

## THE PARAGONE OF SCULPTURE AND PAINTING IN FLORENCE AROUND 1550

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### THE PARAGONE IN VASARI'S VITE OF 1550

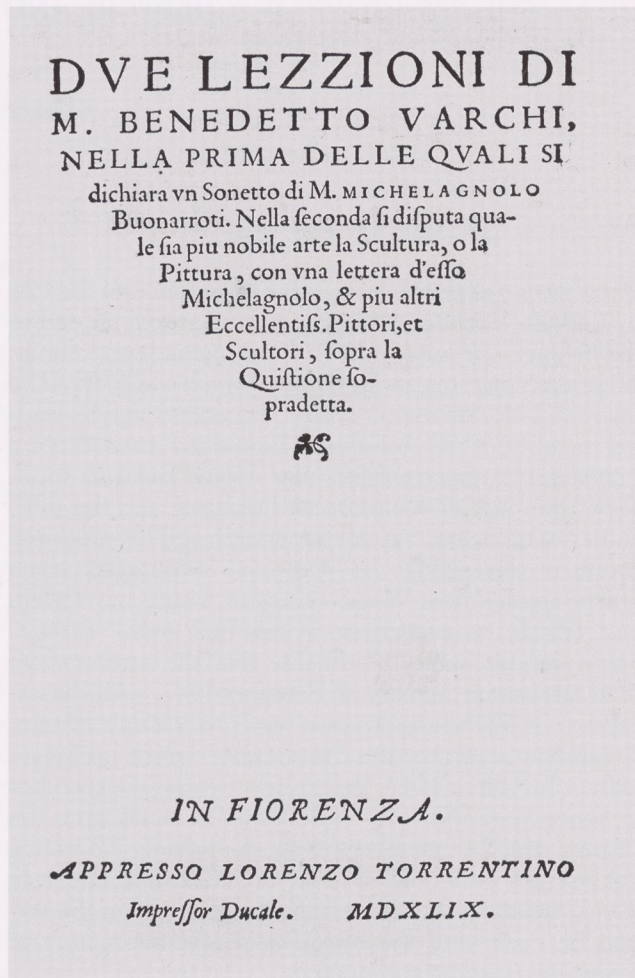
The *Proemio di tutta l'opera* in the first edition of the *Vite* by Giorgio Vasari in 1550 (fig. 1) tries to put an end to the dispute – *disputa* – about the supremacy and nobility between painting and sculpture, which was sparked by many and «for no reason at all»<sup>1</sup>. Benedetto Varchi, leading member of the Accademia Fiorentina, carried out a public survey among artists and invited them to speak about the rank of sculpture and painting and the difficulties of both arts. Varchi's reputation and his proposed problem concerning the *paragone* encouraged seven artists, among them Vasari, Bronzino, Pontormo, Cellini and Tribolo, to participate in this first artists' survey<sup>2</sup>. Some datings make it probable that the artists wrote their answers in January or February 1547, with the exception of Michelangelo, who refers to Varchi's *libretto*, assumingly a copy of the *Due lezioni*, which no longer exists<sup>3</sup>. In March 1547, Varchi held two public speeches in Santa Maria Novella on Sundays, as usual, after the vespers which all members of the Accademia Fiorentina of Cosimo I were obliged to attend. In his first *Lezione*, Varchi treated a sonnet by Michelangelo, and in the second he dealt with the *maggioranza*, the supremacy of sculpture, painting and poetry<sup>4</sup>.

Lorenzo Torrentino, who was called from Bologna to Florence as *impressor ducale* with Flemish origins by Cosimo I, published Varchi's *Due lezioni* with all the artists' answers in January 1550 (according to *stile commune*, dated 1549 according to *stile fiorentino*) (fig. 2). The circumstances of the publication are not unimportant. In the same year, Torrentino published Leon Battista Alberti's *Architettura* translated by Cosimo Bartoli and with a title illustration by Giorgio Vasari, and he edited the latter's first publication of the *Vite*<sup>5</sup>. In 1549, Torrentino published the folio-volume *Illustrium virorum vitae* by Paolo Giovio – one of the models of Vasari's *Vite* – and in the same year Torrentino printed Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* after an Italian translation by Bernardo Segni, an *accademico fiorentino*. One year later, in 1550, Torrentino published Aristotle's *Ethics* in Italian, again translated by Bernardo Segni<sup>6</sup>. In the lecture *Della poesia* held in December 1553, Varchi mentioned that he had translated and commented on the *Poetics* by Aristotle some years ago. However, his academic colleague must have pre-empted him to print<sup>7</sup>. By 1548 Francesco Robortello had already brought out the Folio-volume of the two comments concerning Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horaz's *Ars poetica* with Lorenzo Torrentino as publisher<sup>8</sup>. In his answer to Varchi dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 1547, Vasari (fig. 3) told of two courtiers from the en-

tourage of Cardinal Farnese in Rome who had appointed him as referee because of a bet about the same dispute. He reported that in his perplexed state, Vasari would have consulted the “divine” (*divino*) Michelangelo<sup>9</sup>. This highest authority with regard to questions about the arts responded with an oracle: «La scoltura e pittura hanno un fine medesimo, difficilmente operato da una parte e dall'altra». – «Sculpture and painting both have the same ultimate purpose, which is put into work with difficulties by both arts»<sup>10</sup>. In a *captatio benevolentiae* Vasari flatters, in a convoluted way, the erudite Varchi and puts Varchi's judgment above the artists'. However, Vasari claims that architecture takes the first rank without dealing with sculpture and painting any further. Thereafter followed, announced as a joke, a *paragone-test*: Varchi was expected to form a face, an animal or anything else with clay and draw and shade it after the clay figure. The comparison of quality and easiness of both works would then make it possible to draw a conclusion: «[...] e quello, che vi sarà più facile a esercitarla troverete manco perfetta». – «The one you did more easily you will consider less perfect»<sup>11</sup>. Then Vasari listed the difficulties of painting, its abilities to imitate with life (*animo*) and colour everything that nature does, furthermore, he mentioned the techniques and the portrait. Finally, Vasari came up with an unusual formulation for an old argument: «il disegno è madre [sic] di ognuno di queste arti» – «*disegno* is the mother of both arts». In the *Proemio di tutta l'opera* of the Vasari-edition of 1550, *disegno* frees itself from the grammatically incorrect role as mother and becomes the biologically incorrect birth-giving father of two arts: «Dico adunque che la scultura e la pittura per il vero sono sorelle, nate di un padre, che è il disegno, in un sol parto et ad un tempo [...]». – «I therefore claim that sculpture and painting are truly sisters, born of one father, who is called *disegno*, in one single birth act and at the same time»<sup>12</sup>. In this case, an idea that is similar to the mythological one with Zeus as the double-bearing father fades over the anthropological probability. The purpose of this assertion obviously is to present painting and sculpture as equal and independent sister arts of the same origin and the same time. The difference between Vasari's letter addressed to Varchi and the *Proemio di tutta l'opera* could support the thesis that Vasari was not the author of the *paragone*-discussion in the *Vite*. Thomas Frangenberg recently pointed out the insufficient coherence between Vasari's letter and the careful argumentation in the *Proemio di tutta l'opera* in the *Vite*. Frangenberg considers Cosimo Bartoli (fig. 4), the translator of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, as the possible author of the *paragone*-debate in the *Vite*, and also



1. Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite*, front page, Florence: Torrentino, 1550



2. Benedetto Varchi, *Due lezioni*, front page, Florence: Torrentino, 1549 (1550)

co-author with Pier Francesco Giambullari for the *Proemio delle vite*<sup>13</sup>.

The following (revised) arguments are made in the *Proemio di tutta l'opera*:

- Painting and sculpture are sisters and both have *disegno* as their father.
- The entire dispute is in vain because architecture is not taken into consideration (this is not true for Varchi, which proves that Varchi's *Due lezioni* were not accessible to the author of the *Proemio*)<sup>14</sup>.
- Among the arts of the *disegno*, architecture is the most extensive, necessary and useful, and both painting and sculpture serve as accessories to architecture.

Artists such as Antonio Pollaiuolo or Leonardo da Vinci are active in various arts, and the divine artist, Michelangelo, was second to none and accomplished the most wonderful in all three arts<sup>15</sup>.

#### MICHELANGELO'S RESPONSE

In his response to Varchi's *libretto*, Michelangelo said

that sculpture and painting would stem from the same (artistic) intelligence and could well be in harmony. Also, they would be equal because they aim towards the same ultimate purpose. Moreover, he advocated that such disputes should be ignored as they hinder productive work<sup>16</sup>. After this conciliatory proposal, Michelangelo continued with an insulting sentence: «Colui che scrisse che la pittura era più nobile della scultura, se gli avessi così bene intese l'altre cose che ha scritte, l'arebbe meglio scritte la mia fante». – «If he who wrote that painting would be nobler than sculpture had understood all other things he wrote about just as well, then my maid would have written it better». The addressee of this ironic contempt could have been Baldassare Castiglione, who praised his friend Raphael all over in the *Cortegiano* of 1528, though without neglecting Michelangelo's *eccellenzia*. Alternatively, it could have been intended for the big rival Leonardo<sup>17</sup>. To me it seems more likely that in the 1540s Michelangelo meant the big rival Leonardo rather than Raphael's already long-dead friend, the courtier Castiglione. The knowledge of Leonardo's papers beyond the vicinity of

Milan remains unknown. It is possible that the general preference for painting caused by Leonardo got around orally and that Michelangelo referred to hearsay evidence only. The Milan doctor, mathematician and philosopher Hieronymus Cardanus wrote about the *paragone* in his big and thorough work *De subtilitate*, which was printed for the first time in 1550, and agrees with Leonardo, whom he mentions specifically by name, by giving painting the first rank<sup>18</sup>.

Michelangelo, in his response to Benedetto Varchi (fig. 5) and in his first argument, addressed the difference between sculpture and painting. Sculpture would be the light and sun, while painting should be compared to the moon, and the more it resembles a relief the better it is, while sculpture becomes worse the closer it comes to painting. According to Rudolf Preimesberger, Michelangelo puts the medial basic conditions of both arts in antithetical opposition, and thus differs from Varchi<sup>19</sup>. Michelangelo then seems to take up Varchi's Aristotelian argument, which says that both arts would be only one art since they would have the same ultimate purpose. Paola Barocchi calls this a «punto culminante della dissertazione varchiana» – the «culminating point in Varchi's essay»<sup>20</sup>. However, this approval makes it a condition that if not the better judgment, then the higher level of difficulty, bigger obstacles and stronger efforts would justify the higher rank of the sculpture<sup>21</sup>. Despite the seeming agreement with Varchi, Michelangelo insists on the differences in the main points of the *paragone* in order to justify the higher rank of sculpture<sup>22</sup>.



3. Anonymous, Portrait of Giorgio Vasari, lost drawing (after: Ernst Steinmann: Michelangelo im Spiegel seiner Zeit, Leipzig 1930, Table XV)

#### PARAGONARE

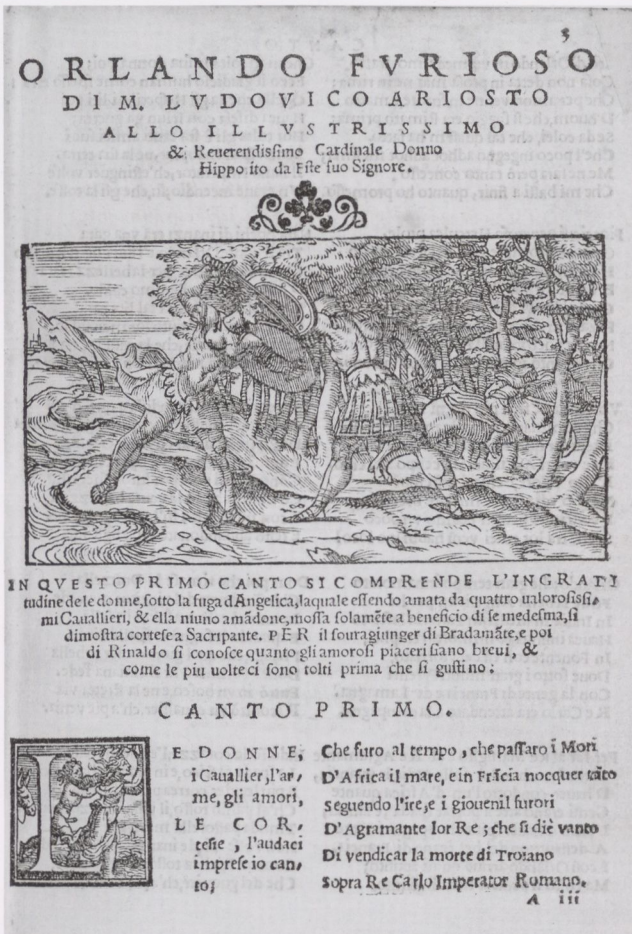
The competitive comparison among the arts and between poetry and music has been called *paragone* since Guglielmo Manzi used the expression for Leonardo's *Libro Primo of the Codex 1270*. Irma Richter adopted the term as title for her edition of the *Prima Parte* in 1949<sup>23</sup>. It concerns a venial anachronism because *paragone* as book title cannot be found before 1554: in that year Lorenzo Torrentino's treatise of Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Paragone della Vergine et del Martire* appeared, translated from Latin by Torrentino's proof-reader Lodovico Domenichi. The latter correctly translated Erasmus' treatise entitled *Virginis et martyris comparatio* with the Italian equivalent *paragone* for *comparatio*<sup>24</sup>. Leonardo's use of *paragone* and *paragonare* – words with uncertain etymology and changing orthography – around 1500 and in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was shown by Claire Farago in her analysis of the first part of the *Codex Vaticanus Latinus Urbinas 1270* for Italy<sup>25</sup>. In France, other problems concerning the competitive comparison were taken up in the *querelles des anciens et des modernes*, and the *Dictionnaire Universel* by Antoine Furetière commented about *paragonner* in a laconic way: «Vieux mot qui signifioit



4. Portrait of Cosimo Bartoli, in *Cosimo Bartoli, Discorsi storici universali*, Venice 1569



5. Anonymous, Michelangelo as stonemason, in *Sigismondo Fanti, Triompho di fortuna, Venedig 1527*



6. The encounter between Rinaldo and Ferragu, in *Ariosto, Orlando furioso, Ferrara 1516, stanza 16*

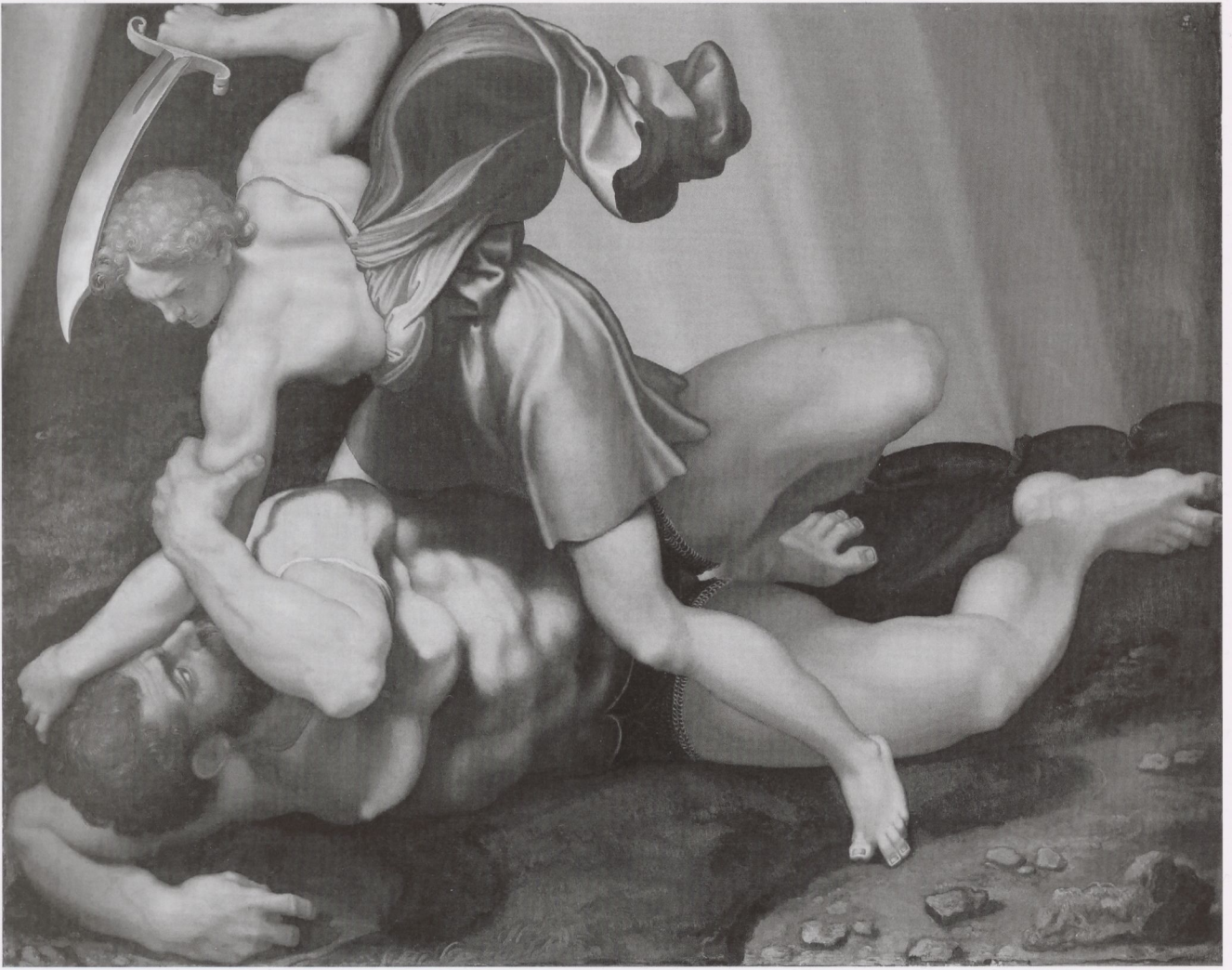
autrefos, mettre en parallèle, comparer». The following example illustrates the use of the word: «Qui est le conquérant qu'on ait oser paragonner avec Alexandre<sup>26</sup>?» The most important first use of the word can be found in the delicate area of precious metal testing, which was at least as important as the inspection of banknotes under ultraviolet light nowadays: *pietra da* (or *di*) *paragone* was a black stone which served goldsmiths to test gold and silver samples. Rudolf Preimesberger has discovered it painted deceptively real and appropriately inserted in Jan van Eycks Diptych in Madrid<sup>27</sup>. «Al paragone si conosce l'oro» – «On the touchstone one detects the gold» – was a proverbial saying in Italy, which is listed in the 12<sup>th</sup> volume of 1984 of the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* with a great deal of evidence since the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>28</sup>. In France, where touchstone is known as *Pierre de touche*, Edouard Manet said to Jacques-Emile Blanche in 1881: «La nature morte est la pierre de touche du peintre» – «The still life is the touchstone for painters»<sup>29</sup>. The touchstone as metaphor is suitable for the trial in the moral, intellectual, social or practical, technical and artistic field («venire al paragone»), for the result of such a trial, and especially for the armed conflict, battle, tournament or for a woman. The meaning of *paragone* and *paragonare* resembles an open fan as it goes from comparison (*comparazione*) to the field of competition (*concorrenza*) to contests with arguments, to the tournament (*combattimento, gara*) and to the field of the serious armed conflict.

Evidence for this last aspect is given by Ariosto in stanza 16 of the first song of *Orlando furioso* in 1516 where he describes the encounter between Rinaldo and the Saracen Ferragu: «And though he want a helmet, yet to fight / With bold Renaldo he will do his best, / And both the one the other straight defied, / Oft having either others value tried.» (fig. 6). It is followed by the «crudel battaglia» – the fierce battle – of two warriors, the undecided outcome and the bonding of the enemies in order to catch up with Angelica, who tries to escape from four pugnacious men that desire her<sup>30</sup>.

«Paragon de l'arme» – the measurement of weapons – was common to the extensive contest, in which individuals, families, enterprises, towns and nations, artists and patrons were involved. The legendary rivalries among artists in the Ancient World, which are told by Pliny, were made generally accessible through Cristoforo Landino's Italian translation of the *Historia naturalis*. Landino made use of expressions such as «combattimento dela pictura», or «chiamarsi vincto» for the competition between Zeuxis and Parrhasios, or «confessare se essere vincto» in Protogenes and Apelles to name the competition for the finest line<sup>31</sup>. These stories prompted new diachronic and synchronic competitions or promoted at least the forming of legends such as the ones that are known with Giovanni Bellini and Albrecht Dürer, to whom Joachim Camerarius 1532 attributed the repetition of the rivalry between Apelles



7. Daniele da Volterra, *Battle between David and Goliath*, Paris, Musée du Louvre



8. Daniele da Volterra, *Battle between David and Goliath*, Paris, Musée du Louvre

and Protogenes for the «*linea summae tenuitatis*»<sup>32</sup>. In her book *Renaissance Rivals*, published in 2002, Rona Goffen showed the permanent rivalry and its consequences for the greatest artists of the Italian Renaissance<sup>33</sup>. The competitive habitus is illustrated with excellent contributions in the volume *Im Agon der Künste*, published in 2007<sup>34</sup>. This shall be demonstrated with only one significant example: the project of two battle pieces by Leonardo and Michelangelo for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence in 1504 was set up as rivalry between two artists of whom it was known that their competition was poisoned by hatred and disdain<sup>35</sup>. In 1550, Vasari held the opinion that the *concorrenza* ended in favour of Michelangelo, and reported that Michelangelo's cartoon of the *Battle of Cascina* had served all artists for their studies until they tore it into pieces and carried them away like booty<sup>36</sup>. John Shearman pointed out that Vasari's *Vite* are suffused with the imagination of rivalry. Those who wanted to withdraw from the contest were treated with contempt<sup>37</sup>.

The commentary, which Leonardo Sellaio sent from Rome in January 1517 to Michelangelo in Carrara, is significant. Sellaio referred to Cardinal Giulio de' Medici's organised competition with orders for altar paintings from Raffaël and Sebastiano del Piombo and wrote that Raffaël apparently tried everything to thwart Sebastiano, «per non venire a paragoni» —«in order not to enter the contest»<sup>38</sup>.

Alessandro Nova recently showed that artists reacted to the dispute about rank with a series of sculptures and paintings<sup>39</sup>. Daniele da Volterra, for instance, made two contributions to the *paragone* according to Vasari for Monsignore Giovanni della Casa from Florence<sup>40</sup>. One contribution is a plastic burnt in clay, which is lost, and the other is painted, namely the battle between David and Goliath in two different views (figs. 7, 8) and with several references to the *paragone*: one reference is iconographic, such a battle is a «Paragon de l'arme» according to Ariosto, the second is the *paragone* with Michelangelo, and the material of the picture carrier, slate, could almost count as a *pietra di paragone*.

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LEZIONE DI BENEDETTO  
VARCHI, NELLA QUALE SIDISPUTA DELLA MAGGIORANZA  
dell'arti, et qual sia piu nobile, la Scultu-  
ra, o la Pittura, fatta da lui publica-  
mente nella Accademia Fio-  
rentina, la terza Do-  
menica di Quare-  
sima: l'anno  
1546.

P R O E M I O .



**T**UTTE le cose di tutto l'u-  
niuerso, il quale abbraccian-  
do tutti i Cieli, & tutti gl'e-  
lementi, comprese in se, &  
contiene non solamente tut-  
to quello, che era, ma ezian-  
dio tutto quello, che poteua  
essere, in guisa, che fuora di  
lui non pure non rimase co-  
sa nessuna, ma ne luogo ancora, ne voto, sono degnissi-  
mo Consolo: honoratissimi Accademici, & voi tutti  
Vditori nobilissimi, o eterne, o non eterne. L'eterne (fa-  
uellando Aristotelicamente) sono quelle, le quali non  
deuendo finir mai, mai ancora non cominciarono, et per  
consequenza non hebbero cagione efficiente, cio è, al-  
cuno, che le facesse, & queste si chiamano celesti, diui-  
ne, & immortali; le non eterne sono quelle, le quali de-  
uendo hauere sine qualche volta, hebbero ancora qual-  
che volta principio, & per consequenza cagione effi-  
ciente

9. Initial T, in Benedetto Varchi, *Due lezioni*, Florence: Torrentino, 1549 (1550), p. 56

Daniele da Volterra's contributions to the *paragone* deal with the number of views that can be offered by painting and sculpture, thus it concerns one of the points of the discussion of the *paragone*. The big base, on which the revolving slate board is set up, was created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Nicolò del Giudice gave the board as a present to Louis XIV in 1715. It can be assumed that a device making it possible to rotate the board had existed before so that both painted views of the battle could be shown one after the other.

Lorenzo Torrentino produced Varchi's *Due lezioni* with initials that show hunting scenes<sup>41</sup>. In the initial «I», two hunters on horseback competitively chase a deer, and the winner shoots the prey while the other arrives too late. Two other initials with hunting scenes follow, and the initial «T» to the *Proemio* of the second *Lezione* (fig. 9) shows two horsemen and a runner with a dog running ahead. The hunting scenes were well chosen for the theme of the book. The book had been lying in Torrentino's workshop for a long time. He tried

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E L O G I O R V M

Cosmus Medices Florentino-  
rum Princeps.

**D**Il vota tua cumulare implcant magnanime Cosme, postquam nihil praeter ipsum aolutae virtutis sp ecimen respiciunt. Tales namque tibi mores natura tribuit, nusquam hercle nouerca, vti fas est videre, sed semper arridens & benigna mater, vs gloriam ex benefactis clarissimisque virtutibus obuientem contempnas potius quam affectes. Apud te siquidem pudor atque iustitia viget, & virtuti optimisque artibus domi tuae certissimus est receptus. Literas colis, ingenia foues, magnificentiae studium pulcherrimis operibus extendis. Rempublicam porro ita gubernas, vt nobilitatem in honore habere, populum alere, & patriam tranquillitate atque opibus florentissimam reddere contendas. Quo vero admirabile clementiae tuae munus est, exules facile reducis; parcis rebellibus, scilicet vt plures domi sint, qui tibi plurimum debeant

10. Tobias Stimmer, Portrait of Duke Cosimo I., in Paolo Giovio, *Elogia Virorum bellica virtute illustrium*, Basel 1575, p. 390

to justify this carelessness by writing a mysterious dedication. Torrentino used the same initials for Paolo Giovio's *Illustrium virorum vitae* of 1549, for the Italian publication of Leon Battista Alberti's *L'Architettura*, for the *Proemio* of the *Vite* of 1550 and also for the *Paragone* written by Erasmus of Rotterdam.

## PARAGONI AROUND THE PARAGONE

We can assume that the publication of Leon Battista Alberti's *De Pictura* of 1540 in Basle, and the Italian translation by Lodovico Domenichi of 1547 in Venice, triggered the dispute on the basis of the generally competitive behaviour which was firmly promoted by Cosimo I (fig. 10)<sup>42</sup>. Saying this, I do not rule out the possibility that arguments made by Leonardo were passed on orally or that they found their reflection in the first book of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* of 1528<sup>43</sup>. Paola Barocchi commented on the publication of the *Due*



11. Anonymus, Portrait of Benedetto Varchi, *lost drawing* (after: Ernst Steinmann: Michelangelo im Spiegel seiner Zeit, Leipzig 1930, Table XIV)

*lezioni* that the second lesson was «suggerito probabilmente dalle precedenti riflessioni di Alberti, Castiglione, Leonardo, tutti favorevoli alla pittura»<sup>44</sup>. The status of Alberti's treatise on the art of painting experienced decisive changes through print and especially through translation. Up to then, relatively few copies were passed on. Domenichi, a lawyer and author from Piacenza, dedicated the Italian translation of Alberti's treatise to the painter Francesco Salviati, whose rivalry with Giorgio Vasari was well known. Alberti drew provocative conclusions from the praise for painting. In opposition to Vitruv, who saw every art under the judgment of the architect, he asked whether it is not painting that should be considered the teacher of all arts, «omnium artium magistra», or functions at least as their excellent ornament, «praecipuum ornamentum»: «Ma che piu, non è ella la pittura o maestra di tutte l'arti, o almeno principale ornamento?»<sup>45</sup>. In *De Pictura*, 26, Alberti claims that the architect would have copied every decorated part of a building from the painter, and that painting can be seen as the standard for plastic and all worthy skilled arts: «Who can doubt that painting is the master art or at least not a small ornament of things? The architect, if I am not mistaken, takes from the painter architraves, bases [...] It is scarcely possible to find any supe-

rior art which is not concerned with painting [...]»<sup>46</sup>. In the architectural treatise *De re aedificatoria*, which reached its first form in 1452 and was published for the first time in 1485, Alberti puts his assessment in perspective and notes that it would be in the nature of all arts that they tend to see each other as inferior<sup>47</sup>. In chapter 26 of *De Pictura*, however, painting is again attributed the first rank among the arts. This is done with the botanical metaphor, namely that painting would be the blossoming of all arts, «fiore d'ogni arte» – «omnium artium flos pictura» – and this forged links between the art of painting and the new invention of Narcissus as the *inventor picturae* – the «inventor of paintings»<sup>48</sup>.

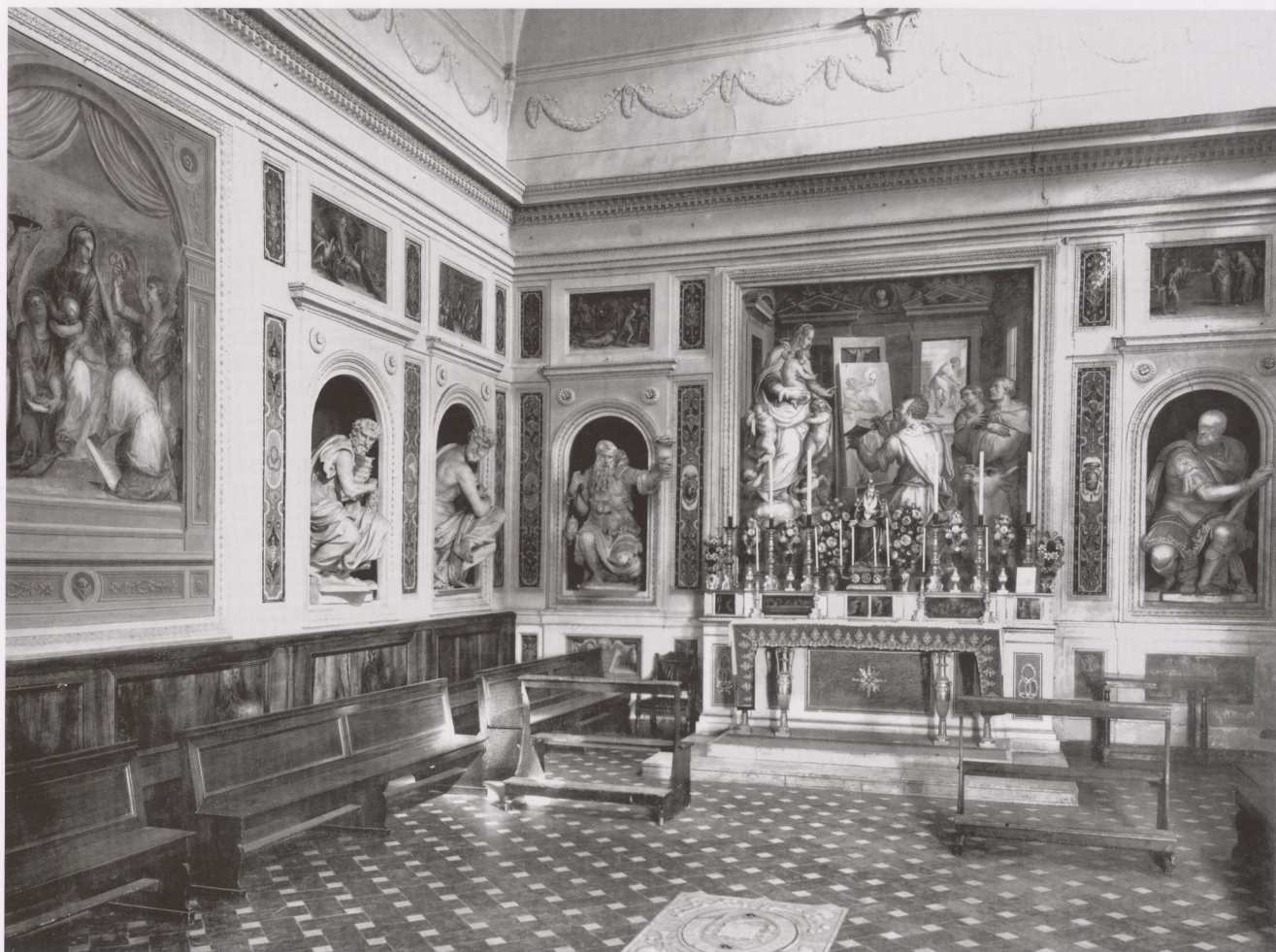
In the second half of the 1540s, the dispute between painting and sculpture became the genuine reason for a first rivalry among the authors Benedetto Varchi, Giorgio Vasari, Cosimo Bartoli, Anton Francesco Doni, Paolo Pino, Hieronymus Cardanus, and Michelangelo Biondo, and the cities of publication Florence, Venice, Nuremberg, and Basle. Additionally, there is Francisco d'Olanda, who treats the question of sculpture and painting very briefly in *Della pittura antica* of 1548<sup>49</sup>. The preferred literary form was the competitive dialogue, in which arguments took the place of weapons<sup>50</sup>. In the following decade, Lodovico Dolce published his *Dialogo della pittura*, and Vincenzio Borghini made notes of the *paragone* in the 1560s. Lomazzo gave his view on the topic, as did many others, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the question continued to be treated differently and in different places, for example by Galileo Galilei, the Académie royale in Paris, Gian Pietro Bellori or Shaftesbury, the Robinson, or Shaftesbury's nephew James Harris, then Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Herder and Goethe in Germany, Denis Diderot in France and many more. Later, as Erwin Panofsky pointed out, the topic was brought forth by Wilhelm Busch in the *Maler Klecksel* once more.

The problem remains as to why it took 200 years or even more to direct the question to the differences between the arts, their characteristic features and the performances of various media, or to redirect the question to Michelangelo's arguments.

#### THE FRUITS OF THE PARAGONE

What results did the authors achieve through this productive contest about the *paragone* between Florence and Venice? Benedetto Varchi (fig. 11) successfully introduced the question into the Accademia Fiorentina, which was mainly dominated by philological interests and interpretations of Dante, Petrarca and possibly Boccaccio. His ingenious introduction of the theme was first approached by his interpretation of one of Michelangelo's sonnets and second by the discussion of the *paragone* on the following Sunday. How far the interest of scholars and the activities of *scrittori*, such as Lodovico Domenichi or Cosimo Bartoli, were motivated by re-





12. Florence, Cappella di S. Luca in the cloister of SS. Annunziata, view of the altar with altar painting by Vasari and statues in the niches

sistance to reformationist iconoclasm, which was known in Italy, presents an important question. The start of a discussion between the mainly philologically interested Accademia Fiorentina and the artists is more important than every single argument concerning the dispute about rank. It takes place in front of or under the omnipresent, huge figure of the divine Michelangelo. The recognition for the artists – as it was recognition in the eyes of the Accademici – had immediate institutional effects on the establishment of the Accademia del Disegno for painters, sculptors and architects through Cosimo I. He approved of the statutes on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1563, appointed Vincenzo Borghini as *luogotenente* (governor) and gave a chapel and place of burial in Santissima Annunziata (fig. 12) to the members of the academy<sup>51</sup>. The statutes explicitly obliged the members of the Accademia del Disegno to pursue a friendly teaching style and support the *Giovani*<sup>52</sup>. The dispute about the rank and the pressure for argumentation forced the creation or consolidation of criteria which were used to assess or compare the arts. The consequences are manifold: First, the *giudizio*, the powers of judgement, and the

powers of discernment, was created. It includes insights into the diverse constitutions and temperaments of the artists as well as insights into the impossibility of reaching perfection in every part, and eventually the ability to prove the arguments.

Second, it marked the beginning of style and media criticism. In 1550, Varchi brought forward the classification of sculpture as *tactus* and painting as *visus*. He referred to the blind man who was going to have a bright future in the argumentation of the *paragone*. Due to the fear of falling out with all arts, however, Varchi does not go any further and draws the philosophical conclusion that sculpture and painting would be one art, and thus occupy the same rank<sup>53</sup>.

Third, theoretical concepts were improved: one of the main points of the *paragone* was the claim that painting could depict everything, yet sculpture would only have been able to imitate bodies. In his answer to Varchi, Vasari especially emphasised painting's unlimited capacity to imitate in contrast to the limited capability of sculpture<sup>54</sup>. This somewhat simple argument of supremacy possibly strengthened the demand for a better understanding of imitation: the sculptor Vincenzo

Danti best met this demand with the distinction of *ritrarre* and *imitare* in 1567. However, according to Rudolf Preimesberger, one is to be understood as a copying doubling replication while the other aims to create bodies that are congruent with the aims of nature to reach artistic perfection<sup>55</sup>. Only in the field of *ritrarre* (reproducing, copying) yet not in the field of *imitare* (depicting, representing), is painting able to master more phenomena than sculpture. The understanding of *imitazione* meaning *rappresentazione* was put forward in Varchi's lecture *Della poesia* in 1553<sup>56</sup>.

Fourth, this claim is expressed by Lodovico Dolce, or rather by Aretino in his conversation against the Florentine, by denying that there would be only one kind of «del perfetto dipingere» because constitutions and temperaments would differ and therefore different painters would exist, «alcuni piacevoli, altri terribili, altri vaghi, et altri ripieni di grandezza e di maestà» – «some of pleasing manner, others of terrible, and others of graceful sort or also full of greatness and majesty» – as there would be differences between poets and orators (authors) just the same<sup>57</sup>. With Lodovico Dolce, not only Titian, Venice and colour are brought into play against Michelangelo, Florence and the *disegno*, but also the problem of style, which is dependent on the artistic individual, in connection with a successful structuring of painting that is equal to the classic rhetoric that could be used, or could have been used, for the now to be developed (systematic) art education.

I am grateful for the suggestions made by Marco Collareta and Rudolf Preimesberger. For research assistance I am indebted to Patricia Bieder, Andreas Rüfenacht and Monika Schäfer.

<sup>1</sup> G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani da Cimabue a' tempi nostri*, Firenze 1550.

<sup>2</sup> The first survey among artists: cf. J. v. Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, Wien 1924, pp. 200-201; E. Panofsky, *Galileo Galilei as a Critic of the Arts*, Den Haag 1954, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> B. Varchi & V. Borghini, *Pittura e scultura nel Cinquecento*, ed. by P. Barocchi, Livorno 1998, p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> B. Varchi, *Due lezioni*, Firenze 1549 [1550 according to *stile commune*]; B. Mendelsohn, *Paragoni. Benedetto Varchi's "Due Lezioni" and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor 1982.

<sup>5</sup> L.B. Alberti, *L'Architettura*, trans. by C. Bartoli, Firenze 1550; G. Vasari, *Le Vite*, Firenze 1550. On L. Torrentino's (Laurens Leenaert van der Beke) occupation and his workshop in Florence 1547-1572 see: F. Ascarelli & M. Menato, *La tipografia del '500 in Italia*, Firenze 1989.

<sup>6</sup> P. Giovio, *Illustrium virorum vitae*, Firenze 1549; Aristoteles, *Rettorica et poetica*, trans. by B. Segni, Firenze 1549 – the *Poetics* pp. 276-355 is commented in great detail; Aristoteles, *L'Ethica*, trans. by B. Segni, Firenze 1550.

<sup>7</sup> B. Varchi, *Lezioni da lui pubblicamente lette nell'Accademia Fiorentina sopra diverse materie pratiche, e filosofiche (nelle quali sono anche inserte le due sopraindicate)*, Firenze 1590, p. 599.

<sup>8</sup> F. Robortello, *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes*, 1548, Firenze 1548. Id., *Paraphrasis in librum Horatii, qui vulgo de Arte Poetica ad Pisonem inscribitur* [...], Firenze 1548 (cf. D. Moreni, *Annali della tipografia fiorentina di Lorenzo Torrentino, impressore ducale*, Firenze 1819, pp. 13-16).

<sup>9</sup> On the letter and dating: G. Vasari, *Der literarische Nachlass*, ed. by K. Frey, München 1923, Vol. I, pp. 185-193. Frey assumes Paolo Giovio as one of the two courtiers.

<sup>10</sup> Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Vasari in *ibid.*, pp. 61-66.

<sup>12</sup> G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori. Nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by R. Bettarini & P. Barocchi, 6 Vols., Firenze 1966-1987, Vol. I, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> T. Frangenberg, «Bartoli, Giambullari and the Prefaces to Vasari's Lives (1550)», in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LXV, 2002 (2003), pp. 244-258, esp. pp. 252-255.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Vasari, ed. Bettarini & Barocchi, 1966-1987 (as in n. 12), Vol. II, pp. 3-57; G. Vasari, *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie*, trans. by V. Lorini, ed., preface and comments by M. Burioni & S. Feser, Berlin 2004, pp. 27-42 (after the edition of 1568).

<sup>16</sup> Michelangelo, in: Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; B. Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, Venezia 1528, lib. 1, 52: «Per questo parmi la pittura più nobile e più capace d'artificio che la marmoraria [...]».

<sup>18</sup> H. Cardanus, *De subtilitate libri XXI. Nunc demum recogniti atque perfecti*, Basilea 1554, p. 448: marginal note: «Artes quae subtilitate iuuantur. Pictura omnium mechanicarum subtilissima» - «Pictura non solum iuuatur, sed etiam illustratur. Est enim pictura mechanicarum omnium subtilissima, eadem uero & nobilissima. Nam quicquid plasticas aut sculptura conatur, mirabilis pictura fingit, addit umbras & colores, & optice sibi iungit, nouis etiam additis quibusdam inuentionibus: nam pictorem omnium necesse est scire, quoniam omnia imitatur. Est philosophus pictor, architectus, & dissectionis artifex. Argumento est praeclara illa totius humani corporis imitatio, iam pluribus ante annis inchoata a Leonardo Vincio Florentino, & pene absoluta: sed deerat operi tantus artifex ac rerum naturae indagator, quantus est Vessalius. Itaque ut de artis praeceptis tum plasticas aliquid dicam, illud commune ambabus primo assumendum est, tum etiam caelandi ac sculpendi, difficilius esse utranque partem faciei fingere quam unam tantum. Tripliciter enim contingit faciem exprimere, mediam, totam, & sesquidimidium. In facie sumptum est exemplum, quia homines belluis, ut belluae plantis, & plantae regionibus earumque partibus difficilius finguntur. Facies autem ex hominis partibus & ex modis illius tota difficillime exprimitur. Primum quidem, quia generaliter duplex est labor: inde comparatione, si quid artifex delinuit in magnitudine, numero, forma, colore, lituris, rugis, cauitatibus, aliisque innumeris quae in unius medietatis figura latebant, manifesta facta operis turpitudinem declarant. Qui igitur finger aliquid uolunt, formam eius primum uisam mente quasi memoria concipere debent, inde typum quemdam seorsum delineare subtilius, post presente eo quod fingis singula animaduertendo ad a musim perficere: latet enim in unoquoque partium quaedam symmetria, quam si non mente conceperis, oculorum uero praesidio tantum innixus tentes exprimere, operam luseris [...]».

<sup>19</sup> R. Preimesberger, «Rilievo and Michelangelo: "...benché ignorantemente"», in: *Visuelle Topoi. Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, ed. by U. Pfisterer & M. Seidel, München 2003, pp. 303-316.

<sup>20</sup> Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), p. 43, n. 99.

<sup>21</sup> Michelangelo in: *ibid.*, p. 84: «Ora, poi che io ho letto nel vostro libretto dove dite che, parlando filosoficamente, quelle cose che hanno un medesimo fine sono una medesima cosa, io mi son mutato d'oppennione e dico che, se maggiore giudizio e difficoltà, impedimento e fatica non fa maggiore nobiltà, che la pittura e scultura è una medesima cosa, e perché la fussi tenuta così, non dovrebbe ogni pittore far manco di scultura che di pittura, e 'l simile lo scultore di pittura che di scultura».

<sup>22</sup> Preimesberger, 2003 (as in n. 19).

<sup>23</sup> L. da Vinci, *Trattato della Pittura, tratto da un codice della Biblioteca Vaticana e dedicato alla Maestà di Luigi XVIII, Re di Francia e di Navarra*, ed. by G. Manzi, Roma 1817; Id., *Paragone. A Comparison of the Arts*, ed., preface and trans. by I.A. Richter,

London 1949; C.F. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone. A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas*, Leiden et al. 1992.

<sup>24</sup> E. von Rotterdam, *Il Paragone della Vergine, et del Martire, e una Orazione a Giesu Christo*, trans. by L. Domenichi, Firenze 1554. The publication by E. von Rotterdam *Virginis et martyris comparatio* was thus translated together with *Concio de puero Iesu* in one volume and was published under the title *De immensa Dei misericordia* by J. Froben, Basilea 1524.

<sup>25</sup> Farago, 1992 (as in n. 23), pp. 8-28; H. Baader, «Paragone», in: *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, ed. by U. Pfisterer, Stuttgart/Weimar 2003, pp. 261-265; U. Pfisterer, «Paragone», in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. by G. Ueding, Vol. VI, Darmstadt 2006, columns 528-546.

<sup>26</sup> *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, preface by M. Fumaroli, Paris 2001; A. Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel contenant tous les mots français*, 3 Vols., Den Haag/Rotterdam 1690, Vol. III, fol. C 4 v; D. d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, Arts et Métiers*, Lausanne 1765, Vol. XII, p. 581: «pierre de touche» with reference in Italian to «pietra di paragone», the key word «paragone», Vol. XI, p. 899, only refers to the «pierre de touche».

<sup>27</sup> R. Preimesberger, «Zu Jan van Eycks Diptychon der Sammlung Thyssen-Bornemisza», in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LIV, 1991, pp. 459-489; cf. also Id., «Albrecht Dürers Jabachaltar – "Trommler und Pfeifer"», in: *Die Zukunft der alten Meister. Perspektiven und Konzepte für das Kunstmuseum von heute*, ed. by E. Mai & E. Hartmann, Köln et al. 2001, pp. 155-185.

<sup>28</sup> Art. «paragonare», «paragonato», «paragone» in: *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, ed. by S. Battaglia, Torino 1984, Vol. XII, pp. 547-549. Cf. the proverbial saying «Al paragone si conosce l'oro».

<sup>29</sup> J.-E. Blanche, *Propos de Peintre. De David à Degas*, Paris 1927, pp. 133-152 (Quelques notes sur Manet).

<sup>30</sup> L. Ariosto, *Orlando furioso secondo la princeps del 1516*, edizione critica by M. Dorigatti, Firenze 2006, pp. 11-12 (1-16, 1-22); «Trasse la spada, e minacciando corse / dove poco di lui temea Rinaldo. / Più volte s'eran già non pur veduti, / m'al paragon de l'arme conosciuti». English translation: *Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Sir J. Harington (1591), ed. by R. McNulty, Oxford 1972, first book, p. 21 (1-16).

<sup>31</sup> P. Secundus, *Historia naturale di lingua latina in fiorentina traducto per il doctissimo homo misser Christophero Landino fiorentino novamente correcta [...]*, Venezia 1516, libro 35, fol. 237v-245r.

<sup>32</sup> In the preface of the Latin edition of Dürer's book about the human proportions, which was published in 1532, Joachim Camerarius recalls the meeting of the Nurnberg artist with Giovanni Bellini. Camerarius applied Pliny's narration of the competition between Apelles and Protogenes about the finest line – the *linea summae tenuitatis* – to Dürer and Bellini and refers to the latter being held in greatest esteem as painter in Venice and Italy. All the more important thus is Bellini requesting Dürer to give him the brush as a present, with which he paints the delicate hairs. Camerarius therefore implies that Bellini admitted his defeat in the competition about the finest line and thus conceded the young Dürer Apelles' rank. As shown by Camerarius, Bellini held the opinion that Dürer used a special paintbrush that allowed him to paint several hairs in one stroke. Dürer denied and proved his case by painting some long and wavy curls in front of Bellini. He witnessed it with great surprise and admitted that no one could have convinced him of the truth had he not seen it with his own eyes: A. Dürer, *Schriftlicher Nachlass*, ed. by H. Rupprich, Vol. I: *Autobiographische Schriften, Briefwechsel, Dichtungen, Beischriften, Notizen und Gutachten, Zeugnisse zum persönlichen Leben*, Berlin 1956, pp. 307, 309: «Et arrepto uno ex propositis penicillo, longissimos et flexulos crines quales mulierum maxime sunt, constantissima ordine et ratione inspec-tante et stupente Bellino produxit, qui postea multis confessus

fuisset, nullius mortalium sermonem eius rei, quam oculis vidisset, fidem sibi facere potuisse.»

<sup>33</sup> R. Goffen, *Renaissance Rivals. Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian*, New Haven/London 2002. Cf. also R. Prochno, *Konkurrenz und ihre Gesichter in der Kunst. Wettbewerb, Kreativität und ihre Wirkungen*, Berlin 2006.

<sup>34</sup> *Im Agon der Künste. Paragonales Denken, ästhetische Praxis und die Diversität der Sinne*, ed. by H. Baader et al., München 2007.

<sup>35</sup> B. Varchi, *Orazione funerale fatta, e recitata da lui pubblicamente nell'esequie di Michelagnolo Buonarroti in Firenze, nella chiesa di San Lorenzo, Firenze, appresso i giunti, MDLXIII*, Firenze 1564, p. 17; B. Cellini, *La Vita*, ed. by L. Bellotto, Parma 1996, p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Il Codice Magliabechiano*, ed. by C. Frey, Berlin 1892, pp. 114-115 (the anecdote of a meeting full of scorn and spitefulness); Vasari, ed. Bettarini & Barocchi, 1966-1987 (as in n. 12), Vol. VI, pp. 23-25; Cellini, 1996 (as in n. 35), pp. 44-45; Varchi, 1564 (as in n. 35), pp. 17-18. Varchi attributes to Gonfaloniere the rivalry thought and to Michelangelo the motive of defeating the one («vincere») who for a long time had always beaten everyone.

<sup>37</sup> J. Shearman, «Giorgio Vasari and the Paragons of Art», in: *Vasari's Florence. Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. by P.J. Jacks, Cambridge 1998, pp. 13-22.

<sup>38</sup> M. Buonarroti, *Il Carteggio*, ed. by P. Barocchi & R. Ristori, Firenze 1965, Vol. I, p. 243, no. cxci; cf. Goffen, 2002 (as in n. 33), pp. 246-264.

<sup>39</sup> A. Nova, «"Paragone"-Debatte und gemalte Theorie in der Zeit Cellinis», in: *Benvenuto Cellini: Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. by A. Nova & A. Schreurs, Köln 2003, p. 183-202.

<sup>40</sup> Vasari, ed. Bettarini & Barocchi, 1966-1987 (as in n. 12), Vol. V, p. 545: «Avendo monsignor messer Giovanni della Casa, fiorentino et uomo dottissimo (come le sue leggiadrissime e dotte opere, così latine come volgari, ne dimostrano), cominciato a scrivere un trattato delle cose di pittura, e volendo chiarirsi d'alcune minuzie e particolari dagli uomini della professione, fece fare a Daniello, con tutta quella diligenza che fu possibile, il modello d'un David di terra finito; e dopo gli fece dipingere overe ritrarre in un quadro il medesimo David, che è bellissimo, da tutte due le bande, cioè il dinanzi et il didietro, che fu cosa capricciosa: il qual quadro è oggi appresso messer Annibale Rucellai». R.P. Ciardi & B. Moreschini, *Daniele Ricciarelli. Da Volterra a Roma*, Milano 2004, pp. 224-229.

<sup>41</sup> L. Torrentino (Laurens Leenaertsz van der Beke) was called from Bologna in the middle of 1547 as Cosimo I's *stampatore ducale* to Florence. The workshop existed until 1572; cf. Ascarelli & Menato, 1989 (as in n. 5).

<sup>42</sup> L.B. Alberti, *De Pictura libri tres absolutissimi*, ed. by T. Venetorius, Basel 1540; Id., *La Pittura, trad. per Lodovico Domenichi* [Venezia 1547], Reprint, Sala Bolognese 1988; cf. the dedication in: L.B. Alberti, *Das Standbild, die Malkunst, Grundlagen der Malerei*, ed., introd., trans. and comm. by O. Bätschmann & C. Schäublin, Darmstadt 2000, doc. 9, pp. 377-379; Art. «Domenichi, Ludovico», in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Vol. XL, Roma 1991, pp. 595-600.

<sup>43</sup> Castiglione, 1528 (as in n. 17), lib. I, 49-54. Mario Equicola's small work is of almost no relevance. It was published posthumously in 1542 in Milan and held the pompous title: *Institutioni di Mario Equicola al comporre in ogni sorte di rima della lingua volgare, con uno eruditissimo discorso della pittura & con molte segrete allegorie circa le Muse & la Poesia*, Milano 1541. Of the altogether 52 pages two on *Pittura, Plastiche & la Scultura* are dedicated to Poetry (fol. B viii v, fol. C i r).

<sup>44</sup> Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), p. vii.

<sup>45</sup> Vitruv, *De Architectura libri decem – Ten Books on Architecture*, ed. and trans. by I.D. Rowland & T.N. Howe, Cambridge 1999; Alberti, 2000 (as in n. 42), pp. 236-237 (*De Pictura*, 26); Id., *Über die Malkunst*, ed., introd., trans. and comm. by O. Bätschmann & S. Gianfreda, Darmstadt 2002, pp. 102-103 (*De Pictura*, 26); Id., 1547 (as in n. 42), fol. 19 r.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 19 r; cf. Id., 2000 (as in n. 42), pp. 236-239 (*De Pictura*, 26); Id., 2002 (as in n. 45), pp. 102-105 (*Della pittura*, 26): «Finalmente non si ritroverà quasi nessuna arte anchora che in tutto villissima, laquale non risguardi à la pittura: di maniera che io arderei dire, che tutto l'ornamento, che è ne le cose, sia stato tolto da la pittura.» English translation: L.B. Alberti, *On painting*, trans. by J.R. Spencer, New Haven/London 1956, p. 64; A. Payne, «Alberti and the Origins of the *paragone* between Architecture and the Figural Arts», in: *Leon Battista Alberti. Teorico delle arti e gli impegni civili del "De re aedificatoria"*, ed. by A. Calzona, Firenze 2007, pp. 347-368.

<sup>47</sup> L.B. Alberti, *L'architettura - De Re Aedificatoria*, ed. by G. Orlandi, 2 vols., Milan 1966, Vol. I, pp. 6-7; Payne, 2007 (as in n. 46).

<sup>48</sup> Alberti, 2002 (as in n. 45), pp. 102-103: «Però usai di dire tra i miei amici, secondo la sentenza de' poeti, quel Narcisso convertito in fiore essere della pittura stato inventore; ché già ove sia la pittura fiore d'ogni arte, ivi tutta la storia di Narcisso viene a proposito. Che dirai tu essere dipignere altra cosa che simile abbracciare con arte quella ivi superficie del fonte?». Id., 2000 (as in n. 42), pp. 236-237: «Quae cum ita sint, consuevi inter familiares dicere picturae inventorum fuisse, poetarum sententia, Narcissum illum qui sit in florem versus, nam cum sit omnium artium flos pictura, tum de Narcisso omnis fabula pulchre ad rem ipsam perapta erit. Quid est enim aliud pingere quam arte superficiem illam fontis amplecti?» – «For this reason, I say among my friends that Narcissus who was changed into a flower, according to the poets, was the inventor of painting. Since painting is already the flower of every art, the story of Narcissus is most to the point. What else can you call painting but a similar embracing with art of what is presented on the surface of the water in the fountain?». Id., 1956 (as in n. 46), p. 64.

<sup>49</sup> M.A. Biondo, *Della Nobilissima Pittura, et della sua arte, del módo, & della dottrina, di conseguirla, ageuolmente et presto* [Venezia 1549], Reprint, Westmead/Farnborough 1972.

<sup>50</sup> V. von Rosen, *Mimesis und Selbstbezüglichkeit in Werken Tizians. Studien zum venezianischen Malereidiskurs*, Emsdetten 2001.

<sup>51</sup> K. Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State. The Discipline of Disegno*, Cambridge 2000, doc. 1, pp. 221-231.

<sup>52</sup> Z. Waźbiński, *L'Accademia Medicea del Disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento: idea e istituzione*, Firenze 1987, Vol. II, pp. 423-436.

<sup>53</sup> B. Varchi, «Lezione nella quale si disputa della maggioranza delle arti e qual sia più nobile, la scultura o la pittura», in: *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. by P. Barocchi, Bari 1960, Vol. I, pp. 3-91, pp. 43-44.

<sup>54</sup> Varchi & Borghini, 1998 (as in n. 3), pp. 33-51.

<sup>55</sup> V. Danti, *Il primo libro del trattato delle perfette proporzioni di tutte le cose che imitare e ritrarre si possano con l'arte del disegno*, Firenze 1567 (cf. Barocchi, 1960 [as in n. 53], pp. 207-269); *Porträt*, ed. by R. Preimesberger, H. Baader & N. Suthor, Berlin 1999, Vol. II, pp. 273-287.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. B. Varchi, «Della poesia» [1553], in: Id., 1590 (as in n. 7), pp. 593-682, p. 604: «[...] che i poeti hanno una cosa comune, nella quale eglino convengano tutti, e questa è l'imitazione, perche tutti i Poeti sono imitatori, cioè rappresentatori, e conseguentemente tutte le poesie sono imitazioni, cioè rappresentazioni [...]».

<sup>57</sup> L. Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura, intitolato l'Aretino nel quale si ragiona della dignità di essa pittura, e di tutte le parti necessarie, che a perfetto pittore si acconuengono; con esempi di pittori antichi, e moderni, e nel fine si fa mentione delle virtù e delle opere del divin Titiano*, Venezia, 1557, fol. 41 v.