

CONNOISSEURSHIP AND THE ADVENTURE OF ATTRIBUTION

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«A drawing, like a person, takes a long time to get to know»
(Nicholas Turner)¹

The attribution of drawings is a discipline that demands connoisseurship. It is the attempt to link a draughtsman's individual 'handwriting' to a work or an artist². It also requires extensive research. Research on the present drawing was replaced by the internet-research. As an alternative to the usual contact-restrictions, a survey sent to connoisseurs was supposed

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¹ Nicholas Turner, in LANDESMAN 2001.

² Cf. LINDEMANN 2003. Cf. also KOBİ 2017.

to bring about a solution. As it happened, the attribution roll call met with an overwhelming response among researchers³.

1. *Caccia, Ruschi, India, Strozzi... A Case for Connoisseurs and Detectives*

In Cologne the procedure of the digital survey had been carried out on a single specimen – with surprising results. Here, the potential of the digital copy was utilised at an early stage and an international expert survey on this drawing had already been initiated in 2018.

Brown pen on grey-brown aged paper, folded several times, edges torn – filed in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne under «Anonymous, Italian, 16th century» (Fig. 1). A sheet in wide format approx. 800 mm in length, 300 mm in height, with the inv. no. Z 03498⁴. A chance find, filed among large formats and never unpacked!

First, one asks what is there, according to John Gere's catalogue of questions, «What *is* this [...] drawing?»⁵. No, they are not celebrating. They are righteously frightened, confused, perhaps even melancholically touched by a scene that is part of religious existence in Semitic culture. It is a group of guests which joined the rite of *Brit Mila* (entry into the Jewish community). The subject of the sheet is difficult to discern, as the tangle of lines conceals the meaning of the depiction. The dense row of figures makes deciphering the scene a guessing game. Moreover, it is not

³ Unforgettable are the two grand masters of attribution, the connoisseurs Philip Pouncey and John A. Gere, who have made lasting contributions to Italian drawing.

⁴ The sheet is joined in the middle from two parts and is marked by numerous breaks and pressings. It comes from the Old Collection, probably belonging to the Wallraf block. The watermark could not be identified exactly despite transmitted light, incident light and grazing light images.

⁵ GERE 1987, p. 291.

the focus of the composition, but pushed to the side where the viewer begins his observation. Next to a cloaked figure striding to the right, one encounters a somewhat receding old man with a beard and a mantle doing something with his hands over a table⁶. From the other side of the table a veiled woman leans forward holding a reluctant child in her arms. Shown is the New Testament episode of the *Circumcision of the infant Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem*⁷. A theme that signifies value and esteem to Christian iconography since Giotto.

Female and male figures crowd behind the protagonists, including, in the second row, the child's foster father, Joseph. In the foreground naked boys, *Ignudi*, pose in exalted positions. With decorative gestures they reach into the cloaks of the figures in the back. These are lined up in several layers in front of the viewer, spreading out in an unnatural urge to move. The ones in front overlap the ones behind, some are only gap fillers in this turbulent hustle and bustle. The future saviour, a child in panic, is initialised here, offered to God by the mother, accompanied by a chaotic thiasos – performed as an expressive drama.

On the one hand, the 'processional arrangement', which starkly contrasts the traditional depiction of the circumcision of Jesus, has a disturbing effect – in pictures the act usually takes place in a small circle; and on the other hand, the naked boys (*Ignudi*) positioned in front seem completely out of place with their characteristic graceful nonchalance. Just a cheeky paradox or the

⁶ John A. Gere describes the theme of the drawing as *An Antique Sacrifice*. Cf. GERE 1987, p. 304.

⁷ Listed on the WRM index card as *Presentation in the Temple*. The offering of the infant Jesus in the temple, formerly also known as the Purification of Mary, Latin *Purificatio Beatae Mariae Virginis*, is described in Luke 2:22-38. In favour of *circumcision* is the resisting child, in favour of the *representation in the temple* of the family procession. The custom of circumcision is part of the Jews' rite of admission into the community of faith (Genesis 17, 10 ff.; Luke 2, 21) and is celebrated here as a mass event. Cf. ISERMEYER 1938.

wistful conclusion of antique beauty education? In addition, the theatrical gestures of the actors are confusing, especially the two lightly dressed women who rush along at the end of the procession like raving followers of Bacchus. Affects, emotions, psychological dispositions shape the narrative. Mannerisms and effect tricks are used here. Also striking is the asymmetry of the motif, which has been moved all the way to the left. This raises the question of the meaning of the depiction as well as the function of this draft.

The figures are stretched out in a contour-accentuated formal language and arranged in a frieze-like wide format. Depths and shadows are created without wash, only with parallel, diagonal and cross hatching. Body and garment contours are pencilled in long pen strokes, the inscriptions of the muscles are marked with linear abbreviations and semicircular, small sketches. A morphological peculiarity is the graphic capturing of the heads. The head is outlined in an egg shape, the centre of the head is marked vertically and the axis of the eyes horizontally, the eyes, nose and mouth are circumscribed with circles and filled in with scribbles, condensed with ink to create dark cavities. Mostly, the head dress is curly and elaborated like foam bubbles that line the heads (Fig. 2). The nimble pen gives the figures emphatic verve. John Gere describes the drawing as «more curious than beautiful» and associates it with the frescoes by Taddeo Zuccari in Verona (Fig. 3)⁸. With this, the connoisseur answers the question of purpose («Where, when, in what circumstance, and for what purpose was it created?»)⁹.

⁸ GERE 1987, pp. 303-304. In particular, the author refers to the lost frescoes by Taddeo Zuccari, which he had produced in Verona in 1552. Specifically, Gere insists on Taddeo's facial type with the dark eye sockets and the sideways tilted heads; cf. Taddeo Zuccari, *A procession of Roman soldiers with captives*, British Museum, inv. no. 1946,0713.579; MUNDY 1989, figs. 6, 13, 14, 16, 35 etc. I am grateful to John Marciari for the literature reference.

⁹ GERE 1987.

2. *Style analysis: who, what, when, how*¹⁰

The question of the author of the drawing is the beginning of the guesswork and a difficult business. So far, it has not been possible to identify a painting corresponding to the drawing in the Northern and Central Italian art world, as far as the drawing style and the frieze-like composition are concerned. Motifs and stylistics are available as research tools. The work begins with a search for specific stylistic characteristics. In particular, the draughtsman's 'handwriting' can contribute to finding the maker, because every draughtsman usually has an individual graphical drawing style. It may vary within the creation periods. Like the letter script, the drawing script is also a personal form of expression. It contains characteristic signa, unique marks. Once defined as an individual style, these orientation signs make it possible to recognize anonymous sheets. Stylistically, the figure scheme (elongated figures and exalted positional play), especially that of the *Ignudi*, can be placed in the second half of the Cinquecento¹¹. This rough characterization of the individual style is based solely on connoisseurship, i.e. empirical basis and is only experiential knowledge.

That is why expertise or connoisseurship is needed. It is at the forefront of art historical research, experimental research as well as research practice and it highly depends on the cooperation of collectors, artists, art dealers, art lovers and art historians; let alone the *amateur* gifted with an artistic eye. Thus, proven experts should be consulted in order to ascertain one's own assessment or to get closer to the authorship of the drawing.

¹⁰ On the 'connoisseurship' of master drawings, see STRAUSS, FELKER 1987, pp. 285-305 (Oberhuber, Zerner, Gere); most recently: CHAPMAN, WESTSTEIJN, MEIJERS 2019 as well as DAMM 2021.

¹¹ For comparison, consider the drawings by Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola called Parmigianino, Francesco Primaticcio or Perino del Vaga and their successors.

It all began when a knowledgeable *flâneur* in the rich garden of *pictura* drew my attention to a pen and ink drawing in the Albertina, Vienna (inv. no. 1628) and associated it with the name Guglielmo Caccia¹². This pen and ink drawing takes up the subject of *Mary with Child* (Fig. 4) and corresponds stylistically to a composition with inv. no. 24039, showing the same subject in the same place (Fig. 5). The latter shows the mother sitting on a column embracing the child, who is only covered with a cloth over his chest with both arms. Mary wears a flowing robe and a veil in her hair. Both figures are elongated in a mannerist way. Mary, her hand on a folio, carries her unruly child in her lap and turns away. The mother is dressed in a décollete dress and veil, the child with a cloth over his chest. Drapery forms the background. Perspective foreshortening and elongation of the figures characterize the composition¹³.

The Viennese sheets (inv. no. 1628 and 24039) have been attributed numerous times in the course of their cataloguing. In his 1961 exhibition catalogue on Venetian drawing, Otto Benesch attributed the sheet traditionally assigned to Farinati as well as the reference sheet (inv. no. 24039) to the Genoese Bernardo Strozzi (1582-1644)¹⁴. A glance at the Albertina online catalogue reveals a round dance of attributions making the difficulty of finding the author all too clear: Giuseppe Fiocco

¹² A tip that seemed promising for further research.

¹³ Vienna, Albertina, *Maria mit Kind*, inv. no. 1628, brown pen on grey paper, 380 x 260 mm; Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 24039, brown pen on beige paper, 390 x 278 mm. The connection of the latter sheet with our drawing is already noted on the WRM's index card. The two drawings were last listed in the Albertina's inventory catalogue under «Anonymous»; cf. BIRKE, KERTÉSZ 1992-1997, II, p. 865; IV, p. 2319. Another sheet (*Entombment or Lamentation*) with a similar handwriting, which was sent to me by Heiko Damm, is in the Graphic Collection of the Klassik Stiftung Weimar under inv. no. KK 11514, where it is attributed to Giovanni Battista Paggi. Cf. FISCHER PACE, GÜSE 2008, no. 471.

¹⁴ BENESCH 1961, p. 44, no. 50.

(1928/1961) suggested Bernardino India¹⁵; Eckhard Knab assigned the drawing to the Piedmontese Guglielmo Caccia called Moncalvo (1568-1624); Veronika Birke decided in favour of the Genoese Giovanni Battista Paggi (1554-1624); then Giulio Benso (1592-1668); Ugo Ruggeri pleaded for the Venetian Francesco Ruschi (1598-1661); Veronika Birke and Janine Kertész finally confined themselves to the designation «Anonymous» (1992/1997).

Traditionally listed by Teresio Pignatti as the work of a Veronese, John A. Gere, Keeper of Prints and Drawings of the British Museum, scrutinised the Cologne drawing in the early 1980s and felt «quite certain» that he was looking at a work by the Veronese Bernardino India¹⁶. The bubbly texture of the hair was certainly the reason for this suggestion, since India can offer neither similar hatchings nor facial patterns. The line management of both artists converge even less. There the fine, almost filigree line work, here rigorous line work. On the other hand, one can agree with Gere's assessment that it was inspired by a Renaissance frieze in the manner of Polidoro da Caravaggio. Hella Robels, then head of the Graphic Arts Collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, agreed with Gere's determination and labelled the work as a «typical work by India»¹⁷.

This rings in the guessing game and opens door and gate to a merry-go-round of attribution and reattribution. Attribution is by no means trickier than shifting an attribution of a drawing. And every writer would like to advertise a well-known name. Gaining solid ground in this situation requires healthy optimism. Attribution and reattribution alternate according to individual

¹⁵ On India, see PEDROCCO 1964.

¹⁶ GERE (1987, p. 303), affirms «I feel no doubt that it is by India». Teresio Pignatti's view is also mentioned here.

¹⁷ Hella Robels, correspondence with John Gere of 12.01.1981. See also GERE 1987, p. 303. Here the connoisseur is reminded of scriptural reminiscences of Taddeo Zuccaro, who was also active in Verona.

empirical experience. Depending on knowledge and preference in the designatory universe, the drawing is examined according to the peculiarities of processing, drawing, line technique, contouring, shading, etc., allocated to a temporal and local classification and assigned with a name. The subject and composition of the drawing provide information about its original function. A match of the 'handwriting' to be examined with a characteristically recognised drawing style provides the clue to the artist's name. This insight alone forms the basis for the objectifiability of aesthetic experience and its namability. The more connoisseurs understand in their connoisseurship about a certain name, the more plausible and valid the attribution. Mind you – on an empirical basis. The sum of experience yields a probabilistic profile as a preliminary result.

3. *Hypotheses*

An attempt shall now be made to shed light on the drawing sheet through knowledgeable discourse. «In a friendly, informal way» as Charles Bell once put it¹⁸, connoisseurship will be pursued. The *crème de la crème* of drawing research is invited to measure the stylistic range and to comment on the basis of digital images. This much can be revealed: there is a great deal of confusion among the expert community. Their assessments diverge widely, owing to their various inclinations and experiences, meandering back and forth between the cultural landscapes of Italy, Central Italy, Veneto, Lombardy, Piedmont and Liguria.

Identifying the author(s) of the anonymous sheets was the task of the survey. Thirty scholars were interviewed, whose statements are summarised here. The recipients were presented with three drawings in digital form – the pen and ink drawing inv. no. Z 03498 in the Graphic Collection of the WRM, Cologne, and the two pen and ink drawings inv. nos. 1628 and

¹⁸ MAURER 2013, p. 60.

24039 in the Graphic Collection of the Albertina, Vienna – and asked about possible similarities as well as possible naming. Considering that neither a signature nor a watermark is available, let alone a painting with adequate composition, and the origin of the sheet is uncertain, expert knowledge was required. In concrete terms, the prime discipline of drawing research is required here, the reading of the ‘handwriting’ of the draughtsman. Conclusive evidence is thus excluded, at best, an attribution is plausible.

Based on John Gere’s consideration of attributing the Cologne drawing to Bernardino India or his circle, the experts voiced controversial opinions. Even the comparison of the Cologne sheet with the two Viennese drawings evoked the most diverse positions among the respondents. As a matter of fact, the connoisseurs accepted the challenge: «Nothing is more enjoyable than looking at problematic drawings in other collections, although in this case it is lowering of the spirit to be so comprehensively defeated»¹⁹.

The relationship between the three drawings was discussed very divergently, although the majority opinion is that the Cologne sheet converges with the two Viennese drawings, due to stylistic features or that the same hand was active. Yet the following assessment reads unambiguously: «I am completely persuaded that the three drawings are indeed all by the same hand»; equally: «the hand is indeed identical to that of the Albertina sheets». From the Rhine comes the message: «it stands no reason that the Cologne sheet is closely related to Albertina 24039!» and from the Seine: «ils sont très certainement l’œuvre du même dessinateur».

Several experts see Genoese hands at work in the Viennese sheets («Genova est une bonne idée»), Bernardo Strozzi (against: «Assolutamente [no] Strozzi, davvero è di un’altra generazione,

¹⁹ Hugo Chapman, mail of 26.11.2010.

non ha nulla a che fare con quel disegno!» and «the WRM's "Procession" would be a very unusual subject and format for Strozzi») and Giovanni Battista Paggi (against: «Le style me paraît par ailleurs plus archaïsant que celui de Paggi malgré quelques parentés de facture») are the favourites; Giulio Benso and Valerio Castello (1624-1659) are also mentioned. The figures are characterised, among other things, as «tipicamente cambiascesca, oltre che, di nuovo nella definizione linearistica sintetica dei profili così tipica in quella scuola». For the Veneto, the painter Francesco Ruschi, who worked in Venice and Treviso, is claimed for the Viennese Madonna inv. no. 24039²⁰; but this is vigorously contradicted: «le dessin n'a rien à voir avec Ruschi».

Furthermore, it can be suspected that the author of the Cologne drawing could be an artist from central Italy with Roman experience influenced by Parmigianino; or a Roman draughtsman in the Perino succession, «not far from Taddeo Zuccari»; or a mannerist interpretation of Polidoro da Caravaggio's frescoes («[...] rappelle les frises de Polidoro da Caravaggio»); or a non-mainstream Veronese or a Lombard artist. With an excursion into the third dimension, considerations such as: «what if it were the work of a sculptor?» are made. The guessing game culminates in the confession: «unfortunately I didn't have an attribution to suggest».

Concrete attributions mostly refer to Gere's India attribution. If India is not directly cited, at least the artist's circle, school or succession is referred to, as «l'idée de B. India va dans ce sens» or «I would agree that he (Bernardino India) or his following are the right 'ball park'», and «if it is not Bernardino India himself, it is by an artist formed in Verona without a doubt». There were also readjustments in favour of India, such as «Moreover, this time I could see more clearly the reminiscences of Bernardino India's draughtsmanship».

²⁰ The attribution to Ruschi can already be found in MEIJER 2017, p. 429.

A collaborator of India is mentioned as an outsider: «I would be tempted to turn onto Anselmo Canera, if he were not such a mediocre painter»; and equally: «the drawing perhaps deserves a higher name». Against this came the objection: «I would not completely agree with you on the definition as “a very mediocre painter”, particularly in his frescoes [...]. Still, Palladio and Vittoria had Canera in high esteem». With reservation also the following: «In short, the Canera hypothesis and above all that of the circle of India seems valid to me and deserves further study». Finally, the veto for the draughtsman Canera: «il disegno ha davvero la raffinatezza di un caposcuola, a mio avviso, e per me impensabile per Canera».

4. *A Result?*

The elite of art history appears to diverge between consideration, misgivings, opinion and conviction. What is striking is the great uncertainty in front of a draughtsman's 'handwriting' that perhaps does not fit into the connoisseur's usual scheme of experience. Nevertheless, one must concede to the esteemed connoisseurship that 'prima vista judgement', the first appearance, is formulated here, which precludes any detailed research.

In order to gain an overview of the interviewees' opinions, common tendencies are compiled: twelve experts recognize the direct connection between the Cologne drawing and the Viennese sheets, i.e. the same hand. Two disagree and see no correspondence at all. The other pundits identify one or the other sheet with the Cologne drawing, but cannot bring themselves to give a conclusive judgement or do not issue an opinion.

In the search for the draughtsman, the scholars first and foremost focus upon the regional characteristics. As to the Cologne drawing, 16 respondents opt for Upper Italy, 10 of them for Verona, one is indecisive between Verona and Lombardy,

another between Mantua and Cremona, one is in favour of Lombardy. Nine respondents opt for Genoa, six for central Italy and Rome. Some specialists feel, there are overlaps due to various similarities between the line drawing style of Genoese and Veronese draughtsmen. However differently the respective experts argue, in the end most of them settle for northern Italy. Literate *savants* recognize a graphical 'handwriting' floating between Genoa, Lombardy and Veneto.

If one asks for the specific name of the drawing's author, Gere's early mention of «Bernardino India» dominates. Including his circle, there are 13 approvals. Two researchers consider the painter Anselmo Canera worthy of consideration. Five scholars are in favour of Strozzi, Paggi and Benso. Parmigianino's, Primaticcio's and Perino's influence is also cited, even flirted with the Egmont master. Remarkable are some collegial recommendations, such as: «A Mario Di Giampaolo might have known advice» and «perhaps Sergio Marinelli could help to clarify this complex topic». Finally, the advice of a versed *conoscitrice*: «the more specialists you consult, the more complicated the matter becomes».

The period of origin is usually given as the second half of the 16th century.

5. *Verona or Genoa?*

Back to the craft: In order to obtain a reasonable basis for assessing the drawings and determining an author's name, it is necessary to compare the 'handwriting' of the three sheets and search for similarities, according to Henri Zerner's definition: «(Connoisseurship) is the articulation and symptomatic examination of the visual evidence»²¹. A comparison of the two Albertina sheets with the pen and ink drawing in Cologne reveals

²¹ ZERNER 1987, p. 290.

extensive stylistic parallels: significant graphical features of the drawings are the fluctuating fanned-out hatchings moving in all directions as well as the curlyheads of the figures donned with bubbles. The facial patterns in particular show comparable expressive schemes (Fig. 6). There is the lifeless-looking gaze of the eye sockets filled in black, the similarly depicted mouths – swiftly scribbled, without individuality. Even the rare concurrence in the motif of the woman wrestling with the whining toddler – an iconographic peculiarity – speaks for the same author. In comparison of the graphic skills the typical abbreviations and the bubble-like mop of hair – graphical signum in Mannerism – are convincing (Fig. 2). The figures are elongated and have concise graphic abbreviations. The small, circular squiggles depicting the bodies are striking (Fig. 7). Mannerist elongated contours outline the naked boy's bodies. The rudimentary, wooden and stiff representation of the hands is noticeable in all the figures, and in some of them fleeting scribbles are shaping on the feet ('crow's feet') (Fig. 8). The graphic abbreviations and curlicues of the draughtsman are of such a special and individual character that confusion with another 'handwriting' can be almost ruled out. Only the name of the author of these sheets is lacking.

The names of the drawing's author that surfaced in the manifold considerations, sound very divergent. Due to the significant mannerist connotation of our drawings, the artists of the Seicento, Francesco Ruschi and Valerio Castello, are to be discarded. An attribution to Girolamo Caccia must be rejected for stylistic reasons. Also, an attribution to Bernardo Strozzi because of the extreme foreshortening of the figures traditionally used in Genoa (see Luca Cambiaso) can't be derived, although the similarly dense hatching point in our direction, as seen for example in the Louvre sheet *La Vierge à l'Enfant avec sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie et saint Ambrois* (inv. no. 15250), the *God the Father* (inv. no. 11179) or in the *Justitia* in the Palazzo Rosso in

Genoa (inv. no. D 2912)²². However, the typical patterns to elaborate a body and a face as well as the curlyheads of the Cologne Master are only rudimentarily developed in Strozzi's work. Similarly, Giovanni Battista Paggi is out of the question because of the technical features of his *disegno*²³.

At first blush, even an attribution to Bernardino India is difficult to comprehend. The doll-like faces of his figures and their sterile contours can hardly be attributed to our draughtsman's hand²⁴. However, a work created in the circle of this artist would have to be considered. It is here alone that the bubble-covered curlyheads emanate. The *Ignudi* in a decorative sheet of the Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. no. 11452 F, most closely resemble our drawing²⁵. Analogies to the *Ignudi* in the Cologne composition are represented in particular by Bernardino India's lost frieze of figures at the Palazzo Murari della Corte, Verona (c. 1560)²⁶. The brown pen and ink drawing *The Virgin with the Christ Child, St. Anne (?) and three angels* (1579) in the British Museum inv. no. 1972,0513.1 (Fig. 9) could be the decisive factor for a possible attribution to India²⁷. Here the graphical features, such as the bubble-like head dress, typical

²² I am grateful to Giulio Bora for the reference to the drawing in Genoa.

²³ Cf. illustration in: NEWCOME-SCHLEIER 1991; NEWCOME-SCHLEIER 1995.

²⁴ Cf. the opinion of an expert: «Still, I agree with you on the fact that there are some differences: India always shows a more stylized pen writing, very "neat" so to speak, and with characteristic features in the faces (sharp noses, small eyes and elongated legs)».

²⁵ MARINELLI 2000, pp. 56-57, fig. 32. I thank Francesco Grisolia for the reference.

²⁶ The composition of the destroyed frescoes has been preserved in an engraving by Pietro Nanin (1864). See SCHMIED-HARTMANN 1997, fig. 109.

²⁷ London, British Museum, inv. no. 1972,0513.1, pen-and-ink drawing in brown, wash, over black chalk, 238 x 146 mm. Philip Pouncey recognised in it a study for India's painting (1579) in the Cappella Pellegrini in San Bernardino, Verona. See TURNER 1994, no. 95.

hand and foot patterns as well as the mirror image of Baby Jesus converge with the Cologne and Viennese drawings. Here, wash replaces the hatching in the latter. In the sheet *Le Christ mort, assis dans le tombeau, soutenu par deux anges*, inv. no. 9027 of the Louvre in Paris, which Mario Di Giampaolo has attributed to the artist, the circular body shapes as well as the hand and hair patterns, which are characteristic for our drawing, are found²⁸.

Figural similarities are particularly evident with the Child Jesus in the altarpiece *Mary with Child and St. Anne* in San Bernardino, Verona (1579). Here, the strongly foreshortened Child Jesus of the Viennese drawing inv. no. 24039 is obviously adapted²⁹. The Verona-born India also had his central field of activity there. He created frescoes in city palaces and later panel paintings for the Church and the patriciate³⁰. Painting frescoes was one of his specialities. Here in Verona, devotional paintings on walls of houses were rather rare, it was mostly profane and mythological image repertoire³¹.

One of his teachers was Domenico Riccio, called Brusasorzi (1515-1567), one of the leading artists around the middle of the 16th century in Verona³². Together with India, he decorated the façade of the Palazzo Murari dalla Corte with frescoes around 1555, demonstrating virtuoso composition and skilful perspective. A *Mary with Child* (Fig. 10) attributed to Brusasorzi,

²⁸ Paris, Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. no. 9027, pen-and-ink drawing in brown, wash, over black chalk, 134 x 172 mm.

²⁹ Cf. Illustration of the altarpiece in San Bernardino (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia) in <http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda/opera/33961/>.

³⁰ India collaborated with Michele Sanmicheli (1484-1559) in the Pellegrini Chapel of the Church of San Bernardino in Verona. Cf. BIFFIS 1992. See SERAFINI 2004.

³¹ On the frescoes of India in Verona, see SCHWEIKHART 1973, pp. 240-241, ill. 196-205.

³² WEINGART 1996. See BARBIERI 1972. On Brusasorzi's frescoes in Verona, see SCHWEIKHART 1973, no. 126, figs. 173-183, 190-191.

which was offered in the Uppsala Auktionskammare in 2008, shows a Baby Jesus in the position of the Viennese drawing inv. no. 24039³³. However, since Brusasorzi's 'handwriting' exhibits no stylistic congruence with the Cologne sheet, he can be excluded as the draughtsman.

Following the suggestion of a connoisseur of Verona's art, we should perhaps take a closer look at the «mediocre painter» Anselmo Canera, who was active in the Veneto between 1550 and 1586. A pupil of Giovanni Francesco Caroto (c. 1480-1555), he frescoed Palladio buildings in Vicenza, Thiene, and Poiana Maggiore under the direction of Bernardino India, worked in Verona and Castelfranco Veneto and created allegorical, mythological as well as religious works³⁴. One of these panel paintings (formerly an altarpiece in San Zeno, Verona, 1566) is displayed in the Museo del Castelvecchio in Verona. It shows a *Depiction of the Boy Jesus in the temple* (Fig. 11)³⁵. The main protagonists are the family of Jesus and Simon the Priest adorned with a mitre³⁶.

If we look for similarities in motifs between this painting and the drawings, some correlations can be detected: there is the infant Jesus in a similar foreshortening as in Albertina inv. no. 24039. The nappy has slipped up over his belly, as in the two Albertina compositions. Here the draughtsman presents Mary in 'lost profile' to the right, the painter in the opposite sense to the left.

³³ Domenico Brusasorzi, *Mary with Child*, oil on canvas, 380 x 500 mm, https://www.uppsalaauktion.se/auktioner/?auction_name=20081202&cat_alog_nr=12.

³⁴ See AURENHAMMER 1997. See <https://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/search?query=anselmo+canera>.

³⁵ Anselmo Canera, *Circumcision*, Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona, oil on canvas, 2600 x 2860 mm, inv. no. 43773-1B1511 (signed at the bottom: [ANSELMVS CANERIVS] VERON. PINGEBAT MDLX[VI]).

³⁶ Gaetano Zancon (1771-1816) made an etching from the original around 1800 (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1943,0709.18), which shows the original composition or dimension of the altarpiece.

The *velum*, the fine veil at the back of Mary's head, as well as her companions – one balancing a basket with doves on her head and one with the child in her arms – are also not missing in the Cologne drawing. As far as Canera's drawing skills are concerned, there is no clue here³⁷.

Regarding the use of the drawing, the arrangement of the figures and the wide format indicate a sketch for a wall frieze. A continuation of the composition to the left for the purpose of a symmetrical arrangement of the figures is conceivable³⁸. In respect to the subject, John A. Gere has already argued for a façade decoration³⁹.

Furthermore, it is important to classify the three drawings chronologically. Gere dates the Cologne drawing to the time of Taddeo Zuccari's stay in Verona, around 1552-1553⁴⁰. Stylistically, the draughtsman of the Cologne drawing appears to be at the height of his skills. Yet also the Viennese Marys with Child testify to a professionalism that hardly reveals a chronological sequence. Here the perfect perspective template for a panel painting, there the sketchy and spontaneous work for a decorative project. Even if no stylistic correspondence with

³⁷ Only the cavalcade of feathers in the Uffizi (MARINELLI 2000, fig. 33), marked with question marks, is currently known.

³⁸ This idea is advocated by Michael Venator, to whom I am grateful for the intensive exchange of ideas.

³⁹ GERE 1987, pp. 302-303. In his essay on Connoisseurship, he takes up Vasari's *Vite* reference, according to which Taddeo worked for some time in Verona, and expresses the assumption that the artist created a façade frieze there. Furthermore, the connoisseur constructs a connection to the Cologne composition and assumes that it is a «copy of Taddeo's lost Veronese façade». If one compares Taddeo's frieze-like drawing *A procession of Roman soldiers with captives* in the British Museum (inv. no. 1946,0713.579) with the Cologne drawing, one cannot help but sympathise with this assumption. The sheet is illustrated in GERE 1987, p. 296, no. 4. See also GERE, POUNCEY 1983, no. 326.

⁴⁰ GERE 1987, p. 304, fig. 14.

common scriptural and pictorial elements can be established, the graphics point to certain temporal and local pictorial formulations⁴¹.

Considering the circumstantial evidence, however, we are far from having solid ground under our feet to allow ourselves to make a firm attribution. Without a signed, comparable drawing or a compositionally congruent and documented work, any naming connected to the sheets remains patchwork. Thus, further research is needed to arrive at a well-founded result. To this the expert comment: «It would be boring if a solution were in sight so quickly».

As far as connoisseurship is concerned it is all too easy to get into familiar waters, since specialism is predominantly based on individual experience. In addition to visual memory and viewing experience, above all it is personal expertise that influences attribution. Sara Hyde, former curator of drawings at the Courtauld Institute in London, put it this way: «Experts see what they want to see. They have tunnel vision»⁴². The specialists in Genoese drawing would like to recognise Cambiaso, Paggi or Strozzi as the authors of the drawing, the experts in Venetian matters would like to tie in quickly with India, even Ruschi, while those trained to northern Italian artists would like to find a name between Lombardy and Piedmont. They focus specifically on Verona, Cremona and Emilia. Others digress into central Italian and Roman realms. All consent to the particular quality of the drawing. Here connoisseurship reaches its limits, and if no comparable work of the same hand turns up, then only chance can help, and chance is known to be a fickle companion. Conclusion: «Il problema rimane appassionante» (Giulio Bora).

⁴¹ The elongated physique, the exalted movement patterns and the typical internal drawing are the characteristic mannerisms of northern Italian drawing in the 2nd half of the 16th century.

⁴² See LANDESMAN 2001.

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Illustrations

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- Fig. 2. Anonymous, *Presentation or Circumcision in the Temple*, detail, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, inv. no. Z 03498
- Fig. 3. Taddeo Zuccari, *A procession of Roman soldiers with captives*, 1548, pen and brown ink, with grey-brown wash, British Museum, inv. no. 1946,0713.579
- Fig. 4. Anonymous, *Mary with Child*, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 1628
- Fig. 5. Anonymous, *Mary with Child*, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 24039
- Fig. 6. Anonymous, *Mary with Child*, detail, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 1628; Anonymous, *Presentation or Circumcision in the Temple*, detail, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, inv. no. Z 03498
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