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1 Giorgio Vasari, *Saint Luke painting the Virgin*, 1565. Florence, Santissima Annunziata, chapel of Saint Luke

DIVINE VISIONS
IMAGE-MAKING AND IMAGINATION IN PICTURES OF SAINT LUKE PAINTING THE VIRGIN

Marsha Libina

In his devotional guidebook *I tesori nascosti nell'alma città di Roma* (1600), the antiquarian Ottavio Panciroli tells the story of the miraculous finding of the image of the Madonna of Saint Luke of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio. At the same time as the nuns find the image and decide to construct a tabernacle in its honor, Michelangelo is visited by a voice ("fu Michel Angelo avvisato da una voce") that tells him to make the most beautiful tabernacle he could make, which he then gifts to the nuns.[1] Such stories of works inspired by divine visions that had appeared to the artist were widespread in sixteenth-century Italy, and one might be tempted to take them at face value as celebrations of divinely-inspired, artistic ingenuity (*ingegno*) were it not for the extreme suspicion with which visionary accounts were met.[2]

In the second half of the sixteenth century, under a new concern with orthodoxy and demand for evidence of the miraculous, vision had become an increasingly controversial mode of securing knowledge of the world.[3] Within Renaissance adaptations of the Augustinian typology of vision, imaginative vision, as

[1] Ottavio Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti nell'alma città di Roma*, Rome 1600, pp. 483f.

[2] On the fashioning of the Renaissance artist as a 'divine' genius, see Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts", in: *Viator*, VIII (1977), pp. 347–398; Noel L. Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius During the Italian Renaissance: The Theories of Supernatural Frenzy and Natural Melancholy in Accord and in Conflict on the Threshold of the Scientific Revolution*, Leiden 2001; Patricia A. Emison, *Creating the 'Divine' Artist: From Dante to Michelangelo*, Leiden 2004; Maria C. Ruvoldt, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep, and Dreams*, Cambridge 2004.

[3] On the problematics of vision in the early modern era, see Robert Klein, "Studies on Perspective in the Renaissance", in: *idem*, *Form and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, New York 1979, pp. 102–140; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, Berkeley 1992; Michael Cole, "Discernment and Animation, Leonardo to Lomazzo" in: *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, conference proceedings Atlanta, Ga., 2003, ed. by Reindert

2 Frederik Bouttats, after Abraham van Diepenbeeck, *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi in ecstasy*, in: *Vita Seraphicae Virginis S. Mariae Magdalenae de Pazzis [...] iconibus expressa*, Antwerp 1670 (?), fig. 12

distinguished from corporeal and intellectual vision, emerged as particularly unreliable because it could create fictions as easily as it could receive divine truths, with no clear way of distinguishing between these. Such concerns over the knowledge that private visionary experience yields converge in works such as Frederik Bouttats' engraving after Abraham van Diepenbeeck showing the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli witnessing and authenticating Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's ecstatic vision (Fig. 2). Pazzi's confessor Agostino Campi had in fact asked her to describe her visions to her fellow nuns as testimony – a safeguard against possible deception.[4] A similar concern with deception is seen in Filippo Abbiati's *Saint Peter Martyr unmasks the false Madonna* (Fig. 3), which foregrounds the rejection of the false vision, here signaled by the horns on the Virgin and Child.[5] Saint Peter Martyr holds up the host to the false Madonna, which reveals the vision's true demonic nature. The scene demonstrates the innate expertise of the saint in the practice of spiritual discernment, that is, the discrimination between true and false vision. While the kind of verification of visionary experience that we see thematized in van Diepenbeeck's engraving and Abbiati's painting was not a new phenomenon, but rather part of a long-standing concern dating back to the late Middle Ages,[6] late sixteenth-century Italian devotional painting saw the emergence of a new emphasis on affective visionary imagery; such images assumed an important role in visualizing post-Tridentine concerns with the control of false images and deceptive

Falkenburg/Walter S. Melion/Todd M. Richardson, Turnhout 2007, pp. 133–161; Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture*, Oxford 2007; *Renaissance Theories of Vision*, ed. by John Hendrix/Charles H. Carman, Surrey 2010; Mary Quinlan-McGrath, *Influences: Art, Optics, and Astrology in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago 2013; Charles H. Carman, *Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus: Towards an Epistemology of Vision for Italian Renaissance Art and Culture*, Farnham 2014; *Vision and Its Instruments: Art, Science, and Technology in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alina Payne, University Park, Pa., 2015. On the broader problem of certitude, see Susan E. Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era*, Oxford 2011.

[4] Clare Copeland, "Participating in the Divine: Visions and Ecstasies in a Florentine Convent", in: *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by *eadem*/Johannes M. Machielsen, Leiden 2013, pp. 75–101.

[5] Victor Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art*, London 1995, p. 26.

[6] On spiritual discernment and the scrutiny of false visions in the medieval and early modern era, see Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries*, York 1999; Wendy Love Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits: Assessing Visions and Visionaries in the Late Middle Ages*, Tübingen 2011; Schreiner (note 3), pp. 261–322.

appearances.[7] As Michael Cole has shown, painting provided reminders to lay viewers of the difficulties of discernment and the discretion that had to be exercised with regard to vision.[8]

Above all, the uncertainty of sensory experience stemmed from pre-modern conceptions of the imagination as a central faculty of the soul and the concern among artists and writers on art over its trustworthiness in making the invisible visible.[9] The imagination was conceived of as a visual process that was both a mirror to the real world – that is, a storehouse of images and a supplier of sensory data to the intellect, out of which the latter created universal ideas – and also a disruptor of vision.[10] This was particularly true for imaginative vision because the imagination could create delusions or counterfeit things that seemed real. It was therefore not clear whether images were true revelations implanted in the mind by God or rather of human, or even demonic, origin and hence subject to falsification. An example of this concern can be found in Anton Francesco Doni's *Disegno* (1549), which, despite attributing artistic creation to imaginative vision, cautioned that artistic invention lay in false visions, or chimeras, and in the chaos and confusion of the mind.[11] Likewise, in his *Vita*, Benvenuto Cellini grounded invention in feverish hallucinations, rather than in an elevated *fantasia* (imagination), thereby undercutting the notion of the divinely-inspired artist.[12]

3 Filippo Abbiati, *Saint Peter Martyr unmasks the false Madonna*, ca. 1700. Milan, Museo Diocesano di Milano, Arciconfraternita del Santissimo Sacramento

[7] Klaus Krüger, "Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy", in: *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self* (note 3), pp. 37–69: 68.

[8] Cole (note 3), pp. 159–161.

[9] Sixteenth-century conceptions of the imagination were based in ancient and medieval faculty psychology. See for example Elisabeth Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London 1975; David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance, Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge 1987; Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge 2017 (¹1990), pp. 16–60; *Image, Imagination, and Cognition: Medieval and Early Modern Theory and Practice*, ed. by Christoph Lüthy, Leiden 2018. At the same time, the imagination acquired greater importance within early modern theoretical psychology as medieval models, in which the imagination was one of many auxiliary internal senses, were revised and streamlined. For a discussion of this change, see Katharine Park, *The Imagination in Renaissance Psychology*, M.Phil. diss., University of London 1974, and Clark (note 3), pp. 42–45. On the dangers of the imagination in early modern Europe, see also Christian Kleinbub, *Vision and the Visionary in Raphael*, University Park, Pa., 2011; Peter Parshall, "Graphic Knowledge: Albrecht Dürer and the Imagination", in: *The Art Bulletin*, XCV (2014), pp. 393–410.

[10] Clark (note 3), pp. 46–48; Claudia Swan, "Counterfeit Chimeras: Early Modern Theories of the Imagination and the Work of Art", in: *Vision and Its Instruments* (note 3), pp. 216–237: 227f.

[11] Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno: fac simile della edizione del 1549 di Venezia del Doni*, ed. by Mario Pepe, Milan 1970, c. 22r–v.

[12] Cellini frequently makes recourse to Vasari's idea of the exalted artistic genius in moments of artistic creation and has visions that re-enact those

At stake was the involvement of the imagination in the making of religious images and the question of whether it could be entrusted with this task.

This essay examines three works on the theme of Saint Luke painting the Virgin that foreground the problem of vision and imagination in a highly self-conscious way: a fresco at the Santissima Annunziata by Giorgio Vasari (Fig. 1), a painting made for the Accademia del Disegno by Passignano (Fig. 10), and an altarpiece often attributed to Raphael and installed by Federico Zuccaro in the new headquarters of the Accademia di San Luca (Fig. 12). Made for newly established academies of art in Florence and Rome, the works transfer the privileged role of the visionary to the artist, thereby reframing the significance of the vision: meditation on the divine simultaneously becomes a moment of image-making. Put another way, the pictured vision becomes a metapictorial reflection on the capacity of art to visualize the irrepresentable.[13] Saint Luke, one of the four gospel writers and the first Christian artist (and hence also the patron saint of the academies of art), functions as a stand-in for the painter at his easel and justifies the very existence and use of religious images for personal devotion. The easel picture, in fact, establishes a new medium for the holy image of the Virgin. The portable, hand-held sheet of paper or icon that we typically see in Italian representations of the legend of Saint Luke is here replaced with an imposing work of art, a change that holds consistently across the three works.[14] The holy image is displayed prominently as a material surface that in Passignano's case has yet to receive the marks of the paintbrush, thus juxtaposing the materiality of the (blank) canvas with the heavenly and immaterial apparition of the Virgin and Child above. In so doing, the works set out to make a statement about the role of the man-made image in making the invisible visible.

What is more, the three works present a markedly new and cohesive iconography for Saint Luke painting the Virgin. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italian iconography of the legend as a portrait sitting transforms into an account of the Saint Luke icon made in the prototype's absence – the product of an artistic vision.[15] Neither the significance of this new formulation of the legend, specifically its departure from textual sources, nor the historical circumstances that would account for its collective emergence among

of Dante in his *Divina Commedia* (Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography*, trans. by Anne MacDonell, New York 2010, pp. 154, 221–229, 236f., 357f.). See also Victoria C. Gardner, "Homines non nascuntur, sed figuntur: Benvenuto Cellini's Vita and Self-Presentation of the Renaissance Artist", in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXVIII (1997), pp. 447–465; Paul Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose: A Myth and Its Maker*, University Park, Pa., 1997, p. 142. For further discussion of the trope of the 'non-divine' artist, see Stephen J. Campbell, "'*Fare una Cosa Morta Parer Viva*': Michelangelo, Rosso, and the (Un)Divinity of Art", in: *The Art Bulletin*, LXXXIV (2002), pp. 596–620.

[13] Metapainting, as defined by Lorenzo Pericolo in his introduction to Victor Stoichita's seminal study *The Self-Aware Image*, can be understood as "the staging of painting's fictiveness, its maker and making", and it intensifies at times of reflection on the status, aims, and limits of art (Lorenzo Pericolo, "What is Metapainting? The Self-Aware Image Twenty Years Later", in: Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Turnhout ^{2}2015 [^{1}2014], pp. 1–31: 22).

[14] One Italian exception is Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna's destroyed roundel of *Saint Luke the Evangelist* (1450) in the Ovetari Chapel at the Eremitani, Padua. However, even here Luke's easel picture appears small and portable and stands right next to him. The Northern Renaissance iconography of the Saint Luke legend differs from the Italian tradition and often includes a full-sized easel.

[15] The three key works discussed in this essay are the earliest of a new iconography in Italy showing Saint Luke as a visionary creator. This includes Annibale Carracci's *The Virgin appears to Saints Luke and Catherine* (1592, Paris, Musée du Louvre), the frontispiece of Paolo de Angelis, *Basilicae S. Mariae Maioris de Urbe a Liberio Papa I usque ad Paulum V Pont. Max. descriptio et delineatio* (1621), Luca Giordano's *Saint Luke painting the Virgin and Child* (ca. 1650–1655, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon), a preparatory drawing for the semi-dome of San Luca in Genoa by the workshop of Domenico Piola showing *Saint Luke painting the Virgin and Child* (ca. 1681–1691, London, The British Museum). North of the Alps, the Renaissance iconography of Saint Luke painting the Virgin includes the visionary type, as discussed in Jean Owens Schaefer, "Gossaert's Vienna 'Saint Luke Painting' as an Early Reply to Protestant Iconoclasts", in: *Source*, XII (1992), pp. 31–37. Examples include the woodcuts by an anonymous German artist (1488;

painters belonging to Italy's art theoretical and academic milieus have been adequately examined by scholars to date.[16] While suggestive conclusions regarding the changing status of the religious image in Reformation-era Europe have been drawn from individual case studies on paintings of Saint Luke painting the Virgin, the above-mentioned works have not been considered together in this regard.[17]

Given the works' significant departure from the traditional version of the legend in their emphasis on Saint Luke's vision of the Virgin and Child, the scenes ask to be understood within contemporaneous discourses on vision and visionary experience. Hans Belting has explained the emergence of visionary painting, taking the Accademia di San Luca *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (Fig. 12) and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* as his prime examples, as evidence of a process of gradual secularization and affirmation of a new conception of art as an authorial performance.[18] The approach taken here sees art and spirituality working in tandem and builds on the work of Victor Stoichita, Klaus Krüger, Jeffrey Hamburger, and Walter Melion on late medieval and Renaissance theories of vision, spiritual seeing, and image-based meditation.[19] Moreover, it distinguishes between the very different artistic and religious climates before and after the Council of Trent, to which Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and the Accademia painting respectively belong.[20] As this essay shows, the rise of vision as a meaningful subject in the representations of *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* by Vasari and Passignano and in the Accademia altarpiece is evidence not of the rise of the 'artistic genius' or of secularism in the early modern era, but rather of a growing anxiety over the imagination of the artist and his problematic status as a mediator of the divine in the second half of the sixteenth century.[21] In particular, as paintings made for academies of art, they offer a reflection on the

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) and by Erhard Schön (1515–1517; London, The British Museum, inv. 1848,0212.193). The vision of the Virgin appearing to Saint Luke is less common in painting; however, one notable exception is Jan Gossaert's version in Vienna (Fig. 8).

[16] For the essential literature on the pictorial legend of Saint Luke, see Dorothée Klein, *St. Lukas als Maler der Maria: Ikonographie der Lukas-Madonna*, Berlin 1933; Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista: storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca*, Pisa 1998; Heidi J. Hornik/Mikeal C. Parsons, *Illuminating Luke: The Infancy Narrative in Italian Renaissance Painting*, Harrisburg, Pa., 2003.

[17] See, however, Guillaume Cassegrain, *Représenter la vision: figurations des apparitions miraculeuses dans la peinture italienne de la Renaissance*, Arles 2017, pp. 203–260 for a discussion of the theme of the artist as a divinely-inspired visionary, including several depictions of Saint Luke painting the Virgin. For individual case studies, see Zygmunt Waźbiński, "San Luca che dipinge la Madonna all'Accademia di Roma: un 'pastiche' zuccariano nella maniera di Raffaello?", in: *Artibus et Historiae*, VI (1985), 12, pp. 27–37; Catherine King, "National Gallery 3902 and the Theme of St. Luke the Evangelist as Artist and Physician", in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, XLVIII (1985), pp. 249–255; Jean Rivière, "Réflexions sur les 'Saint Luc peignant la Vierge' flamands: de Campin à Van Heemskerck", in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1987, pp. 25–92; *Rogier van der Weyden: St. Luke Drawing the Virgin – Selected Essays in Context*, ed. by Carol J. Purtle, Turnhout 1997. For a discussion of Jan Gossaert's and Maarten de Vos's Saint Luke paintings as a defense of religious image-making in response to Protestant iconoclasm, see Clifton Olds, "Jan Gossaert's St. Luke Painting the Virgin: A Renaissance Artist's Cultural Literacy", in: *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, XXIV (1990), pp. 89–96; Schaefer (note 15); Koenraad Jonckheere, "Images of Stone: The Physicality of Art and the Image Debates in the Sixteenth Century", in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, LXII (2012), pp. 125–134.

[18] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago 1994.

[19] Stoichita (note 5); Jeffrey Hamburger, "Seeing and Believing: The Suspicion of Sight and the Authentication of Vision in Late Medieval Art", in: *Imagination und Wirklichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Alessandro Nova/Klaus Krüger, Mainz 2000, pp. 47–70; Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der Frühen Neuzeit in Italien*, Munich 2001; Walter S. Melion, "The Art of Vision in Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*", in: Jerome Nadal, *Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels*, trans. and ed. by Frederick A. Homann S.J., Philadelphia 2003–2014, I: *The Infancy Narratives*, pp. 1–96.

[20] The disputed dating and authorship of *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* belonging to the Accademia di San Luca, and often attributed to the school of Raphael or Raphael himself, will be addressed below; see esp. note 57.

[21] On the problem of vision and its regulation in Counter-Reformation Italy, see Guillaume Cassegrain, "Le commentaire visionnaire: apparitions et persuasion dans la peinture italienne post-tridentine", in: *Revue de l'art*, 149 (2005), pp. 5–12; Anton Boschloo, *The Limits of Artistic Freedom: Criticism of Art in Italy from 1500 to 1800*, Leiden 2008. For the art theory of the Counter-Reformation more generally, see Anthony Blunt, *Artistic The-*

4 Pinturicchio, *Saint Luke the Evangelist*, 1509. Rome, Santa Maria del Popolo, choir vault

5 Girolamo da Carpi, *Saint Luke painting the Virgin*, ca. 1535. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago

medial nature of the artist's imaginative, or non-corporeal, vision, as well as the source of the artist's authority in figuring the divine. Considered in context of Catholic Reformation thought regarding the imagination's hold on divine truths, the works present a defense of the artist's capacity to see beyond the visible.[22] By the same token, given Catholic reformers' ambiguity as to how ideas about the reform of art – penned down in theoretical writings – might translate into practice, these post-Tridentine paintings demonstrate the agency of art in reflecting on the unresolved problems of image-making in an age of religious reform.[23]

From Portrait to Apparition: The Privatization of Saint Luke's Vision

Before examining each work individually, it is helpful to begin with a consideration of both the written legend and the pictorial tradition of Saint Luke painting the Virgin. Early Greek sources from the mid-eighth century were the first to describe that Saint Luke had made a portrait of the Virgin and Child from life as a way of legitimizing icon veneration during the iconoclast controversy.[24] The legend of Saint Luke held firm throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, despite the fact that the story was from the start anachronistic and uncanonical. Saint Luke could not have painted the figures from life nor have known Christ as a child

ory in Italy, 1450–1600, Oxford 1940; John Bossy, "Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe", in: *Past and Present*, XLVII (1970), pp. 51–70; Pamela Jones, "Art Theory as Ideology: Gabriele Paleotti's Hierarchical Notion of Painting's Universality and Reception", in: *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450–1650*, ed. by Clare Farago, New Haven 1995; Gauvin A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610*, Toronto 2003; Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio*, New Haven 2011; *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, ed. by Marcia B. Hall/Tracy Elizabeth Cooper/Costanza Barbieri, New York 2016.

[22] On the concept and term Counter-Reformation, see John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge [3]2002 ([1]2000).

[23] For literature on the relationship between Counter-Reformation theory and artistic practice, and particularly for the scholarly consensus that post-Tridentine art had rich and nuanced aims in relation to ecclesiastical calls for simple and didactic painting, see Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting around 1590*, London 1971; Anton Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna: Visible Reality in Art after the Council of Trent*, New York 1974; Charles Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci and the Beginnings of Baroque Style*, Glückstadt 1977; Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan*, Cambridge 1993; Stuart Lingo, *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting*, London 2008.

[24] Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons*, London 1985, p. 261; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park, Pa., 2014, pp. 124–127.

because the latter had no apostles until the start of his ministry as an adult.[25] Writers and painters found ways around the anachronism, usually by means of omission. In 1492, the Augustinian monk Iacopo Foresti wrote that "due to the intimacy that Luke always had with the blessed Virgin (as Damascenus wrote), he painted portraits of her for himself many times".[26] This testimony is repeated almost verbatim by at least three other writers over the course of the sixteenth century.[27] In conformity with the version of the legend that refrains from mentioning the Virgin's presence altogether, or Christ's for that matter, thereby sidestepping the question of whether she was painted from memory or from life, Pinturicchio's *Saint Luke the Evangelist* (Fig. 4) shows Luke cradling an icon of the Virgin and Child in his lap as if working from memory.

More typical, however, were scenes of Saint Luke in his studio or at his easel with the Virgin and Child seated in front of him. In Rogier van der Weyden's rendition of the subject, which has come to exemplify the Northern Renaissance tradition, the Virgin and Child are seated in front of Luke in a modern interior. An early sixteenth-century Italian work attributed to Girolamo da Carpi (Fig. 5) shows Luke as a guest in Mary's and Joseph's home. Both scenes underscore Luke's role as an eyewitness to how Mary and Christ looked during their life and remain faithful to the written legend, as first related in Greek accounts dating to the eighth and ninth century. To avoid the anachronism, Renaissance writers also continued to tell the story in terms of Luke's rendering a portrait

from life, but without mentioning the Child. In his *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre et profane* (1582), Gabriele Paleotti writes, "We read that Saint Luke painted an image from nature of the glorious Virgin while she was still alive, for Nicephorus writes as much."[28] Similarly, Pietro Canisio's *De Maria Virgine incomparabili* (1577) relates that Mary "was portrayed by the hand of Luke when she was still living".[29]

[25] Robert Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images in the Fifteenth Century: The Origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa*, Rochester 2004, p. 67. Belting (note 18), p. 58, notes that Jesus "was a child before Luke was even born".

[26] "Propter familiaritatem quam iugiter cum beata virgine habuerat (ut scribit Damascenus) eius imaginem pluries sibi depinxit" (quoted from Bacci [note 16], p. 271, note 105).

[27] This includes Paulianus (1550), Maioli (1585), and Albericis (1599), as quoted *ibidem*. See also Belting (note 18), p. 540, Appendix no. 36 for Prague reformer Matthew of Janov's *Rules of the Old and New Testament* (1390), which states that the Saint Luke icon was "drawn directly from the living model".

[28] Gabriele Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. by Paolo Prodi, Los Angeles 2012, p. 212. "Si legge che s. Luca dipinse dal naturale la imagine della gloriosa Vergine mentre che ella vivea, che cosi scrive Niceforo" (*idem*, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane*, Bologna 1582, c. 166r–v).

[29] "[…] Mariam adhuc viventem Lucae manibus depictam" (Pietro Canisio, *De Maria Virgine incomparabili*, Ingolstadt 1577, p. 696).

6 Filippino Lippi, *Vision of Saint Bernard*, ca. 1485–1487. Florence, Badia Fiorentina

There are no written sixteenth-century sources that explicitly tell the story of Saint Luke as the portrayal of an apparition,[30] and yet, the visualization of the legend in the latter half of the century takes an unexpected turn toward the visionary. In Vasari's *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (Fig. 1), Saint Luke is no longer an observer of concrete reality with the Virgin and Child sitting before him, nor a painter working from memory, but rather a witness to a cloud-borne apparition entering his studio. The bystanders raise their heads up in awe, while he remains concentrated on the sight of the Virgin and Child suspended above him. The apparition is perceived by corporeal eyes and is witnessed by everyone in the room. The scene brings to mind Anton Francesco Doni's account of Michelangelo's divine inspiration when working on his Medici Madonna for the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, which relates that "in the room where he [Michelangelo] works, there is a Madonna who descended from heaven to have her portrait made",[31] presumably as a vision seen with corporeal eyes. The passage can be read as an account of a vision,[32] but also as a form of hyperbole, praising Michelangelo's divinely-inspired carved image of the Madonna. With this double meaning, Doni indicates the divine origins of the work, the result of a supernatural vision.

The idea of portraying Saint Luke as a visionary with the Virgin and angels appearing before him may have come from Filippino Lippi's *Vision of Saint Bernard* (Fig. 6), which Vasari had seen in the Badia Fiorentina.[33] Lippi's Saint Bernard is shown writing on the theme of the Annunciation with Luke's gospel open to the relevant text. The Virgin interrupts his writing and touches the page of Bernard's manuscript, as if to offer him spiritual nourishment and to enliven his work with divine inspiration. In similar fashion, the Virgin in Vasari's fresco authorizes the image with her pointing finger, which nearly touches the edge of the picture, and fills it with divine grace.[34] As she does this, the representation on the canvas comes to life: the painted image of the Virgin reaches out with her left hand and seemingly takes one end of Luke's mahlstick into her palm (Fig. 7). The impression that

[30] The account that comes closest is a poem cited by the priest Andrea Vittorelli that juxtaposes praise for Luke's rendering the Virgin's beauty with a description of her ascension into heaven. See Andrea Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie della B.ma Vergine madre de Dio*, Rome 1616, pp. 91f.

[31] "La stanza dove lavora, che v'è una Madonna che scese di Paradiso a farsi ritrarre" (Doni [note 11], c. 48r).

[32] See Campbell (note 12), pp. 608f., for a discussion of the passage.

[33] Vasari describes the work in Filippino Lippi's vita. See Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1997, III, p. 561. The painting was transferred from its original location in the monastery of Santa Maria alle Campora di Marignolle to the Badia Fiorentina by the monks during the 1529 siege of Florence for safety (Timothy Verdon/Filippo Rossi, *Mary in Western Art*, Washington 2005, p. 211). For more on the painting, see Melinda Kay Lesher, *"The Vision of Saint Bernard" and the Chapel of the Priors: Private and Public Images of Bernard of Clairvaux in Renaissance Florence*, Ph.D. diss., Columbia University 1979, pp. 46–56.

[34] For a reading of the Virgin's gesture as the transmission of divine

7 Giorgio Vasari, *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (detail of Fig. 1)

the image stirs to life is heightened by the disparity of the hand gesture between the real and the painted Virgin, as well as by the physicality of the painted figure, which, by the omission of clouds at the Virgin's feet, hardly betrays its visionary nature.[35]

As the Virgin in the easel picture helps Luke steady his hand with her own by the support of his mahlstick, we are reminded of the divine hand that similarly guides Luke's drawing in Jan Gossaert's painting of the same subject (Fig. 8). In Gossaert's version of the legend, a notable exception to the Northern painting tradition showing the legend as a portrait sitting, an angel steers the hand holding the silver-point, while the saint draws the other hand out to the side as if forfeiting control over his work and submitting to the divine force (Fig. 9).[36] Similarly, Vasari alludes to the divine authority with which Luke completes the holy image and recalls the art theorist's conception of *disegno* as a creationary act akin to God's invention of man.[37] Indeed, located above the high altar of the chapel of Saint Luke at the Santissima Annunziata, Vasari's fresco represented one of the three arts – painting –

grace to the artistic image, see Martino Rossi Monti, "Visioni di grazia: la leggenda di San Luca e il sogno di Raffaello", in: *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, XV (2009), pp. 423–443.

[35] It should be acknowledged that the easel picture appears lighter than the rest of the scene, which reinforces its status as a painted image and a second level of fiction within the fresco.

[36] Olds (note 17), p. 94.

[37] For Vasari's definition of *disegno*, see Vasari (note 33), I, p. 44. See also

8, 9 Jan Gossaert, *Saint Luke painting the Virgin*, ca. 1520, general view and detail. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

that had been newly joined under the common theoretical umbrella of *disegno* with the establishment of the Accademia del Disegno in Florence just two years prior.[38] In the *Vite*, speaking of Michelangelo's Sistine Adam, Vasari writes that "[the figure of Adam] seems newly created by his supreme and first Creator rather than by the brush and design of a mortal man".[39] The legend of Saint Luke as the maker of the first sacred Christian portrait is also a story about origins. Akin to his account of Michelangelo's newly created Adam, Vasari's fresco re-establishes the religious image's connection to its creationary moment.

Vasari's work was completed two years after the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent met in December of 1563 and issued a decree addressing the question of how one ought to understand the representation of the divine in art. Of particular interest are the council's deliberations on the capacity of corporeal vision and physical images to open onto knowledge of the invisible, pointing to a broader concern in the second half of the century with the figuration of God. The decree stated: "And if at times it happens, when this is beneficial to the illiterate, that the stories and narratives of the Holy Scriptures are portrayed and exhibited, the people should be instructed that not for that reason is the divinity represented in the picture as if it can be seen with bodily eyes or expressed in colors or figures."[40] The decree explains that, although one finds the divine represented in pictures for the benefit of the illiterate, one must not conclude that it can actually be seen or expressed in physical form. Yet the council offers no further justification for what exactly allows the divine to be represented pictorially, apart from the educational necessity of images for the laity. In phrasing its directive in the negative, the council remains rather vague as to how painters could reconcile the making of religious imagery with divine invisibility, thereby leaving the question open for elaboration by the makers of images themselves.

Vasari's fresco engages with the very question that the council leaves unresolved. By reconceiving the legend of Saint Luke as a visionary revelation to the painter, who is suspended in the midst of applying

Renaissance Theory, ed. by James Elkins/Robert Williams, New York 2008, pp. 386f.

[38] Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State: The Discipline of* Disegno, Cambridge 2000, pp. 23–32, 47, 148–151.

[39] Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella/Peter Bondanella, Oxford 2008, p. 445. "e' [Adamo] par fatto di nuovo dal sommo e primo suo Creatore, piuttosto che dal pennello e disegno d'uno uomo tale" (Vasari [note 33], VI, p. 967).

[40] "Quod si aliquando historias et narrationes sacrae scripturae, cum id indoctae plebi expediet, exprimi et figurari contigerit: doceatur populus, non propterea divinitatem figurari, quasi corporeis oculis conspici, vel coloribus aut figuris exprimi possit" (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent:*

color to the holy image of the Virgin and Child (the preparation of pigments seen in the background and the palette of paints beneath the apparition underscore the point), the dual act of seeing and picturing divine revelation takes on central significance. Indeed, in choosing to portray the Virgin and Child as an apparition, rather than as living figures, Vasari could approach the problem of representing the invisible head on. Disregarding the council's admonition about the limitations of corporeal vision, the image on the easel derives its authority from a collective experience of the miraculous based in bodily sight, but also, by virtue of the Virgin's assistance, through divine intervention. In response to the doubt cast over the human authority to represent the invisible, the physical expression of divinity is here made possible not by the hand of the artist, but rather by divine hand, or *acheiropoietos*, in accord with the written legend. The San Sisto legend from the eleventh century, for example, relates that the Saint Luke icon was delineated by the evangelist and then colored by angels, so that the Virgin's face was "found shining with wonderful glory and was not the work of fleshly hands but of divine command".[41]

Vasari's fresco is the first visionary conception of the Saint Luke legend in Italy, but it does not implicate internal vision. In contrast, Passignano's painting and the Accademia di San Luca altarpiece restage sacred history in terms of a manifestation of the artist's imaginative vision. On the heels of the council's and other

Original Text with English Translation, trans. and ed. by Henry Joseph Schroeder, London 1950, pp. 216 and 484.

[41] Quoted in Maniura (note 25), p. 66. See also Panciroli (note 1), p. 746, and Angiolo Lottini, *Scelta d'alcuni miracoli e grazie della Santissima Nun-*

reform statements regarding the limitations of bodily sight, as well as a growing anxiety over the vision of the imagination, the scenes emphasize the act of seeing and the artist's working process, shown to be grounded in internal rather than external vision.

Passignano's *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (Fig. 10) was made just under thirty years after Vasari's work for a competition held to adorn the main altar of the oratory of the Accademia del Disegno.[42] It did not win enough votes and, according to Filippo Baldinucci, was kept in the academy.[43] The painting reveals a rethinking of artistic image-making and the workings of the imagination, particularly with respect to its contentious role in visionary experience. Half kneeling, with his right leg balanced on the ball of his foot and his right arm held out gracefully to bridge the distance that separates him from his work, Saint Luke brings his brush to the canvas to make the first mark. No signs of divine guidance are present. Contrary to Vasari, Passignano locates the authority of the image in a different source – not in divine intervention, but rather in the hand and the imaginative vision of the artist that receives the divine revelation. Luke even assumes the stance of a visionary. Passignano in fact reused almost exactly the same pose for Saint Francis in a visionary painting of the *Madonna in glory with saints* (1600–1614) for the cathedral of Livorno.

A thin shadow stemming downward from the tip of Saint Luke's brush falls onto the canvas and calls attention to its blankness. This 'emptying out' of the easel picture is highly unusual for a painting of the Saint Luke legend, especially given the legend's role in legitimizing the authority of man-made images of the divine – the very element missing in Passignano's work. At the same time, and as if to compensate for what is left out of the easel painting, the vision of the Virgin and Child overflows into the room. The ecstatic facial expression and posture of Saint Luke underscores the obliviousness of the two men next to him and that of the young boy. The older bearded man scrutinizes the blank canvas where the highpoint of the action appears to reside for him, while the younger man gestures towards the boy's entrance into the room.[44] The witnesses thus remain unaware of the miraculous event unfolding around them. Luke's sole gaze at the apparition is significant: the Virgin and Child become his exclusive vision. It is as if the holy figures' presence, their very visibility, is made possible by his inner eye. This becomes apparent when Passignano's work is compared to Girolamo da Carpi's version. In Girolamo's painting (Fig. 5), Luke looks down at his metalpoint drawing – the fact that it is a time consuming medium underscores the artist's concentration on his work – and, as a result, the Virgin and Child can be understood to exist apart from his efforts. Thus, rather than an external apparition, like we see in Vasari's work, Passignano's Virgin and Child are the inward and exclusive vision of Saint Luke. The upper half of the studio is overtaken by clouds as if to signal that we are in the internal realm of the painter's soul, the seat of the imagination, made visible for us to see.

ziata di Firenze, Milan 1619, pp. 11–14. The latter text describes the legend of the Servite *Annunciation* in the Santissima Annunziata, believed to have been painted by Friar Bartolomeo in 1252. Like in the Saint Luke legend, the Virgin's face was miraculously completed by an invisible, divine hand when the painter had fallen asleep. Vasari may have had this legend and fresco, located in the same convent, in mind when making his work.

[42] Multiple artists likely submitted drawings or *bozzetti* on the subject of Saint Luke painting the Virgin, which were voted upon by the academy members. See Joan Lee Nissman, *Domenico Cresti (Il Passignano): 1559–1638. A Tuscan Painter in Florence and Rome*, Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 1979, pp. 78f.; Roberto Contini, "Il *San Luca ritrae la Vergine* del Passignano: un trompe-l'œil supersimbolico", in: *L'onestà dell'invenzione: pittura della riforma cattolica agli Uffizi*, ed. by Antonio Natali, Florence 1999, pp. 110–120: 111.

[43] Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, ed. by Ferdinando Ranalli, Florence 1974/75, III, p. 439. Baldinucci describes the work as unfinished.

[44] The direction of the boy's gaze is somewhat ambiguous. However, given the fact that he is taking a step over the threshold of the doorway, it is unlikely that he is able to see the vision of the Virgin and Child. Rather,

10 Passignano, *Saint Luke painting the Virgin*, 1592/93. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture

As contemporaneous treatises on art and reform demonstrate, the rise of vision as a meaningful subject in religious images was bound up with questions about the role of corporeal and imaginative vision in apprehending the invisible. We might consider Gabriele Paleotti, who in the first part of his *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images* (written a decade prior to Passignano's work) defends the use of images and yet is clear about the limitations of the artist's vision, restricting the field of the latter's invention to things seen by bodily eyes alone:

> We say that the office of the painter is to imitate things in their natural state of being, purely as the eyes of mortals behold them, and rather than overstep his bounds, he must leave it to theologians and sacred doctors to extend them to other, loftier and more hidden sentiments. Otherwise, everything is jumbled together, and we shift chaotically from the state of nature to the state of grace or glory.[45]

This sentiment is in marked contrast to Vasari's writing on art, which moves easily from corporeal to spiritual vision. For instance, celebrating the capacity of Michelangelo's art to open the eyes of fellow artists, Vasari writes:

> Oh blessed Artists! […] you have been able to rekindle *the dim lights of your eyes* from a source of such clarity […]. [Michelangelo] has removed the blinders from the *eyes of your minds*, so full of shadows, and has shown you how to distinguish the true from the false that clouded your intellects.[46]

Yet, even as writers like Paleotti expressed increasing concern over the artist's use of imaginative vision, we can observe a shift in the iconography of the Saint Luke legend in favor of internal vision as a means of accessing the divine.

It should be noted that the older bearded man directly behind Saint Luke in Passignano's painting has been identified as Filippo Neri,[47] a man known for his keen spiritual discernment and who would be beatified in 1615, following the popularity of his cult. His biographer Pietro Giacomo Bacci wrote that "Philip had acquired, both by the sanctity of his life and from his long experience, great discernment in these matters, and knew well how to distinguish true from false visions".[48] Neri was in fact frequently pictured having a vision of the Virgin and Child.[49] His presence therefore offers support in favor of the authenticity of Luke's vision; Luke might be understood here as a match to Neri's abilities. By virtue of this association, the work corroborates the credibility of the artist's imagination in the face of doubt about its ability to access divine truths. At the same time, despite his frequent visions of the Virgin, Neri also cautioned against the trustworthiness of visions and

he appears to be looking at Saint Luke's canvas or at the younger man who gestures towards him.

[45] Paleotti 2012 (note 28), p. 250. "Diciamo che, essendo l'officio del pittore l'imitare le cose nel naturale suo essere e puramente come si sono mostrate agli occhi de' mortali, non hà egli da trapassare i suoi confini, ma lasciare a' theologi e sacri dottori, il dilatarle ad altri sentimenti piu alti e piu nascosti: altrimente seria un confondere ogni cosa, e passare tumultuariamente dallo stato della natura a quello della gratia, o della gloria" (*idem* 1582 [note 28], cc. 208v–209r). Gregorio Comanini, *The Figino, or, On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance*, trans. and ed. by Ann Doyle-Anderson/Giancarlo Maiorino, Toronto 2001, p. 40, also limits the field of the artist's invention by distinguishing between paintings that are "icastic imitations" (those that imitate nature) and "fantastic imitations" (those that exist only in the intellect). Both Paleotti and Comanini posit a boundary between corporeal and imaginary vision and position the artist strictly within the realm of the visible.

[46] Vasari (note 39), pp. 449f. "O[h] beati artefici […] avete potuto al fonte di tanta chiarezza rischiarare *le tenebrose luci degli occhi* […] da che ha tolto da voi quella benda che avevate inanzi *gli occhi della mente*, sì di tenebre piena, e v'ha scoperto il velo del falso, il quale v'adombrava le bellissime stanze dell'intelletto" (*idem* [note 33], VI, p. 973; my italics).

[47] Contini (note 42), p. 113.

[48] Pietro Giacomo Bacci, *The Life of Saint Philip Neri: Apostle of Rome, and Founder of the Congregation of the Oratory*, ed. by Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, London 1902, I, Book III, Chapter II, p. 355.

[49] Costanza Barbieri, "'To Be in Heaven': St. Philip Neri between

advised his followers to reject all visionary experiences given the likelihood of demonic deception. In Passignano's painting, spiritual discernment is therefore presented as a skill possessed by the privileged few, and Saint Luke the painter is thus granted an important role in authenticating the heavenly vision. This is a notable self-assertion of artists' capacity to represent revelations of divine glory by means of divine inspiration, given that such claims were met with suspicion by Church authorities.

The Church's concern with the artist's powers of representation and the license to picture divine revelation is evident, once again, in Paleotti's treatise. In a discussion of painters who choose to paint saints in glory, Paleotti writes: "But since the authentic records do not state that they [saints] were observed by anyone so transfigured, it seems unsuitable for a painter to introduce it now, except in cases where the approved versions of the life do solemnly swear that they were on occasion observed in that form, as we read concerning some saints."[50] This counsel is an extension of Paleotti's repeated insistence that painters and others who wish to learn about miraculous events rely on "testimony from the worthiest authors" ("testimonio di dignissimi autori").[51] In this way, the painter safeguards himself from committing errors "with the universal consensus of the learned" ("co'l consenso universale dei dotti").[52] Paleotti's position thus warns against artistic invention and especially denies painting the capacity to create religious meaning or depict uncertain events unless they were witnessed and described by authorized writers, such as the Church fathers or the Hebrew prophets.[53] At stake is the liberty of painters to invent sacred subjects with their imagination.

Saint Luke's vision fits the kind of undocumented event that Paleotti describes as being beyond the artist's knowledge. In fact, his *Discorso* explicitly states that Saint Luke painted the Virgin from life and not from a vision,[54] as presented in Passignano's painting. Of course, Passignano's work should not be taken as a direct response to Paleotti's treatise. Rather, the painting's treatment of the subject offers a reflection on the reliability of imaginative vision to picture divine truths that is best appreciated when considered in context of contemporaneous concerns about artistic invention and historical accuracy voiced by reformers like Paleotti. The scene is further complicated by the fact that Saint Luke is presented as a modern Renaissance painter, rather than the ancient Greek physician. He paints not only in the presence of Filippo Neri, but also of Michelangelo's *River god* (Fig. 11), a terracotta fragment given to the Accademia del Disegno by the sculptor Bartolomeo Ammannati as a gift in 1583.[55] The visual convergence between the visionary and Michelangelo's fragmented sculpture – the figures are placed opposite one another creating a mirroring effect – stages a rapport between the work of art and the creator, thereby situating Saint Luke precisely in Passignano's present. The side-by-side comparison of the pagan god and the soon-to-be divine image alludes to further questions concerning the nature of the man-made image and whether it is able to rise above the falsity, or emptiness, of the pagan idol.

The problem of historical authenticity and the ambivalent status of the religious image is taken up

Aesthetic Emotion and Mystical Ecstasy", in: *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church* (note 21), p. 206.

[50] Paleotti 2012 (note 28), p. 250. "Ma poiche le scritture autentiche non dicono, che da alcuno siano mai stati veduti in tale trasfiguratione, non pare che convenga al pittore hora d'introdurla, eccetto in quei casi, dove le vite loro approvate facessero fede, che fossero stati tal'hora veduti in quella forma, come di alcuni santi si legge" (*idem* 1582 [note 28], c. 209r).

[51] *Idem* 2012 (note 28), pp. 130 and 104; *idem* 1582 (note 28), cc. 88v and 60v.

[52] *Idem* 2012 (note 28), p. 251; *idem* 1582 (note 28), c. 209r.

[53] Klaus Krüger, "Signa et res – The Pictorial Discourse of the Imaginary in Early Modern Italy", in: *Italian Academy Fellows' Seminar Working Papers*, 2011, https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8MS404V, p. 11.

[54] Paleotti 2012 (note 28), p. 212.

[55] Contini (note 42), p. 112.

11 Michelangelo, *River god*, 1524–1527.
Florence, Accademia delle Arti del Disegno

by another altarpiece on the theme of the Saint Luke legend (Fig. 12), a work that came into the possession of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome and was likely installed on the altar of its new headquarters in the church of Santi Luca e Martina.[56] There is considerable disagreement over the attribution and dating of the painting, which should be taken into account before further discussion. The altarpiece has been alternatively considered the work of Raphael (particularly by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources) or a follower of his school, made in the 1520s, or a work that was executed in the second half of the century, with additional restoration work by Scipione Pulzone within that period.[57] Scholars have also noted the discrepancy in style used for the figures of the Virgin and Saint Luke on the one hand and for Raphael and the ox on the other hand, suggesting that a second hand was involved, which may have altered the original design.[58] Two separate documents from the *Libro del camerlengo* record a painting (described as a "ttavolla di Sal·Lucha" and "il quadro") in the possession of the Università dei Pittori in 1571 and 1577 respectively. According to these documents and as discussed by Isabella Salvagni, the work was restored in 1571[59] and given a hinged cover on the high altar of the church of San Luca on 18 October 1577 to celebrate the informal elevation of the Università dei Pittori and the Congregazione di San Luca to the status of an academy.[60] The painting from the 1570s can be connected with the Saint Luke altarpiece under discussion (Fig. 12) with fair certainty, given Pompeo Ugonio's record of it on the altar of the church in his *Theatrum Urbis Romae* of circa 1585: "San Luca is a small church and there is a beautiful painting there by the hand of Raphael of Urbino with Saint Luke who

[56] Peter M. Lukehart, "Visions and Divisions in the Early History of the Accademia di San Luca", in: *The Accademia Seminars: The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c. 1590–1635*, ed. by *idem*, New Haven, Conn., *et al.* 2009, pp. 161–195: 176.

[57] On the painting's debated attribution, see Pico Cellini, "Il restauro del S. Luca di Raffaello", in: *Bollettino d'arte*, IV s., XLIII (1958), pp. 250–262; Waźbiński (note 17), pp. 30–32; Raymond Ward Bissell, "Simon Vouet, Raphael, and the Accademia di San Luca in Rome", in: *Artibus et Historiae*, XXXII (2011), 63, pp. 55–72: 63; Tom Henry/Paul Joannides, "Raphael and His Workshop between 1513 and 1525: 'per la mano di maestro Raffaello e Joanne Francesco e Giulio sui discepoli'", in: *Late Raphael*, exh. cat. Madrid/Paris 2012/13, ed. by *eidem*, New York *et. al.* 2013, pp. 17–85: 79; Stefania Ventra, "Il San Luca 'di Raffaello': vicende e restauri tra Cinquecento e Novecento", in: *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, 116–117 (2015), pp. 170–183. For discussion of the work's date and installation on the altar, see Isabella Salvagni, "The Università dei Pittori and the Accademia di San Luca: From the Installation in San Luca sull'Esquilino to the Reconstruction of Santa Martina al Foro Romano", in: *The Accademia Seminars* (note 56), pp. 69–121: 77f. and 115, note 22; *eadem*, *Da Universitas ad Academia: la corporazione dei Pittori nella chiesa di San Luca a Roma. 1477–1588*, Rome 2012, pp. 227–235. It is this author's conclusion that both Raphael's authorship and that of one of his pupils are unlikely. First, Raphael appears as an idealized youth, suggesting that the portrait is a retrospective homage rather than a self-portrait, as observed by Henry/Joannides, p. 79. Second, the painting is done in an archaicizing style and no documents from the first half of the century are known that can be firmly associated with it.

[58] For discussion of the overpainting of the work and the inconsistent style, see Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, Chicago 2011, p. 79 and p. 300, note 12.

[59] The full entry is as follows: "Et più per cera mastice pece chiodi isteche per riempiere le comettitture della ttavolla di Sal·Lucha dinazi e didretto si spese i[n] ditte cose – baiocchi 20. Et più per geso groso per fare istucho per djtta ttavola – baiocchi 5. Et più per llibbre 5 di geso da oro per istucare sopra dove all presentte è dipinto – baiocchi 10" (Rome, Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di San Luca, vol. 41, fol. 74r).

[60] The full entry is as follows: "Più iulij dua al Zaga per dui bandelle

12 *Saint Luke painting the Virgin*, before ca. 1585. Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca

portrays the Madonna, restored by Scipione Gaetano [i.e. Pulzone]" ("S. L[uc]a e piccola chiesa e vi e un quadro di mano di Rafael di Urbino co S. Luca che ritrahe la M[adon]na bellissimo rinovato da Scipion Caetani").[61]

In 1588, the Università dei Pittori relocated from its small church on the Esquiline Hill to the church of Santa Martina in the Roman Forum. As described by Romano Alberti in 1593 in the inaugural proceedings of the academy, Federico Zuccaro, the academy's president, adapted a barn next to Santa Martina into a room suited for the academy's new headquarters. Here again we find the altarpiece of *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (Fig. 12) named explicitly – it is made the centerpiece of the newly furnished room –, suggesting that the academy transferred the painting in its possession to this new location:

> The aforementioned *Signore Principe* [Federico Zuccaro], soon enough and as best he could, made of a barn a place suitable for the academy, furnished with chairs, benches, tables, a small table, and similar other things, with an altar at the head of the academy, with the image of the glorious Virgin and Saint Luke.[62]

The argument presented here side-steps the thorny question of attribution and instead takes an approach that privileges the painting's installation in the new headquarters of the Accademia di San Luca to celebrate its official inauguration in 1593. The work, as argued below, constituted an extension of Zuccaro's concurrent theorization of the principles of *disegno* – a notion that can be accepted even if the original author of the work remains contested or unknown.[63] Zuccaro's involvement with the academy in 1567/68 and again in the 1580s and 1590s[64] closely links the artist to the altarpiece in three respects. First, as the report of 1593 quoted above details, Zuccaro directed the organization of the room that now housed the painting, installing the work within a space dedicated to the academy's meetings, lectures, and orations. Second, as recounted in Giovanni Baglione's vita of the artist (and corroborated by Ugonio), Zuccaro had asked Scipione Pulzone to make some restorations to the work some time before 1585.[65] Finally, as discussed by Salvagni, despite the absence of secure documentation one cannot exclude the possibility that Zuccaro may have donated the painting to the academy in or shortly before 1571.[66] Given the Roman academy's alliance with the goals of Catholic reform – its statutes of 7 March 1593 specified that academicians making works for churches were to create images that inspired piety and devotion ("imagini tali che rendano pietà, et de-

e dui girele per la tela che copre il quadro sopra l'altare – [baiocchi] 20" (Rome, Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di San Luca, vol. 41, fol. 83v). Both documents are cited in Salvagni 2012 (note 57), pp. 323f., 334. Cf. also *eadem* 2009 (note 57), pp. 76–78 and 115, note 22.

[61] Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. lat. 2160, fol. 126r; quoted from Isabella Salvagni, "Gli 'aderenti al Caravaggio' e la fondazione dell'Accademia di San Luca: conflitti e potere [1593–1627]", in: *Intorno a Caravaggio: dalla formazione alla fortuna*, ed. by Margherita Fratarcangeli, Rome 2008, pp. 41–74: 74, note 145.

[62] "Il detto Sig. Principe fece di un' fenile, a che serviva, quel luogo ben presto al meglio che si poté accommodare per Academia, così provisto di sedie, banchi, tavole, e tavolino, e simili altre cose, con un Altare in capo ad essa Academia, con l'imagine della gloriosa Vergine, e di S. Luca" (Federico Zuccaro/Romano Alberti, "L'Origine e progresso dell'Academia del Disegno di Roma", in: *Scritti d'Arte di Federico Zuccaro*, ed. by Detlef Heikamp, Florence 1961, pp. 1–102: 14).

[63] In fact, it has been suggested that the altarpiece pictured (partially cut-off) on the frontispiece of the *Origine, et progresso dell'Academia*, immediately below a depiction of Zuccaro's conception of *disegno*, is the painting under discussion. See Lukehart (note 56), p. 176. According to this hypothesis, the scene corresponds to Alberti's description of the first meeting of the academy in the new room arranged by Zuccaro.

[64] Salvagni 2012 (note 57), pp. 232f.; Ventra (note 57), p. 171.

[65] "Federico fu zelante della riputatione de' suoi maggiori, & in particolare di Raffaello Santio da Urbino suo paesano; poiche venne il caso, che il quadro di s. Luca, di mano di Raffaello, e da esso donato a cotesto luogo, per alcuni patimenti fu dato ad accomodare a Scipione da Gaeta, Accademico valent'huomo […]" (Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori scultori et architetti […]*, Rome 1642, p. 124). Pulzone's intervention may correspond to the restorations recorded in 1571 or possibly date to the late 1570s or early 1580s, as discussed by Salvagni 2012 (note 57), pp. 233f.

[66] *Ibidem*, pp. 232f. The argument was first made by Ważbiński

votione")[67] – and the fact that the Saint Luke altarpiece was installed in the academy's headquarters in the very year that the academy had written up these statutes, there is good reason to consider the painting as a pronounced statement on image-making in the context of a broader conversation on the possibility of figuring the divine.

Whereas Passignano's witnesses remain excluded from the visionary experience to signal Luke's privileged status as a recipient of divine revelation, in the Accademia di San Luca painting, the witnessing of the vision unmistakably takes on an active role. The scene includes Raphael as a witness to Saint Luke's vision. He appears not in the guise of Saint Luke (which would have been more conventional and which is precisely what we see in Vasari's version) but as himself, a bystander dressed in contemporary sixteenth-century dress.[68] In fact, Raphael was believed to have been the very author of the work. In its documents, the academy refers to the painting as "made by the hand of Raphael" ("fatto per mano di Raffaele"),[69] an attribution that dates back to as early as circa 1585, as is testified by Ugonio's mention, if not before then. Indeed, the attribution to Raphael can be said to anticipate the practice of feigning or ascribing works to the hands of admired painters of the High Renaissance – a phenomenon that became commonplace by the start of the seventeenth century, particularly with the rise of a culture of collecting and connoisseurship.[70] As will be shown, the paint-

13 Hieronymous Wiericx after Bernardino Passeri, *Easter Sunday Morning: Jesus appears to His Virgin Mother Mary*, in: Jerome Nadal, *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp 1607

(note 17), pp. 30–32, but with a proposed date of 1593, which has since been discounted by the new evidence documenting the work in the academy's possession in the 1570s and 1580s.

[67] Rome, Archivio di Stato, Trenta Notai Capitolini, uff. 11, 1593, pt. I, vol. 25, fol. 426v. The document is available online in *The History of the Accademia di San Luca, c. 1590–1635: Documents from the Archivio di Stato di Roma*, https://www.nga.gov/accademia/en/intro.html (accessed on 15 February 2018). See also Lukehart (note 56), pp. 171, 177.

[68] Another example of the inclusion of a possible artist's portrait is the personification of *furor poeticus*, or poetic fury, in Maerten van Heemskerck's *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (1532, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum), for which see Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1604, c. 245r; Klein (note 16), p. 57; Rainald Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerck: Die Gemälde*, Berlin 1980, p. 112. According to Grosshans, Heemskerck appears next to Saint Luke in the guise of an ivy-wreathed muse, alluding to the central role of divine inspiration in the making of religious images. If this identification is correct, the painting offers a precedent for the visualization of the artist's imagination and powers of poetic invention in the Accademia di San Luca altarpiece, thereby highlighting the novelty of the depiction of Raphael as himself.

[69] Rome, Archivio di Stato, Trenta Notai Capitolini, uff. 15, 1622, pt. 4, vol. 94, fol. 512r. The document is available online in *The History of the Accademia di San Luca* (note 67). See also Waźbiński (note 17), pp. 33–35.

[70] For this question, see especially Maria Loh, "Originals, Reproduc-

ing for the Accademia di San Luca stages the fiction that the painting is by Raphael and that its subject is his very imagination at work, as the scene recreates the circumstances of the making of the first holy image of the Virgin and Child. In other words, by virtue of Raphael's presence, the painting presents sacred history in terms of an artistic reimagining or an image extracted, as it were, from the storehouse of the artist's imagination.

A close look at the work makes clear that the scene in fact makes little sense if understood as Raphael's self-projection into sacred history. A comparison to an illustration by Hieronymous Wiericx from Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia* of Christ appearing to the Virgin after his Resurrection (Fig. 13) underscores the different treatment of space in Raphael's painting. The illustration is one of many engravings meant to assist the reader in his

tions, and a 'Particular Taste' for Pastiche in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Painting", in: *Mapping Markets for Paintings, Europe and the New World, 1450–1750*, ed. by Neil De Marchi/Hans J. Van Miegroet, Turnhout 2006, pp. 237–262; Philip Sohm, "Painting Together: 'A Terrestrial Trinity' of Painters in the *Quadro delle tre mani*", in: *Artistic Practices and Cultural Transfer in Early Modern Italy: Essays in Honour of Deborah Howard*, ed. by Nebahat Avcıoğlu/Allison Sherman, Farnham *et al.* 2010, pp. 131–147; Colin Murray, "Giorgione, Titian, and Sebastiano del Piombo: A Purported Collaboration for the Seventeenth-Century Gallery", article in preparation.

14 *Saint Luke painting the Virgin* (detail of Fig. 12)

15 Giovanni Battista Moroni, *A gentleman in adoration before the Madonna*, ca. 1560. Washington, National Gallery of Art

16 Raphael, *Madonna del Granduca*, 1504. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti

or her meditation on Christ's life through an appeal to the vision of the imagination.[71] In this way Nadal draws on Ignatius of Loyola's *Exercitia spiritualia* and what Ignatius called "the composition of place".[72] Yet whereas Nadal aims to situate the reader-viewer in sacred history by means of a detailed setting that is annotated with glosses on how the historical moment unfolded, the barren, abstracted features of the room in the Accademia painting suggest a different kind of space: a mental one, rather than a historically specific place. The scene (Fig. 14) recalls the experimental compositions of Giovanni Battista Moroni from several decades earlier, such as *A gentleman in adoration before the Madonna* (Fig. 15), which presents us with a Madonna and Child as though envisioned by the patron in the foreground and modeled on a memory of a sculptural prototype.[73] What is more, upon further looking, one discovers that the Christ-child twists and looks at Raphael, while the image of the Virgin in the easel picture, as if having come

[71] Melion (note 19), pp. 2–23.

[72] Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. by W. H. Longridge, London 1955, pp. 53f.

[73] The motif of a vision modeled on a sculptural prototype can also be observed in Caravaggio's *Madonna dei Pellegrini* (ca. 1605/06, Rome, Sant'Agostino); see Ralph Dekoninck, "Figuring the Threshold of Incar-

alive, acknowledges Raphael's presence with her sideways glance.[74]

Raphael's presence thereby creates ambiguity as to who is having the vision and reframes the event as if observed from the perspective of the Renaissance artist. The Virgin and Child – and the entire scene of Saint Luke painting them – are generated by the vision of the imagination, much like in Jan van Eyck's *Rolin Madonna* (ca. 1435), where Chancellor Rolin's unfocused gaze and hands clasped over his prayer book signal that what we see is in fact an internal vision prompted by his reading.[75] In the Accademia work, not only does the scene create the fiction that what we see is in fact Raphael's imagination at work, rather than a historical event, but the vision that is meant to be the divine prototype turns out to be a direct quotation of Raphael's art, recalling his *Madonna del Granduca* (Fig. 16).[76] The work draws on the belief in the visionary character of Raphael's Madonnas, as exemplified by the *Sistine Madonna* (1512) and the *Madonna di Foligno* (1511/12), and on Raphael himself as the model artist for the academy, whom Zuccaro called "the true master and proper imitator of every grace, of every beauty of nature and of art, in all things".[77] The artistic fiction thus eclipses the divine prototype and becomes the new truth.[78] Put another way, the holy image is presented as the product of the artist's *fantasia*.

This analysis brings us to a consideration of Zuccaro's writings on art, particularly on the relationship between the material and the mental image. Zuccaro's theorization of *disegno* in his treatise *L'Idea* (1607) as well as earlier in his lectures to the Accademia di San Luca touched on the very question of mental activity and its relationship to the external image.[79] In the treatise, Zuccaro speaks of painting as finished in the mind of the painter before it is even begun; he thereby prioritizes the mental image (*disegno interno*) over the outer, material image (*disegno esterno*).[80] What is more, Zuccaro's definition of *disegno interno* is that it is an activity of the mind shared by the painter and the theologian alike:

> By the term 'Disegno interno' I understand an internal concept formed not only in the mind of a painter, but in any mind. […] I have not used here the term 'intention', as philosophers and logicians are wont to, not 'model', nor 'idea', as theologians do. […] One should use the terminology proper to one's profession.[81]

Zuccaro does not place the artist on a lower rank than the theologian, as does Paleotti. In fact, repeating a sentiment he expressed earlier in his lectures to the Accademia in 1593/94, he alleges that painting is capable of showing things that are not based in images and are known only to the intellect: "Thus it also

nation: Caravaggio's Incarnate Image of the Madonna of Loreto", in: *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image*, ed. by Walter S. Melion/Lee Palmer Wandel, Leiden 2015, pp. 356–361.

[74] On the direction of the gazes, see Kleinbub (note 9), p. 100, and Nagel (note 58), pp. 78f.

[75] James Snyder, "Jan van Eyck and the Madonna of Chancellor Nicolas Rolin", in: *Oud-Holland*, LXXXII (1967), pp. 163–171; Beth Williamson, "Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion: Sound and Vision, Invisibility and Silence", in: *Speculum*, LXXXVIII (2013), pp. 1–43: 26f.

[76] Ważbiński (note 17), p. 30.

[77] "il vero maestro, e proprio immitatore d'ogni gratia, d'ogni bellezza della natura, a dell'arte in tutte le cose […]" (Zuccaro/Alberti [note 62], p. 72).

[78] Krüger (note 7), pp. 54f., 60.

[79] For a seminal discussion of the relationship between ideation and the artistic representation in Zuccaro and the Renaissance, see Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art History*, New York/London [3]1968 (first German ed. Leipzig/Berlin 1924), pp. 50–120.

[80] For an in-depth analysis of Zuccaro's concept of *disegno*, see David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge *et al.* 1987, pp. 283–308: 283f.

[81] Quoted from Władisław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, ed. by D. Petsch, London [3]2005 (first English ed. Warsaw 1974), III, p. 220. "[…] per questo nome di Dissegno interno, io non intendo solamente il concetto interno formato nella mente del Pittore, ma anco quel concetto, che forma qualsivoglia intelletto […] e non uso il nome d'intentione, come adoprano i Logici, e Filosofi; o di essemplare, ò Idea, com'usano i Theologi […] si devono usare i nomi conforme alle professioni di cui si

paints those things that are invisible, and only known by internal sense, or by the intellect alone without the form of things."[82]

In reflecting on the nature of mental activity and the acquisition of knowledge, Zuccaro uses an analogy that is particularly relevant to the painting of Saint Luke installed in the Accademia. He describes the image formed in the soul as analogous to the painted image. According to Zuccaro, the soul is like a painting: both are mirrors of nature, showing the forms of things, as if reflections, but without their substance.[83] He thereby raises the status of art by presenting it as a paradigm for all human thought.[84] Envisioning the intellect as a receptive surface for the material world, Zuccaro turns to another metaphor of art, namely the blank canvas. He describes the intellect as a *tabula rasa*, "a spacious, smooth canvas prepared by us painters to receive all those figures that will be painted upon it".[85] The analogy between a mental and a painted image in Zuccaro's writing on art clarifies the unusual composition in the painting of Saint Luke. The scene likewise compares the process of the artist's formation of an image in the mind to its manifestation in the material image on the easel.

Comparing Passignano's portrayal of the legend to the version set up in the Accademia di San Luca, we see a distinction: in the former, an image of the divine is received by the vision of the imagination; in the latter, the imagination fashions an artistic image of the divine. Together, these works' exploration of effects of ambiguity as to what we are seeing, a true divine vision or a product of the artist's imagination, can be understood as pictorial strategies for considering the relationship between an image (or vision) of God and an artistic representation. This consideration can also be found in Francisco de Zurbaran's painting of Christ on the cross with a painter (Fig. 17), who is usually identified as Saint Luke and a self-portrait of the artist. The elderly artist meditates at the foot of the cross, while holding a palette and brushes, with parted lips and a gesture of devotion. As Victor Stoichita points out, it is unclear whether the artist has projected himself into the Passion as in a spiritual exercise or whether he is having a vision; likewise it is

17 Francisco de Zurbaran, *The crucified Christ with a painter*, 1630–1639. Madrid, Museo del Prado

ragiona" (Federico Zuccaro, "L'Idea de' pittori, scultori, et architetti", in: *Scritti d'Arte* [note 62], pp. 133–311: 152f.).

[82] Quoted from Summers (note 80), p. 299. "Così dipinge ancora le cose, che sono invisibili, e solo conosciute ò dal senso interno, ò dall'intelletto solo senza forma delle cose" (Zuccaro [note 81], p. 244). For Zuccaro's lectures delivered to the academy in 1593/94, see Zuccaro/Alberti (note 62), pp. 2–40.

[83] Zuccaro (note 81), pp. 154f.

[84] Summers (note 80), p. 287.

[85] Quoted from *ibidem*, p. 288. "[…] un'ampio, e polito quadro di noi

difficult to tell whether the artist is in the painting or standing in front of an unfinished canvas, admiring his work.[86] The scene generates intended ambiguity between reality and illusion, and between painting and vision.

Similarly in the diptych of *Saint John on Patmos* (Fig. 18) and *The Immaculate Conception* (Fig. 19) by Diego Velázquez, we see an interplay between the vision and its representation. The glowing vision in the top left-hand corner interrupts John's writing of the text of Revelation (note his lifted pen and the mostly blank page); at the same time, the vision provokes the representation. Following Stoichita's reading of this work, together, the two paintings show the process of clarification – of transforming vision to visual and textual representation – so that the painted canvas on the right replaces the blank page on the left.[87] The tiny vision of the Virgin is completed, as it were, by the second part of the diptych, which shows how the vision ultimately becomes a devotional work. In other words, the diptych shows the sacred image as the product of a process of representation, while simultaneously visualizing the unbridgeable gap between vision and painting.

The scenes of Saint Luke pausing at his work discussed here provoke a similar reflection on the relationship between visionary experience and its representation, and the authority by which the invisible may be figured in art. On the one hand, even as Paleotti urged painters to represent the divine and the miraculous exactly as recorded by learned authors approved by the Church, the Accademia di San Luca painting foregrounded the fiction of its making and therefore made no such claims to painting's historical authenticity as a record of sacred history. On the other hand, whereas Paleotti insisted that artists must leave it to theologians to conceive the invisible, the Accademia painting affirmed in Aristotelian fashion that thought, even of the sacred, is associated with a phantasm or mental picture, thus authorizing the figuration of God in the religious image. This divergence from Paleotti's advice to painters is significant given the Roman academy's allegiance to the principles of Tridentine reform. It points to a range of possible positions regarding the authority of artists' license of invention.

At a moment in the history of Catholic reform when the very capacity of the artistic image to transmit divine truths became subject to scrutiny, image-makers responded to challenges to their status as mediators of knowledge of the divine by redefining the principle of *disegno*.[88] Taking Vasari's definition a step further, Zuccaro made *disegno* synonymous with all mental activity and thus with the very soul of the artist.[89] In light of reform-minded efforts to limit the imagination's hold on the divine, Passignano's work as well as the altarpiece amended by Pulzone under Zuccaro's direction both reveal the academies' defense of the capacity of the artist's soul to see beyond the visible and to visualize the irrepresentable. Zuccaro's metaphor of the intellect as "a spacious, smooth canvas" vividly evokes the scene in Passignano's painting where Saint Luke's blank canvas awaits to receive the painted image of the Virgin and Child. Like Zuccaro, Passignano uses the image of the blank canvas as a metaphor for the impression of the divine vision onto the soul of the artist. As suggested by the works discussed here, the very making of images constituted a path to contemplation of the invisible and the divine.[90]

altri Pittori preparato p [*sic*] ricevere tutte quelle figure, che gli saranno dipinte" (Zuccaro [note 81], p. 173).

[86] Stoichita (note 5), pp. 73f.

[87] *Ibidem*, pp. 114–116.

[88] See however Barzman (note 38) for a reading of *disegno* as a form of Medicean social control.

[89] For a discussion of the changing conception of *disegno*, see Robert Williams, "The Artist as Worker in Sixteenth-Century Italy", in: *Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro: Artist-Brothers in Renaissance Rome*, exh. cat., ed. by Julian Brooks *et al.*, Los Angeles 2007, pp. 94–104.

[90] As Zuccaro stated, through painting "the intellect is helped to rise to the contemplation of divine things, and brings to mind the benefits received from God" (Summers [note 80], p. 299); ("l'intelletto si aiuta à salire alla contemplatione delle cose divine, gli riduce à memoria i beneficij

18, 19 Diego Velázquez, *Saint John on Patmos* and *The Immaculate Conception*, 1618/19. London, National Gallery

Divine Truth and Aesthetic Fiction: The Vision and Its Medium of Transmission

This thesis brings us to a final observation about the three paintings of Saint Luke under discussion: the unusual, doubled representation of the Virgin and Child, as a 'real' apparition entering Saint Luke's studio and a simulacrum in his unfinished easel painting. As this section will show, the doubling of the Virgin and Child in these works should be understood as a reflection on the central problem of the artistic image in Catholic Reformation Italy, namely the question of its truth value in picturing God.

The preoccupation with the interplay between divine and artistic vision places the works within an emerging trend in the late sixteenth century of showing visions of divine figures as works of art or living statues – that is, showing the vision by means of a recognizable fiction having come alive; a phenomenon Klaus Krüger calls the double tendency towards authentication and fictionalization.[91] In other words, painting now thematized the status of the material im-

ricevuti da Dio"; Zuccaro [note 81], p. 252). For a discussion of Zuccaro's notion that the act of artistic creation permits contact with God, thereby raising the status of art from its low status in the hierarchy of knowledge, see Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne*, Cambridge 1997, p. 138.

[91] Krüger (note 7), p. 62.

20 Santi di Tito, *Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1593. Florence, San Marco

age as a medium of vision. The work of art reveals and even generates the divine vision within the beholder's imagination through a synthesis of authentic and fictive modes of representation. For example, Santi di Tito's *Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Fig. 20) shows a vision of the Crucifixion that is borne out of the saint's meditation on the altarpiece, internalizing the work of art into inner visual experience.[92] Likewise, a painting by Giovanni Battista Crespi (Fig. 21) presents a vision of the Assumption that takes the form of a real marble statue, specifically Annibale Fontana's *Madonna Assunta* in the Milanese church of Santa Maria presso San Celso (1586). This conflation of the material and the invisible realm emerges out of a medieval and Renaissance mode of thought that likened visions to artistic images, which in turn inspired new visions. Saint Teresa of Avila, for example, described having a vision of Christ

> that seemed to me an image, not like an earthly drawing no matter how perfect it may be – for I have seen many good ones. It is foolish to think that an earthly drawing can look anything like a vision; it does so no more nor less than living persons resemble their portraits.[93]

The very analogy between a divine vision and an earthly image of the divine functions to highlight the fact that the two types of visual experiences defy comparison.[94]

The Accademia di San Luca painting, like Crespi's portrayal of the Madonna, uses a work of art – Raphael's *Madonna del Granduca* – to represent a vision of the Virgin and thus conforms to the new tendency to conflate the artistic and the supernatural image. However, the painting also presents the vision and its medium (the easel picture) side by side as distinct, rather than conflated, entities. This separation is made even more explicit in Passignano's painting. The juxtaposition of the empty canvas and Luke's vision points to a separation of the image and its medium.[95] We are shown the agent of transmission, the bare medium of the representation, while the vision is

[92] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

[93] Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of Saint Teresa of Avila*, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, Washington 1987, p. 240. "[…] que me parecía imagen, no como los dibujos de acá, por muy perfectos que sean, que hartos he visto buenos; es disparate pensar que tiene semejanza lo uno con lo otro en ninguna manera, no más ni menos que la tiene una persona viva a su retrato" (Teresa de Ávila, "Libro de la vida", in: *eadem*, *Obras completas*, ed. by Efrén de la Madre de Dios/Otger Steggink, Madrid 1986, pp. 31–232: 150f.).

[94] Dekoninck (note 73), p. 356.

[95] On the material image as a medium of the vision, see Krüger (note 19).

in turn made to saturate the room itself. The canvas in the painting is thereby emptied of its potency and the fictive status of the man-made image is brought to the forefront, notably, right alongside the image of a pagan river god.

In separating the image from its divine prototype in this way and emphasizing its status as a physical and fictive object, the works of Vasari, Passignano and the Accademia di San Luca consider a question that was on the minds of reformers and artists alike in the years after the Protestant attacks on images and the decrees of the Council of Trent: could aesthetic experience substitute for religious experience? Put another way, what exactly was the truth value of an artistic fiction?[96] Whereas Paleotti denied art the capacity to portray divine truths, calling for the removal of all fictions, an alternative solution was the defense of artistic fictions in their own right. The artistic image could constitute a category of images distinct from both the false idol and the divine icon.[97]

The latter solution can be found in a poem titled *Del'Eccellenza de la Pittura*, written by the painter Cesare Nebbia, which itself takes on the form of a vision. In 1594, Nebbia sent the poem to Cardinal Federico Borromeo, a leading figure of the Catholic Reformation and a proponent of the reform principles set out by the Council of Trent. The poem describes how Girolamo Muziano, a deceased painter and friend of Nebbia, appears to the artist and praises the role of religious images as aids in the veneration of the divine, stressing their link to God.[98] Through the mouthpiece of Muziano, Nebbia celebrates the importance of art, treating the formation of images as an in-born characteristic of human nature even while acknowledging their fictive nature:

21 Giovanni Battista Crespi, *Virgin Mary with Saints Francis and Carlo Borromeo*, 1610. Turin, Galleria Sabauda

By natural instinct and by hidden light
It is impressed in us to use images
To venerate in a sacred and divine congregation
He who governs, arranges and upholds all things;
Such that fruitless and foolish would be
What man holds as rational

Stoichita (note 5), p. 22, similarly speaks of the "metalingual function" of visionary painting, which refers to a picture's split nature: the vision shown and the physical painting itself. See also Hans Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology", in: *Critical Inquiry*, XXXI (2005), pp. 302–319.

[96] I borrow the elegant formulation of these two questions from Klaus Krüger, *Grazia: Religiöse Erfahrung und ästhetische Evidenz*, Göttingen 2016, pp. 7–26 and 29.

[97] Campbell (note 12), p. 608.

[98] For a discussion of Nebbia's poem and Muziano's involvement in

If in so pious a practice of the sacred rites
We did not behold GOD in the simulacrum.[99]

According to Nebbia, people's natural predisposition to use and think in images is what allows God to be venerated – indeed, to be beheld in the simulacrum.

Nebbia again highlights the fiction of the man-made image when he asks later in his poem:

And what [is there that] the soul of nature does not do
That our beautiful art does not imitate
With such excellence that it almost steals
The prize from the truth, so lifelike its fictional display?[100]

Art complements divine truth, a notion that is made explicit in the twentieth octave, which focuses on the relationship between the sacred event and its artistic representation:

This is well known to those who have seen the holy deeds
Unfolded with paintbrush in graceful color;
And whatever in those [scenes] was not a holy echo
Was the work of the confident and superior painter.[101]

In other words, what is remarkable, is that images are only part "holy echo"; the rest is the work of the masterful artist.

The blank or incomplete canvas next to the apparition of the Virgin and Child in the paintings of Saint Luke can be understood as a symptom of the concern with the relationship between the sacred and its material representation, and in turn with the fictiveness of art as a transmitter of divine truths. Aware of the unruliness of the imagination and the consequences of this potentially threatening and ungovernable aspect of artistic practice, early modern academies of art defended and institutionalized the value of the aesthetic fiction and the imagination as indispensable to the figuration of the invisible God. The artistic image could reveal divine truths under the condition that it was recognized for what it was: a fiction.

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transforming the Compagnia di San Luca into a formal academy, see John Marciari, "Artistic Practice in Late Cinquecento Rome and Girolamo Muziano's Accademia di San Luca", in: *The Accademia Seminars* (note 57), pp. 197–223: 198–200.

[99] "Da naturale instinto, et lume occulto / impresso in noi d'usar l'imagin viene / per venerar nel santo, e divin culto / lui che governa 'l tutto, orma, e mantiene; / tal che ne fora sterile, et inculto / quel che di ragionevol l'huom più tiene, / se col mezo sì pio del rito sacro / non mirassimo DIO nel simolacro" (quoted from Alberto Satolli, "La pittura dell'eccellenza: prolegomeni ad uno studio su Cesare Nebbia nel suo tempo", in: *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Artistico Orvietano*, XXXVI [1980], pp. 17–275: 264). All translations from Nebbia's poem are by Troy Tower. I am grateful to Adriana Savastano for her help with earlier translations.

[100] "Et che cosa non fa l'alma natura / che non l'immiti la bell'arte nostra, / con eccellenza tal, che quasi fura / il pregio al ver, si vivo il finto mostra?" (*ibidem*, p. 268).

[101] "Ben lo san quei ch'i santi fatti han scorti, / spiegati col pennello in color vago; / e quel ch'in lor non fer le note sante, / fe' l'opera del pittor fido, e prestante" (*ibidem*, p. 266).

Abstract

The early modern period saw the rise of a growing anxiety over the imagination of the artist and his problematic status as a mediator of the divine. This is nowhere more evident than in works made for the newly-established artists' academies of Florence and Rome. The works of Giorgio Vasari and Passignano, and the altarpiece often attributed to Raphael that was installed by Federico Zuccaro in the Accademia di San Luca picture the well-known legend of Saint Luke painting the Virgin; yet neither the significance of their new formulation of the legend – portrayed as the artist's vision rather than a portrait sitting – nor the historical circumstances that would account for its collective emergence among painters belonging to Italy's art theoretical and academic milieus have been examined. This essay shows that these works constitute a reflection on the medial nature of the artist's imaginative vision at a moment when Catholic reformers sought to reign in this potentially threatening side of art-making, deemed too important to be entrusted to the ungovernable imagination, or *fantasia*, of the artist. Aware of the unruliness of the imagination, early modern academies of art defended and institutionalized the value of the aesthetic fiction as indispensable to the figuration of the invisible God. The artistic image could reveal divine truths under the condition that it was recognized for what it was: a fiction.

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Umschlagbild | Copertina:

Giorgio Vasari, *Der hl. Lukas malt die Madonna* | *San Luca dipinge la Vergine*
Florenz | Firenze, Santissima Annunziata, Cappella di San Luca
(Detail aus Abb. 1, S. 234 | dettaglio di fig. 1, p. 234)

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