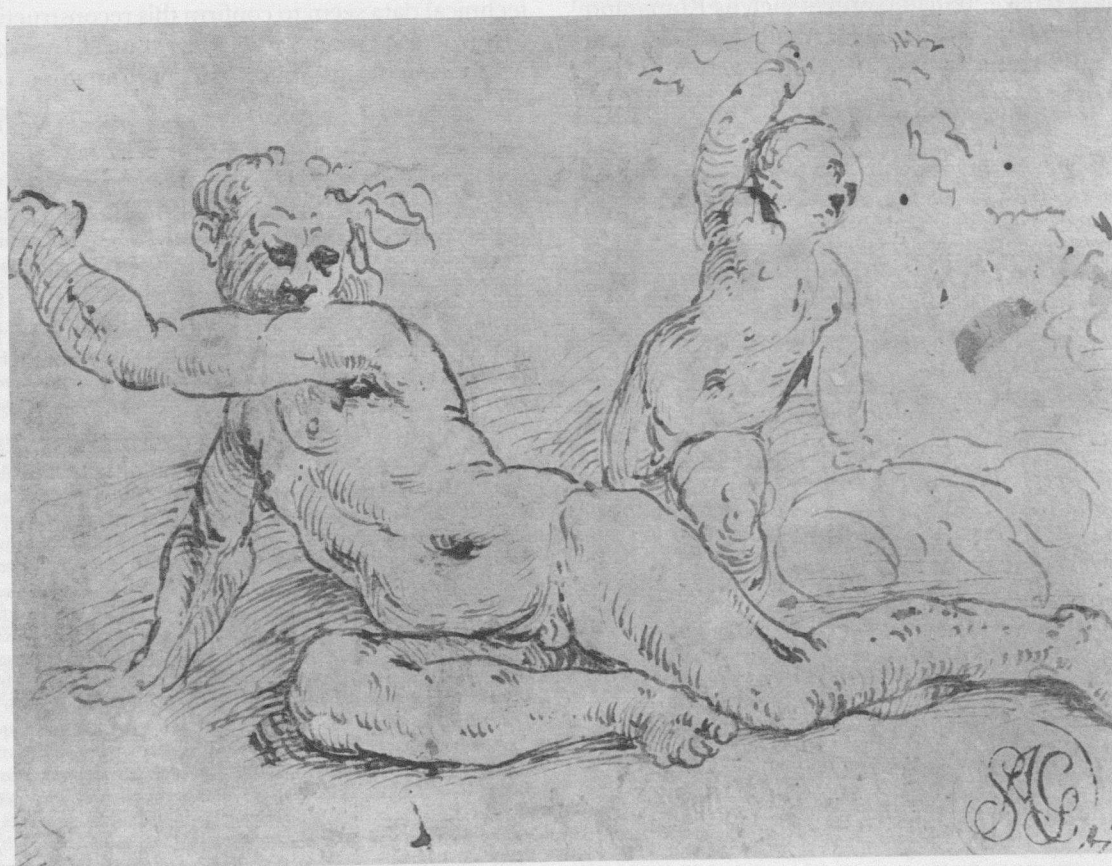
39.

39. *Male nude*, by Girolamo Romanino. Fresco. (Loggia, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent).

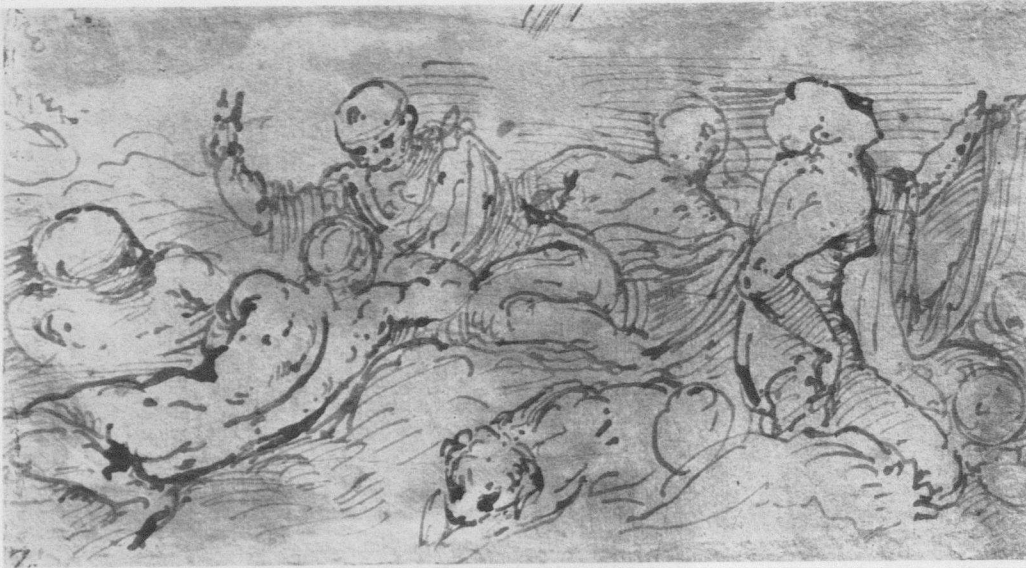


40.

40. *Male nude*, by Girolamo Romanino. Fresco. (Loggia, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trent).



41. *Lying nude flanked by two putti*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink on red-tinted paper, 13.7 by 18.5 cm. (Achenbach Foundation, San Francisco).



42. *Group of nudes with a dog*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and ink on red-tinted paper, 9.9 by 18.4 cm. (Albertina, Vienna).

na (Fig.42),³⁶ and a *Naked woman seen from behind with three putti*, also in Vienna (Fig.43).³⁷ As far as the last is concerned, it should be noted that the inscriptions 'pressanone' and 'Perssanone', which have never elicited any comment, obviously refer to Bressanone (Brixen), the beautiful town approximately sixty-five miles north of Trent. It is therefore likely that these drawings were all executed in Trent and/or its immediate surroundings, and it is quite characteristic of Romanino's receptiveness that the technique of preparing the ground with a red colour was traditionally used by German artists such as Altdorfer and Baldung Grien.³⁸ The territory between Trent and Brixen, which is the border between Italian and German cultures, was naturally open to this type of cultural exchange. For example, on the building-site of Cardinal Clesio's palace, Italian painters such as Romanino and German craftsmen, including Bartholomäus Dill, the son of Tilman Riemenschneider, worked together in the same rooms.³⁹ It is typical of Romanino's curiosity that he

was eager to experiment with a technique which had been made more readily available to him by these unusual circumstances.

Black-and-white photographs cannot do justice to one of Romanino's major attractions as a draughtsman, his brilliant and creative use of coloured papers. The Venetian blue sheets were an ideal background for his early black and red chalk drawings. In the 1530s, as he became more interested in Northern models which enriched his earlier interest in Venetian painting, he produced frenzied pen sketches on red-tinted paper, a technique most effectively used by German artists although also known in Italy. While the chronology of the artist's drawings offered here is based on connecting preparatory sheets with his documented works, technical data seem to confirm this reconstruction. In Part II of this article I shall consider the drawings associable with the works from the last thirty years of Romanino's career.

University of Frankfurt



43. *Naked woman seen from the back with three putti*, by Girolamo Romanino. Pen and brown ink on red-tinted paper, 15.7 by 17.9 cm. (Albertina, Vienna).

³⁶Vienna, Albertina, inv. no.25.000: pen and brown ink on red-tinted paper; 9.9 by 18.4 cm. Traditionally attributed to Paris Bordone (see A. STIX and L. FRÖHLICH-BUM: *Die Zeichnungen der Venezianischen Schule (Beschreibender Katalog der Handzeichnungen in der Graphischen Sammlung Albertina)*, Vienna [1926], p.205), it was ascribed to Romanino by the TIETZES (*op.cit.* at note 26 above, p.121). O. BENESCH and K. OBERHUBER: *Disegni Veneti dell'Albertina di Vienna*, exh.cat., Fondazione Cini, Venice [1961], pp.30-31, published it as Girolamo Romanino (?), but in the entry they seem to prefer the old attribution to Bordone. The drawing has recently been attributed to Romanino's son-in-law, Lattanzio Gambara (see U. RUGGERI: *Disegni Veneti dell'Ambrosiana*, exh.cat., Fondazione Cini, Venice [1979], p.35).

³⁷Vienna, Albertina, inv. no.32.976: pen and brown ink on red-tinted paper; 15.7 by 17.9 cm.; inscribed 'Perssanone'. Attributed to Romanino (with a question mark) by BENESCH and OBERHUBER, *op.cit.* at note 36 above, p.31. Florence Kossoff also ascribed it to Romanino (see PANAZZA *et al.*, *op.cit.* at note 2 above, p.249). It is worth pointing out that the two drawings now in Vienna were in the same anonymous collection (for the collector mark Z, see F. LUGT: *Les Marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes*, The Hague [1956], vol. I, p. 505, either no.2680 or no.2683 'Marque non identifiée, relevée sur des dessins anciens de l'école allemande'), and that the San Francisco sheet has also a Viennese provenance: the latter was in the collection of D. Artaria who died in 1936 (see VITZTHUM, *loc.cit.* at note 34 above). This suggests that they all belonged to one group which was purchased, probably in Trent, by an Austrian collector who might have thought that they were drawn by German artists.

³⁸Parmigianino and other Italian artists also used this technique. According to Popham's catalogue, Parmigianino's first sketch in pen and brown ink on pink-tinted paper dates from around 1522 (see A.E. POPHAM: *Catalogue of the Drawings of Parmigianino*, New Haven and London [1971], I, p.86, no.161). In Florence the technique was already used in the Quattrocento, by Lippi and Ghirlandaio, for example, but Romanino's sources were different.

³⁹Dill executed the maiolica floor of Clesio's bedroom, and in the same room Romanino frescoed the frieze (see G. GEROLA: *Il Castello del Buonconsiglio e il Museo Nazionale di Trento*, Rome [1934], pp.123-24).