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Il Bronzino (1530-72): A Short Biography

Liana De Girolami Cheney

Il Bronzino or *Bronzino*, Agnolo di Cosimo Mariano di Agnolo di Antonio di Agnolo di Toro, was born 17 November 1503, in the town of Monticello, near San Frediano, outside Florence, and died on 23 November 1572 in Florence (Fig. 1). His surname, *Il Bronzino* or *Bronzino* (little bronze), refers to the color of his hair or skin tone.¹ There is limited information on his family, none on his mother, Felice, or his siblings, although it is known that his father was a butcher. A commentary notes that Bronzino came from an “honest, humble and poor family.”²

Bronzino commences his artistic education at the age of eleven as a pupil of the Florentine painter Raffaellino del Garbo (1466–1527), learning the art of drawing and color.³ In 1514, he becomes an apprentice in the workshop of Jacopo Carucci or Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557). Their tutorial relationship through the years transforms into a close friendship and artistic symbiosis.⁴ Bronzino begins to assimilate Pontormo’s Mannerist style, developing lucidity of form rendered with a polished finish.⁵

In 1523, Pontormo and Bronzino, escaping the plague in Florence, move to Certosa di Galuzzo, a Carthusian monastery, to decorate *al fresco* stories on the Passion of Christ in the Chostro Grande. During this sojourn, which lasted until 1525, Bronzino assists Pontormo in the completion of the Passion cycle, paints two lunettes in the Chostro Grande—the *Dead Christ Supported by Angels* and the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*—and a small *Crucifixion*, and illustrates some liturgical books (*libri di culto*) for the monks.⁶ At the Charterhouse at Galuzzo, he meets for the first time Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), who was admiring and studying Pontormo’s Passion

cycle. The two men forged a close friendship that spanned more than forty years.⁷

After the Certosa cycle, in 1525, Bronzino paints *al fresco* the *Temptation of Saint Benedict* in a lunette of the cloister of the Badia Fiorentina (now in the church of San Salvi in Florence). Between 1525 and 1527, he further assists Pontormo in decorating the Ludovico Capponi Chapel in Santa Felicita in Florence: the vault fresco (now destroyed), and the pendentive with tondi of the Four Evangelists. Bronzino paints two Evangelists: Saint Mark (now in the Musée des Beaux Arts at Bensaçon in France) and Saint Luke (*in situ*).⁸

During the years 1527 and 1528, Bronzino again flees from the plague in Florence, this time to the villa of Ugo della Stufa in Bivigliano, near Florence. Here, he meets the classical humanist, historian, and poet Benedetto Varchi (1503–65) and his Latinist pupil Lorenzo Lenzi (1516–70?).⁹ In 1528, Bronzino begins work on what will come to be considered a Manieroso portrait: *The Portrait of Lorenzo Lenzi* (now at the Civiche Raccolte d'Arte del Castello Sforzesco in Milan). *The Portrait of Lorenzo Lenzi* is an innovative fusion of imagery combined with an intellectual flair that emphasizes the noble social status of the sitter. By projecting Lenzi's inner psyche through gesture, costume, and facial expression, Bronzino renders an artistic portrait that is natural yet abstract.¹⁰

In 1529, Lorenzo Cambi, at the bequest of his father Antonio, commissions Bronzino to create a *Pietà with Mary Magdalene* for their private chapel in the church of Saint Trinity in Florence.¹¹ In this painting, Bronzino develops his artistic and poetic approaches, demonstrates his concern with artistic theories, and combines the acts of "evoking plasticity of sculpture and recreating nature."¹² He reveals a paragone that recurs in his devotional and historical religious paintings as well as in his poetic creations.

In 1530, as the War of the League of Cognac progressed, Florence came under siege. Yet, Bronzino's career continues to flourish, and he paints *Pygmalion and Galatea* (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi). During WWII, Craig Hugh Smyth rescued this picture from Goering and restored it to Florence, as noted in his biography in this volume. *Pygmalion and Galatea* was intended as the cover (*copertino*) for Pontormo's *Portrait of Francesco Guardi (The Halderbier*, now at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California).¹³

After the Florentine blockade, Bronzino is invited by Francesco Maria and Eleonora delle Rovere to their ducal court at Urbino in Pesaro, on the Adriatic coast of the Marches. He completes a *Portrait of Guidobaldo delle Rovere* (now at the Palatine Gallery in the Pitti Palace in Florence) and, for a harpsichord's music case (*cassa d'arpicordo*), an allegorical scene of *Apollo and Marsyas* (now at The Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, Russia).¹⁴ Between 1530 and 1532, he assists local artists, for example, Girolamo Genga (1476–1551) and Raffaellino delle Colle (1490–1566), in painting for the chambers of the Duke of Urbino's Villa Imperiale at Pesaro decorating cycles with mythological and seasonal themes in the new Maniera style.¹⁵

In 1533, Bronzino returns to Florence to compose theatrical designs for a comedy of the Compagnia dei Negromanti. He requests Vasari's collaboration in the completion of these settings.¹⁶ This early interest in theater accompanied his poetic endeavors. Throughout his career, Bronzino retains a fascination with the theater, as he develops his poetic expression.¹⁷ In his theatrical decorations and poetic output, he creates interplays between the conceits of the hidden and the revealed—the masked and the unmasked—that tease the viewer and the reader in a manifestation of what can be identified as his Maniera style.¹⁸ Still collaborating with Pontormo as late as 1536, Bronzino works with the older artist in the now-lost decoration of the Medici villas at Poggio a Caiano and Carreggi.¹⁹

In 1537, Bronzino becomes member of the prestigious academy *La Compagnia di San Luca*.²⁰ His artistic career begins to bloom, and his activities as a portrait painter expand. For the home of Florentine banker Bartolomeo Bettini, he completes a series of portraits of famous Tuscan writers.²¹ In these portraits, which I would label as *Manieroso portraits*, Bronzino manifests a new approach to artistic expression and intellectual display that facilitates his entry into the savant circles of aristocratic humanists, poets, and merchants who form a circle of patrons who commission works of art denoted as Mannerist. Inspired by his artistic and intellectual surroundings, he collaborates with a group of poets, including Giovanni della Casa (1503–56), to publish a burlesque poem in terza rima: *Il pennello* in 1538 in Venice.²²

The following year, 1539, together with other Florentine artists, he is engaged in the scenography of the entry and nuptial decora-

tions for Eleonora de Toledo and Cosimo I de' Medici.²³ Impressed by Bronzino's artistic inventiveness and imagery, Cosimo I commissions him in 1542 to decorate a new religious chapel in Palazzo Vecchio: the Chapel of Eleonora de Toledo.²⁴ Bronzino becomes the court painter for the Medici family, composing tapestry design, settings for carnivals, and comical plays.²⁵

As his career unfolds, Bronzino's circle of patrons increases, to include Medici associates such as Bartolomeo and Lucrezia Panciatichi, lords of Pistoia. For this family in the early 1540s, Bronzino paints their portraits, two *Holy Families*, and a *Crucifixion*.²⁶ These portraits, composed with preciously cultivated effects of design, convey the "precise elegance and complex expression of the Maniera style."²⁷

In 1541, several significant events occur in Bronzino's life. His close friend Cristofano Allori dies. Bronzino transfers his lodging to the Allori household in order to assist Allori's mother, his niece, his widow Dianora Sofferoni, and his four children, among them Alessandro, who will later become his most devoted protégé.²⁸ Bronzino will pattern the tutor-son relationship with Allori on the paternal friendship he had with his master Pontormo.

When in 1541 Duke Cosimo I reforms the *Accademia degli Umidi* into the *Accademia Fiorentina*, Bronzino, along with other artists, is invited to join this prestigious new art society.²⁹ However, in 1547, again with other artists, Bronzino is expelled from the *Accademia Fiorentina*.³⁰ The reason for this action is still unclear.

Between 1544 and 1545, Vasari asserts that for Francis I, King of France, and at the request of Duke Cosimo I, Bronzino creates the ingenious and salacious *Venus and Cupid (Allegory of Love or Allegory of Lust)*, now at the National Gallery of London.³¹ Perhaps this painting constitutes the best expression of Bronzino's Maniera style in its combination of sensuality and capriciousness. With exquisite *disegno* (design) and *bella maniera* (refined style), Bronzino reveals the "passions of love with figures that turn into equivocations between nature and a [classical] statuary and improbable perfection, posturing in attitudes that are meant to tell [the viewer] primarily about their beauty and not about their meaning of the scene."³²

During 1546 and 1547, Bronzino travels to Rome. The events of this sojourn are nebulous.³³ Upon his return to Florence, between

1547 and 1548, he participates in a debate on the paragone, initiated by Varchi in order to encourage contemporary humanists and artists to consider the merits of painting over sculpture and the essential questions that concern him about the meaning and function of art.³⁴

During the 1550s, Bronzino's career as an artist of devotional and portrait paintings continues to prosper. In 1552, he completes two large religious paintings: for the Guadagni Chapel in the church of Santissima Annunziata, the altarpiece of the *Resurrection of Christ*; and for the Zanchini Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce, the *Descent of Christ in Limbo*.³⁵ When composing devotional and religious scenes, Bronzino visualizes the holiness of the imagery by manipulating light and color, creating a luminous tonality, and employing cool colors, thus achieving a celestial realm. When viewing these paintings, the faithful are not moved by the religious narrative or *istoria* but, instead, are transported aesthetically and spiritually by perceiving the physical refinement of the design, the beauty of the figures, and the ethereal tonality.³⁶ Bronzino creates an elegant art form that transforms corporeal sensations into mystical vision.

Pleased with her earlier portrait of 1539,³⁷ Eleonora de Toledo summons Bronzino to Pisa in 1550 to depict a portrait of her son, Giovanni, who will become a future Medici cardinal. Throughout this decade, Bronzino will continue to create his renowned series of ducal portraits of the duke, duchess, and their children as "an assertion of dynastic Medici continuity."³⁸

From 1555 or 1556, Bronzino sustains an active dual career as a poet and as a painter. As a poet, he composes numerous burlesque rimes, satirical verses, and sonnets.³⁹ He befriends the poetess Laura Battiferri (1523–69), married to the Mannerist architect and sculptor Bartolomeo Ammanati (1511–92), and paints her with an open book pointing to a passage of Petrarch's sonnet to Laura in his *Portrait of Laura Battiferri* of 1555–60 (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence).⁴⁰ Inspired by the completion of the tapestries illustrating the story of Joseph for the Salone dei Dugento in the Palazzo Vecchio, Bronzino composes sonnets from these scenes.⁴¹

As a painter, he is very prolific with the invention of complex allegorical portraits, whose *clavis interpretandi* is ambiguous and tit-

illating—for example, the *Portrait of Andrea Doria as Neptune* (now at the Pinacoteca Brera in Milan), *Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus* (now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art), and the double portrait of *Il Nano Morgante* (now at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence).⁴²

Bronzino collaborates with Pontormo again, in the 1550s, on the frescoes for the choir at San Lorenzo. He also assists his master with the diary he initiates in 1554.⁴³ When his master Pontormo dies in 1557, Bronzino completes Pontormo's lost cycle in 1558. Unfortunately, these frescoes were destroyed when the choir of the church was rebuilt in 1732.⁴⁴

In 1563, Vasari establishes the Academy of the Arts of Drawing (*Accademia delle Arte del Disegno* or *Accademia del Disegno*) and includes his admired colleague Bronzino as a participating member.⁴⁵ Two years later, Bronzino completes three paintings: for the marriage of Francesco de' Medici and Joanna of Austria, as well as *The Nativity* for the church of San Stefano in Pisa and *The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*, which is unveiled in 1569 in the Medicean church of San Lorenzo in Florence.

Shortly after this successful unveiling event, Bronzino develops an unknown illness, and on 23 November 1572, at the age of 69, he dies in the house of Allori.⁴⁶ He is buried in the funeral chapel of the Allori family in San Cristoforo degli Adimari. Alessandro Allori composes a honorific eulogy, which he reads at the prestigious *Accademia del Disegno*.⁴⁷

Bronzino's place in the history of art as an exponent of the Maniera style is revealed through satirical and lyrical poetic output, the meticulous rendition of nature in his drawings, his complex allegorical paintings that contain astonishing and puzzling conceits, enigmatic and mesmerizing portraits of aristocrats and humanists, and visionary devotional and religious paintings.

In honor of Craig Hugh Smyth, the essays included in this book explore different aspects of Bronzino's artistic expression, forming part of the ongoing historiography of this remarkable artist.

APPENDIX I. BRONZINO'S LETTER AND TRANSLATION

Al Molto Dotto M. Benedetto Varchi⁴⁸

Mio onorando

Il proponimento mio, M, Benedetto vertuosissimo, è di scrivervi, in quel modo ch'io saprò più chiaro e breve, quale delle due più eccellenti arti che con le mani si facciano tenga il grado principale, e queste saranno la pittura e la scultura; e prima ponendo le ragioni dell'una e poi quelle dell'altra, le verrò comparando insieme, e così si potrà vedere a quale di loro al debba l'altra preporre. E perché io intendo d'accostarmi dall'una delle due, come in verità mi pare accostarmi alla più vera parte, cioè dalla parte della pittura, piglierò per ora la sua difesa. ponendo nondimeno le ragioni della parte opposta fedelmente, e con quanta verità più per me si potrà; materia in vero molto difficile e che avrebbe bisogno di lunga e diligente considerazione: né io prometto però parlarne a pieno, ma, come io dissi, più chiaro e più breve che io potrò.

Sogliono adunque quegli che delle sculture sono o artefici o partigiani, addurre fra l'altre loro ragioni che la scultura par essere più perpetua che la pittura, e per questo volere che ella sia molto più bella e più nobile, perché dicono che, quando dopo lunga fatica si conduce a somma perfezzione qualche opera, durando lungo tempo tanto più si viene a godere, e così viene più lungamente a rinfrescare la memoria di quelli tempi ne' quali o per quali ella fu fatta; adunque è più utile che la pittura. Dicono ancora che con molto maggior fatica si fa una statua che una figura dipinta, per rispetto del subbietto durissimo, come sarebbe marmo o porfido o altra pietra; et ancora aggiungano che, non si potendo porre onde si leva, talché, avendo storpiato una figura, non si può più racconciare, e la pittura potendosi infinitamente e cancellare e rifare, essere di molta più industria et aver bisogno di molto più giudizio e diligenza che la pittura, e per questo essere e più nobile e più degna. Aggiungano che, dovendo ambedue le dette arti immitare et assomigliarsi alla natura lor maestra, e la natura facendo le sue operazioni di rilievo e che si possano toccare con mano; e così, dove la pittura solo è obbietto del vedere e non d'altri sensi, la scultura, per essere cosa di rilievo altresì, in che modo somiglia la natura, non solo del viso, ma è ancora subbietto del toccamento, e per questo, essendo conosciuta da più sensi, sarà più universale e migliore.

Dicono appresso che, dovendo farsi dagli scultori quasi sempre le statue tonde e spiccate intorno, o vestite o gnude che siano, bisogna aver sommo riguardo che stiano bene per tutte le vedute, e se ad una veduta la loro figura arà grazia, che non manchi nell'altre vedute, le quali, rivolgendosi l'occhio intorno a detta statua, sono infinite per essere la forma circolare di tal natura; dove così non avviene al pittore, il quale non fa mai in una figura altro che una sola veduta, la quale sceglie a suo modo e, bastandogli che per quel verso che la mostra abbia grazia, non si cura di quello che avrebbe nell'altre vedute, che non appariscono; e per questo esser di nuovo più difficile. E seguitando alla sopradetta ragione, dicono che molto è più bello e dilettevole trovare in una sola figura tutte le parti che sono in uno uomo o donna o altro animale, come il viso, il petto e l'altre parti dinanzi, e volgendosi trovare il fianco e le braccia e quello che l'accompagna, e così di dietro le schiene, e vedere corrispondere le parti dinanzi a quelle dallato e di dietro, e vedere come i muscoli cominciano e come finiscano, e godersi molte belle concordanzie, et insomma girandosi intorno ad una figura avere intero contento di vederla per tutto; e per questo essere di più diletto che la pittura.

Vogliono ancora innalzarla con dire la scultura esser molto magnifica e di grandissimo ornamento nelle cittadi, perché con quella si fanno colossi e statue, sì di bronzo e sì di marmo e d'altro, che fanno onore agli uomini illustri et adornano le terre e pongon voglia, negli uomini che le veggano, di seguitare l'opere virtuose per avere simili onori, onde ne segue grandissima fama e giovamento. Né mancano di dire che bisogna essere molto avvertito nelle sculture d'osservare tutte le misure, come di teste e braccia e gambe e di tutte l'altre membra, per esservi la riprova sempre in pronto né si potere difraudare misura alcuna, come se può nelle pitture, dove non è tanta riprova, né essere di manco contento che difficoltà trovarle in essere reale e da poterle misurare a sua voglia, il che della pittura non avvien sempre; e per questo la scultura esser cosa manco fallace e più vera. Mostrano ancora che la scultura, oltre alla grandezza dell'artificio, sia di non piccolo utile, potendosi servire di sue figure per reggere, in cambio di colonna o di mensole, o sopra fontane per gittar acqua, o per sepolture, o per infinite altre cose che si veggiono tutto il giorno, dove della pittura non può farsi altro

che cose finte e di niuna utilidade, altro che di piacere; e per questo essere più utile la scultura.

Dell'altra parte, cioè dal canto della pittura, non mancano le risposte a tutte le ragioni addotte dalla scultura, anzi pare, a quegli che la pittura favoriscano, averne molte più; e dicono, rispondendo quanto alla prima ragione, dove si dice la scultura essere più durevole per essere in più saldo subbietto, che questo non si debbe attribuire all'arte, perché non è stato in poter dell'arte il fare il marmo o 'l porfido o l'altre pietre, ma della natura, né in questo si conviene a l'arte lode alcuna di più, se non come se il suo subbietto fosse terra o cera o stucco o legname, o altra materia manco durabile, esercitandosi, come ognuno sa, solo l'arte nella superficie. Rispondono ancora alla seconda ragione in questo modo, dove gli scultori adducano la difficoltà tanto divulgata, cioè di non potere porre, ma solo levare, et essere gran fatica a far tale arte per avere le pietre dure per subbietto; rispondono — dico — che, se vogliono dire della fatica del corpo circa lo scarpellare, che questo non fa l'arte più nobile, anzi più presto gli toglie dignità, perché quanto l'arti si fanno con più esercizio di braccia o di corpo, tanto più hanno del meccanico, e per conseguente sono manco nobili; ché, se ciò non fosse, sarebbero da lodarsi per arti belle infinite che sono tenute a vile, come gli scarpellini che lavorano alle cave o che scarpellano le strade, o quegli che zappano, o scamatini o maniscalchi o simili; ma se vorranno dire della fatica dell'animo, dicono che non solo la pittura gli è eguale, ma la trapassa di gran lunga, come si dirà più di sotto. E dove dicono non si poter porre quando si sia troppo levato, dicono che, quando si dice scultore o pittore, s'intende eccellentissimo maestro o in pittura o in scultura, perché non si deve ragionare di quegli che solamente son nati per vituperare o l'una o l'altra arte; onde non si dee credere che uno scultore eccellente levi dove non bisogna, perché altramente non farebbe quello che ricerca l'arte, ma farà il suo modello tanto fornito, dove potrà aggiugnere e levare molto più facilmente che il dipintore, e di poi, trasportandolo all'opera con fedeli misure, non arà di bisogno di porre per aver levato troppo. Ma quando pure volessi o gli bisognassi porvi, chi non sa che acconciamente possano? Or non si fanno i colossi di molti pezzi? Et a quante figure si rifanno i busti e le braccia e quello che manca loro! Senza i tasselli, che si veggiano in dimolte figure,

che sono uscite nuove con simili toppe di mano del loro artefice, sì che né in questo consiste l'arte, perché quando una figura sia d'infiniti pezzi, pur che stia bene, non dà noia alla bontà dell'arte.

Dicano, rispondendo alla terza ragione, che bene è vero che ambedue le dette arti si fanno per imitare la natura, ma quale delle due più conseguiscano l'intento loro, risponderanno più di sotto; solo dicono che, per questo, non imitano più la natura per far di rilievo che altrimenti, anzi tolgono la cosa che già era di rilievo fatta dalla natura, onde tutto quello che vi si truova di tondo o di largo o l'altro non è dell'arte, perché prima vi erano e larghezza et altezza e tutte le parti che si danno a' corpi solidi, ma solo è dell'arte le linee che cercondano detto corpo, le quali sono in superficie; onde, com'è detto, non è dell'arte l'essere di rilievo, ma della natura, e questa medesima risposta serve ancora dove dicano del senso del tatto, perché il trovare la cosa di rilievo di già è detto non essere dell'arte.

Non fornita

Il Bronzino

BRONZINO: ANSWER TO BENEDETTO VARCHI⁴⁹

My intention, most able Messer Benedetto, is to be as clear and as short as I can in writing you about which of the two most excellent manual arts, i.e., painting and sculpture, holds the first rank. Stating the arguments first in favor of one and then of the other, I shall compare them so that it will be possible to see which of the two should be preferred. And since I intend to take sides, and indeed believe myself to lie on the right side, i.e., on the side of painting, I shall now present its defense, stating, nevertheless, the opposite arguments as faithfully as I can. The subject, however, is really very difficult and would need long and careful consideration; therefore, I do not promise to discuss it fully, but, as I said, only as clearly and as briefly as I can.

Those who practice sculpture, or who take its part, are wont to put forth, among other arguments, that sculpture seems to be more permanent than painting, and for that reason they insist that it is much more beautiful and noble; they argue that, when a work is brought to ultimate perfection after long effort, it is enjoyable for a longer time, and, therefore, it will for a longer time bring back

the memory of those times when or for which it was made; thus, it is more useful than painting. They also say that a statue requires much more effort than a painted figure, because of the very hard material used, such as marble, porphyry, or other stones. They also add that since [in sculpture] you cannot put back something where you have taken something away, so that when you have maimed a figure it cannot be mended, while in painting one can remove and rework indefinitely. Sculpture requires much greater skill and needs much more judgment and care than painting; it is, therefore, both nobler and worthier. They add this: both arts must imitate and resemble Nature, which is their master, and Nature's works are three-dimensional and can be touched with the hand; painting is only an object of vision and of no other sense, while sculpture exists also in three dimensions in which it resembles Nature, and is an object not only of vision but of touch, too. For that reason, sculpture, being known through more senses than painting, would be the more universal and superior.

Then they go on to say that, since sculptors must almost always make their statues, whether nude or clothed, in the round, and free on all sides, they must take great care that the work looks well from all views, and if their figure has grace from one view, they must make sure that it is not deficient from the other views, which, when the eye goes around the statue, are infinite in number, because such is the nature of the circular form. But this problem does not present itself to the painter, who, in each figure, never gives more than one view, which he chooses the way he wants; since he is satisfied if it is beautiful on the side he shows, he does not care what it would look like from the other view-points which cannot be seen. For this reason, also, sculpture would be the more difficult. And following their reasoning, they say that it is far more beautiful and gives greater delight to find in a single figure all the physical attributes of a man, of a woman, or of an animal, such as the face, the chest, and the other parts, and when turning around to find the side and the arm, and what goes with them, and then from the back the spine, and to see how the front parts correspond to the side and the back, and to see how the muscles start and how they end; and to appreciate many beautiful harmonies, and, in sum, moving around a statue, to be totally satisfied with seeing it entirely; for this reason,

sculpture would be more enjoyable than painting.

They want, furthermore, to elevate sculpture by saying that it is magnificently effective and a great ornament for cities, because it serves to make colossi and statues, either in bronze, or marble, or other material, that honor illustrious men, and adorn the land, and give those that see them the will to emulate such virtuous actions in order to be honored in the same fashion, whence follows the greatest glory and advantage. And they do not forget to mention that, in sculpture, one has to be very skillful to respect all the measurements (e.g., of the heads and arms and legs, and all the other parts of the body), because verification is always at hand, and one cannot cheat on any of the measurements, as one can in paintings, where there is less possibility of verification; and it is a source of satisfaction no less than of difficulty to find sculptures to be material and measurable at will, which does not always happen with painting. For this reason, sculpture would be less deceptive and more real. They also show that sculpture, besides the greatness of the skill, is of no small utility, since one can use its figures for architectural support instead of columns or corbels, or for water spouts on fountains, for tombs, or for an infinite number of other things that one comes across all the time, while with painting, one can only make fictitious things of no utility other than giving pleasure. For this reason, sculpture would be the more useful.

On the other hand, on the side of painting, there is no lack of answers to all the arguments brought forth in favor of sculpture; on the contrary, it seems to those who favor painting that there is more to be said for it than for sculpture. Answering the first argument—that sculpture is more durable because it uses a more solid material—they deny that this is not to the credit of the art, because it is not in its power, but in that of Nature, to make marble, porphyry, or any other stone, and that the art of sculpture is not to be praised for its durable materials any more than it would be if executed in clay, wax, stucco, wood, or any other less durable material, since, as everyone knows, art works only on the surface. To the second argument they answer this way: while sculptors put forward their so much publicized difficulty of not being able to add to the work but only to take away, and what a great effort it is to apply their art because they have hard stone for material, the painters answer that

if the sculptors mean the physical effort of chiseling, this does not make their art nobler, but that it rather diminishes its dignity, because the more the arts are exercised with manual and physical exertion, the closer they are to the technical crafts and, consequently, the less noble they are. If it were not so, one would have to praise as beautiful a great many arts that are considered inferior, such as ditch-digging or cleaning cloth or farrier work, or others of the same kind. But if one means mental effort, the painters say that painting is not only equal but also surpasses sculpture by far, as will be explained below. And as to not being able to put back anything when too much has been taken off, they say that when one speaks of the sculptor or the painter, one implies an accomplished master in either painting or sculpture, because one must not discuss those who were born only to disgrace either art; therefore, we ought not to believe that an outstanding sculptor claps off when he should not, because otherwise he would not do what his art requires, but he will make a complete model, where he can add and take off more easily than the painter, and then, transferring this model to the final work with exact measurements, he will not have to add anything for having taken too much away. But if, however, he should desire or need to add something, who is not aware how easily he can do it? Are not colossal statues made of many pieces? And how many statues have their busts, their arms, or whatever is missing remade? Not to mention the plugs that one sees in many statues that come out brand new from the hands of the artists with such patches. The art of sculpture does not consist in avoiding repairs, because when a statue should be made up of an infinite number of pieces, if it is still good, it does not mar the quality of the art.

Answering the third argument, painters say that it is quite true that the purpose of both arts is the imitation of Nature, but which of the two comes closer to this end will be discussed later. Here we shall only say that sculptors do not imitate Nature more because they work in three dimensions, but that in fact they rather take over the object that was already made three-dimensional by Nature; so that rotundity, thickness, or anything else of that kind does not belong to art, because height and breadth and all the qualities of solids already existed in the material, but all that belongs to the art are the lines that outline such a body, which are on the surface; there-

fore, as we said, the three-dimensional existence does not appertain to art but to Nature, and the same objection also applies when they speak of touch, because, as it has already been said, to find that an object is three-dimensional is not a result of art.

Unfinished
Il Bronzino

NOTES

1. Agnolo's nickname "Bronzino" first appears in 1529 payment records for the *Pietà with Mary Magdalene* for the Church of Holy Trinity in Florence, now at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. See Claudio Strinati, *Bronzino* (Florence: Viviani Editore, 2010), 15, and in his last will as "Angelus quondam Cosmi Mariani, vulgariter noncupatus Bronzino pictor." See Edi Baccheschi, ed., *L'Opera completa del Bronzino. Introdotta da scritti del pittore e coordinata* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1973), 83, citing Albertina Furno, *La vita e le rime di Agnolo Bronzino* (Pistoia: Lito-tipografia G. Flori, 1902, reissued 2009); and Elizabeth Pilliod, "The Life of Bronzino," in Carmen C. Bambach, Janet Cox-Rearick, and George R. Goldner, eds. *The Drawings of Bronzino* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 3–10.

2. See Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1584), 113.

3. See Sydney Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1500–1600* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, Pelican History of Art, 1971), 295; and Bambach, Cox-Rearick, and Goldner, *The Drawings of Bronzino*, passim, for a recent study on Bronzino's drawings.

4. Pontormo depicts Bronzino as a young boy seated in the entrance steps of a house in *Joseph with Jacob in Egypt* of 1518 (now at the National Gallery of London), a painting for a decorative cycle in one of the chambers of Pier Francesco Borgherini's palace in Florence.

5. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 296, and for an analysis of Bronzino's Maniera style, see 295–99; and Craig Hugh Smyth, *Manierism and Maniera* (Locust Valley, NJ: J.J. Augustin Inc, 1962, reissued in *Artibus et Historiae*, IRSA, 1992), 35–41.

6. See Baccheschi, *L'Opera completa del Bronzino*, 83, citing Frederick Mortimer Clapp, *Les dessins de Pontormo: catalogue raisonné précédé d'une étude critique* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1914/16), passim.

7. This Passion cycle influenced by Albrecht Dürer's prints will have a great impact on Vasari's art in subsequent years. See Kristina Hermann-Fiore, "Sui Rapporti Fra L'Opera Artistica del Vasari e del Dürer," in *Il*

Vasari Storiografo e Artista (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1974), 701–15; Graham Smith, “Bronzino and Dürer,” *The Burlington Magazine* 119, no. 895 (October 1977), 709–10; and Maurizia Tazartes, *Il “ghiribizzoso” Pontormo* (Florence: Polistampa, 2008), 153–60.

8. See Strinati, *Bronzino*, 51–53.

9. See Alessandro Cecchi, “Famose Frondi di cui santi honori ...” Un sonetto del Varchi e il tritratto dal Bronzino,” *Artista: Critica dell’arte in Toscana* (1990), 8–19, for the relationship between Varchi and Lenzi.

10. See Craig Hugh Smyth, “The Earliest Work of Bronzino,” *The Art Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (September 1949), 194–210; idem, *Bronzino as Draughtsman: An Introduction, with Notes on His Portraiture and Tapestries* (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, Inc, 1971). 80–86 and 94–101; and idem, *Mannerism and Maniera*, 41–42.

11. See Louis Alexander Waldman, “Bronzino’s ‘Uffizi Pietà’ and the Cambi Chapel in S. Trinità, Florence,” *The Burlington Magazine* 139, no. 1127 (February 1997), 94–102.

12. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 296.

13. See Liana De Girolami Cheney, “Agnolo Bronzino’s *Pygmalion and Galatea*: The Metamorphoses of a Muse,” in this volume; and Elizabeth Cropper, “Biographical Memoirs of Craig Hugh Smyth,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 153, no. 4 (December 2009), 495–500.

14. This oil on panel was transferred to canvas. See John T. Spike, “Rediscovery: *Apollo and Marsyas* by Bronzino,” *FMR* 73 (April 1995), 14–24, and idem, *La Favola di Apollo e Marsia di Agnolo Bronzino* (Florence: Edizione Polistampa, 2000), passim.

15. See Luciana Miotto, *Villa Imperiale di Pesaro: Girolami Genga* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), passim; Baccheschi, *L’Opera completa del Bronzino*, 87–88; Smyth, “The Earliest Work of Bronzino,” 194–210; and Smyth, *Bronzino as Draughtsman*, 34–35.

16. See Alessandro del Vita, ed., *Il Libro delle Ricordanze di Giorgio Vasari* (Arezzo: Tipografia Zelli, 1938), Ricordo 20 di marzo 1533, 20.

17. See Franca Petrucci Nardelli, ed., *Agnolo Bronzino. Rime di burla* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1988), passim; Furno, *La vita e le rime di Agnolo Bronzino*, passim; and Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), passim.

18. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 285–95; Smyth, *Mannerism and Maniera*, 39 and 86; and Cheney, *Readings in Italian Mannerism*, 9–34.

19. See Baccheschi, *L’Opera completa del Bronzino*, 89, where he cites Vasari: “Bronzino completes allegorical figures of Fortune, Fame, Peace, Justice and Prudence or Victory,” now lost. See also Charles McCorquodale, *Bronzino* (London: Chaucer Press, 2005), 158.

20. See Strinati, *Bronzino*, 16.

21. See Strinati, *Bronzino*, 16.

22. See Petrucci Nardelli, *Agnolo Bronzino. Rime in burla*, 23–26, for the poem, and 475, for information on the Venetian press of Navo et fratelli in 1538.

23. See McCorquodale, *Bronzino*, 159.

24. See Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), *passim*; Lynette M.F. Bosch, "'A Room With Many Views': Eleonora de Toledo's Chapel by Agnolo Bronzino in The Palazzo Vecchio"; Massimiliano Rossi, "The Bystander" in the Chapel of Eleonora: A Lucretian Image in Bronzino's Work"; and Thomas MacPherson, "A Color Inventory of Selected Paintings by Agnolo Bronzino from 1540 to 1546: The Panciatichi Paintings and the Chapel of Eleonora de Toledo," all in this volume.

25. A newly founded Medici tapestry factory prompts Bronzino to design religious and secular cartoons illustrating the Story of Joseph and allegorical subjects of *Time*, *Abundance*, *Justice* and *Primavera*. See Lynette Bosch, "Bronzino's *Primavera* and the *Vindication of Innocence*," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* (June 1993), 74–82; Carmen C. Bambach, "Entries for Bronzino's Drawings on the Story of Joseph Tapestries," in Bambach, Cox-Rearick, and Goldner, *Drawings of Bronzino*, 150–86; Lucia Meoni, "Entries for Bronzino's The Story of Joseph Tapestries," in Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, *Bronzino: Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici* (Florence: Mandragora, 2010), 124–31; Robert G. La France, "Bronzino and His Friends: The Medici-Toledo Tapestries," in Andrea M. Gáldy, ed., *Agnolo Bronzino: Medici Court Artist in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 67–80; and Smyth, *Bronzino as Draughtsman*, 94–100.

26. See Elena Aloia, "Culture, Faith, and Love: Bartolomeo Panciatichi," Lynette M. F. Bosch, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Agnolo Bronzino's Paintings for Bartolomeo and Lucrezia Panciatichi," and MacPherson, "A Color Inventory of Selected Paintings by Agnolo Bronzino," all in this volume.

27. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 298. Another similar example is the *Portrait of Eleonora di Toledo* of 1539, in the Národní Galerie in Prague, see Donna A. Bilak, "Decoding Bronzino's *Portrait of Eleonora di Toledo* (c. 1539): An Iconography of Jewels and Dress," in this volume.

28. See Elizabeth Pilliod, *Pontormo, Bronzino, Allori: A Genealogy of Florentine Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 81–83.

29. See Zygmunt Wazbinski, *L'Accademia Medicea del Disegno a Firenze Nel Cinquecento: Idea e Istituzione*, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1987), 159; and Tazartes, *Il "ghiribizzoso" Pontormo*, 153–60.

30. See Baccheschi, *L'Opera completa del Bronzino*, 83; Wazbinski, *L'Accademia Medicea*, 1:49, 59, 70, and 201–13; and Pilliod, *Pontormo, Bronzino, Allori*, 81–96.

31. See Leatrice Mendelsohn, “L’Allegoria di Londra del Bronzino e la retorica di carnevale,” in *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, ed. Monika Cämmerer (Munich: Bruckmann, 1992), 152–67; and Maurice Brock, *Bronzino* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 213–37, for a recent summary of the interpretation of this painting as well as *Venus and Cupid with Satyr* in the Galleria Colonna in Rome, *Venus and Cupid with Two Amoretti and Jealousy* at the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest, and *Allegory of Felicity* at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. See also Liana De Girolami Cheney, “Bronzino’s *Triumph of Felicity*: A Wheel of Good Fortune,” in this volume.

32. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 298, where he notes that the London *Venus and Cupid* (*Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time*) is an “allegory on the passions of love, a reverse in moral content from the religious passion of the *Pietà* (now Besançon Museum in France).” Both secular and religious pictures were painted at the same time, revealing stylistic similarities of elegant artificiality and glacial beauty as well as complex and opposite allusions of love.

33. See Baccheschi, *L'Opera completa del Bronzino*, 83, quoting a letter that Bronzino writes to Cosimo I on his return from Rome in Smyth, *Bronzino as Draughtsman*, 47.

34. See Benedetto Varchi, “Lezioni della maggioranza delle arti,” in Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d’Arte del Cinquecento, fra manierismo e contrariforma*, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1960–62), 1:3–82, in particular, 63–67, for a reprinted and annotated comment on Bronzino’s unfinished letter as a response to Varchi’s question on the *paragone* of the arts. See also Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, *Italian Art: 1500–1600: Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 10–13, for an English translation of Bronzino’s letter. In this present volume, Bronzino’s letter and its translation are reproduced as Appendix I.

See also Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982), 150–52, for a discussion on the urgency for Bronzino to finish the letter in honor of Michelangelo’s funeral in 1564; see also 147–48, for a discussion on the letter of 5 August 1564, from the Florentine historian, classical scholar, and philologist Vincenzo Borghini (1515–80) to Vasari, commenting that he has encouraged Bronzino to finish the letter (“Ho scritto al Bronzino che dovrebbe finir la sua lettera”), citing Karl Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, 2 vols. (Munich: Georg Müller, 1930), 2:93.

35. See Brock, *Bronzino*, 268–94.

36. See Brock, *Bronzino*, 240–302, a chapter on “La Forza dell’Arte in the Service of Devotion.”

37. See Bilak, "Decoding Bronzino's *Portrait of Eleonora di Toledo*," in this volume.

38. See Brock, *Bronzino*, 159. In addition, Bronzino continues to create portraits of important dignitaries with complex symbolism; see Leatrice Mendelsohn's lecture on Bronzino's Portraits in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth, presented at the Renaissance Society of America in 2004; and eadem, "The Devil in the Details," in this volume.

39. See Petrucci Nardelli, *Rime in burla*, 23–398, for the inclusion of these poems; Stefania Pasti, "Le rime in burla," in Strinati, *Bronzino*, 203–24; and Stefania Pasti, "I sonnetti," in Strinati, *Bronzino*, 225–37.

40. See Graham Smith, "Bronzino's Portrait of Laura Battiferri," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1996), 30–38; Brock, *Bronzino*, 93–103; and Michael Giordano, "Bronzino's Art of Emblazoning: *The Young Man with a Book*, *Lucrezia Panciatichi*, *Saint Bartholomew*, and *Laura Battiferri*," in this volume.

41. See Baccheschi, *L'Opera completa del Bronzino*, 96–99.

42. See Brock, *Bronzino*, 162–81.

43. See Frederick Mortimer Clapp, *Jacoppo Carucci da Pontormo, His Life and Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1916), including his diary; and Elizabeth Pilliod, "Pontormo's Diary," *Cabinet* 18 (Summer 2005), 7–9.

44. See Freedberg, *Painting in Italy*, 317; and Tazartes, *Il "ghiribizzoso" Pontormo*, 1742.

45. See Wazbinski, *L'Accademia Medicea*, 2:235–66 and 421–45.

46. See Strinati, *Bronzino*, 17.

47. See Strinati, *Bronzino*, 17; and McCorquodale, *Bronzino*, 155.

48. Reprinted letter from Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento, fra manierismo e contrariforma*, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1960–62), 1:63–67.

49. My English translation, in consultation with Klein and Zerner, *Italian Art: 1500–1600*, 10–13.

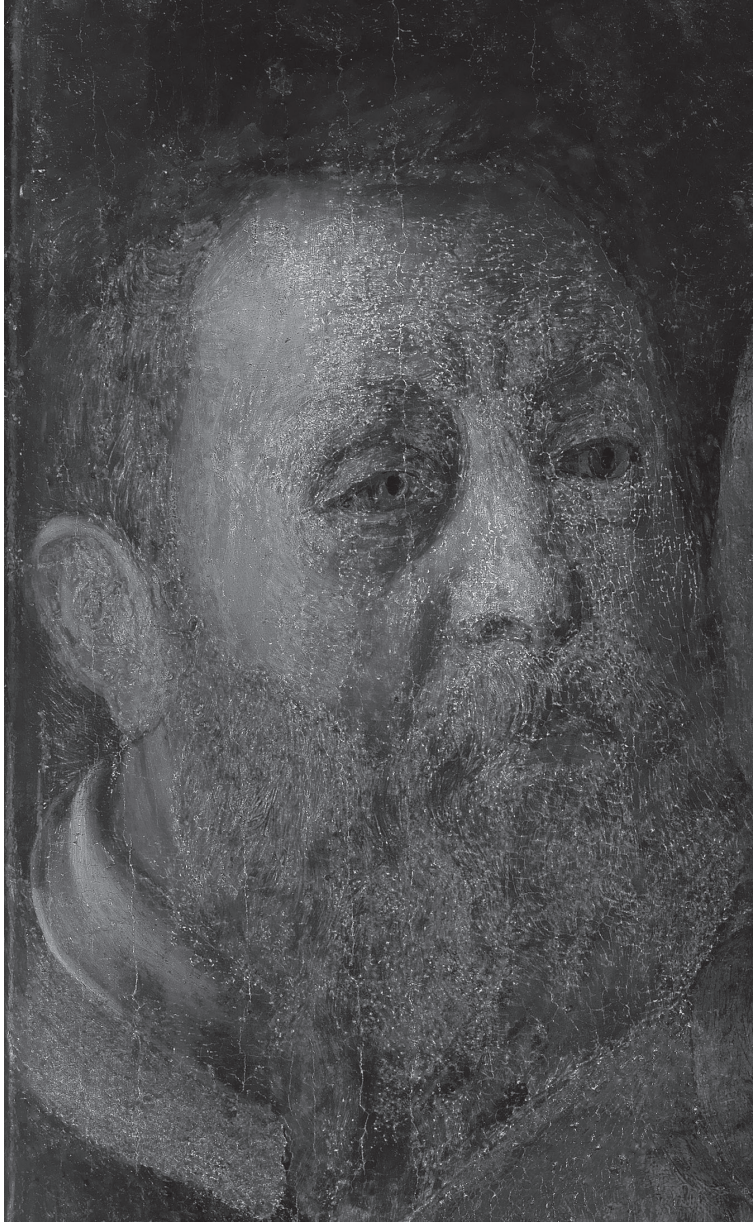


Fig. 1. Agnolo Bronzino, *Self-Portrait* (det.), *Descent from the Cross*, 1561. Accademia Gallery, Florence. Photo credit: Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali/Art Resource, NY.