

## Giuseppe Pesci: New Findings on a Little-Known Eighteenth-Century Painter and Draughtsman

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### Abstract

The essay presents new material on the little-known 18th century Roman painter Giuseppe Pesci (or Pesce; b. 1710), almost certainly the son of the more famous Girolamo, who was a pupil of Carlo Maratti and Francesco Trevisani. As from the 1750s, Giuseppe worked in Naples and in 1757 painted a *Madonna and Child* in wax technique for Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of Sansevero, a work that is now in the Sansevero Chapel Museum. His early activity is almost entirely unknown, with the exception of a few paintings

destined for patrons in the Marche region and in particular for San Severino Marche. This study reveals the painter's unexpected expertise in anatomical illustration, as evidenced by the commission from the physician Gaetano Petrioli, who used Pesci's drawings in 1748 and 1750 for his publications dedicated to Bartolomeo Eustachio's famous anatomical plates. In addition, attention is drawn to two autograph drawings by Pesci, now in London, which reveal his skill as a copyist of ancient and modern statues.

## Introduction

[1] Italian painting in the eighteenth century was not only the domain of the most famous masters, who still dominate the historiography on art, but was also generated by a dense network of lesser-known artists and forgotten episodes of art patronage. This article focuses on one of these cases: Giuseppe Pesci (or Pesce; b. 1710, fl. 1740–1765), a painter of Roman origins who was most likely the son of the painter Girolamo Pesci (1679-1759) and who worked in Rome and in the Marche region around Macerata before moving to Naples during the 1750s. A series of hitherto unpublished archival and visual sources shed new light on Pesci's biography and in particular on his activity as a versatile draughtsman.

## The patronage of Raimondo di Sangro

[2] The acquisition of a peculiar painting representing the *Madonna and Child* by the Sansevero Chapel Museum in Naples in 2005 marked, in a certain sense, its return to its place of origin.<sup>1</sup> It is a rare and eloquent work attesting to the context in which it was produced, in particular with regard to the materials used. The painting is on paper (mounted on canvas) and was commissioned by Raimondo di Sangro, seventh Prince of Sansevero (1710–1771), and offered to Charles of Bourbon (1716–1788), King of Naples from 1734, whom Raimondo served as a man at arms and at court. Inscribed on the back of the canvas are the artist's name and the work's date of execution: "GIUSEPPE PESCE ROMANO DIPINSE / NELL'AN[NO] 1757". In addition, there is a dedication to the sovereign in which Raimondo declares himself to be the inventor of tempera-coloured wax painting and presents the *Madonna and Child* as the first demonstration of this technique (Figs. 1-2). Thanks to the inscription, it has been possible to identify this painting as the one that, according to a contemporary source very close to the patron, was kept in the royal apartments and painted "con cere colorate d'una maniera molto più bella di quella già ritrovata dal Conte di Caylus di Parigi".<sup>2</sup> In 1758, just one year later, Raimondo repeated his experiment and commissioned Pesci to paint a *Holy Family* in encaustic according to his own method as a gift for the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780). As recorded in the 1781 inventory of the Belvedere Gallery, Vienna, this second painting, which can no longer be found, also bore the patron's dedication to the sovereign as well as the artist's signature and the date on the back.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fabrizio Masucci, ed., *I nostri omaggi, Principe!*, exh. cat., Naples 2010, cat. no. 6, 34-36. However, at the time the painting was not a new discovery, as it had already been cited in detail by Oderisio de Sangro, *Raimondo de Sangro e la Cappella Sansevero*, Rome 1991, 67-68.

<sup>2</sup> *Breve nota di quel che si vede in casa del Principe di Sansevero D. Raimondo di Sangro nella città di Napoli*, [Naples] 1766, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Chrétien de Mechel, *Catalogue des tableaux de la Galerie impériale et royale de Vienne*, Basel 1784, cat. no. 17, 145.



1 (left) Giuseppe Pesci, *Madonna and Child*, 1757, wax colours on paper mounted on canvas, 780 × 640 mm. Sansevero Chapel Museum, Naples | 2 (right) Dedication inscription on the verso of Fig. 1 (photos: Marco Ghidelli / Archivio Museo Cappella Sansevero, Naples)

[3] The above-mentioned works represent only a very small portion of the many commissions of the Prince of Sansevero, whose personality was animated by multiple interests and talents, notably for the military arts and the sciences. As a patron of the arts, his name is above all linked to the burial chapel of the Sansevero family, the Cappella di Santa Maria della Pietà (also known as *Pietatella*) in the historic centre of Naples, which is known for its impressive collection of marble statues and funerary monuments, including works by some of the greatest Italian sculptors of the eighteenth century, most notably Antonio Corradini (1668–1752), Francesco Queirolo (1704–1762), and Giuseppe Sanmartino (1720–1793), as well as for its complex and interwoven layering of symbolic meanings.<sup>4</sup>

[4] In at least two cases the Prince, who was famously well versed in and passionate about novel artistic devices and methods, made use of Giuseppe Pesci not only to pay homage to sovereigns, but also to make a personal and concrete contribution to the discussion and experimentation then taking place in Europe on the fascinating topic of encaustic painting and its exceptional characteristics. Encaustic had been described and practised by the ancients, and in the eighteenth century interest in this field was fuelled by the discovery of the paintings of Herculaneum and

<sup>4</sup> For modern studies on Raimondo di Sangro and the Sansevero Chapel, in addition to those mentioned in the other notes, see: Marina Picone, *La Cappella Sansevero*, Naples 1959; Rosanna Cioffi, *La Cappella Sansevero. Arte barocca e ideologia massonica*, Salerno 1987, 2nd ed. Salerno 1994; Bruno Crimaldi, ed., *Chartulae desangriane. Il Principe committente*, exh. cat., Naples 2006; Sergio Attanasio, *In casa del Principe di Sansevero. Architettura, invenzioni, inventari*, Naples 2011; *Napoli, la Cappella Sansevero e il Cristo velato / Naples, Sansevero Chapel and the Veiled Christ*, texts by Marco Bussagli, photographs by Carlo Vannini, Bologna 2019; Fabrizio Masucci and Leen Spruit, eds., *Raimondo di Sangro. Cronaca di vita e opere*, Naples 2020; Gianluca Forgione, *I simulacri delle cose. La Cappella Sansevero e il barocco romano*, Turin 2022. For a biographical profile, see Girolamo Imbruglia, "Sangro, Raimondo di", in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 90 (2017), available at [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/raimondo-di-sangro\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/raimondo-di-sangro_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed 4 December 2024).

Pompeii.<sup>5</sup> The reference to the Comte de Caylus (Anne-Claude-Philippe de Thubières, 1692–1765) gives an indication of how up to date and broad Raimondo's knowledge on the matter was, as further testified and corroborated by famous travellers and writers of the time such as the Abbé Jérôme Richard (1720–1788) and the astronomer Joseph-Jérôme Le Français de Lalande (1732–1807).<sup>6</sup>

[5] Giuseppe Pesci was not a leading artist, but was evidently attentive to the instructions of his patron. He is absent from, or barely mentioned, in the art historical literature,<sup>7</sup> and his catalogue is small to this day. We do not know exactly when he moved to Naples, but the few documents about him relate, not surprisingly, almost exclusively to his relationship with Raimondo di Sangro. A receipt dating from early 1760 records a final payment for various commissions with which Pesci was preoccupied up until the end of November 1759, which indicates that the artist must have worked more or less continuously in the service of the Prince. Indeed, subsequent documents concerning this very point bear witness to a dispute between the two in 1763, when Pesci lodged an appeal with the King of Naples, claiming he had not been paid according to the terms of the agreement and thus wished to recover nineteen months' pay at thirty *ducati* each as remuneration for some paintings, pastels, and drawings; however, Raimondo argued that there had never been an agreement on a fixed salary, especially as the painter had also worked for other patrons. The matter was settled amicably, out of court, with a payment of two hundred *ducati* to the plaintiff.<sup>8</sup> According to the inventory of the Prince's possessions drawn up at his death (1771), in the apartment known as "della Fenice" in Palazzo Sansevero there were two paintings attributed to Pesci depicting *Venus*.<sup>9</sup> Documents finally prove that in 1765 Pesci participated in the (now lost) decoration of Palazzo Orsini di Gravina, opposite the Fountain of Monteoliveto.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The subject of encaustic painting, which is only briefly touched on here, is comprehensively discussed with reference to the painting now in the Sansevero Chapel Museum by the art historian Angela Cerasuolo, including the technical and execution aspects. See Angela Cerasuolo, "Raimondo di Sangro e le sperimentazioni sull'encausto in Europa: la *Madonna con Bambino* di Giuseppe Pesce donata a Carlo di Borbone", in: *Polygraphia* 1 (2019), 85-105 (with bibliography).

<sup>6</sup> Jérôme Richard, *Description historique et critique de l'Italie [...]*, vol. 4, Dijon 1766, 199; Joseph-Jérôme Le Français de Lalande, *Voyage d'un François en Italie, fait dans les années 1765 et 1766 [...]*, vol. 6, Yverdon 1769, 244.

<sup>7</sup> See the short entry "Pesci, Giuseppe" in: Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, eds., *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 26 (1932), 462-463.

<sup>8</sup> Eduardo Nappi, *Dai numeri la verità. Nuovi documenti sulla famiglia, i palazzi e la Cappella dei Sansevero*, Naples 2010, 54 and 83-85 (documents 268-271); Cerasuolo (2019), 86, note 3.

<sup>9</sup> Attanasio (2011), 89 and 127, note 4.

<sup>10</sup> Gloria Guida, "Il Palazzo Gravina: nuovi documenti", in: *Istituto Banco di Napoli - Fondazione. Quaderni dell'Archivio storico* 2009–2010 [Naples 2011], 345-380: 366 (document 75). See also: Giovanna Loggia, *Il Palazzo Orsini di Gravina in Napoli*, Naples 1997, 25 and 55. For the Orsini commission in the Neapolitan palace, where even more important artists and decorators such as Francesco De Mura were involved, see Cristiana Parretti, *Il cardinale Domenico Orsini (1719–1789) mecenate tra Roma e Napoli: la sua attività attraverso i documenti d'archivio*, PhD thesis, Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, 2011, URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/2067/2458>.

[6] Pesci was also involved in other public works in Naples that unfortunately have not survived and for which the chronological details are only partly known. Guidebooks of the era attribute to him two overdoors in the church of Santa Maria Donnaregina Nuova, depicting *Christ Driving the Merchants from the Temple* and *Christ Healing the Paralytic at Bethesda*, as well as two oil paintings representing the *Sacrifice of Isaac* and the *Bunch of Grapes from the Promised Land*, which decorated the vaults under the nuns' *coretti* (choir lofts) on either side of the high altar in the church of Santa Chiara.<sup>11</sup> The former have not been found; the latter, which date to 1759,<sup>12</sup> were destroyed in 1943 during the Second World War together with the entire Baroque decoration of Santa Chiara.

## New discoveries shedding light on Pesci's Roman period

[7] In addition to the previously known documents relating to Giuseppe Pesci's activities in Naples mentioned above, this study has also uncovered new information about his early career in Rome. In all likelihood Giuseppe was the son of the more widely known painter Girolamo, who was rediscovered by Robert Enggass in the 1970s. Girolamo Pesci (1679–1759) started out as a student of Carlo Maratti (1625–1713), who taught him drawing and composition, and later became a follower of Francesco Trevisani (1656–1746), who guided him in improving his use of colour. In 1716 he was elected to the Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon. His primary activity was the realization of religious paintings in Rome and Lazio, but also in Piedmont. Thanks to the mediation of his two important masters, he managed to obtain commissions from high-ranking patrons such as the Ottoboni, the Pallavicini, and the Rospigliosi families. He also had a fair amount of success abroad, working for English patrons and collectors.<sup>13</sup>

[8] Girolamo, moreover, was no stranger to Naples, where in fact he also worked for Cardinal Michael Friedrich von Althann (1680/82–1734), Viceroy of Naples from 1722 to 1728, at the time of the Austrian Habsburg government. His paintings were sent to the diocese of Vác in Hungary, where Althann was to move after his Neapolitan tenure: among these, the *Martyrdom of San Gennaro*, signed and dated 1723, stands out, not least because of its expressly Neapolitan subject

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<sup>11</sup> Giuseppe Sigismondo, *Descrizione della città di Napoli e suoi borghi*, 3 vols., Naples: Fratelli Terres, 1788–1789, vol. 1, 132 and 265; Gennaro Aspreno Galante, *Guida sacra della città di Napoli* [1st ed. 1872], ed. Nicola Spinosa, Naples 1985, 74 and 90. See Cerasuolo (2019), 86, note 3.

<sup>12</sup> "1759, 19 gennaio. Il pittore romano Giuseppe Pesce si impegna a dipingere una storia di Giosuè completamente a sue spese per la volta [...] dal lato dell'epistola"; see: Raffaele Mormone, "Il rifacimento settecentesco nella chiesa di Santa Chiara a Napoli", in: *Studi in onore di Riccardo Filangieri*, 3 vols., Naples 1959, vol. 3, 85–103: 103.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Enggass, "Introducing Girolamo Pesci", in: *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), no. 880, 491–501. For a biographical profile and the work of this painter, see: Marina Coccia, "Pesci, Girolamo", in: Giuliano Briganti, ed., *La pittura in Italia. Il Settecento*, 2 vols., Milan 1990, vol. 2, 829–830; Luca Paonessa, "Girolamo Pesci pittore romano (I–III)", in: *Lazio ieri e oggi* 50 (2014), nos. 1–3 (= 590–592), 25–27, 59–61, 92–95; Rita Randolfi, "Aggiunte a Girolamo Pesci", in: *Lazio ieri e oggi* 50 (2014), no. 12 (= 601), 416–419; Rita Randolfi, "Pesci, Girolamo", in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 82 (2015), available at [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/girolamo-pesci\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/girolamo-pesci_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (accessed 4 December 2024).

matter. In 1729, the painter was involved in producing the series of viceroys' portraits that formed the (now lost) decoration of the Viceroys' Hall in the Royal Palace of Naples.<sup>14</sup>

[9] The *Stati delle Anime* registers of eighteenth-century Rome show that Girolamo's son Giuseppe was fifteen years old in 1725 and lived with his parents, two older sisters, and a younger brother near Piazza di Spagna, in the parish of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte.<sup>15</sup> In 1750 he is documented in Strada Frattina (today Via Frattina), close to the Corso, in the parish of San Lorenzo in Lucina, and had himself five children.<sup>16</sup>

[10] The guidebook *Roma antica e moderna* [...] credits Giuseppe with the painting in the vault of the sacristy of the church of Santi Andrea e Claudio (near San Silvestro in Capite); the decoration must have been completed by 1750, when the guidebook was published.<sup>17</sup> The national church of the Burgundians had recently been rebuilt by Antoine Dérizet (1685–1768), an architect from Lyons, and was dedicated to the apostle Andrew (d. 60) and Saint Claudius (c. 606 – 696 or 699), patron saints of the County of Burgundy. The fresco painting in the vault of the sacristy depicts the cross of Saint Andrew bearing the coat of arms of the House of Burgundy, with angels carrying the mitre and crosier of Saint Claudius (who was bishop of Besançon) – an explicit reference to the foreign community that administered the church and its patron saints.<sup>18</sup>

[11] A number of sources attest to Giuseppe Pesci's activity as a portrait painter. On March 19, 1750, the feast of Saint Joseph, "un Ritratto di Levantino dipinto da Giuseppe Pesci" was displayed in the exhibition of the Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon, among the paintings belonging to a certain Enrico Marini.<sup>19</sup> While this documented work can no longer be traced, another portrait

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<sup>14</sup> Ilaria Telesca, *I viceré austriaci. Esibizione del potere tra committenza e collezionismo a Napoli (1707–1734)*, Rome 2023, 98–99 and 139–146.

<sup>15</sup> Antonella Pampalone, "Parrocchia di Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. Rione Colonna", in: Elisa Debenedetti, ed., *Artisti e artigiani a Roma*, vol. 1: *dagli Stati delle Anime del 1700, 1725, 1750, 1775*, Rome 2004, 11–126: 44.

<sup>16</sup> Antonella Pampalone, "Parrocchia di San Lorenzo in Lucina. Rione Colonna", in: Elisa Debenedetti, ed., *Artisti e artigiani a Roma*, vol. 3: *dagli Stati delle Anime del 1700, 1725, 1750, 1775*, Rome 2013, 157–276: 202 and 256, note 658.

<sup>17</sup> *Roma antica e moderna, o sia nuova descrizione di tutti gl'edificj antichi e moderni, tanto sagri quanto profani, della città di Roma [...], dedicata all'eminetissimo e reverendissimo principe il signor cardinale Silvio Valenti, segretario di Stato della medesima Santità Sua [Benedetto XIV] e camerlengo di Santa Chiesa*, 3 vols., Rome: Gregorio Roisecco, 1750, vol. 2, 257. The work is not mentioned in the previous edition a few years earlier: *Roma antica e moderna, o sia nuova descrizione della moderna città di Roma, e di tutti gli edificj notabili, che sono in essa, e delle cose più celebri, che erano nella antica Roma [...], dedicata all'eminetissimo e reverendissimo principe il signor cardinale Alessandro Albani, diacono di S. Maria ad Martyres*, 3 vols., Rome: Gregorio Roisecco, 1745, vol. 2, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Angelandreina Rorro, in: *Roma sacra. Guida alle chiese della Città Eterna*, under the scientific direction of Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma, vols. 1–34, Rome 1995–2005 and ongoing, here vol. 5: *Santi Andrea e Claudio dei Borgognoni, San Silvestro in Capite, Sant'Andrea delle Fratte [...]*, ed. Bruno Contardi, Rome 1996, 9 (where, however, the painting is attributed to Girolamo). Since the end of the 19th century, this church has been officiated by the so-called Padri Sacramentini of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

<sup>19</sup> Halina Waga, *Vita nota e ignota dei Virtuosi al Pantheon. Contributi alla storia della Pontificia Accademia Artistica dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, Rome 1992, 272.



signed by Giuseppe Pesci was recently sold on the French art market. As evidenced by an inscription on the back of the canvas, it represents a certain Francesco Gioacchino Durandi and was painted in Rome in April 1753 (Figs. 3-4).<sup>20</sup>



3 (left) Giuseppe Pesci, portrait of *Francesco Gioacchino Durandi*, 1753, oil on canvas, 440 × 345 mm. Sold at auction in 2023 | 4 (right) Inscription on the verso of Fig. 3 (photos: Metayer-Mermoz auction house, Nevers)

[12] Additionally, two little-known drawings, now in London, can presumably be attributed to Giuseppe Pesci's Roman period. Both are in red chalk and bear the inscription "Giuseppe Pesce" in the same eighteenth-century hand. Each is a copy of a famous statue, one ancient and one modern. These drawings have roughly the same dimensions and are very similar in their execution, and they were perhaps also made for a similar purpose. It is quite possible that further examples by the same artist can be found in the holdings of other museums and private collections.

[13] One of the drawings, now in the art collections of University College London (Fig. 5), depicts the statue formerly known as the *Belvedere Antinous*, which was later identified by Ennio Quirino Visconti as the god Hermes (Vatican Museums, inv. M.V. 907.0.0.). This sculpture is now believed to be a Roman copy from the Hadrianic age of a lost bronze original from the school of Praxiteles.

<sup>20</sup> Sold at Metayer-Mermoz in Nevers, September 24, 2023, [lot no. 480](#). The inscription on the back, accompanied by the family coat of arms, reads: "RITRATTO VERO DI FRAN.<sup>CO</sup> GIOACHINO DURANDI DI BED.<sup>NO</sup> FATTO IN ROMA DA GIUSEPPE PESCE L'AN.<sup>O</sup> 1753 M. APR.".



5 Giuseppe Pesci, copy of *Belvedere Hermes*, formerly *Belvedere Antinous*, red chalk on paper, 525 × 338 mm. University College London Art Museum, London, inv. no. LDUCS-4725 (photo: UCL Art Museum, University College London)

Highly acclaimed and much drawn by artists, this statue was reproduced in major anthologies and distributed in copies both in Rome and throughout Europe. Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, many commentators extolled this male nude as one of the most beautiful and perfectly proportioned antique statues of the ideal human body.<sup>21</sup> The drawing under discussion was part of an album from the collection of George Grote (1794–1871), which his widow donated in 1872 to University College London, where Grote, the famous scholar of ancient Greece, served as a member of the founding council.<sup>22</sup> The diligent nature of the copy seems to suggest that it had an essentially practical function, for study or perhaps connected with an academic qualification.<sup>23</sup> The draughtsman's name can be found in the lower right-hand corner on the front of the sheet.

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<sup>21</sup> Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900*, New Haven/London 1981, 141–143.

<sup>22</sup> The most relevant album prints and drawings were catalogued in *Select List and Outline Inventory of the Prints and Drawings in the Possession of University College London*, compiled by A. M. Hind, London 1930. For the drawing examined here, see the catalogue *Origin and Originality. Copied Drawings from the Grote Collection*, exh. cat., London 1994, inv. no. 4725 (Grote Collection, cat. no. 1755.127); see also UCL collections online: <https://collections.ucl.ac.uk/Details/collect/20001776> (accessed 4 December 2024).

<sup>23</sup> There are other similar drawings in this collection: e.g., a copy of the *Apollo Belvedere* (Vatican Museums), similar to the *Antinous-Hermes*, and a copy of the *Borghese Gladiator* (Musée du Louvre), where, however, the chalk appears lighter. See, respectively, *Origin and Originality* (1994), inv. no. 4723 (Grote Collection, cat. no. 1755.126) and inv. no. 4726 (Grote Collection, cat. no. 1755.128).



[14] The other drawing, now in the British Museum (Fig. 6), is a copy of the statue of *Saint Bibiana* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680; Rome, Church of Santa Bibiana).<sup>24</sup> The draughtsman's name can be found in the bottom right-hand corner on the back of the sheet. Again, the diligent nature of the replica would suggest a purpose comparable to that posited for the previous sheet. This time the copyist had to deal with the naturalistic and dramatic complexity of Bernini's marble draperies, which are a particularly prominent feature of the statue of *Santa Bibiana*, carved in 1624–1626, given that this was the first work in which the sculptor took on the challenge of rendering such a large-scale, fully draped figure for a church altar.<sup>25</sup>



6 Giuseppe Pesci, *Santa Bibiana*, copy after the high altar sculpture by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in Santa Bibiana, Rome, red chalk on paper, 498 × 342 mm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1993,0619.10 (photo: The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

<sup>24</sup> See Nicholas Turner, with the assistance of Rhoda Eitel-Porter, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Roman Baroque Drawings, c. 1620 to c. 1700, Catalogue*, 2 vols., London 1999, cat. no. 376, vol. 1, 233: "Copy after Bernini's high-altar sculpture in S. Bibiana, Rome, by the Roman artist Giuseppe Pesci (fl. 1754–1757)". The drawing was purchased from Malcolm Brownjohn, who sold prints and drawings to the Museum in 1993; see also BM collections on-line: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1993-0619-10](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1993-0619-10) (accessed 4 December 2024).

<sup>25</sup> On the Santa Bibiana see Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, London 1955, cat. no. 20, 186–187; Hans Kauffmann, *Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini. Die figürlichen Kompositionen*, Berlin 1970, 78–84; Sandra Vasco Rocca, *Santa Bibiana*, Rome 1983, 97–100; Philippe Malgouyres, "Gian Lorenzo Bernini en trois épisodes", in: Louis Frank and Philippe Malgouyres, eds., *La fabrique des saintes images: Rome-Paris 1580–1660*, exh. cat., Paris 2015, 126–140: 126–128; Andrea Bacchi and Anna Coliva, eds., *Bernini*, exh. cat., Rome 2017, cat. no. V.5, 184–189 (entry by Andrea Bacchi).

There is moreover an interesting detail in the copy when we compare it with the original. In the drawing, the figure appears with a crowned head, which is not the case in the statue, nor in its printed reproductions such as those published in *La vita di S. Bibiana vergine e martire romana* (Rome 1627) by Domenico Fedini or in the *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne* (Rome 1704) annotated by Paolo Alessandro Maffei and edited by Domenico de' Rossi. Modern studies do not mention this detail either. The iconographic attributes of Bernini's saint are the column at which she was scourged, the medicinal herb bush (carved in marble), and the palm of martyrdom (made of gilded lead). At the time when Pesci copied it, presumably for devotional reasons, the statue must also have been fitted with a crown, probably of metal, according to a custom that has not survived to the present day. This, moreover, is confirmed by a later visual piece of evidence: in the canvas depicting the *Sermon at Santa Bibiana* by François Marius Granet (1775–1849; recently acquired by the Dallas Museum of Art, [inv. no. 2019.35](#)), painted between 1802 and 1824 or 1835, the statue is also shown wearing a crown.<sup>26</sup>

[15] Another, even more significant observation may be briefly advanced. The *Santa Bibiana* has a reputation as a masterpiece of Baroque art. Livio Pestilli has recently identified various examples of how admiration for the statue continued despite the rise of Neoclassical taste and persisted well into the eighteenth century. There are documents proving that the French Academy in Rome asked several times for copies and casts of the *Santa Bibiana* to be made for teaching purposes. The Accademia di San Luca, in turn, chose Bernini's statues on several occasions as the subject for the drawings in its competitions for aspiring academicians; furthermore, in 1775, the *Santa Bibiana* was the sculpture of which the students were to make a model.<sup>27</sup> We do not know on what occasion or for what precise reason Pesci made his copy, but perhaps it is partly explained by the renewed appreciation of the work of the great Roman Baroque sculptor during the eighteenth century, perhaps in connection with the art academies.

## Anatomical illustrations for Gaetano Petrioli

[16] Owing to another engagement in which Giuseppe Pesci was involved in Rome, a further new group of works can now be added to his oeuvre. In this instance the assignment was given to Pesci by Gaetano Petrioli in 1740 or shortly before. His task was to draw eight anatomical images that would later illustrate a work by Petrioli on anatomy. This was the outcome of a long series of investigations and publications (to be summarised below). The circumstances under which Pesci was engaged are not precisely known, but he was presumably able to rely on the distinguished circle of contacts he had inherited from his father Girolamo.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Grazia Chilosì, "Considerazioni a margine del restauro", in: *Bollettino d'Arte* 102 (2017), nos. 35-36, 205-246: 213, fig. 23, 215.

<sup>27</sup> Livio Pestilli, *Bernini and His World. Sculpture and Sculptors in Early Modern Rome*, London 2022, 156-166. On this subject, see also: Livio Pestilli, "On Bernini's Reputed Unpopularity in Late Baroque Rome", in: *Artibus et Historiae* 32 (2011), no. 63, 119-142; Andrea Bacchi and Anne-Lise Desmas, "La fortuna di Bernini nella scultura del Settecento", in: Andrea Bacchi and Anna Coliva, eds., *Bernini*, exh. cat., Rome 2017, 333-348.

[17] The Roman Gaetano Petrioli (fl. 1720–1760) was surgeon to the King of Sardinia, Carlo Emanuele III di Savoia (1701–1773), and as an Arcadian (a member of the Accademia dell'Arcadia, founded in Rome in 1690) he went by the name of Erasistrato Coo. To art historians he is mainly known for his *Tabulae anatomicae*, published in Rome in 1741, with illustrations from drawings by Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669) dating to more than a century earlier.<sup>28</sup> The twenty anatomy studies, which have been attributed to Cortona since the eighteenth century and which belonged to the collection of William Hunter (1718–1783), the first professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy in London, are now kept in the Glasgow University Library.<sup>29</sup> They were drawn by the young Cortona in 1618, according to the date visible on the first of the plates in some of the exemplars of Petrioli's work; however, we do not know for sure who originally commissioned the sheets.<sup>30</sup>

[18] The depiction of the human body in the Early Modern age has of course not only attracted the interest of art and book historians, but also of scholars of the history of medicine and philosophy, and, as such, it is a highly interdisciplinary object of research. Studies on the subject, which often begin with Leonardo, have flourished especially in English-language literature.<sup>31</sup> For

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<sup>28</sup> *Tabulae anatomicae, a celeberrimo pictore Petro Berrettino Cortonensi delineate, & egregiè aeri incisae nunc primum prodeunt, et a Cajetano Petrioli Romano doctore, regis Sardiniae chirurgo, publico anatomico, & inter Arcades Erasistrato Coo notis illustratae*, Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1741.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Kemp, "Dr William Hunter on the Windsor Leonardos and His Volume of Drawings Attributed to Pietro da Cortona", in: *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), no. 876, 144–148: 144 and 146–148. On the collection, see also Peter Black, ed., *"My Highest Pleasures". William Hunter's Art Collection*, exh. cat., London 2007.

<sup>30</sup> The engraver has usually been identified as Luca Ciamberlano (fl. 1599–1641) due to the presence of the monogram LC in two plates. Cortonian illustrations are generally treated in all studies on anatomical illustration, so see also the bibliographic references mentioned in note 31. The plates in the modern edition are reproduced in *The Anatomical Plates of Pietro da Cortona. 27 Baroque Masterpieces*, New York 1986. For this work of Cortona in studies on the artist, see above all: Lüdike Duhme, *Die Tabulae Anatomicae des Pietro Berrettini da Cortona*, Cologne 1980; Jörg Martin Merz, *Pietro da Cortona. Der Aufstieg zum führendem Maler im barocken Rom*, Tübingen 1991, figs. 14–51, 25–35; Jörg Martin Merz, "Cortona giovane", in: Anna Lo Bianco, ed., *Pietro da Cortona, 1597–1669*, exh. cat., Milan 1997, 55–66: 57–59; Ioana Măgureanu, "Questions of Authorship and Authority in Some Early Modern Anatomical Images: the Tabulae Anatomicae of Pietro da Cortona", in: *New Europe College "Ștefan Odobleja" Program Yearbook 2013–2014*, 251–292; Monique Kornell, ed., *Flesh and Bones. The Art of Anatomy*, Los Angeles 2022, cat. no. 14, 122–123. Finally, see: Jörg Martin Merz, *Pietro da Cortona's Drawings – Catalogue Raisonné*, chapter 4, cat. nos. 9–27 (forthcoming).

<sup>31</sup> It is impossible to offer an exhaustive bibliography on the subject. In addition to the studies mentioned in the other notes, one can cite: Richard N. Wegner, *Das Anatomenbildnis: seine Entwicklung im Zusammenhang mit der anatomischen Abbildung*, Basel 1939; Roberto Ciardi, ed., *L'anatomia e il corpo umano*, Milan 1981; Alpheus Hyatt Mayor, *Artists & Anatomists*, New York 1984; Plant, *Animal & Anatomical Illustration in Art & Science. A Bibliographical Guide from the 16th Century to the Present Day*, compiled by Gavin D. R. Bridson and James J. White, Detroit, MI 1990, 201–262; K. B. Roberts and J. D. W. Tomlinson, *The Fabric of the Body. European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration*, Oxford 1992; Martin Kemp, "'The Mark of Truth': Looking and Learning in Some Anatomical Illustrations from the Renaissance and Eighteenth Century", in: W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, eds., *Medicine and the Five Senses*, Cambridge, UK 1993, 85–121; Harald Moe, *Den anatomiske billedkunst i Renaessancen og Barokken*, Copenhagen 1993;

art historians, it is evident that this topic has the potential to set in motion manifold lines of inquiry. These include, for example, the way in which artists drew from the representation of the body in antiquity; the study of human proportions and the harmony of its structure and parts; inquiries into perspective or physiognomy; the practice of drawing from nude models as it took place in artists' ateliers and, especially, in the official context of academies for training young artists, and so on. Although Cortona's name in relation to Petrioli has understandably monopolised the curiosity of scholars undertaking in-depth studies, there is a later case study related to the same physician that has remained virtually unmentioned and which, although of a lower profile, merits attention.

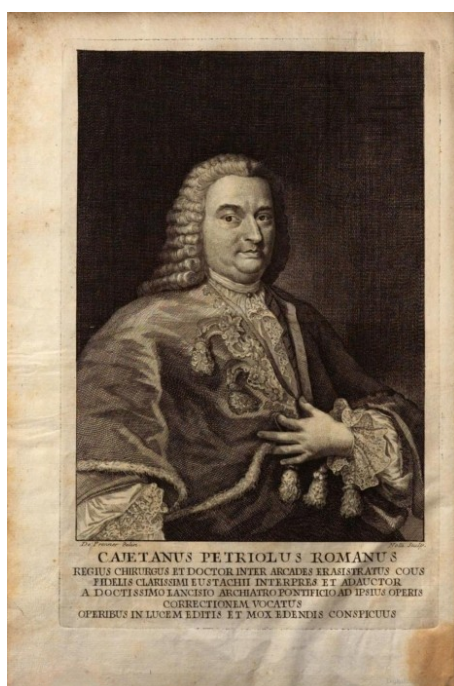
[19] This case study examines the complex history of the anatomical plates associated with the famous sixteenth-century physician Bartolomeo Eustachio (c. 1500–1574). Eustachio, born in San Severino Marche, became a lecturer in anatomy at the Sapienza University in Rome. His life was marked by the controversial rivalry he maintained with his contemporary Andrea Vesalius (1514–1564), the author of *De humani corporis fabrica* (Venice 1543), a landmark publication in modern anatomical science. Likewise, Eustachio is considered one of the founders of this field and would have received even more recognition if he had been more fortunate. From around 1552, he had forty-six large plates engraved on copper for his treatise *De dissensionibus et controversiis anatomicis*, a compendium of the knowledge he had gained both through study of the ancient authors and through the numerous autopsies he had carried out on human cadavers. However, after Eustachio's death in 1574, his treatise never went to print, and the plates were thought to have been lost. Later, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, most of them resurfaced and achieved a remarkable publishing success.<sup>32</sup> The discussion about the artists of the anatomical drawings has not yet been settled: the names of great artists such as Giulio Romano (c. 1492/99–1546) and even Titian (c. 1488/90–1576) were speculatively attached to the drawings for these plates. However, the present contribution is only concerned with the art historical aspects of that endeavour related to the painter under discussion here.

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*The Ingenious Machine of Nature. Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy*, exh. cat., Ottawa 1996; Dominique de Montmollin, ed., *L'illustration anatomique de la Renaissance au siècle des Lumières*, exh. cat., Neuchâtel 1998; Boris Röhrli, *History and Bibliography of Artistic Anatomy. Didactics for Depicting the Human Figure*, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York 2000; Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, *Spectacular Bodies. The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now*, exh. cat., London 2000; Ralf Vollmuth, *Das anatomische Zeitalter: die Anatomie der Renaissance von Leonardo da Vinci bis Andreas Vesal*, Munich 2004; Fulvio Simoni, ed., *Rappresentare il corpo. Arte e anatomia da Leonardo all'Illuminismo*, exh. cat., Bologna 2004; Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael Ackerman and Judith Folkenberg, *Human Anatomy. Depicting the Body from the Renaissance to Today*, London 2006; Morwena Joly, *La leçon d'anatomie. Les corps des artistes de la Renaissance au Romantisme*, Paris 2008; Monique Kornell, ed., *Flesh and Bones. The Art of Anatomy*, Los Angeles 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Eustachio's plates are also a landmark in this field; see the bibliography cited in the previous notes. For specific accounts, see: Adalberto Pazzini, "Introduzione e commento", in: *Le tavole anatomiche di Bartolomeo Eustachio*, Rome 1944, 11-32 (with bibliography); Oreste Ruggeri, "Le illustrazioni anatomiche di Bartolomeo Eustachio", in: *Bartolomeo Eustachio, 1574–1974*, San Severino Marche 1974, 73-126. For a summary, see Stefania Fortuna, "Le tabulae anatomicae di Bartolomeo Eustachio", in: *Medicina e Chirurgia. Quaderni delle conferenze permanenti delle Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia* 64 (2014), 2913-2916.

[20] In 1740 Petrioli published his *Riflessioni anatomiche* dedicated to Cardinal Pier Luigi Carafa (1677–1755).<sup>33</sup> The author – whose portrait appears next to the title page (Fig. 7)<sup>34</sup> – recalled in his dedication that he had devoted himself to this work by following in the footsteps of the renowned Roman physician and papal archiater Giovanni Maria Lancisi (1654–1720). The latter had commented on and published Eustachio's plates in 1714, after having found them in Urbino and after they had been purchased by Pope Clement XI Albani (1649–1721).<sup>35</sup>



7 Anton Joseph von Prenner (or Georg Kaspar von Prenner) and Carlo Nolli, *Portrait of Gaetano Petrioli*, in: Petrioli 1740 (note 33), n.p. (photo: Google Books, copy held by Biblioteca Statale di Cremona)

However, Eustachio's copper plate series was incomplete. In fact, the first eight engravings in Lancisi's edition, in quarto, had already appeared in Eustachio's *Opuscula anatomica* (Venice 1564), which was mainly concerned with renal anatomy. According to Petrioli, Lancisi had become dissatisfied with his own work and, busy with other matters, had entrusted to him the task of revising, amending and supplementing the notes. Lancisi died in 1720. Twenty years later, Petrioli

<sup>33</sup> *Riflessioni anatomiche sulle note di monsignor Giovanni Maria Lancisi fatte sopra le tavole del celebre Bartolomeo Eustachio, coll'aggiunta di molte cose omesse nelle sudette note, oltre quelle, che si riferiscano in fine, per miglior dilucidazione di dette tavole. Di Gaetano Petrioli romano, dottore e chirurgo di Sua Maestà il Re di Sardegna, e fra gli Arcadi Erasistrato Coo, colla Vita esatta del medesimo Eustachio, non prima d'ora da altro Autore data alla luce, unita alli di lui Opuscoli De Renibus [...], Rome: Giovanni Zempel, 1740.*

<sup>34</sup> The portrait bears these signatures: "De Prenner delin.", "Nolli sculp."

<sup>35</sup> *Tabulae anatomicae clarissimi viri Bartholomaei Eustachi quas è tenebris tandem vindicatas et Sanctissimi Domini Clementis XI Pont. Max. munificentia dono acceptas praefatione, notisque illustravit, ac ipso suae Bibliothecae dedicationis die publici juris fecit Jo. Maria Lancisius intimus cubicularius, & archiater pontificius, Rome: Francesco Gonzaga, 1714.*

felt particularly indebted to Cardinal Carafa, who had given him the original Eustachio copper plates. Prior to that, the copper plates had been kept in the library set up by Lancisi at the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia. Thus, the plates were published in 1740, accompanied by inscriptions identifying them as originals by Eustachio donated by Carafa to Petrioli. (Although the title page of the book bears the date 1740, some of the inscriptions are dated 1741.)

[21] In 1742 Petrioli published the *Corso anatomico, o sia universal commento*, again based on the Eustachio plates, albeit without illustrations, and this time dedicated to Cardinal Annibale Albani (1682–1751) (Fig. 8).<sup>36</sup> In the preface, the author set out in new detail the motivations and the methods of his investigation by which he had extended his knowledge and acquired his expertise. In this regard, it is significant that eight of Eustachio's anatomical illustrations (perhaps the first eight) were never found and remained shrouded in mystery. Asserting that after extensive laborious research he had attained an idea of what was contained in the eight lost plates, Petrioli wrote: "onde non risparmiando né fatica, né spesa, ho già fatto delineare per mano di valente Pittore Giuseppe Pesce Romano, quanto a mio parere in quei sudetti rami smarriti si conteneva, e che dall'opere medesime dell'Eustachio ne' suoi rami aver egli delineato, chiaramente mi persuasi".<sup>37</sup> However, the eight new engravings by Pesci that would complete the visualisation of Eustachio's lesson were not included in the *Corso anatomico*, but only published in 1748, in Petrioli's subsequent volume *Anatomicae tabulae octo* (Fig. 9): it contains the series of eight anatomical representations, on the first of which can be found the name of the draughtsman with the date, alongside that of the engraver: "Gios. Pesci dise. an. 1740", "Bald. Gabbuggiani sculp." (Figs. 10-17).<sup>38</sup>

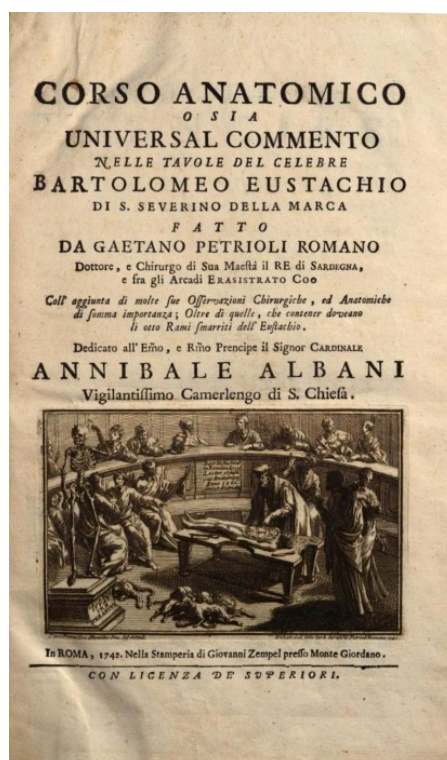
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<sup>36</sup> *Corso anatomico o sia universal commento nelle tavole del celebre Bartolomeo Eustachio di S. Severino della Marca fatto da Gaetano Petrioli romano dottore, e chirurgo di Sua Maestà il Re di Sardegna, e fra gli Arcadi Erasitrato Coo, coll'aggiunta di molte sue osservazioni chirurgiche, ed anatomiche di somma importanza; oltre di quelle, che contener doveano li otto Rami smarriti dell'Eustachio [...]*, Rome: Giovanni Zempel, 1742.

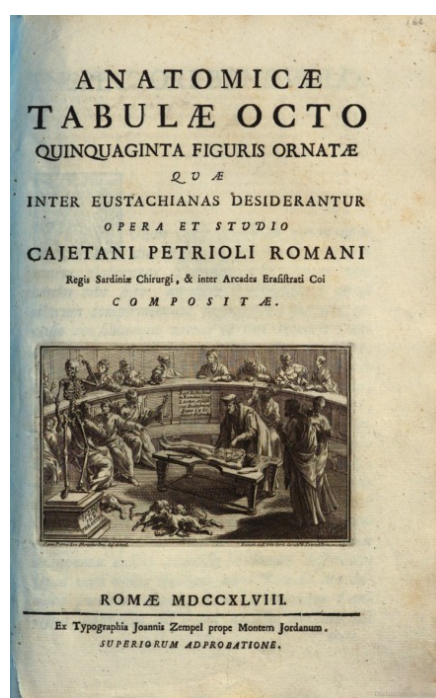
<sup>37</sup> The quotation is from the preface to the reader in Petrioli (1742).

<sup>38</sup> *Anatomicae tabulae octo quinquaginta figuris ornatae quae inter Eustachianas desiderantur opera et studio Cajetani Petrioli Romani Regis Sardiniae chirurgi, & inter Arcades Erasistrati Coi compositae*, Rome: Giovanni Zempel, 1748.

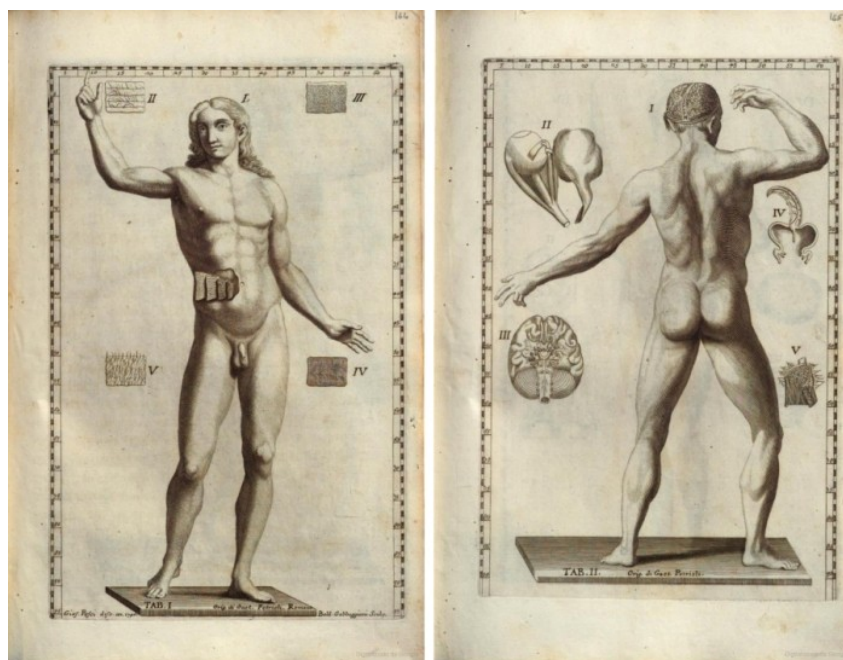




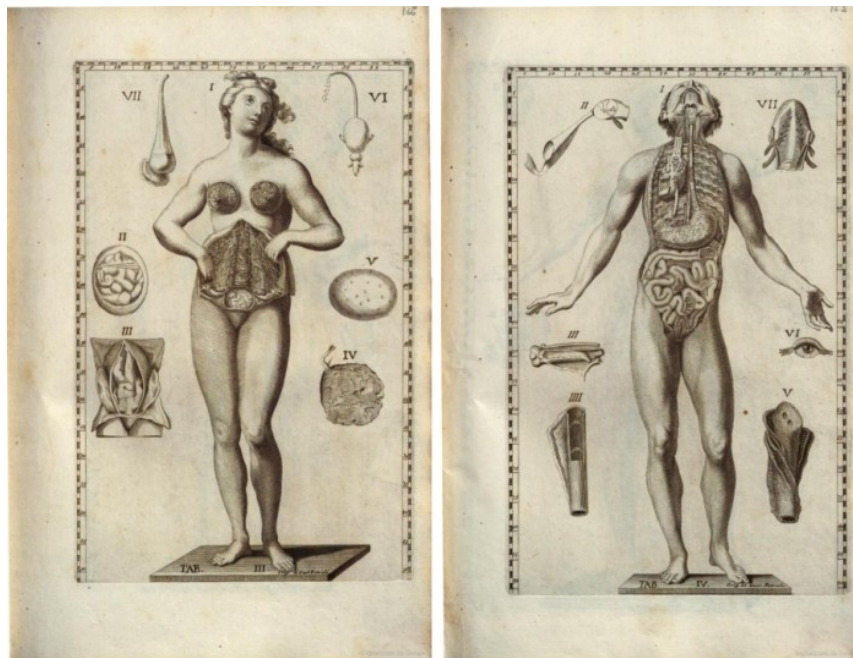
8 Frontispiece of Petrioli 1742 (note 36) (photo: Google Books, copy held by the Library of Cremona)



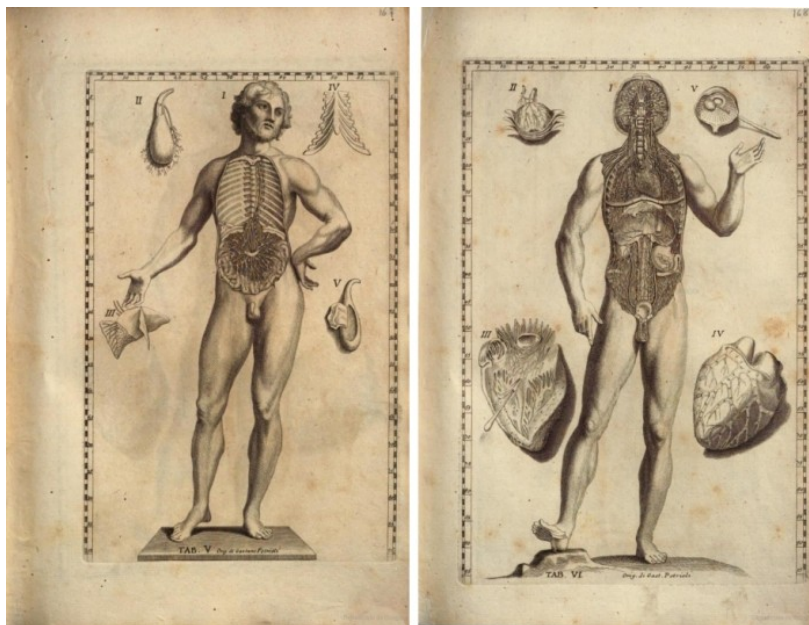
9 Frontispiece of Petrioli 1748 (note 38) (photo: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)



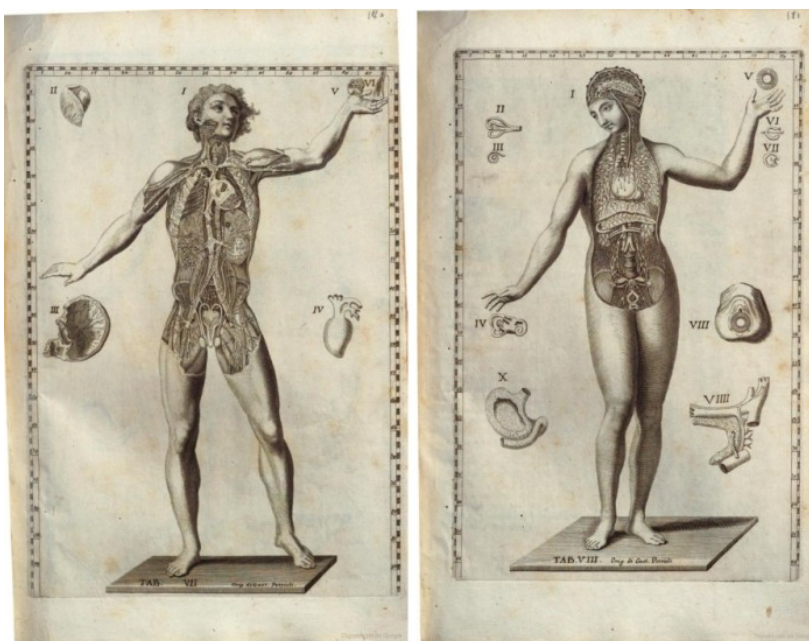
10-11 Giuseppe Pesci and Baldassare Gabbuggiani, anatomical plates, in: Petrioli 1748 (note 38)  
(photos: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)



12-13 Giuseppe Pesci and Baldassare Gabbuggiani, anatomical plates, in: Petrioli 1748 (note 38)  
(photos: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)



14-15 Giuseppe Pesci and Baldassare Gabbuggiani, anatomical plates, in: Petrioli 1748 (note 38)  
(photos: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)



16-17 Giuseppe Pesci and Baldassare Gabbuggiani, anatomical plates, in: Petrioli 1748 (note 38)  
(photos: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)



[22] The same plates appeared in the next edition of the volume *Le otto tavole anatomiche*, which Petrioli dedicated to Cardinal Giovan Battista Mesmer (1671–1760) in 1750 (Fig. 18).<sup>39</sup> These images are accompanied by inscriptions in which the Roman physician claimed the originality of the contents for himself. As already mentioned, however, there is no intention in this essay (nor can it rely on the necessary expertise) to assess the scientific merit or to reveal the possible arbitrariness of Petrioli's discoveries and choices, which others have already subjected to historical analysis.<sup>40</sup>



18 Frontispiece of Petrioli 1750 (note 39) (photo: Google Books, copy held by the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome)

[23] In the mid-nineteenth century, the German physician and medical historian Ludwig Choulant (1791–1861) credited the drawings for *Le otto tavole anatomiche* to "Giovanni" rather than to Giuseppe Pesci, leaving the comment: "They [Petrioli's eight plates] are in folio and were drawn by Giovanni [sic] Pesci and engraved by Bald. Gabuggiani [sic]. They have no anatomical value but the main figures are well drawn and very carefully engraved."<sup>41</sup> Choulant's words are of interest because they invoke one of the major issues for those who study the iconography of anatomy.

<sup>39</sup> *Le otto tavole anatomiche con cinquanta figure in foglio delineate per compimento dell'opera sublime, et imperfetta del celebre Bartolomeo Eustachio di S. Severino della Marca composte con sommo studio, e fatica da Gaetano Petrioli romano chirurgo della Maestà sarda e fra gli arcadi Erasistrato Coo illustrate da medesimo Autore di note, non pria d'ora date alla luce [...]*, Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1750.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Pazzini (1944), 20, note 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Choulant, *History and Bibliography of Anatomic Illustration*, translated and annotated by Mortimer Frank, New York 1945 [original edition in German: Leipzig 1852], 203. See also Măgureanu (2013–2014), 290, note 44, where the incorrect "Giovanni Pesci" is used again.

This issue concerns the distinction between the scientific value of anatomical depictions and their formal quality. In the middle of the last century, the medical historian Loris Premuda (1917–2012) argued otherwise for Eustachio's original plates when describing them as undoubtedly superior from a scientific point of view than an artistic one.<sup>42</sup> In more recent times, in a study informed by a broader and more complex understanding of the concept of 'style' in the processes of image communication and perception and significantly titled "Style and Non-Style in Anatomical Illustration", the art historian Martin Kemp has investigated from this perspective a number of sources and episodes ranging from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and from the pioneers in this field in the Renaissance to *Gray's Anatomy* (1st ed. 1858).<sup>43</sup> There has been a more or less ongoing conflict between the needs of the anatomist and the sensibility of the artist when it comes to questions about how to conceive and describe figures; the former's need for precision and functionality often clashes with the latter's inclination towards elegance and artifice. However, while this separation is not rigid, it is often problematic and should be studied on a case-by-case basis.

[24] Setting aside their degree of scientific validity, we can say that the anatomical drawings by Pesci take their cue from sixteenth-century prototypes – as was the case for Cortona, the model Petrioli was clearly familiar with – but that they are more sober and lack the muscular tension and dramatic gesturing that sometimes animate the attitude of the figures and the overall scenes in the earlier examples. Moreover, in the construction and articulation of the bodies and in their proportional and compositional balance, Pesci's figures (Figs. 10-17), six male and two female, clearly display the influence of ancient (and Renaissance) statuary. For his part, Baldassare Gabbuggiani (1689–doc. 1750), an engraver of Genoese or Florentine origin who was active mainly in Rome in the mid-eighteenth century, carried out the engraving in an accomplished manner.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, Petrioli's project appears, in its own distinctive way, to belong to the humanist tradition and to exhibit a classicising tendency.

[25] As mentioned previously, the connections between anatomical illustration, the study especially of ancient statues, and training methods in the academies of painting and sculpture have been extensively studied. One work exemplifying these connections is the *Anatomia per uso et intelligenza del disegno*, which was intended for use in the French Academy in Rome, prepared by the physician Bernardino Genga (1620–1690) and furnished with an explanatory text by Lancisi in 1691.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Pesci's ability as a copyist of antiquities and as an anatomical draughtsman confirms this fusion of artistic proficiencies.

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<sup>42</sup> Loris Premuda, *Storia dell'iconografia anatomica*, Milan 1957, 139-140.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Kemp, "Style and Non-Style in Anatomical Illustration: From Renaissance Humanism to Henry Gray", in: *Journal of Anatomy* 216 (2010), no. 2, 192-208.

<sup>44</sup> See Rosetta Pizzo, in: *Dizionario enciclopedico dei pittori e degli incisori italiani, dall'XI al XX secolo*, 11 vols., Milan [first ed. 1974–1976], reprint 1981, vol. 5, 180-181; Giorgio Milesi, *Dizionario degli incisori*, Clusone 1982, 104.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Adriano Aymonino, "'Nature Perfected': The Theory & Practice of Drawing after the Antique", in: Adriano Aymonino and Anne Varick Lauder, eds., *Drawn from the Antique. Artists & the Classical Ideal*, exh. cat., London 2015, 15-77: 46-52.

## Pesci at San Severino Marche

[26] A short time later Giuseppe Pesci was engaged at San Severino Marche (Province of Macerata) in the creation of the altarpiece for the Duomo (today the Old Cathedral), as recorded by local eighteenth and nineteenth century sources. The work formed part of the renovations dated to 1741 and promoted by Bishop Dionigi Pieragostini (bishop 1732–1745) from Camerino, a member of the Congregazione dell'Oratorio, who, as a local historian reported, "con vaga moderna architettura, ha riabbellita la Cathedrale, e vi ha collocato un quadro con tutti i Santi, e Beati concittadini, opera degna del pennello del signor Giuseppe Pesci Romano".<sup>46</sup> These renovations were promptly recorded by Bernardo Gentili of Rovellone (fl. 1740s), a patrician and historian from San Severino and an Oratorian priest of San Girolamo della Carità in Rome. This is highly interesting because Gentili also wrote the biography of his illustrious countryman Bartolomeo Eustachio, which first appeared in the above-mentioned volume by Petrioli of 1740. This all suggests that Petrioli, perhaps with the mediation of a local intermediary (Gentili?), put the artist's name forward for the work in San Severino Marche.

[27] Framed by stucco ornament by the Roman decorator Paolo Campana (doc. 1738–1742), the altarpiece in the Old Cathedral of San Severino Marche, painted in 1741 or 1742 (Fig. 19), reflects the customs of local worship: it depicts the *Madonna and Child* with eleven figures of saints and blessed, with saint Bishop Severino (d. 545) in the foreground. The group includes the saints Giustino (d. c. 165), Ippolito (d. 235), Vittorino eremita (d. 538), Filomena (fl. c. 540), Illuminato (d. c. 1280), and Margherita da Cesolo (d. 1395), as well as the blessed Bentivoglio de Bonis (d. 1232), Marsilia Pupelli (d. 1298), Camilla Gentili (d. 1486), and Marchesina Luzi (d. 1510). The painting's rich composition appears to be one of the last echoes of Maratti's example in the Marche region during the mid-eighteenth century; its style, as expressed in the drapery, seems reminiscent of that of the painter's father Girolamo in some of his altarpieces.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Dissertazione sopra le antichità di Settempeda, ovvero Sanseverino del P. Bernardo Gentili patrizio della suddetta Città, e prete dell'Oratorio di S. Girolamo della Carità di Roma*, Rome: Giovanni Zempel, 1742, 60. See also *Delle antichità picene dell'abate Giuseppe Colucci patrizio camerinese*, 31 vols., Fermo 1786–1797, vol. 4 (1789), 94. The Cathedral then became the church of the Reformed Friars Minor.

<sup>47</sup> For example, the Zagarolo altarpieces. See *L'arte per i papi e per i principi nella campagna romana. Grande pittura del '600 e del '700*, 2 vols., exh. cat., Rome 1990, vol. 1, cat. nos. 49–51, 140–145 (entries by Angela Negro). For eighteenth-century painting in the Marche, see: Maria Rosaria Valazzi, "La pittura del Settecento nelle Marche", in: Giuliano Briganti, ed., *La pittura in Italia. Il Settecento*, 2 vols., Milan 1990, vol. 1, 371–382; Pietro Zampetti, *Pittura nelle Marche*, 4 vols., Florence 1988–1991, vol. 4: *Dal Barocco all'età moderna*. On Maratti's example in this region, see the essays collected in: Costanza Costanzi and Marina Massa, eds., *Il magistero di Carlo Maratti nella pittura marchigiana tra Sei e Settecento*, Milan 2011. The altarpiece in the Old Cathedral is mentioned as a work by Girolamo Pesci by Anna Caterina Toni, "La pittura del '700 nel Maceratese", in: *Il Settecento nella Marca*, conference proceedings (Treia, 20–21 November 1976), Macerata 1978, 122–145: 144.





19 Giuseppe Pesci, *Madonna and Child with Local Saints and Blessed*, 1741/42, oil on canvas. Old Cathedral, San Severino Marche (photo: City of San Severino Marche)

[28] Local texts and guidebooks also mention other altarpieces by Giuseppe Pesci in San Severino Marche, for which, however, the dating is less certain: an *Immaculate Conception with Saints* in the church of Santa Teresa (of the Convittrici del Bambin Gesù) and a *Madonna enthroned with Saints* in the Oratorians' church of San Filippo (the traditional attribution of the latter to Pesci has been, however, rejected by modern studies). More recently, following the restoration of works of art in the areas affected by the 2016 earthquake in the Marche, another painting by Pesci was recovered and brought to the attention of scholars: it is another *Immaculate Conception*, signed "JOSEPH PESCE / INVENTOR E [...] PINXIT 17 [...]" (unfortunately the date is illegible), from the parish church of San Marco in Colpolina at Fiastra (Province of Macerata).<sup>48</sup> This work reveals

<sup>48</sup> For Giuseppe Pesci in the Marche, particularly in San Severino Marche, see: *Devozione antica e perenne dei sanseverinati verso la Santissima Vergine Maria, provata con monumenti, raccolti in queste pagine dal conte Severino Servanzi-Collio cavaliere gerosolimitano*, Macerata: Alessandro Mancini, 1859, 15-16; *Sulla vita e sul culto della Beata Marchesina Luzi. Memorie raccolte dal commendatore Severino conte Servanzi Collio cavaliere di Malta*, Macerata: Alessandro Mancini, 1863, 23; [Domenico Valentini], *Il forastiere in Sanseverino-Marche, ossia breve indicazione degli oggetti di belle arti ed altre cose notevoli esistenti in detta città*, San Severino Marche: Corrado Corradetti, 1868, 38, 42 and 86; Amedeo Gubinelli, *San Severino Marche. Guida storica artistica*, Macerata 1974, 52, 74 and 80; *San Severino Marche. Guida storico-artistica alla città e dintorni*, Pescara 2015, 64 and 72. It was not possible to access the articles on Pesci published by Quinto Domizi in 1999 and 2010 in the locally circulated weekly *L'Appenino camerte*; the articles are listed by Raoul Paciaroni, *Ricordo di Don Quinto Domizi*, San Severino Marche 2015, 30 and 45. For the history and iconography of San Severino, see Luca Maria Cristini, *San Severino vescovo di Settempeda: santità, leggenda e iconografia*, San Severino Marche 2019. For a summary and the latest acquisitions, see Pierluigi Moriconi, ed., *Pro Loco lombarde Pro Arte: restauri nelle Marche colpite dal sisma 2016*, Milan 2021, 121-128 (entry by Massimo Francucci, who does not rule out the hypothesis that Girolamo contributed to the altarpiece in the Old Cathedral).

stylistic affinities with the *Madonna and Child* in the Sansevero Chapel Museum in Naples (Fig. 1). Knowledge of Pesci's activity in this region has remained quite obscure or limited to local studies, but it offers confirmation of the fact that the painter was in demand for sacred and devotional images from patrons who generally did not have overly exacting demands in terms of quality and novelty of style.

## Conclusion

[29] In conclusion, it cannot be ruled out that Pesci's involvement in Raimondo di Sangro's projects was somehow connected to the latter's passion for scientific experiments in the field of anatomy. The anatomical models (one male and one female) owned by the Prince of Sansevero and made by the Palermitan physician Giuseppe Salerno (1728–1792), the so-called *macchine anatomiche*, now on display in the Sansevero Chapel Museum, are famous and still arouse interest and curiosity.<sup>49</sup> One is tempted to speculate that Pesci's name may have caught Sansevero's attention precisely because of his previous experience in anatomical drawing – possibly a not insignificant calling card in the eyes of this patron. Of course, this hypothesis would be somewhat more convincing if the volumes edited by Petrioli were among the titles in Raimondo's library (which is not the case, although one must bear in mind that the list known today is probably incomplete).<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the wide range of the Prince's knowledge, interests, and relations, even beyond Naples, should not be underestimated and exclude other possibilities; after all, he had been educated in Rome as a young man and had developed a deep interest in the Roman Baroque.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps future investigations, especially in the archives, will shed new light on the matter and provide further clarification.

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<sup>49</sup> The more recent and supra-local literature on this topic includes: Lucia Dacome, *Malleable Anatomies. Models, Makers, and Material Culture in Eighteenth-Century Italy*, Oxford 2017, 215-253; Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, "The Fantastic Anatomy of Raimondo de Sangro, Prince of Sansevero", in: *Medicina nei secoli* 32 (2020), no. 2, 657-678.

<sup>50</sup> The inventory of his library can be found in Masucci and Spruit, eds. (2020), 319-403.

<sup>51</sup> See Forgione (2022).

### About the Author

Augusto Russo received his PhD from the University of Naples Federico II (2017) and won a scholarship at the Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura della Compagnia di San Paolo in Turin (2018). His research interests focus on painting and sculpture in Italy in the Baroque Age, with particular attention to the Neapolitan context. He has written essays on, among other themes and artists, Giacomo del Po, the Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro, Francesco De Mura, Neapolitan funerary portraiture between the 17th and 18th centuries, and Francesco Solimena. He has collaborated on the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* of the *Enciclopedia Treccani* and contributed to the catalogue of the works of the Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples (2020). He is currently a researcher in the History of Modern Art at the University of Naples Federico II, and as part of this role, he was a visiting scholar at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London in 2023–2024.

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