

Tintoretto and drawing ‘dal vivo’ in sixteenth-century Venice

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Jacopo Tintoretto’s approach to drawing had a strong impact on seventeenth and eighteenth-century Venetian artists: he was praised by Marco Boschini as a ‘Monarca nel disegno’, Carlo Ridolfi’s influential biography gave much detail on his methods, while many artists clearly learned from his drawings and practice.² The quantity of surviving material, notably the archive of drawings kept under the name of Tintoretto in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, testifies to the importance given to drawing the human body in the workshop, in terms of observation, inventiveness, design processes and education. In that archive, the many historic attributions on miscellaneous sheets, some not even Venetian, similarly attest to Tintoretto’s standing in *disegno* amongst seventeenth-century collectors.

Widely dispersed in international collections, the surviving drawings that can be attributed to Tintoretto and his studio are almost entirely figural, with the majority being single figure studies.³ How can we evaluate the significance of studying the body through drawing in Tintoretto’s practice? This paper focuses in particular on drawing from the life and from sculptural models over the course of Jacopo’s career, placing his practice in the context of drawing the body in sixteenth-century Venice. Some initial comparisons will be made with central Italian practice. It will raise questions on Tintoretto’s use of drawing in the understanding of the human body and its expressive potential, and argue for his pursuit of persuasive ‘dal vivo’ effects.

Drawing ‘dal vivo’ and the idea of ‘life drawing’

The expression ‘dal vivo’ is one used in the mid and late sixteenth century to describe the practice of studying the human form directly from the life, from a posed model clothed or nude.⁴ Such studies in drawing could be made with many purposes in mind; as a minimum,

¹ I am grateful to Giorgio Tagliaferro for his acute editorial comments.

² Carlo Ridolfi, *Vita di Giacompo Robusti detto il Tintoretto*, Venice, Guglielmo Oddoni, 1642; Marco Boschini, *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana*, Venice, Francesco Nicolini, 1674, no pagination: ‘Ma à tè, ò Gran Tintoretto, tocca haver il titolo di Monarca nel Disegno’; for admiration for Tintoretto’s methods and drawings by individuals, see Catherine Whistler, *Venice & Drawing. Theory, Practice and Collecting 1500-1800*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2016, pp. 45, 67, 85, 129, 214.

³ Paola Rossi, *I disegni di Jacopo Tintoretto*, Florence, La Nuova Italia Ed, 1975.

⁴ Drawing ‘dal vivo’ or ‘dal naturale’ are terms widely used by Giorgio Vasari. Tintoretto used the expression ‘dal naturale’ in claiming his expenses in 1573 for paying models to pose, part of his extensive preparation for

each drawing involves observation, analysis and abstraction. The very phrase carries with it the sense of confronting a living, breathing entity, with the corollary that in making such studies the artist may seek to imbue the work with animation and vitality.

Venetian sixteenth-century artists did not generally document their working process, therefore art historians must to a large extent rely on the surviving drawings as material evidence for their approach to drawing. Yet, this evidence is unstable: many drawings are unpublished hence unavailable for interpretation to the majority of scholars; many others, accessible through digital images or not, may have been misidentified; while the very fact of presence through survival opens up questions of absence and types of loss.

In the case of Titian, a celebrated sheet in the Uffizi presents a study of the head and shoulders of a young woman, made from the posed model (GDSU inv.718E). This compelling image, drawn in layers of black and white chalk on blue paper in a time-consuming, meditative way, must represent an aspect of his practice otherwise unknown in the first ten years of his career.⁵ The sheer virtuosity of this naturalistic representation in terms of technical skill and empathetic visualisation testifies to the artist's experience and accomplishment in drawing by about 1511. Similarly, almost forty years later, c.1547-51, Titian's extraordinarily haptic interpretation of a helmet and visor conveys the weighty, metallic qualities of this highly crafted object in a carefully considered drawing in charcoal, black chalk and white chalk on blue paper (Uffizi, GDSU inv.566 Orn).⁶ Here, as in the study of a young woman, Titian displays an attention to representation that is far in excess of

the lost *Battle of Lepanto* of 1574 for the Palazzo Ducale; on this and for interesting observations on Jacopo's methods of drawing see Peter Dreyer, "The Drawings for the Gonzaga Cycle" in *Jacopo Tintoretto: The Gonzaga Cycle*, ed. by Cornelia Syre, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz, 2000, pp. 151-177. In the 1573 inventory of the possessions of Battista del Moro, a Veronese artist and printmaker who had worked intermittently in 1550s Venice, settling there in the 1560s, drawings 'dal vivo' are recorded, see Bernard Jestaz, "Un fonds d'atelier de Battista del Moro (1573)", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 44, 2/3 (2000), pp. 292-304, p. 304. The inventory lists some bundles of 'schizzi', and 'schizzi assai cavati dal vivo de chiaro scuro' (see Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, p. 182; and *ibid.*, p. 26 for 'chiaro scuro' as described by Paolo Pino, referring to the layered tonal technique of black chalk heightened with white on blue paper). See some corrections to Jestaz's interpretations by Michael Bury, "New Light on Battista del Moro as a Printmaker", *Print Quarterly*, 20 (2003), pp. 125-130.

⁵ Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, *Titian Drawings*, New York, Rizzoli, 1990, cat. no. 8; Catherine Whistler, catalogue entry in *Drawing in Venice: Titian to Canaletto*, by Catherine Whistler, with contributions by Marzia Faietti, Giorgio Marini, Jacqueline Thalmann and Angelamaria Aceto, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 2015, cat. no. 11.

⁶ Chiari Moretto Wiel, *Titian Drawings*, cat. no. 30, see Matthias Wivel, "A New Drawing by Titian", *The Burlington Magazine*, 155 (2013), pp. 152-156 for a convincing argument on dating the helmet study to c.1547-51.

functional preparatory needs. The fusion of visual observation and sensitive internalisation that each drawing manifests results in persuasive images imbued with graphic intelligence.

In a more pragmatic mode, Titian worked relatively rapidly to produce a pen and ink study of a standing, bearded model wearing a suit of armour (Uffizi, GDSU inv.20767F). In preparation for the commissioned portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere, the Duke's armour was sent to Venice so that Titian could accurately represent this expensive and prestigious military dress. Some scholars interpreted this drawing as evidence of an initial intention to portray the Duke full-length.⁷ Whatever about the purpose of this squared-up study, where the figure is additionally shown from a slightly low viewpoint standing in a curved niche, it seems likely that Titian had asked a model to put on the armour so that he could understand how it worked on a turning body. The bearded man is barefoot, and as Jennifer Fletcher observed, this would have been a hot summer's day.⁸ This raises questions about Titian's use of drawing, notably whether drawing from the posed model might have been a common practice for him – that is, not necessarily an everyday or rigorously observed one, but **an** habitual method. Such questions led me to challenge some long-standing views in the critical literature, whereby drawing or *disegno* was still regarded as utterly marginal to the interests of Venetian sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists, who were perceived as pursuing the values of *colore* above all.

Of course, *disegno* embraces drawing as a concept, as a cognitive and gestural act, and as a material object, hence theory, practice and reception hover around the term. An examination of documentary and visual evidence led to the conclusion that drawing from the life had long been embedded in Venetian practice, rather than being an innovative method transplanted from Bologna to Venice in the early eighteenth century.⁹ This research led to further questioning of the authoritative view that there was a crisis in Venetian art towards 1600, whereby a perceived need for reform in *disegno*, in emulation of the Carracci in Bologna,

⁷ Chiari Moretto Wiel, *Titian Drawings*, **cat. no. 23**; Harold E. Wethey, *Titian and His Drawings: With Reference to Giorgione and Some Close Contemporaries*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 15-16 and p. 139, cat. no. 13.

⁸ Jennifer Fletcher, "Tiziano retratista", in *Tiziano*, ed. by Miguel Falomir Faus, Exhibition Catalogue, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 2003, pp. 63-75; **p. 68**; Titian was requested on 17 July 1536 to arrange to return the armour to Milan.

⁹ Catherine Whistler, "Life Drawing in Venice from Titian to Tiepolo", *Master Drawings*, 42 (2004), pp. 370-96; the subject was taken up by Alessio Pasian, "La Scuola del Nudo: dagli studi dei pittori alle sale dell'Accademia", in *L'Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia. Il Settecento*, ed. by Giuseppe Pavanello, Crocetta del Montello, Antiga Edizioni, 2015, pp. 287-309.

was signalled by the drawing manuals of Odoardo Fialetti and Giacomo Franco.¹⁰ In arguing that these manuals, with their presentation of the human body in fragmentary details, were entrepreneurial projects, I discussed them in the context of the *virtuoso* (together with the taste for collecting prints, since different compilations of plates might appear in different editions).¹¹

This ideal of the cultivated gentleman-collector or amateur, long established in Renaissance Venice in the patrician class where the concept of *virtù* included appreciating and understanding drawings and prints, had spread beyond the elite by the later sixteenth century. Thus, these drawing books were primarily intended for a growing market of aspirational *virtuosi*, whose sons (or daughters) would acquire gentleman-like skills in drawing through copying.¹² Overall, the excavation of visual and documentary evidence concerning the study through drawing of the human form demonstrates the seriousness with which Venetian artists regarded the practice of drawing, and the many varieties of drawing within that embedded practice. With much recent scholarship that has involved re-visiting the vexed question of *disegno* versus *colore* in sixteenth-century Venice, including work by Michel Hochmann, John Marciari and Peter Lüdemann, the ground has undoubtedly shifted in our understanding of drawing and its significance in the studios of sixteenth-century Venetian artists.¹³

In considering drawing ‘dal vivo’, it is crucial to reflect on the terminology used by modern art historians (and I include necessary self-criticism here): in attempting to imagine historical drawing practice, inevitably we are influenced by certain preconceptions. Thus, the term ‘life drawing’ inevitably conjures up the ‘academy’, with associated ideas about rigorous pedagogic traditions, including the elaborate, meticulous studies of the posed model typical of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which took formal shape in the French Academy’s

¹⁰ David Rosand, “The crisis of the Venetian Renaissance Tradition”, *L’Arte*, Nuova ed. 3, 11/12 (1970), pp.5-53, was a seminal article. Subsequent studies of print culture and the business of printmaking shifted the ground in this area: see *The Print in Italy 1550-1620* by Michael Bury, Exhibition Catalogue, London, The British Museum, 2001, with many previous references.

¹¹ Catherine Whistler, “Learning to Draw in Venice. The Role of Drawing Manuals”, in *Re-Thinking Renaissance Drawings. Essays in honour of David McTavish*, ed. by Una Roman d’Elia, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015, pp. 121-136.

¹² On the use of drawing in the education of the Barberini children in Rome, c.1635-45, see Marie-Reine Haillant, “La leçon de dessin: apprendre à dessiner à Rome au XVIIe siècle”, *Dix-septième siècle*, 244 (2009), pp. 535-554.

¹³ Michel Hochmann, “Drawing as a Method of Replication in Late Cinquecento Venetian workshops”, in *Re-Thinking Renaissance Drawings*, pp. 137-146; Michel Hochmann, *Colorito; la technique des peintres vénitiens à la Renaissance*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2015; John Marciari, *Drawing in Tintoretto’s Venice*, New York, The Morgan Library and Museum and Paul Holberton Publishing, 2018; Peter Lüdeman, *Tiziano, le botteghe e la grafica*, Florence, Alinari, 2016.

teaching in the mid seventeenth century (hence the term *académie* for the genre).¹⁴ To avoid projecting potentially anachronistic concepts onto sixteenth-century Italy, it is important to think instead in terms of ‘drawing from the life’, meaning working from the posed model for many possible reasons. Artists’ aims would include exercises in observation and in representation; exercises in foreshortening and difficulty; a type of research into the physical limits and affective potential of a pose; or immediate preparation for a figure in a painting.

Two instances in Venetian drawing, by Paris Bordone and by Domenico Tintoretto from the mid and later sixteenth century, in different ways combine all of these aspects (Figs. 1 and 2). The drawings are in charcoal or black chalk, with white, on blue paper; they bear traces of oil splashes, recalling their afterlife in the studio, although each is faded and worn, attesting to their prolonged display (Bordone’s sheets became part of the collection of Cardinal Leopoldo De’ Medici having previously been in a Genoese collection).¹⁵ Paris Bordone had a specific type of action in mind for a composition on the subject of Bathsheba bathing when he made some studies from the life of a woman, her hair pulled into a cap, in c. 1550. Two surviving sheets document his investigation of a standing or seated pose, with the model’s arm upraised, but their elaborate modelling in black and white chalks, with many revisions, demonstrate his care in creating a convincing representation (respectively, Uffizi, GDSU inv.1804F and inv.1805F, Fig. 1). By contrast, the exercise of responding to a challenging viewpoint with extreme foreshortening is seen in the *Youth lying on a bed*, c. 1580, drawn by Domenico in charcoal and black chalk with white bodycolour on faded blue paper (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 7487S, Fig. 2). The Tintorettesque vocabulary of startled eyes, protruding elbow bone and schematic ovals for the undersides of toes links this to drawings by Domenico of the early 1580s, notably his studies of the female nude in a sheet in Paris (Louvre, inv. 7514) with precisely these characteristics. However, others in the Tintoretto studio doubtless learned by drawing from this challenging pose in the same session, and Palma Giovane employed it for the figure of a sleeping soldier in c.1581-82.¹⁶ The popularity of this type of

¹⁴ See Carl Goldstein, *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 165ff.

¹⁵ See Andrea Donati, *Paris Bordone. Catalogo ragionato*, Soncino, Edizione del Soncino, 2014, cat. no. D.9 and D.10, for the Uffizi female nude studies and their probable provenance from the collection of Giovanni Battista Balbi (1617-57) in Genoa.

¹⁶ Whistler, *Drawing in Venice*, cat. no. 58, p.140, and for a direct comparison, the Louvre sheet is reproduced on p. 138, fig. 60. Paola Rossi, “Schede per Jacopo Tintoretto e Palma Giovane”, *Arte Veneta*, 40 (1986), pp. 66-72; pp. 70-71, attributed this to Palma Giovane, primarily because of the connection with the painted figure, an attribution confirmed in Paola Rossi, “Disegni della bottega di Jacopo Tintoretto”, *Arte Veneta*, 68 (2011), pp. 56-89; p. 80. For a discussion of Palma’s debt to Tintoretto as a draughtsman, see David Rosand, “Palma il

exercise is also seen in the work of the Carracci in Bologna in the late 1580s, with similar drawings of a clothed or nude model posed lying on a bed, presenting difficulties of foreshortening.¹⁷

Reflecting on the topic of drawing from the life in mid-century Venice and the issues of terminology raised above requires a brief consideration of the broader context of current theoretical frameworks relating to sixteenth-century drawing. Inevitably, art-historical discourse makes comparisons between Venetian practice and that of Central Italy. There, the formation of an academic tradition has been located in certain highly modelled, scrupulously studied figures by Raphael and Michelangelo, which have generally been described or understood in the scholarly literature as ‘life drawings’. These assumptions require some interrogation. For instance, from a scrutiny of some of Raphael’s meticulous figure studies, notably those for an unexecuted Resurrection composition, an additive method can be discerned.¹⁸ His close observation of the male form certainly underpins his drawings; he worked from the posed model – typically identifiable by the hair pulled into a cap and by minimal underwear – and used black chalk or charcoal for tightly-controlled modelling with nuanced hatched strokes (Fig. 3). In exploring figural motifs, Raphael was in pursuit of eloquent contrasts and of novelty or difficulty, in order to increase the impact of the painted protagonist. However, taking into account the unstable or exaggerated poses of standing and moving figures in the drawings, it becomes evident that the artist developed the representations in parts, for instance in fig. 3 studying a twisting torso and extended arm from a seated model, and studying the legs in a separate pose. In joining his studies together, Raphael reinforced the contours and used external hatching to clarify and give force to the form as a whole.

Giovane as Draughtsman: the Early Career and Related Observations”, *Master Drawings*, 8 (1970), pp.148-161 and 210-223; pp. 153-54.

¹⁷ For examples of similar foreshortened, apparently informal poses of youths lying on beds, see Christ Church, Oxford, inv. JBS 933, traditionally attributed to Annibale Carracci in the mid to late 1580s, and Ashmolean Museum, inv. WA1853.1.22, in Babette Bohn, *Ludovico Carracci and the Art of Drawing*, London, Miller, 2004, **cat. no. 52**, late 1580s.

¹⁸ See the points made by Joachim Jacoby, in *Raffael. Zeichnungen*, Exhibition Catalogue, Frankfurt, Städel Museum, 2012, under cat. no. 46, pp. 237-238, an argument developed by Ben Thomas, catalogue entries in *Raphael: The Drawings*, by Catherine Whistler and Ben Thomas, with contributions by Achim Gnann and Angelamaria Aceto, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 2017, **cat. nos 83, 84, 85**, and similar observations at **cat. no. 56**.

Michelangelo's practice as seen in some of the surviving drawings for the Sistine ceiling involved making highly elaborate and nuanced studies of the male nude: they are powerfully naturalistic while also heroically expressive. These drawings, generally regarded as life drawings, were immensely time-consuming to make.¹⁹ Clearly, Michelangelo would have drawn from the life first, appraising and capturing the twisting pose of a model in tension. For instance, a rapid black chalk drawing testing a pose from the model appears on the verso of a sheet that includes an elaborately layered red chalk drawing for the upper part of the body of a Sibyl in the Sistine Chapel.²⁰ In this and other polished red chalk studies for that project, the artist created beautiful and convincing representations, essentially fusing his memories of classical sculpture with deep experience of anatomical studies and with intensity of observation. One can also trace Michelangelo's development in drawing of a formal vocabulary of differently accentuated strokes and marks that capture the effects of tensed muscles pressing through the stretched skin.

In distinctive ways, these highly analytical and richly modelled studies by Raphael and Michelangelo are part of a process of visualisation and realisation, based on drawing from the life, with the artist blurring the boundaries between artifice and the realities of the human body. It is precisely studies such as these that created a standard of accomplishment and idealisation in the representation of the body in drawing for the next generation, and, on the other, provided exemplars for the painstaking pedagogic process of teaching and learning in the later production of the approved '*académie*' or life-drawing as it came to be institutionally understood.

In rejecting the application of the modern concept of 'life drawing' to sixteenth-century practice, and in making 'drawing from the life' more problematic, I would argue that art historians should not take for granted any standardisation of 'life drawing' in the lifetime of Tintoretto. Equally, we should not assume the existence of an established academic tradition in terms of 'life drawing' in Central Italy by the 1550s, against which Venetian drawings might be evaluated (or might have been judged at the time). Nonetheless, it is quite clear that

¹⁹ However, see Hugo Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master*, London, British Museum Publications, 2005, pp. 127-128, whose acute observations on Michelangelo's fusion of naturalism and contrivance in his elaborate red chalk studies for figures such as Adam (London, British Museum) are in tension with the use of terms such as 'life drawing' and 'life study'. An even more polished red chalk study for an *ignudo* is in the Teyler Museum, Haarlem, inv.A27, *Ibid.*, pp.130-31.

²⁰ Metropolitan Museum, New York, inv.24.197.2, see Carmen Bambach, *Michelangelo. Divine Draftsman and Designer*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017, pp. 88-89, for reproduction of **recto** and **verso** side by side with the painted figure, and discussion, p. 91.

the practice of drawing from the posed model was of great importance in the major artistic centres in Italy, albeit pursued in different ways.²¹ Hybrid studies were common in Central Italy, even if resembling to modern eyes meticulous life drawings. Studies created from composite sources including sculptural models, or from a layering of real-life observation and memory, could function as exemplary works for students, or as demonstration pieces. However, informal studies were also part of the everyday concerns of the workshop in preparing commissions for paintings, when prominent elements in a composition required research and testing against an actual body.

A few surviving drawings by Tintoretto – and there are serious problems with the survival of sheets from his earlier career – act as evidence for his purposeful use of drawing from the life. His striking study in the Louvre from a reclining male nude, preparatory for a dead body in the *St George and the Dragon* (London, National Gallery, c.1553) was made with concern for the play of light across the skin of the man's muscular torso, which is modelled with serious consideration in charcoal, black chalk and white heightening (Fig. 4).²² Yet Jacopo's approach to delineating the body is already a distinctive one that features his hallmark manner, with curving contours, and with the musculature of the torso modelled with lumpy circular forms. Observation is now distilled into a gestural, linear mode that allows the artist to create a sufficiently convincing figure, charged with emotion, who will become a protagonist in the final painting. As in the drawings discussed above by Raphael or Michelangelo, a graphic language has been tested and developed on this and other sheets of paper to convey the artist's internalised vision of the body and his distinctive sense of naturalism.

While Tintoretto was not interested in the kind of scrupulous, analytical drawings that central Italian artists made, studies from the life such as this are neither impulsively done nor careless in execution: the attention and evaluation involved in mapping and modelling the body was itself time-consuming, and the studies represent a process of reflection and distillation. Moreover, the graphic language that Tintoretto discovered and employed is

²¹ For an exploration of the meaning of the term 'academy' in relation to artistic practice and the informal *accademie* in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Italy, see Donatella Livia Sparti, "'Dal vivo trahendo': Academies and Life Drawing in Early Modern Italian Art', in *Arte dal Naturale*, ed. by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, Annick Lemoine, Magali Théron and Mickaël Szanto, Rome, Campisano, 2018, pp.53-70.

²² Paris, Louvre, inv. 5382, see the comments in Jill Dunkerton, "Tintoretto's Underdrawing for *St George and the Dragon*", *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 28 (2007), pp. 26-35.

appropriate for the artist's purpose, which, as I will argue, in Venetian art concerns the need to convey a palpable sense of breathing life.

The lifelike body in Venetian drawing c.1500-1550

An exploration of the broader visual context of graphic art in Venice, together with the particular concerns visible in the imagery of autonomous prints and drawings in the first half of the sixteenth century, will throw fresh light on Tintoretto's approach to studying the body in drawing. In Jacopo's lifetime, the relationship of nature and the natural world with the nude body is a linking thread in Venetian graphic art. This relationship is closely connected with the antique, both in terms of classical models, literary and artistic, and in terms of the Venetian landscape as a poetic space echoing with antique resonances. The emergence of the autonomous landscape drawing in pen and ink in the 1500s notably in the work of Giulio Campagnola, Titian and Domenico Campagnola is closely bound with the appreciation of the virtuosity of the monochrome print, and the power of the inked line to convey atmosphere, texture and mood (all three artists were closely involved in printmaking). Remarkably, the subject-matter of their drawings almost invariably naturalises the classical, whether in presenting arcadian rustic youths, elderly shepherds or philosophers in a Venetian vernacular, or mythological themes of nymphs and satyrs.²³ In a striking landscape drawing of about 1509-10 in the Metropolitan Museum, Titian's lavishly inked pen describes in lapping strokes the sinuous, twisting forms of young satyrs whose bodies fuse with the foliage and blades of grass around them. Another autonomous drawing attributed to Titian of a seated satyr with a Veneto hamlet in the distance (Frick Collection), displays a similar expressive and vigorous handling of the pen in modelling the figure's muscular torso and hairy legs. The confidence and economy in evoking the airiness of the open landscape, and the witty touch of the satyr's distraction by a sketchily-indicated goat, give plausibility to the attribution to Titian.²⁴ Impressed by Titian's robust pen style, and by northern prints, the young Domenico Campagnola used engraver-like hatchings, dots, short loops and curls to give an air of conviction to the nude female body in an early drawing (London, British Museum, inv.1896,0602.1). The refinement of the drawing and the fact that the sheet bears no signs of

²³ Catherine Whistler, "Disegno a stampa, disegno a mano and the Development of the Independent Landscape Drawing in Renaissance Venice", in *Jenseits des disegno: Die Entstehung selbständiger Zeichnungen in Deutschland und Italien im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Daniela Bohde and Alessandro Nova, Petersberg, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018, pp. 128-145.

²⁴ Respectively, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1998.28, and Frick Collection, New York, inv. 1936.3.55, see Chiari Moretto Wiel, *Titian Drawings*, **cat. no. 6 and cat. no. 19**.

transfer suggests that it was made for its own sake, and that Domenico's engraving of the same subject, dated 1517, was a shrewd adaptation. A nymph, or Venus, half-reclines in a landscape whose woodland hillocks enfold and mimic the rounded curves of her body; the classical nude is presented in a Veneto landscape with almost disconcerting immediacy.

Experimentation with representing the lifelike nude body, whether set in a landscape or studied from sculptural models, is a *leit-motif* in a group of pen drawings of the 1520s that come from the same workshop, albeit not all by the same hand, where we find an intriguing oscillation between antique-style sculpture and the naturalistic human form. Their subjects resonate with the poetic and classical themes explored in Venetian paintings of the 1510s and 1520s, seen notably in a powerful pen drawing in Berlin (inv. KdZ5106) with a frank depiction of youthful male nudity in a woodland setting that resonates with the homoerotic themes of some of Domenico Campagnola's independent landscape drawings.²⁵

Traditionally given to Campagnola, and in recent studies to his pupil Stefano dall'Arzere (active c.1525 – died before 1581), these sheets are not homogeneous in approach or execution.²⁶ One study depicting a tragic heroine, Lucretia or Dido in the act of suicide, presents the image seemingly as a known piece of sculpture brought to life by the power of the artist's pen (Uffizi GDSU inv.697E). The body is finely described with engraver-like care, typical of Campagnola, but the passion of the moment is evoked by the wildness of the

²⁵ See Christophe Brouard, entry on inv.KdZ5106, datable to 1527-29, in *Arkadien. Paradies auf Papier. Landschaft und Mythos in Italien für das Kupferstichkabinett Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, ed. by Dagmar Korbacher, Berlin, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2014, cat. no. 56; and, more generally, Christoph Brouard, "Tradition and Gender Transgression: The Iconography of the Shepherd Couple in Venetian Pastoral Landscape during the Sixteenth Century", in *Sexualities, Textualities, Art and Music in Early Modern Italy: Playing with Boundaries*, ed. by Melanie L. Marshall, Linda L. Carroll and Katherine A. McIvor, Farnham, Routledge, 2014, pp. 133-154.

²⁶ An important group of head and figure studies is in the Uffizi, and others are in Berlin, Frankfurt, Rome and elsewhere. Amongst divergent views on attribution, see Giovanni Agosti, *Disegni del Rinascimento in Valpadana*, Florence, Olschki, 2001, pp. 431-439, for the influential argument, following Alessandro Ballarin and Elisabetta Saccomani, that the studies are by Stefano dall'Arzere; and W. Roger Rearick, *Il disegno veneziano del Cinquecento*, Milan, Electa, 2001, pp. 213-214, n. 80, who rightly pointed to the diversity of authorship within the group. Elisabetta Saccomani, "Ancora su Domenico Campagnola: una questione controversa", *Arte Veneta*, 33 (1979), pp. 43-49, showed that some of the head studies were used in the decoration of the Oratory of Santa Maria del Parto, Padua, in 1531, traditionally attributed to Domenico Campagnola but now linked to Stefano dall'Arzere. See the discussion (with many references) of the *all'antica*-style study of a male nude viewed from behind by Joachim Jacoby, *Raffael bis Tizian. Italienische Zeichnungen aus dem Städel Museum*, Frankfurt, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2014, cat. no. 86, pp. 257-258, who attributes this to the workshop of Campagnola, c. 1520-25, with whose general arguments I concur; similar counter-arguments to the Dall'Arzere attribution are in Christoph Brouard, catalogue entry on Domenico Campagnola, in *Arkadien. Paradies auf Papier*, under cat. no. 56. Tobias Nickel, *Die Landschaftszeichnungen von Domenico Campagnola (1500-1564)*, PhD thesis, University of Vienna 2017, pp. 140-141, accepts the Dall'Arzere attribution for the group, giving details of collections, inventory numbers of the relevant drawings, and bibliography. Matthias Wivel usefully listed the same information in his catalogue entry in Chris Fischer, with contributions by Matthias Wivel, *Italian Drawings in the Royal Collection of Graphic Art, Statens Museum for Kunst, National Gallery of Denmark. Venetian Drawings*, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, 2018, p. 52.

penwork, seen in the lavish accentuation of the contours, the streaming hair, and the rippling waves of hatching emanating from the form. This study chimes with our knowledge of Venetian practice in the pedagogic use of sculptural models, some small enough to be held in the hand as part of a drawing session. A painting of about 1530 by Bernardo Licinio depicting an artist with his students, including expensively-dressed amateurs, is fascinating for what it tells us about artistic practice as well as for the recognition that its Venetian viewers will be familiar with the ideas around *disegno* that the painting celebrates.²⁷ Since Licinio was not a pioneering artist, but explored themes proposed earlier by Giorgione, Titian and Palma Vecchio, one can conclude that this painting represents recognised modes of teaching, including the central importance of studying sculptural models, whether with chalk or with pen and ink. The master holds a cast or sculpture of an antique-style female nude, turning and half-rising, probably Venus bathing. A young pupil holds up his chalk drawing of the model. There are affinities in the turning movement of the sculpture with the Lucretia-type figure in the Uffizi drawing. Such a pen drawing could have emerged from the study of a similar *all'antica* Venus model, the result of contemplation on the potential of the pose.²⁸

Antique sculpture is dramatised in intriguing ways in a further pen study by the same artist, which arguably dates from the same time in the mid 1520s (Uffizi, GDSU inv.692E). The male figure with blown-back curly hair is given a lifelike air, accentuated by the variety and vitality of the pen strokes that evoke effects of light playing over flesh, as well as contrasts of texture in skin and drapery. The pace of the pen-work and the dense hatching in the same lapping, swirling mode around the figure as seen in the Lucretia study creates a powerful sense of movement and energy. Seated on a generic support, the figure has some drapery falling from his hips. The image is arresting and ambiguous: should it be read as a representation in inked lines of a nude youth, drawn from the life, who has taken up a pose

²⁷ Bernardino Licinio, *An Artist and His Students*, oil on canvas, 83 x 128 cm, Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland Collection, see Luisa Vertova, "Bernardino Licinio", in *I pittori bergameschi: Il Cinquecento*, 4 vols, Bergamo, Poligrafiche Boli, I, p.410, cat. no. 1. While the painting is given a suggested date of c.1535, it is closer stylistically to Licinio's *Family Group* (dated 1524) in the Royal Collection, and the costumes are compatible with a dating of the mid to late 1520s; see Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, pp. 17-23 and pp. 69-71 .

²⁸ The sculptural model of Venus in Licinio's painting is a composite, based on a classical marble, armless and headless (Museo del Prado, Madrid) that was re-worked by Antico in a bronze for Isabella d'Este , in which he endowed the figure with elegant missing parts, including the hairstyle seen also in the painting. For the identification of the sources see Bruce Boucher, "Artes Cognatae: The Relationship between Painting and Sculpture in the Time of Tintoretto", in *Jacopo Tintoretto nel quarto centenario della morte (Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, 1994)*, ed. by Lionello Puppi and Paola Rossi, Padua, Il Poligrafo, 1996, pp. 241-46. p. 241. In Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, p. 93, I observed that the sculptural model of the baby in Licinio's painting recurs in a pen study on another sheet in this Campagnola /Dall'Arzere group in the Uffizi, inv. 693E, as well as in a chalk study on a sheet now in the Princeton University Art Museum, inv. 44.272 by a Venetian artist of the 1520s.

based on the antique; or, as one of an actual sculpture, given the missing upraised left arm, perhaps an interpretation in youthful form of the agonised figure of Laocoön, seen from behind? ²⁹

This kind of playful exploration of antiquity coming to life is seen in a clumsier form in another drawing from the same workshop, but by a less competent hand in the articulation of the figure as a whole (Uffizi, GDSU inv.1763F; Fig. 5). Clearly, young artists were encouraged to experiment with responses to sculpture in Campagnola's circle, whether in Venice or Padua where Domenico had settled by 1527: here the exercise may relate to a model of the Belvedere torso. The broken forms of classical sculpture are made explicit by the stony area marking the loss of the right arm. Essentially, a nude of Michelangesque muscularity emerges from dense pen strokes, placed again with some drapery to cushion his seat, but in a woodland setting, with the addition of a leaping animal to suggest the illusion of human presence. The conceit of the drawing is that the viewer will be versed in arcadian images; the imagery refers to the young herdsman, draped or nude, in a rustic scene, but represents a fragmentary antique sculpture utterly in tune with Nature and the pastoral. Yet, the depiction is also arranged as a study taken from the life while the youth holds a difficult pose.

These representations themselves raise questions about the expressive nude body and how it may be understood through the exercise of making a drawing. Hovering behind them is the presumption that one has to learn through drawing how to fuse classical references with naturalistic effects; and that the drawing of the body should convey an air of lifelikeness such that the viewer might take it to be a study of a living model. While pen and ink predominated as a medium for copying antique sculpture, seen in innumerable studies by Italian artists from the early sixteenth century, and in the Campagnola/ Dall'Arzere group, Licinio's dramatisation of a Venetian drawing class shows contrasting studies in chalk as well as pen, ink and wash.³⁰ Side by side with robust pen studies after sculpture runs the tactile chalk or charcoal drawing on blue paper.

²⁹ See Beverly Brown, "Titian's Marble Muse: Ravenna, Padua and *The Miracle of the Speaking Babe*", *Studi Tizianeschi*, III (2005), pp. 19-45, for observations and many references on the ownership of antiquities and sculptural models by artists in early sixteenth-century Venice.

³⁰ See Arnold Nesselrath, 'I Libri di disegni di antichità. Tentativo di una tipologia', in *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana. III. Dalla tradizione all'archeologia*, ed. by Salvatore Settis, Turin, Einaudi, 1986, pp. 89-147.

A Venetian artist, probably Lorenzo Lotto, made a remarkably sensuous evocation of heroic strength in a charcoal drawing heightened with white chalk on blue paper when studying an antique model, a group of *Herkules and Antaeus* then in the Belvedere Courtyard. The same prototype appears as a large fragment in Lotto's *Andrea Odoni* of 1527 (London, Royal Collection).³¹ In the drawing, the artist exploited the softness of the medium, rubbing it with his fingers to achieve subtle tonal gradations, then blending the white chalk and finally allowing it to stand for the most strongly illuminated parts of the group. Both the sculpture's fragmentary nature and its placement in a curved niche are fully rendered, yet the approach is essentially a tactile one. The same sensuous use of charcoal and white chalk is seen in a broadly-handled - though considered - interpretation by Titian of a celebrated relief known as the so-called *Bed of Polyclitus* in the Palazzo Mattei, Rome. This layered, tonal study appears amongst other sketches, including studies inspired by the antique, on the verso of the large sheet with drawings from the posed model for the *Martyrdom of St Lawrence* (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 12907F) on which the artist was working in 1548.³² In translating the marble prototype, where the sleeping Cupid is sculpted in high relief as a well-formed youth with hefty shoulders and toned arms, Titian focussed on the relaxation of slumber, with the vulnerability and lassitude of the body emphasised through the soft materiality of the drawing.

Tintoretto's study of the body in drawing

This cross-over between drawing from the life and drawing from known sculptural models is particularly interesting in its relation to Tintoretto's practice. While he used a variety of casts and small-scale models after the antique, it is his ownership of a range of Michelangelesque models that has particularly incited art-historical analysis. The survival of much workshop material demonstrates the pedagogic method of learning by copying the master's drawings as much as the significance of Jacopo's response to, and uses of, the sculpture itself.³³

Nonetheless, certain autograph drawings reveal his imaginative engagement, notably his

³¹ Recently discussed in *Lorenzo Lotto Portraits*, ed. by Enrico M. Dal Pozzolo and Miguel Falomir, Exhibition Catalogue, Madrid, Museo del Prado, London, National Gallery, 2018, p. 270, cat. no. 25A (noting it was attributed to Lotto by Arnold Nesselrath); see also Ugo Ruggeri, *Disegni veneti dell'Ambrosiana*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1979, cat. no. 30, who had identified the group in the Belvedere courtyard as a source, and the presence of a reduced model in Lotto's portrait, but who had concluded that the drawing was probably not by Lotto.

³² See David Rosand, "Titian and the 'Bed of Polyclitus'", *The Burlington Magazine*, 117 (1975), pp. 242-245.

³³ Marciari, *Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice*, pp. 99-106, identified a number of sheets as copies of other drawings, based on elements such as the repetitive use of white highlights. Lucy Whitaker, "Tintoretto's Drawings after Sculpture and his Workshop Practice", in *The Sculpted Object 1400-1700*, ed. by Stuart Currie and Peta Motture, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1997, pp. 177-191 remains a fundamental study.

studies stimulated by Michelangelo's sculpture of *Giuliano de' Medici*, involving the deconstruction of the Florentine artist's invention in order to present it as a study from the life. In the case of a sheet in the Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford (JBS 759), the Michelangelo prototype became a starting point for an exercise in endowing a muscular nude with physical dynamism and emotional intensity (Fig. 6).

Tintoretto treats the study as if drawn 'dal vivo', with an immediacy suggested by the direct gaze, the nudity and momentary turn of the firmly-planted seated body. Over light indications in charcoal, he built up the modelling with vigorous strokes, accentuating the contours and allowing the powerful left arm to speak for the otherwise lumpy shorthand of the chest. Tintoretto sought a springing rhythm in the tension of the slightly hunched pose, which evokes defensive readiness, perhaps reflecting as he drew on the subject of the military leader. On the other side of the sheet, the 'lifelike' approach is similar but the modelling of the chest is more considered, as is the definition of the right hand, and the emotional temperature is slightly lower. The significant differences in pose compared with the final statue, such as the sharper twist of the upper body and the relative proximity of the hands, which appear to hold a sheet of paper, indicate either that Tintoretto owned a model that reflected an unknown preparatory phase in Michelangelo's thinking, or, more likely, that he generated an entirely new form, calling on memory to re-create the physiognomy of the head (which he studied several times elsewhere).

Indeed, some of his drawings after the head of Giuliano, and copies by students, evoke the tension between observation and idealisation, and the artifice of representation. Studies of the head in profile, captured in strong light, include an extensive liminal area of tonal hatching from which an ear and curls of hair begin to emerge.³⁴ If this is intended to depict a roughly-modelled part of a plaster cast, as some scholars assume, then it is an unusual exercise in faithfulness which does not in fact render the solidity of the cast. Instead, the studies attest Tintoretto's innovative approach where his primary concern is with sweeping directional movement that fills a substantial sheet, culminating in the grace of the classicising profile: the contrast of gestural modelling and delicacy of touch calls attention to the emergence of ideal beauty from inchoate form. Jacopo's dialogue with the sculpted figure of Giuliano de' Medici was an intensive one, which, unlike his studies after models of *Dawn*

³⁴ See the discussion in relation to the autograph study after *Giuliano de' Medici* in Frankfurt, with references, by Jacoby, *Raffaël bis Tizian*, cat. no. 88.

and *Dusk* from the Medici Chapel, sees him mining the figure for a hyper-naturalism that perhaps led to his choice of representing the heroic leader as a powerful nude, gripped by apprehension as well as determination.

Dating Tintoretto's studies after sculpture is particularly tricky, as the textual and visual sources attesting to his use of certain models do not always align; the artist undoubtedly had some material after Michelangelo in his possession or accessible for study in the 1540s.³⁵ However, his use of studies based on an early version of the bronze *Mercury* by Jacopo Sansovino for the Loggetta can be placed in this period, owing to the appearance of the motif, as Paola Rossi noted, in a painting of the early 1540s.³⁶ In an imposing sheet now in Rotterdam (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. I 225), drawn in front of the sculptural model with the supporting strut indicated, Tintoretto worked with careful consideration (Fig. 7).³⁷ He shaped the image with a variety of strokes and touches of black chalk that give authenticity to the form and conviction to the broad-chested tensed body, while also revealing a tendency to use short curling marks to suggest some areas of muscles beneath the skin. Turning the sheet 90 degrees, he roughly jotted an inventive sketch, first discussed in detail by Roland Krischel as a rare type of compositional drawing; a further single figure to the left, seen from behind, embodies a recollection of the *Bed of Polyclitus* that so interested Titian.

The close alignment of Tintoretto's manner of studying the body from sculpture and from the life may be seen in the way that his graphic language in the Rotterdam sheet resonates with that in a rare study from the posed model datable to the late 1540s (Paris, Louvre, inv.5385). By contrast with the standing sculptural figure, here Jacopo sought to explore the idea of a slumped, exhausted body that would also convey dignity and authority, with a devotional painting of the tortured Christ in mind (Fig. 8).³⁸ His close attention to the representation of a single suffering figure in a challenging pose, caught in strong light, is visible in the layered

³⁵ See Michiaki Koshikawa, "Draftsman", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, ed. by Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, Exhibition Catalogue, Washington, National Gallery of Art; New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 171-174, with many references.

³⁶ Rossi, "Schede per Jacopo Tintoretto e Jacopo Palma il Giovane", p. 66, noting that Tintoretto used the pose for the figure of Jupiter in a painting of the *Council of the Gods* (private collection). The model, with bent knee, also appears in his *Apollo and Marsyas*, believed to be for Pietro Aretino (Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum). See Roland Krischel, "Tintoretto e la scultura veneziana", *Venezia Cinquecento*, 6, 12 (1996), pp. 5-54 for further discussion. Other studies of the same model seen from behind are in Lausanne, Jan Krugier Foundation, inv. FJK 071, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. GB8464, Christ Church, Oxford, inv. JBS 767, and on a fragmentary sheet in the Ashmolean Museum, WA1940.7.

³⁷ Roland Krischel, "Tintoretto at Work", in *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, p. 68, and fig. 50.

³⁸ Black chalk or charcoal with white bodycolour, squared in black chalk, on blue paper, 373 x 242 mm, Louvre inv. 5385. Keith Christiansen, "Tintoretto's Christ Mocked", *The Burlington Magazine*, 148 (2006), p. 767-711; p. 768, identified the related painting.

modelling of the drawing, exploiting the full tonal range of the black chalk. He seems to have used a grid as an aid to placing the figure on the sheet, working over it as he built up the form, including the extensive use of white chalk. Jacopo's approach to modelling the structure of the body is close to that of the Rotterdam study of sculpture, while also demonstrating the knowledge and assurance that comes with observation from the life. The formal affinities at this time are telling, as in his pursuit of naturalism he generated representations that are intensely expressive, whether based on the life or on sculpture.

One of the distinguishing features in the drawings after the live model is the use of revision, as Tintoretto adjusted the pose, or re-considered elements that would be essential to the mood and narrative: this can also be seen in later studies such as that for the figure of Eve in *Christ's Descent into Limbo* (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 12977F).³⁹ In the Louvre drawing, fast-moving revisions were made to the head and shoulders, and to the right arm (fig. 8). The powerful pressure of the artist's hand on the black chalk can be observed here, in the gouging out of the facial features and in re-defining the right hand with its apparently helpless splayed fingers, while he used his finger to rub some white chalk in this area to push back an earlier form. Tintoretto's vehemence in revision suggests the need to imbue his study with persuasive power. Certainly, since this related to a painting presenting the single figure of Christ, it can be argued that this was an exceptional case and that such types of detailed study were unnecessary in relation to his multi-figured compositions.⁴⁰ This may be so, however another possibility is that Tintoretto made a variety of naturalistic studies of the body from the life in the 1540s and 1550s which have simply not survived, such as that discussed above for the corpse in *St George and the Dragon* (Fig. 4).⁴¹ He would have similarly moved between that type of thoughtful study and studies after sculpture using the same graphic

³⁹ Whistler, *Drawing in Venice*, cat. no. 46.

⁴⁰ Marciari, *Tintoretto's Venice*, pp. 57-58.

⁴¹ In Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, pp. 129-145, in the light of evident continuity of practice in the Venetian family workshop, I suggested that once Domenico Tintoretto took on the role of senior collaborator, he would have ensured that drawings were kept as the artistic capital of the workshop. Although many drawings have been lost, the existence (documented or actual) of certain types and groups suggest this motivating interest. Hence, the majority of Tintoretto drawings known today date from the 1570s and 1580s. It seems likely that the paucity of early works by Jacopo was a matter of lack of organisation and later accidental loss rather than evidence that he did not make drawings. I used the later analogy of Tiepolo drawings: survival is equally patchy from the first decades of the artist's career, whereas Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo compiled albums of drawings dating from the mid-1740s onwards, by subject, for reference and preservation. However, I did not infer from this that Domenico Tintoretto would have adopted the same method of organisation, merely that he deliberately gathered drawings to ensure the continuation of the studio as a respected business.

language. This practice in his early maturity would have laid the foundation for his understanding of the expressive body.

Artistic interest in the vividly life-like yet sculptural body in mid-1540s Venice is attested by a substantial drawing on blue paper of two male figures (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 717E) whose purpose is unknown; it has generally been accepted as a work by Titian (Fig. 9).⁴² Striking for its juxtaposition of an elaborately drawn protagonist with a sketchy yet characterful companion figure, the image is particularly interesting for its dialogue with relief sculpture – high and low – including the hatching that sets off the group. Yet the expansive form of the monumental figure is marked by a sensuous treatment of the charcoal and white chalk, which is layered and gently rubbed to create tactile effects of light playing over the soft flesh of the relaxed torso. The extensive revisions to the form, with the contours re-drawn and the angular features almost obliterated by deeply shadow, also involved using the white to push back and correct areas of the arms and hands. Undoubtedly, there are affinities with Tintoretto's mode of drawing and revision discussed above, while the vigorous, abbreviated rendition of the companion figure, taken in isolation, chimes with his graphic language. The sheet has had at times a suggested attribution to Tintoretto; I would argue that the soft treatment of the main figure speaks of a different sensibility, indeed demonstrating the same considered observation and exploitation of the medium for varied textural and light effects as seen in Titian's study of a helmet discussed above (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 566Orn).

Whether the drawing is by Titian or Tintoretto is perhaps an open question; in any case, this study may represent what Tintoretto might have learned of drawing practice from Titian, whether during the brief period in his workshop mentioned by early sources, or through viewing drawings. Certainly, Titian's approach to modelling the body was developed with great attentiveness by his student, Paris Bordone (see fig. 1). He clearly learned from Titian the mode of building up soft layers of chalk or charcoal with white to achieve strong effects of light and shade. A drawing that relates to a painting for the Ognissanti convent in Treviso of a nocturnal Resurrection scene shows Bordone studying the startled form of a soldier from

⁴² Wethey, *Titian and his Drawings*, cat. no. A-43, p. 201, had suggested a possible attribution to Tintoretto; Maria Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel, "Per un catalogo ragionato dei disegni di Tiziano", *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte*, 16 (1988), pp. 21-99; **cat. no. A-3, pp. 62-63**, as 'Attributed to Titian'; Rearick, *Il disegno veneziano*, pp. 102-103, as by Titian. Exhibited with secure Titian drawings in Oxford in 2015 (Whistler, *Drawing in Venice*, cat. no. 27), it was a subject of discussion at the Scholars' Day at the close of the exhibition, when some specialists revived the idea of an attribution to Tintoretto.

the life as a fully modelled nude in violent motion.⁴³ Again, there are various revisions before the artist arrived at the desired form, especially to the contours. Notably, he shaded the background both to recall the surrounding darkness and to emphasise volume through tonal contrasts, throwing the figure into high relief. Now cut, the sheet is of a substantial size (402 x 291 mm), perhaps in emulation of Titian's use of large sheets in drawing from observation, where the artist could stand back to review the study.⁴⁴

Unlike Bordone, Tintoretto did not pursue this type of fully-modelled study from the life. Instead, he developed a flexible, speedy design process of moving between painting and drawing, involving sketching with the brush directly on the canvas as well as incorporating figures previously studied in drawing.⁴⁵ The visual evidence of the drawings asserts that for Jacopo the body is truly a site for experimentation, yet this has to be grounded in an understanding of the body's capacities and limitations. This can be learned through informal rather than meditative sketches from the posed model.

Evidence of Jacopo's search for this understanding of the body is seen in a figure study in the Uffizi (GDSU inv.12983F) taken from a youthful model bending forward, his arms outstretched; the revisions to the pose and the indication of a minimal loin cloth suggest it is taken from the life (Fig. 10). The addition of the bishop's mitre to the completed study identifies the relationship with St Augustine in the *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* of c.1545 (Musée des beaux-arts, Lyon).⁴⁶ In fact, Tintoretto did not need to make such a preparatory study because the position of Augustine behind the main group, together with the stiff, heavy cope over folds of drapery, would conceal both the foreshortening of the body and the definition of the arms as studied in the drawing. Instead, Jacopo must have been making a sequence of studies from the same young man with other saintly figures in this painting in

⁴³ Louvre, Inv. 12212; the painting, perhaps dating from the mid to late 1550s, is in the Museo Civico, Treviso: see the lengthy discussion by W. Roger Rearick, catalogue entry in *Le siècle de Titien*, revised edition by Michel Laclotte and Giovanna Nepi Sciré, Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994, cat. no. 147, suggesting it might have been based on a lost Titian drawing for the lost *St Peter Martyr Altarpiece* for the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice.

⁴⁴ Bordone's *Seated Woman* (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 1805F) is 413 x 257 mm (my measurements in all cases here); Titian's *Helmet* measures 447 x 357 mm; his *Studies of legs for an executioner* (Uffizi GDSU inv.12907F) is 409 x 252 mm, while his *Young Woman* (Uffizi GDSU inv. 718E) is 418 x 265 mm. All sheets have been cut down to some extent.

⁴⁵ Ana María González Mozo, "El concepto de dibujo en Jacopo Tintoretto. Análisis de los recursos técnicos utilizados en algunos cuadros del Museo Nacional del Prado", in *Jacopo Tintoretto. Actas del Congreso internacional, Museo del Prado 2007*, ed. by Miguel Falomir Faus, Madrid, Museo del Prado 2009, pp. 165-177; see also Dunkerton, "Tintoretto's Underdrawing".

⁴⁶ Marciari, *Tintoretto's Venice*, pp. 50-51, observes that Tintoretto reinforced the contours of the upper part of the body in the drawing, since that essentially would be visible in the painting.

mind, probably the prominent St John the Baptist leaning in, baring his muscular torso, and the thrusting St Mark, who moves forward, arms also outstretched. Variations on a rhythmic, forward-leaning and turning pose made in the same drawing session would serve for the gesturing St Mark, the turning St John, and the stiffly-clad St Augustine. Thus, Jacopo's habit of study at this time through observation from the life gave him the vocabulary to deploy his protagonists coherently.

We may imagine a similar drawing session made with the *St Augustine Healing the Lame* of c.1549 in mind (Vicenza, Musei Civici). This striking painting features seated or reclining male near-nude pilgrim figures, their limp, weary forms awaiting revival through the miraculous healing powers of the visionary saint. Jacopo seems to have efficiently created a devotional painting with convincingly lifelike figures based on a series of studies of a seated youthful male model, whether upright, turning, or leaning backwards. Echoes of Michelangelo can be detected particularly in a foreshortened reclining bearded man in the middle ground, and Tintoretto's study of sculpture surely informed his thinking.

Nonetheless, a type of informal figure drawing from the life underpins this painting: this type is seen in a study of a cross-legged seated youth usually attributed to Jacopo but almost certainly by Domenico Tintoretto (London, Victoria & Albert Museum) that may reflect continuing studio practice.⁴⁷

Continuity is a key strategy in ensuring the success of an expanding business, and it was just as important in the Tintoretto workshop as in that of Veronese. While the stimulation of visual dialogue between master and talented student undoubtedly contributed to the evolution of the 'house style', nonetheless a sound training in the master's graphic and pictorial methods was essential for the student's developing role. Rather than viewing the drawings from the life that Domenico made in his early career in the mid-1570s and 1580s as forging a new path in the Tintoretto studio, I have argued that they document the type of training that Jacopo needed his trusted collaborators to undergo in order to fulfil the demands on his busy workshop.⁴⁸ By that time, as an extraordinarily imaginative and talented artist, Jacopo could

⁴⁷ Inv. Dyce 246; W. Roger Rearick, "From Drawing to Painting: the Role of "disegno" in the Tintoretto Shop", in Puppi and Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto nel quarto centenario*, pp. 173-181; p. 179, n. 25, convincingly proposed this as Domenico Tintoretto, linking it to the seated woman at the right in the *Last Supper* at San Rocco, c.1579-80, which he also saw as by Domenico. Typical of Domenico's anecdotal and observational spirit is the interest in where the model is seated, with indications of a straw or textile mat. Interestingly, though without noting any relationship, Rearick discussed in the same article (*ibid.*, fig. 2, and n.12) a study by Jacopo of a seated figure in a similar cross-legged pose (Jan Krugier Foundation, inv. FJK 072).

⁴⁸ Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, pp. 137-139.

use drawing in spontaneous as well as in considered ways, and could call on memory for his knowledge of the human body. Moreover, he had developed shorthand studies of figures in impossible poses from easily manipulated wax or clay models: these would generate protagonists who could be shown in tension or rapid motion in complex narrative paintings. These methods, together with his improvised procedures in painting, were potentially risky for students to adopt. In creating the Tintoretto industry and the Tintoretto brand, sound training was important, hence the intensive studying of sculptural models by his students, and the more regular practice of drawing from the posed model found in Domenico's formative years. This was also a time when Tintoretto – unusually - took on many commissions for subjects involving the female nude, including mythological and allegorical themes. This required studio collaboration as well as studio training in comprehending the body.

Domenico's very different artistic personality emerges in his early studies from the life, which are characterised by his more literal-minded and anecdotal concerns. The technique remains the same: black chalk or charcoal, sometimes touched with white on blue or occasionally white paper. In some studies of the reclining nude, his concerns move beyond the figure to descriptions of the surroundings or to extra details of landscape or additional attributes. This is seen for example in an elaborate drawing of a female nude, with the folds of the bedclothes carefully observed and a receding line of trees creating a setting beyond the highly-worked figure (Uffizi GDSU inv.13001F).⁴⁹ Similarly, Domenico transposes observational studies directly into paintings, without disguising their origins as drawings from the posed model: this is obvious in his early painting of *Venus, Mars, and the Three Graces*, where Venus for no apparent reason clutches the knot of some hanging drapery (Art Institute of Chicago, inv.1929.914).

This type of observational study is seen in a sheet in the Louvre (inv.5383), where Domenico drew a seated woman with one arm upraised in a difficult turning pose, her legs widely spread; he indicated the bed or covered support beneath her, and her grasp probably on a suspended rope to hold the pose during this drawing session (Fig. 11). This chunky figure study, squared up, seems to relate to the Tintoretto studio painting of *Susannah and the*

⁴⁹ Rossi, "Disegni della bottega", 2011, p. 64, and Whistler, *Drawing in Venice*, 2015, cat. no. 57, p. 138. The extensive heightening in white chalk goes over the squaring.

Elders of the 1580s (Paris, Louvre) and one may assume that further studies were made from the model in the same session.⁵⁰


Some of Domenico's chalk drawings from the life of male nudes are given attributes, such as a foreshortened seated figure, legs outstretched in front of him who is placed in a rocky landscape with the indication of a crucifix on the ground, an attribute of John the Baptist (Uffizi, GDSU inv. 7499S).⁵¹ This type of male nude study, created in the studio probably in the 1590s, shares the characteristics of Domenico's female nudes in the bumpy curving contours, decisive strokes for internal modelling and in the treatment of elbows or toes. Another male nude in a tricky pose, lying on a bed with one arm upraised, shows extensive revisions, with white lavishly added. The man wears the standard minimal modesty pouch and probably held a rope to keep his arm upright (Louvre, inv. 5378).⁵² Here Domenico adjusted the drawing to correspond to the subject he had in mind, that of Prometheus – he sketched an eagle at the right, added genitals over the clothed area, and indicated possible framing lines for the composition. Domenico's more angular, decisive manner of drawing from the model, seen in a range of strikingly intimate female nude studies from around 1600 onwards, is also reflected in his approach to the male body. We find the same unflinching gaze directed at the undignified prone foreshortened body in a study in Frankfurt (inv.4420), and in a more strongly modelled study with the male model slightly re-positioned, in Chicago (Art Institute, inv. 1996.23).⁵³


The 'dal vivo' drawing: education and naturalism

What may we conclude on the practice drawing 'dal vivo' in Tintoretto's lifetime? First, Venetian artists regularly made observational drawings of the body or of heads and limbs for

⁵⁰ For the painting, see Robert Echols and Frederick Ilchman, "Toward a new Tintoretto Catalogue, with a Checklist of Revised Attributions and a New Chronology", in *Jacopo Tintoretto. Actas*, pp. 91-150, p. 134, no. 279, as designed by Jacopo, painted with studio assistance in the 1580s, and noting the connection with Domenico's Louvre drawing. For the drawing, see Paola Rossi, "Jacopo Tintoretto. Disegni respinti, precisazioni attributive", *Arte Veneta* 64 (2007), pp. 73-117, p. 104, no. 57; it came from the collection of Filippo Baldinucci, together with other female nudes by Domenico in the Louvre (inv. 7513, 7514).

⁵¹ Rossi, "Disegni della bottega", fig. 58, p. 86.

⁵² Black chalk with white on blue paper, 302 x 420 mm, similarly with a Baldinucci provenance. For remarks by Catherine Loisel in 2012, see <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/detail/oeuvres/6/7725-Promethee-enchaine-un-aigle-lui-devorant-le-foie>, accessed 18 June 2020. 

⁵³ Julia Schewski-Bock, *Von Tizian bis Tiepolo: Venezianische Zeichnungen im Städel Museum*, Petersberg, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2006, cat. no. 17, pp. 68-69, with many references; Suzanne Folds McCullough and Laura Giles, *Italian Drawings before 1600 in the Art Institute of Chicago: A Catalogue of the Collection*, Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, 1997, cat. no. 311. 

preparatory purposes. Their investigation and exploration on paper would ensure that the painted form could be realised with assurance and expressiveness.

This practice is evident in Titian's analysis of tensed muscular legs caught in flickering light with a prominent foreground figure in the *Martyrdom of St Lawrence* in mind (Uffizi, GDSU inv.12907F), or in Tintoretto's thinking and re-thinking of the poignant figure of Eve mentioned above. Similar concerns emerge in the Veronese workshop with different types of drawing 'dal vivo', from the master's compelling head study in black and red chalks of c.1569-70 (Louvre), relating to the *Miracle of St Barnabas* (Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts), to the many studies of figures or details from the life by Benedetto and by Carletto Caliari. For example, a study by Carletto in charcoal with traces of coloured chalks and some white heightening of an elderly man who would appear in the *Martyrdom of St Catherine* of 1594-95 (Treviso, Museo Civico) includes the artist's note for reference, **Brazo/ trop grande** ('the arm too large'), ensuring an appropriate correction when it came to using the figure in the painting.⁵⁴

Likewise, Palma Giovane studied poses from a model with specific figures in mind, such a seated turning man in his *Gathering of the Manna* in S. Giacomo dell'Orio, Venice, dated 1575, where a broadly-handled black chalk study in Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett (inv. C1980-86) tests the potential of the form, with the model supporting the weight of his upper body on his left arm and hand (Fig. 12).⁵⁵ Clearly, Palma had adopted a Tintorettesque graphic language for his studies from the life by the mid-1570s, despite his exposure to other ways of drawing when he was in Central Italy, demonstrating the imprint of Jacopo's teaching and example.

In addition, studying the posed model could have an educational purpose: it involves concentration, analysis, and emulation of the 'house style' or of the distinctive graphic language of the master. A substantial group of drawings in rather poor condition held at the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, include studies from the life by Palma Giovane and others, made from the mid-1570s and 1580s onwards, some preparatory for paintings and others forming a repertoire of poses. Like the Dresden sheet, they are Tintorettesque in character,

⁵⁴ On the drawings by Veronese (Louvre, inv.4679) and by Carletto (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, inv. DIS00293), see Thomas Dalla Costa, catalogue entries in *Paolo Veronese. L'Illusione della realtà*, ed. by Paola Marini and Bernard Aikema, Exhibition Catalogue, Milan, Electa, 2014, respectively cat. no. 2.5, pp. 130-131, and cat.no. 6.17, pp. 360-361.

⁵⁵ Stefania Mason Rinaldi, *Palma il Giovane. L'opera completa*, Milan, Alfieri, 1984, p. 154, cat. no. D29, fig. 30.

recalling Palma Giovane's frequenting of the studio at a time when Domenico Tintoretto and others were intensively studying the body – and indeed Palma warmly acknowledged his artistic debt to Jacopo and his close friendship with Domenico when he left some drawings to the latter in his will in 1627.⁵⁶ However, these studies also show how Palma continued to develop this approach to drawing from the life, which, in turn, was taken up by many of his students.

Drawings from the life were often preserved in the workshop, as is clear from Domenico Tintoretto's will of 20 October 1630, where such studies were specified ('150 schizzi dal naturale di figure maschile, e 50 di femminili').⁵⁷ Domenico's intention to institute an *accademia* was recorded by Ridolfi at a time when such informal gatherings of Venetian artists to draw from the life were familiar. Already we find an assertion of communal identity when Marcantonio Bassetti recalled 'nostra accademia', meaning our communal drawing class, in a letter of 1616 to his teacher, Palma.⁵⁸

Where substantial Venetian holdings survive, it seems to be the result of the growing *virtuoso* culture of the early seventeenth century, in which accomplishment in drawing was prized. This led to the appearance of the non-professional – the art-loving *dilettante* – in some of the academies or classes for studying the posed model run by senior artists. The albums of mediocre drawings compiled from the *accademia* held in Venice around the 1610s and 1620s by Filippo Esegrenio (active 1594-1631), include some work by amateurs – and significantly, Esegrenio was primarily an agent and a dealer who cultivated a network of prosperous or noble collectors. A considerable group of drawings from the life, many by his own hand, was gathered in the 1660s by Pietro Paolo Brunacci (1630-1704), an amateur artist who frequented the classes held in Venice by Giuseppe Diamantini. The Palma Giovane group and other drawings from the life housed in Bergamo were collected and bound into an album by Count Giacomo Carrara, whose friend Francesco Maria Tassi frequented the life drawing classes in the recently established Venetian academy in 1761.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Stefania Mason, "Gli affanni del collezionista", in *Studi di storia dell'arte in memoria di Feliciano Benvenuti*, ed. by Chiara Callegari, Padua, Il Poligrafo, 2005, pp. 157-165; p. 159; for the publication of the Bergamo group, see Gabriele Mandel, *Palma Giovane. Disegni inediti dell'Accademia Carrara di Bergamo*, Bergamo, Edizioni Monumenta Bergomensia, 1964.

⁵⁷ Stefania Mason, "Domenico Tintoretto e l'eredità della bottega", in *Jacopo Tintoretto. Actas*, pp. 84-90; p. 88.

⁵⁸ Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, p. xxx.

⁵⁹ Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, p. 153.

Finally, it is intriguing that just when documentary research established that drawing from the life was a common practice in mid and late sixteenth-century Venetian workshops, the existence of the same practice was contested in art-historical studies concerned with Florentine and Roman art. For example, Florian Härb has strongly questioned whether Giorgio Vasari ever drew very much from the life, emphasising instead the importance of sculpture and of drawing from the imagination (counter-arguments to this view have been put forward by Rick Scorza).⁶⁰ In relation to the education of artists in late sixteenth-century Rome, John Marciari has argued that drawing from the life was not a regular pedagogical or artistic practice. Rather, artists took a more cerebral approach in generalised or idealised studies taken from the imagination, based on knowledge of the body achieved in their early careers or developed through the study of figural drawings by other artists.⁶¹

In the end, this takes us back not so much to the traditional opposition of Tuscan or Roman *disegno* and Venetian *colore*, but rather to differently inflected views on nature and the natural in these artistic centres. Running alongside central Italian practice is the theoretical discourse that views the mere transcription of nature as an inferior form of art. Nature had already been improved by the ancients in the idealised and beautiful forms of classical sculpture, therefore the study of the antique and an informed understanding of classical art should impel the transformation by the artist of the unmediated, imperfect forms found in nature. By contrast, for sixteenth-century Venetian artists and intellectuals, nature – or Nature – is an active agent, a creative force that conjures beauty and harmony from the chaos of raw materiality.⁶²

This Aristotelian view of ever-inventive nature in a perpetual state of becoming or of inventiveness inflects Venetian thinking on the relationship of art and nature. Nature is a great painter, as Paolo Pino argued, and Pietro Aretino had famously described Nature's brushwork in a Venetian sunset. If Nature is the sensuous sign of the divine, bearing witness

⁶⁰ Florian Härb, "Dal vivo or Da se: Nature versus Art in Vasari's Figure Drawings", *Master Drawings*, 43 (2005), pp. 323-338; Rick Scorza, review of Florian Härb, *The Drawings of Giorgio Vasari*, Rome, Ugo Bozzi, 2015, *Master Drawings*, 55 (2017), pp. 369-392.

⁶¹ John Marciari, "Artistic practice in late Cinquecento Rome and Girolamo Muziano's Accademia di San Luca", in *The Accademia Seminars. The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c.1590-1635*, ed. by Peter M. Lukehart, CASVA seminar papers, 2, Washington, D.C., 2009, pp. 197-223.

⁶² See the interesting reflections in Mary Garrard, "'Art more Powerful than Nature'? Titian's Motto Reconsidered", in *The Cambridge Companion to Titian*, ed. by Patricia Meilman, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 241-261; Garrard was unaware of the work of Arthur Steinberg and Jonathan Wylie, "Counterfeiting Nature: Artistic Innovation and Cultural Crisis in Renaissance Venice", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32, 1 (1990), pp. 52-88, which complements some of her views; Steinberg and Wylie also argue for a specifically Venetian formulation of the relationship of nature and art, especially pp. 80-81.

to God's wisdom, the artist takes on this creative mantle in empathy with nature.⁶³ Indeed, the literary conceit of Nature as a portrait of the divine, a model for artists to emulate, was turned on its head in the 1530s and 1540s in Venetian writers' praise of Titian, whose art miraculously created a new, superior nature. The continuation into the later sixteenth century of this understanding both of the animating power of nature and of the artist as a dynamic agent of nature is seen in an elaborate landscape drawing with a seductive Venus-type nude at her easel, by Paolo Fiammingo, one of Tintoretto's close associates (London, British Museum, inv.1946,0713.755).⁶⁴ This witty and allusive representation of Nature as a painter, its Aristotelian inscription suggesting that it may have been intended as a design for a print, recalls how, in the culture of the *poligrafi*, theoretical complexity could be communicated with an air of ease and entertainment.

With the high status of 'the natural' in Venetian art, drawing has to give animation and intensity to the human form. Memory, knowledge, and observation are called upon in making drawings of different types, whether from the life or from sculpture. Tintoretto and other Venetian artists infuse studies from sculpture with pulsating energy, or with a sense of palpable flesh. This goes hand in hand with capturing the dynamism or the tenderness of the human body through working from the life. Ultimately, drawing the human body at its most Venetian seems purposefully aimed at achieving the 'dal vivo' effect, hence is immediate and transformative.

⁶³ For Pino on God and Nature, see Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura* (1548), in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento*, ed. by Paola Barocchi, 3 vols, Bari, Laterza, 1960-62, Vol. I, 1960, in particular pp. 105-106, and p. 120; on Nature as a painter, *ibid.*, p. 113. Alessio Santinon, *La natura del colore. I fondamenti filosofici della pittura tonale veneta*, Verona, Colpo di Colore, 2010, especially pp. 75-90, explores Daniele Barbaro's views on nature and art, and the idea of painting as a kind of natural philosophy which infuses Paolo Pino's *Dialogo*.

⁶⁴ Whistler, *Venice & Drawing*, pp. 32-33 with references.