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INTRODUCTION

Art, Luxury, Value

‘I have served all the major rulers of Europe, who appreciate my work,
even though it is the fruit of a barren tree’

– *Artemisia Gentileschi to Duke Francesco d’Este of Modena,*

25 January 1635

On 22 November 2019, Christie’s announced the opening of a new exhibition in its London showrooms. Billed as ‘a visual feast of fashion and fine art’, *Art Adorned* displayed a series of fine and decorative artworks alongside a selection of Dolce & Gabbana’s recently created garments and accessories (fig. 1). This was by no means the first exhibition to explore the connection between art and fashion. The world’s most heavily attended exhibition of 2018, in fact, had been the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*. *Heavenly Bodies* had attracted a record number of 1,659,647 visitors, thus breaking the Metropolitan’s previous attendance record of 1.4 million visitors to the *Treasures of King Tutankhamun* in 1978, a landmark event that had heralded the coming of the global blockbuster exhibition.¹ *Art Adorned* differed, however, from *Heavenly Bodies*, in that it was a commercial exhibition. This meant that, whereas most museum exhibitions display artworks as if they were tastefully presented goods in a luxury boutique, the exhibits in *Art Adorned* actually were for sale.

One of the highlights of the *Art Adorned* exhibition was a painting, *The Triumph of Galatea*, that had first appeared on the art market in 2007 (fig. 114). The painting had





1 Art Adorned exhibition, Christie's, London, November 2019

been auctioned at Christie's, New York, early that year under an attribution to the Neapolitan Baroque painter Bernardo Cavallino (1616–1656), an artist whose oeuvre is as distinguished as it is little known beyond specialist circles. The lot had, nonetheless, achieved a creditable hammer price of US\$550,000, rising to a final figure of \$656,000 with the addition of Christie's customary buyer's premium and fees.² Within a few short years, this attribution had been revised upwards as a number of scholars sought to identify the painting as one of the last works produced in Naples by Artemisia Gentileschi, with the probable assistance of a junior collaborator by the name of Onofrio Palumbo.³ The new attribution was helped along by virtue of the work's appearance in a number of exhibitions dedicated to Gentileschi, including one in Milan in 2011 and another in Rome in 2016.⁴ Now it was for sale again

in London, 'price on request'. *Vogue UK* accordingly encouraged its readers to consider taking the painting home as an attractive investment item: 'The *Triumph of Galatea*, therefore, makes for an interesting conversation piece . . . And with the first major exhibition of Artemisia Gentileschi's work going on display at the National Gallery in spring 2020, now's the time to invest – your hand-painted corset dress, after all, deserves better than a mere handbag as a companion piece.'⁵

As *Vogue* correctly underscored, the Christie's exhibition of the *Triumph of Galatea* was timed to coincide with the increased publicity attendant on a forthcoming Gentileschi retrospective that was scheduled to open at the National Gallery, London, in April 2020 (although subsequently postponed until October 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic). The London exhibition included another recent art-market

discovery. For decades, Gentileschi's *Self-portrait as St Catherine of Alexandria* had languished unnoticed in a French private collection before appearing for auction with a new attribution to Artemisia at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, on 19 December 2017 (fig. 35). The painting had sold on that occasion for the then record price of €2,400,000 (US\$2,832,960), including premium and fees, before being sold the following year to the National Gallery, London, for £3,600,000 (US\$4,750,000). This made the *St Catherine* the first painting by a woman artist to be acquired by the National Gallery since 1991 and one of a mere twenty-one artworks by women in the gallery's collection.⁶ In the space of three short years, then, the *St Catherine* had progressed from being an unknown entity to becoming a canonical addition to the oeuvre of one of the most important artists of the seventeenth century. Its acquisition, moreover, had helped redress the critical imbalance of women in one of the world's most important museums. It, accordingly, figured prominently in the media commentary surrounding the 2020 Gentileschi exhibition – which also turned out to be the first major exhibition to be dedicated to a female artist in the gallery's 196-year history.⁷

The Triumph of Galatea remained unsold following the conclusion of Christie's *Art Adorned* exhibition in December 2019. Yet the initiative had benefited the auction house's longer-term strategy of building publicity for the canvas among its global network of clients. The painting was thus able to take advantage of an increased visibility and momentum when it was subsequently included in the Christie's, New York, auction of 15 October 2020 (two weeks after the opening of the London Gentileschi retrospective, as it transpired). On this occasion, the painting was attributed to Artemisia Gentileschi 'and associate' and placed with an estimate of one to one and a half million dollars. This time the painting did sell: for US\$2,130,000, a significant price increase that represented a more than threefold return on its owner's initial investment over the space of thirteen years. Its new owner was the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. The canvas was thus now also transitioning from the relative anonymity of a private collection to the increased public visibility and recognition attendant upon its new home in an American museum devoted to a multi-disciplinary investigation of the histor-

ical and contemporary processes of visual story-telling and myth-making.⁸

Yet neither the *Galatea* nor the *St Catherine of Alexandria* can claim the title of the world's most expensive painting attributed to Gentileschi to be sold at auction. That distinction goes, instead, to a third 'sleeper' canvas discovered in a private Lyonesse collection, where it had remained unnoticed since the 1980s. This work was sold at the Paris auction house Artcurial on 13 November 2019, with an estimate of €600–800,000 (US\$600,240–880,320) (fig. 77). Depicting the ancient Roman heroine *Lucretia* and probably datable to Gentileschi's Venetian period of 1627–30, the painting exceeded its estimate by a considerable amount. In fact, it achieved a new record for the artist of €4,777,000 (US\$5,200,000), including buyer's premium and fees. It also passed from private to public ownership, being acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. The steeply rising prices and increased public visibility attendant upon these three paintings over such a short period highlight the degree to which Artemisia Gentileschi's work is currently moving into a new phase of increased institutional and art-market-based recognition. This will inevitably drive the prices for her work yet higher, so that a new series of auction records will no doubt soon come to replace those cited here.

What would Gentileschi have made of this? One wonders whether the artist might have felt a certain sense of pique, in fact, at the prospect of commercial firms and private collectors benefiting from the resale of her works on the secondary market while she – the individual who created them – was unable to profit from the sales herself. Neither auctions nor museums, moreover, were as prominent in Baroque Italy as they are today. Gentileschi's career was dominated, rather, by the primary market, with its persistent stream of patrons, agents, artists, dealers and all the other individuals with whom artists needed to remain on good terms in order to maintain an edge in a highly competitive art world.

Many other aspects of the above-mentioned transactions would have, nonetheless, struck an immediate chord of familiarity with Gentileschi. Christie's emphasis on the exclusivity of luxury as a branding strategy, for example, was something with which she was very familiar. She deployed a similar

strategy in attempting to create a unique brand for herself based on the glamour and distinctiveness of her own appearance and persona, as we shall see. Being able to cultivate and then mobilize a global network of influential friends, allies and supporters was also something on which Gentileschi expended a great deal of energy throughout her career. This was particularly important for her given her concern to move beyond the pre-existing boundaries of the complex geographic and political landscape that defined Rome and its surrounds, for example, as a country entirely foreign to Naples. Gentileschi's constant attempts to expand her network to a truly international level further reflected her ceaseless drive to bring her work to the attention of a wide range of powerful individuals throughout Europe, from Messina to London and beyond.

The decisive role played by timing and momentum in making or breaking an artist's career was something that Gentileschi would have well understood as a result of the many ups and downs of her own long and storied career. She had seen for herself the way in which the tipping point of success in an art world will often hinge upon a sudden convergence of factors. Artists lucky enough to experience success of this kind may suddenly notice themselves becoming the focus of sustained and co-ordinated art-world attention, to the extent that a synergy may become evident, as, for example, between the business activities of Christie's in New York and the art-historical, canon-building efforts of the National Gallery in London. Good timing of this sort, however, is an elusive quality that can often seem to remain frustratingly just beyond an artist's reach. Gentileschi also experienced the significance of timing – both good and bad – during her own career. In 1620, circumstances impelled her to leave Florence hurriedly, before being able to capitalise on the growing interest in a particular kind of female-oriented imagery for which she had been carefully building momentum during the previous years. Conversely, and at the other end of her career, during the early 1630s, a more favourable convergence of factors enabled her to enjoy a brief moment of heightened financial and professional recognition in Naples, following her relocation there at the behest of the viceroy.

This is a book about these kinds of professional and business concerns as they apply to one of the most fascinating and top-

ical artists of the early modern era. It will consider the life, art and afterlife of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c.1656) from the point of view of the business considerations that informed her career and legacy and that have helped to shape her audiences' responses to her work and reputation from her own time to the present. It will consider Gentileschi's continual quest for recognition as an enterprising businesswoman seeking to make her way in a male-dominated art world. The kinds of questions that it will accordingly pose include the following: How did Gentileschi negotiate with patrons to receive fair recompense for her work? What strategies did she employ to keep herself in demand over the space of forty years and in the face of a series of newly ascendant, fashionable styles that soon came to eclipse the popularity of her initial training in Caravaggism? How did she exploit her international fame in order to promote herself in ways that manipulated her own image as part of the allure of what was being sold? Which different versions of Gentileschi are presented to us in more recent exhibitions and what do they have to tell us about the ongoing role of the museum in conferring posthumous validation on the historical status of a select few canonical artists?

In pursuing these considerations, I draw inspiration from the emerging field of studies of the Italian Baroque art market and economic analyses of Italian Baroque art more generally.⁹ I am thus concerned to articulate such directly economic and art-market-oriented issues as Gentileschi's pricing strategies, productivity and the market dimensions of the different levels of her workshop output. But I seek also to interpret the topic of the business of art in a broader sense in order to gain insight into how Gentileschi promoted and marketed both herself and her artworks in a varied series of artistic centres throughout Baroque Europe. The ensuing study interprets Gentileschi's art not so much from the point of view of a self-contained aesthetic oeuvre, but rather from the perspective of a dynamically evolving career responding strategically to a series of external challenges and opportunities that presented themselves to her in multiple settings over the space of more than forty years.

This book hinges on the premise that the business of art involves much more than the literal sale of art. For every dollar expended on an artwork – or ducat or florin or scudo in Gentileschi's case – a vast amount of work will have already

gone on in the background to build up a credible infrastructure of meaning and critical value that can be used to support and enhance the claims that are encapsulated within that sale. A successful transaction of this kind will rest on the ability of both the artwork and its creator to ‘sell’ to the audience a complex array of signifiers of artistic value.¹⁰ These work together to communicate an abstracted form of value to the buyer: what might even be described as a convincingly interwoven fiction of value. This understanding of value seeks to bolster the artwork’s authority with reference to such notions as reputational prestige, originality, inventiveness, glamour, luxury, exclusivity and so on. Understanding the business of art in this broader sense will also lead us to consider the influence of the different sectors of the art world in advancing Gentileschi’s reputation, both during her career and following her death. This ranges from the earliest art criticism written during her own lifetime to the fundamental role played by the contemporary museum in promoting varying interpretations of her art on the global stage.

In researching this book, I have been constantly reminded of the degree to which Gentileschi has attracted some of the greatest writers on the Italian Baroque, from Roberto Longhi to today. Within the resulting text I have, therefore, sought to highlight my deep indebtedness to the rich tradition of Gentileschian scholarship, an indebtedness that extends even to my sequencing of chapter titles.¹¹ I also acknowledge the ongoing debt incurred by scholars in following the vital contribution made by feminist scholarship to the study of Gentileschi, both in the context of her own time and in terms of the issues that she continues to raise in relation to more contemporary considerations. This book aims to provide a useful complementary framework to the collective insights of these analyses, drawing as they do on the fundamental contribution of Mary D. Garrard, from her early articles published in advance of her landmark monograph of 1989 to her more focused account of 2001, leading in turn to her most recent study of 2020.¹²

Gender and feminist readings will continue to inform many of the topics to be addressed within these pages. In terms of the previous discussion of Gentileschi’s auction prices, for example, they can help to remind us of the obvious structural

discrimination that persists in undercutting the relative earning capacities of female versus male artists in an art world that perpetuates many of the inequities that were a fact of life during Gentileschi’s day. Gentileschi may have achieved a high of US\$5,200,000 at auction, but this pales in comparison with the prices achieved by her father’s work. The reputation of Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639) was ultimately overshadowed during his own lifetime by that of his daughter. Yet the current record for prices obtained for his work exceeds those for Artemisia’s by a factor of six to one. His *Danaë* was acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum at Sotheby’s, New York, on 28 January 2016 for a hammer price of \$27,000,000, or US\$30,500,000, including premium and fees.¹³ His second most expensive painting is *The Finding of Moses*, which was acquired in 2019 by the National Gallery, London, for £22,000,000 (US\$29,000,000). This is more than six times the amount paid by the same organisation, we recall, for Artemisia’s admittedly rather smaller *Self-portrait as St Catherine of Alexandria*.

This economic disparity between otherwise directly comparable male and female artists becomes more evident still when Artemisia’s prices are viewed in relation to other, supposedly more ‘mainstream’ Baroque artists. Rubens’s *Massacre of the Innocents*, for example, was sold at Sotheby’s, London, on 10 July 2002 for £49,000,000 (US\$76,700,000). Caravaggio’s paintings remain today almost entirely locked up in museum collections and thus hardly ever appear on the market. In 2019, a painting attributed to Caravaggio of *Judith and Holofernes* was, nevertheless, put to auction with an estimate of US\$113 to \$170 million. It was privately acquired for an undisclosed sum just prior to auction, and so, presumably, was sold for a figure within that range.¹⁴ It seems that the Guerrilla Girls had it right all those years ago, then, when they sought to shame collectors into recognising the obvious disparities of gender and race informing the financial dimensions of their collections (fig. 2). This they did by highlighting the relative affordability of Gentileschi and other female artists in comparison with the ‘mega-bucks’ required to purchase a work by the leading male artists of the day. In the late 1980s, this equated to an artist like Jasper Johns; today, we might want to exchange Johns’s name for that of Jeff Koons. That should remind us, in turn, of the mind-boggling sum of US\$91,000,000 that was

WHEN RACISM & SEXISM ARE NO LONGER FASHIONABLE, WHAT WILL YOUR ART COLLECTION BE WORTH?

The art market won't bestow mega-buck prices on the work of a few white males forever. For the 17.7 million you just spent on a single Jasper Johns painting, you could have bought at least one work by all of these women and artists of color.

Bernice Abbott
Anni Albers
Sofonisba Anguisola
Diane Arbus
Vanessa Bell
Isabel Bishop
Rosa Bonheur
Elizabeth Bougereau
Margaret Bourke-White
Romaine Brooks
Julia Margaret Cameron
Emily Carr
Rosalba Carriera
Mary Cassatt
Constance Marie Charpentier
Imogen Cunningham
Sonia Delaunay

Elaine de Kooning
Lavinia Fontana
Meta Warwick Fuller
Artemisia Gentileschi
Marguerite Gérard
Natalia Goncharova
Kate Greenaway
Barbara Hepworth
Eva Hesse
Hannah Hoch
Anna Huntingdon
May Howard Jackson
Frida Kahlo
Angelica Kauffmann
Hilma of Klimt
Kathe Kollwitz
Lee Krasner

Dorothea Lange
Marie Laurencin
Edmonia Lewis
Judith Leyster
Barbara Longhi
Dora Maar
Lee Miller
Lisette Model
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Tina Modotti
Berthe Morisot
Grandma Moses
Gabriele Münter
Alice Neel
Louise Nevelson
Georgia O'Keeffe
Meret Oppenheim

Sarah Peale
Ljubova Popova
Olga Rosanova
Nellie Mae Rowe
Rachel Ruysch
Kay Sage
Augusta Savage
Vavara Stepanova
Florine Stettheimer
Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Alma Thomas
Marietta Robusti Tintoretto
Suzanne Valadon
Remedios Varo
Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun
Laura Wheeling Waring

Please send \$ and comments to:
Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276

GUERRILLA GIRLS CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

2 Guerrilla Girls, *When Racism and Sexism Are No Longer Fashionable, How Much Will Your Art Collection Be Worth?*, 1989, screen-print on paper, 43.5 × 55.5 cm

realised for Koons's *Rabbit* at a Christie's, New York, auction of 15 May 2019, making it the world's most expensive artwork by a living artist (a record that will no doubt be surpassed in the not-too-distant future).¹⁵

Research into Artemisia Gentileschi constitutes one of the most active and hotly debated areas of art history. The image of the artist that we are presented with today is complicated and enlivened by a raft of new ideas, challenges and hypotheses. These render her, in many respects, a radically different proposition from the image that was presented some twenty years ago, when several key studies were published. Another motivation in writing this book has, therefore, been to create an updated monograph for a fresh generation of readers, one that takes into account the many recent developments in the field. The new findings that this book incorporates within its analysis include an additional twelve paintings with credible attributions to Artemisia that have been discovered since

the time of the landmark catalogue raisonné produced by R. Ward Bissell in 1999.¹⁶ Other key new findings of the past few years include the earliest recorded biography of the artist, which came to light in 2018;¹⁷ a trove of more than thirty letters, written by the artist and her husband, which was discovered in a private Florentine archive in 2011;¹⁸ the previously noted documentation regarding the workshop assistance of the Neapolitan painter Onofrio Palumbo in Naples during the 1650s;¹⁹ and the discovery of two sonnets written by Gentileschi in the mid-1620s, a research finding that confirms the artist's 'attainment of a gloss of the poetic skills that were the delightful currency of polite society in Italy', as Sheila Barker has underscored.²⁰

Given all that has been written and contended about Artemisia Gentileschi over the years, it is my hope that the framework here adopted might offer readers an opportunity to reconsider her art and life from a fresh perspective. This

should be nowhere more so than in the account of her origins and early works. Previous studies have stressed the significance for understanding Gentileschi of the trial brought by her father in February 1612 against his former close associate and colleague Agostino Tassi (1578–1644). The ensuing case – which caused a major scandal among the tightly knit networks of the Roman art world – hinged on the charge of *stuprum*. This term is often loosely translated today as rape and is also thus referenced in these pages for the sake of convenience. Yet the term was understood rather differently during its own day. In a legal sense, it denoted the concept of forcible defloration, and its litigation depended upon Baroque notions of family honour and paternal property rights – emphases that seem worlds removed from today’s concentration on the intrinsically harmful legacy and impact of the violent crime

of rape.²¹ The event occurred on 6 May 1611. Gentileschi was aged seventeen; Tassi was thirty-two. In the pages that follow, the trial proceedings are analysed not so much for their insights into the traumatic nature of Gentileschi’s early biography, fundamentally distressing though that experience can only have been;²² rather, the rich documentation of the trial proceedings is used as the basis for an attempt to discern the nature of Gentileschi’s artistic training and first steps as an independent artist. It is to be hoped that a less familiar picture of Gentileschi’s early years might emerge from this focus, one that begins by highlighting the restricted and demanding nature of her initial training and early workshop employment within the hardscrabble environment of the artists’ district of Baroque Rome.

— PART I —

Becoming Artemisia

ROME, 1606–1613



I

In her Master's House

GENTILESCHI'S ARTISTIC TRAINING IN THE ARTISTS' DISTRICT OF BAROQUE ROME

INTRODUCTION

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER: ARTEMISIA AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF ORIGINS

Nothing conveys the impression of fame quite so well as a good origin myth. Giorgio Vasari certainly knew this. As the critic responsible for establishing an artist's biography as one of the fundamental reference points of art history, Vasari was keenly aware of the power of suitably embroidered origin stories to set a golden seal on artistic fame. Instances include his vivid image of Cimabue observing the youthful Giotto scratching pictures onto rocks with a sharpened stone while tending to his flock. Or, Verrocchio returning one afternoon to his *Baptism of Christ* altarpiece, only to discover that his young apprentice, Leonardo, had effortlessly surpassed him by painting an angel that was judged to be 'much better than the figures painted by Andrea' (fig. 3).¹ In these and other instances, Vasari underscored the mythic dimensions of his most famous protagonists by stressing their prodigious origins, together with their youthful, self-absorbed ability to follow their own inspiration while exceeding the best efforts of their peers.²

Michelangelo took this process one step further. Not content with Vasari's attempts to write a flattering life story on his behalf, he sought to shape his own origin myth by producing the world's first ghost-written artist's biography.³ This, in combination with



Ioan. Stradanus inuent.

Phil's Galle excud.



3 Andrea Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci, *The Baptism of Christ*, c.1470–75, tempera and oil on panel, 177 × 151 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi Florence

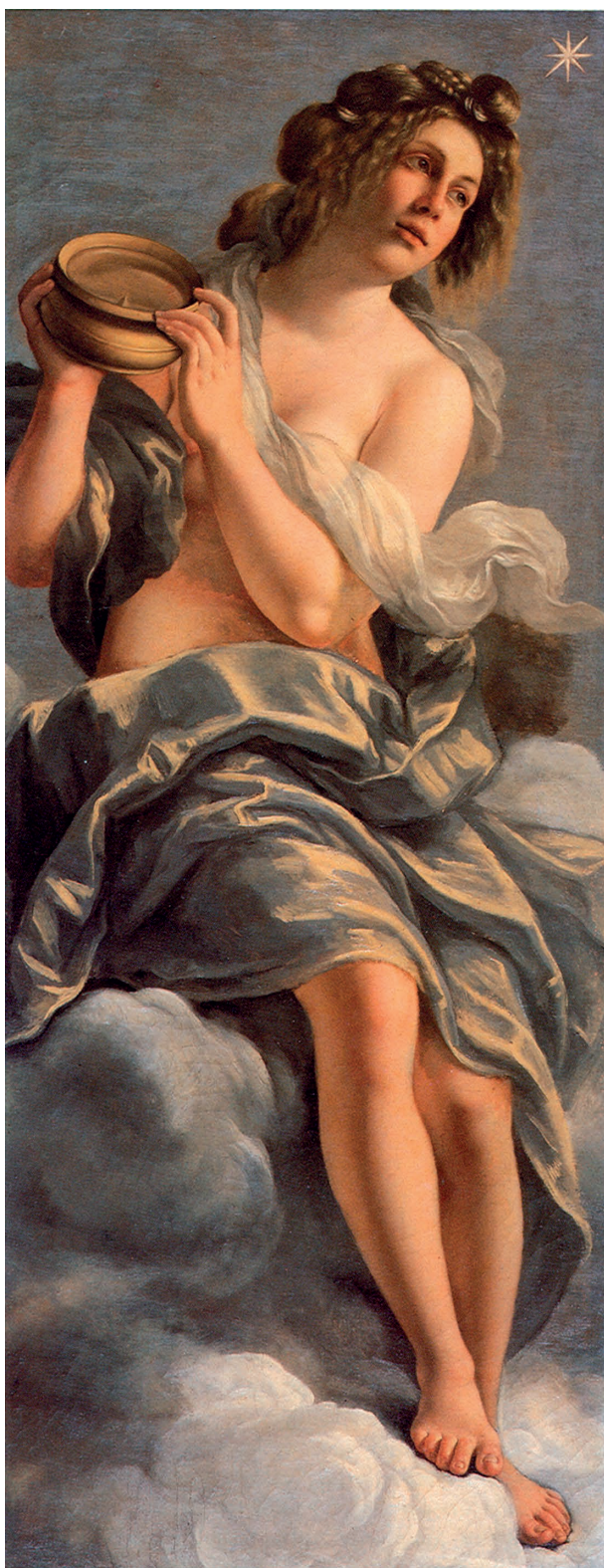
all the other retellings of his life, established an archetypal format for an authoritative, early-life story, characterised by precocious pre-eminence shot through with intimations of immortality. In Michelangelo's case, the story involves such elements as his family's initial hostility to his innate artistic calling, his subsequent apprenticeship to a jealous master – who taught him nothing, or so we are told – the early recognition and encouragement given to the young prodigy by the greatest of all of Florence's enlightened patrons who invited him to improve himself on his own terms by studying in the garden of San Marco, where he, nonetheless, attracted the enmity of yet more rivals, one of whom broke his nose in a fit of jealous rage. And so on.

In 1615, Artemisia Gentileschi contributed to this process of artistic myth-making. In that year, she was selected by the

great-nephew of Michelangelo to paint one of the key canvases for the Casa Buonarroti's innovative iconographic programme, which extolled his forebear's legacy for a seventeenth-century audience. Her work depicts a personification of the artistic quality of natural inclination, an important dimension of Michelangelo's mythic characterisation, since it glorifies his natural propensity towards art, his sense of inner calling and his commitment to follow that calling towards the heights of greatness, regardless of the consequences (fig. 4).⁴ Although only twenty-two and still very much at the beginning of her career, Gentileschi demonstrated a certain level of audacity in her contribution to this cycle. She sought to link herself with Michelangelo and with the quality of artistic inclination that he personified by incorporating an idealized self-portrait of herself onto the semi-naked allegory of Inclination. The direct connection between art and life that she created, however, proved a little too unexpurgated for the Casa Buonarroti's subsequent owners. One of them eventually asked the painter Volterrano to add heavy green drapery over the figure's lap and right arm in order to conceal its nudity.⁵

Gentileschi turns out to have been considering origin myths quite deeply during the time that she painted this work while residing in Florence. This has now become evident thanks to a brief manuscript biography of her early life that was first published in 2018. This biography was ostensibly written – although never published – by Cristofano di Ottaviano Bronzini (c.1580–1633), a prelate attached to the household of Cardinal Carlo de' Medici. Sheila Barker, who made the discovery, has credibly argued that Bronzini's account should be understood as being essentially attributable to Gentileschi herself, with Bronzini acting as a kind of amanuensis to the artist's musings, in much the same way that Condivi had acted as a medium for Michelangelo some seventy years earlier.⁶ The biography makes fascinating reading, not simply for what it communicates about Gentileschi's early years; it is equally revealing about the many aspects of her early life that it chooses not to mention, elements that tend to be taken for granted today as fundamental to the artist's identity and reputation:

There lives today (and may she live many centuries!) Mizia, of Florentine ancestry but born in Rome, who, one



day, when she was about twelve years old, wanted to wear a skirt that her mother had made for her a few years earlier. Finding the skirt now to be by far too short, she decided to lengthen it by herself, and when she did this, she added a little something of her own imagination, adding an embroidery design that she had invented. It happened that this skirt was seen by experts in the realms of design and painting, and they were convinced by what they saw the young girl had a potential for great achievement in these arts.

They spoke with her father and strongly encouraged him to let his daughter study painting, but he would have none of it. Not only did he refuse to teach her, but he also tried to prevent her from becoming an artist by sending her to the convent of Sant'Apollonia in Trastevere for her education. Here in the convent, however, she felt more strongly inclined than ever to become a professional painter, and she begged the abbess to let her study in secret the good painting of a worthy master. The abbess brought her several paintings, including a *Susanna* by Caravaggio, an artist once judged to be the greatest painter alive. The copies that Artemisia made of these paintings came out so well (especially one of the *Susanna*) that everyone was amazed, and none more so than her own father.

When Orazio saw the copies and was assured that they were done by his daughter, he was stunned with disbelief and exceedingly impressed. Still not convinced, he sent his daughter additional paintings to copy, this time quite large ones, all by Caravaggio (whose style she always tried to imitate as the one that pleased her most). After she completed the copies with a masterful finish, some were sold, attaining prices of 300, 500, and even 600 and more, even though these were among her very first paintings. She then married and was brought by her husband to Florence, his native city. The paintings and portraits she made here were as admired no less than the

4 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Allegory of Inclination*, 1615-16, oil on canvas, 152 x 61 cm, Casa Buonarroti, Florence

ones made by the above-mentioned Lalla Cizicena [Iaia of Cyzicus, an ancient woman artist discussed by Pliny], and they adorned and still adorn the rooms of the most prominent and respected gentlemen, and the halls of the most illustrious and exalted princes living in Florence today.⁷

This clearly fabricated account projects a fascinating alternative reality for Gentileschi's early life and career that seems, on first reading, to bear no relationship to what is known about her formative years. It is possible, nonetheless, to discern, embedded within the roots of the narrative, the following essentially accurate biographical details about Artemisia Gentileschi's early years: she grew up in Rome, the daughter of a painter and with a mother – Prudenzia di Ottaviano Montoni – who was already absent by her teens (her mother had died in 1605, when Gentileschi was twelve). She had not one but two father figures: an actual father, with whom she clashed, and an artistic father figure, with whom she identified strongly. The youthful Gentileschi carefully studied and copied Caravaggio's works, culminating in an early version of *Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 13). This constituted a milestone in her early development and attracted particular attention. She married soon thereafter and transferred to Florence, where financial success and critical applause awaited.

In seeking to stress the astronomically high prices that she supposedly received for her work, Gentileschi evidently wished to highlight for the reader a direct correlation between her purported financial success and the intrinsic artistic value of her early paintings. The quoted prices of '600 [florins] or more' were meant to attest to her extraordinary artistic success up to that point. And yet, as with so much else in this obviously self-serving construct, Gentileschi's claim to have received this much money for her paintings at this early stage of her career is in no way supported by the documentary record. This is made clear in a list of recorded payments awarded to her during her lifetime that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11 (see also table 1, pp. 256–57). As the documents show, Gentileschi might conceivably have received a handful of high payments from the Medici by this point in her career for one or other unusually large paintings of Hercules, Pluto and Persephone

or Judith and Holofernes, but these payments were atypical in relation to the majority of her earnings and were unlikely, in any event, to have exceeded 200 florins. Smaller amounts seem to have been much more the norm: 10 florins for a privately commissioned *Judith*, for example, or 34 florins for the *Allegory of Inclination* (and even here, the price recorded for the *Allegory* is itself inflated, since it included an unspecified amount that was advanced to Gentileschi and her husband as an additional loan to be used for other purposes). Thus, the idea that Gentileschi might have routinely received '300, 500 and even 600 and more' florins, scudi or ducats for her paintings constituted an inflated rhetorical claim, which served the purpose of reinforcing an idealized image of her as an outstandingly successful practitioner whose works were in keen demand from the most exalted patrons of the day.

The biography is noteworthy also for the degree to which it seems to depart from many of the standard emphases of the modern literature on the artist. This extends even to Gentileschi's name. Artemisia, we note, has not yet been coined as a virtual trademark, designating the artist's brand. Instead, we are presented with *Mizia*, a diminutive that, as Sheila Barker notes, goes back to her teenage years in Rome.⁸ Yet the single most glaring omission from this early authorised account is any reference to her father's association with the villain of her early years. Bronzini's biography omits any reference to the painter Agostino Tassi and the rape accusation made by Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639) against him in February 1612. The subsequent trial caused a major scandal within the tightly knit Roman art world. Dragging on from March to October 1612, it resulted eventually in the judges' ruling in favour of Orazio and his daughter on 28 November 1612. This resolution, however, brought the family little satisfaction. Tassi's career went from strength to strength – made possible by a combination of his inherent audacity and the influential support provided by a network of powerful Roman patrons. For Artemisia, on the other hand, the trial constituted an ordeal and an early reputational crisis that required careful management by her father. On 11 August 1612, a marriage was negotiated with a twenty-seven-year-old Florentine apothecary by the name of Pierantonio Stiattesi, the brother of the Roman notary Giovanni Battista Stiattesi, who had acted as a supporter,

legal adviser and witness for the Gentileschi during the trial.⁹ On 29 November 1612, immediately following the trial's conclusion, Artemisia and Stiattesi married in Rome and then relocated to Florence soon thereafter.¹⁰

The addition of this early biography into the literature on the artist finally puts paid to the notion that Gentileschi might have sought to benefit from the notoriety attracted by the trial, an argument based on the assumption that 'no publicity is bad publicity'. Such an argument suggests that Gentileschi might have decided that there were benefits to be gained from the frisson associated with a sex scandal attached to her name and used it strategically to catch the attention of would-be patrons.¹¹ Instead, we now learn, the opposite was the case. In common with so many other survivors of sexual violence, Gentileschi wished not to be defined by this youthful trauma, preferring to move on from the memory altogether – at least, in so far as that was possible in a public context – and to redefine herself in other, more socially advantageous ways. This, then, is the first of many challenges to the received truths that have come to surround Gentileschi's reputation that need to be taken into account when considering her early career.

YOUNG ARTEMISIA IN THE ARTISTS' DISTRICT OF ROME

For the first seventeen years of her life, Artemisia Gentileschi and her family resided within a thin wedge of about half a square kilometre in the artists' quarter of Rome. This subdivision of the larger district of Campio Marzio constituted a densely inhabited pocket in the north-west of the city, stretching from the Piazza di Spagna down the via del Babuino (then known as the via Paolina) to the Porta del Popolo and the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, with its famous paintings by Caravaggio and his contemporary and rival Annibale Carracci. If that suggests a certain degree of domestic stability and continuity during the artist's early years, then that impression would be mistaken. In fact, the family changed its place of residence no fewer than five times during this period, sometimes settling in one location for as little as three months before moving on to another temporary abode. This was not in itself unprecedented – the cost of workshops and living

quarters in Rome being beyond the reach of all but the most successful artists of the day.¹² Nevertheless, the documents describing the Gentileschi's successive residences and material circumstances during this period convey an overwhelming impression of a not especially successful, struggling household and professional artistic practice.

Small and densely populated, the artists' quarter of Baroque Rome constituted a veritable microcosm, providing artists with ready access to everything they needed to complete their work, together with much that would distract them from it as well. This included local shops and itinerant salespeople trading in all types of artists' materials and supplies. The neighbourhood was also home to a highly diverse labour force comprising artists and artisans of all ranks, from fully matriculated, independent masters to their most struggling apprentices. Models and independent academies were on hand, offering basic training for young artists, together with a burgeoning field of second-hand traders and professional art dealers to sell their work in both the primary and secondary markets. The area offered also a hospital and a series of churches and religious associations catering to the artists' physical and spiritual needs. In addition, there was a honeycombed network of taverns, brothels, gambling dens, sex workers, gang members, criminality in all its stripes and a barely controlled culture of street violence that combined one with the other to create a combustible blend of illicit attractions catering to the less sanctioned dimensions of the artistic lifestyle.¹³ The neighbourhood's cheapness as a place in which to live added further to its overall impression of a zone set aside for a thronging mass of relatively modest souls, all leading an intensely day-to-day existence. Accordingly, successive waves of foreigners arriving at the Porta del Popolo chose to live there in preference to other, more well-to-do – and therefore more expensive – districts.¹⁴

The Gentileschi family's various apartment residences within this neighbourhood all followed the same basic sequence of amenities. Their lodging in 1611, in via Margutta, for example, is described as comprising a ground-floor entrance hallway with a small laundry/storage room off to the left overlooking a courtyard with tubs and a well. Stairs led to two rooms above. The first of these was a kitchen and dining area. The other,

with two windows overlooking the street, was Orazio's workshop. Stairs then led to a further two rooms for the entire family to sleep in – at that stage comprising Orazio and his three sons in one room and the seventeen-year-old Artemisia in another.¹⁵ A fourteen-year-old nephew of Orazio lodged there also and briefly worked as an apprentice before Orazio threw him out, reputedly, for suggesting that Artemisia had been acting improperly by standing for too long at a window.¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, the family moved again, this time around the corner to via della Croce. On this occasion, they sought an additional two rooms that were to be taken up by a neighbour from the earlier apartment – Tuzia Medaglia, her husband and two daughters would temporarily become part of the family operation. They were hired, in effect, to look after Artemisia while Orazio was away on some increasingly time-consuming commissions on the Quirinal Hill on the other side of the city. They also helped to defray the household expenses by acting as sub-tenants, paying Orazio a rent of 12 scudi a year, Orazio being described in other respects as not especially wealthy and too poor to employ a servant.¹⁷ Soon after moving into this apartment, however, on 6 May 1611, Artemisia was raped by Agostino Tassi. Tassi, Orazio's friend and business associate, had, supposedly, been contracted to teach Artemisia perspective. She was two months shy of her eighteenth birthday. He was thirty-two.

BAROQUE SWEAT SHOP: ARTEMISIA'S EARLY TRAINING WITHIN THE WORKSHOP OF ORAZIO GENTILESCHI

Perched on the infinitely more salubrious slopes of the Pincian Hill and overlooking the endless comings and goings of the artists' quarter, is the Palazzo Zuccari. This, the Roman residence of the Zuccaro family of painters, represented the apogee of solidly genteel success and ennobled bearing towards which the struggling Roman painters down below aspired. Its expansive hallways and quietly echoing corridors – presided over today, fittingly enough, by an art-historical institute – remain worlds removed from the pinched reality of Orazio's cramped rental accommodations and semi-itinerant lifestyle. Nevertheless, the Zuccaro family's recently deceased head,

Federico Zuccaro (c.1540/41–1609), had been intensely concerned for the care and well-being of the city's aspiring painters. As the first Principe or Rector of the painters' association of Rome, the Accademia di San Luca, he had developed a comprehensive programme for reorganising the education of the city's artists. Zuccaro's plans, although not fully implemented during his lifetime, are significant for helping to articulate the preferred expectations of professional training practices against which the more humble artistic education of Artemisia should be measured.

Central to the training programme of the Accademia di San Luca was an *accademia del nudo*, or life-drawing class, that was to be held for three hours every second Sunday.¹⁸ The opportunity to draw from the male nude model, fundamental to the development of an artist, was meant to be provided during the summer months, and to make anatomical studies from dissected cadavers, together with additional studies from posed clay and wax models, during colder periods.¹⁹ Such classes were held sporadically during the opening decades of the seventeenth century, but the academy seems not to have really gotten off the ground until 1628, when its members voted to allocate a monthly allowance of 12 giulij (1.2 scudi) to pay the life model.²⁰ Under Zuccaro's guidance, the academy was, nevertheless, influential as an ideal, encouraging the development elsewhere in Rome of an alternative network of more or less informal academic sessions, described by Peter Lukehart as 'pop up academies'. These ranged from the relatively elevated and aristocratically oriented dilettante academy held periodically in the Palazzo Crescenzi, through to sessions hosted by some of the city's more established artists, such as Girolamo Muziano. They included also more informal arrangements made by groups of junior artists banding together to share resources in one or other rented property.²¹ The independent academies of Domenichino and Andrea Sacchi, for example, would come to play an influential role a decade or so later in providing training opportunities for the next generation of artists, such as Nicolas Poussin and Gaspard Dughet.²²

These opportunities would have been comprehensively barred to Artemisia Gentileschi on account of her gender. So, too, would the other major avenue for artistic self-improvement then open to young artists. Whatever their material

circumstances, aspiring male artists still at least had the freedom of physical mobility to roam the city, seeking out its many ancient and modern examples of artistic excellence to study, be it the Laocoön on the Vatican Hill or Michelangelo's tomb for Julius II in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli. Copies after these sources would then form part of an artist's stock-in-trade, a repository to dip into for inspiration during the years to come.²³ The importance of this informal educational programme is vividly underscored by Federico Zuccaro in a series of allegorical drawings documenting the early trials and tribulations of his older brother, Taddeo, as a youthful, aspiring painter wandering the streets of Rome searching for lodgings and inspiration. These drawings constituted another version of an artistic origin myth. Federico probably planned to use them for frescoes in the Palazzo Zuccari, which he intended to have converted after his death into a *foresteria* or hostel for foreign artists seeking accommodation in the city.²⁴ A particularly touching scene from the series, whose imagery would have offered encouragement to student artists, depicts the young Taddeo copying Raphael's frescoes in the Villa Farnesina before falling exhaustedly asleep by the light of the moon in the very loggia in which he sketched (fig. 5).²⁵

Artemisia had no such freedom of movement. She was severely constrained and was allowed to leave the house only under certain conditions, such as attending Mass or on specially arranged outings, and always only in the company of a chaperone. More specifically still, and as Patrizia Cavazzini and others have noted, she was further hemmed in by perceptions of propriety, even within the supposed security of her own home. These demanded that she keep constantly on guard against allowing herself to be seen in the company of male strangers visiting the master in his workshop to inspect work, deliver materials, negotiate contracts and so on. In this respect, it is significant that none of the witnesses in the rape trial ever mentioned having seen Artemisia assisting Orazio in the room in which he maintained his workshop.

This does not mean, of course, that Artemisia did not work alongside her father when there were no outsiders present. The task of keeping to herself within the house was probably made easier by Orazio's naturally unsociable manner. He is described in the rape-trial documents as 'quasi sempre solo' ('almost



5 Federico Zuccaro, *Taddeo Zuccaro Copying Raphael's Frescoes in the Loggia of the Villa Farnesina, Where He is also Represented Asleep*, c.1595, pen and brown ink, brush with brown wash, over black chalk and touches of red chalk, 42.4 × 17.5 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 99.GA.6.13

always alone') when seen in public, and the Roman Ambassador to Florence described him in 1615 yet more unsparingly as having 'such strange manners and way of life and such temper that one can neither get on nor deal with him'.²⁶ The painter and art historian Giovanni Baglione (1566–1643), who was also Orazio Gentileschi's former rival and the enemy of Caravaggio, describes Orazio as an intensely difficult character. He

considered him to be ‘more bestial than human . . . he kept to his opinions, and with his satirical tongue offended everyone’.²⁷

Even the most closed workshop, however, needed to maintain at least some connection with the outside world. Artemisia would, therefore, have needed another room – her bedroom obviously, since that was the only other space available to her – in which to carve out a modest zone of retreat and an additional workspace to undertake her artistic training. Artemisia’s own deposition at the trial describes her as painting a portrait of Tuzia’s son at the entrance to her bedroom. One imagines from this a landing at the top of the stairs leading to her bedroom, or some other form of basic antechamber communicating with the bedroom. It was at the threshold leading from this space into her bedroom that Agostino Tassi encountered Artemisia on the afternoon of 6 May 1611 before making up his mind to force her into her room to rape her.²⁸

The previously outlined microcosm of the artists’ district, therefore, with all its possibilities both benevolent and malign, reduced down in Artemisia’s case to a professional universe of just two rooms: her father’s workshop, whenever it was available to her, and her own bedroom or the landing outside it. Here it was that the young Artemisia underwent the most basic and time-honoured form of professional, trade-oriented education. Here she remained bound to the experience of working day in and day out as an apprentice to a master who also happened to be her father. In his often-quoted letter of 3 July 1612, extolling Artemisia’s abilities to the Medici Dowager Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Christine de Lorraine, Orazio dates this process as having begun three years earlier, in 1609. However, given that Artemisia was the oldest by four years of the family’s four children (with two sons having died earlier – one, born in 1594, died in 1601, and another, in 1603), it seems more probable that she would have become an apprentice several years earlier. On 8 July 1606, six months after her mother’s death (on 26 December 1605²⁹), Artemisia turned thirteen, the customary age for apprentices to commence their training. This date thus offers a reasonable *terminus post quem* for Artemisia to have begun assisting her father in initially basic and menial tasks, gradually progressing to an advanced level of aptitude, such as would enable her to produce finished works in her own right.³⁰ She evidently soon became the most

valued member of the family team, too useful, in any event, to be granted a formal education. By the time of the trial of 1612, she was an outstandingly promising young painter with the beginnings of an independent career already in the offing. And yet she declared herself at the same time as being unable to write and able to read ‘only a little’.³¹

EARNING ONE’S KEEP: ARTEMISIA’S WORKSHOP EDUCATION AND THE TRANSITION FROM APPRENTICE TO ASSISTANT

What, then, did the process of learning by assisting the master actually entail in Orazio Gentileschi’s workshop? The rape-trial documents are highly revealing on this point. They identify two other apprentices as having recently passed through Gentileschi’s workshop. One of them – ‘Giovanni Battista’ – is mentioned only briefly and indirectly as having entered the workshop sometime in 1610. He is the same individual who was thrown out a few months later for suggesting that Artemisia had spent too long being seen at a window.³² Of greater significance for the trial as a whole was the testimony of Nicolò Bedino. Although aged only about fifteen or sixteen, Bedino was pressured into acting as a central witness for Tassi’s defence. His testimony was potentially the most damaging to Gentileschi’s case, since it involved accusations of impropriety on Artemisia’s part towards various men – Tassi’s defence consisting of the age-old tactic of attempting to refute a charge of sexual violence by smearing the reputation of the victim.³³ Leaving aside the more contentious aspects of Bedino’s testimony, this young apprentice is, nonetheless, quite specific about what the process of training in Gentileschi’s workshop entailed. He states (as recounted back by the court notary) that ‘Orazio asked him to move in with him, and offered to teach him to draw, and [to give him] food and drink as well, in exchange for work at his house.’ This was then corroborated by the other witnesses, who observed that ‘Orazio took in a young man named Nicolo, who helped him with house chores, and came to learn to draw’ (testimony of Caterina Zuccarini), and that ‘a young man, thirteen or fourteen years old, [who was] there a few times. He was learning to draw’ (testimony of Bernardino de Franceschi); and then again that ‘Orazio had

taken a young man to do chores around the house. Later he saw the young man there; he was learning to draw' (testimony of Pietro Hernandez, a neighbour, who must have been on good terms with the Gentileschi since he identifies Artemisia as the godmother of his son). What is striking about the testimony is the repeated phraseology adopted by all the witnesses that Gentileschi's apprentices were being taught by 'learning to draw'. In keeping with the long-established traditions of Central Italian workshop practice, the methodology for learning how to paint in Gentileschi's workshop was clearly based on the study of the process of drawing.³⁴

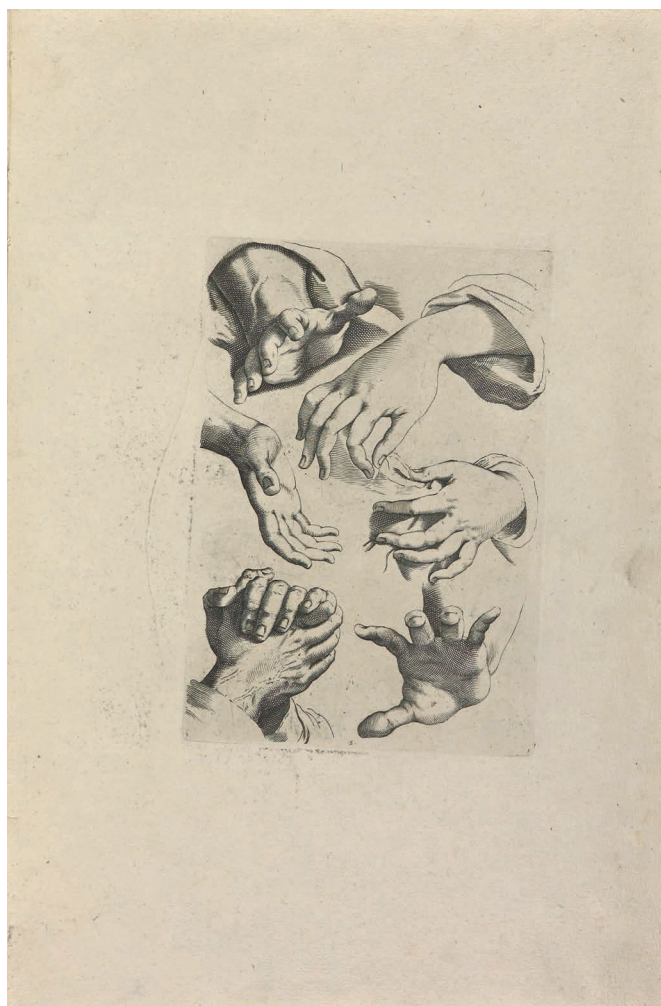
It is easy to underestimate the emphasis on draughtsmanship in Orazio's workshop, given the revolutionary nature of his simultaneous adoption of Caravaggio's method of painting directly from life. Yet it was an emphasis that derived naturally from Orazio's own cultural background and his training in the artistic practice and theory of late sixteenth-century Central Italy. The stress on the importance of repeated drawing exercises is equally evident in Romano Alberti's *Origine, et progresso dell'Accademia del Disegno* [sic.], *de pittori, scultori, ed architetti di Roma* of 1604. As Peter Lukehart and others have noted, this publication essentially summarises and codifies Zuccaro's educational programme, then under consideration at the Accademia di San Luca. According to Alberti, the process of learning to paint consisted of three stages of training, which were based, in turn, on sequential processes of sustained draughtsmanship. First came *copiare*, the imitation or copying of a master's work. This was followed by *ritrarre*, the creation of credible representations of observed things and based particularly on the study of life models. Finally, *disegnare*, which consolidated all that had been learned previously into the composition of a *disegno di'invenzione*, or drawing of an original subject.³⁵

This process would have begun with the young apprentice copying repeatedly from the prints of individual features of the body – eyes, hands, feet, faces – that were included in art-training manuals or primers and were compiled for this purpose by such painters as Agostino Carracci (1557–1602) and Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652) (fig. 6).³⁶ In fact, it is possible to detect echoes of the repertory of features and poses contained in these primers appearing as a kind of continued

muscle memory in a number of Artemisia's compositions. The semaphore-like, spread-out fingers of Susanna's left hand in the *Susanna and the Elders* of 1610, for example, appear to have benefited from the lessons outlined in Luca Ciamberlano's engravings of anatomical details after drawings by Agostino Carracci (figs 6 and 7). The distinctive 'pinching' gesture of the hand in the upper right of the same print seems equally to have informed the framing of the Magdalene's left hand as she turns away from earthly temptations in the *Conversion of the Magdalene* of around 1614–15 (fig. 8).

The exercise of copying from precisely this kind of art primer is shown in the figure of the teenage boy who is depicted seated on a stool at the right of an engraving by Stradanus (Jan van der Straet; 1523–1605) of the invention of oil painting (fig. 9). Stradanus produced this print during the latter stages of a decades-long residence in Florence working for the Medici.³⁷ Although intended as an idealized depiction of Jan van Eyck's workshop in early fifteenth-century Bruges, the print also reads as a remarkably informative visual summary of Central Italian workshop practice at that time. It depicts, in addition, the second stage of Alberti's educative process – *ritrarre* – or learning to render accurately objects in three dimensions. This is shown in the figure of the slightly older apprentice seated to the left who is busily copying a female bust. Orazio's workshop would have presumably included some examples of this kind of standard studio prop, be it a reduced-scale fragment after the antique, an anatomical model of a part of the body and/or a statuette. Such basic tools of workshop training often appear in contemporary scenes of informal academies (fig. 10), and a number are included propped up above the doorway of Stradanus's print. Orazio Gentileschi's contemporaries are known to have possessed them: Orazio Borgianni, for example, owned a collection of twenty plaster casts of parts of the body in various postures which he donated to the Accademia di San Luca; another early Caravaggesque painter, Mao Salini, is also known to have used casts of this kind, including one of his hands in prayer.³⁸

One senses, nonetheless, that the collection of prints and drawings that Orazio must have kept in his workshop was of overriding importance for Artemisia's early training and for the operations of his workshop more generally. This type of visual



6 Luca Ciamberlano after Agostino Carracci, *Study of Hands*, c.1600, engraving, 15.4 × 11.9 cm, from *Scuola perfetta per imparare a disegnare tutto il corpo humano*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles



7 (TOP) Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders* (detail of fig. 13)



8 (ABOVE) Artemisia Gentileschi, *Conversion of the Magdalene* (detail of fig. 40)

resource must have been particularly important in Artemisia's case, given her inability to move freely beyond the four walls of the family's apartment. Prints, accordingly, exert a persistent influence on nearly all of Artemisia's earliest canvases. R. Ward Bissell noted the importance of a print by the school of Raimondi, for example, for the Galleria Spada *Madonna and Child*, which I would follow Mary Garrard among others in positioning as one of the earliest extant works by Gentileschi's hand (fig. 11).³⁹ The Michelangelesque pose of the baby in

this painting must also derive from another as yet unidentified printed source, since it is clearly not a pose that a baby could hold for any length of time. The serpentine, twisting pose of the figure of Susanna in the 1610 canvas of that subject is likewise taken from a print after Michelangelo's *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*. Similarly, the pose of Cleopatra and of Danäe in the early versions of these respective compositions, which are attributed to both Artemisia and Orazio, must have derived from a print of the Ariadne in



9 Jan van der Straet (Johannes Stradanus), *Color Olivi/Oil Paint*, c.1591, engraving, 20.4 × 27.1 cm, from *Nova Reperta*, British Museum, London

the Vatican Belvedere rather than the sculpture itself, since Artemisia would never have been allowed to see the work in situ (figs 21 and 22). Prints remain fundamental to Artemisia, in fact, throughout her career and remain important reference points for a number of her later works as well.⁴⁰ During her early training, then, although physically constrained within the confines of her father's workshop, it seems that the young Artemisia was, nevertheless, allowed to roam free at least in her mind while poring over her father's collection of works on paper as she dreamed up ideas for her earliest independent creations.

Returning to Stradanus's print, we note the presence in the centre of the composition of a yet more mature teenage boy who assists the master by spreading his colours onto the palette from one of the ready-loaded shells that have been handed to him by the middle-aged workmen grinding and mixing pigments at the back of the workshop. Unlike the two younger boys on either side, this youth has evidently progressed up the hierarchy of shop-floor responsibilities to the point at which he is now assuming a more significant role in closer working proximity to the master himself. This individual is no longer a raw apprentice and odd-job *garzone* (boy);



10 Michael Sweerts, *In the Studio*, signed and dated 1652, oil on canvas, 73.5 × 58.8 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Detroit Purchase, 30.297

he is, rather, progressing towards being recognised as a valued assistant to the master. This yet further stage of artistic and professional development is indicated, in turn, by the obviously much older assistant, who is shown seated at the back left of the composition. Unlike the youngsters in the foreground, this figure has clearly completed his training and has been granted a certain degree of responsibility and autonomy within the workshop. He has been given the right to work alongside the master on independent portrait commissions, thereby gaining additional revenue for the business as a whole, while leaving the master free to concentrate on his major commissioned work.

The rape-trial documentation makes clear that Artemisia had also moved up this four-step ladder of artistic and professional development by the time she was seventeen. Nicolò Bedino's testimony confirms this when he notes (again, via the court notary) that 'Nicolo [Bedino] ground the colours and mixed them with oil for Artemisia, who used them to paint her canvases, not for the father.'⁴¹ This statement was not made in relation to any of the contentious aspects of Bedino's testimony – it was not made, for example, as part of some accusation directed against Artemisia's propriety. Accordingly, there seems no reason to doubt its veracity. It is, in any event, directly corroborated by the independent statement of the Spaniard Pietro Hernandes, whose testimony stated that he saw Bedino in the Gentileschi's apartment in S. Spirito, where they resided from around the middle of 1611 until the time of the rape trial in mid- to late 1612: 'he was learning to draw, and Artemisia also taught him to paint'.⁴²

Artemisia was thus now not only assisting Orazio in the workshop, but also teaching his apprentice 'how to paint'. This was undoubtedly useful to Orazio, who had an increasing workload during this period as a result of his collaboration with Agostino Tassi. Since early 1611, he had been working with Tassi on an important sequence of frescoes, first in the Sala del Concistoro in the Quirinal Palace, and then at the garden casino of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, also on the Quirinal Hill.⁴³ For his part, Bedino would have prepared Artemisia's materials and mixed her colours while observing her paint and receiving a certain degree of training in return. There is also reference to Artemisia's working during these months on an independently commissioned portrait – just like the assistant seated at the left of Stradanus's print. This was a portrait of a papal steward by the name of 'Artigenio'. Although less well appreciated today than are other aspects of her work, Gentileschi's portraits would go on to constitute one of the most popular aspects of her later production.

Nothing more is known about the subject of Artemisia's portrait, unfortunately, other than that his name would subsequently be dragged into the mud as part of the wider strategy of the Tassi camp to counter the charges against him by impugning Artemisia's honour.⁴⁴ Like so many other peripheral figures caught momentarily in the spotlight of the rape-trial



11 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Madonna and Child*, c.1608–10, oil on canvas, 116.5 × 86.5 cm, Galleria Spada, Rome

proceedings, this character appears briefly in the legal records before exiting the stage in order to make way for the oncoming cataclysm of the rape and its aftermath. The rape itself and the wider repercussions of betrayal and disruption that it set off would soon also come violently to overturn the natural course that Artemisia's personal and professional development might otherwise have been expected to follow. Yet these years of seismic disturbances would also prove uniquely formative as Orazio sought to train his daughter in relation to the innovative model provided by the work of

Caravaggio. This model would impel both father and daughter to develop novel methods of production that, in turn, would have a fundamental impact on both their later lives and careers in ways that they could never have anticipated when they first began to consider the possibilities opened up by this new technique. The resulting works would include some of their most famous. Yet the intricately interconnected nature of their production during this period would result also in a number of canvases that remain among the most hotly debated of their respective oeuvres.

FACING PAGE Artemisia Gentileschi, *Madonna and Child* (detail of fig. 11)

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