

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF FRA BARTOLOMEO, LEADING ARTIST OF THE DOMINICAN ORDER IN EARLY CINQUECENTO FLORENCE*

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Baptized Bartolomeo Domenico and commonly known as Baccio della Porta until he joined the Dominican order in July 1500¹, Fra Bartolomeo (1473-1517) is famous for his depictions of biblical subjects, ranging from the small *Tabernacolo del Pugliese* (c. 1498-1499), used for private devotion, to the dozen grand altarpieces conceived during the last eight years of his life. The latter were on public display in churches and established his name as one of the main artists of the Florentine High Renaissance, considered the local *caposcuola* after the return of Leonardo da Vinci to Milan in 1506, and the pope's calling of Michelangelo and Raphael to Rome in 1508². His workshop practice is revealed in the more than 1.500 figurative drawings that have survived, an exceptional high number for a single artist of that time³. They attest to both his meticulous preparation of painted composi-

* Due to the limited space for illustrations in this book, the reader is referred to those in other publications, primarily the recent exhibition catalogue *Fra Bartolommeo. The Divine Renaissance*, Rotterdam 2016; the specific pages and figures are mentioned in the footnotes. The spelling of the artist's name is generally with a single "m" in Italy and France, as in his baptismal record (first published in 1996, see note 1), probably based on Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (Florence 1550-1568), but with a double "mm" in most other countries. Exceptions prove the rule, like the street name in Florence which is with "mm". Gaetano Milanesi in his annotated edition of Vasari's *Vite*, uses "Bartolomeo" in the original text and "Bartolommeo" in his footnote annotations and the *Commentario* chapter (see G. VASARI, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori*, by G. MILANESI, 9 voll., IV, Firenze 1879, pp. 175-215).

¹ He was born and baptized on 22 August 1473, as the first of twin sons of Paolo di Jacopo di Piero del Fattorino and Bartolomea di Zanobi di Salimbene Cintonchi, who lived in the *quartiere* S. Spirito (the twin brother Francesco Domenico died soon after birth, the parents in 1487 and 1479 resp.). After his mother's death, his father bought a house close to the Porta Santo Pier Gattolino, now Porta Romana, from which Baccio took the name Della Porta; for the archival records, see K. SCHLEBUSCH, *Fra Bartolommeo della Porta: nuove note biografiche*, in «Memorie Domenicane», 27 (1996), pp. 603-622.

² See A.J. ELEN - C. FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo. The Divine Renaissance*. Exhib. cat. (Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen), Rotterdam 2016.

³ The scholarly catalogue of Fra Bartolomeo's complete oeuvre is being prepared by Chris Fischer, head of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Master Drawings at the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen; expected publication in 2022.

tions and his artistic skills. He is also known, though not in his own time but since 1957 – when an album of drawings assembled by the Florentine collector Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri in the 1720s, then believed to be by Andrea del Sarto, was discovered and dispersed in the art market –, as one of the earliest artists depicting landscapes based on drawn studies made in the open air. These sheets represent picturesque sites in the hilly Tuscan countryside as well as topographical views sometimes still recognizable after five hundred years, such as the hilltop town of Fiesole seen from the Mugnone valley and the nearby Dominican Ospizio di Santa Maria Maddalena (Le Caldine)⁴.

A lesser recognized talent of Fra Bartolomeo is portraiture. In this contribution a number of more or less secure portraits and portrait-like drawings will be discussed as well as presumed self-portraits found in drawings and paintings, which might give us an idea of how the artist and people important in his life and career looked like. The artist's most famous painting is not the unfinished but majestic *Pala del Gran Consiglio* (1510-1513) or *The Last Judgment* fresco (1499-1500), but the iconic *Portrait of Girolamo Savonarola* (fig. 1). This small panel was posthumously painted, probably in the years 1498-1500, after the preacher-prior's death on the scaffold and shortly before Baccio's pledged entry into the Dominican Order as a novice in the convent of Prato⁵. The identification of the sitter is secure because of the "monumental" Latin inscription «HIERONYMI · FERRARIENSIS · A · DEO · MISSI · PROPHEAE · EFFIGIES» (portrait of Jerome of Ferrara, prophet sent by God) on the tablet below the hooded profile bust, the denomination "prophet" adding to the presumption that this portrait was intended for private use by a devoted follower, perhaps the artist himself⁶. Some ten years later, around 1508-1509, Fra Bartolomeo painted a second version in which Savonarola's image is idealized, depicted likewise in profile to the left, but set against a neutral greenish background, the white undergarment visible under the black

⁴ See *Catalogue of drawings of landscapes and trees by Fra Bartolommeo*, with an introduction by C. GRONAU, London 1957, esp. p. 5, lots 8 and 14 (the latter recently sold at Sotheby's, New York, 31 January 2018, lot 5); C. FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo Master Draughtsman of the High Renaissance. A selection of the Rotterdam Albums and Landscape Drawings from various Collections*. Exhib. cat. (Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen), Rotterdam 1990, pp. 375-400.

⁵ See ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 90-91; G. DAMIANI in S. PADOVANI ET AL., *L'Età di Savonarola: Fra Bartolomeo e la scuola di San Marco*. Exhib. cat. (Florence, Museo di San Marco, Galleria Palatina), Venice 1996, pp. 281ss., n. 100.

⁶ The portrait has a long provenance, starting with Filippo d'Averardo Salviati (1515-1572), probably in Florence ca. 1550, a long stay in the monastero di San Vincenzo in Prato (ca. 1550/75-after 1810), and ending with the acquisition by the Italian State for the Museo di San Marco in 1926; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, p. 229, let. C. The portrait was also mentioned by VASARI, *Vite*, IV, p. 179.

cloak, bare-headed with a tonsure and a huge bleeding cut in resemblance of saint Peter martyr, the halo – an almost straight line adapted to the profile head – wishfully reflecting the martyrdom and sanctity of the latter onto Savonarola (fig. 2)⁷.

During the rest of his career, as leader of the artists' workshop in the convent of San Marco, which he entered in the late summer of 1504 after taking his solemn vows, Fra Bartolomeo repeatedly drew portraits of his fellow friars and other people he knew, some of which he used for the physiognomy of holy or secular figures in his paintings, whereas the bulk apparently was made for exercise or pleasure, perhaps a combination of both and as souvenirs of people dear to him as well.

FRIARS AS MODELS FOR SAINTS AND GOD THE FATHER

Fra Bartolomeo's fellow friars were the obvious models for several of his drawings, though not for the full-length figures in real or pseudo ecclesiastical dress. For these he used a life-size mannikin with moveable joints, which could stand frozen in the desired pose, covered with a long neutral robe or a clerical cloak, for as long as he wished (fig. 3)⁸. He also used the dressed mannikin to make drapery studies of either the whole figure or parts of it, experimenting with the incidence of light on folds by accentuating shaded areas with the heavier use of black chalk and highlights of white chalk, so as to achieve a convincing three-dimensionality through a natural rendering of volumes (fig. 5)⁹. He preferred the life model for making detail studies of visible body parts such as arms, hands, legs, feet and faces, executed at random or preparatory for the figures populating his paintings. These needed individual facial characteristics and expressions, so he resorted to his readily available and ever patient colleagues for life models. Usually they can be recognized by the collars or hoods of their outfit. A sheet in Rotterdam bears two red chalk studies after a wax model in different poses for a Christ child combined with two versions of a young friar's bust with the head inclined to the left (fig. 6), in preparation

⁷ Florence, Museo di San Marco, inv. 1890 n. 8522; see DAMIANI in PADOVANI, *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 284-285, n. 101; ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 35 (fig. 3), 91. This portrait painting, slightly larger than the other (52 x 40 cm against 46,5 x 32,5 cm), was first mentioned in 1759, located in a chapel in the Ospizio di Santa Maria Maddalena, Le Caldine.

⁸ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 M 128; see FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 206-207, n. 53. For a detailed discussion of the use of mannikins by Fra Bartolommeo, see M.W. KWAKKELSTEIN, *Mannikins and Wax Models: Study Aids in the Artist's Workshop*, in ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 20-31; ID., pp. 43-54 in this issue.

⁹ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 M 102v.

for the unidentifiable kneeling saint near the infant saint John in the *Pala del Gran Consiglio* (fig. 7)¹⁰. On another but similar sheet (fig. 8) he drew two basic position studies after an undressed mannikin in preparation for the seated Virgin Mary in the *Madonna Carondelet*, now in Besançon (1511-1512), combined with four separate studies of hands and two of a single friar, one seen in three quarters, the other in profile looking down, possibly related to the standing saint at far left in the *Pala del Gran Consiglio* (fig. 9)¹¹. Unlike the first couple, they have such life-like physiognomy and extraordinary presence, that they certainly must be portraits. The same is true for the heads of two different friars, an elderly one wearing a bonnet, and a younger one hooded, represented in another red chalk drawing now in a private collection (fig. 10). The one on the right is related to one of the five lunette frescoes with busts of the Dominican friars Ambrogio Sansedoni, saint Vincent Ferrer, saint Thomas of Aquino, saint Peter martyr and saint Dominic, painted around 1511-1512 above the doors in the *antica foresteria* in the convent of San Marco. This study of the gazing monk was used for *Saint Vincent Ferrer* (fig. 11), whereas the extremely life-like portrait of an elder friar cannot be connected to a painted saint. The *foresteria* fresco of *Saint Thomas reading a book* (fig. 13) is based on a similar red chalk drawing now in Rotterdam (fig. 12)¹². The sitter is a middle-aged and thinly bearded cloaked friar with a tonsure, frowning while looking down. As in the other cases, the highly individualized facial characteristics are stronger in the detailed drawing than in the fresco painting. The physiognomy is slightly more pronounced in the head of saint Dominic in the *Madonna della Misericordia* altarpiece in Lucca (1515) for which the drawing was reused some five years later (fig. 14)¹³. For that purpose it was turned 45 degrees anti-clockwise, as the saint was designed bending over the figure in front of him¹⁴.

Another red chalk drawing in Rotterdam (fig. 15)¹⁵, showing the full bust of a hooded friar combined with unrelated studies of three hands and a pouch, is preliminary for the *Saint Dominic* lunette fresco (fig. 16). The physiognomy in the drawing is less pronounced and

¹⁰ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 126.

¹¹ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 129; see FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 240-242, n. 64; ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 154-155, 221, n. 9C.3; C. FISCHER, *Art in the Making*, Copenhagen 2018, p. 80, fig. 58.

¹² Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 157.

¹³ Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi, inv. 81; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 172-173, 224-225, n. 11.

¹⁴ This connection is recent and presented for the first time here; the drawing was not shown combined with the painting in the 2016 Rotterdam exhibition.

¹⁵ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 129v.

it appears that the artist was more interested in the rendering of the silence sign than the facial features. The head and the hand were therefore repeated in a separate drawing, now in black chalk with white and yellow highlights, kept in Rotterdam (fig. 17)¹⁶. This drawing of an unknown friar's head, the hood now down on his shoulders, was also used for a fresco painting of *Saint Dominic* originally in the Ospizio della Maddalena, since detached and now in San Marco (fig. 18). The painting closely follows the portrait drawing, in the representation of the hood and the silencing right hand with index finger in front of chin and mouth as well, but the saint now has a tonsure and looks the beholder.

Four black chalk drawings (two of them now in Rotterdam and a double-sided sheet in Lyons) are related to the panel painting of *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, painted around 1510-1511, the upper half fragment of which survives in the Museo di San Marco (fig. 4)¹⁷. Three are studies made from a robed mannikin and used for the full-length figure of the standing saint in ecclesiastic robe, his right hand held up with the index finger pointing in a gesture of preaching, the lower arm kept low and half stretched out (fig. 3). The two small heads of a young friar on the front side of the Lyons sheet are almost featureless and do not allow for an assumption as portrait studies, let alone the identification of the saint in the painting as the Dominican fra Tommaso Cajani (died 1528), put forward four hundred years ago by fra Serafino Razzi (1531-1613) in his manuscript chronicles, referred to by Vincenzo Marchese in 1879¹⁸. This identification by Razzi, who was born after Cajani's death and has therefore never seen him, is accepted by Fischer on the basis of the strongly individualized facial expression, which I do not recognize, and are taken for granted by Scudieri, referring only to the painting, but cannot be established with certainty¹⁹.

The identification of the sitter is slightly more convincing – though not conclusive – in two black chalk drawings, now in Rotterdam (figg.

¹⁶ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 146.

¹⁷ See M. SCUDIERI in PADOVANI, *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 186, 188-195, n. 57. For the drawings in Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 128r and N 48 see FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 199-201, 206-207, nn. 53 and 51 resp. For the drawing in Lyons, Musée des Beaux Arts, inv. Pl. 37-38 see C. FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo et son atelier. Dessins et peintures des collections françaises*. Exhib. cat. (Paris, Musée du Louvre), Paris 1994, pp. 106-107, n. 65.

¹⁸ V. MARCHESE, *Memorie dei più insigni pittori, scultori e architetti domenicani*, 2 voll., II, Bologna 1879, p. 68, n. 1. S. RAZZI (*Cronaca della Provincia Romana*, ms., p. 123) also considers the head of saint Peter martyr in the *Pala Pitti* altarpiece (right above the seated Mary Magdalene) to be a portrait of Tommaso Cajani; see S. PADOVANI in EAD., *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 94-98, n. 20.

¹⁹ See FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, p. 106, n. 65; SCUDIERI in PADOVANI, *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 190, 192.

19, 20)²⁰. These studies were used for the profile head of saint Stephen in the *Madonna del Santuario* altarpiece, painted for the cathedral of Lucca in 1509 and still there in its original chapel (fig. 21)²¹. The second drawing is a variant of the first, the head slightly tilted to the left (backwards for the beholder), with heavier highlights on the bare neck. The clothes are summarily indicated by a few parallel lines and the model was therefore not necessarily a fellow friar. Nevertheless, it is believed that it was the dominican preacher fra Niccolò della Magna, the german Nikolaus Schönberg or Schomberg (1472-1537), who was prior of San Marco in 1506-1507. If this theory holds water, the drawings were made two or three years before they were incorporated in the painting. The identification of the sitter unfortunately cannot be corroborated by an existing and universally accepted portrait of Della Magna – the presumed portrait in the *foresteria's* lunette fresco *Christ and the Pilgrims on the Road to Emmaus* (detached, since 1872 in the Cappella del Giovanato)²² mentioned by Vasari (1568) being the only one known (fig. 22) – and therefore remains uncertain²³. According to Fischer, who compares the presumed portrait with the two drawings in Rotterdam, «There can be hardly any doubt that Schomberg should be identified with the young red-haired pilgrim seen in profile»²⁴. This pilgrim in the foreground, holding Christ by both his right hand

²⁰ Inv. I 563 N 140 and 141; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 125, 218, nn. 7.8, 7.9.

²¹ See *ivi*, pp. 122-124, 216, n. 7; PADOVANI, in EAD, *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 91, 93-94, n. 19. The panel has returned to the Cappella del Santuario after the 2016 exhibition in Rotterdam, in January 2017. During the restoration of the chapel it was hosted for some years by the Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi, where it was placed between the large canvases *Padre Eterno* and *Madonna della Misericordia*.

²² See SCUDIERI in PADOVANI, *L'Età di Savonarola*, pp. 274-276, n. 97 (the ill. on p. 275 in mirror image).

²³ See VASARI, *Vite*, IV, p. 197. «He wrought in fresco an arch over the strangers' apartment in S. Marco, in which he painted Christ with Cleophas and Luke, and made a portrait of Fra Niccolò della Magna, who was then a young man, and who afterwards became Archbishop of Capua, and finally a Cardinal» (G. VASARI, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*, translated by C. DE VERE, 10 voll., IV, London 1912-1914, p. 161).

²⁴ FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, p. 141. Pagnini and Della Magna («Fr. Nicolaus Schembergk De Alemania») are priors nn. 31 and 32 listed in the manuscript annals of the convent of San Marco; see Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana, ms. Cod. Lau. "S. Marci" 370, ff. 73-74. Later on Pagnini was prior in all Dominican convents in Tuscany: in Siena (Santo Spirito, 1506-1507), Lucca (1507-1509), Fiesole (San Domenico, 1509-1511, where he had entered the Order in 1487), Florence (San Marco, second term, 35th prior, 1511-1513), Lucca (San Romano, second term, 1513-1515) and Rome (Santa Maria sopra Minerva, 1517-1519); see MARCHESE, *Memorie*, p. 108, n. 2. After the death of his patron pope Leo X in 1521 he left Italy in 1523 for Avignon, moving on to Lyons in 1526, never to return. He is famous as a biblical scholar, author of the first modern translation of the Old Testament and the New Testament from the Hebrew and Greek texts (1527-1528).

and staff, is undoubtedly Luke, who as a future evangelist earned a more prominent position in the composition than the mere disciple Cleophas. Interestingly, Marchese (1879) suggested that this pilgrim, standing in the center between Christ and Luke, represented almost full face, is a portrait of fra Sante Pagnini, Della Magna's predecessor as prior of San Marco (1504-1506)²⁵. Thus it would look – but only to Fra Bartolomeo and his contemporaries – as if Pagnini, pointing with his left hand, introduces his successor to Christ. A double *portrait historié* in the true sense, but losing its added iconographic value to the following generations, if not for Vasari's summary reference. Both priors were practically the same age as Fra Bartolomeo (they were all born in the years 1470-1473), and of essential importance for his artistic career. The young and ambitious Pagnini, born in Lucca in 1470, came to Florence from Pistoia where he was prior in 1502-1504. He started his term in the convent of San Marco by arranging the transfer of Fra Bartolomeo from nearby Prato, in order to revive the artists' workshop of San Marco which had been slumbering since the time of prior Antoninus (1389-1459; consecrated archbishop of Florence in 1446, canonized in 1523) and fra Angelico (1395-1455)²⁶. This was probably meant to boost the income of the convent from commissions by wealthy patrons and other convents or churches, to provide for substantial cultural gifts to high-ranking clergy, and to fulfill the convent's own need for altarpieces to decorate its church²⁷. The identification remains hypothetical though, as no secure portraits of Pagnini exist and the face in the fresco is much abraded.

Two anonymous portraits of a fellow friar, one with the head straight up, now in Rotterdam (fig. 23)²⁸, the other with the head slightly tilted forward, now in Berlin²⁹, were used for God the Father in the *Padre Eterno* (fig. 24)³⁰. Fra Bartolomeo painted this large altarpiece for the Dominican convent in Murano in 1509, but it was never delivered and was eventually presented to fra Sante Pagnini in 1513 when he was elected prior of the convent of San Romano in Lucca for the second time. The painted head, in frontal view though not looking at the beholder, was supplied with a grey patriarchal beard, befitting

²⁵ See MARCHESE, *Memorie*, p. 48.

²⁶ See E. WIND, *Sante Pagnini and Michelangelo. A Study of the Succession of Savonarola*, in «Gazette des Beaux-Arts», 26 (1944), pp. 211-246.

²⁷ See ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 94-95.

²⁸ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 163; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 118-119, 216-217, n. 6.3.

²⁹ Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. KdZ 480; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 118-119, fig. 31.

³⁰ Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi, inv. 88; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 113-115, 216, n. 6.

this iconic representation of God the Father and at the same time disguising the model beyond recognition (fig. 24).

DONOR PORTRAITS

In three paintings Fra Bartolomeo included portraits of the people who commissioned them. The first one is the large fresco of *The Last Judgement*, painted in 1499-1501 in the hospital cemetery of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence, which was accompanied by the portraits of the overseer of the hospital, Gerozzo Dini, and his deceased mother Monna Venna degli Agli, died in 1497, whose grave it adorned. The portraits were executed on the flanking pilasters and were lost when the main fresco was detached from the wall and moved to another courtyard in 1657-1666 when the site was restructured. Dini was probably positioned on the right pilaster, judging from two preliminary drawings for a kneeling figure in profile facing left, now in Rotterdam, which are probably related to the fresco ensemble³¹. Dini's mother was depicted on the left pilaster and, although this relation likewise remains hypothetical, a drawing by Fra Bartolomeo's friend and companion Mariotto Albertinelli, now in the Louvre, seems to record the original setting with the woman kneeling between two painted columns on a pedestal, in profile and facing right, the hands folded in prayer³². Unfortunately, the separate portrait drawings for the two heads have not survived.

The second painting is the altarpiece with the Virgin and Christ child hovering on clouds surrounded by flying angels and saints below on the ground, in the cathedral of Besançon, known as the *Vierge aux Saints* or *Carondelet Madonna*. This large panel painting was commissioned by Ferry Carondelet (1473-1528), a Frenchman of the same age as Fra Bartolomeo, canon and archdeacon of the metropolitan chapter of Besançon, who passed through Florence on his way to Rome on a diplomatic mission in June 1511. His portrait, whose identification is therefore certain, is included in the lower right corner of the composition, clad in a conspicuous red mantle, kneeling beneath the Virgin and Christ child, pointing upwards with his right hand and looking straight at the beholder (fig. 25). Unfortunately, the preliminary portrait drawing is not known, whereas 14 studies survive for both the

³¹ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 M 93 and 94; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolomeo*, pp. 74-75, 88, 214, nn. 3.31, 3.32.

³² Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. RF 5553r; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolomeo*, p. 17, fig. 32.

entire composition and individual figures and details like hands and feet³³. The painting was installed in the cathedral of Saint Stephen.

The third donor portrait is the fra Sebastiano Lambardi da Montecatini's one: the nobleman from Lucca and lay friar of the dominican Order is depicted (like Carondelet) in rich secular clothing and fashionable hairstyle in the *Madonna della Misericordia* in Lucca (1515)³⁴. His position in the composition and the brilliant red color of his cloak are similar to Carondelet. Unlike the latter he is not placed in the foreground, but integrated in the crowd, second row, looking up to the Madonna, to whom he is introduced by the patron saint himself. For his profile head with the pronounced nose Fra Bartolomeo made a carefully worked out drawing, using red chalk for the face (fig. 27)³⁵. The identification of the sitter is secure because of the initials F.S.O.P. (Fratres Sebastianus Ordinis Predicatorum) and his coat of arms depicted on the dais which the Madonna stands on.

OTHER MODELS AND PRESUMED SELF-PORTRAITS

Among the people crowding the lower section of the *Madonna della Misericordia*, representing the Virgin Mary as Mother of mercy protecting the populace of Lucca under her cloak held up by angels, there are several more heads which have individual features as opposed to others which look like masks (hollow eye sockets and open mouths). Most prominent is the old woman sitting in the front next to the donor (fig. 26). The preliminary drawing has an even more pronounced physiognomy and life-like presence, enhanced by the combined use of black and red chalk in the face (fig. 28)³⁶. The same old woman – possibly a relative or a nun of the adjacent convent of Saint Catherine of Siena – also posed for a similar drawing, now in Rotterdam (fig. 29)³⁷. Here she is represented with the head turned away in three quarters profile and with a slightly rearranged veil. The young woman sitting next to her in the painting (fig. 30) was prepared with three drawings after a dressed mannikin for the seated pose, holding a baby, and one

³³ See *ivi*, pp. 234-236; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 150-155, 220-222, nn. 9C.1-8.

³⁴ See note 13.

³⁵ Moscow, Pushkin Museum; see A.J. ELEN, *Missing Old Master Drawings from the Franz Koenigs Collection claimed by the State of the Netherlands*, Den Haag 1989, p. 174, n. 316; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 182, 225, n. 11.13.

³⁶ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 183; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 181-183, 225, n. 11.11.

³⁷ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 180.

drawing of the head turned to the right: evidently a portrait for which a woman from outside the nunnery must have sat³⁸.

A detail which has so far escaped attention is the cleric to the right of the dais, standing out between two “mask figures” (fig. 31). He is indirectly pointed at by saint Dominic, whose right hand is below his chin, and by the Madonna who holds her stretched out left hand right above his head. This is certainly no coincidence: the man is looking towards the beholder and is recognizable as a deacon by his stola³⁹. The face shows a remarkable likeness to a drawing, now in Munich, dated around 1510-1512 (fig. 32), which Von der Gabelentz in 1922 considers to be a study for the anonymous standing saint, second from the left in the *Pala del Gran Consiglio* (fig. 33)⁴⁰. According to Vasari, this detail in the altarpiece is a self-portrait of the artist and he used it as a model for the woodcut portrait (in mirror image) at the start of Fra Bartolomeo’s biography in the second edition of his *Vite* (fig. 34)⁴¹. Assuming that Vasari’s contention – probably based on verbal information from aged friars from San Marco like Fra Bartolomeo’s peer fra Eustachio (1473-1555) – is right and this is indeed a self-portrait, the indicated figure in the *Madonna della Misericordia* might also be a self-portrait of Fra Bartolomeo. He was a deacon and the figure is accordingly dressed. The – at first glance – inconspicuous placing in the crowded background with the very subtle way of indirect introduction and blessing seems to match the modest character of the artist as described by Vasari in his biography of Fra Bartolomeo in the *Vite*⁴².

The *Madonna della Misericordia* may prove to be an even richer treasure-trove of portraits of contemporaries, including an equally subtle hint of Girolamo Savonarola (hidden in the crowd behind the man with the bare upper body standing on the left), and the kneeling cardinal below saint Dominic’s right hand, turned left in profile,

³⁸ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 186; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 181-182, 225, n. 11.12.

³⁹ I am grateful to padre Luciano Cinelli OP for pointing this out to me during the *convegno* in October 2017.

⁴⁰ Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, inv. 2167 Z; see H. VON DER GABELENTZ, *Fra Bartolommeo und die Florentiner Renaissance*, 2 voll., I, Leipzig 1922, p. 160; II, n. 327, pl. 47; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolommeo*, pp. 1, 229, n. A.

⁴¹ See ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolomeo*, pp. 18-20, figg. XII, XIII.

⁴² See VASARI, *Vite*, IV, p. 177; «Baccio was beloved in Florence for his virtues, for he was assiduous in his work, quiet and good by nature, and a truly God-fearing man; he had a great liking for a life of peace, and he shunned vicious company, delighted much in hearing sermons, and always sought the society of learned and serious persons. And in truth, it is seldom that nature creates a man of good parts and a gentle craftsman, without also providing him, after some time, with peace and favour, as she did for Baccio, who, as will be told below, obtained all that he desired» (VASARI, *Lives*, IV, p. 152).

which might be a portrait of Sisto Gara della Rovere (1473-1517, same years as the artist), the apostolic administrator of the see of Lucca since 1507 (fig. 31). One would then also expect a portrait of Fra Bartolomeo's former superior and «il suo dolcissimo amico» fra Sante Pagnini, prior of the convent in Lucca at that time and presumably the intermediary for obtaining the commission for the altarpiece⁴³. Perhaps Sante Pagnini posed for saint Dominic, which in itself would be entirely appropriate, introducing the patron to the Virgin and, at the same time, less conspicuously pointing out the artist to the patron (figg. 12, 14, 26). Unfortunately, for want of contemporary portraits of these people, it is impossible to corroborate these hypotheses, which therefore remain speculative.

On the other hand, two portrait drawings on consecutive pages in one of the Gabburri albums (figg. 35, 37) have convincingly been identified on comparison with a secure contemporary portrait: Michelangelo's portrait bust by Daniele da Volterra (fig. 36)⁴⁴. Although the drawings were made around 1516, when the artist was between 38 and 42 years old, the bronze showing Michelangelo at a later age, between 73 and 78, the facial characteristics, especially the broken nose, and the stone mason's cap in the drawings are obvious and the identification, first made by J.Q. van Regteren Altena and accepted by Chris Fischer, has not been disputed since. Among the obvious but yet anonymous portraits in the second Gabburri album, one may also expect Michelangelo's elder brother Leonello Buonarroti (born in 1473 like Baccio della Porta), who was a fellow friar in the convent of San Marco since 1510, and possibly a link between both artists⁴⁵.

⁴³ Quoted in MARCHESE, *Memorie*, p. 108.

⁴⁴ Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 563 N 185 and 181; see ELEN - FISCHER, *Fra Bartolomeo*, pp. 294-296, n. 78 and figg. 190, 191.

⁴⁵ See FISCHER, *Fra Bartolomeo*, p. 295. The unpublished portrait drawing inv. I 563 N 182, placed between the portraits of Michelangelo in the album N, is a good candidate. Drawings inv. I 563 N 179 and 184, likewise in black and red chalk, are probably portraits too.

