

Notes on a Drawing by Paolo Veronese

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Thanks to the financial assistance from the Kajima Foundation for the Arts, I had the opportunity to visit the fine exhibition of Paolo Veronese held at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, in 1988 which commemorated the four-hundredth anniversary of his death. While reviewing the catalogue of this exhibition, brilliantly written by W. Roger Rearick, a drawing lent by the Uffizi Gallery (Gabinetto dei Disegni, Inv. 12894F) particularly interested me.¹ The purpose of these notes is to reconsider the previous interpretation of the drawing and try to identify the finished painting for which it served as preparation.

The drawing in question was first published by Michelangelo Muraro in 1953.² It shows David and Moses in chiaroscuro, seated, on the recto (fig.1) and, on the verso, several sketchy figure studies with pen, recognizable as the Virgin and Child, and saints, etc. (fig.2). Rearick first linked the sketches on the verso with Veronese's project to paint the main altarpiece of the Church of San Sebastiano in Venice, *Madonna in Glory with St. Sebastian and Other Saints* (fig.4), for which the painter is known to have presented a drawn *modello*, now lost, in January 1559.³ Muraro and Richard Cocke has expressed much doubt about the above relationship,⁴ while Rearick repeats his view in the Cini exhibition catalogue and dates the sheet toward the end of 1558.⁵

Although the poses of the sketched figures in the drawing show the general resemblance with those in the San Sebastiano altarpiece, not one correspondance is quite exact, as Cocke rightly pointed out. I believe that most of them can be related to the figures in another altarpiece, *Madonna and Child, God the Father and Saints* (fig.3), now kept in a much damaged condition at the bishop's palace in Monopoli.⁶ The seated saint at left, showing Veronese's study of various leg positions, is surely preparatory for St. Peter in the painting, and the figure just above, turning her back and looking upward, corresponds to the female saint, St. Dorothea presenting a basket of roses to the Christ Child, in the painting. Another saint at the lower center of the sheet is beyond any doubt for St. Paul, while the study for St. Francis in the painting appears upper center in the drawing, symmetrical to St. Dorothea. The Virgin and Child, the latter inclined slightly to lower right, resemble those in the Monopoli painting more so than to those in the San Sebastiano altarpiece. The group turns up to be a fairly exact repetition of the central figures in a drawing in the Louvre (fig.5) related by Rearick to the unrealized early project for the high altar of S. Giorgio in Braida in Verona and dated ca.1550.⁷ Furthermore, the putto roughly drawn above the Virgin in the Uffizi sheet also reappears in the Monopoli painting as the little angel leaning on the cloud, to the right of the Virgin.

Although a few figures in the drawing remain unexplained (the kneeling young woman between St. Peter and St. Paul and the bust of a man at the lower left), the above correspondances seem sufficient to assure a direct link between the drawing and the Monopoli painting. The Monopoli altarpiece is now generally considered as executed by Veronese's workshop.⁸ The present drawing attests to the fact that at least the composition was conceived by the master himself.

Regarding the relationship between the pen sketches on the verso and the chiaroscuro

drawing on the recto, Rearick assumes that the two drawings are contemporaries. One of the reasons may have been the resemblance of the pose of Moses, though reversed, with that of the sketch for St. Peter. Now this connection is further supported by the close similarity of the pose and the facial characteristics discernible between Moses and St. Peter in the finished painting. How then was this chiaroscuro, *David and Moses*, conceived, and what was its original function?

Rearick relates the chiaroscuro drawing to the standing prophets in the upper part of the fresco decoration in San Sebastiano, while Cocke notes its similarity to the figures in the *Allegory of Redemption*, a large finished chiaroscuro drawing kept in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.⁹ Neither of these views are entirely convincing, and, to date, there is no positive evidence which could directly link the recto of the Uffizi drawing with any particular commission. On the other hand, if one compares the figure of the two prophets with the pen sketch for St. Peter on the verso, one could have the impression that through the chiroscuro figures Paolo “fixed” the result of his pose study evolved from the rough sketch which shows a variety of leg positions. If so, it is an interesting process in which the painter intentionally changed the subject matter, neutralizing the figures by detaching them from the original thematic context. In all probability, the purpose of this conduct was to conserve useful by-products of his inventive working process for later reference or for educational aim—in the form of a finished independent drawing. The present chiaroscuro drawing can be regarded neither as a record of a finished composition nor as a preparatory study for a project to be realized. Rather, it was engendered at a still floating stage of the process of composing, and was included in the workshop’s stock of typical figure motifs. In its relative independence from a particular commission, the character of this drawing may be linked to the emergence of drawings as true independent works of art.

Once the Uffizi sheet is divorced from the early phase of the project for the San Sebastiano altar around 1559, I feel tempted to set a somewhat later date for the drawing. In fact, the pen drawing on the verso looks closer in style to the pen study for the *Marthydom of St. George* in S. Giorgio in Braida, Verona (datable ca. 1566, Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum),¹⁰ than to the preparatory drawings for the fresco decorations of the Palazzo Trevisan, Murano, of ca. 1556-57.¹¹ In this context, I would like to note the close similarity of chiaroscuro Moses with the figure of St. John the Baptist appearing at the lower right of the *Pala Marogna* (fig. 6), painted for the Veronese church of S. Paolo. Sergio Marinelli dates it between 1562-65.¹² This seated figure, with one bare leg powerfully stepping out, was surely one of Veronese’s favorite motifs of this period,¹³ and it is my opinion that the Uffizi drawing as well as the Monopoli altarpiece can be dated approximately in the same period of 1562-65.

Notes

1. A. Bettagno (ed.), *Paolo Veronese: disegni e dipinti*. (exh. cat. at Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice), catalogue entries by W. R. Rearick, Vicenza, 1988, no. 5, p. 52.
2. M. Muraro, *Disegni veneziani del Sei e Settecento*. (exh. cat. at Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi), Florence, 1953, no. 2, pp. 9-10.
3. W. R. Rearick, *Tiziano e il disegno veneziano del suo tempo*. (exh. cat. at Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi), Florence, 1976, no. 116, pp. 159-161. Here the sketches on the verso was published for the first time. For the San Sebastiano altarpiece, T. Pignatti, *Veronese*. Venice, 1976, vol. 1, no. 132, pp. 126-127.
4. M. Muraro, “Grafica tizianesca,” in *Tiziano e il Manierismo europeo*. Florence, 1978, p. 133. Muraro expresses doubts on the attribution to Veronese.; R. Cocke, “Veronese’s Independent Chiaroscuro Drawings,” *Master Drawings*, 15, 1977, p. 265 and Id., *Veronese’s Drawings*. London, 1984, no. 26, pp. 90-91.
5. Rearick, in *Veronese: disegni e dipinti*. cit., p. 52.
6. Pignatti, *Veronese*. cit., no. A208, p. 196. The altarpiece was originally located in the Conventual church in Monopoli. See also M. D’Elia, *Mostra dell’arte in Puglia dal tardo antico al rococo*. (exh. cat. at Pinacoteca

- Provinciale di Bari), Bari, 1964, no.95, pp.93-94 and D. von Hadeln, *Paolo Veronese*. Florence, 1978, no.191, pp.155-156 (as early work, scarcely later than 1555).
7. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des arts graphiques, no.4816. Cf. W. R. Rearick, *The Art of Paolo Veronese, 1528-1588*. (exh. cat. at the National Gallery of Art, Washington), Washington D.C., 1988, no.8, pp.36-37.
 8. See n.6. R. Pallucchini ("I veneti alla mostra dell'arte in Puglia," *Arte Veneta*, XVIII, 1964, p.216) considers the Monopoli painting as a school work and dates it ca.1560.
 9. Cocke, *Veronese's Drawings*. cit., p.91.
 10. Cocke, *Veronese's Drawings*. cit., no.52, 132-133. See also Rearick, *The Art of Paolo Veronese*. cit., no.42, pp.89-90. Rearick dates the sheet 1567-68.
 11. Cocke, *Veronese's Drawings*. cit., nos.8-11, pp.52-59.
 12. Sergio Marinelli (ed.), *Veronese e Verona*. (exh. cat. at Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona), Verona, 1988, no.12, pp.216-218. His dating is based on the date 1565 inscribed on the entrance arch of the chapel.
 13. A very similar repetitive use of a typical figure motif can be observed in the three figures in different altarpieces from the same period: St. John the Baptist in the *Pala Coccina*, originally located at S. Francesco della Vigna, from 1562 (lost, but recorded in an engraving by Antonio Baratti. Cf. P. Ticozzi, ed., *Paolo Veronese e i suoi incisori*. Venice, 1977, no.80), Antonio Maria Marogna in the *Pala Marogna* (fig.6), and, with some modification, St. John the Baptist in the S. Sebastiano altarpiece (ca.1566, fig.4). The figures in the Monopoli altarpiece, though relatively simple and static, find many stylistic affinities in the various figures of this group of paintings.
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fig.1

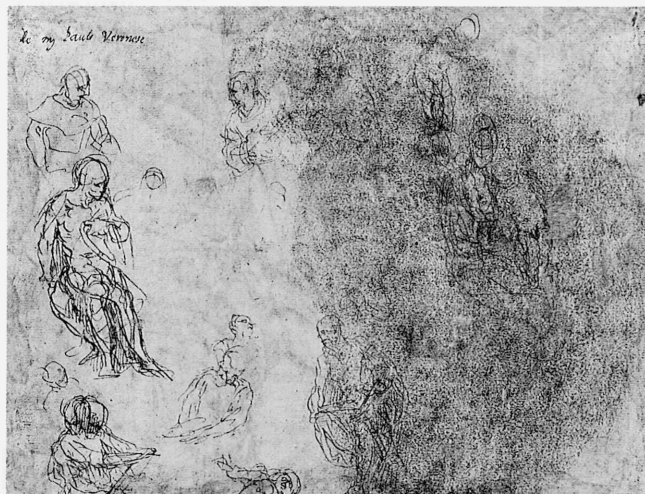


fig.2

fig.1

Paolo Veronese, *David and Moses*. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni, Inv. 12894F (recto).

fig.2

Paolo Veronese, *Studies of the Madonna and Child with Saints*. verso of fig. 1.

fig.3

Paolo Veronese and Workshop, *Madonna and Child, God the Father and Saints*. Monopoli, Bishop's Palace.

fig.4

Paolo Veronese, *Madonna in Glory with St. Sebastian and Other Saints*. Venice, San Sebastiano. (photo Böhm)



fig.3



fig.4



fig.5

fig.5
Paolo Veronese, *Madonna and Child in Glory with Sts. Peter and Paul*.
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Inv.4816.

fig.6
Paolo Veronese, *Madonna and Child with Sts. Anthony and John the Baptist,
Antonio Maria and Giambattista Marogna* (Pala Marogna). Verona, San Paolo.



fig.6