



CHARLES DAVIS

PRINTS AS SOURCES:

RIDOLFO SIRIGATTI'S MARBLE *VENUS* IN AN ENGRAVING AFTER STRADANUS

*A Print engraved by Hieronymus Wierix: "AMORIS, EN QUANTA VIS",
Venus by Ridolfo Sirigatti drawn by Johannes Stradanus
(Antwerpen: Philips Galle, 1585/1590 circa)*

FONTES 59

[22.02.2011]

Zitierfähige URL: <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2011/1354/>

URN: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-artdok-13540

CONTENTS

PRINTS AS SOURCES:

RIDOLFO SIRIGATTI'S MARBLE *VENUS* IN AN ENGRAVING AFTER STRADANUS

PRINTS AS SOURCES	2
STRADANUS'S PRINT AFTER SIRIGATTI'S <i>VENUS</i>	6
<i>DIE MACHT DER LIEBE</i>	10
<i>NOBILTÁ</i>	12
<i>DUCE NATURA</i> / ΑΥΤΟΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΣ (αυτοδιδακτος)	13
'IMPRESSUM'	14
THE IMAGE OF <i>VENUS</i>	16
RIDOLFO SIRIGATTI: LITERATURE	22
RAFFAELLO BORGHINI AND HIS <i>IL RIPOSO</i>	23
<i>Modern editions</i>	24
<i>Selected literature</i>	25

PRINTS AS SOURCES:

RIDOLFO SIRIGATTI'S MARBLE VENUS IN AN ENGRAVING AFTER STRADANUS

Prints as sources:

Among old prints that place word and image side by side there are many that constitute visual and/or verbal sources for the history of art as well as for the abstract and speculative study of art, images, and vision, be it in terms of aesthetics, art criticism and theory, or even, more recently, visual culture. While a number of instances in which prints have been studied from this point of view might be mentioned (see, for instance, the journals *Print Quarterly* and *Word and Image*), there has been little systematic and comprehensive consideration of such images as a source of knowledge about the discussion of art in speech and writing in the past. When Julius Schlosser defined “*kunsthistorische Quellenkunde*” in terms of the historical literature of art, printed images were left behind, unless they happened to belong to printed books. Needless to say, printed images play a leading rôle in many works listed in Schlosser’s general bibliography (1924, pp. 611-640). In any event, the distinction between sheets printed separately and distributed in isolation or in loosely defined sets or series (*Bildgraphik*) and images printed in books (*Buchgraphik*) appears a purely artificial one. To treat many of the central topics of *Kunsthistorische Quellenkunde* – proportion, anatomy, architecture, and many more – without images is nearly unthinkable. Thus in Schlosser’s concept of the literature of art the bifurcation of *Schrift* and *Bild* appears arbitrary and ahistorical, especially when both are printed and both are characterised by a similar mediality in which multiplication and diffusion rendered them both active and powerful forces in fostering consideration of and discussions about art, that is the historical reflection upon art and works of art, which was always broader than merely the printed word. A century earlier than Schlosser, in Leopoldo Cicognara’s *Catalogo ragionato dei libri d’arte e antichità posseduti dal conte Cicognara* (Pisa 1821), it is clear that the compiler still saw the image as a central component of the literature of art. And, as the title of the catalogue of his books made clear, “*arte*” and “*antichità*” comprised a continuum and indeed a unity, a view in accordance with those of nearly all writers on art well into the “*secolo di Canova*”, as the first edition of Cicognara’s history of Italian sculpture identifies its century. Large sections of Cicognara’s library, for instance, “*antichità*”, “*numismatica*”, “*pietre intagliate*”, “*iscrizioni*”, “*Roma antica*”, “*vedute di città*”, etc., are simply absent in Schlosser’s book. Antonio Lafrery’s *Speculum romanae magnificentiae* (1540s ff.) goes unmentioned, although some of the plates, such as Pirro Ligorio’s *Plan of Ancient Rome* (FONTES 9), are effectively brief treatises.

Vasari describes the wide range of subject matter conveyed by prints, and, in treating unexceptional print makers, who, if lacking artistic perfection, none the less have provided useful services with their images, and he mentions many informative functions of prints (*Vasari-Milanesi*, 5, pp. 130-131), giving particular emphasis to the artistic and architectural material. Citing, as his principal example, prints of the paintings of Michelangelo in the Vatican, Vasari writes that prints spread the designs of the best painters far and wide, their

inventions as well as their artistry (“*maniere*”). And prints also document ancient architecture: “*grottesche, templi antichi, cornici, basi, capitegli e molte cose simili, con tutte le misure.*” Vasari sees Serlio’s architectural books as volumes of prints, and indeed Serlio’s first visual documentation of the ancient classical orders was issued in separately printed sheets engraved by Agostino Musi (1528 ff.). If the print market in general was dominated by the religious and devotional print, there was still a strong demand for antiquarian and artistic material.

Although ‘press runs’ of prints (usually between, perhaps, more than 100 and less than 1000 at any one time) were not large enough to flood the world with a single image, the distribution of prints was sufficient to elicit efforts at suppression in some instances, when their content was deemed dangerous by authorities (Bury, *infra*, p. 131). None the less, even in the early Quattrocento, thousands of prints of the Virgin or of individual saints might be distributed on their feast days. Many single prints are also known in copies and replicas, which expanded their public. But how many and who saw them are questions that are only now finding early and provisional answers. Certainly the experience of the historical print-public cannot be likened to the modern jungle of ‘virtual’ images which we now inhabit. If not made for every man every day, prints found an acquisitive audience, certainly among artists, collectors, and connoisseurs (or ‘*intendenti*’) of art, and indeed among learned men of many diverse interests, and thus we may think of at least one public that constituted, to an extent, a cultural elite – prints are very often inscribed with Latin texts. Vasari mentions prints often, and in Raffaello Borghini’s *Il Riposo*, published sixteen years after Vasari’s *Vite*, in 1584, and written more from the standpoint of the amateur and collector than that of the artist, the author frequently takes notice of works of art that have been engraved and circulate “*in stampa.*”

Even casually browsing through the many volumes of the *Illustrated Bartsch* or through those of F. W. H. Hollstein’s *Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400/1450-1700*, or of the extension of this project in the volumes of *The New Hollstein*, will reveal the richness and depth of the relevant material. Examining mainly the sixteenth-century Italian volumes and some of the ones dedicated to Netherlandish engravers in Bartsch and Hollstein, it will soon be seen that the quantity of antiquarian material is extraordinary. The following monumental classes of ancient remains are documented and their images disseminated in printed testimonies: statuary, reliefs, gems and cameos, coins, busts, herms, vases and urns, architecture and architectural fragments, altars, basins, *dis manibus*, paintings, masks, religious instruments, inscriptions, antique and *all’antica* realia, etc. And there are prints relating to ancient topography, costume, games, as well as archaeological and topographical reconstructions. Other prints propose images of ancient religion, customs, practices (and of real objects used), dress, etc. Much of this material is relevant to the history of archaeological and antiquarian investigation, and it contributed to the formation and consolidation of an artistic canon and of an artistic taste which endured for several centuries.

The biography of the artist is visualised especially in artists’s portraits (as well as those of architects and geometers), often framed with personifications and the instruments of the artist’s trade and accompanied by didascallic inscriptions. Many prints record artists’s signatures as well as current attributions, testifying to conceptions of artistic paternity. Other prints relate to the history of artistic instruction. They include the two ‘Academies’ of Baccio Bandinelli and other views of the artist at work, of ideal and typical workshops, and of artists, often mere boys, studying in drawing lessons. These last sometimes extend to include numerous drawing manuals comprised by single and multiple pattern sheets, sometimes bound in albums, and especially frequent in seventeenth-century Emilia and also north of the Alps. Ornamental pattern sheets and pattern books of all kinds are a part of art instruction, as

are prints concerning anatomy, proportion, geometry, perspective, and other accessory subjects of study. Related to this material are images of personifications of the arts and explicit allegories of the visual arts and of the single arts represented together – *pittura*, *scultura*, *architettura*, etc. – here might be mentioned, merely as examples, Stradanus's *Academy of Fine Arts* and Federico Zuccari's loquacious *Lament of the Art of Painting* (Bartsch, 52, p. 253; *The New Hollstein*, 9/3, p. 130), itself a *mini-trattato*, or images such as *Apelles painting Campaspe* (Bartsch, 33, p. 272) and series of the *Wonders of the Ancient World*.

The lettering and inscriptions found on prints, in addition to providing information about their authors and makers (*inv.*, *pin.*, *del.*, *fe.*, *inc.*, *excud.*, etc.), include poems, moralizing verses, often in more than a single language and including Latin, dedications, sometimes lengthy, from artists and publishers, and didascalical keys to the images (especially for geographic and allegorical subjects). In the case of the very numerous images of devotional, religious, and moralising themes, such contemporary written testimonies can enlighten attempts to interpret the images and similar ones. Genre subjects and images of everyday life sometimes contain important testimonies to the use and display of art works. Representations of ancient history include quantities of ancient realia, even if much of it may be fanciful.

Portraits of artists, as a special category, have been mentioned, but portraiture in general became one of the main themes of print makers. The recovery of the portrait iconography of the ancients was an important focus, but modern *illustri* and princes of church and state were widely represented in series and in single prints, and the portraits were often accompanied by extensive inscriptions. And, more generally, such explicative legends shed light upon the iconography of the wide range of subject matter addressed by prints.

In the realm of mythology and secular allegory, prints were extremely important in forging a new pictorial language for representing gods and personifications. The images and legends extend the realm of mythographic and allegorical handbooks, such as those of Cartari and Ripa, which prescribe the appearance and attributes of the personages included. Printed emblems most often appear in collections, but they are printed images and also belong to the world of prints. Among Bonasone's emblems for Achille Bocchi's emblem book, the *Symbolicarum quaestionum* (1555/1574; Bartsch, 29, pp. 43-117), are a number of emblems directly pertaining to art, ranging from "Socrates Painting" and "Athena painting the portrait of François I^{er}" to "Art sculpting Goodness" and others.

Geographical and topographical material covers maps and sea charts, townscapes, and urban plans, including ancient topography. To an extent these prints form a visual counterpart to the guidebooks that figure so large in Schlosser's canon of sources.

As suggested above, many separately printed sheets contain architectural material, including prints of extraordinary modern buildings and a great many ancient monuments and ancient architectural motifs. Such prints are often indistinguishable from those found in architectural treatises. In addition, imagined architectural history is embodied in prints such as those representing *Solomon building the Temple*, and a wide range of architectural fantasies is contained in, especially, the settings in both secular and religious scenes, including those relating to the theme of idolatry. This notable quantity of architectural thought is largely ignored by architectural historians, but historians of garden art, their gardens long disappeared, have made much use of graphic material. Prints offer a supplement to the history of built architecture, and they suggest that architectural thought has been much more wide-ranging than architectural practice.

Ornamental prints, important as a source for artists's creations, included decorative designs as patterns (panels, borders, cartouches, *all'antica* grotesques), as well as designs for large-scale features and architectural details and for specific objects of ecclesiastic and domestic use in interior and exterior settings.

The most obvious interest of the printed words found on prints for the history of art has long been the artist names attached to the works of art that many prints reproduce, that is, in the realm of reproductive prints. Artists's names on engraved reproductions of paintings, drawings, sculptures, reliefs, and buildings effectively resolve the question of attribution in most instances. And they also testify to the rôle of prints in creating a cult of artists and masterpieces. Printed reproductions concentrated very early on the great masters who were to serve as models for the future: Raffaello and Michelangelo, and also Polidoro, as a synthesis of the new '*all'antica*' *Bildsprache*. If we take Michelangelo as a microcosm, we shall see that the prints after his works concentrate fairly narrowly, on the Cascina cartoon, the Leda and the Swan, the Sistina and the Paolina paintings, the presentation drawings, his Roman architecture, and a restricted range of his sculpture: the Bacchus, the Vatican Pietà, the Medici tombs, the Minerva Christ, and the late Pietà now in Florence. But prints also documented other new trends, especially in painting. They afford a rough index of what was deemed significant enough to be reproduced, although, admittedly, printmaking was influenced by considerable self-promotion on the part of artists. To the extent that reproductive prints transmit and focus upon specific figural inventions, they document historical aspects of artistic perception. Nor should the rôle of prints in the formation and propagation of taste be neglected as they transmit the *chefs-des-oeuvre* of the history of art to the present and the future.

The above discussion has relied, in part, on the exhibition catalogue: Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy: 1500-1620*, London: British Museum Press, 2001. See also: Norberto Gramaccini and Hans Jakob Meier, *Die Kunst der Interpretation: Italienische Reproduktionsgrafik 1485-1600*, München-Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009 (exhibition, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, 2009); reviewed in: *Kunstform* 11 (2010), Nr. 09: <http://www.arthistoricum.net/>.

STRADANUS'S PRINT AFTER SIRIGATTI'S *VENUS*:

A case in point is an engraving of a statue of *Venus and Cupid* after a drawing made in Florence by Johannes Stradanus, which was engraved by Hieronymus Wierix and published circa 1585-1590 in Antwerp by Philips Galle, almost certainly, as we shall see, at the behest of Ridolfo Sirigatti, the sculptor of the statue. All this information is reported in the texts printed on the engraving, and these texts contain, further, messages of an interpretative and iconographic nature as well as ones of a more specific interest for the history of art, and its theory and criticism.



This print has been listed in catalogues of prints, including those made after Stradanus's designs, and, while one need only read the words of the print to understand what is represented, the print itself has escaped notice in the two contexts in which it is most interesting: the consideration of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* (Florence 1584), where the statue of Venus is mentioned twice and briefly discussed, and that of its little-known sculptor, Ridolfo Sirigatti (Florence, 1553-1608), who was also a collector, an academician, and one of the principal interlocutors in Borghini's *Riposo*.

That this print has escaped the notice of writers about Sirigatti – who has been of interest mainly to students of Italian sculpture and of the historical literature of art, and in particular of Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo*, published as a kind of up-date to Vasari in Florence in 1584 – is largely a result of the increasing specialisation of the discipline of art history and its concomitant compartmentalisation, which has often left researchers in one field unaware of what the others have done. In recent years electronic library OPACs and, in particular, the enormous potential of online searching have offered avenues to counteract such divisions. Whoever believes that “Zumeist in dunklen Mappen und Schränken abgelegt, nur in den Studiensälen der Kupferstichkabinetten anzusehen, fristet sie (= Druckgraphik) ein Dasein an der Peripherie der Disziplin” (www.h-net.org/reviews/) has missed a number of developments, not all of them particularly recent. Among these are the *Illustrated Bartsch* (1978 ff.; cf. the Warburg Photos of the engravings in Bartsch and *DIAL: Decimal Index of the Art of the Low Countries*, circa 7,500 photographs), the volumes of *Hollstein*, as well as the fully illustrated *New Hollstein* and ARTstor, all of which make the images of the universe of prints available everywhere. The originals are still preserved in graphic collections, many of which are open to the public with regular hours. In visits to print rooms one does not gain the impression that art historians are flocking to see their offerings. One of the notable features of *Bildwissenschaft* in practice is that it is often more concerned with ideas and methodological questions than with images.

PRINTS ONLINE: ARTstor (www.artstor.org) contains the *Illustrated Bartsch* (circa 50,000 images) as well as very many other high quality images of prints. ARTstor can be used without cost by individuals at participating institutions (among them, in 2011: USA 1119; Austria: 1; France: 3; Germany: 16; Italy: 9; Netherlands: 3; Spain: 3; Switzerland: 7; UK: 17). Individuals may register at such participating institutions for free remote access to ARTstor for 120 days. Registration is extendable at a participating institution. See also the *arthistoricum.net* Portal “Kunst auf Papier” (under: “Bilddatenbanken”). The periodical *Master Drawings*, vol. 48, no. 3, Autumn 2010, pp. 383-392, contains an extensive listing of largely European and North American Internet sites (“Online Resources: Image and General repositories; Museum collections”) referring to and describing more than 200 sites for drawings, very many of which treat prints as well. See also the invaluable website of the British Museum for prints and drawings in the collection: www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx. And further: Virtuelles Kupferstichkabinett - Repräsentative Objekte der Graphiksammlungen des Herzog Anton Ulrich Museums und der Herzog August Bibliothek Braunschweig: <http://dbs.hab.de/grafik/>.

Returning to Ridolfo Sirigatti and the print of his over-lifesize Venus – one apparently made at Sirigatti's bequest and one which depicts one of the very few sculptures made by him which is recorded in contemporary written sources –, it should be noted that it may not be entirely correct to label Sirigatti a dilettante, owing to his long application to the arts of sculpture and painting and to his long and active membership in the Florentine *Accademia del Disegno*, both circumstances indicating a serious, almost professional engagement with art. And, further, Ridolfo's maternal grandfather was the painter Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, for whom Ridolfo Sirigatti was named, and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, the son of Domenico, was also one of Vasari's few acknowledged informants for the *Vite* (see Wolfgang Kallab, *Vasaristudien*, Wien 1908, p. 290, 392; Vasari, 1568, G. I, 142; G. II, 717; G. II, 1003). Vasari clearly knew Ghirlandaio very well, and the pages of the *Vite* suggest that, in addition to sharing “*gli scritti*” of his father with Vasari, Ghirlandaio was also an important verbal informant. Ridolfo Sirigatti was, however, also a collector of drawings, paintings, models, and small bronzes, and an art expert. But, like many artists, Sirigatti seeks through the medium of the print to divulge his work to a wider public. He apparently made the *Venus* for himself and

retained it in his ownership, but through his print he explains himself in the legend at the bottom, while setting his work in a moralizing context with the lateral inscriptions. Before examining more closely Sirigatti, his presentation of himself as an artist, and his marble Venus, let us look more closely at the print itself, which is our primary document, beginning by reading the words printed on the engraving.

Description of the Print:

Ridolfo Sirigatti (sculptor of the statue represented)

Johannes Stradanus (drawn by)

Venus and Cupid

after 1584 (sometimes placed circa 1590, but possibly earlier)

Hieronymus Wierix (engraver)

Engraving, 20.0 x 14.0 cm

Philips Galle is the publisher

Signed beneath the feet of the statue of Venus (right): "*Hiero. Wierix fecit.*"

The statue of *Venus* is represented in a niche surrounded by a geometricising frame comprised of wide flat borders, recessed rectangles, with oval frames for the lateral inscriptions. Venus holds a flaming heart in her right hand and a marine conch-shell in her left hand. At her feet and to her right, winged Cupid or Amour holds an arrow pointing to the inferior inscription immediately beneath the niche.

The print bears the following inscriptions.

1. At the left in an oval placed in the frame, the inscription in large capitals: "*Natis Venus alma creandis serviat: hos fines transiliisse nocet.*"

"NATIS VENVS AL= / MA CREAN= / DIS SERVI= / AT: HOS FI= / NES TRAN= / SILIISSE NOCET."

2. Opposite, at the right, in an oval placed in the frame, in large capitals: "*Amare et sapere, vix deo conceditur.*"

"AMARE / ET SAPE= / RE, VIX / DEO CON= / CEDI= / TVR."

3. Beneath the niche, centred:

"Amoris, en quanta vis. / *Rudolphus Sirigattius, nobilis Florentinus, Divi Stephani ordinis eques* — *picturae linearis academiae sodalis, duce natura, comite industria, ex durissimo marmore sua manu sculpsit.* αυτοδιδακτος / *Ioannes Stradanus artificioso suo penicillo imitabatur.* / *Philip. Gallaeus publice spectandum admirandumque dedit.*"

AMORIS, EN QUANTA VIS.

Rudolphus Sirigattius, nobilis Florentinus, Divi Stephani ordinis eques — picturæ linearis academiæ sodalis, duce natura, comite industria, ex durissimo marmore sua manu sculpsit. αυτοδιδακτος Ioannes Stradanus artificioso suo penicillo imitabatur . Philip. Gallæus publice spectandum admirandumq'. dedit.

COMMENTS TO THE INSCRIPTIONS:

1. “*Natis Venus alma creandis serviat: hos fines transiliisse nocet*” is a citation drawn from an apocryphal text long believed to be by Virgil (e.g., Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni*, 1588 ff., ed. Firenze: Olschki, 1996, vol. 2, p. 858: “*Ben detta un giovevole consiglio Virgilio a costoro, in quei versi: Vina sitim sedent, natis Venus alma creandis Serviat. Hos fines transiliisse nocet. Ma essi irretiti, et incathenati dalla forza violenta delle lor lusinghe (...)*”; also 1599 (further: „*Vergil de Venere & Vino*“, in: Ottaviano Mirandola, *Illustrium poetarum flores*, Basel 1599, pp. 12-13; also: 1555). This text was also included in the so-called *Anthologia latina* edited by Alexander Riese in 1868: “*Vina sitim sedent, natis Venus alma creandis Serviat: hos fines transiliisse (or transiluisse) nocet.*” This implies that wine serves to quench thirst, and love (Venus) serves for procreation – who exceeds these limits brings harm. It has been interpreted as an admonishment to temperance and restraint (Rev. Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), *The Great Exemplar of Sanctity and Holy Life*, ed. 1828, p. 45).

2. “*Amare et sapere, vix deo conceditur*” is a once widely quoted and paraphrased Latin moral maxim taken from the *Sententiae* of Publilius Syrus: “Even a god finds it hard to love and be wise at the same time.”

3. “*Amoris, en quantis vis.*” These words appear to be inspired by Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Abbatis Clarae-Vallensis Sermones in Cantica Cantorum*, i-xvii, Sermo vi, „*De amore ardenti quo anima diligit Deum. Item de attentione tempore orationis vel psalmodiae procuranda*“: 3. “(...) O quanta amoris vis! quanta in spiritu libertatis fiducia! Quid manifestius, quam quod perfecta charitas foras mittit timorem? (I Joan. IV, 18.)” Thus the inscription invokes Love, or Venus, instructing (almost warning) the beholder to behold how great her power is: “Love, behold how great her power!”

The remainder of the inferior inscription refers, first, to Ridolfo Sirigatti, a Florentine noble and Cavalier of the Ordine di Santo Stefano. He is a draughtsman, who by implication draws with *disegno* (*picturæ linearis*), a Member of the Academy (*Accademia del Disegno*), who, with Nature as his guide and industry as his companion, has, from hardest marble, carved the statue with his own hand, and he is an autodidact. Johannes Stradanus has imitated it with his artful pen (drawing instrument). Philips Galle publishes it to be admired.

DIE MACHT DER LIEBE

The inscriptions printed in capitals provide, at a literary level, a moralising, cautionary frame for the image of the Venus, and, owing to these inscriptions, the print appears as an allegory of the powers of Venus, of the power of Love, admonishing the beholder to beware and to observe limits in amorous matters. This is accomplished not only through words, but also through the images of the flaming heart and the marine conch-shell which Venus holds in her hand (with its implications of Venus's generation from the foam of the oceans) and also that of the Amour with his arrow at her feet. The arrow of Cupid (himself an image of the power of love), its point or head positioned precisely at the forward edge of the base of the statuary niche, points explicitly at the inferior inscription in its entirety, and more exactly Cupid's arrow directs the beholder/reader's attention to the incipit, "AMORIS, EN QUANTA VIS", which thus constitutes the moralising point of the two lateral inscriptions.

The "*Macht der Liebe*" is explicated on many pages in Johann Adam Breysig's *Wörterbuch der Bildersprache oder kurzgefaßte und belehrende Angaben symbolischer und allegorischer Bilder*, Leipzig: bei Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogel, 1830. As mentioned earlier, Amour himself often symbolizes the power of Love (cf. Breysig, p. 35). So also, the flaming heart (pp. 391-392). Love burns, and may burn the lover. See a Flemish engraving of the first-half of the sixteenth century (Monogrammist CG, No. 5, in: Hollstein, vol. XIII, p. 21), where naked Venus, in a series of seven Planets, holds a flaming heart and a large arrow (online image at: www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/; registration number: 1913,0213.6). Further: a painting of Cupid and Venus holding a flaming heart by Jacques de Gheyn II, as a symbol of erotic love (Venus crowned with flowers, wearing pearls and cestus, or girdle; roses; copulating doves; winged Cupid with quiver and bow and arrow aimed at the pudenda of Venus; catalogued with an image at: www.rijksmuseum.nl/; high resolution image at Wikimedia Commons: Accession number SK-A-2396, Venus and Cupid, circa 1605-1610). Venus holds the conch-shell („*conca marina*“) for she is born from the humid heat of sea foam (“*aphros*“) seeded by the genitals of Padre Cielo, setting into relief her rôle in procreation (Vasari-Milanesi, 8, *Ragionamenti*, p. 19: Saturno “*il quale taglia con essa i genitali al padre Cielo per gettarli nel mare*” (...) *Significa che, tagliando il calore come forma, e cascando nella umidità del mare come materia, fu cagione della generazione delle cose terrene caduche e corruttibili e mortali, generando Venere di spuma marina*”; p. 26: „*questa facciata, dove è questa Venere con tante figure*” (...) “*e, per seguir la storia dico che, cascando i genitali del padre Cielo in mare, ne nasce, per il suffragamento, agitazione della callidità loro ed umidità del mare, quella Venere, la qual'è, come l'Eccellenza Vostra vede, in su quella conca marina*” (...).” Gian Giacomo Caraglio's engraving after Rosso Fiorentino (inscribed: “CIPRIA LASCIVI PULCHERRIMA MATER AMORIS”) shows Venus with much the same attributes (*sans* the flaming heart) and standing on a large conch-shell (*Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 28, p. 110). Sirigatti owned “*conche marine*” as part of his collection (Borghini, 1584, p. 20).

Rijksmuseum
Jacques de Gheyn II, *Venus and Cupid*



Venus, British Museum, Prints & Drawings
Registration number: 1913,0213.6
Hollstein 6 (XIII, p.21); Bartsch IX.17.4

It can possibly not be excluded, however, that the words in large capital letters were simply added in Antwerp at the press of Philips Galle, who has affixed his own notices to the print, in order to give to an image of an obscure statue in far-away Florence a more universal appeal for a wider audience of potential buyers. Galle's engraving of the altar wall of the Galli Chapel in SS. Annunziata in Florence, with Stradanus's *Crucifixion*, contains some inscriptions that do not refer to the painting (and are not present in the chapel) and perhaps render it a general devotional image rather than simply the reproduction of a painting in Florence, although others of the inscriptions recorded in the print can still be read today *in situ*.

NOBILIS FLORENTINUS: The Sirigatti were a noble Florentine family, sometimes appearing as a branch of the Niccolini.

DIVI STEPHANI ORDINIS EQUES: Order of St. Stephen (Pisa) (*Ordine di Santo Stefano Papa e Martire*), knightly order established in 1561, headed by the Medici duke (Grand Master) and founded with the approval of Pope Pius IV.

PICTURÆ LINEARIS: drawing; *Zeichnung*.

ACADEMIÆ SODALIS: member of the Florentine Academy of Design (*Accademia del Disegno*).

DUCE NATURA, COMITE INDUSTRIA: similar to the phrase (motto), “*Deo duce comite industria*” – God being my guide, industry my companion.

EX DURISSIMO MARMORE: a somewhat unusual formulation of a commonplace stressing the hardness of the marble and the difficulty of its carving.

SUA MANU SCULPSIT: a standard Latin phrase corresponding to *di sua mano*.

ΑΥΤΟΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΣ: αὐτοδιδάκτος, autodidaktos; autodidact, or self-taught; without a teacher or master or formal training in a practised art.

IOANNES STRADANUS ARTIFICIOSO SUO PENICILLO IMITABATUR: Johannes Stradanus: 1523-1605; *suo penicillo* is a formula found in Neo-Latin texts (e.g., Ioan Bocchius, *Historia narratio* (...), Antwerp 1602, p. 116: “*artificiosa penicillo elaborata*”).

PHILIP. GALLÆUS PUBLICE SPECTANDUM ADMIRANDUMQUE DEDIT: Philips Galle (1537-1612), who publishes the print.

HIERO. WIERIX FECIT: Hieronymus Wierix, Flemish engraver: 1553-1619 (see *Hollstein*, vol. 65-71).

More relevant to and of greater interest for the consideration of sources is how Sirigatti is presented – or presents himself – as an artist in accord with the humanist theory of art, and, at some points, in contrast to it. Not surprisingly, the inscription which characterises Sirigatti invokes a number of *topoi*. Their selection does not, however, mean that they necessarily do not reflect historical reality. They certainly reveal how Sirigatti chose to present himself in print to the present and future. The first part of the inferior inscription refers to Sirigatti and his marble Venus:

“*Rudolphus Sirigattius, nobilis Florentinus, Divi Stephani ordinis eques — picturæ linearis academice sodalis, duce natura, comite industria, ex durissimo marmore sua manu sculpsit. αὐτοδιδάκτος.*”

NOBILTÁ:

Rudolphus Sirigattius, nobilis Florentinus, Divi Stephani ordinis eques is Ridolfo Sirigatti, a Cavalier of the *Ordine di Santo Stefano* from 1581. His auto-identification as “*nobilis Florentinus*” appears as an invocation of the nobility of the arts, one of the standard arguments for which is that the arts were practiced by princes, noblemen, and other illustrious men. In his *Natural History* (19-24 and 26), Pliny the Elder had listed such men who had exercised the art of painting, and this theme was revisited by Leonbattista Alberti (*Della pittura*, ed. Mallè, Firenze 1950, p. 79) and Paolo Pino (*Dialogo di pittura*, ed. Barocchi, in: *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento*, vol. 1, Bari 1960, p. 108), as well as by Lomazzo (*Trattato*, in: Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, ed. Roberto Ciardi, Firenze: Marchi & Bertolli, 1973, vol. 2, p. 266). This topic also occupies the beginning of Book IV of *Il Riposo* (pp. 456 ff.). Thus *nobilis* indicates more than simple a biographical dimension of the artist; it implies that the artist belongs to the ranks of men whose nobility testifies to the nobility of art. And this aspect of Sirigatti's identity is seconded, it seems, by the mention of Sirigatti's membership in the *Accademia del Disegno*, in which he matriculated in 1576 and to which he

was elected *accademico* in 1582, continuing to serve in various offices at least until 1599 (Luigi Zangheri, *Gli accademici del disegno: elenco alfabetico*, Firenze: Olschki, 2000, p. 301: 1576, 1577, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1584, 1585, 1586, 1588, 1589, 1593, 1595, 1699). As mentioned above, the diction ‘*picturae linearis*’ places emphasis upon Sirigatti’s skills in the art of *disegno*.

See further: Romano Alberti, *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura*, Roma 1585 (*Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento*; Bibliotheca Hertziana: Digitalisat); Paola Barocchi (ed.), *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento*, vol. 3, Bari: Laterza, 1962, *ad Indicem*, p. 672 (‘*nobili*’; ‘*nobiltà*’), 504 ff. *et passim*, and Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De’ veri precetti della pittura*, Ravenna 1587, book I, chapter 4: drawing taught to nobles in the schools of antiquity. Cf. Rudolf Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, London 1963, pp. 93-96 “The Image of the Noble Artist”. See also G. B. Paggi (*infra*).

DUCE NATURA / ΑΥΤΟΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΣ (αυτοδιδάκτος):

The following report of Pliny the Elder about Lysippus may be considered in the context of the phrase “*duce natura*”: “Duris says that Lysippus of Sicyon was not the pupil of anybody, but was originally a coppersmith. He turned to sculpture (says Duris) as a result of a remark made by the painter Eupompus. When someone asked Lysippus upon whom of those preceding him did he look upon as his master, he gestured to a group of people and replied that Nature herself must be imitated, not any artist.” (Pliny, *N.H.*, xxxiv.19.61). “Nature replaces the legacy of earlier artists as the model” (Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, New Haven-London: Yale, 1979, p. 16; first: *Die Legende vom Künstler*, Wien 1934). This anecdote, contained in the ‘Lives of the Greek Sculptors’ by Duris of Samos, indicates the intimate connection between the imitation of nature and autodidactism in Sirigatti’s self-description, for it is the word ‘αυτοδιδάκτος’ which Sirigatti has placed, conspicuously and in Greek letters, at the very end of his self-characterisation. There can be little doubt that it was Sirigatti himself who inspired the issuing of the engraving of his *Venus* with its inscription that declines the parameters of his artistic identity. His motive was surely the same as that which his friend, Raffaello Borghini, attributes to Stradanus for publishing so many prints of his works. This is contained in Borghini’s long and exceedingly well-informed “*vita*” of the artist: “*perché la sua virtù sia conosciuta per tutto il mondo ha fatto molte carte, che si veggono andar fuore in istampa*”, an explanation followed by a detailed list of prints already issued as well as those planned for printing “*in Anversa per mano di Filippo Gale eccellente intagliatore*” (1584, p. 583). Sirigatti’s claim of being self-taught is credible, in that he was not a professional artist, and it does not seem motivated by vanity, so much as by a desire to justify the seriousness of his claims as an artist, claims that found a precedent in a great artist of antiquity, who was instructed by nature and not art. Vasari had suggested that Giotto learned “*senza maestro*” (“*egli imparò l’arte in un certo modo, senza maestro*”: Vasari, ed. Barocchi, 2, p. 114) as a form of praise. And he applies the same phrase to the very young Spinello Aretino and Pierino da Vinci (2, p. 277; 5, p. 229f.; cf. Ulrich Pfisterer, “Erste Werke und Autopoiesis”, in: *Visuelle Topoi*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer and Max Seidel, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003, pp. 263-302). Michelangelo’s attempts to conceal or deny his artistic training and his refusal to accept apprentices belong to the same pattern of the self-created artist. The topos of the self-made musician – ‘*senza maestro*’ – is known also in the history of music.

See: Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, New Haven-London 1979, pp. 14-15, 17, 19-20, 37, 43; further: Johannes Overbeck, *Die antiken Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen*, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1868; *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*; translation Katherine Jex-Blake, with commentary and introduction by Eugenia Sellers, Chicago: Argonaut, 1968.

Thus the autodidacticism of artists is a topic found already in the ancient literature of art. While Lysippus was not the only example of a self-taught ancient artist, he was the most prominent example, and he, like Sirigatti, was a sculptor. It was he who was inspired to become an artist when he heard the painter Eupompus say: “*Naturam ipsam imitandam esse, non artificem*” (Nature, and not the manner of some other artist, is alone worthy of imitation; *N.H.* xxxiv, 61). In the maxim *naturam imitandam*, nature replaces the legacy of earlier artists as a model. This represents a repudiation of ancient masters as models, and an apparent rejection of the genealogies of masters and pupils which constituted the principal pattern of the ancient historiography of art.

Carel Van Mander is also to be counted among those who invoke the same topos, “*Ohne einen Meister gehabt zu haben, ist er selbst ein Meister geworden*” (*Das Leben der niederländischen und deutschen Maler*, 1617, I, p. 161). “*Lysippus Nobilis fuit nullo doctore*” – this is “*quanto a dire: fui scolare della natura*”, argues Sebastiano Ciampi to the sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini in Florence in 1834 (*Lettera di Sebastiano Ciampi à Lorenzo Bartolini, celebratissimo statuario*, Firenze: David Passigli e soci, 1834). In 1587 Giovanni Battista Armenini (*De’ veri precetti della pittura*, Ravenna: appresso Francesco Tebaldini) observed that many youths attempt to learn painting on their own: “*Da’ i quali inconvenienti è poi successo che molti giovani, da alcuni anni in qua, desiderosi di farsi eccellenti e fuggendo le servitù, dalle quali non posso cavare cosa che faccia a loro proposito, si sono dati, con animi grandi e risoluti, a tentare d’impararla da se medesimi.*” (p. 12, ed. Torino: Einaudi, 1988). But Armenini favours precepts and teachers.

It is also not without interest that not long after Sirigatti, in an untraced leaflet issued in 1607 and now known only through written sources, the apparently self-taught and noble gentleman painter Giovanni Battista Paggi of Genoa argued that “art can very well be learned without a master because the foremost requirement for its study is a knowledge of theory, based on mathematics, geometry, arithmetic, philosophy and other noble sciences which can be gleaned from books” (“*Quest’arte si può benissimo imparare senza maestro, consistendo il suo studio prima sulla teorica, la quale per la più parte deriva dalla matematica, dalla geometria, dalla filosofia e da altre nobilissime discipline, le quali sui libri s’apprendono*”: *Diffinizione ossia divisione della pittura*, Genova 1607). The rest is observation and practice (Rudolf Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, London 1963, pp. 10-11 and note 47; Giovanni Bottari and Stefano Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, Milano: Silvestri, 1822-25, VI, pp. 56-97; see also: Raffaello Soprani and Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, *Vite de’ pittori, scultori ed architetti genovesi*, Genova 1768-1797, I, pp. 130 *et passim*: Paggi’s leaflet was apparently one “foglio” folded to form four sheets. See further: Peter M. Lukehart, *The Nobility of Giovanni Battista Paggi and the Nobility of Painting*, Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1987, esp. pp. 122ff.: ‘Diffinizione (...)’; Valeska Doll, *Suzanne Valadon*, München: Utz, 2001, pp. 88-90; Johannes Bilstein, “Die Kunst der Lehre und die Lehre der Kunst”, in: Kristin Westphal und Wolf-Andreas Liebert (eds.), *Gegenwärtigkeit und Fremdheit: Wissenschaft und Künste in Dialog über Bildung*, Weinheim-München: Juventa, 2009, pp. 22-23: „*nullo doctore*“).

‘IMPRESSUM’:

The second part of the inferior inscription, “*Ioannes Stradanus artificioso suo penicillo imitabatur*”, records Stradanus’s artful drawing imitating the statue, and this is followed by, “*Philip. Gallæus publice spectandum admirandumque dedit*”, affirming that Philips Galle has made the print publicly visible for admiration. Not only is the draughtsman *artificiosus*, but the print is also admirable and well worth seeing.



Venus, by Ridolfo Sirigatti, engraved by Hieronymus Wierix,
after a drawing by Johannes Stradanus

THE IMAGE OF VENUS

If the inscriptions framing Sirigatti's *Venus* seem inspired by verbal models from the ancient world and cast in terms of antique topoi, Sirigatti's visual image of Venus is, beyond very general features of her form, e.g. her nudity, or the classical distinction between *Standbein* and *Spielbein*, not notably informed by ancient precedents.

Before turning to this topic, let us review first what is written about Sirigatti's *Venus* in Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* (Firenze 1584). The poet and dramaturge Raffaello Borghini (possibly 1537-1588 circa [?]) is not to be confused with the friend and advisor to Giorgio Vasari, the better known Vincenzo Borghini (1515-1588), who was apparently not a close relative of Raffaello, as is usually stated (*Vincenzio Borghini: Filologia e invenzione nella Firenze di Cosimo I*, ed. Artemesia Calcagni and Pietro Scapecchi, Firenze: Olschki, 2002, p. 3). Despite attempts to discover more about Raffaello's identity, he remains a mysterious figure, and his *Il Riposo* awaits serious textual study. Raffaello Borghini was, however, a close friend of Sirigatti, who figures large in his book, and at the time the book appeared, in the year 1584, Sirigatti's *Venus* had been begun, but it was not yet completed. The *Venus* is described in the book at pages 21-22, when the interlocutor Bernardo Vecchietti addresses Sirigatti, "*Molte cose di pittura, e di scultura ha fatto di sua mano Messer Ridolfo*", among them, two marble portrait busts of the sculptor's parents and an over-lifesize marble *Venus*:

"Hora ha fra mano una Venere di marmo maggiore che il naturale con un Cupido à piedi, in cui già si vede gratia grandissima havendo tutte le membre scoperte: et il modello di cera studiato dal naturale promette che ella habbia à essere una figura di tutta perfettione, e bellezza. Ma perche, come io dissi poco avanti, queste cose son fatte per lo vedere più che per l'udire, lascerò con vostra buona gratia di più favellarne."

[“He now has in hand a larger than life marble Venus with a Cupid at her feet, in which great grace is already to be seen. The wax model, studied from life, promises that she will be a figure of complete beauty, as all the parts of her body limbs are exposed (i.e., nude). But because, as I have just said, such things are made more to be seen than to be heard about, I will, with your leave, refrain from speaking any more about them.”]

Thus Borghini presents us with a Venus, in marble, larger than life, nude, and accompanied by a Cupid and based on a wax model studied from life (“*duce natura*”). Vecchietti had earlier (p. 10) spoken to Sirigatti of his “*studi del disegno*” and of the pleasure he took in “*mettere in opera la scultura, e la pittura*”, and, at this point, he had already mentioned the *Venus* that Sirigatti is making (p. 11):

"Questo dico, percioche, si come io penso, essendo voi dagli studi del disegno, e dal dare perfettione alla vostra bella Venere, non dico satio; ma per aventura in gran parte stanco, et io da molti pensieri travagliato ritrovandomi, giudicherei ben fatto, quando à voi piacesse farmi tanto di favore, che cene andassimo in villa mia à prendere un poco d'aria (...)."

[“I say this because I think that perhaps you are – even if you have not had enough of your Venus – now quite tired by your studies of *disegno* and from your efforts to bring to perfection your beautiful Venus. And I, finding myself tormented by many cares, would judge it to be a good thing, if you would be pleased to do me the favour, that we may go unto my villa to breathe fresh air and have respite from the many cares of the city.”]

Stradanus's print agrees with and amplifies Borghini's descriptions, and it offers a visual counterpart to them, one which, in addition to documenting the appearance of the statue of *Venus*, adds to the little that is known of Sirigatti's art. The two marble portrait busts,

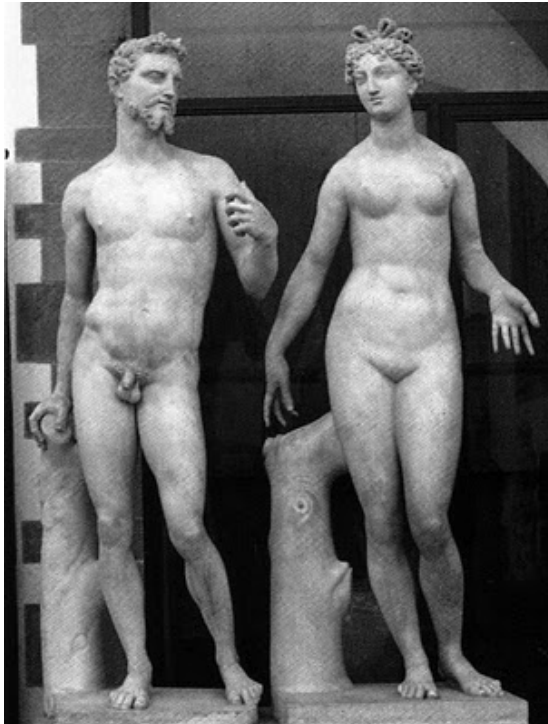
mentioned by Borghini, reappeared in 1961, and they were soon acquired by John Pope-Hennessy for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Pope-Hennessy, "Portrait Sculptures by Ridolfo Sirigatti", in: *Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin*, 1, 1965, 2, pp. 33-36; also in his *Essays on Italian Sculpture*, London 1968). In *Il Riposo* there is also mentioned a painted portrait of Sirigatti's close friend Raffaello Borghini ("suo amicissimo", p. 22) by Sirigatti, a painting said to have been formerly in Berlin, but destroyed in World War II (*DBI*, 12, 1970, p. 678; Avanzini, 1960, p. 40).

It has already been represented that Sirigatti's Venus reflects ancient statues of Venus only in an external way. Her sloping shoulders are as un-antique as the flaming heart she holds in her right hand. These statements find confirmation if the Venus of the print is compared with the Venuses included in Salomon Reinach's *Répertoire* of ancient statues or with the statues in the compilation of his predecessor, Giovanni Battista Cavaliere, the *Antiquarium statuarum urbis Romae* (1561ff.; online: Warburg Institute). Or one may examine plaster cast collections, such as that in Munich (Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke: www.abgussmuseum.de) or perform an online image search.

One of the central actors in *Il Riposo* is Bernardo Vecchiotti, who first sponsored Giovanni Bologna in Florence and who owned many small works by him. Ridolfo Sirigatti also owned bronze figurines by Giovanni Bologna, which he displayed in a frieze between paintings by Francesco Salviati and Alessandro del Barbieri in the second room of his collection (pp. 20-21). Giovanni Bologna is thus an ascendant figure in *Il Riposo* (pp. 585- 589). But Sirigatti's Venus has nothing of the turning movements, often with marked contrappostal contrasts, of Giovanni Bologna's figures, and nothing of the polished, conical and tubular abstraction of his tapering and slightly inflated, often seemingly hollow limbs, characteristics that repeat themselves with a certain sameness in many of his nude female figures, including his many Venuses.

Instead, in 1584, Sirigatti (born 1553) appears to be looking backward, at Florentine sculpture of the fairly distant past. The form and type of his Venus, with her sloping shoulders, her head turned to the side, her short narrow torso with small high breasts, her amorphously elastic limbs positioned in a loose contrapposto, her narrow high waist, broad hips, heavy thighs and slender calves, and the elongated proportions from the waist to the knee, correspond to the essential anatomical canon of Baccio Bandinelli. Even innovations that appear prior to Giovanni Bologna, in the works of sculptors such as Bartolomeo Ammannati and Vincenzo Danti, do not appear reflected. Bandinelli, with his numerous pupils – Pierino da Vinci, Francesco da Prato, Bartolomeo Ammannati, Nanni di Stocco, Francesco Camilliani, Vincenzo de' Rossi, Giovanni Bandini, Giovanni Battista Lorenzi and others (such as the painters, Andrea del Migna, Francesco Salviati, and Giorgio Vasari) –, had by mid-century become the most influential teacher of sculptors in Florence, a rôle he largely retained until the emergence of Giovanni Bologna. Bandinelli's figural ideal can be seen in his drawings (e.g., Roger Ward, *Baccio Bandinelli, Drawings from British Collections*, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1988, no. 16) and in his small bronzes of *Venus*, *Cleopatra*, and *Leda* at the Bargello in Florence (Hans R. Weihrauch, *Europäische Bronzestatuetten 15.-18. Jahrhundert*, Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1967, pp. 182-183, figs. 223-224; Jennifer Montagu, *Bronzes*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1963; Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, Milano: Hoepli, 1936, X/2, p. 216, fig. 183). The same anatomical conception recurs in Bandinelli's large nude *Eve* in marble (Bargello, Florence: 1548-1550; Venturi, X/2, p. 217, fig. 184; ARTstor) and his *Ceres*, now placed before the Grotta di Buontalenti in the Boboli Garden (Florence: ca. 1550; image at Wikimedia Commons).

Baccio Bandinelli, *Adam and Eve*
 Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello



Such figural models, especially those small in scale, were proposed as objects of drawing study in the engravings of Bandinelli's Academy, in particular in that by Agostino Musi (1531; "ACADEMIA DI BACCHIO BRANDIN IN ROMA IN LUOGO DETTO BELVEDERE"), where statuettes of Venus are included. Bronzino drew a copy after Bandinelli's small bronze *Cleopatra* (Fogg Art Museum; 1932.145: ARTstor, s.v. 'Bandinelli'). Among the small bronze statues of the Studiolo di Francesco I in the Palazzo Vecchio (Florence, 1570 f.), it is the *Juno* (1572-1573) of Giovanni Bandini, a pupil of Bandinelli, which displays the greatest affinity with the *Venus* that we see in the engraving after Stradanus's drawing of Sirigatti's *Venus* (Foto Bandini, *Juno*; www.thais.it; Mario Bucci, *Lo Studiolo di Francesco I*, Firenze: Sadea/Sansoni, 1965, pl. 20; Venturi, X/2, p. 258, fig. 219).



Agostino Musi, Bandinelli's *Academy*



Bronzino, *Leda*,
after Bandinelli

In assessing the print of Sirigatti's *Venus* as an image, it is difficult to know the extent to which the art of Stradanus and of Wierix may be interposed as a deforming screen that obscures the original with a Flemish veil. Sirigatti's *Venus* is comparable with Jan Gossaert's, *Venus vana* (Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo; illustrated very often in the Internet). Other engravings after Stradanus of Venus and Cupid are known (*The New Hollstein*, 19/3, nos. 289-290), and they resemble, to an extent, the Sirigatti *Venus*. Hieronymus Wierix's brother, Johann, has also left a drawing of *Apelles painting the portrait of Campaspe*, in which the naked Campaspe is not unlike Sirigatti's *Venus*. But Hieronymus Wierix's engravings show a wide variety of Venuses and related female nudes, which suggest that he attempted to render his models accurately (Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish*, vol. 67, Wierix Family ix, nos. 1896, 1901, 1902, 1914, 1915, 19861, 1963). Nevertheless, the works mentioned above suggest using caution in drawing very detailed conclusions from the image of Sirigatti's *Venus*. The relationship with the art of Bandinelli, proposed above, seems none the less persuasive, and some further general observations appear possible.



Ridolfo Sirigatti
 Bust of his mother, Cassandra di Ridolfo Ghirlandaio
 1578, marble
 London, Victoria & Albert Museum
Inscribed: CASSANDRA GRILLA(N)DARIA
 NICOLAO SIRIGATTIO NUPTA. M.D.L.XXVIII
and on the reverse:
 QUEM GENUI RODULPHUS ANIMI CAUSA CAELAVIT
 (Ridolfo, whom I bore, has carved this as a tribute of love)

Firstly, the print does not support suggestions that Sirigatti may have been artistically connected with Giovanni Bologna. John Pope-Hennessy suggested that the marble portrait bust of Sirigatti's father in London shares the spiral character of Giovanni Bologna's marble groups, but he maintained that the London bust of Cassandra Sirigatti and its pendant reveal an interest in movement that distinguish them sharply from Giovanni Bologna's portrait busts. He saw in the two busts by Sirigatti formal aspirations that belong more to the seventeenth century than to the sixteenth, and he associated these with Giovanni Baglione's report that Gianlorenzo Bernini's father, Pietro, had studied with Sirigatti. Baglione (*Vite de' pittori scultori et architetti*, Roma 1642, p. 304) writes of Pietro Bernini simply, "*havendo havuti dal Cavalier Sirigatti in Firenze alcuni principii del disegno*", a reference that conceivably might also be thought to refer to Ridolfo Sirigatti's brother, the Cavalier Lorenzo Sirigatti, who was however born in 1561, the year prior to that of Pietro Bernini's birth (Pegazzano, 1998, p. 148). Lorenzo died in 1604, publishing his *La Pratica della prospettiva* first in Venice in 1596. It is Ridolfo who is more often identified as Pietro's teacher (Hans-Ulrich Kessler, *Pietro Bernini*, München: Hirmer, 2005, pp. 14, 17f.), although the idea of an apprenticeship in a workshop of Ridolfo Sirigatti is contradicted by what is known of Ridolfo's biography. It is also far from clear that the ideas verbally espoused in Borghini's *Riposo* by Sirigatti as an interlocutor are his, although various writers treat them as if they were.

On the other hand, the fairly obvious conservatism of Sirigatti's *Venus* makes him ill-suited for a rôle as a forerunner of baroque sculpture sometimes ascribed to him. Except for the three marble busts of the Medici Grand Dukes (Cosimo, 1588-1589; Francesco, 1594; Ferdinando, 1596) placed on the façade of the Palazzo della Carovana in Pisa, formerly the home of the Ordine dei Cavalieri di Santo Stefano and now the seat of the Scuola Normale Superiore (Karla Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici*, Firenze: SPES, 1987, pp. 454, 745, 887; documented), no other works by him are known beyond the few already mentioned here. They do not furnish a substantial basis for identifying further works, beyond perhaps portrait busts, although Borghini reports that "*molte cose di pitture, e di scultura ha fatto di sua mano Messer Ridolfo.*" It was Sirigatti's signatures that made possible recognizing his authorship of the portraits of his parents, and 'new works', if they emerge, will probably need signatures or the testimony of documents not hitherto identified.



Workshop of Raffaello (attributed to Giulio Romano)
Ceres, oil on wood, 38 x 31 cm; Louvre, Paris. ca. 1516

The frame surrounding the strongly lit niche containing Sirigatti's *Venus* may reflect an arrangement found in the sculptor's collection. The description of this collection in *Il Riposo* (pp. 19-22) makes it clear that the installation of the collection was a studied one. The framework around the niche of *Venus* possibly embodies an *all'antica* taste not dissimilar to that displayed in a painting of an 'ancient' statue of Ceres attributed to Giulio Romano in Paris (Louvre). This decoration – a geometricising ornamental scheme with circles/ovals, rectangles, and rhomboid lozenges accompanied by fictive *pietre dure* inserts and lighter, nearly white border strips – is very similar to the *all'antica* treatment of the wall at the sides of the altar in the Cappella Guidiccioni of the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, Roma (third chapel at the left, 1546-1549: Emilio Lavagnino, *La Chiesa di Santo Spirito in Sassia*, Torino 1962, ill. pp. 18, 20). This antiquising note may correspond to the intention of the wall decoration of Sirigatti's collection.

As the print of Sirigatti's Venus bore a dedication, it is hoped that this paper might have been of interest to John Pope-Hennessy, to whom the author remains grateful for his occasional encouraging words in the 1980s. I am also grateful to the following for helpful suggestions and corrections: Margaret Daly Davis, Dorothea Diemer, Peter Diemer, Ulrich Pfisterer.

RIDOLFO SIRIGATTI – Literature:

Owing to his presence in *Il Riposo*, Sirigatti's name is cited in a large number of books and articles. Most of these references are not cited here. Only in a few instances do they contribute significantly to the knowledge or understanding of Sirigatti. At present many of them can be found by searching Google books. See also: *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

„Sirigatti, Ridolfo“, in: *Thieme-Becker*, 31 (1937), p. 102

John Pope-Hennessy, “Portrait Sculptures by Ridolfo Sirigatti”, in: *Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin*, vol. 1, no. 2, April 1965, pp. 33-36 (also in Pope-Hennessy, *Essays on Italian Sculpture*, London: Phaidon, 1968)

Dino Frosini, “Il Palazzo del Buonomo e la ‘Torre della Fama’ in Pisa: L’intervento celebrativo di Ridolfo Sirigatti”, in: *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, ser. 3, vol. 9, fasc. 4, 1979, pp. 1475-1496

Donatella Pegazzano, “Lorenzo Sirigatti: Gli svaghi eruditi di un dilettante del Cinquecento”, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 42, 1998, Heft 1, pp. 144-175

Luigi Zangheri, *Gli accademici del disegno: Elenco alfabetico*, Firenze: Olschki, 2000, p. 301 (see also: ‘Lorenzo Sirigatti’)

Donatella Pegazzano, in: *Ombra del genio: L’arte a Firenze 1537-1631*, ed. Marco Chiarini, Alan Darr, Cristina Giannini, exhibition catalogue, Firenze: Palazzo Strozzi, 2002, Milano: Skira, 2002, no. 84 (bust of Cassandra Sirigatti)

Repertorio della scultura fiorentina del Cinquecento, ed. Giovanni Pratesi, biografie a cura di Nicoletta Pons, 3 vol., Torino: Allemandi, 2003 (‘Biografie’: vol. 1, p. 67)

Hans-Ulrich Kessler, *Pietro Bernini*, München: Hirmer, 2005, pp. 14, 17-19, 417

Loeser Collection, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence: Portrait head of Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici: attributed to Sirigatti. See: www.museicivici-fiorentini.it (Donazione Loeser); also Wikimedia Commons; exhibited at: *Il cotto dell’Impruneta*, ed. Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani and Giancarlo Gentilini, Firenze: Edifir, 2009

Sirigatti is not mentioned in Ulrich Middeldorf, “On the Dilettante Sculptor”, in: *Apollo*, 107, 1978, pp. 310-322 [*Scritti*, vol. 3, pp. 173-202], which is not proposed as a comprehensive survey. But at p. 173, note 1, Middeldorf observes that “it has to be kept in mind that the principal meaning of the word [*dilettante*] once was “amateur”, that is, connoisseur, student, collector.” And further that “dilettantism in the arts, as a part of the accomplishments of the perfect gentleman and consequently of the curriculum of his education (as advocated by Castiglione and Peacham), was already a topic in antiquity. Hard marble was not the material usually attacked by dilettantes, who often modelled in wax and clay.”

RAFFAELLO BORGHINI AND HIS *IL RIPOSO*

Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* is, to an extent, a continuation of Vasari's *Vite* of 1568. This intent is testified to, not so much by the verses composed by Piero di Gherardo Capponi and addressed "*A' pittori, et a gli scultori fiorentini*", which follow immediately the title page (where the book is explicitly dedicated to "*il Sig. Don GIOVANNI Medici*"), as by the *verso* of this page, which bears the same woodcut of *Eternal Fame with the Arts of Design and the Artists of the Past* that served as an emblem for the first edition of Vasari's *Vite* (Firenze: Torrentino, 1550). But Borghini's book was primarily addressed to collectors and amateurs of art, an educated lay audience. Borghini writes, "I have written for those who do not practise these precepts, but, either for use or delight, are seized with pleasure in knowing them" (pp. 127-128). The first two books contain dialogues which treat, not the artists's *vite*, but more general questions relating to the arts (*infra*). Thus the book is of a composite nature. Architects are not treated at all. Borghini's conception of the '*vita*' also differs significantly from Vasari's, as well as from a humanist conception of biography. And, as opposed to Vasari's often discursive and anecdotal *vite*, which offer ample biographical detail, Borghini provides, as he says, only a brief summary of the *vite* of the modern painters and sculptors (pp. 249f.), explicitly referring the reader to the fuller expositions found in Vasari. Borghini's *vite* are constituted largely by lists of works by the artists. But, again as he writes, he includes many artists of the present, many treated for the first time. The *vite* begin in Book III, where accounts of artists from Cimabue to Giulio Romano are found. Following a brief introduction, Book IV contains *vite* of artists beginning with Baccio Bandinelli. In addition to very many Florentine artists too late for Vasari, many artists active in Venice and Rome are included, as well as ones from Bologna, Milan, Urbino, and elsewhere. The dialogues treat disparate subjects. Religious decorum is a central concern, and religious narrative and sacred iconography receive much consideration, along with erotic or lascivious content and transgressions. Artistic technique is treated at length as well as criteria for artistic judgement.

Borghini has often been criticised as a mere copyist from Vasari – "*e copista cattivo e frettoloso*" (Rosci, 2, p. vii), and, Borghini himself seems to admit this when he writes that his *vite* are only written in the form of a "*breve sommario*" (p. 249) and the artists are treated more fully by Pliny and Vasari. The earlier *vite* of 'modern' artists are little more than abridgements of Vasari which concentrate on works, and, from the point of view of the historical information they contain, they are of little interest.

The book and its author present many puzzling aspects that remain to be clarified. In 1967 Mario Rosci could write (p. vii), "*quasi nulla in effetti sappiamo di Raffaello Borghini*". His presence is hardly felt in the text of *Il Riposo*; instead we are constantly confronted with the personae of the dialogues: Bernardo Vecchietti, Ridolfo Sirigatti, Baccio Valori, and Girolamo Michelozzi. As we have seen Sirigatti is scarcely an open book, and even less is known about Michelozzi. Are their opinions, as stated in the dialogues, theirs, as sometimes implied or maintained, or Borghini's? Borghini himself seems to suggest that the "four gentlemen" are speaking for themselves (p. 249), but this may simply be part of the fiction of the dialogues. One is not even certain who Raffaello Borghini was, among the various men of this name recorded. The evidence for a birth date in 1537 is extremely fragile, if not quite inexistent. What is one to make of the striking contrast between the hastily compiled, uninformative summaries purloined from Vasari and the extraordinarily well-informed and detailed lists of works by living Florentine artists? And this, despite the fact that Borghini maintains that the latter are discussed with brevity, mentioning only the principal works (p. 542). At several points Borghini implies that what he writes is dependent upon the sources

available to him (e.g., pp. 249f.), but there has been scarcely any attempt to define in detail his sources and to engage the text critically. In the dialogues, following the *vita* of Michelangelo, Sirigatti states that he will discuss the best artists of a later time, those of whom he has personal knowledge, although it seems unlikely that he knew all the artists working in Venice whom he describes. After treating artists who have died in recent years, the book turns to artists still living (p. 551). For the works of Venetian painters Borghini comes close to saying that he is relying upon detailed written reports (p. 559). Information about Bolognese painters seem to have been supplemented by a Florentine informant, Giovambattista Dei (pp. 566f.). Urbino is represented by Federigo Barocci, Rome by Federico Zuccari, Girolamo Muziano, and Scipione Pulzone. In some of these *vite*, Borghini may rely on information received from Egnazio Danti, who is mentioned at several points, and whose rather obscure younger brother, Girolamo, is, exceptionally, accorded a *vita*, and whose historicising collection of drawings representing all the good artists is also reported (p. 566: “*di mano di tutti i valenti huomini dell’arte*”). Returning to Florence (p. 579), Borghini treats foreigners in Florence (Stradanus and Giovanni Bologna) and then native Florentines. Much in these *vite* relies on first hand information from the artists (e.g., Stradanus, Ammannati, and others), and an exemplary and more extensive treatment is often devoted to one of the individual artist’s principal works. In these *vite* a number of mistakes by Vasari are impatiently corrected. The book concludes, rather abruptly, with remarks about the youthful sculptor Giovanni Caccini, who is presented as a hope for the future.

Il Riposo is the only text about art which Raffaello Borghini published. If we examine briefly the several building blocks of *Il Riposo*, we shall see that a number of them are highly derivative. The thirty pages about ancient artists simply follow Pliny and later recitations of his information (Adriani). In the sections on artistic technique several pages are copied from Leonardo (pp. 181-184), and Borghini, a literary man, doubtless availed himself of other sources in the technical sections of the book, e.g., Cennino Cennini on colours. The treatment of the *paragone* of the arts simply repeats Varchi. Thomas Frangenberg has suggested Borghini’s reliance on Vincenzo Borghini’s *Selva di notizie*. The lives of the modern artists before Michelangelo are a replay of Vasari: excerpts copied almost verbatim, with Borghini’s *vite* following the same order as Vasari’s. All this is all too familiar, and it appears to be disavowed by the new material, in particular, by the visits to public monuments in Florence and to a few private collections in the city, as well as by the *vite* of the artists after Michelangelo. The former constitute nearly a guide to contemporary painting and sculpture in Florence. With the exception of some earlier works, attention is directed to Vasari and the art of his successors (Stradanus, Macchietti, Naldini, Poppi, Santi di Tito) and to the art of Bronzino and Alessandro Allori, as well as that of Giovanni Bologna and Federico Zuccari.

Modern editions:

Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, ed. Mario Rosci, Milano: Edizioni Labor, 1967, 2 vol. This edition contains a valuable if too brief introduction, an extensive bibliography, and a careful and detailed index of persons, places, terms, and concepts. The text of *Il Riposo* is a reprint of the 1584 edition.

Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, ed. and translated by Lloyd H. Ellis, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. This publication provides an English translation of well-over half of Borghini’s text. The introduction is to an extent informative, but it contains mistakes and is generally inadequate, as are the notes. The translation is mostly acceptable, but it suffers at times from an insufficient knowledge of Italian and of the matter treated by Borghini.

Selected literature:

Rime inedite di Raffaello Borghini e di Angiolo Allori detto il Bronzino, ed. Domenico Moreni, Firenze: Magheri, 1822 (full view at Google books)

Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstdliteratur*, Wien: Schroll, 1924, pp. 307-312, 333, 392

Sandra Orienti, “Su ‘Il riposo’ di Raffaele Borghini”, in: *Rivista d’arte*, 27, 1951/1952, pp. 221-226

Emilia Avanzini, *Il Riposo di Raffaello Borghini e la critica d’arte nel Cinquecento*, Milano: Gastaldi, 1960. This work is the only monographic treatment of Borghini, but, although it contains some useful information derived from a number of manuscript sources and some useful observations, it is not a scholarly work and should be consulted with critical caution. It might be useful to re-examine Avanzini’s sources in Florentine libraries and archives.

Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, ed. Mario Rosci, Milano: Edizioni Labor, 1967, 2 vol.; vol. 2, pp. xvi-xxi (‘Bibliografia ragionata’)

Remo Ceserani, “Raffaello Borghini”, in: *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 12, Roma 1970, pp. 677-680 (with ‘Fonti e Bibliografia’)

Michael Bury, “Bernardo Vecchietti: Patron of Giambologna”, in: *I Tatti Studies*, 1, 1985, pp. 13-56 (online: JSTOR or, without registration, at: www.itatti.it)

Thomas Frangenberg, *Der Betrachter*, Berlin: Mann, 1990 (pp. 77-103 and *ad Indicem*). This remains the best general account of Borghini’s book. Frangenberg has also written a review of the Ellis translation, in: *Catholic Historical Review*, 95, 2, April 2009, pp. 353-354 (not consulted)

Thomas Frangenberg, “The Art of talking about Sculpture: Vasari, Borghini and Bocchi”, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 58, 1995, pp. 115-131

Donatella Pegazzano, “Raffaele Borghini”, in: *Grove-Macmillan Dictionary of Art*, London 1996, vol. 4, p. 408

VENUS WITH CUPID, ENGRAVED BY HIERONYMUS WIERIX AFTER JOHANNES STRADANUS:

Marjolein Leesberg, *Johannes Stradanus*, part II, in: *The New Hollstein, Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel 2008, vol. 19/2, p. 260, no. 287

Zsuzsanna van Ruyven-Zeman and Marjolein Leesberg, *The Wierix Family*, part IX, in: *Hollstein’s Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*, Rotterdam, 2004, vol. 67/9, p. 11, no. 1900

Alessandra Baroni Vannucci, *Jan Van Der Straet detto Giovanni Stradano*, Milano-Roma: Jandi Sapi Editori, 1997, p. 441, no. 789