

Illuminating Leonardo

*A Festschrift for Carlo Pedretti
Celebrating His 70 Years of Scholarship
(1944–2014)*

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“The Sculptor Says”

Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo Romano

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A winter morning in Mantua: still water in the lakes and, far away, a mirage of the snowy mountains. The bright sunlight filters through the glass windows of Isabella d’Este’s rooms, just caressing the delicate marble reliefs of the Grottino door, the *Porta gemmea*. Everything in this magical gate, conceived as the entry to a repository of Wisdom and Beauty, signals a *paragone*, a comparison between arts, ideas, and feelings. Let us examine the basis of these ideas found in Isabella’s apartments as a series of visual and spatial encounters through which we can epistemologically link Leonardo to his followers.

The first *paragone* is of course between Art and Nature. The beautiful small panels of porphyry and red granite, with their bloody veins, are the same work of *Natura artificiosa*: a response to the technical challenge of Andrea Mantegna in the backgrounds of his *grisailles*, the imitation of colored marbles and precious stones, and the demonstration of the superiority of Painting over Sculpture, and over Nature itself. The response (or the revenge) of Sculpture continues in the four round reliefs of white Carrara marble, a true *paragone* between Sculpture, Painting, and other arts (Music is symbolized by the figures of Euterpe with organ and panpipes; Theater by Thalia with a lyre and a mask near the ruins of an ancient theater; History by Clio), led by Knowledge (Minerva).

The favorite of these is the beautiful and enigmatic outline of a young nude woman (the Muse Clio, but with some iconographic traits of Fortune), bearing a cornet and holding books overhead. She is trampling on a skull, meaning that Fame can triumph over Time and Death.¹ This miracle is possible thanks to History, to the power of words and literacy. Clio then moves from rocks (Nature) toward a town (Civilization), and almost crosses a river (Time) (Fig. 17.1).

At the same time, the panel is a *paragone* because it gives evidence that Sculpture is able to represent what painters consider the exclusive domain of Painting: not only the pictorial quality of the *stiacciato*, but also the atmosphere, the invisible presence of the wind, the flow of the water in a stream, the

1 See Stephen Campbell on this topic in *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d’Este*. (New Haven: Yale University Press), 140.



FIGURE 17.1 *Gian Cristoforo Romano, Clio. Marble. Mantua, Ducal Palace.*

rocks on the left, the *sfumato* landscape of a town and some hills in the background.

While the entire door could be considered a response to Mantegna, the Clio panel openly recalls Leonardo. Clio resembles “la figura che va contro il vento”, as Leonardo says in the *Libro di pittura*, in a text derived from the lost *Libro A*: “The figure which moves against the wind in whatever direction will not keep its center of gravity with the usual disposition of weight above its center of support” (Fig. 17.2).²

² Chapter 230. *Leonardo, Leonardo da Vinci on painting: a lost book (Libro A)* reassembled from the Codex Vaticanus Urbinas 1270 and from the Codex Leicester by Carlo Pedretti. With a



FIGURE 17.2 Leonardo da Vinci, *The "figure that moves against the wind."* Detail. *Codex Vaticanus Urbinas lat. 1270, f. 137 r*

However, she is not exactly moving, but caught in a moment of difficult balance, standing against the wind, and the position of the legs and the books over her head suggest she is trying to retain her balance. The rocks on the left are similar to the landscape of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, and the whole panel seems to say: "It is not true that sculptors, as painters say, are not able to represent atmospheres and landscapes and moving waters." The idea that History and Literacy can make men and their facts more eternal than the visual arts is affirmed by Petrarch in *Triumphs*, and, likely suggested by Isabella d'Este and her court circle, is again a response to other texts of Leonardo's *Paragone*.

In fact, the door of the Grottino is the masterpiece of a friend of Leonardo, Gian Cristoforo Ganti, called Romano because of his origin. Designed around 1497 (when Gian Cristoforo moved from Milan to Mantua), and completed in 1505 in Isabella's old apartment in the castle (just under the former site of the

chronology of Leonardo's Treatise on painting. Foreword by Sir Kenneth Clark. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.

Studiolo), and, only afterwards it was reassembled in her new apartment of Santa Croce.

Among contemporary artists Gian Cristoforo is surely more than a sculptor—he is a real courtier, well integrated in all aspects of courtly life: music, literature, and poetry, refined “conversation” with princes and intellectuals. Coming from the cultural and artistic milieu of the Rome of Pomponio Leto, he will retain the humanist and antiquarian influence of the Roman academy throughout his artistic career.

As he was a specialist in bust portraits of princes and princesses, for him it was natural to engage in *paragoni* with painters and poets (as in the tale of Mattia Corvino told by Leonardo in the *Libro di pittura*, Chapter 27). It is enough to recall the wedding portrait, begun in Ferrara in 1490, of Beatrice d’Este, the future bride of Ludovico il Moro. The sculptor accompanied the princess to the wedding celebration in Pavia on the 17 January 1491, and on the 22 June of the same year Isabella (already in Mantua) asked her sister to “lend” her the artist. However, Gian Cristoforo remained in the service of the Sforza, working at the Certosa of Pavia (the monument of Giangaleazzo Visconti), and celebrated also as a singer and a musician, as Marchesino Stanga wrote in a letter to Isabella (Milan, 18 October 1491).

In 1497 Isabella finally managed to employ Gian Cristoforo in Mantua, in order to carry out the door of the Grottino. In the following years the sculptor became a perfect courtier. His friend Mario Equicola call him “*excellentissimo scultore et virtuosissimo cortesano*,” praising him for the skilled expertise of a vernacular translation of the *Book on the Nature of Love*; and Sabba Castiglione would have praised him as musician, as well as a sculptor. Gian Cristoforo even preceded Sabba in the role of connoisseur of Roman and Greek antiquities on behalf of Isabella d’Este, and as an archeological searcher in the eastern Mediterranean, in a journey to Greece and Rhodes (October 1501–February 1502): I think that Leonardo’s strange note on the verso of the first cover of Codex L, “*Rodi à dentro 5.000 case*” (There are 5,000 houses on Rhodes) also could derive from some lost correspondence with Gian Cristoforo.

In Mantua, in addition to the *Porta gemmea* and the monument to Osanna Andreasi, Gian Cristoforo accomplished several versions (in gold and in bronze) of a medal of Isabella, much celebrated by contemporaries. Even in the small dimensions of the medal, the profile of Isabella, with the soft cascade of hair, looks very close to the superb profile portrait drawn by Leonardo in Mantua at the beginning of 1500, now in the Louvre (Fig. 17.3); and the same profile has been acknowledged in a lively terracotta bust of a woman at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas (Fig. 17.4).



FIGURE 17.3 *Leonardo da Vinci, Portrait of Isabella d'Este, 1499–1500. Paris, Musée du Louvre.*

In fact, the elegant courtier Gian Cristoforo contradicts the common image of the sculptor as the most mechanical artist, always sweaty and dirty with marble powder, as Leonardo wrote in his almost humorous comparison with the painter:

When the sculptor makes his work he consumes the marble and other stone covering in excess of the figure enclosed within by effort of his arm and by percussion, which is a highly mechanical exercise, often accompanied by a great amount of sweat composed of dust and converted into mud. With his face caked and all floured with marble dust, he looks like a baker, and covered with minute flakes that look as though it



FIGURE 17.4
Gian Cristoforo Romano
 (attributed), Bust of
 Isabella d'Este (ca. 1500).
 Fort Worth, Texas, Kimbell
 Art Museum.

has snowed on his back, and his house is filthy and full of chips and stone dust. Just the opposite happens to the painter (speaking of excellent sculptors and painters), because the painter sits in front of his work at great ease, well-dressed, and wielding the lightest brush with charming colors. His clothing is ornamented according to his pleasure, and his house is filled with charming paintings, and clean, and he is often accompanied by music or readers of varied and beautiful works that are heard with great pleasure without the uproar compounded of hammers and other noises. (*Book on Painting*, Ch. 36, transl. C. Farago)

In spite of these convergent lines, documentary evidence about the relationships between Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo is unfortunately full of lacunae. Nothing, either in archives or in Leonardo's manuscripts, enlightens us about their meetings in Milan in the years 1491 to 1497 at the court of Ludovico il Moro, or in Mantua, where Leonardo stayed no more than three weeks at the

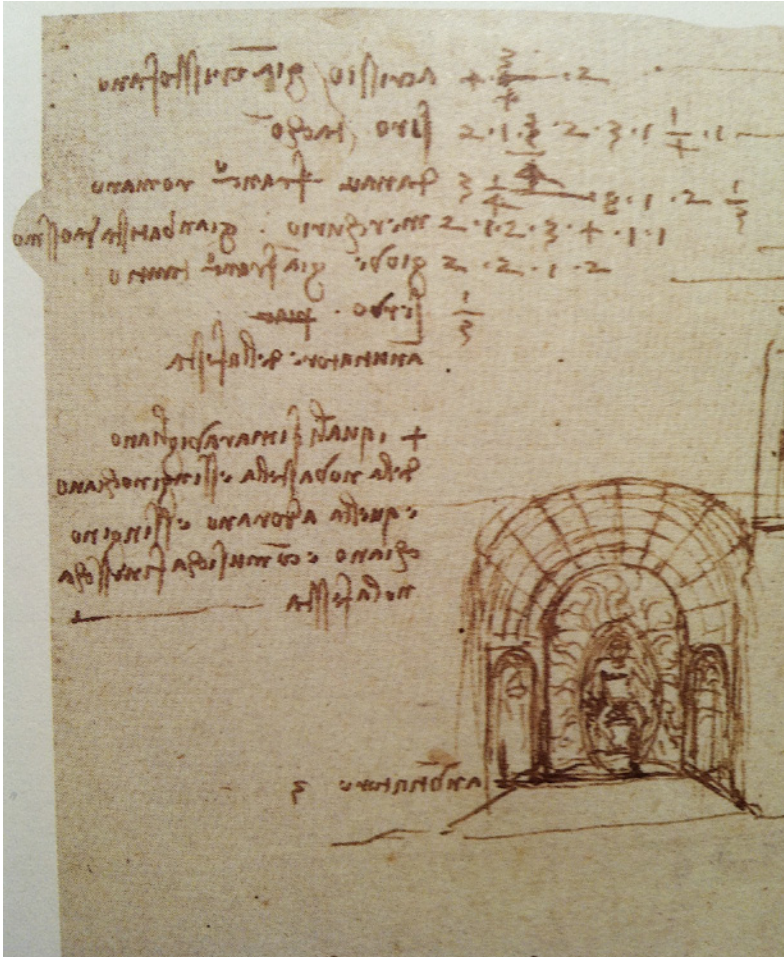


FIGURE 17.5 Leonardo da Vinci, Notes and sketches for the *Comedia di Danae*. Detail (ca. 1496). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

beginning of 1500 while en route to Venice after leaving French-occupied Milan.

In Leonardo’s manuscripts, the name of Gian Cristoforo occurs perhaps only once, on the verso of a famous sheet in New York (Metropolitan Museum, Inv. 17.142.2), among notes and drawings related to the theatrical performance of *Comedia di Danae* by the ducal courtier Baldassarre Taccone. The event was presented on 31 January 1496 in the palace of Giovan Francesco Sanseverino, count of Caiazzo and captain in the Sforza army, with extraordinary scenographic machinery conceived by Leonardo (Fig. 17.5).

According to ancient myth, Danae was the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos, who, terrified by an oracle that told him that he would be killed by the son of his daughter, had Danae imprisoned in a tower. But Jupiter, having fallen in love with her, managed to find her and impregnate her in the form of a shower of gold. Eventually, Perseus, the son of Danae and Jupiter, kills Acrisius. In spite of the poor libretto by Taccone (who transforms the tragedy into a comedy, allowing Acrisius to survive), the spectacle was an opportunity for Leonardo to show off his theatrical and musical skills by devising many special effects—hidden instruments, the celestial vault (like in the Feast of Paradise), a flying Mercury (like the flight of the Angel of the Annunciation in sacred representations in Florence), the shower of gold, the transformation of Danae into a star, and so on.

The myth itself would have been very important for Leonardo: it is the first part of the myth of Perseus, the winner over Medusa. Leonardo's obscure and perverse fascination with Medusa (as we know from Vasari) produced one of the first paintings by the young boy. In 1496, for Taccone, the source was not Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, book IV, verses 610–611 (otherwise a seminal book for the young Leonardo), but Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum gentilium* (Book II, ch. 32–33). The amazing relationship to Leonardo we find in Boccaccio, who says that Perseus killed Acrisius by showing him his shield with the head of Medusa and turning him to stone (“in Argos veniens Acrisium transmutavit in saxum”). In the anecdote told by Vasari, Leonardo was like a new Perseus, wishing to petrify his father, in order to punish him for his cruelty towards the mother (like Acrisius was with Danae) by deploying the *rotella* (a round shield) painted with the snake-covered head of Medusa.

Furthermore, when in Milan, Leonardo would have also known the allegorical meaning of Danae in mediaeval culture, as a figure of the Virgin and of the Immaculate Conception—exactly the subject of the *Virgin of the Rocks*: in the *Defensorium inviolatae castitatis Beatae Mariae Virginis* the German Dominican friar Franz von Retz affirmed that the Virgin Mary could have been made pregnant by the Holy Spirit in the same way as Danae, by a shower of gold (“Si Danae auri pluvia a love pregnans claret, cur Spiritu Sancto gravida Virgo non generaret?”); and the edition of Regensburg from 1471 presents an illustration with Danae in the tower.³

The Milanese spectacle of 1496 was more faithful to this medieval tradition than to the rediscovery of the ancient pagan Danae, who becomes the sensual icon of naked female beauty, abandoned to receive the shower of gold, in later art of Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto, and even Rembrandt. Is it just a

3 From Franciscus de Retza, *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis Mariae*, ([Regensburg]: Johann Eysenhut, 1471).

coincidence that one of the first artistic testimonials of the naked Danae, derived from *Antico*, is on a medal of Elisabetta Gonzaga, with the inscription "HOC FUGIENTI FORTUNAE DICATIS"? The medal, ascribed to Adriano Fiorentino in 1495, was probably made by Gian Cristoforo Romano circa 1502; and a sister medal is dedicated to Emilia Pio, at the court of Urbino, as Castiglione remembers in *The Book of the Courtier*.

On the recto of the Metropolitan Museum sheet, in a *tondo*, the allegory of the Lizard is clearly connected to the political background of the Sforza court, and to Leonardo's bestiary: "The lizard faithful to man, seeing him asleep, fights with the snake; if he sees that he cannot conquer the snake, he runs over the face of the man to wake him so that the snake may not harm the sleeping man." The drawing represents two major virtues of the courtier: fidelity to the prince, and the duty of alerting him of the danger of a plot or of treason (symbolized by the snake). Considering the courtly destination of Leonardo's allegories, could we suppose that the *tondo* shape was completed in a *stiacciato* relief, or in a medal, like those of Gian Cristoforo?⁴

On the verso, besides some sketches (the plan of the stage, and a seated figure in a *mandorla* in a flaming niche—whose perspective recalls the bramantesque architecture of Santa Maria presso San Satiro in Milan) is a list of the characters, with the name of the actors: king Acrisius was "Gian Cristofano"; the servant Siro the poet Taccone; Danae played not by a girl but by a boy, "Francesco Romano" (the son of Gian Cristoforo?); Mercurio was Gianbattista da Osimo (perhaps a courtier acrobat, specialized in jumps and twirls [*tomi*], because of his hazardous part); and Jupiter, the priest Gianfrancesco Tanzi, the publisher of the poems of Bernardo Bellincioni; there was also an *anuntiatore della festa*, as in Florentine sacred representations; the second servant should have been the humanist Piattino Piatti (but Leonardo struck through his name "piat"). But I prefer to transcribe again and more correctly the whole text, because the numbers that follow the names (written by Leonardo in the regular way, from left to right) are strictly related to them and to Taccone's libretto. In fact, they correspond more or less to the numbers of metric units, mostly *ottave*, spoken by each actor. For example, in Act I, Acrisio has exactly 4 *ottave*, Siro 3 *ottave* and 6 verses, and Danae 3 *ottave* and 2 verses, with slight mistakes made by Leonardo when the meter changes in *terzine* or *sonetto*. So, the number on the right should be the sum of the preceding numbers. The calculation (an amazing and hitherto unknown detail, showing how much care Leonardo spent designing these spectacles) was surely important for organizing the timing of the entire

4 The *tondo* shape was common in other allegories. See Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, inv. PD 120–1961; Musée Bonnat, Bayonne, Inv. 656; Windsor, RL 12700.

stage, the special effects, music, lights, as well as the sudden changes of scenography.

acrisio gia(n)crisstofano	4 . 3/4 . 2 . ——— . ——— . 6 3/4
siro taco(n)	2 . 1 . 3/4 . 2 . 3 . 1 1/4 . 1 — acrisio — 13 1/4
danae franc ^o romano	3 1/4 — . 8 . 1 . 2 1/3 ——— 15
mercurio . gianbatista da ossimo	2 . 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 1 . 1 ——— 14
giove gia(n)franc ^o tantio	2 . 2 . 1 . 2 ——— 8
servo . piat	1/3
anu[n]tiatore della festa + i qualisi maravigliano della nova stella essinginochiano e quella adorano essingino chiano e co(n) musicha finisscha no la festa ———	
anu(n)tiatore 3	

The last word *anuntiatore*, on the left of the flaming niche, clearly refers to the seated figure. In fact, what Leonardo calls *annuntiatore* is, in Taccone's text, the Poet ("Parla il poeta"), who introduces the prologus and the whole plot of the story. We could assume that Taccone had to assume different characters (the Poet, "anuntiatore," and the servant Sirius): this requirement for a quick change of costume could explain other notes by Leonardo about a separate exit for masked actors (Codex Atlanticus, f. 214 r-c [571 b r]).

The sculptor-courtier Gian Cristoforo would have acted the part of the evil king Acrisius, cruelly jailing his daughter Danae (Gian Cristoforo's son Francesco), and at the end forgiven by the god, who makes him lose the bear, and become younger. Perhaps we could recognize his prominent profile in a small fragment in Windsor RL 12461, identified by Carlo Pedretti (together with RL 12470) as parts of the f. 358 v-b [996 v] of the Codex Atlanticus (contemporary to the Metropolitan Museum sheet, with the drawing of an urban scenography, perhaps derived from Bramante's ideas). The bald man wears a strange crown (he is the king of a comedy), made by two plumes attached to a band. It looks like a caricature, because of the exaggeration of chin, lips, nose and eyebrows (Fig. 17.6).

It is now possible to add a new document to the dossier Leonardo–Gian Cristoforo. Exactly at the beginning of the 1490s in Milan, Leonardo studies in depth several treatises of architecture, both ancient (Vitruvius) and modern (Leon Battista Alberti, Francesco di Giorgio Martini). This is the same period in



FIGURE 17.6
Gian Cristoforo Romano (?), Profile
of an actor. Windsor, RL 12461.

which he achieves the splendid drawing of the Vitruvian Man, in fact an original illustration to *De architectura* 3.1.2–3.

In Codex Forster III ff. 37 v, 44 v and 45 r, there are small diagrams about the base of a column in ionic style (the *basis attica*, Fig. 17.7), and f. 44 r presents also a list of technical words, that is a comparison of both the Vitruvius and Alberti lexica (precisely, *De architectura* 3.3.5 and *De re aedificatoria* 7.7).

toro . superior —	B toro . sup[erior]
astragali . quadre	B nextroli
troclea ———	B orbiculo
astragali . quadre	B nestroli
toro . inferior —	B toro i(n)feri[or]
plinto plinto —	B latastro

Richter (followed by Zubov) was able to identify the sources of the two lists (“A diagram, indicating the rules as given by Vitruvius and by Leon Battista Alberti for the proportions of the Attic base of a column”), but failed to explain the

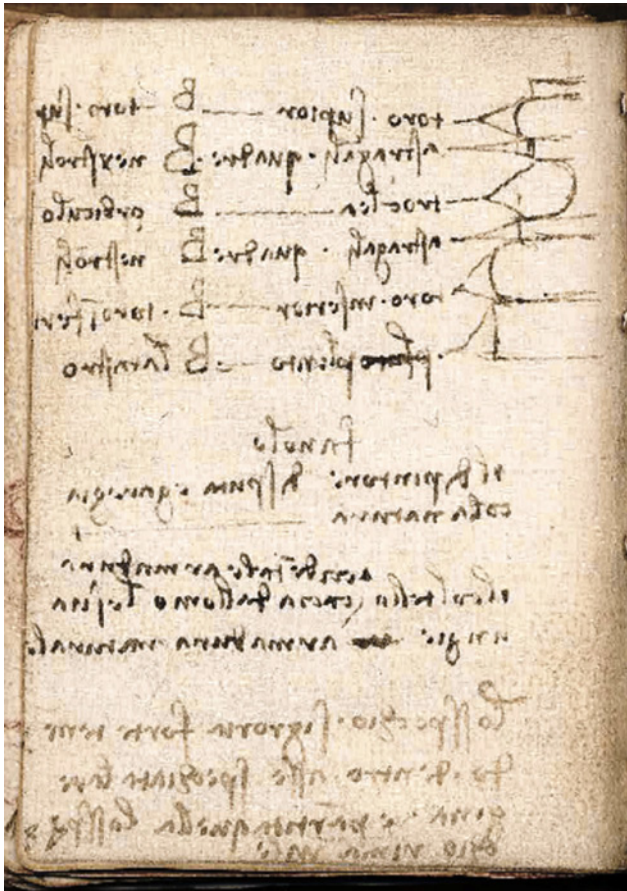


FIGURE 17.7
Leonardo da Vinci,
Diagram of the basis
attica and notes for
fables. London, Victoria
& Albert Museum,
Codex Forster III, f. 44 v.

mysterious B preceding each word of the second list (“No explanation can be offered of the meaning of the letter B, which precedes each name. It may be meant for *basa* (base). Perhaps it refers to some author on architecture or an architect (Bramante?) who employed the designation, thus marked for the moldings”).

On the contrary, the explanation of the letter B is very easy: it may be interpreted as “Batista”—namely “Battista Alberti” (Madrid II, f. 2 v; Codex Arundel, ff. 31 v, 32 r, 66 v; Codex F, f. 82 r; Codex G, f. 54 r), or “messer Batista” (Codex Leicester, f. 13 r). So, the sketches of Codex Forster III are another significant witness to Leonardo’s comparative study of Vitruvius and Alberti after 1490, trying to overcome the “practical” background of his youth, the world of *ingegneri* and *omini pratici* coming from the heritage of Brunelleschi. He needed to deepen his knowledge of theoretical aspects (mathematics and geometry) and of the *Antico*. But, as his knowledge of Latin was still imperfect at that time,

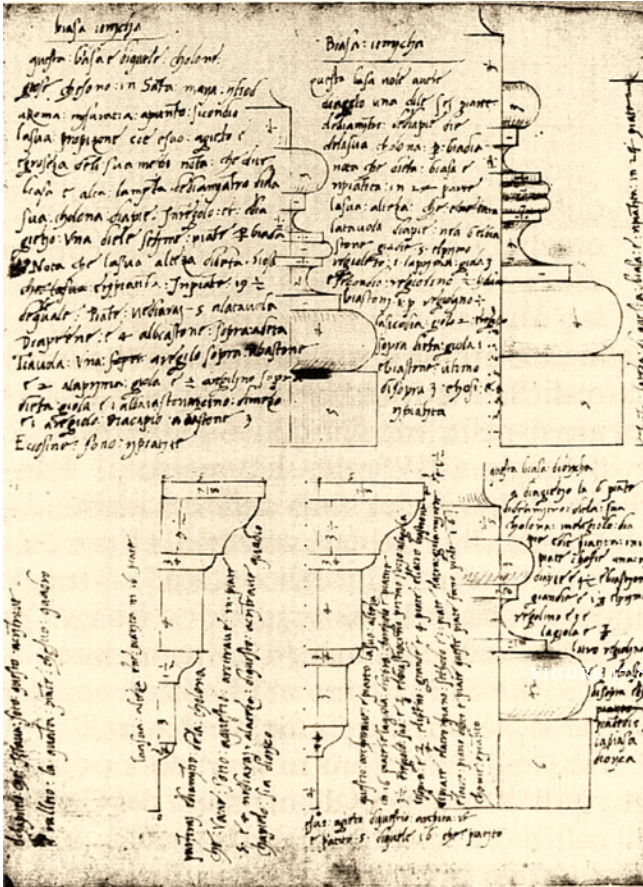


FIGURE 17.8
 Gian Cristoforo
 Romano, Diagrams of
 bases of columns, from
 a lost notebook.
 Florence, Biblioteca
 Nazionale Centrale,
 Magliabechianus
 11-1-429, f. 10 v.

who could have been able to help him in reading both treatises, and discuss together the new ideas?

The best candidate, among contemporary artists and architects in Milan (better than Bramante), is again Gian Cristoforo. Thanks to the copies made by other artists in their sketchbooks (Antonio da Sangallo, and more prominently, the anonymous compiler of the Codex Magliabechianus 11-1-429). Hubertus Günther discovered evidence of a lost notebook by Gian Cristoforo about ancient monuments and buildings in Rome (*anticaglie*), perhaps dating from his youth: the Arches of Constantine and of Septimius Severus, the Pantheon, the Arch of Trajan in Benevento, and so on. In these notes and drawings it was typical of Gian Cristoforo to compare Vitruvius and Alberti in matters of terminology and proportionality, and then to check their theoretical axioms with the teaching of experience and reality (just like Leonardo’s *sperientia*).

As it is possible to see in Codex Magliabechianus f. 10 v some diagrams of doric and ionic bases derived from Alberti and very similar to Codex Forster III f. 44 v (Fig. 17.8) we could assume that Leonardo's source was the lost notebook of Gian Cristoforo (perhaps the *Libro d'anticaglie* quoted in the booklist of Madrid II f. 3 r and certified as belonging to Leonardo: "uno libro che à M.ro Lionardo che fu cavato in Roma," at the beginning of the sixteenth century); or that the architectural sketches of Codex Forster III originated in some direct exchange between Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo, who could have influenced also another of Leonardo's friends to visit Rome and compose the bizarre poem *Antiquarie prospetive romane* dedicated to Leonardo circa 1496.

Leonardo didn't visit Rome before 1501 (a note with the date 10 March 1501 and the record of Villa Adriana in Tivoli can be found in Codex Atlanticus f. 227 a-v [618 v]), but was always fascinated by the beauty of classical art, as he stated in 1490: "The imitation of the ancient things is more praiseworthy than the imitation of the modern ones" (Codex Atlanticus, f. 147 b-v [399 r]). Many years after Giulio Camillo Delminio (hosted in France by the same king Francis I who invited Leonardo) wrote that Leonardo, having arrived for the first time in Rome, said that he had the impression of having already seen it in a dream: "Leonardo come vide Roma la primiera volta disse, certo così fatta io la ho veduta già per sogno." I think that, besides Bramante, it was Gian Cristoforo who played an important role in shaping Leonardo's "Roman" dream.

Let us return to the *Porta gemmea* in Mantua, which may suggest another significant mutual exchange between Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo: the *paragone* between painter and sculptor. The discussion would have originated in Milan, in some intellectual debates at the court of Ludovico il Moro such as the "scientific and praiseworthy duel" (*laudabile scientifico duello*) recalled by Luca Pacioli in the preface of his *Divina proportione* as an event that occurred in 1498 in Sforza Castle, with the participation of Leonardo.

Leonardo's writings present often a dialogic structure, as they were fragments of a real conversation: This fiction of orality reminds us of the origins of his own apprenticeship in the contemporary ambiances of the court, the academy, the school, the artistic workshop. The dialectic or dialogic schema of alternated or opposed voices (the *magister* and the *discipulus*, or two different *magistri*), influenced by the scholastic schema of the dispute (*quaestio disputata*), is recognizable mostly in the *Paragone*: but the rhetorical and polemical tension goes beyond the traditional debate on the role and the hierarchy of the disciplines and the arts.

The speakers are absolutely conventional (the painter, the poet, the musician, the sculptor), but at the time of the first composition of some of the texts of *Paragone* (in Codex A, ca. 1492) they may hint at real people, Leonardo's friends in the 1490s, such as the poets Gaspare Visconti, Bernardo Bellincioni,

Antonio Cammelli, Baldassarre Taccone, Lancino Curzio, Piattino Piatti, Antonio Cornazzano, Antonio Grifo, Bramante, and in the background the authors of Leonardo's library, Luigi and Luca Pulci, Dante and Petrarch; among the musicians, Franchino Gaffurio and Josquin des Prez. And among the sculptors? Who could be the speaker in *Paragone's* texts, when Leonardo writes "The sculptor says?" I would suggest that the sculptor who opposes Leonardo on the grounds of the primacy of sculpture is, again, Gian Cristoforo Romano.

There is, in fact, more crucial evidence, dating from many years later.

Rome. At the end of 1513, an aged Leonardo arrives at the Belvedere Palace, near the Vatican, invited by Pope Leo X. At the court of the pope, Baldassare Castiglione finds again the elegant artist he met in Milan during his youth in the 1490s, when he was a pupil of the humanist Demetrio Calcondila and Giorgio Merula, and while he was a young page in the Sforza court. After leaving Milan in 1499 he likely saw Leonardo also in Mantua, at the beginning of 1500. One of Baldassarre's letters, written from Milan to the brother-in-law Iacomo Boschetto on 4 October, vividly describes the entry of Louis XII, and the sad conditions of the Castle: "già receptaculo del fior de li homini del mundo, adesso pieno di betole e perfumato di ledame."

He is composing now a fundamental book on Renaissance courts, the *Book of the Courtier*, in which there is only one direct quotation of the name of Leonardo (among the best contemporary painters, Mantegna, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Giorgione: *The Book of the Courtier*, Book I, ch. 37), together with an oblique and critical allusion to an excellent painter converted to "philosophy," and incapable of painting the very difficult intentions of his thought ("strani concetti e nove chimere"⁵). The latter text is a key witness to the contemporary criticism directed at Leonardo in the Rome of Leo X; in fact, it appears in the first version of *The Courtier*, in the manuscript Vaticanus lat. 8204 (ca. 1514–15), f. 141 r-v, and returns, without variations, in all subsequent manuscripts.

Castiglione knew extremely well the cultural premises of Leonardo's philosophy, and probably also some texts of the *Paragone* that circulated in the Sforza environment at the end of the fifteenth century (in *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, Book I, ch. 14, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo witnesses the existence of an autograph manuscript on the *paragone* of Painting and Sculpture, composed for Ludovico il Moro, and quotes some texts about the nobility of Painting in comparison to Sculpture, and the praise of the plastic art as the "sister of Painting").

So, Castiglione inserted in the same first version of his treatise also an open commendation of Painting as a basic component in the training of the perfect

5 *The Book of the Courtier*, Book II, ch. 29.

courtier.⁶ The coincidences with Leonardo's texts are numerous and striking (see for example *Book on Painting*, ch. 12 = Codex A, f. 100 r), but Castiglione doesn't need to follow Leonardo in all duels of the *Paragone* (Painting and Poetry, Painting and Music, Painting and Mathematics, Geometry, Astrology and so on), because he doesn't have to affirm the primacy of Painting: the relationship between the Sister Arts is not a hierarchy but a collaboration, finalized in the training of the courtier (*institutio*). Only one *paragone* remains, Painting versus Sculpture, so urgent in contemporary Rome, with the presence of Raphael and Michelangelo, and the comparison between the laboratory of the monument of Julius II and the frescoes of the Vatican Stanze or of the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

In the dialogic fiction of *The Courtier*, set in the Ducal Palace of Urbino in 1507, Ludovico da Canossa says that Painting has more "artifice" than Sculpture (Book I, ch. 49), and a sculptor, present in that room, answers Emilia Pio: "Io, Signora, estimo che la statuaria sia di più fatica, di più arte, e di più dignità, che non è la pittura" (I, my Lady, think that sculpture requires more labor and more skill and is of greater dignity than painting).⁷ His arguments (duration, eternity, dignity, adherence to reality, difficulty in execution and in correcting mistakes) look similar to those exposed by the sculptor in Leonardo's *Paragone*, often preceded by the words "Dice lo scultore..." (The sculptor says : see *Libro di pittura*, ch. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45).

Who is the sculptor? In the manuscript Vaticanus lat. 8204, f. 79 r (ca. 1514–15) Castiglione leaves a blank space for the name, which is inserted only in the following edition, in the manuscript Vaticanus lat. 8205 (1515), f. 63 v. And the name is Gian Cristoforo Romano: "Then my lady Emilia turned to Giancristoforo Romano, who was sitting with the others there, and said: "What think you of this opinion? Do you admit that painting is susceptible of greater skill than sculpture?" Giancristoforo replied: "I, my Lady, think that sculpture requires more labor and more skill and is of greater dignity than painting."

This memorial to the sculptor, who died in 1512 in Loreto, is a tribute to one of the most appreciated artists and courtiers circulating in the contemporary courts of Ferrara, Milan, Mantua, Urbino, and Naples. At the same time, it is also evidence of Castiglione's knowledge that the origin of Leonardo's *Paragone* was the cultural debate at the Sforza court.

"The sculptor says" It is nice to imagine Leonardo on that cold morning of January 1500, regarding the *Porta gemmea*, bent over the figure of Clio, and talking with his friend Gian Cristoforo, sculptor and courtier, about the nobility of Painting and Sculpture.

⁶ *The Book of the Courtier*, Book I, ch. 49–53).

⁷ *The Book of the Courtier*, Book I, ch. 50.