

Podcast Transcript: The Italian Renaissance

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Note to reader:

This is a recording of a live lecture that was delivered in the Gallery's lecture theatre, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation of images. As such, the speaker frequently references images on the screen in the text below.

Introduction 0:01

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Dr Philip Cottrell 0:06

In thinking about what I talked about tonight, I inevitably gravitated towards the figure of Vasari. The history of art is shaped in the writing and also the teaching of it. And so I want to try and briefly summarise the Renaissance from his point of view, because he's done more than anyone to ingrain our common understanding of this period.

Vasari, in case you don't know, was active in the mid to late 16th century. He was a painter, architect, very prolific artist. Born in Arezzo, in the centre of Italy, he was chiefly active in Florence and Rome. He was a contemporary and I think a crony I think you'd call him of Michelangelo. However, it's on account of his writings that we chiefly remember Giorgio Vasari and particularly his *Lives of the Artists*, published in 2 editions in 1550 and 1568.

And many of our ideas concerning the nature of art and artists, in particular, the concept of the Renaissance, as a rebirth of the visual arts that drew inspiration from antiquity comes from him. He even used the word *rinascita*, or rebirth, in reference to what he saw as the revival of art under the supervision of Florence at the start of the 14th century.

Dr Philip Cottrell 1:22

But one of the supreme ironies of Vasari is that although he associated the style of his own day, the mid-16th century, with a real crescendo for developing maturity in art.

Nowadays, we think of his art as not representing the peak of the Renaissance, but in terms of a decline. Vasari's actual paintings get a bit of a rough ride with the critics.

[discussing an image on screen]

It's a bit unfair here to lob this battle scene in as an example of Vasari. Battle scenes are very difficult to choreograph with any clarity, but this one is a typically overcrowded or somewhat indigestible example of Vasari's manner, his style.

It's a scene from Florentine military history. It was painted for the seat of government in Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio. And a few years ago, in 2012 I think, an Italian restorer – Maurizio Seracini – suggested it might be worth jeopardizing the safety of this fresco in order to remove it from a position that it occupied for 500 years in order to uncover an unfinished fresco of another battle scene: *The Battle of Anghiari*, which Leonardo da Vinci had abandoned some 60 years earlier, and which Vasari had been charged with covering up.

But, fair dues to Vasari. At least he, unlike Leonardo, was in the habit of finishing what he started and scientific tests that Vasari, wary of any vandalism, may have included a false wall upon his fresco, painted it on a wall that left a gap of an inch or two. And that would leave Leonardo's earlier unfinished fresco intact. That's the theory anyway.

Dr Philip Cottrell 3:01

Now, if you teach Italian Renaissance art, as I do, you quickly tire of the cult of Leonardo and the popular Dan Brown. A few misconceptions of him: as a cross between Gandalf and Doctor Who with a palette knife; spent his mornings painting the Mona Lisa and then the afternoons inventing microwaves, helicopters and the underwire bra.

But, the fact remains that he was an artist of genius, and he was an artist of immense originality and influence and one can't help getting all Dan Brown about the mystery of whether Leonardo's fresco still lies hidden under Vasari's thanks to a cryptic, otherwise inexplicable, inscription on a banner included in Vasari's fresco which reads "Cerca trivia" – seek and ye shall find. In other words, a prescient message, perhaps, for the high priests of the Leonardo cult, which Vasari himself did a lot to encourage.

As it is, Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* is only known through copies and copies after copies, such as this one by Rubens. They do enough to assure us that in contrast of Vasari, perhaps, Leonardo's design was representative of Italian Renaissance art at the peak of its energy, its accessibility and its sophistication. The exciting, involving drama of Leonardo's approach. The heat and frenzy of battle is involving in a monumental, monumentally expressed. In certain elements of his composition, particularly the rearing horses, Vasari clearly wished also to reflect Leonardo's now hidden design.

Now, there will be an exciting chance for visitors of the National Gallery of Ireland to better appreciate Leonardo's ideas for the *Battle of Anghiari* when a traveling exhibition of 10 Leonardo drawings comes to the Gallery, the sheet of studies of rearing horses among them.

Dr Philip Cottrell 4:47

As a quick aside – it will have to be a quick one because I think I'm going to run out of time at the end of this lecture – I was also hoping that Leonardo's caricature-al drawing of five heads might make it over because it relates to this virtually unknown painting, a Renaissance painting, which is, well almost across the road in St. Andrew's church, Westland Row, by a follower of Leonardo - Cesare de Sesto, which deserves to be a bit better known. And I suppose it might get a bit better known if there's a mini Leonardo frenzy in May, as there ought to be, because we haven't had a Leonardo event like this since the exhibition of the Codex Leicester, at the Chester Beatty in 2007.

Dr Philip Cottrell 5:28

Anyway, let's return to the *Battle of Anghiari*. It is often held up as a totemic symbol of what we recognise as a high watermark in the development of Renaissance art. Or a High Renaissance – a term we can apply to the art of Florence and Rome.

I think, properly speaking, during the first two decades of the 16th century, some people have, as we've seen, a bit more of an elastic view of what the High Renaissance is, but in pure forms, it can relate to the first couple of decades of the 16th century. And it's extremely ironic that one should even consider damaging Vasari's fresco in order to better reveal a High Renaissance masterpiece hidden beneath because it was Vasari himself who did much to create the idea of the High Renaissance in the first place.

For Vasari, at the end of the 15th century and the start of his own century, the 16th century brought with it the advent of new mature and satisfying works that express a Third Age of Italian Renaissance art initially represented by the holy trinity of Central Italian art - Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo. Vasari was the first to argue that certain landmark works represent the advent of this phase.

These include, well, an early entry here, *The Last Supper* of the 1490s by Leonardo, but then we get into the 16th century, with Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, of 1505. Although Vasari has never actually seen this work; he only knew it by reputation. Michelangelo's David, and this is 1505, roughly the same date. A bit later, the Sistine Chapel ceiling, perhaps somewhat less familiar, but no less important or influential. The early Madonnas of Raphael and the frescoes of the Vatican apartments such as the School of Athens of around 1513.

Dr Philip Cottrell 7:19

Now, where Giorgio Vasari parts company with modern art historians is the way he thought that this artistic Golden Age didn't peter out around 1520, the years following the deaths of Leonardo and Raphael. Instead, his *Lives of the Artists* are at pains to argue that things went on improving all the time. Michelangelo, after all, was still alive when the first edition of Vasari's *Lives* was published in 1550.

Now, in the Gallery, we have this rather unloved, a little bit ignored, but really rather important painting which attests to Michelangelo's dominance of Central-Italian art in his late Renaissance phase.

[referencing illustration on screen: [Michele Tosini's Venus and Cupid](#)]

It portrays, would you believe it, Venus and Cupid, and it's by an also-ran painter called Michele Tosini. But, it reflects what Vasari and others would have recognised as exemplary of the supreme achievements of Florentine painting. This is because it closely depends on a drawing which Michelangelo completed in the early 1530s, for the Florentine banker Bartolomeo Bettini.

The composition became very famous and there are numerous Florentine responses to it, of this date. And yet, it's hulking welterweight muscularity shows how Michelangelo's approach is often peculiarly antithetical and amicable to expressing the sensuality of the female nude. Never more so than here in the image of Venus. Michelangelo's great rival Titian from Venice almost certainly knew of Michelangelo's failure in this regard and in a famous showdown decided to twist the palette knife a little.

[referencing illustration on screen] This is Titian's *Danae* of 1545. Not actually a Venus but a classical nude. With Cupid painted in the spirit of Michelangelo's Venus subject. It represents a different Venetian tradition which managed to remain free of the mannerist excesses of Central-Italian art of this period. And I think it was painted in a style that was meant to upbraid Michelangelo for his odd female nudes with their boobs slapped on with an ice cream scoop – to recycle Alan Bennett's rather wonderful, but now well-worn, phrase, I think. And, incidentally, the fact that Titian's racy painting was commissioned by a Roman Cardinal – that Cardinal was the bastard son of the then Pope Paul III – also tells you all you need to know about the worldliness of the Renaissance papacy.

But, Titian was at pains to deliver it to Rome in person. He never bothered to go there before in a career that already lasted 40 years. He knew he would bump into Michelangelo there and impudently adapted one of Michelangelo's muscular female statues from the Florentine church of San Lorenzo for his figure of Danae, restoring feminine curves and bounce, an essential pliancy of female flesh. And Michelangelo, for his part, duly paid a visit to Titian's work and took Vasari with him. And in his *Lives*, Vasari tells us the following:

Dr Philip Cottrell 10:24

One day when Michelangelo and Desiree visited Titian they saw his naked Danae, and praised it greatly as was polite. After they had gone, however, Michelangelo criticised Titian's methods, praising him a good deal saying that he liked his colouring and style – here you hear the patronizing tone oozing out – but, it was a pity that good design was not taught in Venice from the first. And Vasari then chips in “Without design and the study of a selection of ancient and modern works, skill is useless”, and it's impossible by

merely drawing from life – which is what the accused Titian of doing – to impart the grace and beauty of nature so that certain parts frequently lack beauty.

Now, Vasari's writings are patriotically chauvinist, and he is at pains to ignore the fact that in painting at least, the torch of the Italian Renaissance is now burning far brighter in Venice than in Florence and Rome, and that the Venetian tradition of colour, tonality and physical realism was at odds with increasingly rather stale, rhetorical traditions of Michelangelo and his followers.

Dr Philip Cottrell 11:31

Vasari naturally expected Venus to better resemble, or to be drawn directly from, an idealised Michelangesque template, as with Tosini's picture, and for Venus to be infused with a refined and mannered emphasis on the principles of Florentine *disegno*, or draftsmanship, and with promoting the sculptural principles of the classically inspired muscular, male nude. Never mind that she's meant to be an icon of erotic female sexuality, but an anti Visarian and pejorative view of how stale Central-Italian art was becoming by the end of the 16th century is even apparent among artists and critics active at the time.

And its modern, critical currency was crystallised by the late-19th-century scholar Heinrich Wölfflin, who in his book *Die klassische Kunst*, or *Classic Art*, of 1898, reproduced this very work, or rather a close variant of it by Jacopo Pontormo in the Uffizi, to lend weight, literally to lend weight, to his following description of Michelangesque mannerism.

He says, "From now on, everybody sought to obtain stupendous effects of mass. Spaciousness and beauty of proportion became alien concepts. Painters began to rival one another in the atrocious overcrowding of canvases in a dissolution of forms, which deliberately sought a contradiction between the amount of space available and the objects in it."

Dr Philip Cottrell 13:01

Wölfflin rightfully praised the power and tolerability, the baleful power, of Michelangelo's late work, but characterised him in his late career as a counterproductive influence. A mighty mountain torrent, both fertilizing and destructive in his impact, that's how he discusses him. It's a great analogy.

At the time, however, Vasari, for his purposes as a critic, had too much riding on the notion that there had been no falling off, no decline in the quality of Central-Italian art, and any notion of a decline would draw attention to the glaring problem with Vasari's theoretical model for the development of Renaissance art. This is because, for Vasari, the idea of a destiny for Florentine and Renaissance art was both teleological and biological. Sounds a bit of a grand statement, but I'll try and explain what I mean:

Quite simply, this is how Vasari explains the structure and methodology of his own history of Italian Renaissance art as expressed in the preface to the *Lives of the Artists*.

He says, "I've divided and separated artists into three groups or ages. These very neatly correspond to the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, beginning from the rebirth." There's that word again, *rinascita*. You know, it's the root of our word *Renaissance* of the arts and continuing down to the century in which we live.

And then, in order to make more explicit the idea that the development of Italian art was analogous to bodily growth, he writes that "The arts resemble nature as reflected in our own human bodies that have their birth, growth, age and death." And I hope by this he means to show the development of the rebirth of the arts of our own time and the perfection to which they have now attained.

Dr Philip Cottrell 14:54

Vasari is the first person in print to express and use this concept of rebirth. Vasari's approach and ideas have proved very tenacious and for a good reason. He was a brilliant, sensitive, entertaining writer. A great teller of stories, certainly. And, even though he sometimes gets a rough ride, he's much closer to the art of his own period than we are. We are also – sorry, he also possessed a certain degree of journalist integrity, if that's not a contradiction in terms: he did try to get his facts right.

And we, still, in a broad popular sense, subscribe to a view of rebirth in the arts of painting and sculpture and architecture that took place towards the end of the 13th, the start of the 14th century. As Vasari asserted, we still recognise also that this first began in central Italy, and it began with Giotto: still considered the founding father of Vasari's first nascent age of Renaissance art, the 14th century.

Giotto's frescoes from the Arena Chapel in Padua, of around 1306, as epitomised by this detail [referencing illustration on screen] of a scene of Christ on the cross here, the Romans arguing over Christ's cloak. When compared with the art of the medieval world, and the work of the medieval illustrator, you can easily see that Giotto is representative of something new, or something *reborn* in painting: an interest in the weight, the physical presence of human form and the portrayal of human emotions and expressions.

At times, his figures appear like more individualised responses to the late Roman sculptural frescoes that can be found on the Arch of Constantine. Here's a detail.

[referencing illustration on screen]

And this work was also highlighted; I'm talking about the Roman sculptural frieze here, as representing the last gasp of an ancient Roman Golden Age. And it was Giotto, centuries later, like some miraculous paramedic, who is able to apply mouth-to-mouth to the corpse of Italian classicism and revive and rekindle this classical style. Vasari says, "It was Giotto who, by God's favour, restored and rescued art, even though he was born among incompetent artists."

Vasari did not, however, make Giotto's biography the first in his *Lives*, but he gave that honour to Cimabue, Giotto's teacher, in order to establish a repetitive trope, or

repetitive cliché of the *Lives*: how great pupils are destined to out-do and improve upon their masters and therefore quasi-Oedipal, patrilineal sense of development constantly infuses and irrigates Vasari's view of the biological growth of Italian art.

Dr Philip Cottrell 17:38

Vasari's Second Age of Renaissance art, that which Vasari likens to youth, begins very neatly at the start of the next 15th century, with a precocious group of avant garde Florentine artists who were the first to return to Giotto's example and then develop his innovations in a more sophisticated way.

For Vasari, this becomes the age of youthful refinement and experimentation, but it's also Italian art's teenage phase. Therefore, not all is perfect or satisfying. Vasari, however, is keen to promote even the most eccentric of Florentine pioneers is worthy of intense admiration for the emergent potential.

And here, I'll pluck out the figure of Paolo Uccello, of whom Vasari writes a wonderfully affectionate and entertaining life. He focuses on Uccello's almost on the spectrum fascination with a recent Florentine invention of vanishing-point perspective. He is obsessed with this novelty, and he tells us how Mrs Uccello gets very cheesed off with her husband, constantly beseeching him to come to bed, but Uccello stays up late working out perspective diagrams, such as this goblet [referencing illustration on screen], which you might think was drawn on a computer but actually dates from 600 years ago.

Dr Philip Cottrell 18:58

The Gallery has of course, this rather adorable Madonna and Child by Uccello. Now of course, this goblin-like Christ Child is somewhat horrifying in some ways, like something out of a Japanese horror film. The way he's crawling out of the picture, miniature bank manager, but both this and the way in which the body is constructed in terms of conjoined spheres is easier to admire.

Once you understand the originality of what Uccello is doing here, exploring the possibilities of visual illusion, and then there's that carefully constructed perspectival halo with its perfectly aligned orthogonal lines bending away in space, like somebody has nailed a laser disc, or CD, to this child's head. These are all features which seem quirky, but they're subordinate to Uccello's truly ground-breaking wish to explore and experiment with spatial values.

By the end of the 15th century, however, such quirkiness are gradually giving way to a refined sense of visual geometry. The work of Raphael's teacher, Pietro Perugino, represented by this carefully composed Pietà here in the Gallery [referencing illustration on screen of Perugino's Lamentation over the Dead Christ], which has recently undergone an equally careful restoration.....and this is why I love PowerPoint!

Here we are, this is what it looks like now – it's perhaps a good example of what Vasari is referring to when he says that by the end of the Second Age of Renaissance art, little is wanting of complete perfection.

Dr Philip Cottrell 20:28

The truth of nature is exactly imitated. But in this case, Perugino's struggling to bring order and choreography to a subject whose popularity was actually Northern in origin, as is clear from this earlier version of the subject, from the workshop of the Flemish Rogier van der Weyden.

The word *pietà* connotes compassion. And artists of the North seized on the potential to inspire compassion in the viewer by means of the portrayal of the dead body of Christ in the lap of his grieving mother. And the Italians, you know, they're not backwards when it comes to emotion. They sought to master it too, but they became far more concerned with how to banish the obviously awkward consequences of how to join the Virgin Mary together with the body of her adult son and to make sense of this subject as a choreographed event. And you can see this clearly, in Perugino's beautiful work where figures are brought in to support the body of Christ and everyone knows where to stand. But things are posed and stilted, and as Vasari says, "The artists of the Second Age did not attain to the final stages of perfection. In proportion they lacked good judgment, which invest figures with grace beyond measure."

The baton of development, then, could only be passed now to a younger set of artists, those identifiable with the advent of a Vasari's, third and final age, the age of maturity, the higher Renaissance, the age of the 16th century.

Dr Philip Cottrell 21:58

And so we arrive at Michelangelo and his response to the Pietà problem, only this time in sculpture. Michelangelo's sculptural group swells the blousy billows of the Virgin's drapery to provide a sturdy cradle for the languid form of her dead son, which is almost liquefied in the way in which it melds itself to the contours of her lap.

Perugino's solution, of course, is to bring in some attendant figures to cope with the heavy lifting, but Michelangelo sweeps away the scaffolding allowing the Virgin more girth and heft though tempering this with a youthful idealism. It's this sense of counterbalance, clarity, monumentality that are unifying hallmarks of the new High Renaissance style.

Dr Philip Cottrell 22:42

But, as Vasari admits, Michelangelo was not the real pioneer of this quest for clarity and grace. That role belongs to Leonardo. The chronology is a bit confusing because Leonardo is Florentine. High Renaissance only begins around 1500 after Michelangelo delivered the Pietà, but working away in Milan during the last few decades, Leonardo had built up great fame and influence with work such as the *Last Supper* of the late 1480s, early 1490s.

So, while Leonardo is working, Michelangelo is still in nappies, basically, still sucking in stone dust from the teat of his wet nurse who was a stonemason. This, incidentally, is the jokey way in which Michelangelo explained his preternatural genius as a sculptor: like Peter Parker being bitten by a radioactive spider!

It's really, though, with Leonardo's returned to Florence in the year 1500 that the Third Age begins to cook. And Vasari tells us that Leonardo's presence in Florence caused great excitement. People actually queued to see a large-scale preparatory drawing, a cartoon, of the Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the infant John the Baptist that Leonardo completed for the monks of the Florentine Church of Santissima Annunziata.

Dr Philip Cottrell 23:57

This series of paintings by other artists then resulted that crystallised the dynamics of the High Renaissance style. The adulation according to Leonardo, an old timer, clearly annoyed and inspired the young, ambitious Michelangelo to create his own composition that *Doni Tondo*, which pulls apart and reassembles certain elements of the way in which Leonardo is trying to fuse figures together here in a harmonious, balanced composition.

At this point, I should say that an acolyte of Michelangelo's, Francesco Granacci, also seems to have worked on a series of similarly tightly grouped Holy Family compositions. The Gallery's own, a very handsome Holy Family with St John was for a time attributed to Michelangelo himself. I think it dates from this period, a little later than the Gallery label says, but you know, that's what art historians do. They're always arguing with one another.

We can add into the mix, of course, the younger, more inexperienced figure of Raphael of Urbino; the perfect synthesis of all of these different influences. He's a third of our High Renaissance geniuses. He'd already completed an apprenticeship with Perugino. But, here he begins his apprenticeship again, like an inventive child playing with Lego taking different elements of the way in which these Holy Family scenes depend on an internal choreography, and then reassembling them in different ways. Very inventively, sometimes stripping back and giving the viewer a more kind of perfectly clear, balanced and simple composition. Sometimes Raphael's skill in economies is only really clear from his drawings, but all the time pursuing what is a very, very recognisable hallmark of Italian High Renaissance art. This poor and middle profile that we find again and again in High Renaissance art of this period and expresses this quest for monumentality, accessibility, and a sense of figurative clarity. I'm straight now, I know you're worried about getting out and having your ovaltines.

Dr Philip Cottrell 26:09

Well, so far, so Vasari. The start of the 16th century seems to bear out with Vasari's idea of a Third Age of artistic maturity. But Vasari first published his ideas in 1550, some 30 years after the deaths of Raphael and Leonardo, and well after Michelangelo's art had branched out in increasingly personal and problematic ways. The naturalism and the

accessibility of his early High Renaissance phase becomes eroded. Michelangelo doesn't go into decline, but his work isn't as accessible and isn't as concerned with this quest for clarity.

For Vasari, however, this Third Age of maturity was still developing, still improving. And, as I said before, in painting at least the energy and vigour of Titian and his followers in Venice, like Tintoretto and Veronese, argues for a late flowering of Renaissance art in North Italy, not in Florence or Rome. But Vasari could not admit this as it challenged his Tuscan-centric, rather chauvinistic, model. But although Vasari belittles Venetian art, he was able to appreciate the skill of some Venetian artists, even or especially Titian.

Dr Philip Cottrell 27:18

Despite tacitly endorsing Michelangelo's patronising appraisal of Titian, Vasari recognised quality, and could be surprisingly generous and broad minded in praising the extremely modern and challenging impressionistic virtuosity of Titian's late work as wonderfully exemplified by the Gallery's own *Ecce Homo*.

Although not perhaps a Spanish commission, it's very typical of the kind of very freely painted religious and mythological work that find favour with Titian's most important customer in his later years for the second of Spain. As Vasari admits, these paintings are very dear to the Catholic King Philip II, because of the liveliness that Titian has given his figures with colours making them seem almost alive. The recent ones are executed with bold strokes, and dashed off with a broad and even coarse sweep of the brush in so much that from near-to little can be seen, but from a distance they appear perfect.

And this method so used is judicious, beautiful and astonishing, because it makes the work appear alive and painted with great skill. Over time, the transparency of certain glazes has increased to the point that we can now see some of the changes that Titian made to the painting while he was finishing it, or *pentimenti*, to use the jargon. Such as repositioning Christ's scepter and the ropes around his wrist which now actually creates the impression of bruised skin which I think augments the power of this work.

Incidentally, in the 1950s, a past Director of the National Gallery Thomas McGreevy, agonised about whether a restorer should cover these changes up because he was worried that the general public might not be able to cope with a painting by an Italian Renaissance master like Titian being left in a sketchy state. Anyway, he made the right decision, and we can see Titian in effect still painting the work in front of us.

Dr Philip Cottrell 29:15

Titian's lack of finish also troubled Vasari in one important way. The bad example it could set to Titian's followers, particularly those other artists at the Venetian school, such as Paolo Veronese and Tintoretto. These artists we recognise as great artistic giants, but the story is rather dismissive of them. Particularly Tintoretto who is the author of this portrait of a Venetian senator, also here in the Gallery. His drapery is equally virtuoso in its daring and brushy abbreviations.

As we have seen, Vasari criticises the Venetians' general lack of *disegno* or draftsmanship, and this is possibly a means of deflecting attention from the implicit and inevitable consequences.

Dr Philip Cottrell 30:00

Vasari's wish to understand Italian Renaissance art in terms of bodily progression, it is the inevitable flaw in Vasari's critical schematics I mentioned earlier. Because after infancy, youth and maturity comes - What? What we must all face - old age, frailty, a one two vigour and energy. All that we lack in middle and old age the young can supply in spades and with what may sometimes be a wholly necessary, if somewhat lack, somewhat distressing, lack of deference.

Speaking of this lack of deference, and you know, I am a lecturer I don't have to cope with what teachers cope with, but I am aware of a lack of deference in those students. And also the school pupils who have to carve out a world for themselves. Let me quote from some marginal comments hand written into a copy of Vasari that fell into the hands of a young painter in the late 16th century. The writer rudely upbraids Vasari for his wish to marginalise Titian and his rivals and he writes, "Oh, listen to the malignant Vasari", he says that the Venetian rivals of Titian were not men of valour when these were painters of great importance. Yet Titian overcame them all. And if he had had to compete against Vasari's Florentines, some with names as obscure as their works - Tosini here - he could easily have beaten them even if he painted with his feet.

Dr Philip Cottrell 31:24

Now I'm illustrating these comments with a *Supper at Emmaus* by Titian. Also in the Gallery, a bit of a neglected work; lovely painting. And a portrait by Annibale Carracci also here in the collection, and I put the Carracci in because these marginal notes are attributable to Annibale Carracci. This was his copy of Vasari that he put catty little notes in, upbraiding Vasari for his prejudicial ideas.

Of course, Annibale Carracci and the other members of the Caracci family, along with painters such as Caravaggio, are identified with reinvigorating, or the reinvigoration of Italian art that took place at the end of the 16th century and for paving the way for a new Baroque style of the 17th century. That new sense of realistic vigour is also ably represented, of course by Caravaggio's show stopper *The Taking of Christ* and the portrait by Annibale, somewhat more modest in scope, but painted in a very instructive way, very much in the Venetian style that was to have so much influence over the Baroque.

And let's not forget, of course, that Caravaggio was apprentice to a pupil of Titian. While the Caravaggio and certainly the Carracci had no desire to turn their back on the example of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, they also wanted their responses to be as synthesised with an admiration for North Italian and Venetian painting. In other words, they wanted to admit equal importance to the naturalism, colourism and central accessibility that seem not to fit in with Vasari's view of the modern style or modern

maniera. Moderna maniera, he called it. As much as they may have listened patiently to the lessons of the Vasari's *Lives*, they did what all good pupils and students are apt to do. They engaged, they learned, but then they also challenged, disagreed, and they thought for themselves.

Thank you very much.