

A new document for the Carracci and Ruggero Bascapè at the Palazzo Magnani in Bologna*

A LARGE number of documents concerning the construction and decoration of the Palazzo Magnani, Bologna, have – unlike those contained in the private Archivio Magnani Guidotti and published by Giancarlo Roversi in 1984¹ – gone almost completely unnoticed up to now in the Archivio di Stato in Bologna.² Most of this huge bulk of unbound papers is of secondary interest for the art historian, consisting of lists of payments made to carpenters, blacksmiths and the like. However, the series of ‘*bilanzi del libro della fabrica*’ from 1576 to 1599, mentioned only briefly in a recent article on the architecture of the palace, deserves more attention.³

These ‘*bilanzi*’ are annual summary balance sheets of the expenses incurred by the Bolognese nobleman Lorenzo Magnani for the building and the decoration of his palace, listing on the left side the ‘*debitori*’, i.e. the artisans employed, and on the right side the ‘*creditori*’, i.e. mainly the funds used for rewarding them. Among the former appear, for example, not only artists mentioned by later sources such as Domenico Tibaldi (for the years 1577–79) and Cesare Baglione (1582), but even Ercole Procaccini (1577–83) and his son Camillo (1581–83), who have never previously been related to the Palazzo Magnani. However, as these are only extracts from a lost account book (probably a *libro mastro*), the information they provide is far from exhaustive. Indeed, from c.1585 onwards the payments to most of the craftsmen are not separately registered but subsumed in an entry labelled ‘*libri morelli*’ or ‘*libri generali de casa*’, and consequently, a number of artists to whom either local tradition or modern scholarship has attributed works in the palace go unrecorded. This is the case with the architect Floriano Ambrosini (Tibaldi’s successor after his death in 1583), the sculptor Gabriele Fiorini, the painters Lavinia Fontana, Bartolomeo Cesi and, most notably, Ludovico, Agostino and Annibale Carracci, for

whose famous frieze of the *Founding of Rome* in the *sala grande* (Fig. 1) no documentary evidence has emerged until now.⁴

Because of this lack of documents, the exact dating of the Magnani frieze, aptly labelled by Sir Denis Mahon ‘the Adam and Eve of Baroque decoration’⁵ and undoubtedly the most important collaborative work of the three painters, has been up to now a matter for discussion.⁶ The dates proposed by modern scholars oscillate between 1587/88 and 1592; the inscription on the chimney-piece bearing the name of the patron ‘LAURENTIUS MAGN[ANIUS] SENATOR’ and the year ‘M·D·XCII’ is commonly taken to refer to the completion of the decoration of the whole room and therefore considered as a mere *terminus ante quem* for the frescoes. In more recent times, a certain consensus seems to have emerged in favour of placing them in the year 1590, a dating which is based, apart from stylistic reasons, on two main arguments. Firstly, it is thought that the nomination of Lorenzo Magnani as a member of the Bolognese Senate by Pope Sixtus V in May 1590 might have provided the occasion for a decoration with an overtly ‘Roman’ subject; and secondly, a note in the preparatory manuscripts of Carlo Cesare Malvasia for his *Felsina pittrice* (1678), reports a local tradesman’s assertion that the ‘*Sala de Magnani*’ was painted in 1590.⁷ The reliability of this statement, first brought to the attention of art historians by Stephen Ostrow,⁸ is, however, seriously undermined by its context which usually remains unquoted: when we read the entire passage, the mysterious informant Fabri, Malvasia’s supplier of horse fodder (*biavarolo*), reveals himself as not very dependable in this instance, since he claims that Ludovico had no part in the execution of the frescoes, attributing instead the two scenes of *Romulus and Remus nursed by the she-wolf* and *The Asylum* to Agostino, and all the remaining scenes to Annibale.⁹ That this was a rather bizarre opinion must

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¹G. ROVERSI: ‘Palazzo Magnani: “Vero modello del più maestoso fonder volesse un gran monarca”’, in *Il Credito Romagnolo fra storia, arte e tradizione*, ed. G. MAIOLI and G. ROVERSI, Bologna [1985], pp.162–76, 186–90.

²This is all the more astonishing since the folder containing most of the material is entitled *Magnani. Bilanci di Stati, Liste, Spese della fabrica nel Palazzo in Città* (Bologna, Archivio di Stato [cited hereafter as ASB], Fondo Malvezzi-Lupari, serie X, 215).

³M. PIGOZZI: ‘Palazzo Magnani: La ricerca di una domus’, in *Scritti di storia dell’arte in onore di Jürgen Winkelmann*, Naples [1999], p.267 and note 5. The documents are contained in ASB, Fondo Malvezzi-Lupari, serie X, 215, except for the *bilancio* of the year 1598, which is in serie X, 202. I hope to discuss them in more detail in a future article.

⁴On the sixteenth-century decorations of Palazzo Magnani, see C. VOLPE: *Il fregio dei Carracci e i dipinti di Palazzo Magnani in Bologna*, Bologna [1972]; ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, pp.184–91, 200–02 and figs.13–31; S. URBINI, in V. FORTUNATI, ed.: *Lavinia Fontana 1552–1614*, exh. cat. (Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna), Milan [1994], no.72, pp.205–06; F. CHIODINI: ‘Scena pubblica e dimensione privata a Bologna fra XVI e XVII secolo’, in *Bologna al tempo di Cavazzoni: Approfondimenti*, ed. M. PIGOZZI, Bologna [1999], p.160.

⁵D. MAHON: ‘Eclecticism and the Carracci: Further Reflections on the Validity of a Label’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI [1953], p.341.

⁶For an exhaustive bibliography on the frescoes up to 1989, see A. EMILIANI: *Le Storie di Romolo e Remo di Ludovico Agostino e Annibale Carracci in Palazzo Magnani a Bologna*, Bologna [1989], pp.167ff. Later publications include A. EMILIANI: ‘Gli esordi dei Carracci’, in *La pittura in Emilia e in Romagna: il Seicento*, ed. A. EMILIANI, Milan [1992], I, pp.103–12; M. SCOLARO: ‘Le origini di palazzo Magnani e il fregio dei Carracci con le Storie di Romolo e Remo’, *Rolo Banca 1473: Palazzo Magnani*, Bologna [1997], pp.21–40; A. STANZANI: ‘Gioco delle apparenze, allusione ed ironia nella cornice del fregio’, in C. LOISEL, ed.: *Gli affreschi dei Carracci: studi e disegni preparatori*, exh. cat., Palazzo Magnani, Bologna [2000], pp.21–25; S. VITALI: ‘Sul rapporto tra testo e immagine nel fregio Magnani’, *ibid.*, pp.45–50; C. LOISEL: ‘Il disegno: uno strumento privilegiato per i Carracci’, *ibid.*, pp.62–90.

⁷See A. BROGI: ‘Il fregio dei Carracci con “storie di Romolo e Remo” nel salone di Palazzo Magnani’, in *Il Credito Romagnolo*, cited at note 1 above, pp.228–32.

⁸S.E. OSTROW: ‘Diana or Bacchus in the Palazzo Riario?’, in *Essays in Honor of Walter Friedlaender*, New York [1965], p.129, note 15.

⁹‘Dice il mio biavarolo . . . che nella Sala de Magnani – [inserted above the line:] dipinta dice del 1590 – nulla vi ha Lodovico lavorato e che d’Agostino è il paese con la lupa, l’altro paese con l’asillo in mezzo e quelle due mezze figure che vi s’inviato, l’altre d’Annibale et io [i.e. Malvasia] dubito che Lodovico non abbia fatto quelle ove sono le finestre’ (C.C. MALVASIA: *Scritti originali del Conte Carlo Cesare Malvasia spettanti alla sua Felsina Pittrice*, Bologna, Biblioteca Comunale dell’Archiginnasio [cited hereafter as CCB], MS B.16, fol.117r). This passage has so far been cited and discussed only in S.E. OSTROW: *Agostino Carracci*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1966, Ann Arbor [1974], pp.198ff.



1. View of the *sala grande* in Palazzo Magnani, Bologna. With frescoed frieze by Agostino, Annibale and Ludovico Carracci.

already have been evident to Malvasia, as he eventually dropped Fabri's information and proposed a completely different set of attributions.¹⁰

Now, a small piece of paper in the Magnani *fondo* of the Archivio di Stato (see Fig.2 and the Appendix below) supplies the first documentary evidence for the Carracci's frescoes, enabling us to establish the chronology of the decoration of the *salone d'onore* on a secure basis, and furthermore to propose a new attribution for the sculpture of the chimney-piece. The leaf is hastily written on both sides with a coarse pen; by comparison with other documents, the rather peculiar handwriting is easily recognisable as that of Lorenzo Magnani himself.¹¹ As indicated by the heading '*per sala grande*', the document lists in a roughly chronological order the expenses for the decoration of the *salone* in the years from 1587 to 1592 (indicated by the two-digit numbers at the left). Since the sheet was evidently for Magnani's personal use (he left dozens of similar papers listing expenses for artisan's works, furniture, jewellery, clothes, and even food),¹² the

entries are extremely concise and contain many words in dialect, making the document hard to read and interpret.

The first item concerns the painting of the wooden ceiling with a *chiaroscuro* decoration of ornamental motifs, putti and sphinxes (Fig.3),¹³ for which apparently two artists, '*Fiorino*' and '*Latino*', received the considerable sum of 520 Bolognese *lire* in 1587. Whereas the latter is completely unknown, the former can be identified: rather than the fairly well-known painter Giovanni Battista Fiorini,¹⁴ he is probably Lorenzo Magnanini, alias Fiorino, an artist documented up till now only from written sources, who is already recorded as working for Palazzo Magnani in the *bilancio* of 1580.¹⁵ Under the following year (1588) the expenses for the further embellishing of the ceiling with gilded wooden rosettes are listed: 267 *lire* and 10 *soldi* were paid to a certain Sacchi '*per rose*' (presumably the carving of the rosettes), while other payments (482:17 and 275:7 *lire* respectively) were made for the gold-leaf supplied by the gold-beater Mazzolo and for the gilding itself done by the painter Giuliano Spinelli; both of these men

¹⁰C.C. MALVASIA: *Felsina Pittrice: Vite de' pittori bolognesi* (1678), Bologna [1841], I, pp.288ff.

¹¹Cf. for instance the example of his handwriting in ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, p.149, fig.5.

¹²See especially in ASB, Fondo Malvezzi-Lupari, serie X, 202 and 215.

¹³*Tassell* is the Bolognese word for ceiling; cf. C.E. FERRARI: *Vocabolario bolognese-italiano*, 2nd ed., Bologna [1835], p.521. Though the original design is preserved, the decoration appears very repainted.

¹⁴On G.B. Fiorini, see A. GHIRARDI: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XLVIII, Rome [1997], pp.198–200, with further references.

¹⁵For a mention of Magnanini, see MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, I, p.252, who informs us that he entered the council of the *Arte de' Bombasari e Pittori* in 1569 and conjectures that he might have been a pupil of G.B. Fiorini. He is documented as a member of this council from 1581 to 1599 (F. MALAGUZZI VALERI: 'L'arte dei pittori a Bologna nel secolo XVI', *Archivio storico dell'arte*, serie 2, III [1897], pp.311ff.; G. FEIGENBAUM: 'Per una storia istituzionale dell'arte bolognese, 1399–1650 . . .', in *Il restauro del Nettuno . . .*, Bologna [1999], p.369) and must have been dead by 1603, since he is listed among the deceased painters in F. CAVAZZONI: *Pitture et sculture et altre cose notabili che sono in Bologna . . .*, BCB, MS B.1343, p.35, written that year.

2. List of expenses made for the decoration of the *sala grande* in Palazzo Magnani (recto and verso), written by Lorenzo Magnani, probably 1592. c.20.5 by 11.6 cm. (Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Fondo Malvezzi-Lupari, serie X, 215).

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Handwritten list of expenses in Italian, partially obscured by a dark stain. The text is difficult to read but appears to be a continuation of the account book entries.

are also registered in earlier accounts of the Palazzo.¹⁶ The document therefore gives sufficient proof that the ceiling, previously dated to the early seventeenth century,¹⁷ is contemporary with (or even predates) the other decorations of the hall.

The two entries '*Trebilia quadri*' under the years 1587 and 1590 refer to the supply of a particular type of square floor tiles¹⁸ by Giovanni Morandi, who ran a business furnishing building materials and shared the nickname '*Trebilia*' (or '*Terribilia*') with his brother and his nephew, the architects Antonio and Francesco Morandi.¹⁹

Three payments connected with the framing of the four entrance doors to the hall²⁰ are followed, under the year 1592, by the item art historians will find most interesting: '*carazzi fresco sala* - £1000'.²¹ This obviously refers to the Carracci

frescoes and it constitutes the first reliable clue for their dating: if the final payment was made at some time during the year 1592, it is difficult to imagine that work on the decoration began before 1591 - for there is no reason to assume either a delay in the payment, or a particularly slow working process. From circumstantial evidence we can on the contrary infer that the Carracci conceived and painted the frieze rather quickly. Relatively few preparatory drawings have survived, and most of them are compositional studies;²² the *giornate* are quite large, most of the historical scenes consisting of not more than three or four;²³ and the whole decoration is executed in a very bold and fluid manner, often with broad brushstrokes, and entirely *a fresco* (which implies quick working) with few *a secco* corrections.²⁴

As Clare Robertson has pointed out, a date of 1591-92 for

¹⁶'Mazolo' could refer to either Bartolomeo or Bernardino Mazzolo, presumably relatives, who appear, both with the specification '*battiloro*', in the *bilanzi* of the years 1577 and 1582 respectively. Giuliano Spinelli (or Spinello), registered in the *bilanzi* from 1580 to 1584, was a member of the council of the *Arte de' Bombasari e Pittori* by 1581, and must have died after 15th December 1613, when he is still attending the council (F. MALAGUZZI VALERI, *loc. cit.* at note 15 above; G. FEIGENBAUM, *loc. cit.* at note 15 above, pp.358ff and 370). He is probably identical to the painter and gilder Spinelli mentioned by Malvasia as the first teacher of Alessandro Tiarini (MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, II, p.120).

¹⁷ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, p.175.

¹⁸See s. CAVICCHIOLI: 'La decorazione di palazzo dei Diamanti al tempo di Cesare d'Este', in *La Pinacoteca Nazionale di Ferrara: Catalogo generale*, ed. J. BENTINI, Bologna [1992], p.XXX.

¹⁹For Giovanni Morandi, see E. CORTESI: 'Artisti e artigiani al Collegio di Spagna nel Cinquecento', in *El cardenal Albornozy el Colegio de España*, ed. E. VERDERA Y TUELLS, V, Bologna [1979], pp.160-62. Morandi also appears as '*creditore*' in the *bilanzi* of Palazzo Magnani from 1579 to 1581.

²⁰*Masegna* is the Bolognese form of *macigno*, freestone; 'Mastrì' probably refers to the

stonecutter Leonardo di Mastri, registered as '*debitore*' in the balance sheets from 1578 to 1583. '*Zanefj lettere*' seems to be the payment for the cutting of the inscription LAURENTIUS MAGNANIUS over the main entrance. Of the six doors in the hall, the two next to the chimney lead nowhere and must have been added later (the document explicitly mentions four doors). In the eighteenth century, all the doors were enlarged and reframed with '*marmo giallo di Carrara*' (see the document published by ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, pp.196 and 198).

²¹*Fresco* (or *frexo*) is the dialect form of the Italian word *fregio*.

²²On the drawings for the Magnani cycle, see LOISEL, *loc. cit.* at note 6 above (with further references).

²³See the plates with the indication of the *giornate* in EMILIANI, *op. cit.* at note 6 above, pp.159-65.

²⁴O. NONFARMALE: 'Intervento di restauro al fregio dei Carracci in Palazzo Magnani', in EMILIANI, *op. cit.* at note 6 above, p.195; and R. ROSSI MANARESI and A. TUCCI: 'Contributi analitici allo studio del fregio dei Carracci in Palazzo Magnani', *ibid.*, pp.199ff. The fact that the wooden panels in the eighth and tenth scenes lack any preparation (NONFARMALE, *loc. cit.*) is even indicative of a certain haste in the execution.

the frieze is supported by the fact that the reverse of a preparatory drawing by Agostino for his *Pluto*, which was delivered to Cesare d'Este in November 1592, shows an unfinished study for one of the putti holding festoons in the Magnani frescoes, suggesting that the Carracci worked on both commissions contemporaneously.²⁵ Nor are there any compelling stylistic arguments against this dating. As a matter of fact, except for Ludovico's *Madonna with child and saints* of 1591 in the Pinacoteca Civica in Cento, we have no securely dated painting by the Carracci from the three years 1589–91, so that virtually any placing between 1589²⁶ and 1592 would be legitimate. At any rate, taking into account the differences of the medium, the dramatic lighting and the rich, glimmering surfaces of Ludovico's contributions (especially the fourth and seventh scenes, *The killing of Amulius* and *The rape of the Sabine women*; Fig.4) with their predominance of red, violet and yellow tones seem to me consistent with his 'Tintorettesque' phase of 1591–92.²⁷ Furthermore, the preference for circular or semi-circular figure arrangements and for 'centrifugal' compositions not focused on a main figure or group but leaving the centre of the pictorial space empty, is particularly strong in Ludovico's works of this period.²⁸ As for Annibale, the soft handling and sensual naturalism of the scene *Romulus marking the boundaries of Rome* and *Remus brought before King Amulius* (Fig.5) – which in my opinion was executed entirely by Annibale, even if the design appears to be Agostino's²⁹ – comes perhaps closest to such paintings as the *Madonna of S. Ludovico* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna), *Venus and Adonis* (Prado, Madrid) or *Venus, a satyr, and two cupids* (Uffizi, Florence), all of which are unfortunately rather controversially dated between 1587 and 1594.³⁰ However, the stylistic distance from the dated works of 1592 – namely the *Madonna of St Luke* in the Louvre and the *Assumption of the Virgin* in the Bologna Pinacoteca – is not too great to prevent a placing of the frescoes in 1591–92. For Agostino's development, finally, the only documented clue is his *Pluto* mentioned above, whose slightly exaggerated anatomical structure and *terribilità* can be very well compared with the sprawled soldier in the centre of the *Battle of the Romans and the Sabines* or with the caryatid between the ninth and tenth scenes.³¹

²⁵C. ROBERTSON and C. WHISTLER: *Drawings by the Carracci from British Collections*, exh. cat., Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London [1996], p.78, no.35.

²⁶As OSTROW, *op. cit.* at note 9 above, p.199, first remarked, Agostino was mostly absent from Bologna from 1586 to sometime in 1589. C. LOISEL (*loc. cit.* at note 6 above, p.92) retains a dating around 1590 for the Magnani frieze and is consequently forced to presume that the Este paintings too were already commissioned in 1589. This hypothesis is rather implausible, since the carved ceilings of the two rooms where the paintings could possibly have been installed (i.e. the Sala del Parto or, most probably, the Sala del Poggiolo) were planned and executed only in 1591 and 1592 respectively (cf. CAVICCHIOLI, *loc. cit.* at note 17 above, pp.xxv–xliii).

²⁷It is also possible to find some specific similarities with dated paintings of those years. Compare, for example, the woman to the lower right in the scene *The rape of the Sabine women* with the Saint in the yellow robe in the *Martyrdom of St Ursula* from 1592 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) whose torso and head are shown in almost exactly the same posture and present striking parallels in physiognomy and expression. In the same painting, the movements of the soldiers are very similar to those of the aggressors in the *Death of Tattius* scene.

²⁸Compare *The killing of Amulius*, *The rape of the Sabine women* and *The death of Tattius* in the Magnani cycle with the Cento *Madonna*, the *Martyrdom of St Ursula*, the *Preaching of St John the Baptist* (both 1592; Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) and the so-called *Supper of Peter in the house of Simon Coriarius* (1592; ex Foresteria di San Michele in Bosco, Bologna).

²⁹Cf. the quite finished study of the composition in the Louvre, published recently in LOISEL, *loc. cit.* at note 6 above, pp.85 and 87, pl.13.

³⁰The different opinions are summed up in G. MALAFARINA: *L'opera completa di Annibale Carracci*, Milan [1976], nos.43, 44 and 50, pp.96ff. and 99. In virtue of the stylistic proximity to the Magnani frieze, I would suggest a placing not far from 1591/92 for these works as well.

³¹I am aware that my argument raises the question of what the Carracci actually did



3. Ceiling of the sala grande in Palazzo Magnani, Bologna (detail), decoration here attributed to Lorenzo Magnanini and his associate 'Latino'. c.1587. Oil on wood, partly gilt.

Malvasia tells us that 'quel splendidissimo Signore' Lorenzo Magnani recompensed the Carracci well above the agreed price ('*non so quanti scudi sopra l'accordo*') for their highly praised frieze, and that in return for his generosity, at Ludovico's suggestion, the artists executed three frescoes over the fireplaces on the ground floor of the palace.³² Though it is not easy to ascertain the price level of mural paintings in Bologna at that time, a fee of 1000 *lire* (corresponding to approximately 208 *scudi romani* in 1592)³³ for a rather complex frieze covering a surface of about 206 metres seems actually no more than the average reward.³⁴ If Malvasia is correct about the bonus-payment, his account implies that the fee contracted was even lower; as late as 1590/91, then, the Carracci still agreed to work for less than market prices. This is confirmed by other evidence: in his well-known letter to Dionigio Ratta of 4th December 1593, Pompeo Vizzani states that so far the Carracci had taken only sixty or seventy *scudi* for their

in 1590. In my opinion, it might be a solution to place in that year the *Aeneas* frieze in the Palazzo Fava (see most recently D. BENATI, in *The Drawings of Annibale Carracci*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington [1999], p.92).

³²MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, I, pp.330ff.

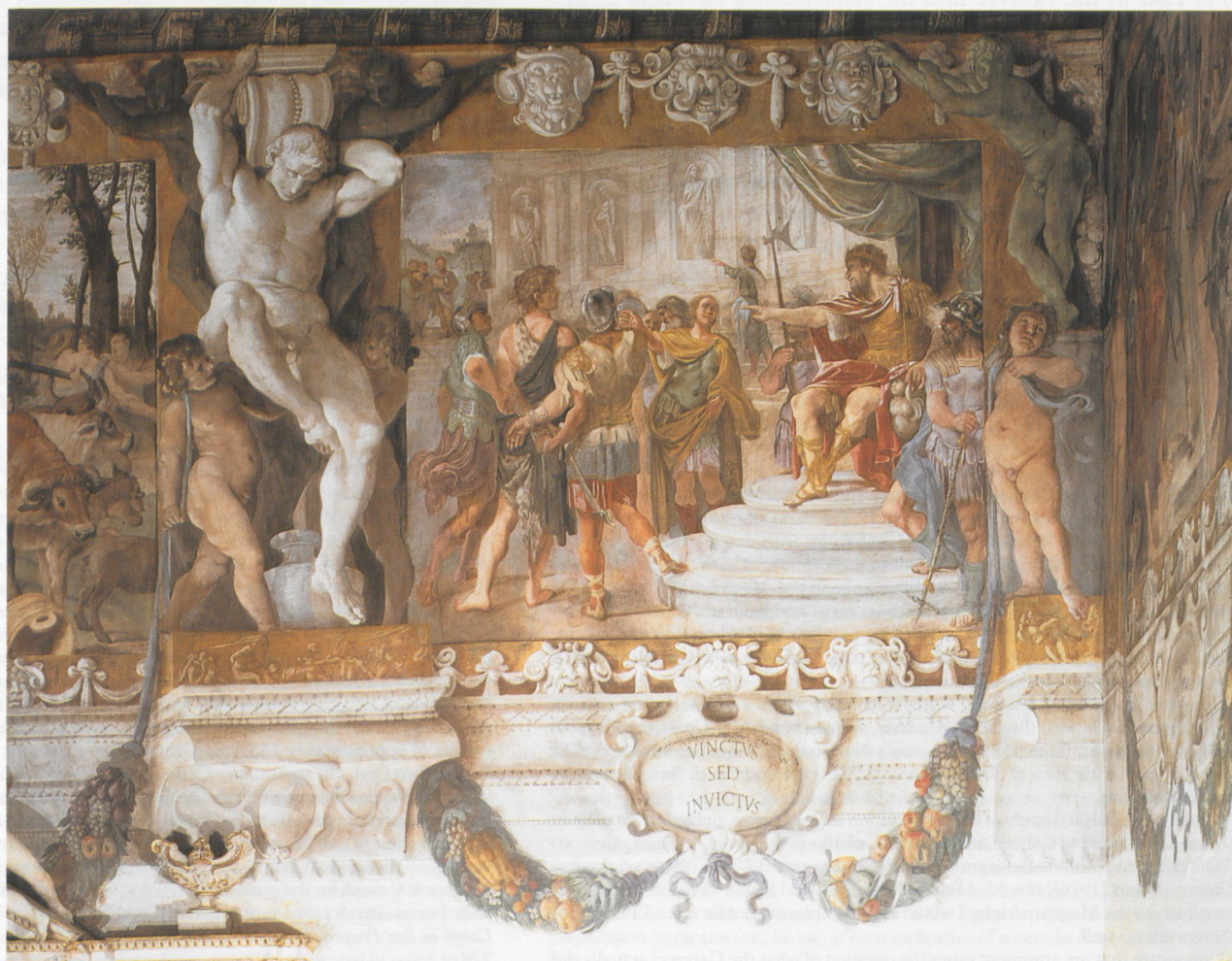
³³For the relation between the *scudo romano* and the *lira bolognese*, see the comparative table in M. MARAGI: *Moneta e credito a Bologna dal Rinascimento all'unità nazionale*, Bologna [1998], p.241.

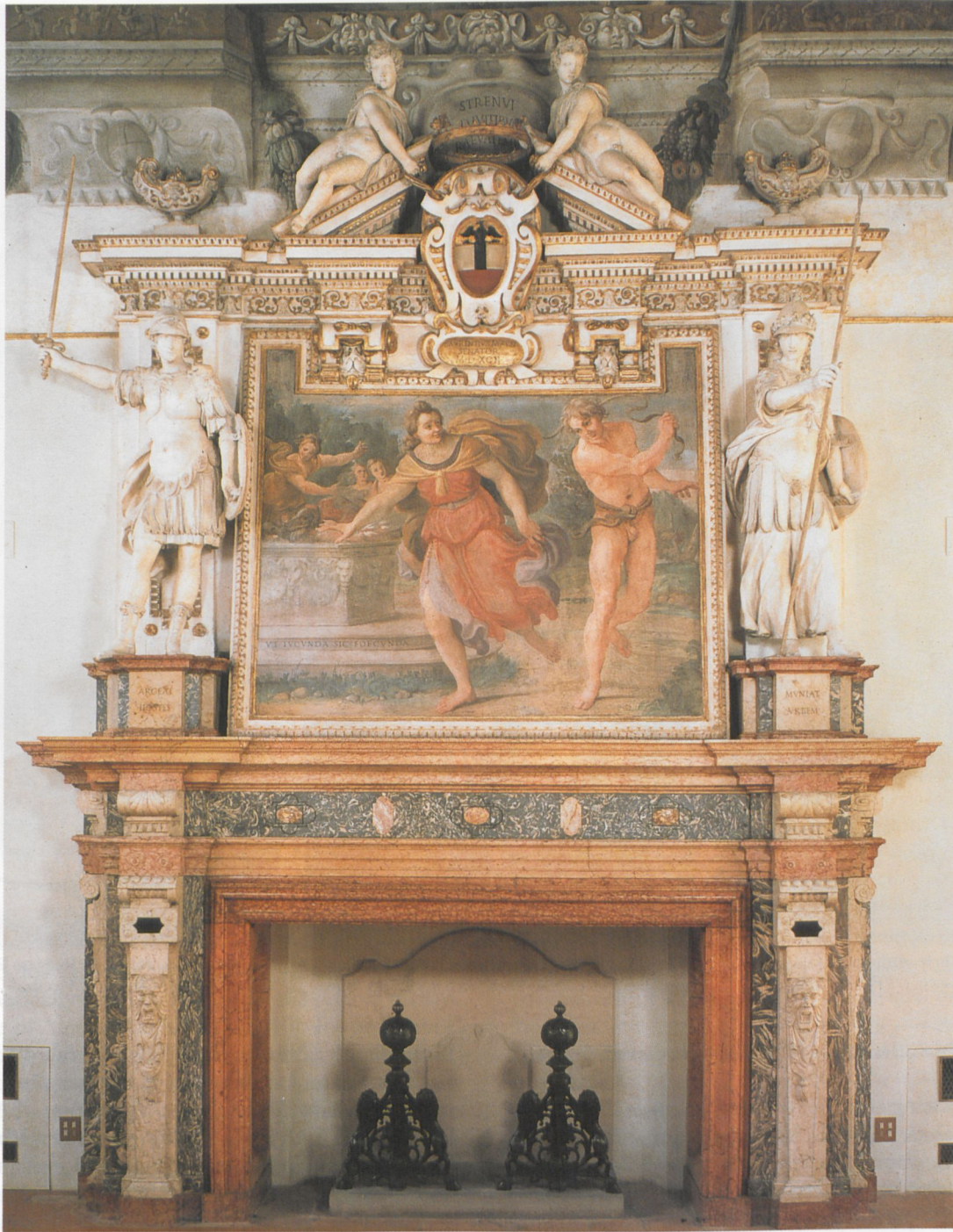
³⁴Much larger sums were paid for the decoration of the new presbytery of the cathedral of S. Pietro: according to the *Summario delle spese della Fabrica...* of 21st July 1584, the painters received 3859:1:8 *lire* 'in pitture della tribuna et nicchie', i.e. for a total surface of about 450–500 square metres (Bologna, Archivio Arcivescovile, Miscellanea vecchie, 822; for the frescoes see F. CAVAZZONI: *Scritti d'arte*, ed. M. PIGOZZI, Bologna [1999], pp.13ff., with further references in the notes). On the other hand, the remuneration of 1600 *lire* assigned to Giulio Morina for the lost decoration of the choir of S. Francesco in 1587/90, i.e. more than 500 square metres, is rather modest (cf. D. FERRIANI: 'Giulio Morina', in V. FORTUNATI PIETRANTONIO, ed.: *Pittura bolognese del Cinquecento*, Bologna [1986], II, p.791). Outside Bologna, two commissions can be cited where the reward was comparable to that received by the Carracci. In 1598, Bartolomeo Cesi was promised 800 *lire* for the frescoing of the Voltone dell'Orologio of the Palazzo Pubblico at Imola with four scenes of *Deeds of Pope Clement VIII*, a surface of approximately 155 square metres (see D. BENATI: 'Apporti al catalogo di Bartolomeo Cesi. Gli appunti per Carlo Cesare Malvasia', in M. CENSI, ed.: *Restauri e scoperte tra Ferrara e Bologna*, exh. cat. (Pinacoteca Civica, Cento), Milan [1998], p.162, with further references). In 1585, Camillo Procaccini was contracted to decorate the apse and choir of San Prospero in Reggio Emilia (611 square metres) for a fee of 600 *scudi* (2610 *lire bolognesi*); however, in 1597 he was able to negotiate the huge price of another 400 *ducati* for the remaining 170.8 square metres of the vault over the high altar (see N. ARTIOLI and E. MONDUCCI: *Gli affreschi di Camillo Procaccini e Bernardino Campi in San Prospero di Reggio Emilia*, Reggio Emilia [1986], pp.225ff., 246ff. and 278).

4. *The rape of the Sabine women*, by Ludovico Carracci. c.1591–92. Fresco. (Detail of the frieze in the *sala grande* in Palazzo Magnani, Bologna).



5. *Remus brought before King Amulius*, by Annibale Carracci. c.1591–92. Fresco. (Detail of the frieze in the *sala grande* in Palazzo Magnani, Bologna).





6. Chimney-piece in the *sala grande* in Palazzo Magnani, Bologna, designed by Floriano Ambrosini, executed by Adamo, Gherardo and Giovanni Battista Giorgi (mantelpiece), Ruggero Bascapè (sculptures) and Annibale Carracci with workshop (painting). 1590–92. Polychrome marble, stucco, fresco, partly gilt.

altar-pieces, whereas the aged Prospero Fontana, whose glory days had long passed, usually charged a hundred.³⁵ This modesty was probably a necessary marketing strategy to gain a firmer footing on the Bolognese art scene, where, after all, the Carracci had secured few important commissions before c.1590.³⁶ Only by the end of 1593 were they apparently so burdened with work that they could afford to ‘*vendere per riputazione*’, claiming, to Vizzani’s astonishment, 200 *scudi* for the *Transfiguration* Ratta wanted to commission.³⁷

³⁵The letter is cited by MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, I, pp.174ff., whose reliability in this case is confirmed by an original letter written four days later by Pompeo’s brother Giasone Vizzani; see R. ZAPPERI: ‘The summons of the Carracci to Rome: some new documentary evidence’, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, CXXVIII [1986], p.205.

³⁶In this light, Malvasia’s report that Agostino and Annibale, ‘*desiderosi di faticar solo per onore e per farsi conoscere*’, offered Count Filippo Fava to decorate the rooms of his

The three frescoes on the chimney-pieces mentioned by Malvasia can be identified with Ludovico’s *Apollo*, Agostino’s *Cupid overpowering Pan*, and a *Bacchus* attributed to Annibale, all of which were later detached and transferred to Palazzo Segni in 1810;³⁸ the dating of these works immediately after the frieze, in 1592, fits well with their style.³⁹ This also applies to the scene of the *Ludi lupercali* over the fireplace in the *salone* (attributed, at least for the design, to Annibale; Fig.6), which, however, was probably conceived together with the frieze,

newly-built palace ‘*ad ogni patto*’ and got the commission to paint the frieze of the hall ‘*per bassissimo prezzo*’, and similarly that Ludovico painted fresco decorations like that of the Lambertini chapel in S. Domenico for knock-down prices (MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, I, pp.271, 276 and 278) might not be completely off the mark.

³⁷MALVASIA, *op. cit.* at note 10 above, I, pp.174ff.

³⁸See ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, pp.178–83, 200–02 and figs.25–27.

³⁹Cf. OSTROW, *op. cit.* at note 9 above, pp.235–37.



7. Detail of Fig.6: *Mars*, here attributed to Ruggero Bascapè. c.1591–92. Stucco, c.195 cm. high.



8. Detail of Fig.6: *Minerva*, here attributed to Ruggero Bascapè. c.1591–92. Stucco, c.195 cm. high.



9. *Statue of Giulio Poiana*, by Ruggero Bascapè. c.1583–85. Stucco. (Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza).

being thematically and compositionally interwoven with the *Foundation* cycle.⁴⁰

The most surprising entry of the document is the following. It records 240 *lire* paid in 1592 to a certain '*Bascapè*' for the ornament of the chimney-piece (*fuga* in the Bolognese terminology). Until now, the stucco statues over the fireplace – *Mars*, *Minerva* and a pair of *ignudi* holding the Magnani coat of arms and a crown (Fig.6) – have, like the rest of the surviving sculptural decoration in the palace, been given to Gabriele Fiorini, an attribution which dates back to the eighteenth-century writer Marcello Oretti.⁴¹ Yet, the name '*Bascapè*' can only refer to the Lombard sculptor Ruggero Bascapè or Bescapè, who is documented as one of the leading artists executing the stucco decoration of the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza from 1583 (at the latest) to 1585.⁴²

Immediately afterwards, he collaborated in the sculptural work at Scamozzi's church of S. Gaetano in Padua, which was finished in 1586, signing four statues of Apostles with the letters 'R. B. F'.⁴³ From 1594 until his death in 1600, Bascapè is documented in Rome where he restored antique sculptures and worked in St Peter's and S. Maria in Aracoeli.⁴⁴

The style and the high quality of the figures on the fireplace do indeed agree perfectly with Bascapè's known works, especially those in the Teatro Olimpico. With their marked *contrapposto*, the slightly exaggerated gestures, the elongated, somewhat Michelangesque faces with long noses and full lips, the statues of Mars and Minerva (Figs.7 and 8) are closely akin to many of the academicians in the *scenae frons* and in the niches of the hemicycle. Even such details as the ornamental lion's heads over the shoulder, at the lower edge of the

⁴⁰See VITALI, *loc. cit.* at note 6 above, p.46. As the document registers no separate payment for this painting, it seems that it was also included in the thousand *lire* for the frieze. OSTROW (*op. cit.* at note 9 above, pp.200–02), argues that the fresco was commissioned only after the completion of the frieze, identifying it as Annibale's contribution to the three fireplace decorations mentioned by Malvasia, but this is in conflict with Malvasia's statement that the three frescoes were all located at the ground floor ('*nel partimento a basso*') of the palace (see note 32 above).

⁴¹M. ORETTI: *Le pitture che si vedono nelle Case e Palazzi de' Nobili della Città di Bologna*, BCB, MS B.104, II, p.126. Oretti mentions two other decorations of *camini* by Fiorini which are now lost (framing Ludovico's *Apollo* cited above and a painting by Lavinia Fontana for which see URBINI, *loc. cit.* at note 4 above) and tentatively attributes the statue of *Hercules* in the loggia of the courtyard to the same artist (*ibid.*, II, pp.126ff; III, p.180). On Gabriele Fiorini, see G. CAMMAROTA: 'Gabriele Fiorini: uno scultore all'Accademia degli Incamminati', *Atti e memorie della Accademia Clementina di Bologna*,

XIX [1986], pp.35–46; A. GHIRARDI, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XLVIII, Rome [1997], pp.196–98.

⁴²On Bascapè and his activity in the Teatro Olimpico, see G. ZORZI: 'Tre scultori lombardi e le loro opere nel Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza', *Arte lombarda*, V [1960], no.2, pp.231–42; M.E. AVAGNINA: 'Le statue dell'Olimpico, ovvero "la messa in pietra degli Accademici fondatori del teatro"', in L. MAGAGNATO: *Il Teatro Olimpico*, Milan [1992], pp.85–127, esp. pp.99, 105 and 112ff; *eadem*: 'La Basilica palladiana e il Teatro Olimpico', in *Scultura a Vicenza*, ed. C. RIGONI, Cinisello Balsamo [1999], pp.151–55.

⁴³G. BRESCIANI ALVAREZ: 'Sculture di Ruggero Bascapè nella chiesa di S. Gaetano in Padova', *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Patavina di Scienze Lettere ed Arti*, LXXV [1962/63], no.3, pp.99–108.

⁴⁴A. BERTOLOTTI: *Artisti lombardi a Roma nei secc. XV, XVI e XVII: studi e ricerche negli archivi romani*, Milan [1881], I, p.215; II, pp.309–11; AVAGNINA [1992], *loc. cit.* at note 42 above, p.99 and note 53.



10. *Statue of Alessandro Mora*, by Ruggero Bascapè. c.1583–85. Stucco. (Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza).

cuirass and on the boots of Mars recur in the figures of the Teatro Olimpico, for example in the statue of Giulio Poiana (Fig.9); the dramatically animated drapery of Minerva recalls that of the statue of Alessandro Mora (Fig.10). In the light of these close parallels with Bascapè's earlier works, Riccomini's hypothesis that the figures of the two gods might be based on a drawing by the Carracci becomes very improbable.⁴⁵ Finally, the heads of the elegantly posed naked youths at the top of the chimney-piece are similar, for example, to that of the youthful Nessus in the *Rape of Deianira* relief in Vicenza (Fig.11), which shows the same type of strongly curled hair.⁴⁶

The remuneration of 240 *lire* for these four figures suggests that Bascapè's reputation had grown considerably since his time at the Teatro Olimpico, where he had to content himself with the meagre sum of seven *scudi* (approximately 33 *lire*) for each statue.⁴⁷ That the fee was generous in Bolognese terms as well becomes obvious by comparison with the 147 *lire* paid in the same year to Gabriele Fiorini for the lost stucco decoration of the chimney-piece in the *Foresteria grande* of S. Michele in Bosco, which also contained four figures and



11. *The rape of Deianira*, by Ruggero Bascapè. c.1584–85. Stucco. (Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza).

presumably was of similar form and dimensions.⁴⁸

In addition, Ruggero Bascapè received 120 *lire* for 'horna-mento ussi', i.e. the decoration of the doors. It is tempting to relate this payment to the bronze-coloured bust in the richly decorated niche over the main entrance to the hall, commonly held to be a portrait of Lorenzo Magnani (Fig.12). Yet, when compared to the figures on the chimney-piece, the modelling of the bust seems too summary and weak to allow an attribution to the Lombard sculptor. Furthermore, the amount of the reward and the plural 'ussi' implies that the commission comprised more than one decoration of this kind, pieces which were presumably located inside the hall and thus removed when the doors were rebuilt.⁴⁹ As for the existing niche, we may surmise either that it did not form part of Bascapè's work or that the bust was changed at a later date. At any rate, of the other eight *all'antica* busts placed on the doorframes of the palace, the one next to the staircase in the loggia on the first floor (Fig.13) seems to be by Bascapè's hand, showing the same physiological features as the Mars and Minerva figures in the hall.⁵⁰ The over life-sized bronze-coloured terracotta group of Hercules with two boys in the central niche of the loggia behind the courtyard (Fig.14), equally attributed to Fiorini from Oretti onwards,⁵¹ is more problematic. Whereas the modelling is fairly accurate, the somewhat limp stance, the stocky proportions and the physiognomy of the hero are untypical for Bascapè; on the other hand, the heads of the children resemble those of the youths on the chimney-piece, and the motif of the swirling drapery around the hips of the second boy reappears in the statue of Minerva. Now, as the asymmetrical shape of the pedestal suggests that the putti were added in a second phase (which would also account for the odd placing of the two, one behind the other),⁵² we may conjecture that Bascapè only completed the group whose main figure had been executed by another

⁴⁵E. RICCOMINI: *Ordine e vaghezza: Scultura in Emilia nell'età barocca*, Bologna [1972], p.66, no.31.

⁴⁶As regards Bascapè's share in the Teatro Olimpico, the opinions of ZORZI and AVAGNINA [1992], cited at note 42 above, coincide only partly. However, they agree in giving him the statues of Leonardo Valmarana and Giulio Poiana, the pair of Victories over the *porta regia* and the *impresa* of the Accademia Olimpica. The attribution of the statue of Alessandro Mora to Bascapè is based on ZORZI, *ibid.*, p.237 (there mistakenly identified as that of Carlo Camozza); the Hercules scenes have been convincingly given to him, on both stylistic and documentary grounds, by AVAGNINA, *ibid.*, p.97.

⁴⁷For the contract between the Accademia Olimpica and the sculptors from 1584, see L. PUPPI: 'Per la storia del Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza: Il testo originale del contratto tra l'Accademia e gli scultori lombardi Ruggero Bascapè e Domenico

Fontana', *Arte lombarda*, XII [1967], no.2, pp.144ff.

⁴⁸CAMMAROTA, *loc. cit.* at note 41 above, p.39 and notes 16 and 17.

⁴⁹See note 20 above.

⁵⁰The other busts are not only of different materials (plaster, sandstone and terracotta), but manifestly by at least three different hands and partly of very poor quality.

⁵¹See note 41 above.

⁵²The centre of the stone plinth, on which the figures stand, is shifted towards the left side, as if it had been enlarged to make room for the boys; furthermore, the left part of the plinth is separated from the rest by a crack. This might have some consequences for the interpretation of the group, which I shall discuss at another occasion; for the moment see B. ROGERS RUBENSTEIN: 'An Example of Neo-Romanism in 16th Century Bologna', in *Le arti a Bologna e in Emilia dal XVI al XVII secolo*, ed. A. EMILIANI, Bologna [1982], p.138.



12. Portrait bust of Lorenzo Magnani (?), by anonymous artist. c.1590(?). Painted terracotta(?), c.70 cm. high. (Palazzo Magnani, Bologna).



13. Bust 'all'antica', here attributed to Ruggero Bascapè. c.1591-92. Terracotta, c.70 cm. high. (Palazzo Magnani, Bologna)

artist, possibly Gabriele Fiorini.⁵³

Bascapè's activity in Bologna around 1592 fills at least partially the gap between his works in the Veneto up to 1586 and his presence in Rome, documented from 1594 onwards. His engagement may have been due to Lorenzo Magnani's connexions with the Veneto, which date back to at least 1567.⁵⁴ It is possible that the sculptor executed works for other patrons in Bologna, now lost or still awaiting identification. In any case, his stay in the city must have been rather short, which would explain the traditional attribution of the Magnani sculptures to Fiorini: as a foreign artist, Bascapè was apparently not prominent enough to survive in local memory and, once forgotten, his name was replaced by a more familiar one which was presumably already connected with the decoration of the palace.

The second large expense on the list concerns the marble mantelpiece designed by Floriano Ambrosini and executed by the Veronese stone-carvers Adamo, Gherardo and Giovanni Battista Giorgi, for which some documentary evidence has already been published by Giancarlo Roversi. The work was contracted in June 1590 but came to a sudden stop early in the following year, when the stone-cutters abandoned their task, as is testified by the action brought against them by Lorenzo Magnani in March 1591; the outcome of the lawsuit, however, is not documented.⁵⁵ Now, the total payment of

800:16:2 *lire* to the Giorgi, which corresponds approximately to the 192.5 *ducatoni veneziani* stipulated,⁵⁶ proves that the artisans were eventually forced to finish their work. The entries '*Ambrosino lastre marmore*',⁵⁷ '*descargare et lavorare lastre*', and '*segare lastre lavorare marmi*', then, cannot be connected with the mantelpiece, because it clearly follows from the text of the contract that the stone-cutters had to deliver their work '*a tutte loro spese*',⁵⁸ that is including the purchase, transport and preliminary treatment of the material.⁵⁹ Instead, these '*lastre*' (slabs) were probably used for the floor which consists of square terracotta tiles (the *quadri* mentioned above) with an inlaid pattern of light grey and black and white speckled marble. Other payments refer to the gilding of the stucco parts of the chimney-piece ('*doratura fuga*')⁶⁰ and to additional materials such as lime ('*calzine*'), gypsum ('*scagliole*', '*zessi*'), marble powder ('*polvere marmy*'), and gold-leaf, again provided by Bernardino Mazzolo ('*Mazolo oro fuga et altri*'). Finally, the list records expenses for the doors of walnut-wood and their gilded iron-mountings.

It becomes clear from the document that most of the decoration of the hall was carried out – or at least paid for, and therefore finished – in 1592, a date which can be explained by the precise historical circumstances. In the first place, the new evidence supports the hypothesis that the iconographical programme of the Carracci's frescoes was devised after

⁵³Since the attribution of most of Fiorini's surviving works is based on Oretti (see note 41 above), who proves to be at least partly unreliable in the case of the Palazzo Magnani, there is some need for a critical reconsideration of his entire *oeuvre*, a task beyond the aims of the present article.

⁵⁴On 27th October 1567, Magnani gave his father-in-law Ottaviano Fantuzzi a proxy to look after his affairs during his trips to Venice (see Bologna, Archivio Magnani Guidotti, *Istrumenti e scritture*, lib. 11, no.64).

⁵⁵ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, pp.186-90.

⁵⁶According to the Magnani documents, the first instalment of 50 *ducatoni* paid to the stonecutters on 30th June 1590, was equivalent to 212:10 *lire bolognesi* (ROVERSI, *ibid.*, p.190); 192.5 *ducatoni*, then, had a value of 818:2:6 *lire*.

⁵⁷I.e. the architect Floriano Ambrosini who seems to have been in some way involved

in the supply of marble.

⁵⁸ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, p.186.

⁵⁹The only exception appears to be the figure of 8:1:10 *lire* spent for '*parangone porto*', i.e. for the transport and perhaps also the purchase of black jasper, which was used in the mantelpiece but is not mentioned in the contract with the stonecutters and had therefore to be supplied by the patron. '*Calvi*' is probably Alessandro Calvi, a Bolognese living in Verona, who was Magnani's representative in his lawsuit against the Giorgi (see ROVERSI, *loc. cit.* at note 1 above, p.190).

⁶⁰Accordingly, the preceding words must probably be related to some minor work on the chimney-piece as well. The most likely interpretation for '*cord . . .*' is *cordone*, which would mean the frame of the Carraccesque fresco; '*parte sopra*' is to be read as *parte di sopra*, i.e. the upper part of the stucco decoration.



14. *Hercules with two boys*, here attributed to anonymous artist and Ruggero Bascapè. After 1580/c.1591–92. Painted terracotta, c.330 cm. high. (Palazzo Magnani, Bologna).

Lorenzo Magnani's elevation to the Senate in May 1590 by order of Sixtus V.⁶¹ In celebrating the foundation of the Eternal City, Magnani expressed his gratitude and loyalty to Rome and to the Pope who, as a successor of the Roman emperors, was also the heir of Romulus.⁶² The acceleration of the work in the hall towards 1592, however, is in all probability due to another event closely related to the patron's senatorial status: on the first of July 1592, Magnani made his first solemn *entrata* as *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, the highest dignity of the city. The *Gonfaloniere* was elected from among the senators six times a year as a kind of *primus inter pares* of the Senate and head of the entire public administration for two months, during which he resided in the Palazzo Comunale.⁶³ Every installation of a new *Gonfaloniere* was celebrated with a public reception in his own house, which was magnificently adorned for the occasion.⁶⁴ Since, thanks to a rotational system, the moment of each senator's turn was roughly predictable,⁶⁵ it is highly probable that Lorenzo Magnani also planned the lavish decoration of his hall in view of his first *Gonfalonierato*, and that he made sure it was finished by July 1592.⁶⁶ That this was no unusual practice is shown by the case of Cornelio Malvasia who had been appointed as senator by Julius III in 1550:

according to a contemporary chronicle, when he became *Gonfaloniere* for the first time in 1555, visitors to his house especially admired a frieze painted for the occasion, representing the life of the Pope to whom he owed his high office.⁶⁷ Lorenzo Magnani, too, certainly spared no expense in celebrating the event, for the splendour of his reception is recorded by a chronicler as well: in his *Annali di Bologna*, Alamanno Bianchetti mentions it as made '*con tanti adobbi e quasi tutti novamente fatti di casa e quanto dir fosse possibile belli*'.⁶⁸ Even if the word *adobbi* is more likely to mean movable decorations such as draperies, tapestries and the like, we may assume that the recently finished Carracci frescoes and the sumptuous chimney-piece in the hall also made a strong impression on Bianchetti and his contemporaries, testifying to the magnificence and the new senatorial rank of the host.

Appendix

List of the expenses for the decoration of the *sala grande* of Palazzo Magnani. (Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Fondo Malvezzi-Lupari, serie X, 215).

(The payments are expressed in *lire bolognese*, *soldi* and *denari*: 1 *lira* = 20 *soldi*; 1 *soldo* = 12 *denari*)

[recto]		
sala granda		
87 Fiorino Latino pitura tasello	L	520 —
Trebilia quadri	L	77 —
88 Mazolo oro	L	482 17 —
Sachi per Rose	L	267 10 —
Spinelli per Doradura	L	275 7
90 Trebilia quadri	L	27 6
91 porta Masegna Mastri	L	60
zanetj l[ette]re	L	8
92 ussi Masegna 4	L	112
carazzi fresco sala	L	1000
Bascapè Horname[n]to fuga	L	240
detto Horname[n]to ussi	L	120
Ambrosino Lastre Marmore	L	151
Giorgij fuga Marmore	L	800 16 2
91 calvi parangone porto	L	8 1 10
Descargare et lavorare lastre	L	82 12
92 segare lastre lavorare Marmi	L	83 4
calzine scagliole zessi pol[ver]e Marmy	L	31 7 6
per cord[. . .] parte s[opr]a Dorad[ur]a fuga	L	40
		<hr/>
		L 4387 1 6
[verso]		
92 ottj ferri usali zibello	L	9 —
fuga toare rosso pre[. . .].	L	7 11
stregare sala	L	1 16
Dorad[ur]a ferri usali	L	4
scafetta cam[in]o sala	L	1
Maso fugalara	L	33 7
4 ussi Nuse	L	42
Mazolo oro fuga et altri	L	57
		<hr/>
		L 155 14
		4387 1 6
		<hr/>
		L 4542 15 6

⁶¹For the enlargement of the Bolognese Senate from forty to fifty seats in 1590 through which Lorenzo Magnani became a member of this council, see A. GARDI: *Lo Stato in Provincia: L'amministrazione della Legazione di Bologna durante il regno di Sisto V (1585–1590)*, Bologna [1994], pp.371–96.

⁶²See BROGI, *loc. cit.* at note 7 above, pp.228 and 232; A. STANZANI: 'Un committente e tre pittori nella Bologna del 1590', in EMILIANI, *op. cit.* at note 6 above, pp.171 and 173. For this kind of homage through a palace decoration, the closest parallel in Bologna is the frieze commissioned by Cornelio Malvasia, see below. An earlier example are the decorations of Palazzo Torfanini for which see A.W.A. BOSCHLOO: *Il fregio dipinto a Bologna da Nicolò dell'Abate ai Carracci [1550–1580]*, Bologna [1984], pp.81 and 99.

⁶³On the *Gonfalonierato di Giustizia* and the Bolognese government in general, see C. SPONTONE: 'Lo stato, il governo et i magistrati di Bologna', BCB, MS B 1114, published in *L'Archiginnasio*, LXXVI [1981], pp.167–376, esp. pp.336–38, and the introduction to this text by S. VERARDI VENTURA: 'L'ordinamento bolognese dei secoli XVI–XVII', *L'Archiginnasio*, LXXIV [1979], pp.181–425 (with further references),

esp. p.365.

⁶⁴A detailed description of the installation ceremony of the new *Gonfaloniere* and his *Anziani* is in SPONTONE, *loc. cit.* above, pp.316–18.

⁶⁵According to SPONTONE, *ibid.*, pp.336ff., the *Gonfaloniere* was chosen in turn from the senators of each of the four Bolognese *quartieri*, and the election was usually a pure formality, '*sapendosi molto bene a chi per lo girare de' mesi et de' quartieri tocca essere Gonfaloniere*'.

⁶⁶Presumably the chimney decorations by the Carracci and the one by Lavinia Fontana (dated 1592; see note 44 above) were executed for the same occasion.

⁶⁷Cf. T. PASI: *Cronica [1428–1585]*, BCB, MS. Gozzadini 152, fol.64v: '*... quando [Malvasia] fu extratto Gonfaloniere di Giustizia fu veduto la sua casa molto hornata . . . et in particolare una grande et magnifica sala tutta historata in alto di un bellissimo friggio attorno con tutta la vita di Sua Santità*'; also cf. G. GUIDICINI: *I Riformatori dello Stato di Libertà della città di Bologna dal 1394 al 1797*, Bologna [1876–77], II, p.90.

⁶⁸A. BIANCHETTI: *Annali di Bologna dall'edificazione della città fino al 1599*, BCB, Raccolta Malvezzi, vol.62, fol.257.