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AN EVANESCENT CORPUS
OF SELF-PORTRAITS
BY ANNIBALE CARRACCI IN THE UFFIZI

In 1670 Annibale Ranuzzi wrote to Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici that there were simply no portraits of the Carracci to be had, neither autograph self-portraits nor portraits of them by other artists¹. By that time, Cardinal Leopoldo was several years into his grand project to acquire self-portraits of all the great artists for his Galleria. He was still avidly seeking an autograph self-portrait of Annibale Carracci and indeed trying to obtain self-portraits of all the Carracci family: Agostino, Ludovico, Antonio and Francesco. His frustrating quest is abundantly documented in his correspondence with his agents in Rome and Bologna, whom he urged to persist in their search for authentic examples. Annibale Ranuzzi, and afterward Giuseppe Maria Casarengi, combed Bolognese collections following up leads and eventually procuring some portraits that were acceptable to Leopoldo, but these were compromises. Paolo Falconieri and Domenico Maria Corsi conducted the search in Rome, and they too found some examples to acquire for the Florentine collection. An autograph self-portrait by Annibale was an elusive quarry. When Ranuzzi had gotten hold of a self-portrait of Agostino in 1664 that was first thought to have been of Annibale, it was referred to as the fourth Carracci self-portrait in Leopoldo's collection, but it may well be the sole possibly autograph Carracci self-portrait that Leopoldo ever obtained². It should be said that Leopoldo and his agents were anything but credulous or uncritical buyers of Carracci portraits, and the correspondence and other documents make it clear that they were aware of serious doubts and questions about the works they were able to attain. The agents were frank in the appraisals they offered to Leopoldo. Questions were raised at the time about whether the various obtainable portraits were in fact by the hand of the artist, especially in the case of Annibale, but also regarding Ludovico and Agostino. And in cases where the hand of one of the Carracci was accepted, doubts were sometimes expressed as to whether the sitter who was portrayed was the same artist who painted it.

Ranuzzi's assessment of the situation from the vantage point of Bologna in 1670 is interesting, attesting that the market for Carracci portraits evidently had been picked clean. A couple of years later, Casarengi turned up a possible candidate for



1

Annibale Carracci, *Miniature Self-Portrait*, ca. 1590/95, oil on panel, 13.6 x 9.6 cm. Florence, Uffizi Gallery (inv. 1890, no. 8990).

a self-portrait of Annibale, a miniature, and Leopoldo bought it, yet its authenticity was equivocal even at the time³ (fig. 1). In Rome, the elusive genuine article does seem to have existed in the firm grip of Gianpietro Bellori. A savvy diplomat, Bellori politely put off Leopoldo's agent Corsi, who recognized that the project to pry away the precious Annibale self-portrait, which had come from the collection of Francesco Angeloni, was futile: later Casarenghi wrote "ma sarà difficile que quest'uomo tanto devote della scuola de' Caracci voglia privarsi di cosa che egli tiene in sì gran veneratione"⁴. More than a century later, in 1797, Tommaso Puccini informed Grand Duke Ferdinando that they were trying to find better self-portraits of both Paul Rubens and Annibale Carracci to acquire for the Galleria, a tacit acknowledgment that Leopoldo's desire to obtain a complete set of autograph self-portraits of the Carracci had remained thwarted⁵. Documents published in Wolfram Prinz's comprehensive book on the collection in the Uffizi amply attest to the array of problems attending the self-portraits not only of Annibale but also of Ludovico Carracci. These documents even register the curious specimen of a purported portrait by Annibale of his wife, even though we have no indication he had a wife⁶.

In Prinz's monumental and meticulous study of the documents, it is often difficult to sort out which of the several self-portraits that eventually entered the collection a given letter refers to, because they are all described in more or less similar terms as self-portraits. A dizzying confusion sets in when one collector, for example Bellori, may have owned more than one.

Occasionally, scholars of the past few decades have added to the muddle either by connecting references in documents to different objects - which is understandable when multiple paintings are designated by the same description - or because they are more credulous, or perhaps more optimistic, than the experts of the seventeenth century, and more inclined to accept doubtful or contested attributions in the self-portrait collection than was Leopoldo himself. That is the case especially with the Uffizi's version of Annibale's *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, which was understood even centuries ago to have been based on an original that was acquired for St. Petersburg from the Crozat collection. The two versions are discussed below, but it is worth noting that modern scholars sometimes treat them in effect as interchangeable, reproducing the Uffizi version rather than the Hermitage painting when discussing the iconography of the self-portrait.

It is a little ironic that historically, in sorting out the likenesses of the various Carracci, especially of Annibale, Agostino, and Ludovico, Leopoldo's collection of self-portraits served as a touchstone and index. For example, the butchers in Annibale's painting of the *Butcher Shop*, in Christ Church Picture Gallery, are described in two British guidebooks as portraits of the family - the descriptions differing, however, on the identifications of many of the individuals. One of the guidebook authors



2

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, ca. 1604, oil on panel, 42.5 x 30 cm. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum (inv. no. GE-148). (Ph: © The State Hermitage Museum).

indicates that the likenesses are excellent, as can be judged based on comparison to the portraits in the Florentine collection⁷.

Narrowing the focus to self-portraits of Annibale Carracci in the Uffizi in Leopoldo's time, four paintings are purported to conform to this description. Four is quite a lot of self-portraits of a single artist in one museum collection. It is not clear whether this number registers the intensity of interest in Annibale's visage, or prestige of this Bolognese painter who was undoubtedly in the canon of great artists, or whether it is effectively a byproduct of Leopoldo's serially frustrated effort to find a good and true specimen of the self-portrait. Thwarted, Leopoldo kept trying. Each one of the supposed self-portraits of Annibale presents complicated problems, and in the end, after considering all of the Uffizi's purported examples, the resulting corpus is evanescent. Of the others of the Carracci family, the best of the self-portraits is by Agostino, perhaps the one Malvasia describes as in the manner of Tintoretto and having been in the hands of Ludovico⁸. The self-portrait of Ludovico in the Galleria is not by his hand and it does not appear that the ones of Antonio or Francesco are autograph either.

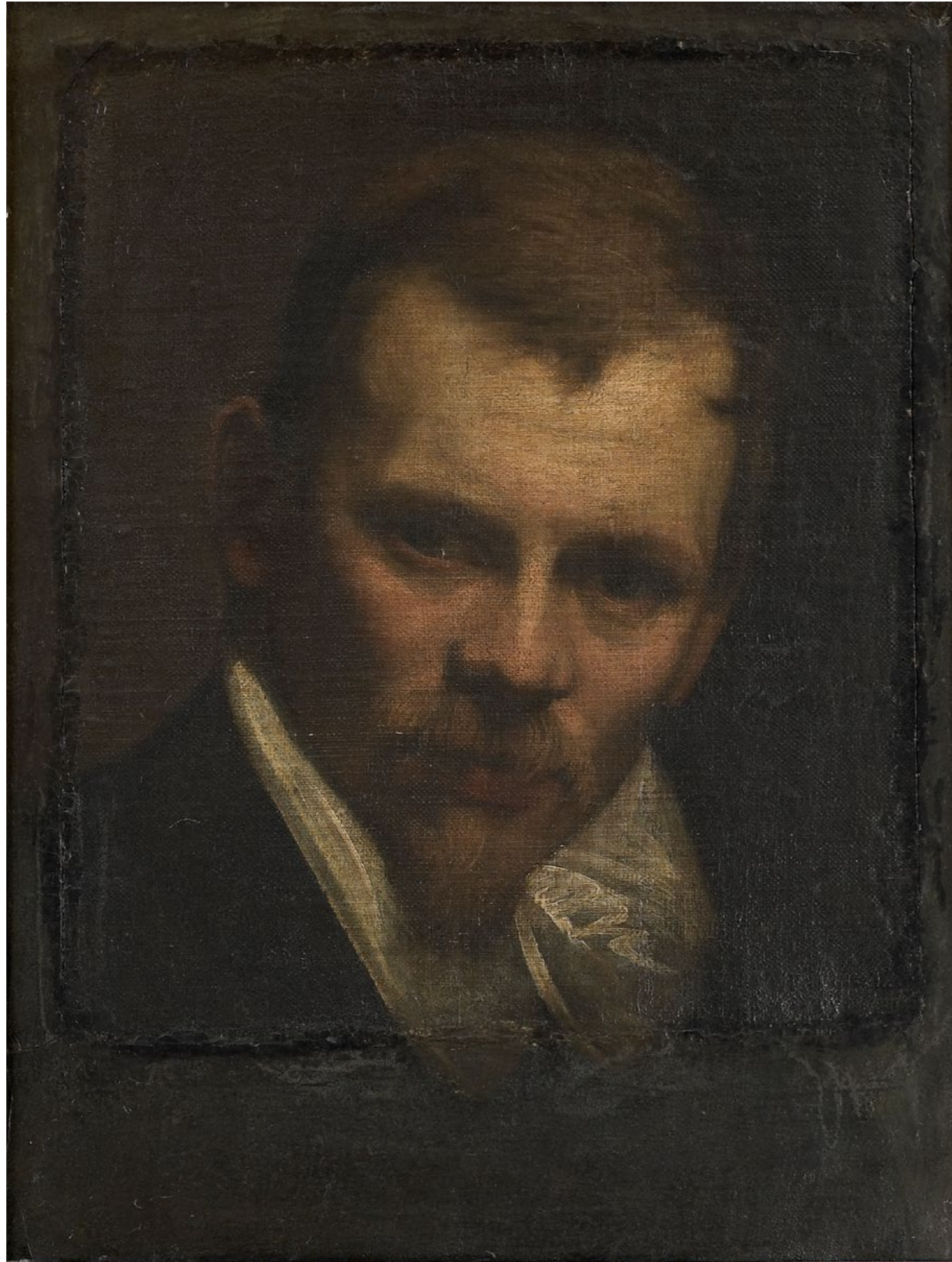


3

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, ca. 1604 or a later copy, oil on panel, 36.5 x 29.8 cm. Florence, Uffizi Gallery (inv. 1890, no. 1774).

The cache of problematic self-portraits of Annibale does provide an opportunity to take a critical look at an array of objects that individually, and, in aggregate, have contributed an image of the artist that is undeniably out of focus. Perhaps in the process of a devolution of confidence in attributions, authenticity, and identifications that ineluctably result from the study of this group of portraits emerges a concomitant sharpening of focus and an occasion to think about what the objects pushed out of the bounds of this category tell us if considered on their own terms.

Annibale Carracci's famous composition, his *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, is a paragon of the self-conscious, self-referential presentation that Victor Stoichita designates as meta-painting⁹ (fig. 2). As such, it seems to have transcended its own material embodiment. Leopoldo had a beautiful version of this composition that is often reproduced in scholarly publications as Annibale's self-portrait, presented without qualification regarding its autograph status. The prime version of this composition, however - the painting with the strong claim to be the autograph original - is the panel in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The Uffizi version is on canvas and of slightly smaller dimensions (fig. 3).

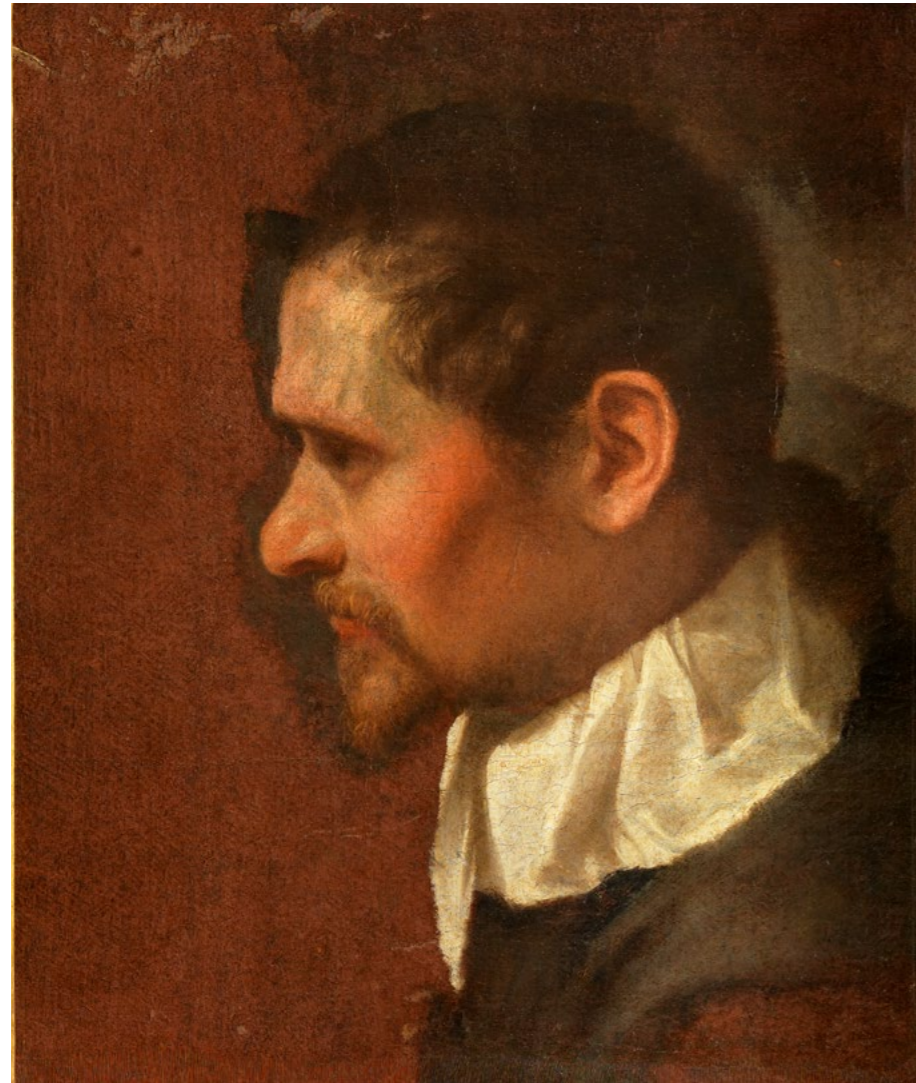


4

Annibale Carracci, *So-called "Romantic" Self-Portrait*, ca. 1590/91, oil on canvas, 71 x 56 cm. Florence, Uffizi Gallery (inv. 1890, no. 1803).

Acquired as an original before 1674 by Leopoldo, according to Prinz, it is probably the self-portrait that appears as n. 623 in Leopoldo's inventory¹⁰. Prinz speculated that Bellori may have been in possession of the original and had it copied to satisfy Leopoldo, but there is no corroborating evidence; at the same time, Prinz hesitated to rule out the Uffizi version as an original. The Hermitage panel was acquired from the Crozat collection in 1772. When the Uffizi version was exhibited in the landmark "Mostra dei Carracci" in 1956, the catalogue registers a strong doubt that it was by the hand of Annibale and records Denis Mahon's suggestion that it might be a seventeenth-century Flemish copy of the Hermitage painting¹¹. Donald Posner's influential catalogue raisonné designates the Uffizi version as a copy¹². With the exception of Prinz and then Evelina Borea, who in 1975 maintained that the Uffizi canvas was autograph¹³, scholars have tended to regard it as a copy. It is difficult to think of any circumstance in which Annibale, who was not known to repeat or copy his own work in any other case, would have made a faithful copy of his self-portrait. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine a skilled seicento painter making an excellent copy, and easy to understand the motives and demand for such a copy. The blur persists between the two pictures, however; it has certainly been easier to get better photographs of the Uffizi painting than of the Hermitage version and sometimes the Uffizi canvas was reproduced when scholars discussed the *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, as if the image itself had become almost generic and it did not matter if the painting under discussion was by Annibale's own hand. In 2007 Daniele Benati included the Uffizi painting in his exhibition on Annibale and, in the catalogue entry, he reexamined the evidence and supported Borea's opinion, quoting her argument, "non differisce e non discade rispetto all'opera carracesca indiscussa"¹⁴. At times, debates on attributions of individual works by the Carracci threaten to submerge any worthwhile scholarly research or insight into their practice. Nevertheless, the Hermitage and Uffizi self-portraits are not, in the end, interchangeable. There is no doubt about the primacy of the Hermitage painting, and the dramatic *pentimento* in this version should not be underestimated. What may be most interesting about the Uffizi canvas is how a deft early copyist could convey so much of the haunting power and originality of the concept. Without seeing the two works side by side, however, it is difficult to confirm if the portrait within a portrait in the Hermitage painting is indeed more remote and guarded in expression as it appears to be compared to the more frank, open impression in the Uffizi canvas. At present the Uffizi's version is cleaner and clearer than the one in the Hermitage, making it easier to decipher a somewhat murky picture, as will be discussed below.

Most of the examples of Annibale's self-portraits have long dwelled in the heavily populated, hazy margins of the artist's *oeuvre*. A canvas that depicts the sitter from the neck up is described by Donald Posner as "romantic," probably because of its nebulous atmosphere and the sitter's evocative expression¹⁵ (fig. 4). The "romantic portrait" may,



5

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait in Profile*, ca. 1590/91, oil on canvas, 46.5 x 39.6. Florence, Uffizi Gallery (inv. 1890, no. 1797).

or may not, be the self-portrait by Annibale listed as no. 220 in the 1675 inventory of Cardinal Leopoldo de Medici¹⁶. It is disconcerting that the sitter in the romantic portrait does not in the least resemble the man in the Hermitage/Uffizi *Self-Portrait on an Easel*. Going back to the documents, it apparently was recognized as early as Leopoldo's time as representing a different artist. As Prinz and Borea agreed, this must be the painting Filippo Baldinucci wrote about in a letter of 1675, confidently ascribing it to Antonio Varsillacchi, called l'Aliense¹⁷. Following Baldinucci, Richard Spear noted the sitter's resemblance to an engraved portrait of l'Aliense, but he nevertheless accepted Annibale's authorship¹⁸. In the same letter, Baldinucci discussed another example in the evanescent corpus, a *Self-Portrait in Profile* probably to be identified as no. 260 of the 1675 inventory¹⁹ (fig. 5). Baldinucci sustained the attribution of the profile portrait as by Annibale. The attribution to Annibale was accepted by Posner, who recognized him



6

Albert Clouet, *Annibale Carracci*. From Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (Rome: Mascardi, 1672).

as the sitter²⁰. Borea expressed doubts about both the attribution and identification²¹. Posner's opinion notwithstanding, and even if the painting is autograph, it is difficult to see how it can portray the same man as the Hermitage/Uffizi *Self-Portrait on an Easel*. There is no resemblance between the heads or countenances of the sitters.

The last of the Uffizi group is a very small oval self-portrait, a miniature measuring only 13.6 x 9.6 centimeters (fig. 1). It seems to be solidly a portrait of Annibale, but the attribution of the miniature to Annibale himself - supported by Evelina Borea - was rejected by Donald Posner and doubted by Richard Spear²². Donatella Sparti later did some digging in the archives and discovered that this was the miniature acquired in the spring of 1673 as a self-portrait of Annibale by Casarengi, Leopoldo's agent in Bologna. The miniature was reported to have belonged to the Cavaliere Donzi of Modena²³.

The miniature conforms to a type established in Albert Clouet's engraved portrait, which was used as the image of Annibale in Gianpietro Bellori's biography of the artist (fig. 6). Sparti reproduced two painted versions of the Clouet type, one in the museum in Rouen and the other in the collection of the Duke of Beaufort in Bad-



7

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait with Other Figures*, ca. 1588/90, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera (inv. 795).

minton²⁴. It is likely that all of the images of this type - the Uffizi miniature, Clouwet's engraving, and the two other copies - derive from a missing original that was once in Bellori's own collection. It is likely, but not certain, that Bellori's original, now lost, was the self-portrait Annibale painted on a palette. Bellori had acquired this extraordinary object from Francesco Angeloni, who presumably had gotten it directly from the artist. Thus the Uffizi miniature may record the self-portrait on the palette, to which I will return. But the support, of course, is not a palette.

As the evanescent corpus of the Uffizi collection suggests, the situation grows still more complicated beyond the collections of the Florentine museums. In the Brera, for example, is a superb self-portrait with three additional figures, which has been attributed to Annibale since it appeared in the early nineteenth century (fig. 7). Donald Posner claimed that "resemblance to other, though later self-portraits by the artist leaves little doubt that Annibale is represented"²⁵. But the question of discerning the likeness of an individual in a four-hundred-year-old painting is



8

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait with a Hat*, 1593, oil on canvas, 24 x 20 cm. Parma, Galleria Nazionale di Parma (inv. no. 329).

perennially vexed, a subjective exercise. Posner's assertion of the resemblance here to Annibale in the Hermitage self-portrait leaves this writer in doubt. How can this nose be the same as that of the sitter in the Hermitage self-portrait? Granted, the Hermitage painting is perhaps almost twenty years later (Borea dates it earlier), but the basic structure of a nose does not normally change so much over time. In any case, the attribution of the Brera canvas to Annibale has been questioned by other scholars, including Daniele Benati²⁶. The composition, the relationship between the figures, seems provisional and additive in a way that points more to Ludovico than Annibale. The Brera painting raises too many problems for it to fit comfortably into a corpus of Annibale's autograph self-portraits, much less to serve as an anchor.

The last of the group with a compelling claim to be a self-portrait of Annibale comes with a provenance that goes back no further than the early nineteenth century. Very small, this *Self-Portrait with a Hat* in the Galleria Nazionale in Parma is inscribed with the date "17 di Aprile 1593" (fig. 8). Annibale would have been thir-



9

Annibale Carracci, *Study for the Self-Portrait*, ca. 1575-80,
black chalk heightened with white on grey-green paper, 38 x 25 cm.
Windsor, Windsor Castle, Royal Library (inv. 2254).
(The Royal Collection © 2009, Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II)

ty-three years old. It is not difficult to accept the man portrayed with large, dark, moody eyes and rounded jaw as the same sitter, seen some years earlier, in the Hermitage *Self-Portrait on an Easel*. The Parma *Self-Portrait* and the Hermitage *Self-Portrait on an Easel* can then serve as the touchstones for Annibale's likeness. Moreover, even if it is not autograph, the miniature in the Uffizi depicts a sitter who resembles the one in the anchoring pair because it probably closely copies a lost original.

In addition to the painted examples, two drawings by Annibale are considered to be self-portraits. They can be situated in relation to the most secure of the painted self-portraits. A large study in Windsor brings to life a young man, with his head tilted off-axis, further enlivened by exciting chiaroscuro effects (fig. 9). A medley of chalk strokes is deployed to show off the skill of a virtuoso draftsman. The effect is of an unusual spontaneity. The face and features are close to the Parma portrait, but in a younger man. The drawing seems to represent Annibale, himself still a boy, and to be by his hand. Most scholars continue to agree on this despite Denis Mahon's proposal of an attribution to Ludovico Carracci in the 1956 Carracci exhibition²⁷.

It is possible that this Windsor drawing might relate to the academic tradition in its Bolognese iteration with which the Carracci are inextricably, pioneeringly, entwined. There exists a fair number of head studies drawn of young men in a similar format, by the Carracci family as well as by their pupils and associates. Such portrait drawings emanating from the early years of the Carracci's practice may have been part of an early idea of the Carracci's Accademia dei Desiderosi, later Accademia degli Incamminati, to emulate the established academic tradition of memorializing members in portraits that would constitute a display of professional association and achievement. The drawings would have constituted a gallery of members of the academy, an example of work that would have been expected from each of them as part of the process of formation of an academic institutional identity. In this, the drawn portraits of artists would have represented a kind of ancestral project to Leopoldo's gallery.

Utterly different is a drawn self-portrait in the J. Paul Getty Museum, a small sketch of Annibale framed in an oval (fig. 10). The frame is decorated with unsettling, ragged motives that seem to parody the conventions of elegant adornment ubiquitous in frames for portraits of illustrious men in prints and in sculptures. I published an article arguing that Annibale has made his likeness in his tomb, an effigy self-portrait. It is identified and discussed as a caricature, and as trenchant, sardonic, and bitter²⁸. The Getty self-portrait was probably drawn when the artist was suffering physically and psychically in Rome during the difficult years following the Farnese Gallery project. A pessimistic streak and a preoccupation with death and immortality in this drawing chime with the themes of the Hermitage *Self-Portrait on an Easel*.



10

Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait*, early 1580s,
pen and brown ink 13.5 x 10.8 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (96.GA.323).

Autograph or not, the two paintings in the Uffizi group that bear a relation to an original outside the collection offer a chance to reflect on models of self-portraiture that were especially searching and innovative. The miniature forms a bridge to the self-portrait that disappeared, the one that had been in the collection of Francesco Angeloni, where it was seen by two Englishmen: Philip Skippon, who noted in January of 1665 that it was painted on a palette; and Richard Symonds, who described it as five or six inches long sometime between 1649 and 1651²⁹. Angeloni's self-portrait of Annibale on a palette passed to Bellori. It was in his prized

possessions when Leopoldo's agent in Rome, Paolo Falconieri, unsuccessfully tried to buy it in 1666. For Annibale to paint his likeness on a palette was an extraordinary gesture. Victor Stoichita discusses the Hermitage composition as the ultimate self-portrait as meta-painting, a literal painting within a painting³⁰. I interpret the lost self-portrait on the artist's palette as the ultimate identification, an absolute conflation, of painter and painting: of painter as painting in the sense of the act of painting, as *techne*; and painter as painting in the sense of image; and of painter as paint, as in the subsuming of the maker in his materials. The normal relations between the creator and his creation collapse. There is no distancing of representation or reflection. The subject and the object are the same. The painter is made of paint. The means and the material are one. Annibale is on the road to the Vera Icon, a self-portrait as touch relic. The way in which this object was passed from the artist, probably directly to Angeloni, and then to Bellori, who would not part with it, reflects that status. This likeness on the palette would become the true image of the artist for posterity, and it is no wonder that Bellori would use it for his biography of Annibale, that Clouwet would disseminate it in prints, and that it would serve as the model for so many later copies, including the Uffizi miniature.

Though it may be a little shaggy around the edges, and even if there is only a handful of examples, and only one possible candidate in the Uffizi, it can be said that there is a corpus of self-portraits by Annibale - and that in itself is an important claim for an Italian artist circa 1600. That an artist recorded in images an analysis of the image of self, and in a gamut of moments and moods and versions, is not a minor or typical phenomenon; the practice looks back to Albrecht Dürer and forward to Rembrandt van Rijn. What ties together all of the self-portraits by Annibale that have a fair claim to authenticity is a rare modesty in the self-presentation, a deliberate eschewal of pretension or flourish. There is no effort to impress. There is no trace of striving, no ambition toward a high social status. Annibale is always in his working clothes, forgetful of his attire. More the artisan than the liberal artist. It is interesting that this is how Annibale was described by early writers, and in contrast to his cousin Ludovico Carracci, who was said by Malvasia to have dressed in the elegant robes of the university professor. Annibale meets our gaze frankly. He seems to not perform his identity, as is typical in self-portraits of this period, but seeks merely to record it, to capture nature as it appears, without idealization. With the exception of the Getty drawing, where he manipulated rhetoric for purposes of irony and subversion, Annibale tamped down the rhetoric as far as he could.

Where the Uffizi version of the *Self-Portrait on an Easel* is easier to "see" or "read," it draws attention to that which is different in the original in St. Petersburg. The Uffizi version faithfully replicates the surface of the composition, but it is missing



11

Annibale Carracci, *Study for the Self-Portrait with Easel*, ca. 1603-4, pen and brown ink on paper, 24.5 x 18 cm. Windsor, Windsor Castle, Royal Library (inv. rl 1984). (The Royal Collection © 2009, Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II)

the evidence of its backstory, as it were, which lurks in the Hermitage panel. The key to understanding that liminal evidence is the fascinating preparatory drawing for the composition in Windsor³¹ (fig. 11).

In the Hermitage picture, there is a significant *pentimento*, which Posner noted. No trace of this is found in the Uffizi version. The *pentimento* indicates that Annibale painted the composition now visible over a standard format portrait. Very likely the face he covered was his first idea for the self-portrait. Beneath the scumbling can be seen an eye, most clearly discernable to the lower right of the bright square. A little harder to distinguish are the nose and beard to the left of the canvas on the easel. Once seen it is hard to ignore or forget the face. It haunts the subsequent painting like a ghost. The preliminary drawing suggests how the ghost started out. At the top of the sheet, Annibale sketched a portrait of a man wrapped in a mantle at a window, or possibly as a picture in a frame, in three-quarter view. It is in the vein of elegant *cinquecento* portraits. On the upper left is what seems to be a round mirror with a figure reflected in it (there can be no doubt that Annibale knew Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, and if not from the original, then at least as it was described in Vasari). Below is a second rectangle with a compositional sketch of the interior of an artist's workshop showing in perspective the beamed ceiling and left wall. It sets out the basic configuration of the Hermitage composition. There seems to be an opening, a window? Or a framed painting? In it we see a figure similar to the one sketched above, facing the other direction. These two figures, formal portraits in frames, or seen through a window, disclose how the ghost portrait started out. Stoichita describes it as a process of zooming out and morphing into a self-portrait on an easel.

The drawing brings to light how the portrait on the painting on the easel plays with the posed portrait figures in the upper rectangle and in the window-shaped embrasure in the composition. The pose of the figure in the easel portrait is less elegant, more literally faithful to the intrinsically awkward mechanics of an artist looking sideways in the mirror while his body faces his canvas. Detectable too is the beginning of the hunch in the head and neck, which Annibale exaggerated in his caricature self-portrait at the Getty, and which contrasts with the more erect posture of the upper drawn portrait. It is a slight hunch that persists in the Hermitage easel portrait, a head forward into the neck, rather than held erect, and a posture that conveys an unguarded, unpretentious, natural presentation.

In the painting, the window or painting at the upper left acquires an ambiguous identity. It has no frame, no contours, no depth. Its edges are blurred. Can it even be read as an opening, as a window, as it usually is? It is like a patch of light that glows on the wall. If it is a window, one sees a golden light through it, but it is strangely one way: it does not admit any light into the room.

In the sketch there is a pack of alert and active hounds, perhaps barking at the painting (at the likeness of their master?)³². In the painting, the pack dwindles to one scruffy lap dog on spindly legs who peers out at the viewer at the left of the easel. The cat survives in a similar pose beneath the easel. And the Hermitage painting adds a painter's signature attribute of the palette hanging from the easel³³.

The self-portrait depicted on the easel in the Hermitage picture is insistently an object whose dimensionality and materiality are indicated by the unpainted tacked edge of the stretched canvas. It rests solidly on the shelf of the easel, and it is even shifted a little awkwardly in perspective as the easel is set a little aslant to the picture plane. The portrait itself is plain and frank, stripped of rhetorical flourish. The artist is not wrapped in an elegant mantle in the manner seen in the preparatory drawing, but rather seen in his working clothes, a white collar and unadorned jacket. Stripped out of its context in the painting, this excerpt of the portrait on the easel became the source of Annibale's likeness in numerous prints and paintings.

How should it be read? The Hermitage painting has inspired brilliant scholarship beyond Stoichita. Matthias Winner identified the mysterious figure in front of the "window" in quotes as a term, a figure that marks a boundary³⁴. Daniele Benati read this as an artist's mannequin, Malvasia's *burattini*³⁵. This is a more plausible and expected accoutrement in an artist's workshop, and yet it also surely evokes the form of a term; Annibale gave too much thought to what he painted for this to be accidental. Ulrich Pfisterer sees the ambiguous form as the figure of the artist himself, having walked away from his canvas, while also accepting the formal and metaphorical allusion to a term. To greatly reduce the complexity of Winner's argument, the term marks the boundary of the land of the living. It is worth noting that Annibale was intimately familiar with the figure of the term in classical antiquity, having brought many statues of terms to life so brilliantly in the Galleria Farnese. Annibale knew well the liminal realm occupied by the term, and pointedly, there is nothing of the festive cheer of his Farnese Gallery terms in his self-portrait.

Thus, the *Self-Portrait on an Easel* is an essay on immortality. Annibale anticipated the audience for this painting: the people who would view it long after he died. The artist has left his studio. He is present, he lives on, in his painting and in his fame. Annibale was a painter's painter. He portrayed himself as painting incarnate. Not as a living being, but as a man whose life was painting. A man who was proud of the potential of the art of painting and who recognized the magnitude of his own skill. He did not aspire to a fancier social position for himself, or for his profession, but fought for the respect of his art. Annibale's ambition was for painting that could conquer time and distance, and even death by making present what is absent, by bringing what is dead to life, by making two dimensions into three, creating animated beings in space. In the *Self-Portrait on an Easel*, he realizes

these ambitions for painting, making his absent self present in his studio, bringing himself to life even in death.

Artists' self-portraits of the early modern period tend to make a claim, usually with a flourish: here I am. Annibale's portrait operates in multiple temporalities that precede and follow such a performance of self. Annibale's portrait conveys the sequence of first-person messages to a spectator of his own time, but more forcefully to the spectator of the future: not, here I *am*, but rather here I *was*, when I painted this. Annibale declares, as you - the spectator - look at this painting, I am *not* here; here is my studio that now is empty of me. The artist has finished his painting and he has departed, but when? Has he only just departed, is the paint not yet dry? Is the spectator Annibale's contemporary? What about the term and the association with the boundary between life and death? Is this a painted farewell? Still dwelling in this painting four centuries later is a melancholy that does not flinch from a truth. The artist addresses his viewer in the long durée: As you look at this, what is left of me is my painting. The painting reifies my presence and my absence. Painting is my fame, my immortality.

NOTES

1 "Ritratti de' Carracci non se ne trovan assolutamente che sian di propria mano, né d'altri pittori". See Prinz 1971, p.77. Prinz's magisterial volume on the documents related to the Galleria is the best and most comprehensive source for the correspondence and inventories; all subsequent scholarship depends on Prinz's publication.

2 Id., p. 76; Sparti 2001, 71, pp. 60-101.

3 This attribution of the miniature is not certain, but it is the only example in the collection to have a plausible claim to be an autograph work by Annibale.

4 Prinz 1971, p. 90.

5 Id., pp. 219-220.

6 Id., pp. 83, 175.

7 Walpole - Vertue 1849.

8 Malvasia 1678, pp. 243, 389, 416.

9 Stoichita 1997, pp. 212-16.

10 Prinz 1971, p. 83.

11 Cavalli 1956, p. 183.

12 Posner 1971, p. 65.

13 Borea 1975, pp. 19-20.

14 Benati - Riccomini 2006, pp. 80-81.

15 Posner 1971, p. 27.

16 Borea notes several possible, but mutually exclusive, references to this picture. The "romantic portrait" is on canvas attached to panel (a fact not known to Posner) as in Leopoldo's inventory the support is identified only as panel: Borea 1975, pp. 15-17.

17 Prinz 1971, p. 180 and Borea 1975, pp. 15-17.

18 Spear 1975, pp. 503-508.

19 Prinz 1971, p. 235.

20 Posner 1971, p. 27.

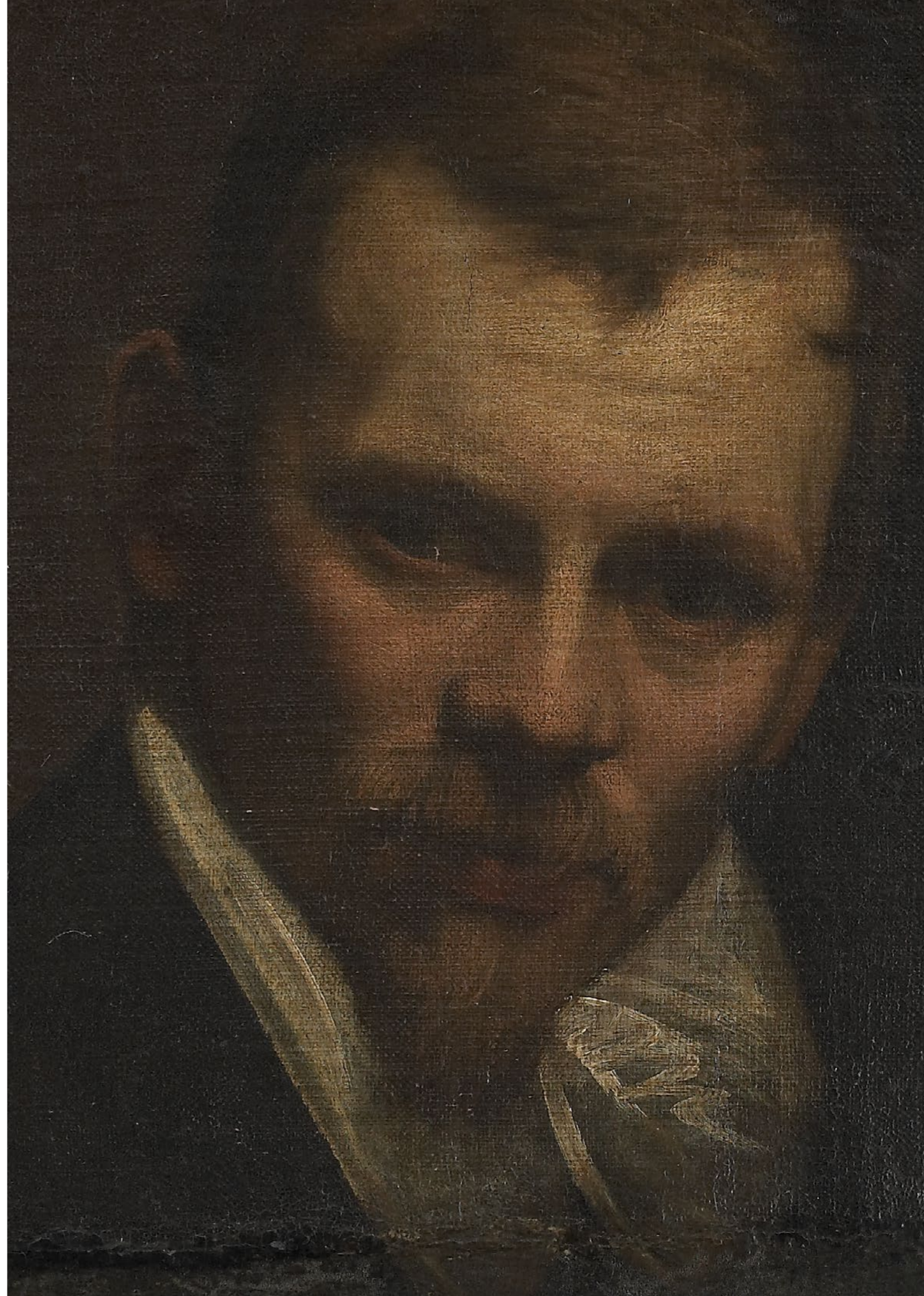
21 Borea 1975, pp. 18-19.

22 Borea even considered the possibility that it might have been concocted in Bologna in response to Leopoldo's avidity for such a thing, but thought the quality too high to support this hypothesis: Borea 1975, pp. 20-22.

- 23 Sparti 2001, pp. 71–79. This writer knows the miniature only in photographs, but considers the attribution plausible. If it is a copy of Bellori's lost original, and it is autograph, this might be a unique instance in Annibale's *oeuvre*.
- 24 Sparti 2001, pp. 75–76.
- 25 Posner 1971, p. 13.
- 26 Benati – Riccomini 2006, (note 4), p. 82 (cat. no. 1.4).
- 27 In the most recent comprehensive catalogue of Ludovico Carracci's drawings, Babette Bohn rejects Denis Mahon's attribution, further solidifying Annibale's authorship. See: Bohn 2004, p. 602.
- 28 Feigenbaum 2010, pp. 19–38.
- 29 Sparti 2001, p. 66.
- 30 Stoichita 1997, pp. 212–16.
- 31 Windsor Castle, Collections of Her Majesty (inv. rl 1984). See: Benati *et al.* 1999, p. 274 (no. 88; entry by Kate Ganz) and Benati – Riccomini 2006, (note 4), p. 82 (cat. no. 1.4).
- 32 Ulrich Pfisterer, in a trenchant entry on the portrait, links it with the anecdote of the self-portrait by Dürer that was so realistic that his dog barked at it or licked it. See: Pfisterer – Rosen 2005, p. 70.
- 33 Philip Sohm has written about the palette, arguing that it displays the primary colors of the classical artist: Sohm 2017, pp. 994–1025.
- 34 Winner 1989, pp. 509–15.
- 35 Benati – Riccomini 2006, pp. 80–81.

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