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Author(s): Thomas McGrath

Source: *The Art Bulletin*, Jun., 2000, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Jun., 2000), pp. 298-308

Published by: CAA

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3051378>

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Color and the Exchange of Ideas between Patron and Artist in Renaissance Italy

Thomas McGrath

In 1542 the confraternity of the church of S. Maria della Steccata in Parma complained to Giulio Romano about a *Coronation of the Virgin* fresco they had commissioned him to design (Fig. 1).¹ The colors, the confraternity claimed, appeared unnatural and made many figures difficult to read. This was not the first time a patron had expressed displeasure over the handling of color and light in a painting or fresco, and it would not be the last. In 1510, for example, the Compagnia of S. Zenobi in Florence refused to pay Mariotto Albertinelli for his *Annunciation* altarpiece because, Giorgio Vasari suggests, he had compromised its appearance by constantly changing the colors (from light to dark, from muted to bold).² In 1533, Pope Clement VII criticized the manner in which Giovanni da Udine had decorated the interior of the dome in Michelangelo's Medici Chapel, finding that the whiteness of the ribs made the richly colored *grotteschi* in the coffers hard to see.³ And in 1603 Pope Clement VIII advised Federico Barocci to alter the lighting in his proposed *Institution of the Eucharist* altarpiece for S. Maria Sopra Minerva, preferring a night scene with more muted tonalities.⁴

The criticisms voiced by each of these patrons reveal a strong concern with the coloristic appearance of the works they commissioned. Their disagreements with artists over issues of light and color—elements of visual style generally assumed to fall outside the patron's purview—raise a number of important questions about the nature of the artist-patron relationship in Renaissance Italy. First, did patrons and artists sometimes exchange ideas about the coloring of a commissioned work prior to its execution or completion? Second, what form or forms did their communication take? And third, were there problems inherent in the ways they communicated, or basic differences in their respective values and expectations, that could have affected the nature of their negotiations and, ultimately, the appearance of the works produced? While many aspects of a painting or fresco could be described verbally with a fairly high degree of precision, the coloristic appearance of a proposed work was less easily conveyed through language. In some cases, including a number of projects commissioned for the church of S. Maria della Steccata in Parma in the first half of the cinquecento, the parties involved relied not simply on words to describe light and color but on images as well. Surviving documents and drawings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggest that some patrons entered into a dialogue with artists that operated in modes both verbal and visual, and that both the content and form of their dialogue contributed to the appearance of the works produced.

The frequency with which patrons and artists engaged in substantive dialogues on color is open to question. Patrons, after all, must have known what to expect, at least in a general sense, when hiring a particular painter.⁵ Fra Angelico, for

example, was known for his bright, high-keyed palette; Andrea del Castagno's somewhat darker manner was widely recognized; and according to Vasari, Sebastiano del Piombo's early reputation in Rome rested to a large degree on his manner of coloring.⁶ Yet color was of greater concern to patrons than surviving contracts indicate, and it undoubtedly became a topic of discussion during many patron-artist negotiations. According to Martin Kemp, the scarcity of explicit references to coloristic appearance in period documents does not indicate the patron's lack of interest in what he calls "the more elusive aspects of a work's visual quality."⁷ One of the most pervasive stipulations in Renaissance contracts—the quantity and quality of expensive pigments to be used—reveals not merely a concern with cost but also a desire for coloristic richness.⁸ Color was one of the primary criteria that Sixtus IV used to evaluate Cosimo Rosselli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, and the reason he singled out Rosselli for praise.⁹ The nuns at Monteluce also exhibited a concern with coloristic appearance when they instructed Raphael to emulate not only the composition of the altarpiece he had been hired to copy but also its coloring.¹⁰ Advisors hired by patrons to supply iconographic programs for artists sometimes took an interest in color as well; Charles Davis has noted that iconographic programs by Cosimo Bartoli describe several effects of light and color that can be discerned in Vasari's frescoes in the Palazzo Almeni.¹¹ Further evidence of patrons' concern with color is provided by Clement VII's criticism of Giovanni da Udine's frescoes in the New Sacristy and Clement VIII's advice to Barocci, both mentioned above, as well as the interaction between the confraternity of S. Maria della Steccata and the various artists it employed, discussed more fully below.

The patron's role in the creation of works of art in Renaissance Italy has received much attention in recent decades.¹² While the nature and extent of the patron's influence varied tremendously from commission to commission, artists' contracts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggest that it was not unusual for the patron to specify the subject to be depicted and the amount of expensive materials to be used. In some cases, the patron took a more active part. In an addendum to their 1438 contract with Sassetta for an altarpiece, for example, the friars of S. Francesco in Borgo S. Sepolcro specified which saints were to be represented, where they were to stand, and even how some of them were to be posed;¹³ Domenico Ghirlandaio's 1485 contract for his frescoes at S. Maria Novella stipulated that the landscapes were to be rich and full of details, including figures, cities, castles, mountains, and a variety of birds and animals.¹⁴

On the topic of color, however, contracts seem to have provided very little guidance. Although Ghirlandaio was instructed to embellish his frescoes for S. Maria Novella with



1 Michelangelo Anselmi, after a design by Giulio Romano, *Coronation of the Virgin*. Parma, S. Maria della Steccata (photo: Paolo Candelari)

gold and ultramarine, he was offered no advice concerning how the colors should be arranged, which colors should dominate, or whether the overall tonalities should be intense, muted, bright, or dark.¹⁵ This reticence about color, however, should not be taken as a sign of the patron's apathy regarding matters of visual style. Since ideas about color were less easy to describe and quantify than ideas about subject matter, numbers of figures, or the scale of buildings, they might have seemed out of place in a legal document. It seems likely that some of the decisions regarding the finer points of a work's iconography and design were decided through oral discussions between patron and artist that both preceded and followed the signing of the contract. A number of contracts, including Ghirlandaio's for his frescoes in S. Maria Novella and his altarpiece for the Ospedale degli Innocenti, stipulated that the artist was to consult with an overseer concerning various aspects of the work, and several instances of ongoing, postcontractual discussions between patrons and artists are documented.¹⁶ Certain issues relating to colors and pigments might have presented themselves only after work on

a painting or fresco was under way, and would have been addressed, perhaps in informal discussions, after the contract had been approved. While oral exchanges cannot, of course, be scrutinized, there are insights to be gained from two more tangible bodies of evidence: first, documents that relied on images (such as drawings), which artists often used as a means of presenting ideas to the patron, and which sometimes contained information about color; and second, documents that relied on verbal communication, such as the letters the confraternity of S. Maria della Steccata exchanged with Giulio Romano and other artists it employed. These letters, which provide examples of the terminology used to describe certain visual effects, can offer a sense of how successful certain verbal descriptions might have been.

Ideas about color were sometimes transmitted through prospectus drawings. Prospectuses, unlike preparatory studies, were finished drawings that Renaissance artists submitted to patrons as a means of securing approval for their designs.¹⁷ A number of surviving prospectus drawings, moreover, exhibit watercolors that conveyed information about the pro-



2 Attributed to Raffaellino del Garbo, *Saints Anthony Abbot, James the Greater and Catherine*. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Woodner Family Collection

posed work.¹⁸ In order to understand how color functioned in such drawings, it is important to note that prospectuses were not regarded as blueprints that had to be followed with absolute fidelity. In the 1485 contract for the *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece made for the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, for example, Ghirlandaio was instructed not to make an exact duplicate of his (monochrome) drawing, but rather to adhere to its manner and composition (“modo e composizione”).¹⁹ He was allowed, moreover, to make changes with the approval of the monk overseeing the project, suggesting that a dialogue continued during the work’s subsequent design stages and execution. Hannelore Glasser, in her study of artists’ contracts in the early Renaissance, concluded that contract drawings were usually regarded as an idea or generic scheme rather than a model in the strict sense of the word.²⁰ Given this mutable relationship between the prospectus and the final work, an artist could indicate a particular color scheme in his drawing even before the design had been finalized, knowing that it would be scrutinized by the patron, who might request modifications.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries prospectus drawings for public projects often took the form of large drawings in sinopia made on the wall of a civic or religious building. This was the case with one of Jacopo della Quercia’s proposals for the Fonte Gaia in Siena, for example, as well as a number of other works.²¹ The sinopia drawing commonly made on the surface of a wall in preparation for a fresco painting also functioned as a prospectus in many instances, and frequently

exhibited touches of color.²² Red and yellow washes appear, for example, in a number of the fourteenth-century sinopias in the Camposanto, Pisa.²³ A late fifteenth-century sinopia showing the Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints, originally executed on the left wall of the Cappella della Confraternità di S. Luca in SS. Annunziata, Florence, features haloes tinted yellow and parts of draperies toned red.²⁴ Such coloring had no real preparatory function. The artist, after all, hardly needed a reminder that haloes were golden or that the Virgin’s inner robe was crimson. Although the coloring in these sinopias was not elaborate, and was of little use as a set of instructions for an assistant, it imbued them with a greater pictorial quality and helped the patron better envision the proposed work. It also contributed to a tradition whereby color in prospectus drawings was acceptable, and perhaps in some cases expected.²⁵

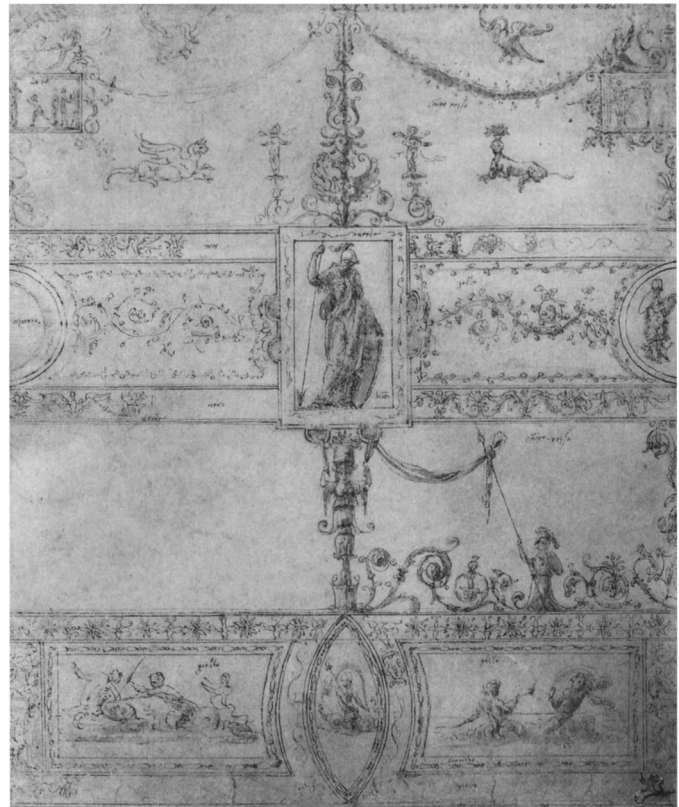
A tradition of adding color to prospectus drawings on paper can be discerned by the end of the fifteenth century, if not earlier. While determining the precise function of drawings usually involves a degree of speculation, it seems likely that the *Saints Anthony Abbot, James the Greater and Catherine* in the Woodner Collection (Fig. 2), made by a Florentine artist about 1490 (probably Raffaellino del Garbo), served as a means of conveying a visual idea from artist to potential patron.²⁶ The drawing, which exhibits yellow, gray, green, red, and blue watercolors and white gouache over pen and ink, is almost certainly a proposal for an altarpiece in S. Felice in Piazza, which shows the same saints, similarly posed and in the

same order.²⁷ Stylistic differences, however, indicate that the painting is not by the same hand. Everett Fahey has explained this discrepancy by suggesting that the drawing represents a rejected proposal, in which the artist took advantage of colors to give the patron a more complete vision of the finished work.²⁸

There are a number of sixteenth-century drawings, including several by Perino del Vaga, that almost certainly functioned as prospectuses. Perino's *Design for an Altar Wall* in the British Museum from the mid-1530s (Fig. 3),²⁹ for example, records an idea for a fresco, apparently never executed, that features the Virgin and Child in the clouds, beneath a canopy held open by putti, hovering above two saints and a donor. Several features suggest that the drawing was created in order to help the patron understand how the fresco would appear in situ. The draftsmanship, first of all, exhibits a certain precision—one might even say dryness—that appears infrequently in Perino's graphic oeuvre; the lines of the architecture were drawn with a straightedge, and virtually no pentimenti are visible.³⁰ Second, the figures exhibit rather uninspired poses, which the artist perhaps intended to reinvent later. Third, there are indications that the work was intended for a specific location, notably, the panels at the bottom, which might have been meant to accommodate actual doors in the wall. Finally, Perino has inserted a hastily sketched praying figure, presumably a donor, at the lower left. Such a last-minute change is typical of those a patron might suggest after examining an artist's proposal. The use of watercolors, moreover, reinforces the likelihood that the drawing functioned as a prospectus for the patron rather than a *modello* to guide an assistant in the execution of the fresco. Instructions regarding color could have been—and often were—conveyed much more easily and with a greater degree of precision through verbal notations. Words could identify many different visual effects and specific pigments. Watercol-



3 Perino del Vaga, *Design for an Altar Wall*. London, British Museum (photo: Copyright The British Museum)



4 Luzio Romano, *Design for Grottesque Decoration*. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection

ors, on the other hand, were less successful as a means of conveying information regarding the various tonalities and array of hues in a large fresco, particularly when used in a small-scale drawing and in a largely transparent form. Watercolors were quite effective, however, in giving a layman, or a patron, a quick, vivid impression of what the finished work might look like.

Verbal notations appear in Lorenzo Lotto's *Landscape with the Camp of the Assyrians*, now in a private collection, which seems to have functioned as a *modello* for an assistant. In the drawing, which records a design for an intarsia panel, the word "nocte" indicates a dark, night sky, "biaco" a white tent, and "veste de laca" the precise hue of a woman's dress.³¹ "Laca" or "lacca" referred not only to varnish but also to lake pigments, and specifically to the most common lake pigment, red.³² While watercolor or gouache could convey a more vivid and immediate impression of a proposed work, it could also make certain aspects of the drawing difficult to read. This was sometimes the case with drawings for decorative projects. In Luzio Romano's *Design for Grottesque Decoration* from the 1540s in the Lehman Collection, for example (Fig. 4), inscriptions like "giallo" and "verde" indicate how various panels should be colored. The use of watercolor or gouache in these areas might have obscured the intricate patterning and delicate foliage motifs.³³ The loss of clarity that could result from the addition of washes was an expressed concern of Giovan Antonio Dosio, who noted in a letter of 1574 that he had deliberately refrained from using "acquerello" in one of his architectural drawings so that the measurements he had inscribed on the sheet would remain visible.³⁴ In those cases

where precision and legibility were valued—as in a *modello* for an assistant—verbal notations had distinct advantages over watercolor or gouache.

Perino's experience in Raphael's workshop, which produced a series of remarkable cartoons for tapestries, must have familiarized him with the use of drawings as conveyors of visual information regarding light and color.³⁵ The tapestry cartoons, however, were intended not so much for the patron as for the weavers who produced the large textiles. The creation of the tapestry cartoons, which vary in size but measure approximately eleven by sixteen feet, involved a tremendous outlay of manpower. By the time one was completed, negotiations between artist and patron regarding the appearance of the work had more or less come to a close. The tapestry cartoons are virtual paintings, executed in opaque gouache on large sheets of thick paper joined together at the edges, and exhibit layering of colors, visible brushwork, and touches of impasto.³⁶ Perino's *Design for an Altar Wall*, by contrast, is a small drawing about eight inches square, embellished with a few watercolors applied in a comparatively free manner, which conveys much less visual data. While the cartoons served, almost literally, as blueprints or templates, Perino's *Altar Wall* drawing, with its rather stiff figures and general colors, offered a relatively quick and simple solution to a visual problem, and seems intended more for the eyes of a patron than those of an assistant or executor.

It is difficult to imagine that the patron did not at least take note of, and perhaps comment on, Perino's use of color in the *Design for an Altar Wall*. Red, mauve, green, yellow, and blue were used throughout with an eye toward both variety of hue and unity of composition. The yellow and mauve combination on the inside of the canopy, for example, is picked up in the symmetrically placed marble panels beneath the two saints, while the red and blue pairing in the Virgin's robes is echoed in the red panel and blue mountains below. Occasionally Perino alluded to rather complex color effects. In the robes of Saint Lucy he implied a kind of *cangiante* (modeling achieved through a change in hue rather than tonality) in the shift from rose to white. Even the tiny landscape received touches of yellow, green, mauve, and blue. Perino's handling of watercolors in this drawing is inventive, suggesting that he was making a serious attempt to work out the chromatic appearance of the fresco and communicate this appearance to the patron.

The submission of colored drawings to the patron seems to have been a more widely accepted practice in some regional centers than in others.³⁷ Artists in Parma, for example, have left us an unusually large number of colored drawings connected with several different projects. Some of these drawings, such as Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli's pen-and-watercolor *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* at Windsor,³⁸ relate to projects that are unrecorded or lost, or which were never executed. Others associated with well-documented projects, including many of the frescoes for the church of S. Maria della Steccata, offer considerable insight regarding the ways in which artists and patrons exchanged ideas about light and color.

The confraternity of S. Maria della Steccata in Parma seems to have relied on colored drawings to evaluate artists' proposals on more than one occasion. A colored drawing was clearly

specified in its contract with Giulio Romano of March 14, 1540.³⁹ Although no other contracts for Steccata projects explicitly call for colored drawings, there are several by Parmigianino relating to his work at the Steccata, and one by Bernardino Gatti (the only such drawing in his oeuvre, to the best of my knowledge).⁴⁰ Such a concentration of colored drawings around a particular patron raises the question of whether they were produced at that patron's urging. Documents suggest that the members of the confraternity of the Steccata were rather demanding and meddlesome employers. A day after entering into an agreement with Giulio Romano that allowed him nine months to design a Coronation of the Virgin fresco, they demanded that he complete his work four months ahead of schedule.⁴¹ In their 1560 contract with Bernardino Gatti, they stipulated that the artist relocate his family to Parma so he could spend more time on his commission.⁴² In the case of Parmigianino, close supervision seems to have been warranted. Parmigianino's initial contract with the Steccata, drawn up in May 1531, called for the decoration of the eastern apse to be completed by the end of 1533.⁴³ The work was still not finished in 1535, when the two parties entered into a second contract that gave Parmigianino two more years. (Part of his original commission, a Coronation of the Virgin for the eastern semidome, was eventually turned over to Giulio Romano and Michelangelo Anselmi.) Parmigianino's unwillingness or inability to finish the work resulted in his imprisonment in 1539.⁴⁴ Such behavior makes the confraternity's careful scrutiny of his proposals and his progress understandable, and perhaps justified.

Several drawings with color that relate to Parmigianino's Steccata frescoes survive. One, now in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth (Fig. 5), which records an early idea for the eastern vault, depicts three draped female figures standing against a field of six coffer. The figures are drawn carefully in pen and ink with brown wash and white gouache, along with a bit of dull green watercolor in the shaded areas of the woman in the center. Their hair and the urns on their heads are tinted yellow, as are the round elements within the coffers, which are set into a red background. Despite the rather high degree of finish exhibited by the drawing, neither the iconography nor the precise poses of the figures has been finalized. The women, who are here depicted as classical *canephorae*, do not yet carry the lamps that will mark them as the Wise and Foolish Virgins of the completed fresco.⁴⁶ A substantial change in iconography such as this must have been dictated—or at least approved—by the confraternity, which might have objected to Parmigianino's pagan figures after seeing a drawing such as this one. The decision represents an astute compromise between Parmigianino's vision and the desires of the Steccata authorities, because the modification entails only a slight change in the artist's design. The color scheme proposed in the drawing, however, must have been agreed on at a fairly early date, since the dominant red and yellow hues in the drawing are the same ones that appear in the painted architecture of the final work (partly visible at upper left and right in Fig. 1).

While the Chatsworth drawing exhibits colors that accord with the fresco, a number of other sketches by Parmigianino for the decoration in the east end of the church presume a different color scheme. For example, there are over a dozen

pen-and-wash studies of figures in oval or hexagonal frames intended for the arch that separates the eastern apse from the rest of the church (visible in Fig. 1).⁴⁷ Many of these small sketches, such as one at Christ Church (Fig. 6), were probably part of a single design and perhaps cut from a larger sheet. At least five exhibit touches of yellow and green watercolors. The quickly applied dabs of color must have been of minimal use to the artist, because they do not really identify particular color fields with a high degree of precision; an assistant working with such drawings would not be able to discern the divisions between one hue and the next. The touches of pigment, however, offer a sense of the overall color scheme and add a certain legibility to the images by accentuating the distinction between backgrounds and borders. If these drawings were indeed intended for, or subjected to, the scrutiny of the confraternity, they must have provided an opportunity for its members to reconsider the colors initially proposed. This seems to be exactly what happened, because in the fresco decoration Parmigianino eliminated all traces of green, employing instead a gold filigree pattern over a deep blue ground with grisaille figures at the base. At some point, the color scheme proposed in these early drawings was rejected. These sheets, along with the larger one showing the Wise and Foolish Virgins from Chatsworth, suggest that the confraternity scrutinized Parmigianino's drawings, evaluating not only the subject and design, but the coloristic appearance as well.⁴⁸



5 Parmigianino, *Study for the Eastern Vault of S. Maria della Steccata*. Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection (photo: By permission of the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees)



6 Parmigianino, *Design for an Ornamental Panel Containing a Bearded Male Figure*. Oxford, Christ Church

The precise roles that Parmigianino and the confraternity played in determining the colors of the eastern arch must remain somewhat speculative, since the written documents are silent on this matter. We have a fairly substantial body of verbal evidence, however, relating to a later commission: Giulio Romano's proposal for the *Coronation of the Virgin* fresco in the eastern semidome. In an agreement of March 14, 1540, Giulio explicitly promised to submit "un disegno [*sic*] colorito con acquarelle in carta" (a drawing colored with watercolors on paper).⁴⁹ Although Giulio's drawing is lost, his description of it in a 1542 letter gives us a fairly good sense of its coloristic appearance:⁵⁰ a bright, celestial glow radiated from God the Father in the center, causing some hues to become desaturated and tinged with gold while others, around the periphery, remained bolder and more intense.

Given the care with which the members of the confraternity examined Parmigianino's drawings, it is likely that they also studied closely Giulio's "disegno colorito." Giulio's reminder that he made the drawing so that his proposal could be examined and criticized before work began on the fresco, and that work should not have been undertaken if the confraternity was not satisfied, reveals that he intended it as a prospectus for his patron and not simply a *modello* for another artist.⁵¹ One must assume that the confraternity liked what it saw, because it commissioned Michelangelo Anselmi to execute Giulio's design as faithfully as possible.⁵² Neither Anselmi nor the confraternity, however, seems to have understood the light effects that Giulio intended. In 1542 the confraternity of the Steccata complained to Giulio that the colors of Anselmi's fresco (Fig. 1), which must have been close to completion at that time, created confusion among the figures.⁵³ In a letter dated September 12, Giulio explained

that since his colored drawing had not been understood, he would have to rely on words to express his intentions.⁵⁴

And as for making the beautiful [or rich] colors less saturated, they cannot appear otherwise, because I have made them dazzling inside the cloud [that is, in the foreground] and subdued [*suffocati*] in the splendid rays of the sun. . . . If I had made [all] the colors bold [*manifesti*] there would be a confusion of figures as in a tapestry. . . . I wanted each thing—the flesh and the draperies—affected by the flame to be so much more dazzling, and diminished [*annichilate*] according to how far away they were; and those that are on this side of the flame, like Adam and Noah and other patriarchs, are able to show bold and finished colors [*colori manifesti et terminati*].⁵⁵

Giulio's description of his drawing suggests that he made a conscious decision to work in the local style, offering his patrons a celestial vision of light and color akin to that popularized by Correggio. Giulio's description of his drawing emphasizes a brightness at the center that lessens in intensity toward the periphery, an effect exploited about ten years earlier by Correggio in his *Assumption of the Virgin* fresco in the dome of the Parma Duomo. Giulio's insistence that the colors be affected by the splendor radiating from God the Father, moreover, suggests golden yellow highlights like those found in the *Assumption*. The likelihood that Giulio tailored his vision to accord more closely with what he perceived as the Parmesan style is bolstered by the observation that a similar use of dazzling light to subdue large areas of color appears, to this degree, nowhere else in Giulio's paintings and frescoes.⁵⁶

Giulio's insistence on a variety of saturated hues and sharp contrasts of light and dark in the lower band, all of which served to make individual figures more distinct, might also be an attempt to answer the criticisms of illegibility that had been leveled at Correggio's dome.⁵⁷ Giulio's intentions can be better understood, however, by considering the intellectual component of his design. His system of light and color conveys not simply visual order, but thematic clarity as well. As Konrad Oberhuber has pointed out, Giulio evoked Raphael's *Disputa* in his insistence on a conceptual link between the brightness at the center of the composition and the theological splendor associated with those who reside there—God the Father and the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ The glow lessens in intensity as it spreads outward. As a result, the New Testament figures, representing the New Law and situated close to the center, display lighter colors than the Old Testament figures at the edge of the composition, rendered with dark, saturated hues. Giulio's colors, then, do more than add a sense of order and naturalism. They also help communicate, in a fundamental way, the very meaning of the work. Because of this, Giulio must have believed it was vital that his intentions be understood.

The source of the misunderstanding, confusion, and disapproval on the part of the confraternity is difficult to pinpoint. Did the fault lie with Giulio's drawing, Anselmi's fresco, or both? Since the confraternity approved Giulio's *disegno colorito* (which functioned both as a prospectus and *modello*) but disliked the image painted on the semidome, the fault would

appear to have been Anselmi's. Nevertheless, the authorities of the Steccata held Giulio responsible and tried to induce him to come to Parma and make the changes they desired with his own hand. Perhaps Giulio's color scheme seemed acceptable in the comparatively small *disegno colorito* but overpowering on the large surface of the semidome.⁵⁹ In other words, the problem might have been inherent in the format Giulio employed to convey his vision. It would have been nearly impossible, after all, for Giulio to use in his drawing the variety of pigments in the proper degrees of saturation required for the large fresco. It is quite possible that Anselmi translated the watercolor drawing too literally, failing to render the subtle gradations of tone necessary for the light and color effects Giulio desired. Whatever the reason for the confraternity's reaction, the evidence suggests, first of all, that Giulio's colored drawing was perfectly adequate as a means of gaining patronal approval, since the confraternity would not have hired Anselmi to execute it if they disliked its design or color; and, second, that it was less successful as a set of practical instructions, since the patrons perceived a discrepancy between the visual effect of Giulio's design and that in Anselmi's fresco.

Part of the confraternity's objection to the fresco might have stemmed from a traditional preference on the part of patrons for bright, rich colors. In order to ensure that the works they commissioned were of the highest quality, patrons frequently stipulated that artists use only the finest pigments (ultramarine, for example, instead of azurite).⁶⁰ Rich colors signaled to the viewer that no expense had been spared and reflected the patron's generosity. Artists, on the other hand, tended to place a greater premium on the skill involved in the creation of a work than on the richness of the materials. According to Leonardo, ". . . colors honor only those who manufacture them, for in them there is no cause for wonder except their beauty, and their beauty is not to the credit of the painter. . . ."⁶¹ The Florentine writer Anton Francesco Doni was even harsher in his criticism of bright colors, arguing that they "deceive, and dazzle the minds of common men who do not have good judgment."⁶²

A number of episodes recorded in period documents suggest that artists harbored a long-standing suspicion of their patrons' ability to appreciate the use of color in their work. In his *Lives of the Artists*, Vasari related the story of how Cosimo Rosselli's too liberal use of gold and bright colors in his Sistine Chapel frescoes elicited derision from his colleagues but high praise from Pope Sixtus IV, who awarded him the prize for the most beautiful work.⁶³ As far as Vasari was concerned, Sixtus's delight in Rosselli's coloring provided clear evidence of his ignorance in matters of art. In the case of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* altarpiece, commissioned in 1483, the artist was less willing to accept the patron's assessment. The patron in this instance, the confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in Milan, claimed that the altarpiece was not worth the price originally stipulated. Leonardo and his partners (Evangelista and Giovan Ambrogio de Predis) responded in writing, contending that the confraternity members were unqualified to make a monetary assessment because "the blind cannot judge colors."⁶⁴

A similar conflict can be detected in Giulio's dealings with the confraternity of the Steccata. In its contract with Anselmi

of May 17, 1540, the confraternity included its customary clause requiring the painter to use rich colors (“li colori finissimi d’azzurro come d’altra sorte”) and to bear their cost himself (“a spesa sua”).⁶⁵ In his letter, however, Giulio specified that the colors at the very heart of the composition should appear bleached out and advised that too many bright colors would create “a confusion of figures as in a tapestry.”⁶⁶ Giulio’s comparison of the fresco to a tapestry was carefully chosen and designed to make a specific point. Writers on art in Renaissance Italy often referred to tapestries as works that emphasized mere craftsmanship over invention and design. The Ferrarese humanist Angelo Decembrio, for example, asserted in a mid-fifteenth-century treatise that the weavers of tapestries “are far more concerned with opulence of color and the frivolous charm of the tapestry than they are with the science of painting.”⁶⁷ Vasari took up the same metaphor in his *Lives*, advising that a careless application of colors made a painting look like a “tappeto colorito” (colored tapestry).⁶⁸ Giulio obviously felt that the confraternity was placing far too much emphasis on material richness at the expense of his carefully designed and meaningful light effects. To many confraternity members, who desired beautiful, strong colors, the hues in the fresco must have appeared less bold than those in the drawing. The aesthetic qualities valued by the confraternity clearly differed from those of Giulio, making communication between them on matters of visual style inherently problematic.

In an attempt to pacify the members of the confraternity and avoid a trip to Parma, Giulio offered a verbal explanation of his color scheme. The language in his letter is eloquent without being precise. In discussing the appearance of the band of angels and clouds nearest the source of light, for example, Giulio resorts to the adjective “suffocati” (suffocated or subdued). The hues in this area of Anselmi’s fresco are indeed “suffocated” by the bright light. Because they have been dramatically desaturated with tones of yellow, the colors here are high in value and appear bleached out by the splendor radiating from God the Father. In other cases, however, Giulio’s terminology can be difficult to grasp. He describes the colors in the outer band as “annichilate” (annihilated or drastically diminished) even though they appear more vibrant than those closest to the light. Confusion arises because Giulio has switched to a different scale. The variable had been intensity; here it is value. Colors in the outer band are richer and more saturated, but also darker than those above. Giulio’s use of the adjectives “manifesti” (bold) and “terminati” (finished, complete, or saturated) to describe the robes of the Old Testament figures in the foreground suggests that he understood this distinction, even if he might not have been able to communicate it clearly. He had hoped, of course, that the drawing would communicate it for him.

Giulio’s thematic justification for his color scheme must have been sufficient to put the confraternity’s misgivings to rest, at least temporarily, because there is nothing to indicate that Anselmi made any major changes at this time. Although the confraternity issued its formal approval on January 28, 1543, finding that the fresco corresponded to the *disegno colorito* “in design as well as in color,”⁶⁹ they brought Anselmi back in 1547 to make a number of modifications. Most of

them, such as clothing the nude figures of Adam and Eve and covering the personification of God the Father with a cloud, were intended to bring the fresco more in line with Counter-Reformation doctrine. Other changes, however, were clear attempts to alter aspects of the fresco that had inspired so many complaints in 1542. In this case, the intervention of the patron in determining coloristic appearance was very direct. Anselmi was instructed to enliven (*ravvivare*) the colors of the New Testament saints in the middle circle and diminish (*diminuir*) the brightness emanating from the center.⁷⁰ The explanation Giulio had given four years earlier evidently did not really satisfy everyone, and disapproval must have grown during the interim.

It is important to realize that the confraternity’s dealings with Parmigianino and Giulio Romano were atypical of artist-patron relationships in several respects. First, both commissions were fraught with conflict; second, Parmigianino’s procrastination led to legal action; and finally, Giulio had little personal contact with either the confraternity or the artist who executed his design. These two commissions, however, call into question certain widely held assumptions about the process by which works of art assumed their final form in Renaissance Italy. Scholars have traditionally characterized the artist-patron relationship as one in which the patron concerned himself with a work’s cost, placement, subject, and perhaps iconography, while the artist took responsibility for matters of visual style. The use of color in prospectus drawings, as well as the concern over color expressed by not only the confraternity of the Steccata but also patrons like the Compagnia of S. Zenobi, Sixtus IV, and Clement VIII, suggest that this paradigm is in need of revision. The members of the confraternity had a certain idea of what the colors in the *Coronation* fresco should (or should not) look like, and their idea did not accord with Giulio’s. The appearance that the fresco ultimately assumed—after Giulio’s initial proposal, after the confraternity’s criticisms, and after Anselmi’s revisions—depended on the interaction, and perhaps the misunderstanding, that occurred between the patron and the artists it employed.

The drawings and documents associated with the Steccata commissions also call attention to the manner in which artists and patrons communicated and how the nature of their communication affected the appearance of the finished works. If Giulio’s proposal had been made strictly in words, without the visual aid of his *disegno colorito*, the response of the confraternity and the colors of Anselmi’s fresco would undoubtedly have been very different. Verbal exchanges, moreover, depended on terminology whose meanings could not always be translated into images with much precision, and drawings, perhaps because of the media they employed and their comparatively small size, could offer only an approximation of the intended effects. The problems inherent in both visual and verbal modes of communication, moreover, were compounded by the different values and expectations held by artist and patron. What is needed, and what this brief study cannot begin to undertake, is a systematic examination of the language artists and patrons used to describe effects of light and color in letters, contracts, and treatises. There is additional insight to be gained, I believe, from a consideration of the role of the advisers and iconographers hired by patrons,

who, as Charles Davis has pointed out, sometimes made suggestions regarding the use of certain hues.⁷¹ A full appreciation of the collaborative nature of the relationship between artist and patron in Renaissance Italy depends on not only an understanding of their respective concerns but also the ways in which they exchanged ideas and the problems inherent in their communication.

Thomas McGrath has published several articles on artistic theory and practice in Renaissance Italy, including studies of Barocci's preparatory process; color in Florentine and Venetian art; and the response of sixteenth-century draftsmen to the burgeoning art market. Ongoing projects include an investigation of cinquecento Florentine portraiture [Department of Fine Arts, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. 02454].

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Notes

This article has benefited greatly from the sensitive criticisms of John Paoletti and the two anonymous *Art Bulletin* reviewers, to whom I'd like to offer sincere thanks. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

1. See Testi, 277, doc. XVIII. For a summary of the documentation surrounding Giulio's work for the Steccata, see Frederick Hartt, *Giulio Romano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 247–50.

2. Vasari, vol. 3, 224. For more on this commission, see Ludovico Borgo, *The Works of Mariotto Albertinelli* (New York: Garland, 1976), 107–12, 318–25, who discusses the handling of color in the painting, which he calls unprecedented in Albertinelli's oeuvre (111–12). See also John Gage, *Color and Culture* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 137.

3. Charles De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 48, 157. The pope's reaction was noted by Vasari, vol. 6, 1881, 561.

4. Andrea Emiliani, *Federico Barocci*, vol. 2 (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1985), 377–83; see also Harald Olsen, *Federico Barocci* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962), 83, 209–10. Letters cited by both authors suggest the pope favored a night scene lit by oil lamps, as opposed to the daylight scene proposed in the *modello* by Barocci in an English private collection (Emiliani, 378, no. 825).

5. Charles Hope ("Artists, Patrons and Advisors in the Italian Renaissance," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. G. F. Lytle and S. Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 293–343) has noted that certain artists were hired because of their facility with certain subjects, and it stands to reason that others were sometimes hired because of the way they handled colors.

6. For a thorough discussion of coloristic modes in Italian Renaissance art, see Marcia Hall, *Color and Meaning: Practice and Theory in Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42–46 (a discussion of Fra Angelico), 49–52 (Andrea del Castagno). On Sebastiano's reputation as a colorist, see Vasari, vol. 6, 567: "Colori similmente alcune cose a olio, delle quali fu tenuto, per aver egli da Giorgione imparato un modo di colorire assai morbido, in Roma grandissimo conto" (He also painted some works in oil, for which, after having learned from Giorgione a very soft manner of coloring, he was held in great esteem in Rome).

7. Martin Kemp, *Behind the Picture: Art and Evidence in the Italian Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 79–80.

8. Thomas, 135.

9. Vasari (vol. 3; 1878, 187–89) noted Sixtus's delight in Rosselli's "vivaci colori." Sixtus's awareness of the symbolic importance of color in works he commissioned is revealed in a set of liturgical textiles used to decorate the Sistine Chapel, which exhibited different hues for different feasts and seasons of the church calendar; see John Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 5.

10. Vincenzo Golzio, *Raffaello nei documenti* (Spoleto: Panetto e Petrelli, 1936), 11–13.

11. Charles Davis, "New Frescoes by Vasari: Colore and Invenzione in Mid 16th-Century Florentine Painting," *Pantheon* 38, no. 2 (1980): 153–57.

12. Among the most noteworthy studies of the role of the patron in Renaissance Italy are Glasser; Chambers; Baxandall, esp. chap. 1; Salvatore Settis, "Artisti e committenti fra quattro e cinquecento," in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 4, *Intelletuali e potere*, ed. Corrado Viviani (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1981), 698–761; Lytle and Orgel (as in n. 5); Thomas; and Kemp (as in n. 7). The complexity of the artist-patron relationship has been explored in several case studies by John Shearman, notably "Il mecenatismo di Giulio II e Leone X," in *Arte, committenza ed economia a Roma e nelle corti del Rinascimento (1420–1530)*, ed. Arnold Esch and Christoph Frommel (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), 213–42. Recently, a reevaluation of Renaissance patronage has been undertaken by Creighton Gilbert ("What Did the Renaissance Patron Buy?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 2 [1998]: 392–450), who argues that the role of the patron has been largely overstated.

13. The contract is cited by Thomas, 105–6, who also discusses the involvement of patrons in the design and iconography of commissioned works (107–9).

14. Baxandall, 17–18.

15. The document is included in Chambers, 172–75. For more on stipulations in contracts regarding pigments and their cost, see Thomas, 129–37; and Gage (as in n. 2), 131–33. Occasionally, artists were instructed to emulate the composition and coloring of another painting; see Raphael's contract for the altarpiece in the church in Monteluce, in Golzio (as in n. 10), 11–13.

16. For Ghirlandajo's contract with Giovanni Tornabuoni for the S. Maria Novella frescoes, see Chambers, 173–75. For his 1485 agreement for the *Adoration of the Magi* with the Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence, see Baxandall, 6. Vincenzo Foppa's 1476 contract for an altarpiece in the church of S. Jacopo outside Pavia is also worth noting, in Kemp (as in n. 7), 39–41. Thomas, 102–3, 107–9, provides further evidence for continuing artist-patron negotiations.

17. For more on prospectus drawings, see Settis (as in n. 12), 752–54; Joseph Meder, *The Mastery of Drawing*, trans. W. Ames, vol. 1 (New York: Abaris, 1978), 253 ff.; Glasser, 115 ff.; Charles Seymour Jr., "Fatto di sua mano": Another Look at the Fonte Gaia Drawing Fragments in London and New York," in *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), 93–105; and Francis Ames-Lewis and Joanne Wright, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983), 219–20.

18. For a more general discussion of the functions of color in Italian Renaissance drawings, see Thomas McGrath, "Colour in Italian Renaissance Drawings: Reconciling Theory and Practice in Central Italy and Venice," *Apollo* 146, no. 429 (1997): 22–30; and idem, "Federico Barocci and the Early History of *Pastelli* in Central Italy," *Apollo* 148, no. 441 (1998): 3–9.

19. Glasser, 120.

20. *Ibid.*, 121.

21. Seymour (as in n. 17), 97.

22. Visible differences between some frescoes and the sinopias that once lay beneath them make clear that patrons sometimes ordered changes after inspecting the preliminary drawing on the surface of the wall. See *The Great Age of Fresco*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1968, 50–52, cat. no. 1, for an example of a fresco that exhibits iconographic differences from its sinopia, suggesting the intervention of a patron.

23. On the Camposanto sinopias, see Barbara Dodge, "The Role of the Sinopia in the Traini Cycle in the Camposanto, Pisa," in *La Pittura nel XIV e XV secolo: Il contributo dell'analisi tecnica all' storia dell'arte*, ed. Henk van Os and J.R.J. Asperen de Boer (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Edictrice Bologna, 1979), 125–53. While Dodge does not explicitly discuss the role of sinopias as prospectuses, she notes that those finished with red and yellow appear "presentational in nature" (127).

24. This sinopia, presumably rejected, is now on display in the chapel's anteroom. See Ugo Baldini, in *The Great Age of Fresco* (as in n. 22), 218–19. Although Baldini asserts that "the halos were added later in yellow," there is no evidence to suggest that they are not original.

25. Color had many other functions in Italian Renaissance drawings; a discussion of those functions lies outside the scope of this essay, unfortunately, but can be found in McGrath, 1997 (as in n. 18).

26. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., inv. no. 1991.190.1.h., where the drawing is attributed to Botticelli.

27. The similarities between painting and drawing were noted by Bernard Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), vol. 2, 79. The identity of the author of both the painting and drawing have been much debated. For a synopsis, see George Goldner, in *The Touch of the Artist: Master Drawings from the Woodner Collection*, ed. Margaret Morgan Grasselli, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1995, 70–71. While Goldner seems to accept Botticelli's authorship of the painting,

he assigns the drawing to Botticelli's workshop. Raffaellino del Garbo, who used watercolors on other occasions (see, for example, the *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, inv. no. 70 S, illustrated in Berenson, vol. 1, 123, cat. no. 628), seems a better candidate.

28. Everett Fahey, *Some Followers of Domenico Ghirlandaio* (New York: Garland, 1978), 20. Fahey dated the drawing 1485–90; if the author is Raffaellino, then 1490 seems nearer the mark. Fahey has since changed his mind as to the author of the painting and drawing; he now believes both to be by Botticelli himself. See Fahey, "Florence, Palazzo Strozzi: Late Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting," *Burlington Magazine* 135, no. 1079 (1993): 170.

29. The drawing (inv. no. 1885.5.9.42) cannot be connected to any of Perino's known projects. Bernice Davidson ("Drawings by Perino del Vaga for the Palazzo Doria," *Art Bulletin* 41 [1959]: 322–23 n. 42) placed the drawing early in Perino's career, but Philip Pouncey and John Gere's argument (*Italian Drawings in the . . . British Museum: Raphael and His Circle* [London: British Museum, 1962], vol. 1, 98–99) for a date from the mid-1530s seems more convincing. Additional drawings with watercolor by Perino that probably functioned as prospectuses include his *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints Joseph, Dominic and Francis*, collection of the duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth, inv. no. 318 (pen and brown ink, brown wash, blue, red, olive green, and gray watercolors, 13 1/2 by 9 1/2 in. [338 by 242 mm]) and his *Chimney Decoration* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. 601 (pen and brown ink, brown wash, red, blue, and yellow watercolors, white gouache).

30. While admitting that there are no fixed criteria for visually identifying prospectus drawings, Meder (as in n. 17), 256, noted several features common to many of them, including neat contours, a high degree of finish, and the frequent appearance of inscriptions referring to the work's placement and dimensions or to changes desired by the patron.

31. Private collection, pen and brown wash with white gouache, 12 1/2 by 9 3/4 in. (315 by 245 mm). See N. Turner, *The Study of Italian Drawings: The Contribution of Philip Pouncey* (London: British Museum, 1994), 52–54, cat. no. 57.

32. On red lakes, see H. Schweppe and H. Roosen-Runge, "Carmine—Cochineal Carmine and Kermes Carmine," in *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics*, vol. 1, ed. Robert L. Feller (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1986), 255–83. The authors observe that "lacca" or "lacha" was known by the Middle Ages as a red pigment for painting wood or walls (261). See also Hall (as in n. 6), 15, 32, 54.

33. See Anna Forlani Tempesti, *The Robert Lehman Collection*, vol. 5, *Italian XV- to XVII-Century Drawings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 300–302, who compares the drawing to preparatory designs Luzio made for the decorations in the Castel S. Angelo. While the precise function of Luzio's drawing (inv. no. 1975.1.334) is not known, its precision and lack of pentimenti suggest it might have functioned as a prospectus. Other drawings with verbal notations for colors that might have functioned as prospectuses include Perino del Vaga's *Design for Part of a Ceiling* in the collection of Marvin Gelber, Toronto (pen and brown ink, brown and blue washes, 5 1/2 by 8 1/2 in. [139 by 210 mm]); see David McTavish, *The Art of Italy in Toronto Collections 1300–1800*, exh. cat., Toronto Art Gallery, 1981, 32–33, cat. no. 19.

34. G. Bottari and S. Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*. . . (Milan: Silvestri, 1822–25), vol. 3, 301.

35. For more on the cartoons, see Shearman (as in n. 9). See also Sharon Fermor, *The Raphael Tapestry Cartoons: Narrative, Decoration, Design* (London: Scala, 1996).

36. A description of their appearance and technique can be found in Shearman (as in n. 9), 112–13; for good color reproductions, see Fermor (as in n. 35).

37. For a discussion of some important regional variations in the production and use of colored drawings in Renaissance Italy, see McGrath, 1997 (as in n. 18).

38. Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, inv. no. 0353 (pen and brown ink, brown wash, pink, blue, green, and gray watercolors, white gouache, traces of black chalk, 7 1/2 by 5 in. [187 by 125 mm]). For more on the drawing, see Dianne DeGrazia, *Correggio and His Legacy*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1985, 216–17 (reproduced in color on 14); and David Ekserdjian, "Parmigianino's First Idea for the 'Madonna of the Long Neck,'" *Burlington Magazine* 126, no. 976 (1984): 424–29. Other watercolor drawings that might have functioned as prospectuses include Bedoli's *Ceiling Design* in the British Museum (inv. no. 1946.7.13.602; see A. E. Popham, *Italian Drawings in the . . . British Museum: Artists Working in Parma in the Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols. [London: British Museum, 1967], 110; and Parmigianino's *Lucretia* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., inv. no. B-35, 839, for which see DeGrazia, 178, cat. no. 55.

39. The contract with Giulio clearly specifies "un disegno [sic] colorito con acquarelle in carta"; see Testi, doc. VII, 268–69.

40. Contracts with Parmigianino and Gatti do not specify colored drawings, but they require that drawings be shown to the patron and emphasize the importance of color. In his contract of May 10, 1531, Parmigianino promised to execute his frescoes "fargli come han'o propuose una incoronazione et osservando la metta del disegno qual hano visto metendo il colorj cosi dazuro fino come daltra sorte. . . ." (to execute, as proposed, a Coronation, observing the scheme of the drawing, applying the colors of pure azure blue and others in this way [casi: as indicated in the drawing?]); see Testi, doc. III, 265. (Konrad Oberhuber, "Giulio Romano pittore e disegnatore a Mantova," in *Giulio*

Romano, exh. cat., Palazzo Te and Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, 1989, 138, suggested, based on the evidence presented here, that the confraternity probably requested colored drawings from Parmigianino.) In the case of Gatti's contract of 1560, the artist promised to use the "piu belli colori che si possa trovar" (most beautiful colors that could be found) and, in the same sentence, "far un disegno piccolo nel q'ale sia disegnata tutta la Opera" (to make a small drawing in which the entire work would be designed); see Testi, doc. XXXII, 289–90. Gatti's drawing, representing a standing saint, features green, pink, and yellow watercolors and is in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. no. 243; see DeGrazia (as in n. 38), 276, cat. no. 92.

41. Testi, doc. VI, 267–68.

42. *Ibid.*, doc. XXXII, 290.

43. For documents relating to this commission, see Testi, 265–71. A good overview is provided by Sidney Freedberg, *Parmigianino: His Works in Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), 189–93.

44. See Freedberg (as in n. 43), 192.

45. Inv. no. 788, pen and brown ink, brown wash, gray, green, yellow, and red watercolors, and white gouache, over traces of black chalk, 9 1/4 by 6 3/4 in. (231 by 170 mm).

46. On the iconography of the figures, see E. Battisti, "Ecce virgo ecce habat lampades: Il Parmigianino alla Steccata," in *Santa Maria della Steccata a Parma*, ed. Bruno Adorni (Parma: Artegrafica Silva, 1982), 99–136, esp. 106–13.

47. For more on these drawings, see A. E. Popham, *A Catalogue of the Drawings of Parmigianino*, 3 vols. (London: Yale University Press, 1971), vol. 1, 25, 101–5, vol. 2, pls. 325–32. The five drawings with yellow and/or green watercolor are in the British Museum, London, inv. nos. 1918.6.15.3 and Ff. I-86; Christ Church, Oxford, inv. nos. 0412 and 0414; and Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 4898. The drawings are included in Popham as nos. 228, 229, 347, 349, and 270, respectively.

48. A similar, documented instance of a patron's rejection of a proposed system of light and color can be found in Clement VIII's instructions to Barocci to transform his *Institution of the Eucharist* altarpiece from a day scene to one lit by torches (see above at n. 4).

49. Testi, doc. VII, 268–69. The letter is also transcribed by Konrad Oberhuber (as in n. 40), 135.

50. This letter, discussed and quoted below, is doc. XIX in Testi, 277–79.

51. In his letter to the confraternity of Sept. 12, 1542, Giulio noted: ". . . qual disegno si poteva esaminare benissimo p[ri]ma che se mettessi a op[er]a; se serria corretto in tutto q[uan]to q[ue]llo fossi mancato facil[men]te o vero sel detto disegno no' fossi satisfatto si poteva lassar di no' metterlo a op[er]a" (Testi, doc. XIX, 278).

52. Testi, doc. XIII, 273.

53. Unfortunately, a detailed written record of the confraternity's criticisms of Anselmi's fresco does not exist; rather than sending a letter to Giulio in Mantua, the confraternity dispatched one of its own members, who explained the situation to Giulio and tried to get him to come to Parma. The envoy's brief account of his trip to Mantua is published in Testi, doc. XVIII, 277. The confraternity's criticisms are easily inferred from Giulio's response (Testi, doc. XIX, 277–79).

54. Testi, doc. XIX, 278: ". . . no' potro remediare con altro che con parole. . . ."

55. Testi, doc. XIX, 277–78: "E quanto a bellj colori no' essendo colori schietti no' pono parere, p' chio li ho finj abbagliati et dentro nella nebulla et soffocati nella fiam'a del splendore in forma de raggi del sole. . . ; altra mente chi hauessi fatto parere li colori manifesti sarebbe stata una confusione di figure come un pa[n]no de razzo. . . io uolevo ogni cosa e le carne et li panni al tutto fossi in color de fiamma et tanto piu abbaglate [sic] et annichilate q'to erano piu lontane; et q'elle che son di qua da la fiam'a come adam et Noe et quelli altri patriarchi si potevano fare li colori manifesti et terminati."

56. While Giulio used bright interior illumination in works like the *Assumption* fresco in Verona or the ceilings of the Sala di Psiche and Sala dei Giganti in the Palazzo Te, Mantua, these works do not exhibit the drastic differences in the intensity of hues or the pervasive golden highlights that characterize the Steccata Coronation.

57. See David Ekserdjian, *Correggio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 254.

58. Oberhuber (as in n. 40), 139.

59. It is called "piccolo" (small) in an addendum of May 8, 1541, to distinguish it from the larger cartoon (Testi, doc. XVII, 276).

60. Clauses stipulating that high-quality pigments be used were commonplace in contracts from the 15th and 16th centuries. See, for example, Perugino's contract with the canons of S. Maria Maggiore of 1521 (Chambers, 16–17) or Pinturicchio's with Cardinal Francesco de' Todeschini-Piccolomini of 1502 (Chambers, 25–29).

61. Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting* (Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270), vol. 1, trans. A. Philip McMahon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 63, par. 108.

62. Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno* (Venice, 1549), facsimile ed. (Milan: Mario Pepe, 1970), 15b. The aversion of many artists to rich colors is also discussed by Gage (as in n. 2), 137.

63. Vasari, vol. 2, 1878, 187–89.

64. See L. Beltrami, *Documenti e memorie riguardanti la vita e le opere di Leonardo da Vinci* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1919), 73–74: ". . . dicti scolari non sono in

talibus experti, et quod cecus non iudicat de colore. . . ." The letter is translated by Chambers, 207–8.

65. Testi, doc. XII, 273.

66. Testi, doc. XIX, 277–78. Baxandall (81–83) has pointed to a tradition whereby expensive pigments were associated with important personages, and Giulio's color scheme might have challenged this convention.

67. Angelo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria* (Ferrara, 1462), quoted in (and translated by) Michael Baxandall, "A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Lionello d'Este," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963): 316.

68. Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del cinquecento*, 3 vols. (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1971–77), vol. 2, 2181.

69. Testi, doc. XX, 279–80.

70. For a list of the changes demanded by the confraternity, see Testi, doc. XXIV, 282–84. In item no. 5 Anselmi was instructed to ". . . ravivare alquanto li colore del ordine delli Santi del Testamento novo, ed ancora dimunir il irropo zaldo di quel splendore. . . ." Item 7 instructs the painter to "ravivare alcuni vestimenti in qualche loco a noi parerà."

71. Davis (as in n. 11).