

MITTEILUNGEN  
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN  
INSTITUTES  
IN FLORENZ



LXV. BAND — 2023  
HEFT I



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HEFT I

# MITTEILUNGEN DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTES IN FLORENZ

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**Umschlagbild** | Copertina:  
*Vecchiatta, Auferstandener Christus* | *Cristo risorto*  
(Detail aus Abb. 18, S. 85 | particolare da fig. 18, p. 85)

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Raphael’s Unexecuted *Resurrection of Christ* and Santa Maria della Pace





1 Raphael, compositional study for  
a *Resurrection of Christ*. Bayonne,  
Musée Bonnat-Helleu, inv. 683

## Raphael's Unexecuted *Resurrection of Christ* and Santa Maria della Pace

Angelamaria Aceto

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Among the many undocumented projects by Raphael known only in drawings is a *Resurrection of Christ*. The group comprises three compositional studies in pen and ink and six highly finished figure studies in black chalk. Their significance as a coherent group was overlooked by early collectors and scholars. It was Carl Ruland who recognised them as studies related to the same commission, pointing to the merits of an arrangement by subject matter of the Prince Consort's collection for the discovery.<sup>1</sup> John Charles Robinson had meanwhile arrived at the same conclusion, though he erroneously believed them to be connected with Raphael's *Transfiguration*.<sup>2</sup> As a group, this is one of the most extraordinary endeavours by Raphael as a draughtsman to have come down to us, displaying the wide range of his drawing modes and command of media.

First in the series is a sheet in Bayonne showing the composition in two registers (Fig. 1). The later, but not final, study for the lower part in the Ashmolean (Fig. 2) contains concepts for four of the figures or groups further studied in chalk. The guard on the left seen from the back, balancing on a stone, a complex invention modelled on an antique type of fallen soldier found in

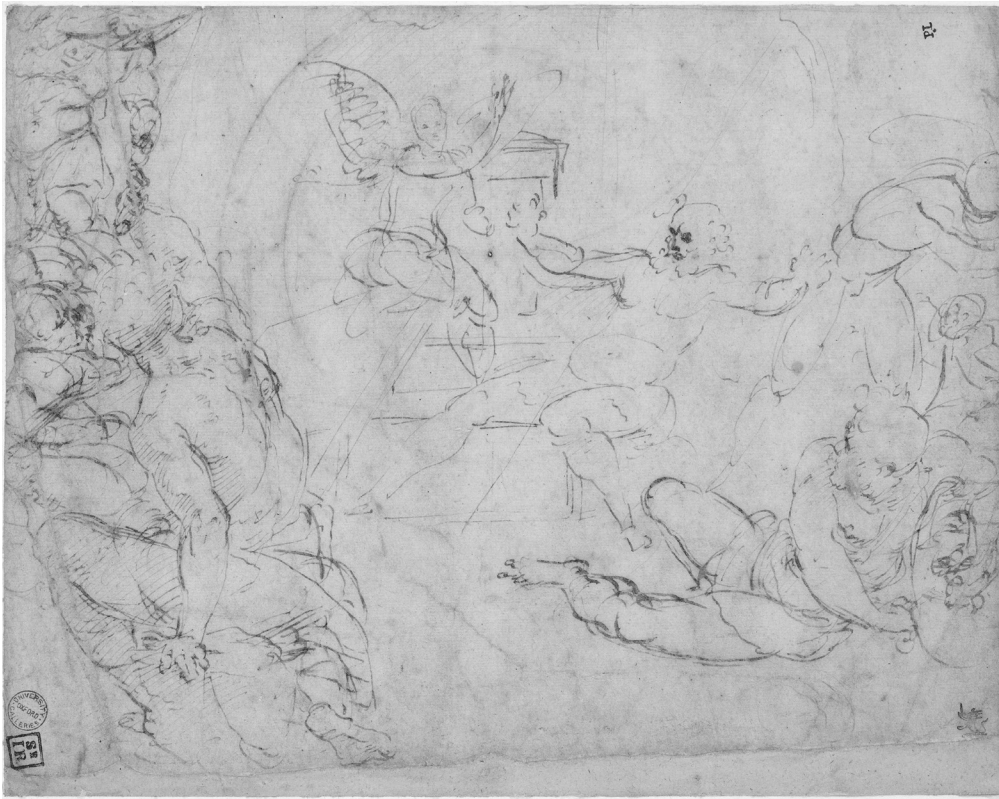
the Torlonia collection,<sup>3</sup> and the semi-recumbent guard on the right return in two sheets at the Ashmolean (inv. WA1846.200r and WA1846.201). The action taking place in the left background is less clear due to both its extremely swift and inventive nature and the erosion caused by the iron-gall ink which contributes to some visual confusion: two kneeling, intertwined soldiers are discernible. Their poses and attitudes are developed in a chalk figure study in the Royal Collection (inv. RCIN 912736). Behind, to the far left, is a soldier apparently standing, seen in an elegant contrapposto. To the right, the figure shielding his face with his right arm – a motif recalling an invention from Raphael's Florentine period that returns in the *Liberation of Saint Peter* – would be further studied in another chalk drawing in the Royal Collection (inv. RCIN 912735). Immediately behind, minimal strokes suffice to suggest the form of a sleeping soldier, while in the centre the bearded figure seen falling onto his back seems to develop from a figure that Raphael had tried and retried in a brainstorming sketch in the Ashmolean (Fig. 3), in which the artist's creative force is on display as nowhere else in his drawn oeuvre. There are two further studies traditionally

<sup>1</sup> Carl Ruland, *The Works of Raphael Santi da Urbino as Represented in the Raphael Collection in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle [...]*, London 1876, p. XIX, note \*, and p. 40. On the Prince Consort's collection, see Carly Collier, "Collecting Raphael in Reproduction in the Nineteenth Century: The Formation of Prince Albert's Raphael Collection and Its Early Impact on Raphael Studies", in: *Journal of the History of Collections*, XXXV (2023), pp. 525–536.

<sup>2</sup> John Charles Robinson, *A Critical Account of the Drawings by Michel Angelo and Raffaello in the University Galleries, Oxford*, Oxford 1870, p. xi. The Chatsworth study however, long associated with the name of Michelangelo, was

not grouped with the others until 1925, by Oskar Fischel, "Raphaels Auferstehung Christi", in: *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XLVI (1925), pp. 191–200: 198.

<sup>3</sup> As noted by Vincenzo Farinella, *Raffaello pittore archeologo: eguagliare e superare gli antichi*, Rome 2021, pp. 138f., note 30, and not on the *Galati* of Alfonsina Orsini discovered in the summer of 1514, as maintained by Claudia La Malfa, *Raphael and the Antique*, London 2020, p. 195. The similarities are in fact too generic. The alleged relation with the Orsini *Galati* also would imply too late a dating for our drawing, as we shall see.



2 Raphael, *The Angel Appearing to the Soldiers at the Tomb* (study for a *Resurrection of Christ*).  
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1846.199r

connected with this group, one in Chatsworth (inv. 20) and the other in the British Museum (inv. I854,0513.11).<sup>4</sup>

The lack of documentary evidence has naturally led to an abundance of hypotheses on the possible destination of the *Resurrection*, the most influential of which was put forward by Michael Hirst in 1961.<sup>5</sup> According to him, the drawings would be preparatory for a panel painting showing a *Resurrection of Christ* for the chapel of Agostino Chigi in the nave of Santa Maria della Pace, one of the many projects left unfinished at Raphael's sudden and premature death on 6 April 1520. Hirst brought forward

two pieces of evidence. The first is the copy of a contract dated 10 August 1530 between Sebastiano del Piombo and Filippo Sergardi, the executor of Agostino Chigi's will, which obliged the painter to complete the banker's chapels both at Santa Maria del Popolo and at Santa Maria della Pace. The contract is the third in a series which must have followed Raphael's death, Sebastiano having already received the commission by December 1520, as we learn from correspondence between Leonardo del Sellaio and Michelangelo.<sup>6</sup> For the funerary mausoleum in Santa Maria del Popolo Sebastiano was obliged to execute a "tavola" with a *Nativity*

<sup>4</sup> This is the group that can be securely attributed to Raphael. The figures are represented in the nude, but they would doubtless have been clothed in the finished work. Inv. D. 2301 in Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, and inv. 381 v in Frankfurt, Städel Museum, are in my opinion correctly framed as workshop exercises by Joachim Jacoby, in: *Raphael: Drawings*, exh. cat. Frankfurt 2012/13, ed. by *idem*/Martin Sonnabend, Munich *et al.* 2012, pp. 237f., under no. 46. Inv. PL 462 in Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts, is in

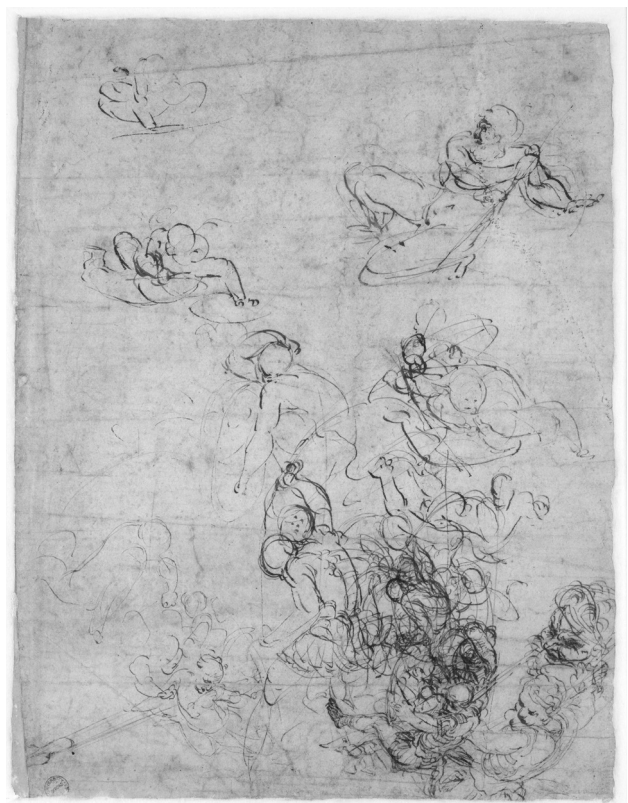
my view not by Raphael, as argued by Achim Gnann, in: *Raphael*, exh. cat., ed. by *idem*, Vienna 2017, pp. 222–225, no. 66, but an early example of the work of Giulio Romano, as widely maintained (see previous bibliography in the same entry).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hirst, "The Chigi Chapel in S. Maria della Pace", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXIV (1961), pp. 161–185.

<sup>6</sup> "[Bastiano] à preso una tavola alla Pace, sotto le figure di Raffaello"

of the Virgin for the main altar. For the chapel in Santa Maria della Pace the subject was to be a *Resurrection of Christ*.<sup>7</sup> In Hirst's view, the 1530 document demonstrates that a *Resurrection* must have been previously intended by Raphael too, a hypothesis first seeded in his mind by the iconographical programme of the surrounding paintings, where the scroll inscriptions held by the prophets and sibyls explicitly refer to the same theme. Moreover, the idea that the altarpiece was to be in the shape of an arched panel painting, an aspect which he believed documented by the drawing at Bayonne, is – according to Hirst – “conclusively demonstrated”<sup>8</sup> by a second, yet – as we shall see – weaker, piece of evidence. This is a bill for works carried out by a craftsman for Agostino Chigi dated 1521, listing among the items a “tauola d’altar[e] che andaua alla pace ad tucta mia spesa, era tucta intagliata cioe la cornice d’intorno mo[n]ta duc. 30”, published by Giuseppe Cugnoni in his critical edition of Fabio Chigi’s *Commentari* on the life of Agostino Chigi.<sup>9</sup> I will turn to this document later; for the moment, it will suffice to say that objections to Hirst’s interpretation have been prompted by the fact that the space available would have been remarkably small for an altarpiece of the complexity Raphael had envisaged, encompassing at least some ten figures and developing vertically. A variety of alternative scenarios have taken shape over the years. These can be briefly summarised.

In 1992, Cecil Gould suggested that a simpler, two-figure *Pietà* was contemplated instead, measuring about 1.5 by 1.25 metres only. He believed that the *Resurrection* would have been a better fit for Agostino’s mausoleum in Santa Maria del Popolo.<sup>10</sup> To account for the many figural studies that have come down to us, Martin Clayton conjectured that Raphael had envisaged two *Resurrections*, one for each Chigi Chapel in the Popolo and at the Pace.<sup>11</sup> For Paul Joannides the issue of the altarpiece – which he suggested was to be painted on the wall – remained essentially unresolved: against the possibility that the drawings here discussed were intended for the Pace chapel, he objected that the area available would have been too small, measuring “no more than about 200 × 145 cm [...], meaning that the figures would have been only 40–50 cm [...] high” and would therefore have been “overpowered by the sibyls above”.<sup>12</sup> Both Joannides and Tom



3 Raphael, studies for fallen soldiers. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1846.200r

Henry have separately discussed another scenario, namely that Raphael, and not Girolamo Genga, was initially contracted by Agostino for a painting in the church of Santa Caterina da Siena in Via Giulia, a commission subsequently inherited by Raphael’s fellow citizen of Urbino and resulting in the painting now on the high altar of the nearby oratory of Santa Caterina, and that therefore our drawings could be related to that commission.<sup>13</sup>

(*Il carteggio di Michelangelo*, ed. by Giovanni Poggi/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1965–1983, II, p. 266), “à preso” meaning simply “he received/accepted the commission” and not “set to work”, as interpreted by Hirst (note 5) and subsequent writers.

<sup>7</sup> The document is published *ibidem*, pp. 183–185.

<sup>8</sup> Hirst (note 5), p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem* and Giuseppe Cugnoni, “Note al Commentario di Alessandro VII sulla vita di Agostino Chigi”, in: *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, II (1878/79), pp. 209–226, 475–490, III (1879/80), pp. 213–232: 221, 291–305, 422–448, IV (1880), pp. 56–75.

<sup>10</sup> Cecil Gould, “Raphael at S. Maria della Pace”, in: *Gazette des beaux-arts*,

6th ser., CXX (1992), 1484, pp. 78–88. Oskar Fischel, *Raphael*, London 1964 (1948), p. 178, had already conjectured the presence of a *Pietà* on the altar of the Pace chapel. Gould’s view is shared by Claudia La Malfa, “Οὐρανὸν εἰλιξὼν γαίης κευθμῶνας: Raphael, Agostino Chigi and the Triumphant Church of Julius II”, in: *Thomas Putzfarcken Workshops I & II*, conference proceedings Athens 2016–2018, ed. by Effie Mavromichali/Ianthi Assimakopoulou, Thessaloniki 2023, pp. 79–102.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Clayton, in: *Raphael and His Circle: Drawings from Windsor Castle*, exh. cat., ed. by *idem*, London 1999, p. 91, under nos. 21f.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Joannides, *Raphael*, London 2022, pp. 112f.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116; Tom Henry, in: *Raphael*, exh. cat., ed. by David Ekserdjian/



Alessandro Ballarin instead leaves the question of the destination of the painting open.<sup>14</sup> Those in favour of Hirst's suggestion have not perceived the lack of space as a problem. For example, Achim Gnann observes that an able designer would have succeeded in fitting many figures within a small area.<sup>15</sup> Joachim Jacoby, who accepted the likelihood of the relation between the drawings and the Pace chapel on iconographical grounds, proposed larger dimensions for the panel painting, now seen as measuring "more than about 2.70 × 1.75 metres".<sup>16</sup>

The two main, complementary aspects of the problem concern the destination of the *Resurrection* and its form. I will address each of them by absorbing in the discussion documentary data that have recently emerged and by looking afresh at the available evidence, in doing so unveiling a new and simpler scenario.

A number of clues read concomitantly strongly favour the idea that the *Resurrection* was the subject requested by Agostino from Raphael for the Pace altar. Hirst's intuition, as we have seen, was stimulated both by the iconography and by the 1530 document, two elements telling in themselves. These can now be substantiated by a recent, and in my opinion significant, documentary discovery by Alessandra Caffio showing that for his Pace chapel Agostino had contemplated celebratory masses dedicated to the Virgin Mary; yet the most solemn of all would, significantly, fall on the Octave of Easter ("Octava Paschatis Dominice Resurrectionis").<sup>17</sup> The theme celebrated in the decoration, if it was indeed the *Resurrection of Christ*, would therefore intertwine with the liturgical activities planned for the chapel. This perfectly aligns with what Agostino had envisaged for

Santa Maria del Popolo. As highlighted by Antonio Pinelli, in his will Agostino had made provision for the celebration of a yearly mass "in festo nativitatis eiusdem Sanctae Mariae, quod est die octava septembris, unam missam altam et solemnem ad eiusdem Virginis Mariae honorem",<sup>18</sup> a fact that strongly indicates this subject – the *Nativity of the Virgin* –, and not an *Assumption of the Virgin*, as conjectured by John Shearman,<sup>19</sup> was indeed part of the original iconographic programme at the Popolo chapel. The dedication to the Madonna di Loreto, towards whom Agostino nurtured a deep devotion, further thematically chimed with the altarpiece – the Santa Casa in Loreto being the birthplace and home of the Virgin Mary, transported from Nazareth by angels.

It has been unquestioningly assumed that the "tavola" mentioned in the note published by Cugnoni, as well as in Sellaio's letter to Michelangelo, would have taken the shape of a portable painting. But, first, the term *tavola* is widely used in different contexts in broader terms, to indicate an image, a devotional focus. For example, *tavola* is employed to signify *imago* independently of the medium or support on numerous occasions by Giorgio Vasari.<sup>20</sup> And in the 1530 contract, Sebastiano's picture in Santa Maria del Popolo, which was to be a wall-painting, is repeatedly called a "tavola", as mentioned above.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it seems far more reasonable to think that the bill transcribed by Cugnoni, if indeed for the actual chapel within the church, refers to a small object to be placed on the altar or already in the niche, rather than to Raphael's unexecuted picture.<sup>22</sup> However, crucially – from what the written and visual sources plainly tell

Tom Henry *et al.*, London 2022, p. 208, under no. 51. On Santa Caterina in via Giulia, see Luigi Spezzaferro, "S. Caterina da Siena", in: *Via Giulia: una utopia urbanistica del 500*, ed. by *idem*/Luigi Salerno/Manfredo Tafuri, Rome 1973, pp. 415–423; on Genga's painting, seen as intimately connected with the making of the church after 1519 when the confraternity of the Siennese in Rome received its formal status from Pope Leo X, see additionally Roberto Bartolini, "Genga nell'Urbe", in: *Girolamo Genga: una via obliqua alla maniera moderna*, conference proceedings Bologna/Pesaro 2016, ed. by Barbara Agosti *et al.*, Bologna 2018, pp. 179–195, esp. pp. 182–186, and more recently Barbara Agosti, "Dopo Raffaello", in: *Raffaello e gli amici di Urbino*, exh. cat. Urbino 2019/20, ed. by *eadem*/Silvia Ginzburg, Florence 2019, pp. 240–249: 240.

<sup>14</sup> Alessandro Ballarin, "Raphael, 1511–1514: 'much still remains to be discovered about Raphael's attitude to nature'", in: *Raphael in Rome: Style, Technique, Conservation*, ed. by Antonio Paolucci/Barbara Agosti/Silvia Ginzburg, Città del Vaticano 2017, pp. 41–53: 43.

<sup>15</sup> Achim Gnann, in: *Raphael* 2017 (note 4), p. 282, under no. 88.

<sup>16</sup> Joachim Jacoby, in: *Raphael* 2012 (note 4), p. 208, under no. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Alessandra Caffio, "La cappella di Agostino Chigi: il patronato, la liturgia, il cantiere di Raffaello", in: *Templum Pacis: storia della chiesa di Santa Maria della Pace a Roma tra Quattro e Ottocento*, ed. by Maria Beltrami *et al.* (= special issue of the *Bollettino d'arte*), forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> See Antonio Pinelli, "La cappella delle tombe scambiate: novità sulla cappella Chigi in Santa Maria del Popolo", in: *Francesco Salviati e la Bella Maniera*, conference proceedings Rome/Paris 1998, ed. by Catherine Monbeig-Goguel *et al.*, Rome 2001, pp. 253–285: 275. After Hirst's, this is the most careful and helpful reading of the 1530 document.

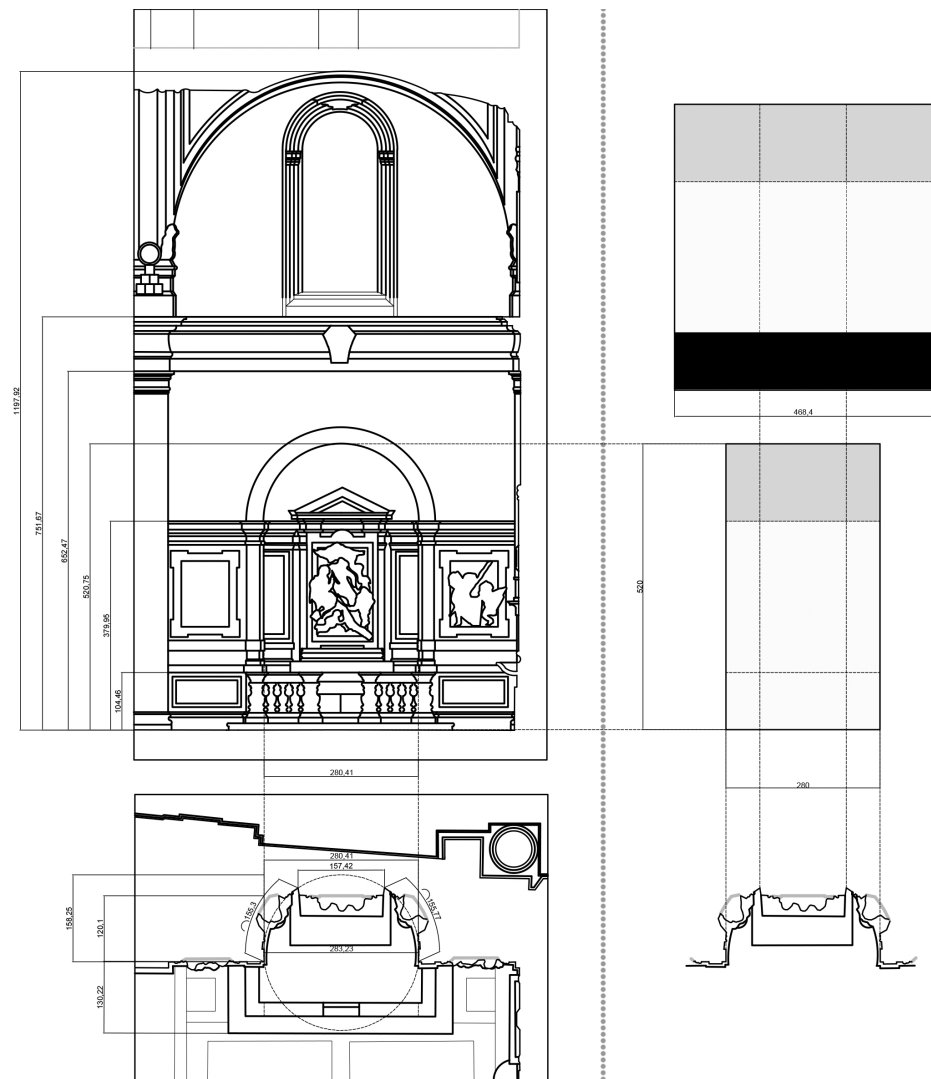
<sup>19</sup> An *Assumption of the Virgin* is documented in two drawings in Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WAI846.195 v, and Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. NMH292/1863. See John Shearman, "The Chigi Chapel in S. Maria del Popolo", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXIV (1961), pp. 129–160. The evidence of the will was indeed known and considered by Shearman himself (at p. 148), but he still argued in favour of the Assumption as a subject for the altar.

<sup>20</sup> For example, it qualifies the silver furnishing of the altar of San Jacopo in Pistoia or again Giovanni Pisano's high altar of the cathedral at Arezzo; see Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piu' eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1997, II (text), pp. 130f., and III (text), p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Hirst (note 5), pp. 184f.

<sup>22</sup> We know for example that from the second half of the sixteenth century its altar was furnished with a small Marian image, a detached fresco from the fifteenth-century building, described by a variety of sources and still present in the 1650s, as reported by the abbot Costantino Raffaelli.

4 Survey of the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace: elevation, plan (with the dotted line marking the perimeter of the chapel prior to the Seicento remodelling), and – above right – the half cylinder of the niche developed as a rectangle



us – none of the artists involved in the Pace chapel following Raphael's death had ever intended to furnish the main altar with a movable painting. Importantly, and this point is never given the emphasis it ought to receive, it was a wall-painting (in oil on peperigno) – a commission significantly referred to as a “tavola” by Leonardo del Sellaio in the 1520 letter – that Sebastiano had been contracted to execute in 1530, as plainly stated by the document:

Item el Reverendo Messer philippo predetto dat et al-hora [i.e. dà e alloga] al prefato mastro sebastiano che depinga la Cappella del herede prenominato di Messer augustino chisi in la chiesa di santa maria de la pace che sta Infronte a la cappella del Reverendissimo Cardinale Ponzetti videlicet il niccio et vacuo di detta Cappella dove ha ad esser depincta la resurrectione del Nostro Signore Jesu Christo con tutte le sue Circunstantie convenienti a tal

This is probably the small object visible within a canopy in the anonymous red chalk drawing illustrated in Fig. 7. For a useful history and chronology of the chapel with reference to early sources and documents, see Simona Benedetti, “La definizione della Cappella Chigi tra Raffaello

e Pietro da Cortona”, in: *Santa Maria della Pace in Roma: storia urbana e vicende artistiche tra XV e XVII secolo*, ed. by *eadem*/Laura Carlevaris/Maria Grazia Ercolino, Rome 2022, pp. 93–106, with extensive bibliography, and Caffio (note 17), updating and correcting in part the account in Francesca





5 After Raphael, project for the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. NM 325/1863

pittura la qual detto mastro sebastiano habbia ad pinger ad olio et In piperigno come el quadro della Cappella del populo [...].<sup>23</sup>

The 1530 document chimes with Vasari's account:

Ma vi si conosce che quest'uomo durava grandissima fatica in tutte le cose che operava [...]. E che ciò sia vero,

Parrilla, "Le vicende storico-artistiche della chiesa di Santa Maria della Pace nel Cinquecento", in: *Santa Maria della Pace in Roma*, pp. 77–92.

<sup>23</sup> Cit. from Hirst (note 5), p. 185 (emphasis mine).

<sup>24</sup> Vasari (note 20), V, p. 93 (emphasis mine).

<sup>25</sup> See Benedetti (note 22), p. 94.

<sup>26</sup> See, in particular, the Uffizi drawings inv. 706 A recto and verso, with the plan measured as 12½ palms, that is 282.32 cm, and 708 A, with measurements of the height of the adjacent Cesi Chapel as 23 palms, that is 525.55 cm. For the drawings, see Christoph Luitpold Frommel,

nella medesima Pace, nella cappella d'Agostin Chigi, dove Raffaello aveva fatte le Sibille et i Profeti, voleva, nella nicchia che di sotto rimase, dipignere Bastiano, per passare Raffaello, alcune cose sopra la pietra, e perciò l'aveva fatta incrostare di peperigni, e le commettiture saldate con stucco a fuoco; ma se n'andò tanto in considerazione, che la lasciò solamente murata; per che essendo stata così dieci anni, si morì.<sup>24</sup>

Even Pietro da Cortona, when first approached in March and August 1628, was engaged to fresco the area, not to provide a removable painting.<sup>25</sup>

It will benefit the discussion to establish at this point the appearance and fabric of the Pace chapel faced by Raphael on receiving the commission. In the Raphael literature, this is often said to be difficult to envisage, the space having been profoundly modified by Pietro da Cortona's remodelling of the church in the 1650s. But we can gauge it with great confidence from drawings that have come down to us. Its exact plan and size are provided in well-known drawings by Antonio da Sangallo with measured surveys of the church,<sup>26</sup> whose accuracy has been confirmed by the recent survey of the chapel (Fig. 4). Like all the other chapels located within the fifteenth-century nave and in the octagon prior to the various remodellings, our chapel therefore presented itself as a shallow niche carved in the thickness of the wall and measuring nearly 283 cm in width and 520 cm in height. But we can go even further. Information on the architectural skeleton of the fabric showing pre-existing features is offered by a copy of an early project by Raphael in Stockholm carrying a traditional and interesting attribution to Timoteo Viti (Fig. 5).<sup>27</sup> It shows a simple ribbed cornice and incorporates the bifora above. A further drawing by Raphael (Fig. 6) – a schematic concept for the right portion of the wall of the nave – offers yet another important piece of evidence: this is the presence of a cornice that divides the semi-dome from the cylindrical niche below, thus creating two levels within the recess. Evidently this was an existing element the designer had to contend with, as echoed in Baldassarre Peruzzi's Ponzetti Chapel opposite, which is also divided into two registers. The situation was still substantially unchanged in 1626, when Fabio

*The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and His Circle*, Cambridge 1994–2000, II, pp. 142–144.

<sup>27</sup> For this drawing see Joachim Jacoby, in: *Raphael* 2012 (note 4), p. 206, no. 36, as workshop of Raphael, with previous bibliography. The drawing has been cautiously associated with Viti by Furio Rinaldi, "The Viti-Antaldi Collection of Raphael's Drawings", in: *Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino in Art Collections and in the History of Collecting*, conference proceedings Rome 2017, ed. by Claudia La Malfa, Newcastle upon Tyne 2023, pp. 157–176: 158.

Chigi describes the chapel as a space “in forma d’un nicchio tanto dentro alla muraglia quanto occupa il trasporto in fuore della mensa dell’Altare, dipenta a fresco dentro; e sopra la nicchia fino al Cornicione della Chiesa si uedono quelle Sibille e Profeti di Raffaello tanto celebri”.<sup>28</sup> A drawing at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Fig. 7) serves as an illustration of Chigi’s words.<sup>29</sup> And, significantly, what the drawing also does is to show that the frescoed area covered both levels of the niche.

It is argued here that the Resurrection drawings were indeed destined for the Pace Chigi Chapel, but not to be translated into a panel painting. Rather, it is my contention that Raphael too had planned to fresco the area from the altar to the cornice, but also the semi-dome, as seen in my reconstruction (Figs. 8, 11). When it comes to the lower register, only an impression of the final painting can be offered, as no definitive compositional study has come down to us. But what the reconstruction importantly shows is that Raphael had plenty of surface available to accommodate the surviving studies (and plausibly more besides, such as sections of a landscape). The reconstruction additionally incorporates those features of the fabric prior to Pietro da Cortona’s project just described above. A fresco decoration would hardly have been a surprising option for a niche of this type, in fact the most commonly employed at the time. Suffice it to say that an equivalent setting was present in the same church. This is the Chapel of the Magi in the octagon, which had been frescoed by Antoniazio Romano with a *Madonna and Child with Saints*, while the semi-dome above was decorated with a *Transfiguration*.<sup>30</sup> But an even more powerful echo of what I believe Raphael had devised for Agostino’s chapel is to be found in a later work, namely Sebastiano del Piombo’s Borgherini Chapel in San Pietro in Montorio (1516–early 1520s). Here, the dependence is both formal and conceptual, as we shall see.

A solution of this kind for the Chigi Chapel would answer various questions. Not only would it solve the problem of the lack of space, Raphael now having at his disposal the entire area of the niche, the lower level measuring circa 260 cm in height by 460 cm in width, that is just over half the perimeter of the circle in Fig. 4, but it would also unlock the meaning of several compositional choices seen in the group of related drawings. Finally, it would chime with Raphael’s brilliant mind as a quintessential designer in the widest possible sense, an artist concerned with every aspect of the ensemble. It is only if we imagine the space as

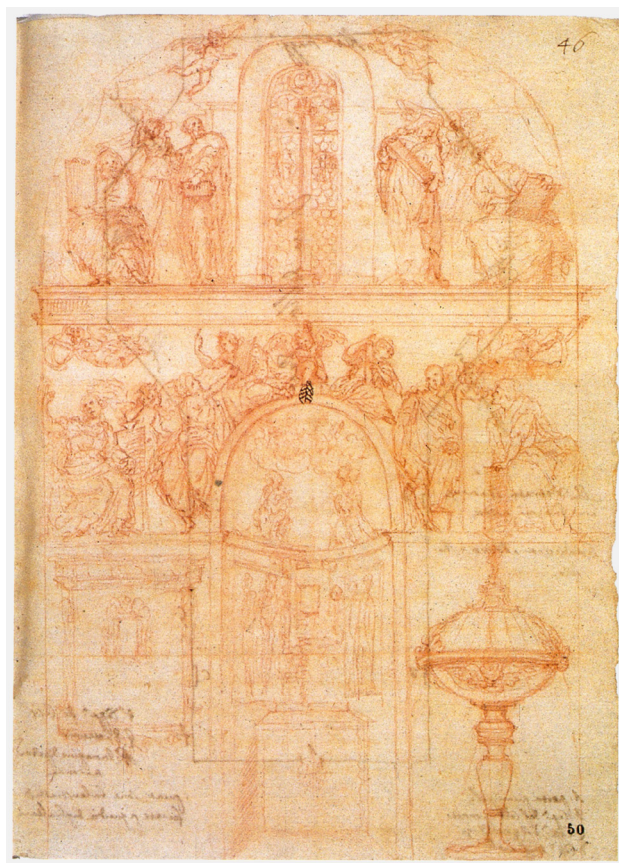
<sup>28</sup> Cugnoni (note 9), IV (1880/81), p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> This sheet was discovered and published by Alessandro Angelini, in: *Alessandro VII Chigi (1599–1667): il papa senese di Roma moderna*, exh. cat., ed. by. *idem*/Monika Butzek/Bernardina Sani, Siena 2000, pp. 122f., no. 47.

<sup>30</sup> See the reconstruction in Paul Davies, “*Templum Pacis*: Santa Maria della Pace in the Quattrocento”, in: *Templum Pacis* (note 17).



6 Raphael, project for the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA 1846.194v



7 Drawing of the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace, 1626. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Chigi, a.1.32, fol. 50v



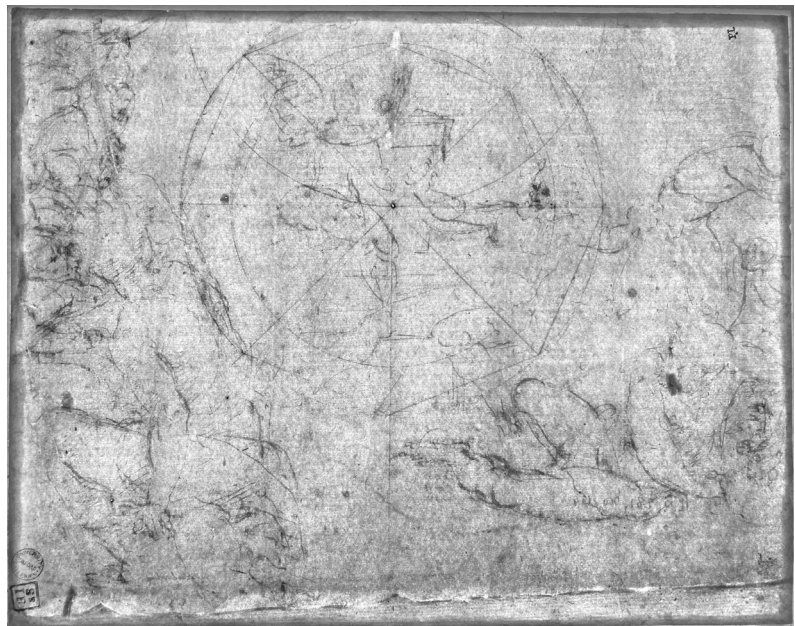


fully frescoed that we comprehend how – evidently stimulated by the fifteenth-century architectural setting at his disposal – Raphael arrived at an iconographic interpretation of the subject whose novelty and complexity has yet to be addressed.

The Bayonne compositional study (Fig. 1) shows a semi-circular line markedly dividing the composition into two zones. This line may seem to indicate the horizon line of the landscape, but – on closer inspection – faithfully corresponds to the cornice of the apse. Moreover, the motif of the angels forming the small celestial opening at the top of the composition, to my knowledge most unusual in a conventional representation of the Resurrection at the time, would have fitted perfectly round the fictive circular lightwell opening in the semi-dome. The compositional idea of a celestial opening to coincide with the fictive lightwell is again visible in the Vatican drawing (Fig. 7); but above all it is already present in Peruzzi's Ponzetti Chapel opposite, here with the image of the Holy Spirit. A development

of the narrative on a curved surface would also explain the accentuated low vanishing point of the Ashmolean compositional study, where the tomb is seen in the distance at the upper centre (Fig. 2). One might reasonably attribute the shift in the orientation of the tomb, from a parallel view in the Bayonne sheet to a frontal one in the Oxford study, as an attempt by Raphael to further adapt his composition to the curved wall. Equally, the excessively elongated silhouette of Christ in the Bayonne drawing (Fig. 1), here seen orthogonally, would have been re-dimensioned by its modelling on a curved surfaced. The projection of this section in the measured semi-dome shows a perfect fit of the drawing into the area. Even the laborious geometrical study for a double octagon drawn on the verso of the Ashmolean sheet (Fig. 9) might find an explanation. Hypothetically connected by Christoph L. Frommel to the execution of the dome of Santa Maria del Popolo, I wonder if it was not made from the outset as part of Raphael's thinking process for Agostino's chapel

8 Author's reconstruction of the Chigi Chapel as conceived by Raphael in 1510/11 circa with the known drawings projected in the niche, lateral view. The fabric incorporates features of the architecture as visible in Figs. 5 and 6, the Chiaravalle tondi with *Christ Descendent in Limbo* and the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, on the left and right of the main altar, respectively



9 Verso of Fig. 2, seen in transmitted light

in Santa Maria della Pace, rather than having been exploited retrospectively: the compass point works as the centre of the explosion of figures; the smaller octagon seems to define the centre of the lower register and the outer situates the guards, while the half-drawn circle projects the central section of the dome above that Christ occupies.<sup>31</sup>

In conceiving the scene, Raphael created a fundamentally novel iconography. Scholars have observed that it was in earlier imagery that he found inspiration for the deeply dramatic nature of his composition.<sup>32</sup> However, while earlier visual traditions might have played a role, it was in fact to the careful interpretation of the New Testament text that Raphael turned, as no other artist had done before.<sup>33</sup> In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the image of the guarded sepulchre (Mt 27:62–66) is introduced, and it is normally found in previous iconographies. But the text also describes the powerful

moment when, three days after the entombment, an angel who was like ‘lightning’ descended and appeared, seated on the lid that covered the sepulchre, to the Maries and to the guards, as well as the astonishment and shock at this sight of the men who shook “and became as dead men” (Mt 28:1–5). It is this precise passage that Raphael explores in his drawings. The soldiers are clearly reacting not to Christ, as often misleadingly stated in the literature on the drawing, but to the angel, who is announcing with his Leonardesque gesture that Christ “had risen, as He said”. He, the angel, is the focus of the drama. Compositionally, he would have provided the main source of light.<sup>34</sup>

Of the four Gospel accounts, Matthew’s clearly afforded Raphael the opportunity to introduce textual fidelity and, most crucially, profound drama into an iconographic tradition that in relation to the text was either faithful but too static, with the soldiers as a rule shown asleep; or dynamic but fundamen-

<sup>31</sup> See Christoph Luitpold Frommel in: *Raffaello architetto*, exh. cat. Rome 1984, ed. by *idem*/Stefano Ray/Manfredo Tafuri, Milan 1984, p. 135, no. 2.3.9, and more recently Ben Thomas, in: *Raphael: The Drawings*, exh. cat., ed. by Catherine Whistler *et al.*, Oxford 2017, p. 190, no. 82. For Raphael’s use of geometry in compositional studies, see at least Eun-Sung Kang/Martin Kemp, “Costruire la composizione”, in: *Raffaello da Firenze a Roma*, exh. cat., ed. by Anna Coliva, Rome 2006, pp. 76–85.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Hirst (note 5), p. 173, sees a dependence upon Dürer’s *Small Passion* series; Konrad Oberhuber, *Raffaello*, Milan 1982, p. 116, cites Verrocchio and Francesco di Giorgio, while Fischel 1925 (note 2), p. 194, mentions Leonardo’s emotionally charged figure studies.

<sup>33</sup> Raphael’s use of the Gospels as a source is perceived and singled out by Giorgio Vasari (note 20), IV, significantly in the “Proemio”, pp. 8f.: “[...] ma più di tutti il graziosissimo Raffaello da Urbino, il quale studiando le fatiche de’ maestri vecchi e quelle de’ moderni, prese da tutti il meglio [...] e l’invenzione era in lui sì facile e propria quanto può giudicare chi vede le storie sue, le quali sono simili alli scritti”; and in Raphael’s life, in the context of the *Liberation of Saint Peter*, pp. 179f. “avendo egli cercato di continuo figurare le storie come elle sono scritte, e farvi dentro cose garbate et eccellenti”.

<sup>34</sup> Ruland (note 1), p. XIX, note \*, Fischel (note 2), p. 194, and *idem* (note 10), pp. 96f., correctly highlight the role of the angel within





tally inaccurate in depicting the soldiers reacting to the sight of Christ appearing from the tomb, for in *none* of the Gospels were the soldiers described as actually seeing the Resurrection. Nor do the Gospels describe how Christ left the tomb. Artists imagined him as stepping out or hovering above it. In contrast, and with the same text-based approach just described, Raphael turns to a different episode in the writings for the decoration of the semi-dome of the Chigi Chapel, as the Bayonne sheet reveals: the image of the glorified Christ, seen surrounded by heavenly angels, moving energetically upwards towards the aforementioned celestial opening, powerfully evoked an *Ascension*.

the economy of the lower part of the composition. This reading has somewhat and curiously got lost in the vast literature on the drawings over the decades, including their most recent discussion by David Ekserdjian and Tom Henry, in: *Raphael* (note 13), pp. 206f., nos. 50f., with previous bibliography, the exceptions being Joachim Jacoby, in: *Raphael* 2012 (note 4), p. 228, under no. 43, and Achim Gnann, in: *Raphael* 2017 (note 4), p. 278, under no. 87. However, its full meaning and implications have never been pointed out. For the iconography of

Raphael's choices are charged with greater significance when read in relation to the specific physical site he had to fresco. Each episode in fact would have formed part of a carefully constructed iconographical programme to be orchestrated in a pre-existing architectural space, in which every element had to speak to all the others in order to forge a coherent overall narrative. As far as the devotional focus was concerned, Raphael was faced with the limitation of a surface broken into two levels, which, however, he cleverly exploited by populating each compartment with a distinct dramatic narrative. One wonders how much Sebastiano (and Michelangelo) were aware of this composition, since what they eventually realised in the equivalent – if simpler – setting of San Pietro in Montorio<sup>35</sup> is conceptually very close to our design (Figs. 10, 11): Sebastiano, like Raphael, exploits the two registers created by the cornice by pairing two biblical narratives. Here, the slender and gesticulating Christ of the *Transfiguration* is strikingly close to Raphael's own both in form and proportions.

With the roundels placed on either side as documented in the Stockholm sheet (Fig. 5), the Pace chapel would have conjured up a triumphal arch, a most apt form for the celebration of Agostino Chigi, known as the 'Magnifico'. And if these roundels are to be identified with the Chiaravalle bronzes,<sup>36</sup> then the entire lower register would have displayed a coherent narrative through a succession of biblical events strictly connected and carefully embedded within the architectural framework to subtly evoke the mystery of the Resurrection (Fig. 8). The narrative unfolds from left to right, starting with the *descensus Christi ad inferos*, which immediately followed his death and preceded his resurrection (Mt 12:40), and then moving towards the centre with the angel appearing to the soldiers at the empty tomb and to the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (Joh 20:19–29), to culminate in the semi-dome, with *Christ Ascending to Heaven* (Mk 16:19 and Lk 24:50–53). Each of these episodes would have resonated in the iconography represented on the wall of the nave, aptly described by Fischel as a “hymn of Death and Resurrection”,<sup>37</sup> where the carefully orchestrated motions of the prophets and sibyls encourage the beholder to read the prophetic inscriptions. Beginning from the lower spandrel, the first are written in Greek and based on Lactantius: “He will resurrect / He will accomplish the destiny of death” (left of the arch); “He

the Resurrection and its various iterations in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period, see Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, Paris 1955–1959, II, pp. 538–550.

<sup>35</sup> The size of the Borgherini Chapel virtually matches that of the Chigi Chapel, with the internal arch measuring circa 590 × 315 cm.

<sup>36</sup> As recognised by Hirst (note 5), p. 175, developing an intuition by Fischel (note 10), p. 182.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 181.

10 Rome, San Pietro in Montorio, Borgherini Chapel with decoration by Sebastiano del Piombo



11 Author's reconstruction of the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace as conceived by Raphael in 1510/11 circa, frontal view

will come into the light" (on the *tabula ansata* held by the putto); "I will shake the Heavens and will open the secret places of the earth / then I shall rise the dead" (to the right of the arch). The last inscription at this level, on the tablet held by the putto on the right, is written in Latin and taken from Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*, a passage traditionally associated with the Cumaean Sibyl: "Already a new generation". Moving on to the upper zone, again in Latin: "God shall raise Him after the second, on the third" (on the far left) and "I have arisen and I am still with you" (on the right).<sup>38</sup> Both the written and visual imagery would have been echoed in the liturgy taking place on the Octave of Easter, providing a powerful experiential and emotional dimension for the beholder.

One last but complementary note concerns the chronology of the group of studies for the *Resurrection*, which have often been dated much later than the studies for the prophets and sibyls. However, there is no reason to think that Raphael waited until 1513/14 to execute them, as the reconstruction here presented further suggests.<sup>39</sup> Rather, it is reasonable to assume that their conception fell in late 1510 or 1511 when, as it now seems clear, his mind had already turned to the commission. Several clues point to this early dating. First is the account of Giorgio Vasari, who remarked on the Michelangelesque qualities of Raphael's prophets and sibyls, which had been painted "avanti che la cappella [Sistina] di Michelagnolo si discoprisse pubblicamente, avendola nondimeno veduta".<sup>40</sup> Moreover, if the bronze roundels commis-

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed discussion of the inscriptions, the reference remains Leopold D. Ettlinger, "A Note on Raphael's Sibyls in S. Maria della Pace", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXIV (1961), pp. 322f. The translations are based on Hirst (note 5), p. 169; see also La Malfa (note 10), pp. 96f., for a more literal translation.

<sup>39</sup> The dating of our drawings has ranged from 1511 to 1514. For a summary of opinions to date, see Benjamin Couilleaux, *Raphaël à Bayonne: le maître, ses élèves, ses copistes dans les collections du musée Bonnat-Helleu*, exh. cat. Bayonne 2020, Ghent 2020, p. 59, under no. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Vasari (note 20), IV, pp. 176f.

sioned from Cesarino Rossetti on 10 November 1510 were indeed those at Chiaravalle, then it means that at this date Raphael already had a general notion of what he wanted to achieve, even if the contract did not specify the subject of the roundels.<sup>41</sup> This chronology also aligns with Timoteo Viti's absence from Urbino between the spring of 1510 and the summer of 1511, as he was summoned by Raphael to Rome to assist him in the chapel.<sup>42</sup>

Drawings provide further support for an early dating. Indeed, the swiftly-executed concept for the nave wall at the Ashmolean (Fig. 6) appears on the verso of a metalpoint drawing for the lower right section of the *School of Athens*. This study substantially corresponds to the final fresco and therefore documents a late stage of its designing. Misinterpreted by K.T. Parker, it was first correctly contextualised by Michael Hirst in 1961, though he discounted its importance for the chronology of the Chigi Chapel project, giving more weight to the little sketch appearing on a sheet of studies at the Ashmolean for the *Expulsion of Heliodorus* (inv. WA1846.198), which he dated to 1512 circa.<sup>43</sup> It is true that recto and verso of the *School of Athens* sheet do not need to be contemporaneous. But the material evidence provided by the paper can now add a further piece to the puzzle, for a sheet of studies for the Pace angels in Vienna shows the same watermark found on a spectacular study of the *Combat of Men* for the *School of Athens* in Oxford.<sup>44</sup> And while Raphael could have reused a piece of paper at some chronological distance, the graphic style supports the chronological proximity between the Vienna Pace studies and the *Combat of Men*: both sheets display the same use of red chalk for figure studies, the medium having been finely sharpened to ensure crisp images, as Raphael aimed at clarity over painterly effects. The conception for the *Resurrection* must have gone hand in hand with work on the nave wall of the Chigi Chapel and on the Stanza della Segnatura – and with the first stages of the Stanza di Eliodoro, to which Raphael had already turned his attention in the summer of 1511. Again, beyond reasons of style widely adduced, the material evidence of the paper plays in favour of this idea: two of the chalk studies for the soldiers are executed on sheets sharing the same water-

mark with a compositional drawing for the window embrasure on the Jurisprudence Wall of circa 1511.<sup>45</sup> This was the time when Raphael was deeply embedded in the artistic, literary, and theological circles at the Vatican, in a restless competition with Michelangelo, which would see him flourish as a supreme storyteller and sophisticated designer. As such, Raphael will have thought of the space of the Chigi Chapel as an organic whole – a *Gesamtkunstwerk* –, with painting, architecture, and sculpture in a seamless dialogue of form and meaning which only the setting as now re-imagined could have suggested.

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<sup>41</sup> On the purpose of the tondi, see Roberto Bartalini, *Le occasioni del Sodo-ma: dalla Milano di Leonardo alla Roma di Raffaello*, Rome 1996, p. 59, and, more recently, Tom Henry, in: *Raphael* (note 13), pp. 198–201, nos. 44–46, with bibliography.

<sup>42</sup> On Viti's collaboration with Raphael, see Vasari (note 20), IV, p. 267: "Lavorò col maestro nella chiesa della Pace le Sibille di sua mano et inven-zione, che sono nelle lunette a man destra, tanto stimate da tutti i pittori; il che affermano alcuni che ancora si ricordano averle veduto lavorare, e ne fanno fede i cartoni che ancor si ritrovano appresso i suoi successori." For an overview of this collaboration, see Matteo Procaccini, "La chia-mata di Raffaello: Timoteo Viti nel cantiere della cappella Chigi di Santa

Maria della Pace", in: *Raffaello e gli amici di Urbino* (note 13), pp. 190–197.

<sup>43</sup> Hirst (note 5), pp. 167f.

<sup>44</sup> Vienna, Albertina, inv. I7574, and Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1846.193; the watermark shows the letter T within a circle sur-mounted by a cross, at a distance from the supplementary chain line of 2.8 cm to the left and 2.6 cm to the right. Both studies were drawn on halves of a royal format of fine Fabriano paper (measuring ca. 440 × 610 mm), then further cropped.

<sup>45</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1846.201; Windsor, Royal Col-lection, inv. RCIN 903720. The watermark shows a crossbow in a circle; see Martin Clayton, in: *Raphael and His Circle* (note 11), p. 214, nos. 19 and 22.