

## Domenichino, Albani and Viola

The pictures Domenichino painted before and during the stay with the Agucchi brothers seem to have been independent easel paintings, done to show his application and inventiveness with small figures in action. The Doria *Flight into Egypt* is a signal example of his early mastery of the new idiom of landscape with small figures, but at the same time the decorative context in which it was placed meant that it would not have had the prominence it has enjoyed in modern times - as the work of Annibale. It was the 'viva efficacia di esprimere gli affetti che fu sua propria, destando i moti e movendo i sensi', as Bellori put it (1672, p. 290), and this speciality would in the biographer's words be extremely sought after 'per essere hoggi in grandissima stima'. His early landscapes with figures had an immediate following among some of the other Bolognese painters who had come down to Rome, and the genre began to compete with the landscapes of the Northern artists like Bruegel and Brill, and Baglione writes of the goldsmith Bartolomeo Loto who made works of this kind in his workshop - they must have been quite precious editions of the new landscape form. But the main development of the Carraccesque landscape was in fact decorative, and we know of a number of interiors - and exteriors - where the new style was fashionable, from patrons like Odoardo Farnese, Pietro Aldobrandini, Scipione Borghese, Alessandro Peretti Montalto, Vincenzo Giustiniani, Cardinale Pio. The scale varied greatly, some of the individual paintings were quite large, and there were others painted outside 'a fondo di viali' to increase the illusion of *rus in urbe*. The trouble with it is that its popularity outstripped its survival, for most of the schemes were dismantled by the next generation, and individual canvases taken abroad without any record of who did what. These schemes, starting with the chapel of Palazzo Aldobrandini al Corso, were undertaken by the Carracci school and successors, and the composite nature of their working practice meant that individual hands were not credited with separate work and it was almost impossible to say who did which part. Sometimes there was a deliberate counterpoint between Northern painters, and especially Brill, and the new Bolognese tendency. There are several personalities involved here apart from Domenichino, from Albani to Antonio Solari, Antonio Carracci to Sisto Badalocchio Giovanni Battista Viola to Pietro Paolo Bonzi, but one in particular is of striking importance, because he became a long-term collaborator with Domenichino and is responsible for some of the achievements usually attributed to him. An important work of 1607 with figures introduced by Albani, done for Alessandro Peretti Montalto, by this landscape specialist Viola, opposite a contrasting *Port Scene* by Paul Brill, enables us to see the true character of his style and how it became a major component in the new Carraccesque landscape.

Domenichino in the meantime refined his skills as a painter of history subjects on a small scale, and having a colleague who was more than proficient in doing landscape detail, took advantage of this to produce grand landscapes that raised the bar for the landscape idiom that was identified with the Carracci workshop. Both of them were very conscious of the example of the compositional designs of Agostino Carracci, who remained a strong source also for the figural designs of the decorations of the walls of the Farnese Gallery that had yet to be completed. Many of the landscape paintings were indeed targeted by French collectors of the next generation as examples of the 'Carracci' style, like the two Ludovisi landscapes of *Hercules and Cacus* and *Hercules and Acheloo*s now in the Louvre (Inv. 370, 371). The *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt* (Louvre, Inv. 364) was also a Ludovisi painting, and it is often believed that the *Landscape with Erminia and the Shepherds* (Louvre, Inv. 70) was too, but in that case it is not known where it was before being sold to Louis XIV by the banker Jabach in 1662 with the attribution to Annibale Carracci. These works are usually confidently dated to the period of the Ludovisi papacy but there is nothing to tie them securely to this period, and there was much about the Villa Ludovisi that the pope's nephew took over from its former owner, Duke

Giovanni Antonio Orsini. The collaboration with Viola (who died August 10 1622) indicates that they probably date from at least a decade earlier. Although these were always regarded in France as by Domenichino, they must have been among the many landscapes by Viola that Grimaldi saw in Paris. Two other paintings of this kind made their way to France later, *Diana and Callisto* (given to Louis XIV by Cardinal Spada in 1674, now Louvre Inv. 207, background by Paul Brill) and the *Hunt of Diana* (Wrotham Park, Byng Collection) that came from the Giustiniani collection<sup>1</sup> and in all probability from the Sala di Diana at Bassano Romano, where Domenichino painted in 1609/10. These ambitious landscapes were the next stage in the evolution of the Bolognese landscape as it had emerged in the Palazzetto Farnese, and at the Montalto estate by the Baths of Diocletian, and were targeted by French collectors as soon as they became available for sale. And that these paintings should be confused for the work of the Carracci was not surprising considering that Domenichino continued to call himself by their name 'Vive della scuola dei Carracci della quale fece sempre professione' as Mancini wrote (in 1619/21, *Considerazioni*, ed. 1956 I, p. 243). The relationship with his landscape assistant was to be continued in the commission from the Aldobrandini for the frescoes of the Sala di Parnaso at Frascati, (1616/18) where Domenichino introduced the figures to landscapes painted by Viola (and Alessandro Fortuna) with minimal indications for their layout.<sup>2</sup> 'onde si partì ugualmente il poco danaro, che come a paesista si diede' as Malvasia puts it (Felsina Pittrice, 1841 ed, II, 226/27). The partnership that they enjoyed should not be seen as diminishing the leading role that Domenichino played in creating the new genre through a whole series of paintings that made up the new Bolognese landscape. The collaboration continued throughout Viola's lifetime and made a significant difference to the character of the classical landscape tradition especially because he was able to accompany the figure subjects on which Domenichino devoted so much obsessive attention, with the freely composed detail that took its cue from the variety of devices that they learnt from the studio where Agostino Carracci had been the principal teacher. To connoisseurs and dealers who depended on naming a single author as responsible for the entire invention it represented (and still does) an almost intractable problem, especially marked in seventeenth century France where the taste for Bolognese landscape had such enthusiastic following. One of the real problems has been that paintings that have come down to us have usually carried the single name of an artist and it has been difficult to come to terms with the idea that parts may have been done by others, despite the consideration that this was a common practice.

Giovanni Battista Viola (1576-1622) is better known as a result of Richard Spear's study in 1980, his essay in the 1996/97 Domenichino exhibition catalogue at Palazzo Venezia, and the

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<sup>1</sup> The two paintings are of an unusual size (160.5 by 211 cm, and 161 by 205 cm) and share the subject of the story of Diana.

<sup>2</sup> The series of pen and ink drawings at Windsor are, as I have already pointed out (1988 C. Whitfield, 'Les paysages du Dominiquin et de Violo', in *Monuments et Mémoires*, Fondation Eugène Piot, LXIX (1988, p. 121-22) copies of the frescoes done probably at the time of Dominique Barrière's engravings (1647); Domenichino's original designs were in chalk, like the 'Apollo and Daphne' in the *Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe*, Spear, Domenichino, 1982, pl. 187.

recent (2002) essay by Belinda Granata,<sup>3</sup> and a wide range of work is now recognised as his. We can appreciate that there are limitations to his independent work, as we see it in the pair of paintings in Budapest that Spear published, and the two that he also brought to light in the Bowes Museum. There is not much more in the somewhat disjointed compositions of the



paintings Belinda Granata (and Francesco Gatta) published from the Patrizi collection, from a group that were in Villa Montalto, and the final fresco in the Stanza dei Paesi at the Villa Ludovisi is quite consistent with these paintings over a decade earlier. The landscape features of the *Deposition*, among the lunettes from the Aldobrandini chapel, with the cliff on one

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<sup>3</sup> On Viola, see especially R. E. Spear 'A Forgotten Landscape Painter, : Giovanni Battista Viola', in *Burlington Magazine*, CXXII, 1980, p. 218-313, essentially reprinted in his volume of collected studies *From Caravaggio to Artemisia, Essays on Painting in Seventeenth Century Italy and France*, 2002, p. 451- 485; his essay 'Domenichino e Viola' in the catalogue of the *Domenichino* exh., Rome, 1996/97, p. 163-169; C. Whitfield, 'Les paysages du Dominiquin et de Viole;', in *Monuments et Mémoires*, Fondation Eugène Piot, LXIX (1988, p. 61-128; B. Granata, ' Giovanni Battista Viola: Nuove ricerche sul "Pittore dimenticato"', in *Annali dell' Università di Ferrara*, n. 3, 2002, p. 287-295. Francesco Gatta, Dieci quadri di provenienza Peretti Montalto rintracciati nella collezione Peretti Montalto', *Bollettino d'arte*, 94, 2009, I, p. 59-75. A few more details of Viola's presence in Rome are published by R. Vodret in 'Alla ricerca di Ghiongrat, Studi sui libri parochiali romani (1600-1630) Rome, 2011, p. 34/35.



side, a distant townscape and a hillside with his typical winding path on the left, make it clear that he did contribute to this project, which from 1605 was under the supervision of his close friend Albani. These details are rather like those of the single **Landscape** at Villa Borghese, which has been loosely connected with a payment of 1613; it seems unlikely that Albani would have left his mate Viola out of a project like this that took eight years (1605-1613) and several pairs of hands to complete. The repetitions Viola did of others' works, like the pair in the National Gallery, drawn from the originals by Domenichino now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, the smaller versions he did of *St John Baptising* (based on their collaborative painting in Cambridge) and the *Landscape with St John Preaching*<sup>4</sup> in the Uffizi, and the large versions (10 palmi or 230 cm) he is recorded as having done of the four landscapes in the Stanza dei Paesi at Villa Ludovisi<sup>5</sup>, presumably in the last year of his life, giving the lie to the much repeated assumption that he gave up painting after he joined the Ludovisi household as their *maggiordomo*. He had a tendency to use others' figures, and sometimes he gives the impression of being drawn to the example of Antonio Tempesta's horsemen, with rather plodding mounts.

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<sup>4</sup> Spear, 1980, Figs 34/35: the St John Preaching is based on the larger painting that Viola did in collaboration for the Giustiniani series, which is in Richard Feigen collection in New York, shown in the Domenichino show at Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1996, V, p, 534/35

<sup>5</sup> Listed in the undated Colonna inventory quoted by B Granata, loc. cit 2002, p. 295



The little *Landscape with a Tabernacle* in the Galleria Doria, for instance, which spawned at least a couple of early copies (also usually seen as by Domenichino) has many of Viola's idiosyncratic features: the rather typical clouds, usually cumulus with horizontal nimbo stratus ending in a curved lift, the waterfalls, and the trees and foliage, as well as the chunky horseman and his mount, a flock of sheep rather too small in the scale of the picture. It seems as though Viola here borrowed the figures from an engraving *Landscape with Travellers arriving at an Inn* (Bartsch 1176) by Antonio Tempesta, who was one of the most prolific landscapists of



this generation. But he must have been close to Domenichino when he did this picture and there is great refinement in the figure group that suggests he played a part in finishing it. It is clear that Viola's own skills for painting figures was limited: Grimaldi reported that as he did not possess the ability in this field, he limited his invention to trees, foliage and distances, leaving open spaces for others to fill with their inventions (Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, 1841 ed., p. 90). Viola was a specialist, and corresponded to what Edward Norgate described when he wrote about landscape painting 'But to reduce this part of painting to an absolute and entire Art, and to confine a mans industry for the tearme of Life to this onely, is as I conceive an Invention of these later times, and though a *Noveltie*, yet a good one, that to the inventors and Professors hath brought both honour and profit'<sup>6</sup> So when there are figures in these landscapes that differ from those we know are characteristic of Viola, we can assume that they were introduced by others. We should be looking at the landscape elements as being the common thread in Viola's career, and they may be found in other works by Domenichino and Albani where his presence is not yet recognised. - it would be surprising if he did not collaborate frequently with the latter, given the closeness of their relationship. He did

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Norgate, *Miniatura, or the Art of Limning*, [1650] ed. J.M. Muller and J. Murrell, New Haven and London 1997, p. 83.



evidently paint landscapes with an exotic setting, like the pair in Budapest of which the *Landscape with Turkish Merchants*<sup>7</sup> is reproduced here, along with a drawing in the Louvre *Turks Hunting Birds* that is clearly related in style. It does look as though Viola was reluctant, like Canaletto, to give features to his own staffage figures, who are usually facing away from the viewer. The framing element of the cliff in the Budapest painting is quite typical, as is the hill in the middle distance, with trees and foliage against the horizon, with castellated buildings and towers mainly in the distance, all elements that he would have learnt from Agostino and Domenichino.

But it is still not possible to acknowledge his collaborative contribution, his work alongside others and most especially for and with Domenichino, with whom he seems to have had a continuing relationship throughout his stay in Rome, and his mate Francesco Albani. It does seem as though his collaborations upped the standard of his work, and sometimes it would appear that they jointly created a new kind of landscape; Domenichino was actually continuing a process that is more readily acknowledged in the Carracci business in Bologna, where it is often very difficult to identify separate hands. Like Caravaggio and the genre of still life with which he is associated, Domenichino did not aim to be remembered as the originator of a new kind of 'classical' landscape, because this was a genre that did not fulfil the ideals of figure painting that were evidently much more highly regarded, and the outlines of the landscape idiom he worked had actually been absorbed from his teacher Agostino Carracci even before he arrived in Rome. But more than other Seicento partnerships he and Viola created a kind of landscape that had a great following, particularly among collectors of the next generation. With the increased demand for his handiwork Domenichino was evidently more than willing to take advantage of a dependable assistant, and although this means that some of the paintings have a hybrid character, we should credit both the direction he gave and the distinctive character his assistant brought to the Bolognese landscape in Rome. It does also explain Viola's chameleon-like character, because he was evidently quite dependent on the direction he received, and readily passed from an Italian style to one that was coloured by his contact with Flemish artists like Paul Brill. There was an active appreciation of their different styles: patrons like Cardinal Federico Borromeo, Cardinal Alessandro and Principe Michele Peretti and Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte had had a lot of contact with Northern art, but at the same time appreciated the more naturalistic Italian landscape that the Bolognese brought with the Carracci firm). But it was a sense of grand scale and distance that Viola contributed to the landscape setting for several different artists, and it is this that was perhaps his greatest achievement, something that would be of importance for the new landscape tradition. His imperfect grasp of perspective made paradoxically for successful joint work, particularly with Domenichino, who at the start of his Roman stay was attempting to introduce narrative subjects on a small scale in his *paesi con figure piccole*, which Viola expanded to the larger scale of the decorative demands placed on the Carracci team. The accolade 'Domenichino with Viola' should be a mark of this very successful partnership. It should be clear that the collaboration resulted in products of much higher quality, while even the numerous repetitions of designs painted by Viola never reached the high standard of their joint efforts.

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<sup>7</sup> First published by Marco Chairini in a catalogue of the Museum's collection, the pair are also in L. Salerno's *Pittori di Paesaggio* 1977, I p.98, and in Spear's 1980 article in the Burlington. (p. 302, Figs 19,20)

Viola came to Rome with Albani, in 1601<sup>8</sup>, and already practising his speciality, which he had stumbled upon almost by accident, for painting was not his intended profession. (the son of a carpenter, he had worked in a barber's shop). This means (as with Domenichino) we do have to look at the background of the Carracci Accademia degli Incamminati, and therefore Agostino Carracci, as being formative influences once he began painting - Annibale had left Bologna in 1595<sup>9</sup>. Domenichino was five years younger, and he too was mainly formed in those years and yet Viola's training experience, such as it was, must have been shorter, for his lack of technique both in terms of perspective and so far as figures were concerned was always a limiting factor in his art; it was his natural talent for the elements of landscape that lent itself to the speciality for which he became known. We know that both Domenichino and Viola already painted landscapes when they arrived in Rome, and the patronage of the Aldobrandini, probably through the Agucchi brothers, meant that by January 1603 both had supplied them with examples, Viola's being of decorative hunting pictures, Domenichino's already more ambitious with a history subject. They were close if for no other reason that Domenichino stayed with Albani for the first two years of his stay in Rome (according to Bellori), worked alongside Viola for his years in Rome, and the latter was a fellow-traveller with Albani for eighteen years.

Viola has many of the same ingredients: tall trees to frame his view, buildings in the background, often a whole town with spires and towers, crossed trunks and different species of trees, including palms, a cliff to one side with trees growing on the edge against the sky, a winding path with figures walking away from the viewer, a pair of figures on one side, a horse and groom walking into the landscape, flocks of sheep and a shepherd (often out of scale), a weir or waterfall to one side, and always that principle that Brill was said to recommend, 'Yet one general rule I had from my old friend Paulo Brilli, which he said will make a Landscape Caminare, that is move or walk away, and that is by placing Darke against Light, and light against Darke. His meaning is best understood by Circumlocution, viz., that what part of your Landscape is light, the near adjacent ground to be proportionately darke, or shadowed, and that again seconded with light, and then shady again until you come to nearest ground, where all ends with strong and dark shadows, to set off all the rest'<sup>10</sup> This is a pattern that depends upon the example of Agostino Carracci rather than Annibale, but as it was developed in the first decade of the century by Domenichino in Rome. As we shall see, the landscape is the stage often for others' figures, and they could be introduced by colleagues like Albani and Domenichino, or borrowed from other sources, like Antonio Tempesta, who left many graphic expressions of his talent for hunting scenes and woodland settings.

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<sup>8</sup> Albani is documented in Bologna in the first three months of 1601, and seems to have arrived in Rome - with Reni - in the summer of that year. As Viola was so closely associated with him, it seems likely that they travelled to Rome together, but being a little older he may have preceded him there. Tiarini told Malvasia (*Scritti originali del Conte Carlo Cesare Malvasia spettanti alla sua Felsina Pittrice*, ed by Lea Marzocchi, Bologna [1982]) that he arrived in Rome with Albani, and this is also supported by Baldinucci (F. Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno*, Firenze, ed, 1848, III, p. 359-60.

<sup>9</sup> Although Belinda Granata uses the authority of Malvasia to say that Viola studied with Annibale, what the author of *Felsina Pittrice* actually says is *da' Carracci* in other words, with the Carracci (*Felsina Pittrice*, 1841 ed., II, p. 90; Baglione also named Viola as 'tra li giovani, che furono allievi di Annibale Carracci' (1642, p 173) but the chronology actually shows that although Annibale was still in charge of the Carracci workshop this arrangement disguised the Bolognese background and training that Viola had arrived in Rome with.

<sup>10</sup> E. Norgate, *Miniatura, or the Art of Limning*, MS Bodleian Library. Oxford, ed Muller and Morrell, New Haven, 1997, p. 87



Whether or not he and Domenichino were in Rome while Agostino Carracci was still there (he left in the middle of 1600) the format of the new landscape that they both followed was based on the compositional designs that he had worked out, mainly in drawings, in the Accademia degli Incamminati. The few landscapes that Agostino did in Rome, including the *Landscape with Diana and Callisto* (Duke of Sutherland collection, Mertoun) and the *Landscape with the Sacrifice of Abraham* in the Louvre, were of great significance, as Viola found himself collaborating with his friend Albani in completing the companion pictures - ***The Toilet of Diana*** (Bologna, Pinacoteca) and the ***Death of Absalom*** in the Louvre, where the figures seem again to come from Tempesta. While Albani was also a landscapist, particularly early on in his Roman years, the trees and foliage in these are identical in handling to those of other established Viola originals, like the ex-Giustiniani *Flight into Egypt*, (Mount Stuart Trust) which also has the same flying Cupids (but the main figure group appears to be more sophisticated than Viola on his own). It may well be that there was some preparatory material that Agostino himself had started in relation to the figures for the *Toilet of Venus*, which relate to those of the



*Sleeping Venus* at Chantilly, or those of Agostino's 1599 engraving of *Omnia vincit Amor*. These cupids are not far from the one being more intimate with Venus in one of the *Lascivie* prints; but it is equally clear that their execution is by a different hand from the original *pendant*, *Diana and Callisto*. It is clear from a stylistic point of view that the landscape detail of the *Toilet of Diana* is that of Viola, he uses the same foliage and the same skies in many other pictures. The flying angels are equally typical, we find them in the Mount Stuart *Flight into Egypt*, and they are a give away, although ultimately they are the same as Agostino invented in the two main frescoes he did in the Farnese Gallery. The painting that Agostino had done, probably for Odoardo Farnese, of the *Vision of St. Eustace* (Naples, Capodimonte) was the inspiration for Viola's **own painting** of the same subject now in the Louvre, a work done alongside Brill, who painted the companion, *St John the Baptist in the Wilderness*<sup>11</sup>, in one of the first

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<sup>11</sup> Louvre, Inv. 231 (Viola) S Loir, 1996, p, 366-8, & Inv. 1111 (Brill)





juxtapositions of their styles. Mancini, writing around 1620, had seen many landscapes by Viola in Rome, but not much was left there a generation later because they were all bought 'a gran prezzo' by the *oltramontani*. The paintings were evidently collected because they represented the best of the Bolognese landscape, and in this process the names of Annibale and Domenichino were the only ones to survive. So it is a paradox that the majority of the landscapes that have been recognised as Viola's are those where he was working independently, even though there is a lot of evidence that his collaborations were the most successful side of his work. Grimaldi too was a (more distant) follower of Agostino, for he sought out the drawings that remained in the Carracci studio in Rome when he arrived there in c. 1626; he was also aware of the career and activity of Viola and was able to admire the broad landscapes he had seen by him in Paris when he went there in 1649. The *siti immensi* and *aperti campi* that Viola invented were actually the best part of the collaboration with Domenichino. Some of them came from the most important interiors of the Carraccesque landscape in Rome, which were in the Camerini of Palazzetto Farnese, and their origin there doubtless lent them authority as the products of Annibale himself.

Apart from the subject-matter, which has to do with what Bellori would call *azione*, Domenichino's early landscapes have a variety of compositional devices, with a link between foreground and background being achieved through a continuous prospect like a water feature, a castle or other building in the middle distance, figures with careful proportions depending on their distance from the foreground, a framing tree or cliff, and sometimes a central tree. The Ackland painting (*Landscape with Hunters and Washerwomen*) also has a waterfall bringing a stream to the foreground, a feature that is frequently introduced in later landscapes (and which Agostino had used in his *Landscape with Diana and Callisto* (Duke of Sutherland, Mertoun) that was in all probability a Farnese commission, done before Agostino's abrupt departure from Rome in 1600. These compositional devices are also common to Viola's parallel efforts, and it is quite clear who is the leader here. Domenichino was however always more concerned with representing activity, and it is the exaggerated musculature of the protagonists in these pictures, like the one in the foreground of the large *Landscape with Hunters*, formerly in the Orléans collection and now in a private collection in Italy, that show Domenichino's emphasis on figure painting. It is not accidental that this figure attaching a lead to his dog is close to *Narcissus* in the fresco Domenichino painted for one of the little rooms in the Palazzetto Farnese. These are figures that belong to the same gym as the energetic figure lifting his shirt in the *Baptism in the Jordan* in the Kunsthau Zurich, or the similar participant in the *Baptism in the Jordan* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The little figures in the Ackland Art Centre painting are exemplary in showing a whole range of activities; while artists in the Cinquecento studied hard from life in order to be able to evoke any kind of gesture and expression, Domenichino takes it further in illustrating many different poses and tasks so that each could be part of an invented narrative. The same concern with figures in motion is present in the *Landscape with a Boating Party*, among the pictures from the Mahon collection now in the Pinacoteca, Bologna, and the energetic gondolier is again found in Domenichino's fresco of the Calling of Peter and Andrew in the apse of S. Andrea della Valle, painted long after his early dalliance with landscape painting.

#### Paintings for Vincenzo Giustiniani





It is stylistically useful to trace the development of Domenichino's figure style, especially in the early years, when the strenuous musculature of works like the Aldobrandini *Vision of St Jerome* (recorded by Girolamo Agucchi in the 1603 inventory of the Cardinal's collection, and now in the National Gallery, No. 85), to the undressing characters that recur in the Zurich ***Landscape with St John Baptising***,<sup>12</sup> the same subject in the painting formerly in the Cook Collection and now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge<sup>13</sup> the stockish boatmen in the Rondenini *Landscape*, those in the Mahon *Boating Scene* now in Bologna, in the ex-Orléans *Fishing* landscape, the hunter unleashing his dog in the companion ***Hunting*** scene, the kneeling figure of *Narcissus* in the Farnese fresco, the group of figures in the ***Latona turning the Lycian peasants into Frogs*** (Whitfield collection, London), to their successors in the frescos of the apse of S. Andrea della Valle. The series of paintings from the Giustiniani collection, listed in the 1638 inventory<sup>14</sup> as by Viola, must have been a commission where Domenichino was still in collaboration with his assistant, because the varying quality of the figure subjects, superior in the Fitzwilliam Museum *Landscape with St John Baptising in the Jordan*, points to such a division of labour. Two others of the series have been identified, and were exhibited in the 1996/97 Domenichino retrospective at Palazzo Venezia in 1996/97; one with the *Flight into Egypt*, now in the Mount Stuart Trust in the Isle of Bute, the other with the *Preaching of St John the Baptist*, belonging to Richard Feigen in New York. In reality the smaller versions of two of these compositions by Viola in the Galleria Palatina, Florence<sup>15</sup> show how much more modest his talent was when not working alongside Domenichino, but also link them to the time when the Giustiniani series was produced, which is most likely around 1610 when Viola was at Bassano. These landscapes represented what the Bolognese painters hired by Vincenzo Giustiniani could produce as a team, and he was an enthusiastic consumer of such decoration, having had Antonio Tempesta decorate the whole courtyard of his palazzo at Bassano Romano (now only minimally visible). Still untraced is the picture from the Viola series of overdoors with Christ and the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee<sup>16</sup>, although there was another 'Domenichino' landscape that also seems to have belonged to the Giustiniani if the nineteenth century reference is

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<sup>12</sup> I think we can assume that this is already a collaboration with Viola, who is probably the author of the landscape background.

<sup>13</sup> Although Spear (1980 and 1996/97) regarded this work as entirely by Viola, the evidence we have about his concentration on landscape detail is a fundamental consideration in his career; if he had actually achieved fame as a painter of history subjects we would have more evidence from contemporary sources.

<sup>14</sup> See S D Squarzina, *La Collezione Giustiniani*, Turin, 2005, *Inventari, I*, p. 272

<sup>15</sup> Including a version of the Fitzwilliam painting, rep. by Spear in the Domenichino retrospective 1996/97, p. 167, Fig.8)

<sup>16</sup> *il Secondo con Christo sopra una barca de Piscatori, che pescano nel mare'* in the 1638 inventory



correct 'Domenichino A Grand landscape with Christ journeying to Emmaus, From the Justiniani Palace at Rome' that was Lot 1776 in Lord Northwick's sale at Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham, in 1859 (26 July and twenty-one successive days). But increasingly for Domenichino it is the figures that matter, and indeed there is variety even in the landscape background that often betrays collaboration. In general, Domenichino had been concentrating more and more on the challenges posed by larger figural compositions, and was happy for landscapes background and foliage to be done by an expert specialist, who was from the same firm that he represented. The possibility of providing these decorations, described by Giustiniani as '*sopraporti maggiori...con varie historie di figurine piccole*' was evidently part of the scope of the new Bolognese interior design that the Carracci firm (headed there by Albani) could provide. When Domenichino later, in around 1621, did a landscape (at Villa Ludovisi, in competition with three other painters) he used a compositional formula that was not really different from those of his first paintings in Rome, and the designs he and Viola employed were essentially variations on the formulae provided by Agostino Carracci, with the emergence of a background with a greater scale.

#### Paintings on the walls of the Palazzetto Farnese

It is unfortunate that we have so little information about the decorations of the Palazzetto Farnese, where the principal group of Carracesque landscapes done in Rome were. We have some hints that the Agostino painting of *Diana and Callisto* hung there, but some of the wall paintings had evidently been moved from other parts of the complex, and we have only sketchy information of the nineteen landscapes with a painting of Apollo in the middle, arranged in a flat ceiling, can have been. The paintings whose descriptions tally so far include the *Landscape*

*with a Bridge* now in Berlin (called Annibale and with various quite implausible dates suggested in the literature) and two other paintings, one of a *Landscape with Bathers* now in Rhode Island, and a *Landscape with Latona and the Lycian Peasants* which I came across a number of years ago. These are all of approximately the same dimensions. This important decorative scheme must have included some of the other paintings we know, and I think that it is the most plausible origin of the two larger landscapes formerly in the Orléans collection, the *Landscape with Hunters* and the *Landscape with Fishermen*. Knowing other smaller paintings of similar subject-matter, I have no problem in seeing the latter work as by Domenichino; it is perhaps the most ambitious of the early landscapes, with figures that continue to show how much his interest was in portraying activity, giving such a central role to the muscular oarsman poling his craft. But while the huntsman tying a leash to his dog in the companion *Landscape with Hunters* is clearly by the same hand as the kneeling *Narcissus* in the fresco Domenichino did in another room in the Palazzetto Farnese, much of the background seems to be by another hand and this is arguably that of Giovanni Battista Viola.

#### Earlier paintings in the Palazzetto Farnese

The suite of rooms in the Palazzetto, in the descriptions we have of them, obviously included works from the Carracci that had been painted earlier: we know the building work was begun in 1602, but Agostino's *Amon nano, Pietro motto and Arrigo peloso* (probably painted soon after Agostino arrived in Rome in 1597/98) was there, and there are some indications that the Chantilly *Sleeping Venus* that was the most significant single picture in the Palazzetto, had been started well before Agostino left Rome in 1600, although Agucchi saw it close to completion in 1602. The pair of paintings *Landscape with the Toilet of Diana* (Bologna, Pinacoteca) and the *Landscape with Diana and Callisto* (Duke of Sutherland, Mertoun), have not so far been connected with Palazzo Farnese, but the former is described in the 1662 inventory of pictures sent from Palazzo Farnese to Parma, and it seems right to associate them with this space. 'Un quadro in tela con un paese con una fontana un amorino un carretto una Venere con tre donne attorno che li acconciano la testa, Scola degli Carracci segnato n. 270'. Stylistic characteristics make it clear that Viola did the landscape background of this painting, while the main figures are equally obviously by Francesco Albani, his constant companion during these years. The cupids are characteristic Viola accessories, ultimately dependent on Agostino's ones in the Farnese Gallery. The companion *Landscape with Diana and Callisto* must have been completed by Agostino shortly before he left Rome in 1600. Other works evidently from the Camerini that had clearly been finished earlier include Agostino's *Rape of Europa* (now on loan to the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh) and his *Diana and Actaeon* (Brussels, Musée des Beaux-Arts), so there was enough surviving of his work at Palazzo Farnese to provide subject-matter for the panels that were eventually done on the walls of the Galleria, not to mention the drawings that stayed in the studio. But the paintings had been transferred to these rooms across the Via Giulia from other locations in Palazzo Farnese itself.

#### Decorations in the Palazzetto Farnese done by the Carracci school



Viola must have worked, with the other associates of Annibale at Palazzo Farnese, in the room where there were nineteen landscapes set in the ceiling around the figure of Apollo in the

middle. Unlike Domenichino's frescoes of *Narcissus*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Apollo and Hyacinth* in the loggia on the ground floor, these were canvases with a framed surround, inserted in

panelling in the ceiling of a room on the first floor, and they will have included the *River Landscape* in Berlin (done by Domenichino) and the ***Landscape with Bathers*** in Rhode Island. (Viola) and the ***Landscape with Latona and the Lycian Peasants turned into Frogs***, (Viola and Domenichino). In both of these Viola shows his easy handling of the new landscape idiom, with hillsides with his signature feature of a winding distant paths and small figures that are in effect part of the setting: the foliage is extremely well painted, and the drawing for the *Latona* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) shows a hand that is mindful of Agostino's graphic style. Domenichino's invention of the figure group for Latona was used by him also in the oval of *Charity* in the Galleria Farnese, and in the ceiling of the Sala di Diana at Bassano as well as in the ***Rest on the Flight*** in the Hermitage, where we can also distinguish



Viola's hand in the background with a characteristic hill and winding path. The ensemble was in any case the most obvious landscape decoration from the Bolognese in Rome, done perhaps around 1605/06, but largely went missing after 1662 when the paintings were transferred to Parma. This was the most important source of Carraccesque landscapes for the following generation, both from the point of view of how this new naturalism was perceived - and in contrast to the curious detail of the Flemish painters - and also as the origin of many of the actual canvases that found their way on to the market over the next half-century. In another room there were canvases of *Night*, and *Day*, and it looks as though the figure of Night,



(Chantilly, Musée Condé) with two sleeping children in her arms, is by Domenichino, while the landscape background seems to be by Viola.

Enough remains of the description of the room on the first floor of the Palazzetto Farnese where the Carracci school painted a whole ceiling with landscapes, probably in the years 1605/06, to give an idea of what the decoration looked like, and the titles of some of them in the 1662 list of paintings sent from Palazzo Farnese to Parma correspond with those subjects of the pictures we know from the descriptions in that list, alternating scenes of river landscapes and hunting scenes. Apart from a 'Landscape with Narcissus' (presumably repeating or echoing Domenichino's fresco from the ground-floor loggia), these subjects were close to those of the Mahon *River Landscape* (by Domenichino) and the companion *Landscape with Hunters*, both now in Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale and the *Landscape with a Musical Party* in the Louvre that had a spectacular history as a work of Annibale in France in the seventeenth century, but which is fairly obviously the work of Viola, with figures perhaps by Badalocchio<sup>17</sup>. A drawing in the Louvre (Inv 7461, Loisel 752) that I have previously attributed to Brizio, seems to be related to this kind of design, and is probably by Viola.

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<sup>17</sup> This could be No 45 on the 1662 Farnese list 'Un paese in tela con lago barchette con figure che sonano della Scuola degli Carracci segnato n. 108'. For its history. see A Brejon de Lavergnée, *L'Inventaire Lebrun de 1683: La Collection de tableaux de Louis XIV*, Paris 1987, Cat. No. 163, p. 219.



Most of the Palazzetto landscapes had subjects from the countryside, like the 'Little figure on horseback with a dog pissing, a Campagna with water, two hunters one loading the other firing an arquebus, a Landscape with a big tree with water and fishermen, a Landscape with three cows and a calf suckling and a hut, a Landscape with a hill and two figures playing cards'. Unlike the loggia on the ground floor where Domenichino painted his frescoes in 1604/05, this room on the first floor had a flat ceiling where canvases were introduced into a wooden surround, doubtless punctuated with gilt surrounds, perhaps looking forward to decorations like that completed by Grimaldi in Palazzo Fiano Almagià, where he also used the composition of one of Domenichino's paintings, the *River Landscape* now in Berlin. The figures in this work are of precisely the same kind as those of the landscape Domenichino painted in the Villa Ludovisi fresco he did in 1621, and the design is that of his orchestrated use of framing trees around a watery prospect, as in a variety of drawings, or indeed the early Rondanini landscape. Although this has, like so many paintings from the world of the Carracci, strayed into the Annibale catalogue, its subject is, as I have argued in the past, among the works from the Roman Farnese collection sent to Parma in 1662, and it is also of the same proportion as two other landscapes, the *Landscape with Bathers* in Rhode Island, and the *Landscape with Latona and the Lycian Peasants turned into Frogs* (Whitfield collection, London).

The **drawing** in the Ashmolean museum, Oxford<sup>18</sup> with a very similar castle in the distance, and a winding path leading up it, is as close to being a preparatory study for a Bolognese landscape as exists. Loosely Carraccesque, it is among those traditionally attributed to Annibale, so it is valuable to have this association. For the painting of *Latona* there is a more

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<sup>18</sup> Parker, II, 167, pen and brown ink, 214 by 273 mm. I have previously attributed this drawing (and the painting) to Antonio Carracci, see 'Landscape Paintings and Drawings by Antonio Carracci, *Paragone*, Arte, No. 79 (631) November 2006, p. 13, 14, n. 46.



**distinctive study** (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) <sup>19</sup>which, like the painting itself, shows this draughtsman's ability with trees and foliage; the figures do relate closely with those in the painting, but as these must have been done (in the painting) by another hand, we understand Viola's clumsiness with these in the drawing. For the Louvre *Landscape with a Musical Party* the drawing (**Louvre Inv. 7461, Loisel 752**) is not so close, but we begin to be able to recognise characteristics in common, with the same weaknesses in perspective and ragged figures that we encounter in the paintings. And although there is no documentary evidence to support this hypothesis (apart from the Farnese description of the Berlin picture in 1662), it seems to me likely that the two large landscapes that were once in the Orleans collection at the Palais Royal, a *Landscape with a Boating Party*, and a *Landscape with Hunters*, originally also formed part of this interior. It is the family likeness that suggests their common origin, across the different hands that contributed to them. Domenichino's ability to place his figures in a scaled recession, still without a narrative subject, in the first of these ex-Orléans pictures, and in the Berlin *River Landscape*, is also accompanied in both by the same variety of trees and foliage, and a familiar use of a river to provide a measured recession.

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<sup>19</sup> Catalogued at the Museum by D. Scrase as by Francesco Brizio, (No. 2024, C H Shannon Bequest 1937, pen and brown ink, brown wash, slight traces of chalk, 191 by 244 mm, also in my article on Antonio Carracci (see note above) Fig 15, n. 45



In the background of the ex Orléans *Landscape with Hunters*, however, we see many characteristics of Viola's style, not only the fantastical castle in the distance, but also the wandering path, often leading to an unreal cliff, the Tempesta like horsemen. that are frequent reminders of his hand, while the foreground kneeling figure and the head behind the bushes are much stronger. By contrast, the water landscape of its companion is much stronger, and relates closely to other situations where Domenichino uses this element to create perspective distances that are more convincing. It does seem as though it is legitimate to see this kind of collaboration, and indeed Viola is a vital ingredient in the Carracci environment in Rome, a presence that was clearly amplified and improved the closer he was to his colleagues who had more training.. The collaborative nature of the production is illustrated by the presence of the same sort of figures at the centre of the *Latona* landscape, deriving ultimately from what may be an Annibale drawing (which Domenichino also used for the figure of Charity in the oval on the wall of the Galleria Farnese, and again in the ceiling of the Sala di Diana at Bassano Romano). This is the moment of the similarly scaled figures of the frescos of Narcissus and Apollo and Hyacinth painted for the ground floor of the Palazzetto, and it is a style also matched by those the fisherman standing in the water in the middle distance of the *Landscape with a Boating Party*. It seems to me useful to see the diversity of the constituent parts of this landscape idiom that would evidently have such an impact on the Roman scene. These pictures, where Domenichino is still trying to find his feet as a figure painter, already reveal the reliance on the specialist who would leave such an impression on the Bolognese landscape in Rome, and the decorations of the Palazzetto Farnese were the most significant of the Carracci school contribution to the tradition.

#### Grimaldi's notes on Viola for Malvasia

More recent publications have indeed identified more work by Viola, with a stylistic thread that is unmistakable, from pictures done for Alessandro Peretti Montalto<sup>20</sup> opposite Brill (in 1607 / 1610) to the well-documented fresco in the Casino Ludovisi, painted in 1621. As it happens, Grimaldi was the best informant<sup>21</sup> for Malvasia's biography, and he gave him a sheet of recollections in 1670. Neither the published version of these notes, in the 1678 *Felsina* nor the other notes that Malvasia drew from and which were published in 1982<sup>22</sup>, have been fully exploited. Landscape painting was after all Grimaldi's *métier*, and he knew Viola's mate Albani well, because it was the latter who taught him his landscape profession, as he attended what

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<sup>20</sup> In the Patrizi Montoro collection, Rome, published first by A.M. Pedrocchi, *Le stanze del tesoriere, la quadreria Patriizi, Cultura senese nella storia del collezionismo romano del Seicento*, Milano 2000, p. 106; by F. Gatta, 'Dieci quadri di provenienza Peretti-Montalto rintracciati nella collezione Patrizi Montoro: Capolavori del primo ventennio del Seicento e un' ipotesi attributivo a Domenichino per la *Fuga delle ninfe*', in *Bollettino d'Arte*, 94, 2009, I, Fig 16, 17,) and also by B. Granata, *Le passioni virtuose: Collezionismo e committenze artistiche a Roma del Cardinale Alessandro Peretti Montalto (1574-1623)*, Roma 2012, Fig 77, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Grimaldi knew his predecessor's work well, even though Viola had died before he arrived in Rome in the mid 1620s. As a professional landscapist in a consciously Bolognese idiom, he sought out the works of his elders for study and imitation: it is he in particular who refers to the close company Viola kept with Albani.

<sup>22</sup> *Scritti originali del Conte Carlo Cesare Malvasia spettanti alla sua Felsina Pittrice*, ed by Lea Marzocchi, Bologna [1982]. These notes, which entered the Biblioteca Comunale di Bologna (MS B 16-17) in 1872 from the collection of Principe Filippo Hercolani, represent Malvasia's *officina segreta*, with much original material that was not included in the *Felsina*. Attached to Malvasia's own notes is Grimaldi's account (f. 283) received by Malvasia on 6 March, 1670.

was still called the Carracci school in Rome. Grimaldi confirms what Baldinucci<sup>23</sup> had as hearsay, that Viola, who had started out as a barber, arrived in Rome with Albani (so in 1601/02; this information coincides with what Tiarini also told Malvasia<sup>24</sup>). And that he was as it were a comrade in arms: not only did they go to the same academy in Bologna (that of Bernardino Baldi, the Accademia degli Indifferenti, which was eased out by the Carracci around 1590) but they spent eighteen years together, culminating in their taking over their landlady (il perché presa di comune concordia a pigione una casa di una assai comoda vedova la Signora Livia [sic] Gemelli', (Felsina Pittrice, II. p.90) in Rome in 1613, with the elder Viola marrying the wealthy widow Silvia Gemelli<sup>25</sup> and Albani, two years his junior, taking the daughter Anna. Malvasia in the Felsina Pittrice (1841, II, p. 90) acknowledges Grimaldi as his informant, and gives him the accolade that he was 'tanto più del Viola bravo paesista'<sup>26</sup>. But Malvasia's published text and the notes in the Biblioteca Comunale in Bologna characterise him as one of those artists, from classical and modern times, who did their own speciality rather than being of universal capacity, starting as he did late in the profession and having a manifest talent for a part of representation. Grimaldi praises his ability at trees and foliage, and then the wide open spaces of his 'siti immensi'. It was this gift that evidently compensated for his familiar naiveté in the field of perspective and figures. In the published text of the Felsina Malvasia (1841, II, p 90) 'Non trovandosi egli dunque il primo provisto di quel talento grande, e fondamento che richiedesi all' arte massime che in età si avanzata volle tentare il pennello, ritirossi in un angolo di essa, ed appigliandosi a' tronchi, e afferrando la frasca, si diede a batter solo il paese, riuscendone poi in modo, che bramavano tutti allora, ed oggi cercano i diletteanti d'introdurvi per entro la loro virtuosa curiosità; e misurando co' guardi que' siti immensi e diportandosi per quelle verdi amenità, godere di que' deliziosi siti e spaziare per quegli aperti campi.' And contrary to the general perception<sup>27</sup> that Domenichino had little recourse to assistants, the practice of Roman workshops in the Seicento, and in that of the Carracci school in particular, was that landscape was regarded as a secondary feature that could well be entrusted to specialists in the field., just like drapery would be done by the studio of Van Dyck in the absence of the master. Painters who adopted this profession could also be involved in actual landscape design: this was certainly the case with Domenichino, who was involved with that of the Bosco delle Statue at the Villa Ludovisi, and then with Grimaldi, whose paintings were frequently part of designs that were continued beyond the open loggias he decorated, and who was a stage designer to rival Bernini.

## More collaborations

Since Richard Spear's monograph on Domenichino (1981) we know that it was Viola who painted the bulk of the Sala di Parnaso at the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati, and this was in

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<sup>23</sup> F. Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno*, Firenze, ed, 1848, III, p. 359-60.

<sup>24</sup> Malvasia, *Scritti originali*, p. 302

<sup>25</sup> She was the widow of the sculptor Giovanni Battista Rusconi, from Como.

<sup>26</sup> There was a falling out between Viola and Albani prompted by the inheritance issues that stemmed from Silvia Gemelli's death in 1618.

<sup>27</sup> See for example R. Spear, in 'Domenichino e Viola' in exh. cat., *Domenichino*, Rome, 1996/97, p. 163

1616/18, and not much earlier in the century, as used to be thought. The figures were introduced by Domenichino 'dentrovi fece l'istorie della Metamorfofi d'Ovidio il Signor Domenico Zampieri'. "le figure di Apollo nella Villa Aldobrandini come accessorie e aggiunti a' paesi del Viola" (Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, 1841 ed. II, p. 226-27). In other cases too Domenichino's association determined how the collaboration would be viewed, with the landscapist getting barely a mention. We should review some of these paintings without the prejudice that commercial pressures obviously brought to bear when they were on the market, a market that had little experience of the separate personalities involved in the workshops that produced this new decoration. It is possible that the collaboration that we can now comprehend at the Sala di Parnaso was a long standing one, and that Viola played a bigger role in some of the major paintings traditionally known by the artist who did the figure subjects in them. Many of these made their way to France, where Grimaldi recalled seeing Viola's many impressive landscapes, which are not accounted for in the small paintings at the Louvre and Fontainebleau. In these joint ventures Domenichino and Viola together made the grand classical landscape that was the principal contribution to the tradition leading up to Claude.

From Grimaldi's account we learn of the long partnership Viola shared with his friend Albani<sup>28</sup>, and it becomes easier to understand the specialised role that he played, collaborating



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<sup>28</sup> Tiarini reported to Malvasia "A Roma stava col' Albani, parlavano alla rovescia con tanta franchezza ch'era cosa da stupire e facevano più stupire chi li sentiva non sapendosi immaginare che linguaggio fosse quello' Malvasia *Scritti originali...* etc, p. 371.

with him and other masters to introduce trees and foliage to accompany their inventions. If he had worked with Domenichino (Bellori says the latter lived for two years with Albani) at the outset when he arrived in Rome, doing landscapes for the Aldobrandini, the link continued, and his hand is recognisable, as we have argued, in the lunettes for the chapel in the Corso. Domenichino was godfather to Viola's daughter Tecla in 1614,<sup>29</sup> he was Albani's assistant for the landscape background in the frescoes of the Palazzo Giustiniani at Bassano Romano in 1610 to



1612, and he very probably also worked for Domenichino there in frescoes and oil paintings. There was evidently a fashion to contrast the Northern landscape with the new Bolognese one - we see references to the combination in the same schemes of Viola (and his pupil/follower Pietro Paolo Bonzi) and Paul Brill. Avanzino Nucci not only did the wall frescoes in the Cappella Aldobrandini, with Domenichino doing the *Flight into Egypt*, he also worked opposite Brill in the loggias of the Giardino segreto of Scipione Borghese's lavish gardens of the Palazzo di Montecavallo (later Palazzo Rospigliosi). Among the paintings in the Louvre, also referred to above, is the pair of landscapes with saints, that of *St Eustace* being by Viola, matched by

<sup>29</sup> R. Vodret, *Alla ricerca di "Ghiongrat" Studi sui libri parrocchiali romani (1600-1631)* Rome 2011, p. 34/35

another of *St John the Baptist in the Wilderness* by Brill<sup>30</sup>. They belonged to Cardinal Mazarin, and while the first retained its attribution to Brill, the other was called 'Carracci' in his 1653 inventory; while Foucault apparently supposed that it was a chance association, they were more likely part of the same original decoration, possibly from the Villa Ludovisi, whence Malvasia says the Cardinal bought landscapes by Viola 'with others by Domenichino on behalf of the King of France'<sup>31</sup> presumably when the contents were dispersed in 1633. These others most likely included the pair of *Hercules and Cacus* and *Hercules and Acheloo* now in the

Louvre. The small figures of these pictures are characteristic of the miniaturisation of history



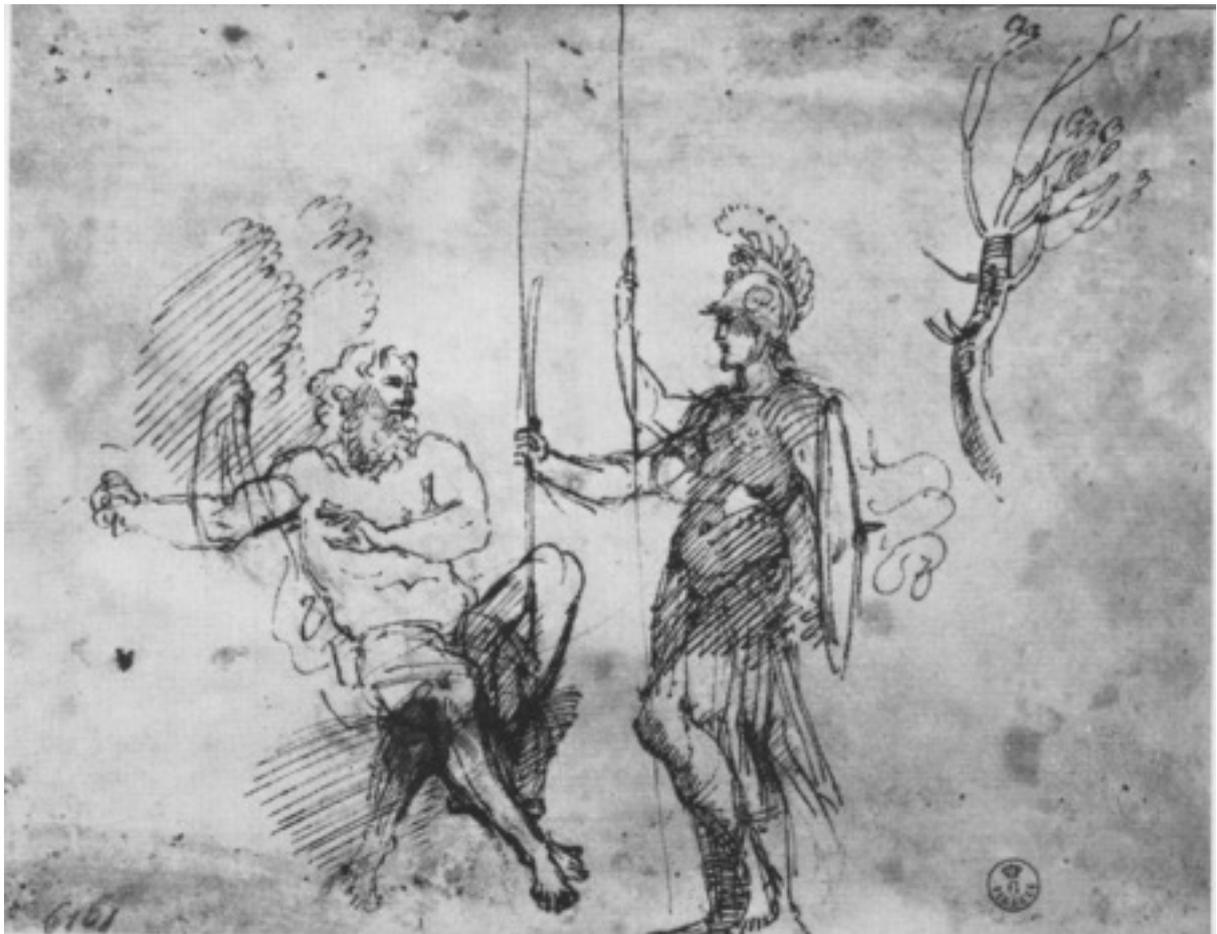
subjects as practised by Domenichino probably in the first decade of the century, but it is possible to argue that their landscape settings of these paintings could well have been done by

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<sup>30</sup> S. Loir, *Peintures du Louvre, Ecole italienne du XVIIIème siècle, I, Bologne, 1996, p. 364/65*. The *St Eustace* was originally attributed to 'Carrache' in Paris, (until after 1961) and was valued twice as much as the painting by Brill.

<sup>31</sup> Malvasia, Felsina Pittrice, 1678, II, p. 91

Viola as Ann S Harris began to argue in her review of Spear's monograph on Domenichino<sup>32</sup>. Their idiosyncratic hillsides and small background figures contrast with the more monumental characters that his partner invented. These paintings were therefore painted for another location than the Villa Ludovisi, and immense wealth that the family were endowed with when Gregory XV was elected in 1621 did not mean that these could not have been acquired by them from other sources, while that they have been subsequently always associated with their patronage. Equally the Louvre painting of *Erminia and the Shepherds* which has always since its arrival in France been given to Domenichino may well be another collaboration between the two<sup>33</sup>, and it would answer the description that Grimaldi makes of the landscapes with *siti immensi* that he saw by Viola in Paris, and although this is usually dated to the mid-1620s, it is actually easier to think of it in the light of the debate that Agucchi had, much earlier in the century, over the same subject that he had had Ludovico Carracci paint for him,



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<sup>32</sup> The idea of Viola's authorship of the landscapes in this pair of pictures is discussed by A.S. Harris in her review of Spear's monograph, *Burlington Magazine*, 1984, CXXVI, p. 167.

<sup>33</sup> My suggestion (in 1988) that Viola painted the landscape here was supported also by Spear in 1997/98 in his article on Domenichino and Viola in the catalogue of the Domenichino retrospective at Palazzo Venezia. (p. 165); it is also advanced by S. Loir in his catalogue entry on the painting in his catalogue of the Louvre Bolognese paintings: Inv. 799, *Ecole italienne, XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, I. Bologne*, 1996, p. 206/209



with disappointing results<sup>34</sup>. The **drawing** I published in 1973 in the same article that mirrors the poses of Erminia and the shepherd actually was part of a dismembered album in the Uffizi<sup>35</sup> that was evidently made when Francesco Brizio visited Rome, probably around 1606/07, must be his reaction to Domenichino's figures in the painting now in the Louvre. A small painting on copper that was recently on the market with the story of **Erminia** is probably also the result of Brizio's encounter with the picture Domenichino and Viola had painted, a revision of the design he and Ludovico Carracci had originally produced for Agucchi. There is a stylistic consistency between the escarpment on the left of the Louvre painting and those that Viola introduced into Albani's frescoes at Palazzo Giustiniani at Bassano Romano, and we get an impression of the powerful combination of Domenichino's ability to miniaturise the figures from Tasso's narrative, and Viola's facility with trees and foliage expanding into these broad pastures with cliffs and sloping limestone hillsides. The landscape setting of Albani's large

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<sup>34</sup> See my article 'A Programme for Erminia and the Shepherds by G.B. Agucchi', in *Storia dell'Arte*, 19, 1973, p. 219-232

<sup>35</sup> Uffizi, No 6161F. The drawings with figures have been separated from the landscape drawings from the album, which I published in the article Francesco Brizio, Prospetti e paesaggi, *Accademia Clementina*, 38/39, 1998/99 p. 5-30, which record various steps in Brizio's journey to Rome.



fresco in the Salone of Palazzo Giustiniani, of *The Heliades and Cycnus at the River Po*, or the upright panel with *Ceres lamenting a Drought*, show what Viola's backgrounds are like.



Comparison of the Louvre painting with early Domenichino landscapes, like the one with *St Jerome* in Glasgow, shows essentially the same compositional framework, but opened out with an artificial, intuitive perspective that was in fact the essence of the collaboration with Viola's master. This is one of the major expressions of an idiom of that gave nobility and scale to the subject by providing a foil of a great prospect, even theatrically enhanced, and we can comprehend that Viola was an essential part of the 'Carracci' team who visited Bassano in 1609 - 1612 to work on the decorations of Vincenzo Giustiniani's palazzo there. Grimaldi speaks of seeing many of Viola's works in Paris, where he travelled in 1649 to answer the taste that the French court had for the new Bolognese landscape painting, and to work for Cardinal Mazarin, and it is to these Ludovisi paintings that he was referring when he praised Viola. Passeri tells us that he did the backgrounds of four paintings for Principe Ludovisi at Zagarolo (*Vite dei Pittori...* 1772 ed Hess p. 44/45), but only the rather unfamiliar staffage of Domenichino's *Garden of Eden* has been recognised.. It is here suggested that these were in reality the landscapes that

ended up in Paris with Cardinal Mazarin, and that they were not the product of the brief period of the Ludovisi papacy, but date from an earlier period.

### Viola Brill and Albani working for Alessandro Peretti-Montalto

Another patron who was keen on the painters from Bologna was the very cultivated Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto, who spent many years (from 1592 to 1598 and 1601 to 1605) as Papal legate in the city, and had a large estate by the Baths of Diocletian in Rome. From Grimaldi's notes given to Malvasia<sup>36</sup> we read: 'Nel Casino a mezzo il Giardino del Cardinal Montalto e Zemina [Viola] dipinse a concorrenza del Brille due paesi di simile grandezza a fresco vengono stimati essere bellissimi'. This was the Palazzetto (or Casino) Montalto or Felice, and it and the park survived until after 1869, (when it became the site of Termini station) and as we can see from Falda's 1675 engraving, it was quite distinct from the Palazzo di Termini that overlooked the whole *vigna*. The collaboration is most likely the one referred to in the accounts, which B. Granata recently published<sup>37</sup>, showing that both Brill and Viola were each paid 25 scudi on the 6th July 1607 for the 'pitture ...al nostro *giardino* a S. Maria Maggiore' (my italics), which must be the frescos that were well-known, and which of course no longer survive<sup>38</sup>. But the accounts also detail two payments of 25 *scudi*, again to Brill and Viola, on 20 August 1607, for 'dui paesi da lui fatti al *palazzo* (my italics) di nostro Giardino di S. Maria Maggiore'<sup>39</sup>. And Grimaldi too refers to two oil paintings that were hanging in the Palazzo [di Termini] 'al medesimo Giardino nel Palazzo vi sono due Paesi grandi dipinti a olio, le figure sono del Signor Francesco Albani...' Whether or not there were *two* paintings by Viola there, or if these were<sup>40</sup> the **pair of paintings** now in Palazzo Patrizi that have been recently published as by Domenichino and Brill<sup>41</sup>, they must be the ones in the 1655 inventory

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<sup>36</sup> *Scritti originali... etc*, p. 374. The published text in the Felsina (p. 91) is slightly different 'Nel casino in mezzo al giardino del già detto sig Card. Montalto, oltre i due (non l'un solo) paesi grandi, a concorrenza del Brillo, due grandi a olio con le figure del sig Francesco Albani...'

<sup>37</sup> B. Granata, 'Giovanni Battista Viola: Nuove ricerche sul 'pittore dimenticato'', *Annali dell' Università di Ferrara*, 3, 2002, p. 290.

<sup>38</sup> **Brill was paid 150 scud for his series of seven views of the Mattei feudi, completed in 1604, or about 22 scudi each for these large views (and the extra cost of travel to record them). By the end of his career he would command much more, as much as 100 scudi per landscape.**

<sup>39</sup> see Granata 2002 loc. cit.

<sup>40</sup> *pace* B. Granata, *Le passioni virtuose: Collezionismo e committenze artistiche a Roma del Cardinale Alessandro Peretti Montalto (1574-1623)*, Roma 2012, p. 170/171.

<sup>41</sup> A.M. Pedrocchi, *Le stanze del tesoriere, La quadreria Patrizi, Cultura senese nella storia del collezionismo romano del Seicento*, Milano, 2000, p. 296-297; F. Gatta, 'Dieci quadri di provenienza Peretti-Montalto rintracciati nella collezione Patrizi Montoro: Capolavori del primo ventennio del Seicento e un' ipotesi attributivo a Domenichino per la *Fuga delle ninfe*', in *Bollettino d'Arte*, 94, 2009, I, p. 53-75. Gatta assumes that the Landscape with Nymphs and Satyrs is by Domenichino, but he had only taken in Granata's publication of the Montalto payments in 1607 at a late stage of his text.



of the Fidecomesso of Cardinal Francesco Peretti Montalto<sup>42</sup> which passed to his nephew,



[later Cardinal] Paolo Savelli. The Patrizi Brill has the arms of Margherita Cavazzi della Somaglia on the stern: she was the first wife of Principe Michele Peretti, and died Feb. 6th 1613. They (or the frescos lost with the Casino) are also referred to by Baglione: 'Nella Vigna di Alessandro Peretti Montalto tra il colle Viminale al Esquilino dipinse un paese grande molto bello con quella sua maniera a concorrenza di Paolo Brillo fiammingo'. The two paintings are in two very contrasting styles, the *Marina* is a consummate demonstration of Brill's ability to paint boats and rigging in a varied perspective.<sup>43</sup> The juxtaposition with Viola's piece makes it clear that this was intended to be a real contrast of manner, opposing 'la maniera pittoresca buona italiana' with the Flemish character of Brill's *Port Scene*, a tour de force of detailed display of people, ships and rigging, a major contribution to the marine painting tradition followed later by Agostino Tassi, Goffredo Wals, Filippo Napoletano and Claude. Although Viola's perspective is a little awry, the landscape detail is extraordinarily brilliant and we can see that he was trying to make this a characteristic 'Bolognese' landscape, in the manner of Agostino Carracci and Domenichino, for it contrasts with the more 'Flemish' character of some of his other landscapes, including others done for Cardinal Montalto. The subject was drawn, as Gatta has shown, from a Virgilian pastoral play by Giovanni Battista Giraldo Cinzio called *Egle* after the fairest of the Naiads in Virgil's *Eclogues*. And Grimaldi's recollection that the figures were introduced by Albani is a realistic attributional indication even though they have a lot of Viola's 'rustic' charm, echoing those on the cliff of the *Hunt of Diana* in the Byng collection. Francesco Gatta has observed that some of these figures are taken from Agostino Carracci's *Lascivie*, and while they have a certain rusticity that is appropriate to the erotic nature of the subject, they are more sophisticated than Viola's familiar turbaned merchants (like the ones in the Budapest pair of landscapes). It does look as though the artist was consciously delivering a 'Bolognese' landscape; on other occasions as with those at the Bowes Museum<sup>44</sup>, or the other ones in the Patrizi collection published by Gatta <sup>45</sup>, show that by himself he was drawn to the Flemish vein as much as he was immersed in the Bolognese environment of Albani and Domenichino. The Patrizi painting is a key example, datable to 1607, of Viola's landscape presentation, a *paese dal natural rapportato* that was the setting for another painter to introduce a figure subject; whether this was actually Albani is not clear, but it must be that the invention is not simply that of Viola himself.

Grimaldi recalled other paintings by him at the Villa Montalto (and the accounts published <sup>46</sup> by Granata describe a further six small canvases paid for in 1610):  
 'vi sono altri quadri fra quali in uno ha rappresentato le feste solite farvi il primo giorno di maggio con quantità di fabacce e barche con infinito numero di figurine, la diligenza usata da Tramontani quali siano pagati a prez(z)i vigorosi ne hanno spogliato non solo Roma ma altri luoghi dove han(n)o a(v)uto notizie estranee in occasione che Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi si reto(r)nava in Parigi al servizio del Signor Cardinal Mazarino vide le sue stanze ed in molti

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<sup>43</sup> The painting by Brill has a coat of arms of the Peretti-Caviglia della Somaglia family, and Gatta has related this to descent from Margherita della Somaglia, the first wife of Principe Michele Peretti, Cardinal Montalto's brother (she died in 1613).

<sup>44</sup> See B. Granata, *loc. cit.*, 2002, p. 293/94, , Figs. 5, 6, for these pictures, which she dates late in Viola's career, around the time of the Ludovisi fresco.

<sup>45</sup> Gatta, *loc. cit.*, Fig. 16, 17; also reproduced by Granata, *Le passioni virtuose,,,, cit*, 2012, Fig. 77, 78

<sup>46</sup> Granata, *loc. cit.*, 2002, p.290.

cabinetti (p. 374)<sup>47</sup>. As Gatta has shown (op. cit. 2009, figs. 18 - 21), the others of this series of six paintings were done by Paul Brill. And the paintings at the Villa Montalto were well-known, as we learn from P. de Sebastiani's *Viaggio curioso de' Palazzi e Ville più notabili di Roma*, (Roma 1683) where Viola is described (p. 59) as a 'pittore che intendeva molto' obviously because he could illustrate a literary theme and not just a mere landscape subject. It is really another indication that the origin of this landscape idiom, with a classical narrative, is due to Agostino Carracci's dominant role among these Bolognese painters in Rome, and the importance of the few remaining examples of paintings by him there; we can see that it was Albani who guided Viola to the graphic sources in Agostino's prints and drawings for the figures in the Patrizi landscape, and Grimaldi's comment that the figures were by him should at least indicate that Viola sourced the subject from his mentor; he did not have the skill or inclination to be a creator of history subjects, regardless of the praise Sebastiani gave to his paintings at the Villa Montalto.

In reality Viola's principal collaboration was with Domenichino, and it could be that some other known works are joint works. The *Landscape with the Daughters of Raguel* at Christchurch, Oxford is a painting that has what I<sup>48</sup> regard as a characteristic Viola view, a broad perspective to a picturesque farmstead and the skyline of a town, (like the one in the ex-Giustiniani Flight into Egypt) which is the edge to a broad stretch of water with sailboats. It is framed with trees and the high cliff on the left in the middle distance, a recurring feature like

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<sup>47</sup> *Scritti Originali, etc.*, p. 374. The text Malvasia published is slightly different 'levati tutti a rigoroso prezzo da gli oltramontani, come può ben attestare, dic' egli il Sig. Grimaldi, averne veduto molti in vari gabinetti di que' signori, senza li tanti nel palagio del sig Card. Mazzarini, allora che si trovava in Parigi a' servigi di quell' Eminentissimo' (ed. 1841, II, p. 92).

<sup>48</sup> And Richard Spear, in his 1980 article, Fig 25. Since it was restored before J. Byam Shaw's catalogue of the collection, its appearance has deteriorated, and it needs restoration.



the one in the Villa Chigi landscape. But the figures, which are arranged to collaborate with the perspective (and Moses is really among the running figures in the middle distance) are more self-assured than we expect from Viola, and we should not be surprised to see this joint effort, which must be quite early. Equally the *Landscape with St George and the Dragon* (National Gallery, London) represents a similar collaboration<sup>49</sup>, and is one of the kind of 'deliziosi siti' that Grimaldi praised Viola for. In other respects the dragon and horse are creations that remind one of the lion in the Glasgow *St Jerome*, and certainly more accomplished than Viola was capable of. It is when we compare the buildings, as well as the foliage, and the clouds in the sky, that we can identify his distinctive hand, for there is not so much attention to the natural and picturesque charm of Domenichino's views. It is too much to dismiss the figure subjects in these early landscapes as not being by the more accomplished history painter, who was ever trying to capture action and expression; and it is perhaps the same collaboration in the Prado *Landscape with Bathers*, where the bathers preparing to swim are characteristic of one hand as the buildings are more meticulously imagined by another. And the largest of the Parisian landscapes (none of them are in a great state of conservation), the one with the *Flight into Egypt* (165 by 212 cm) in the Louvre, which is from the Ludovisi



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<sup>49</sup> Long indicated by Richard Spear, who pointed to Viola's hand even while including in his Domenichino monograph, (1981) cat. no. 4, and even more in his 1980 Burlington article (Fig 39 & p. 312).

collection<sup>50</sup> (where it is listed without an author in the 1623 inventory), is probably another instance of Domenichino's collaboration with his older assistant. It is not certain that the subject was really intended to be a *Flight*, the Ludovisi inventories (1623 and 1633) does not mention it, and instead refer to the fishermen and the boat, and we can see that these have more to do with the earliest landscapes, from the one in the Ackland Art Centre in Chapel Hill (*Detail*), and the little copper of the *Flight into Egypt* in the Lodi collection with its reflections, and the birds silhouetted against the water, which are also present in Domenichino's lunette of the *Flight* in the Doria group. But the cliff on the right with the



winding path, (*Detail*) the grand scope of the buildings and the distant view to the right, with a profile of dreamy spires betray the hand of Viola, who is also responsible for the mistakes in





scale of the shepherd and flock in the middle distance. The impressive scale, and the detail of the castellated buildings, take their cue from the fortified centrepiece of the Doria lunette in the Flight, but are a tribute to the remarkable partnership Domenichino enjoyed with a specialist who did not tire of ever more picturesque detail, and enabled him to provide impressive decorations in the idiom of the new Bolognese landscape from nature, with appropriate figures introduced as he would do again in the frescoes at Frascati in the Sala di Parnaso of the Villa Aldobrandini.



## Viola's fame

So the Patrizi *Landscape with Satyrs and Nymphs* from Villa Montalto is a key work for comprehending Viola's role in the Bolognese landscape in Rome, and the reference is precious as it can be dated (1607) - only one earlier documented work is one of the two pictures listed as belonging to the Aldobrandini collection in January 1603<sup>51</sup>. Evidently Albani's mate Viola was thought of as a 'pittore doratore'<sup>52</sup> as he never aspired to narrative painting, and was therefore seen as more of an artisan. Even on such a level there was a basis for future partnership, for while Domenichino and Viola did small landscapes for the Aldobrandini, Domenichino evidently achieved more renown for his efforts in this field, extending what was an affordable category of *verdura* or landscape to the sophistication of history painting. The Patrizi painting illustrates the rich landscape detail for which Viola was evidently famous, with Domenichinesque motifs that are impressive and delightful, recalling Tiarini's comment<sup>53</sup> 'Finiva i suoi paesi (e) mai si saziava. Fece per il Conte Camillo Ranuzzi un paese in rame da starvi un mese a guardare le cose fattevi'. It is the juxtapositions of the various features in the landscape that betrays Viola as someone who imperfectly understood the idiom, for while the prospect of water that is used by Domenichino to give an easy impression of distance, uniting the distance with the foreground, Viola's seems always a mis-match, and the picturesque recession from the side waterfall to the bluff with a central tree, and the next cliff in the mid-distance does not seem to retain a scaled proportion. Even the figures seem to be out of proportion in terms of the distance from the foreground, and trip up against the silhouetted forms of banks and foliage. In this the variegation of leaves, trunks and light is what so impressed his contemporaries. Even when Viola does versions of known compositions, like the large canvases in the National Gallery, London (NG. 56, 63; *Domenichino* show, Rome 1996, p. 326f, which are based on the *River Landscape* from the Mahon collection and its companion *Landscape with Hunters* in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) there are flagrant mistakes of perspective that seem to characterise his lack of control in this area. These are characteristics and deficiencies are what that accompany Viola throughout the works we know. Because of the close links between the Bolognese followers in Rome, during the years of Annibale's incapacity and after his death, we can however expect to see Viola's participation in the background of numerous works given more generally to Albani and Domenichino, as well as some of the many landscapes for which he was famous that reveal a more rustic character. Occasionally a feature,

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<sup>51</sup> The painting listed (no. 330) in the 1603 Aldobrandini inventory as a 'quadretto con un paese d'acqua di mano dell' istesso [Viola] is probably the same as the 'quadretto con un paese di Cagna caccia di Gio. Batta. Viola del n. 330' because of the dog swimming after the ducks, now under Inv 368/323 in the Galleria Doria. Viola must have been 'un poco aiutato in the main figures, but the disproportion of the features, figures and trees, perspective, seems to already be true to form. See E. Safarik, *La Galleria Doria Pamphilj*, 1982, Pl. 206, p. 129.

<sup>52</sup> Most of the 'painters' who worked in Rome were *pittori doratori*, in other words they undertook decoration, including grotesques and landscape panels, rather than history paintings; they would have included among many others Caravaggio's employer Lorenzo Carli the 'pittore Siciliano, che di opere grossolane tenea bottega', Prospero Orsi, and Spadarino's brother Giacomo (Galli); see P. Cavazzini, *Painting as Business in Seventeenth Century Rome*, Pennsylvania State University, 2008, p. 29 f.

<sup>53</sup> Reported to Malvasia, see *Scritti originali etc.*, ed Lea Marzocchi, p. 371.

like the waterfall in Domenichino's fresco of the *Girl with a Unicorn* in the Farnese Gallery itself, seems to be naïf enough to be Viola's, and we should not ignore a working practice that involves such participation. Some of the works, like the Byng *Hunt of Diana* or the *Erminia and the Shepherds* in the Louvre, should in reality continue to be thought of as by Domenichino because of his invention of the figures and overall direction, but the great skill Viola had for what Grimaldi called those 'siti immensi' and green fields should also be recognised and his talent celebrated. These were the works that had been carried off at great prices by the Northerners who sought them out in all places they were to be found in Rome, and doubtless counted among them the works that Grimaldi saw in Paris, such as the paintings in the collection of Cardinal Mazarin<sup>54</sup>. The question of collaboration with his colleagues like Domenichino and Albani that Grimaldi also recalls, in describing a painter who essentially was an intuitive rather than trained specialist was the main reason why his hand has been so overlooked. It would be surprising if there were not more instances of Viola's completing other works, particularly with Albani and Domenichino, that have so far not been recognised. At the same time it is worth remembering not only the direction that the Carracci gave to interior decoration in Bologna and then Rome, but also the formal design of landscape with small figures, which was Domenichino's enduring contribution. And it was ironic that when Camillo Pamphilj gave the two real masterpieces of Annibale's landscape art, *La Chasse* and *La Pêche* to Louis XIV in 1665, they fell upon deaf ears.

With Brill, Albani and Domenichino at Bassano Romano

As we have seen, in 1610 Viola spent a month and a half in Bassano Romano doing the backgrounds to Albani's frescoes in the Palazzo Giustiniani, and he evidently collaborated with Domenichino (and Brill) on some of the oil paintings there - he also did the series of four



overdoors for Vincenzo Giustiniani, listed in his 1638 inventory that we have dealt with above. Their Carraccesque association is remembered in Lebrun's day when they were taken with the other Giustiniani paintings to Paris, and for this eminent dealer (who knew the Bolognese school well) they were by Annibale<sup>55</sup>. Viola worked again with Domenichino on a series of four paintings for the Colonna family 'in uno vi è un Giacobbe che dorme di mano del Domenichino di pmi 1 1/2 incirca'. In 1616/18 he painted the landscapes of the Stanza d'Apollo at Frascati in company with Alessandro Fortuna, and Domenichino introduced the figures. Although these landscapes (now in the National Gallery, London) were long been thought of as by Domenichino, it is clear that in this genre the landscapist had a free rein, and Viola deserves more credit than the small recompense that he received for the work he specialised in.



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<sup>55</sup> The Giustiniani origin of the Flight into Egypt was emphasised by Lebrun by including the Italian family's arms in the French frame he had made to sell it in.





I have already suggested <sup>56</sup> that the pair of paintings represented by the ex-Giustiniani *Hunt of Diana* <sup>57</sup> now in the Byng collection at Wrotham Park, and what I have identified as its companion of virtually the same size in the Louvre, a *Landscape with Diana and*

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<sup>56</sup> C. Whitfield, 'Les paysages du Dominiquin et de Viole', *Monuments et Mémoires*, Fondation Eugène Piot, 69, 1988, p. 114/115.

<sup>57</sup> 160,5 by 205 cm, from the Giustiniani collection as indicated in the British Institution exhibition of 1816 (as Domenichino); see Whitfield, Domenichino et Viola, *Monuments Piot*, 1988, p. 113/114.

**Callisto**,<sup>58</sup> with a landscape by Brill but with figures that used to be called Annibale's (and more recently P.P. Bonzi's) may have been invented for the same setting in the Sala di Diana at Bassano, where Domenichino did the ceiling dedicated to the goddess. It is reasonable to suppose that the the Louvre painting, given to Louis XIV by Cardinal Fabrizio Spada in 1674 as a work by Annibale, is also a joint production but in this case the landscape is surely by Brill, the Flemish character of the background is accompanied by very different figures that are not explained simply by the artist's own increasingly 'Italianate' tendency in painting, but are very like the principal figures in the Byng picture. Their disposition follows a familiar pattern in works of Agostino Carracci's followers, with figures whose gestures either side of the composition contain the scene and point to the drama unfolding. The successful juxtaposition of Brill and Viola at the Casino Montalto was a comparison that would be repeated many times. The Flemish painter was the most successful Northern landscapist of his generation, working alongside the Bolognese Reni (and Bonzi) in the Sala della Pergola of Scipione Borghese's Villa di Montecavallo and then in the Sala dell' Aurora (finished in 1614), and became increasingly drawn to the Bolognese idiom. In the Palazzetto Farnese Brill had contributed four moonlight landscapes (still unidentified) to the Camerino with the Allegory of Night (? by Domenichino and Viola, Chantilly, Musée Condé), and later he did the *Four Seasons* to accompany Guido Reni's fresco *Aurora* in the Casino Rospigliosi (c. 1614). As noted above, we are missing the large landscapes that Viola and Brill painted in fresco in the Casino at the Villa Montalto, and those Viola did in the gardens of the Villa that Cardinal Lanfranco Margotti had (from 1608/11 onwards) between the Via del Colosseo and the Via del Tempio



<sup>58</sup> canvas, 161 by 205 cm; when given to Louis XIV in 1674 it was called Annibale Carracci and Paul Brill; P. Cappelletti, *Paul Brill*, Rome, 2005/06, cat. 175, p. 308, who however dates it to the early 1620s and surprisingly gives the figures to P. P. Bonzi.

della Pace, which were up to five meters high' (Grimaldi in Malvasia, *Scritti originali*, 1982 p. 373), and they were obviously illusionistic panels at the end of avenues. But a meeting of the various styles of landscape is to be found in the frescoes of the Sala dei Paesi in the Villa Ludovisi, where Guercino, Domenichino, Viola and Brill each did a landscape (probably in 1621), and we see the naturalistic Bolognese style gaining ground even in Brill's contribution.

While the Wrotham Park painting has one of the most impressive of Viola's *siti immensi*, and the foliage and progressive escarpments are typical of his hand, it is really useful to compare the figures with those of Domenichino in his earlier compositions, and those for which Albani provided the invention in the Patrizi *Landscape with Nymphs and Satyrs*, and to see that here too Viola must have relied on another's invention for the figures, (**Detail of Diana**); this was the painter who was brought by Albani to decorate the Sala di Diana, in other words Domenichino. I now think that Spear was right to question<sup>59</sup> Domenichino's hand in the landscape, although because of his direction of the frescoes in the ceiling of the room where they probably hung at Palazzo Giustiniani at Bassano, we should not as he has done, exclude his guidance of his landscape assistant in this most successful design. Vincenzo Giustiniani was one of the most powerful patrons in Rome since he and his brother inherited their father's fortune in 1600, and his taste was for the best in Bolognese painting. Albani was evidently delegated to conduct the work at Bassano as the representative of the Carracci firm, and the idea of a Northern landscapist providing a contrasting foil for the same figure painter responded to the fashionable juxtaposition of Brill and Viola at the Villa Montalto. The subject of these landscapes was also an extension of the idiom that Agostino had formed in his *Landscape with Diana and Callisto*, which was hanging at Palazzo Farnese, and also coloured the imagery that Domenichino used in the panels of the ceiling illustrating the mythology of Diana. The character of these classical figures has to do with the succinct imagery of an idealised classical world that derived from Agostino Carracci's example, just as his classicism inspired the panels on the walls of the Galleria Farnese, where for instance the scene of *Diana and Actaeon* is a recollection of Agostino's canvas (also from Palazzo Farnese) now in Brussels. The history figures that Domenichino spent so much effort in inventing, as in the Hercules and Achelous (**Detail**) were an achievement that a mere landscapist found difficult to emulate, and this visual explanation of narrative would be ever more important among Seicento patrons, from Agucchi to Cassiano dal Pozzo and Chantelou. The decoration at Bassano was the result of Vincenzo Giustiniani's enthusiasm for Bolognese artists, and while Annibale was alive the origin of the inventions could still be thought of as coming from his direction, which is why these pictures continued to be associated with his name when they were snapped up by French agents. It must be that these commissions were created in the context of competing personalities, just as Viola's Bolognese landscape fresco was set against another by Brill in the destroyed Casino Montalto. The *putti volanti* of the *Hunt of Diana* are key features of this idiom: drawn from Agostino's example, they are a common denominator of several of his pictures;; it is not a contradiction to point to the possibility that this element originates from Agostino Carracci's examples, followed as closely as he could by Albani. These landscapes, together with the collaborations at Villa Ludovisi that ended up in Cardinal Mazarin's collection, are the real manifestations of the *buona maniera italiana dal natural rapportati* that was still in place in Rome when Claude and Poussin arrived there. Again, the figures and the idiom of the landscape detail is consistent with Domenichino's direction, but it is coloured by Viola's

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<sup>59</sup> In his article on 'A Forgotten Landscape Painter; Giovanni Battista Viola, *Burlington Magazine*, May 1980, Vol. 122, 926, p. 306-308



magnificent and exaggerated perspective, as sublime as John Martin would achieve in the *Plains of Heaven*. (Tate Gallery, 1851/53). And the iconography of the whole room anticipates the major composition on which Domenichino would work (1616/17) for Pietro Aldobrandini, the large canvas of the *Hunt of Diana* that would be appropriated by Scipione Borghese for his country villa on the Pincio.

The Wrotham Park painting came to England in 1811, probably from France. Most of the Giustiniani paintings that came on the market at the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth century passed through Paris; the Wrotham Park picture first came to light in England, and was imported by the dealer Alexis Delahante, included in his sale at Phillips, June 3rd, 1814 (73) where it was said to have come from Rome and the 'Justiniani Palace'. It was bought by George Byng, founder of the collection at Wrotham. He lent it to the 'British Institution Old Masters exhibition in 1816 (No. 23), as by Domenichino, and from the Giustiniani collection. Not listed in the 1638 Giustiniani inventory, its absence there probably points to its origin at Bassano and Vincenzo Giustiniani's country seat. The elaborate French Louis XIV revival frame in which it is displayed, with *Dco. Zampieri dto Il Domenichino (detail)* on a gilt ribbon either side of coats of arms that resemble the Giustiniani lion and the Pamphili dove, looks like a ploy that Jean-Baptiste Pierre Le Brun (1748-1813) adopted on other occasions, notably with the Viola of the *Flight into Egypt* (then attributed to Annibale Carracci) now at Mount Stuart, where it still has his French Louis frame with the Giustiniani arms at the top<sup>60</sup>. He was one of the greatest connoisseurs of his generation, and had a particular passion for the Bolognese painters, and especially Domenichino. In 1810 he sold a 'Domenichino' landscape for 3351 francs, while in a sale earlier in the same year he had sold a work by the artist who was his major discovery, Johannes Vermeer, the *Concert*, for 151 francs, which illustrates the greater

<sup>60</sup> See the catalogue entry by Spear in the Domenichino retrospective, Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1996/97, VI, p. 536.



appreciation that there was in France for Bolognese painting. Delahante rightly recognised that the major collectors of this school of painting were now over the Channel in England.

There has been some confusion in the consideration of Viola's work, because there is a contradiction between the fame he obviously enjoyed, and the relatively modest quality of the work attributed to him alone, with little variation in achievement from one end of his career to the other. So some of the works traditionally given to Domenichino and others have been re-attributed to his hand. In reality he was a continuous presence in the lives and work of both Albani and Domenichino in Rome right from his arrival in 1601 to his death in 1622. Because he was untrained and had a gift, as Grimaldi put it *si diede a batter solo il paese*, he was gauche even when he repeated figures from compositions that he copied, as he frequently did. It was collaboration with his Bolognese companions that brought out the best of his work, and he was widely appreciated for the complementary background that he invented for their figure subjects, for he was quite obsessive '*mai si saziava*' in the detail of his landscape. The earliest known painting by him, the so called *Cagna caccia* in the Doria, which was painted in 1602 as it is in the Aldobrandini inventory of January 1603, must be a collaboration as the figures of hunters in a boat are superior to the staffage figures he introduces to people his own landscapes (and the ones in the background of that painting). The characteristic that the more ambitious scope of his collaborations brought out was the sense of scale, for despite nearly always misjudging it along with his perspective, the stage he set for others' 'classical' figures gave their compositions breadth and space in a way that was influential on the next generation. There was no artistic contradiction in a collaboration where such a reliable assistant could be counted on to provide precisely the detail that Domenichino would have chosen, only better.

In conclusion, it ought to be noted that Domenichino's efforts in landscape painting, when he tried to satisfy the needs of his demanding patrons the Agucchi brothers shortly after his arrival in Rome, were intended to respond to the challenge of history painting, with a landscape setting because that was a speciality he had shown talent for early on. The experience that G B Agucchi had in obtaining paintings that reflected his imaginative personal interpretation<sup>61</sup> of subjects like that of *Erminia among the Shepherds* meant some progress in Domenichino's career ladder, for the patron was surely better able to explain in person what he wanted rather than by written word with the distant Ludovico. The Louvre painting, done probably for the Ludovisi, would indeed have been a real fulfilment of his request, but before that the Doria *Flight into Egypt* was a real expression of his 'classical' landscape. Domenichino was also appreciated at this period by the Farnese, probably as a result of Annibale's encouragement, for he contributed frescoes (with landscape settings) for the Palazzetto Farnese. We should not disregard the artist's obsessive personality, by means of which he developed a formal landscape practice, a working vocabulary of forms that revolved around figures but included a compendium of devices drawn from the setting in a new 'Roman' countryside. It was evidently this science that Poussin studied when he arrived in Rome, one of the major beneficiaries of the knowledge and practical preparation that Domenichino had developed, from the impulse he had found in Bologna under Agostino. But he also started painting more significant figure subjects, and this was an achievement that put what he would have felt was his modest achievement in the field of landscape - a decorative genre if ever there was one - in the shade. The Carracci workshop, which still had Annibale as its nominal head, even though for the last five or even six years of his life he hardly could put brush to canvas, was already a collective and we have little chance of identifying all of the hands in its productions, names like Bartolomeo Loto, Giovanni Antonio Solari, Sisto Badalocchio, and Giovanni Paolo Bonconti. Then there was Viola's pupil Pietro Paolo Bonzi, followed by his compatriot from Cortona, Pietro Berrettini, and then Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, all taken with the genre of *historie di figurine piccole*. Not only Agostino's son Antonio, the real figure of continuity in the Annibale studio in Rome, followed the example of his late father, but also Guido Reni, who also did Carraccesque landscape paintings and drawings. Domenichino, and Albani (and maybe others) made considerable use of the specialist Viola who could satisfactorily complete landscape settings, but was not up to the level of figure painting except as staffage. It is this aspect of the original invention that meant that Grimaldi could see a great number of works by Viola when he visited Paris, when there the Bolognese landscape idiom was billed as the creation of Annibale Carracci, followed by Domenichino, with very little credit being attributed to the handiwork itself. But we should not continue to follow the lead of those commercial agents in the Seicento who were only too happy to invent and perpetuate the idea of Annibale's conversion to a classicism that was completely at odds with his intuitive genius, because of the works of his followers that were to hand when he was so obviously in such acute physical decline. And it is worth considering not only how contemporaries viewed what were two different approaches to landscape, the Bolognese and the Northern, and also how the designer could make a real difference to the new classical landscape even when much of it was undertaken by a trusted specialist. It is still a paradox that in some of Domenichino's best works, like the *Erminia and the Shepherds* in the Louvre, and the pair of landscapes with *Hercules and Acheloo*s and *Hercules and Cacus* that certainly belonged to Viola's employers, the Ludovisi, the backgrounds may well have been materially executed by Domenichino's assistant, which is why the escarpments and trees have such an affinity with those we know Viola painted at Bassano Romano for Marchese Giustiniani. Things would change, even as in the Sala dei

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<sup>61</sup> see C. Whitfield, 'A Programme for "Erminia and the Shepherds" by G.B. Agucchi' in *Storia dell'Arte*, 19, 1973, p. 217-229

Paesi at the garden pavilion of the Ludovisi the work of four renowned landscapists would be compared each for their own virtues. But the creative vein that led to such panoramas as Claude's *Sermon on the Mount*. (Frick collection, New York) was the inspiration from not just a single artist, but a more collective effort from the Bolognese in Rome, pitched against the invasion of Brill, Brueghel, Elsheimer, Poelenburg, Breenbergh the Van Nieulandts and other Northerners. It was known as the Bolognese landscape, of which the main representative even in Domenichino's lifetime was Grimaldi, and he as we shall see touched base with Domenichino as the latter returned to his own roots in the 1630s. And although this interpretation of the participation of Viola in the celebrated landscapes usually attributed to his colleague can be quite arresting, in reality it was their collaboration that made this phase of the Carraccesque landscape, and it was above all in the overall design that Domenichino excelled and established the guiding principles of the new genre that would be studied not only by Grimaldi, but also by Claude and Poussin, and many others.

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