

Irving Lavin, "The Sculptor's 'Last Will and Testament'," *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin. Oberlin College*, XXXV, 1977-8, 4-39

# *The Sculptor's "Last Will and Testament"*

*To H. W. Janson for his sixty-fifth birthday.*

When we think of aged artists, among the first that occur to us — both in chronological terms and in terms of what might be called popular artist-imagery — are artists of the Renaissance: Leonardo who died in 1519 at 67; Michelangelo who died in 1564 at 88; Titian who died in 1576 at either 89 or 99, depending on when one assumes he was born. The fact that these names spring to mind is not an accident, nor did Renaissance artists regularly live longer than their predecessors. It is rather due, I think, to the fact that they conceived of themselves and their old age in a new way. The famous self-portrait drawing by Leonardo is a case in point (fig. 1): its style leaves absolutely no doubt that it was done around 1512, when Leonardo was 60, whereas he represents himself as a kind of Methuselah, hoary with years. Michelangelo may have portrayed himself as the old and vanquished figure in his Victory group made for the Julius tomb, when he was no more than middle-aged (fig. 2). Another instance is a picture by Titian in which he uses his own profile as the very personification of time past (fig. 3). It is almost the reverse of what we would take today as the normal bias in self-presentation.<sup>1</sup>

I must emphasize that the process we are describing is not confined to old age; one could make a similar case for childhood, youth and maturity as well, and the phenomenon might be viewed as one part of the pervasive discovery or rediscovery of all aspects of life and nature in the Renaissance. I hasten to add also that I do not mean to suggest that these men actually liked growing old; they often complained bitterly about it. What is remarkable is that we perceive their late years as something special because they produced grand and noble works of art at a stage in life when they might have been expected to rest upon their laurels; they did so because they themselves regarded senescence and even death not as a motive for retirement or withdrawal but as a challenge to continue — indeed, to surpass — their earlier achievements. My purpose here is to focus on this idea of the old man as an ambitious, innovative creator. I shall do so within a very limited context, but an incisive one, I think, for it involves a group of works made by artists for the specific purpose of expressing themselves about the approaching end of their lives. I shall consider an interrelated series of four monuments executed by sculptors from the end of the fifteenth through the

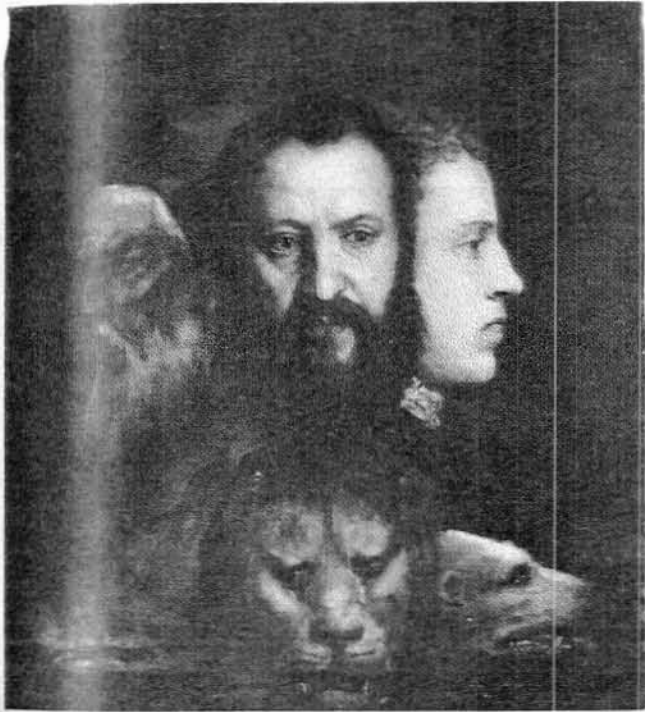
<sup>1</sup> On the date of the Leonardo drawing, see K. Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci*, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 158; on the Victory group, J. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, London-New York, 1970, p. 323; on the Titian, C. Gould, *National Gallery Catalogues. The*

*Sixteenth-Century Italian Schools*, London, 1975, p. 290ff.

The phenomenon has been discussed, in a different framework, by C. Gilbert, "When did a Man in the Renaissance Grow Old?," *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIV, 1967, pp. 7-32.



1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Self-portrait*, drawing, Biblioteca Reale, Turin  
Photo: Alinari



2. Michelangelo, *Victory*, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence  
Photo: Alinari

middle of the sixteenth centuries for their own tombs. I am eliminating analogous works by painters partly for simplicity's sake, and partly because certain aspects of the matter are related to the Renaissance sculptor's conception of his medium. As far as sculptors' monuments are concerned, however, those to be discussed are the first and most important ones from the period.<sup>2</sup>

This is in itself a significant point, since earlier examples are extremely few. Many classical funerary monuments are preserved in which

the deceased is identified as a sculptor by an inscription (fig. 4) or the subject represented — either the tools of the profession (fig. 5) or the artist at work (fig. 6). It is rarely possible, however, to determine if he was himself the maker. Upon consideration it also becomes apparent that these works are really only distinguished by their inscriptions or subjects, and one suspects that the artist did not think of his own tomb as being in any fundamental sense different from those of other people.<sup>3</sup>

Although the artist was by no means so

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, artists' tombs have never been systematically collected, nor has artist-commemoration been treated as a coherent subject; what follows is offered as a limited and necessarily tentative step in that direction. This paper is a kind of epi-prologue to my essay, "Bernini's Death," *Art Bulletin*, LIV, 1972, pp. 158-86 (also "Afterthoughts on 'Bernini's Death,'" *ibid.*, LV, 1973, pp. 429-36). After correcting the proof I learned, courtesy Mr. Eric Apfelstadt, of the following dissertation dealing with Italian artists' tombs of the Renaissance, which I have thus far been unable to consult, but which I gather is to be published: G. Schütz-Rautenberg, *Künstlergräber der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich, 1971, cf. *Kunstchronik*, XXIV, p. 230.

The task of gathering the material has been greatly facilitated by the willing and careful assistance of Edith Kirsch.

<sup>3</sup> The physical evidence for artists' commemorations in antiquity consists of monuments with inscriptions mentioning the profession and/or depictions of tools or actual practice. See in general, most recently, A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1972, p. 180f. on sculptors' epitaphs. On the epigraphical material especially, J.M.C. Toynbee, "Some Notes on Artists in the Roman World," *Collection Latomus*, VI, 1951, pp. 17-33; I. Calabi Limentani, *Studi sulla società romana. Il lavoro artistico*, Milan-Varese, 1958; *idem*, in *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica*, 7 vols., Rome, 1958-66, IV, pp. 870-75. Monuments with representations of tools and sculptors at work have been variously collected: O. Jahn, "Darstellungen antiker Reliefs, welche sich auf Handwerk und Handels-

verkehr beziehen," *Akademie der Wissenschaften, Leipzig. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Berichte*, XIII, 1861, pp. 294-304; H. Blümner, *Technologie und Terminologie der Gewerbe und Künste bei Griechen und Römern*, 4 vols., Leipzig, 1875-87, III, pp. 217-26; H. Gummerus, "Darstellungen aus dem Handwerk auf römischen Grab- und Votivsteinen in Italien," *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, XXVIII, 1913, pp. 93-118, 121-26; W. Deonna, "Ex-voto déliens," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, LVI, 1932, pp. 411-90.

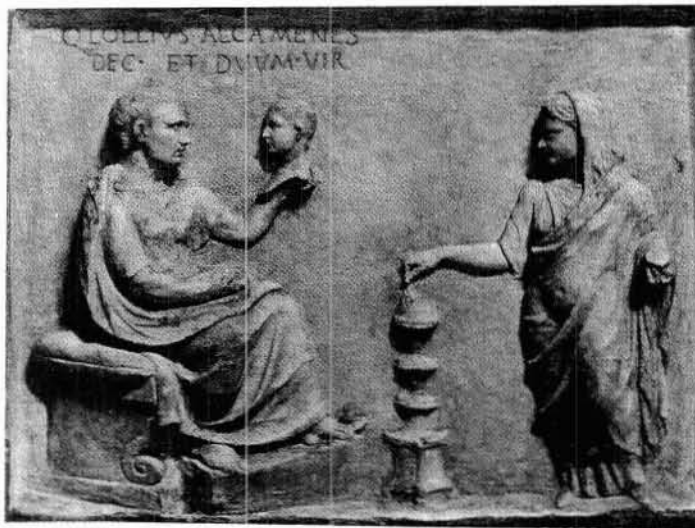
Only the inscriptions guarantee the profession, since the subjects might be included for other reasons. In neither case can it be assumed that the artist himself executed the work. Indeed, I have found only one instance in which a sculptor evidently made a monument for himself — that recorded in the inscription on a herm in the Vatican (fig. 4) referring to a tomb, a stele and portraits which Zeno of Aphrodisias carved for his wife and son, and intended for his own burial (cf. W. Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des vaticanischen Museums*, 3 vols., Berlin, 1903-56, pp. 158-60, no. 135). The tombstone in Reggio Emilia (fig. 5) is a group monument which includes a *marmorarius*, whose tools are shown in the lower section (Gummerus, pp. 105, 122, no. 58). In the Villa Albani relief (fig. 6) the inscription identifies the seated artist as the deceased, who held civil office and probably adopted the name of the sculptor Alcamenes in reference to his own profession (W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, 4th ed., 4 vols., Tübingen, 1963-72, IV, p. 240, no. 3264).



4. Herm statue of Zeno  
of Aphrodisias,  
Museo Vaticano, Rome  
Photo: Vatican



5. Roman tombstone,  
Musei Civici, Reggio Emilia  
Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut



6. Roman relief, Villa Albani, Rome  
Photo: Alinari



7. Tomb portrait of Eudes de Montreuil, engraving  
 (after Thevet, *Les vrais portraits . . .*, fol. 503)  
 Photo: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

obscured in the Middle Ages as is sometimes imagined, only architects seem to have had sufficient status to warrant funerary monuments.<sup>4</sup> In the one recorded instance I have found of a medieval artist carving his own tomb, he showed himself as an architect (fig. 7).<sup>5</sup> In our context the sculptor did not emerge from this kind of personal and professional anonymity until December of 1476 when the Sieneese painter and sculptor Lorenzo di Pietro, called "il Vecchietta," petitioned the syndics of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala for a funerary chapel for himself and his wife Francesca in the hospital church. Vecchietta was then 66. He stipulated that the chapel was to be dedicated to the Saviour and promised to decorate the altar with two works of his own creation: a figure of Christ about 1.5 meters high (that is, life-size), on which he was already engaged, and behind the altar a panel painting of about 2.5 by 1.5 meters, according to a drawing on parchment which he submitted with the petition; he wanted to be buried in the chapel

<sup>4</sup> See the material collected by F. de Mély, "Nos vieilles cathédrales et leurs maîtres d'oeuvre," *Revue archéologique*, XI, 1920, pp. 290-362, XIII, 1921, pp. 77-107; N. Pevsner, "The Term 'Architect' in the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, XVII, 1942, pp. 549-62; idem, "Terms of Architectural Planning in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V, 1942, pp. 232-37. The signatures of Roman medieval marble workers were collected by C. Promis, *Notizie epigrafiche degli artefici marmorarii romani dal X al XV secolo*, Turin, 1836.

<sup>5</sup> Mély, *Revue arch.*, 1920, p. 350, no. 84. The tomb of Eudes de Montreuil (died 1289), in the church of the Cordeliers in Paris, destroyed in 1580, is described and illustrated in A. Thevet, *Les vrais portraits et vies des hommes illustres grecz, latins, et payens*, 2 vols., Paris, 1584 (facsimile, New York, 1973), II, fols. 503-504 verso; cf. S. Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française du moyen age au règne de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1898, p. 409.

in whatever place possible. The request was granted in February of the following year, and the chapel was mentioned as finished in the testament Vecchietta made, sound of mind but languishing in body, as he said, in May 1479, a year before he died. Both works still exist (figs. 8, 9). The painting, which shows the Madonna and Child with Sts. Peter, Paul, Lawrence and Francis before an apse, is in the Gallery of Siena; it bears the inscription, "This is the work of the sculptor Lawrence son of Peter, alias the Old Man, for his devotion." The bronze figure of the Risen Christ, now on the high altar of the hospital church, is inscribed, "The Sienese painter Lawrence son of Peter, alias the Old Man, made this work in 1476 for his devotion." (He had his curious nickname, incidentally, by the time he was 31.)<sup>6</sup>

The panel painting and the statue, both to-

gether and separately, were novel works in several respects. The genesis of Vecchietta's idea was in the Cathedral of Siena, where since the early fourteenth century Duccio's famous *Maestà* had occupied the high altar (fig. 10). Beginning before the middle of the fifteenth century, and reflecting a great efflorescence of the cult of the Holy Sacrament in Siena and elsewhere, there is record of a series of works made to be placed on the high altar in devotion to the Eucharist. These included several tabernacles in gilt wood and silver to contain the Host, in accordance with the blossoming custom of reserving the Host separately on the high altar (rather than in niches set in the wall in less conspicuous locations); there were also several statuettes of Christ, one of which Vecchietta had himself executed, to be placed on the high altar in front of the *Maestà* on special occasions like Eastertide and the Feast of Corpus

<sup>6</sup> Summaries of the information concerning the chapel may be found in J. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, London and New York, 1971, p. 306f.; G. Vigni, *Lorenzo di Pietro detto il Vecchietta*, Florence, 1937, pp. 67, 80, 83; and most recently the study by H. W. van Os, "Vecchietta and the Persona of the Renaissance Artist," in I. Lavin and J. Plummer, eds., *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in Honor of Millard Meiss*, New York, 1977, pp. 445-54, esp. pp. 451ff., where several of the observations made here are anticipated. The texts of the petition and testament were published by G. Milanesi, *Documenti per la storia dell'arte senese*, 3 vols., Siena, 1854-56, II, pp. 366-69.

Vecchietta was assumed to have been born in 1412 until C. del Bravo determined that he was baptized on August 11, 1410 (*Scultura senese del quattrocento*, Flor-

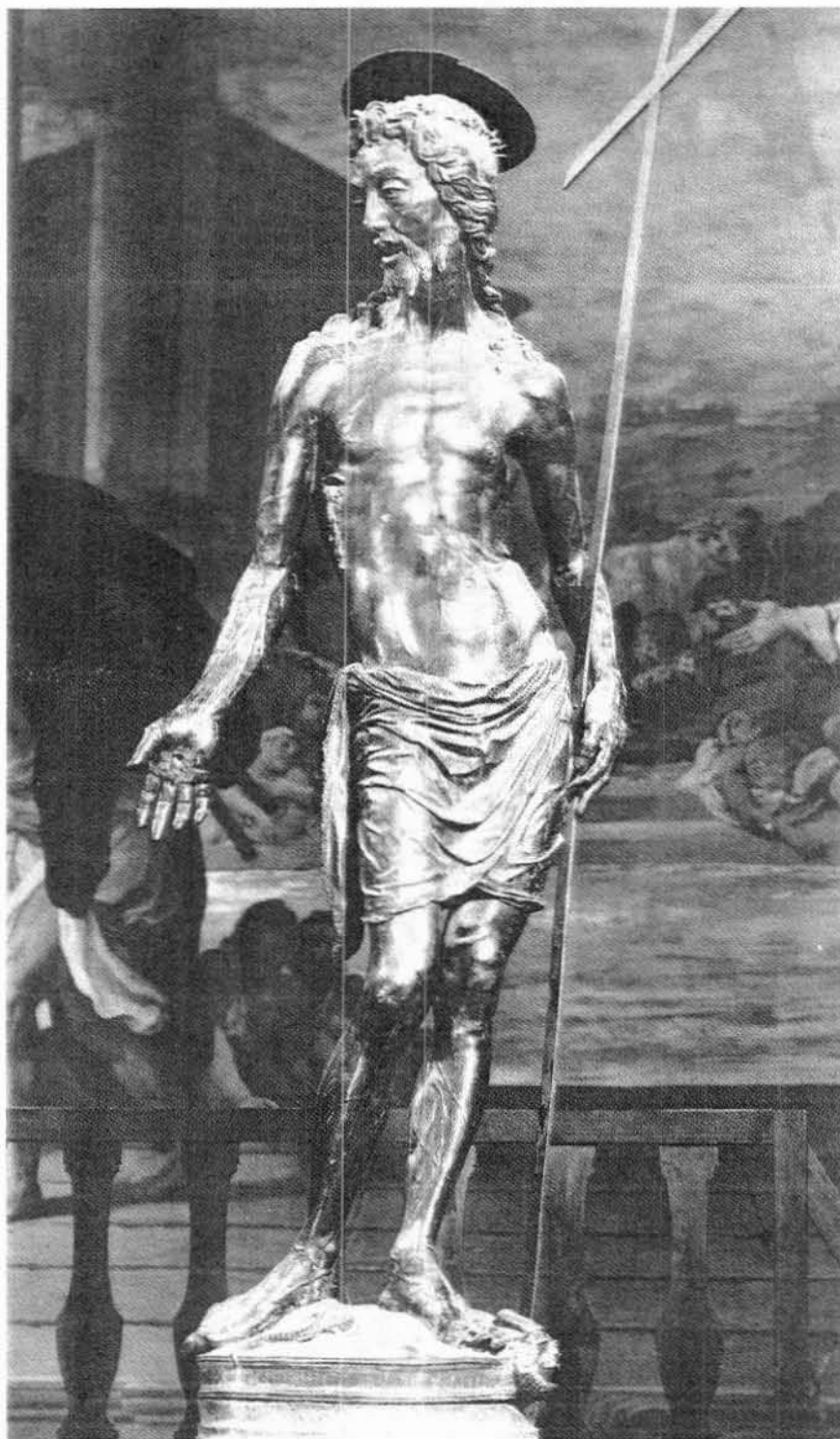
ence, 1970, p. 60). The earliest use I have noted of his nickname — for which I have found no explanation in the sources — is in a document of April 4, 1442 (Milanesi, *Documenti*, II, p. 369).

The inscriptions: on the Risen Christ, OPVS LAVRENTII PETRI PICTORIS AL VECCHIETTA DE SENIS MCCCCLXXVI P SVI DEVOTIONE FECIT HOC (Vigni, *Vecchietta*, p. 83); on the altarpiece, OPVS LAVRENTII PETRI SCULTORIS ALIAS EL VECCHIETTA OB SVAM DEVOTIONEM (thus E. Jacobsen, *Das Quattrocento in Siena*, Strasbourg, 1908, p. 52, and C. Brandi, *La regia pinacoteca di Siena*, Rome, 1933, p. 310, no. 210; the fourth word is given as "pictoris" by Vigni, *Vecchietta*, p. 80, but close scrutiny shows that this was a change from its original form); see also n. 8, below.



8. Vecchietta, *Madonna and Child with Saints*, Pinacoteca, Siena





9. Vecchietta, *Risen Christ*, S. Maria della Scala, Siena  
Photo: Alinari



10. Duccio, *Maestà*, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena  
Photo: Alinari

Domini.<sup>7</sup> Vecchietta was making a coherent, stable and wholly monumental version of this disparate and temporary arrangement at the cathedral for his own funerary chapel. In doing so, he created what was, so far as I can discover, the first altar in which a monumental painting and a monumental sculpture were combined in a unified, preconceived design — an important event

in the history of relations between the arts. At the same time, Vecchietta's intention was also to demonstrate his prowess in both media; this was surely his point in calling himself a sculptor in the inscription on the painting and a painter in that on the sculpture, as though this purely artistic feat was in itself the act of devotion to which both inscriptions refer.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The documents concerning the sacramental works for the high altar of the Duomo have not been carefully sorted and studied; they are published or referred to in Milanese, *Documenti*, II, pp. 220, 259f., 369, III, pp. 61, 62; S. Borghesi and L. Banchi, *Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'arte senese*, Siena, 1898, p. 269; V. Lusini, *Il duomo di Siena*, 2 vols., Siena, 1911-39, II, p. 48, n. 1, p. 49, nn. 1-2, p. 55, nn. 1-2, p. 56, nn. 1-2; I. Machetti, "Orafi senesi," *La Diana*, IV, 1929, pp. 69, 72, 73, 96, nn. 185-6, pp. 207-9; Del Bravo, *Scultura*, p. 64, n. 185; also the inventory of 1467 published by J. Labarte, "L'église

cathédrale de Sienne et son trésor d'après un inventaire de 1467," *Annales archéologiques*, XXV, 1865, pp. 263, 268, 276 (cf. J. Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2 vols., Munich, 1924, II, p. 635).

On the Feast of Corpus Domini in Siena, cf. Lusini, *Duomo*, II, pp. 55, 56, n. 1; J. Pope-Hennessy, *Sassetta*, London, 1939, p. 8f. A key event was the transfer of the celebration from the church of the Carmine to the Duomo in 1447.



11. Siena, S. Maria della Scala, view towards altar

Photo: Grassi

The painted altarpiece is notable on several counts, one of them purely stylistic. Although in a ruinous state, it must have been, as one recent critic has said, "not only Vecchietta's masterpiece but one of the greatest creations of the fifteenth century in Siena (with) a unity and sense of monumentality unusual (he might well have said unprecedented) in Sienese painting."<sup>8</sup> This effect is due at least partly to the way in which the figures are isolated against a grandiose apse with a coffered vault, an unprecedented compositional

device. Vecchietta evidently wanted to echo in his own chapel the form of the hospital church itself (fig. 11), establishing a new kind of sequential link between sculpture, painting and the architectural context. Finally, the subject of the altarpiece — ostensibly an ordinary *sacra conversazione*, the Madonna and Child with saints — is really quite extraordinary. Saints Peter and Paul are shown in their traditional capacity as guardians of the mother church and intercessors for the persons kneeling beside them. But rather than

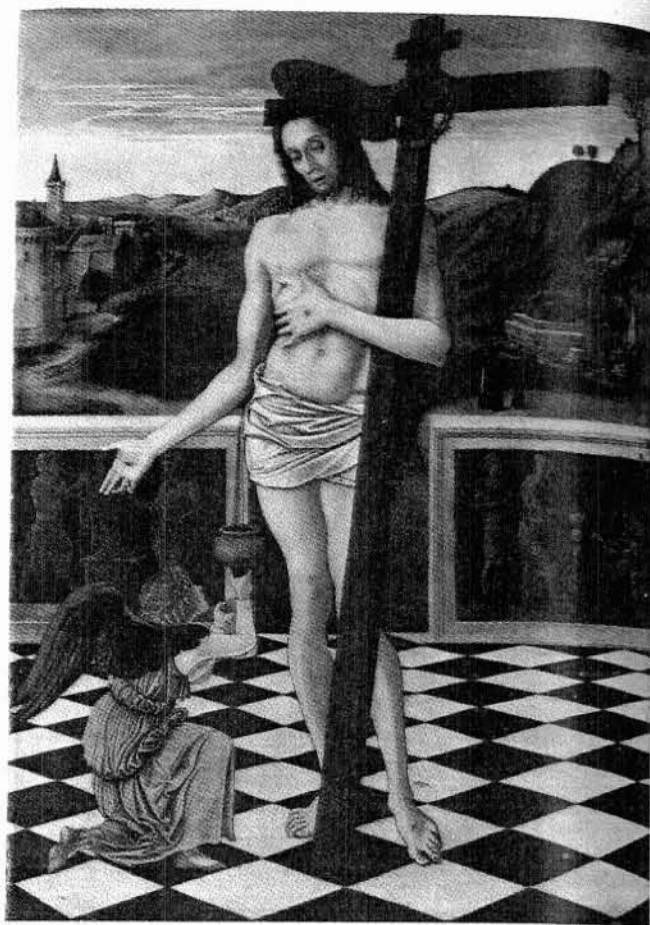
<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that, judging from the inscriptions given in Vigni's catalogue of the artist's works (*Vecchietta*, p. 73ff.), once Vecchietta began to include his profession, i.e. after about 1460, he always called himself "sculptor"

on paintings and "painter" on sculptures.

<sup>9</sup> E. Carli, *Guida della pinacoteca di Siena*, Milan, 1958, pp. 75, 77, no. 210.

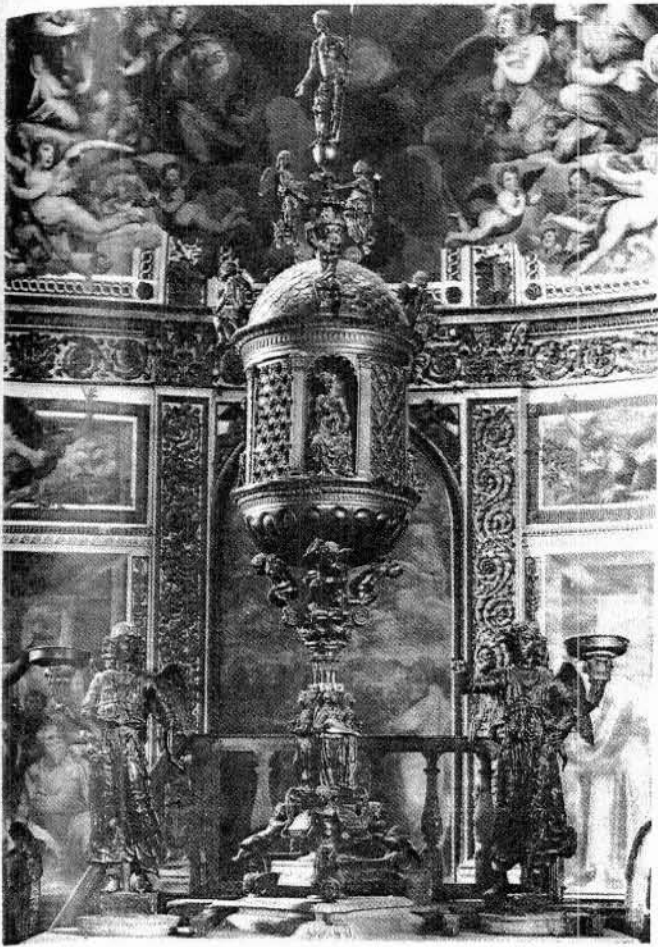
portray himself and his wife as supplicants, as would have been normal in such a donor picture, Vecchietta showed their name-saints, Lawrence and Francis, in this guise.<sup>10</sup> This explicit act of self-denial betrays a kind of alter ego, or rather alter non-ego, of the individual pride and assertiveness we usually associate with the Renaissance — a crucial point to which we shall return later.

The great bronze Resurrected Saviour (fig. 9) is the first monumental, isolated such figure of Christ in Italian art and the first used as an altar-piece. It contributed mightily to that epochal process of the Renaissance wherein sculpture was liberated from the architectural matrix to which it had been confined in the Middle Ages. The conception of the figure is also new in this context; it alludes to a tradition that is fundamental to the whole phenomenon with which we are concerned. The type of the standing, seminude Christ holding the crossed banner and looking sideward and down toward His outstretched right hand, is based on a common image that had been created specifically to convey the essence of the Eucharist as a sacrament. A well-known instance is the panel by Giovanni Bellini in the National Gallery in London, which may actually have served as the door of a sacrament tabernacle containing the Host (fig. 12). Christ's gesture and attention are directed toward the chalice, so that the relation between His sacrifice and the sacrament is made clear. The derivation of Vecchietta's figure from this tradition may be traced through his own small image of the Saviour standing on a chalice that crowns the bronze ciborium for the Host which he had made a few years earlier for the high altar in the hospital church (fig. 13). This



12. Giovanni Bellini, *The Blood of the Redeemer*, National Gallery, London

<sup>10</sup> His testament makes clear that the names Peter and Paul would also have had various personal associations for the artist (Milanesi, *Documenti*, II, p. 366f.)



13. Vecchietta, ciborium, Cathedral, Siena  
Photo: Alinari

was the first such free-standing, figured ciborium, a notable step in that process of isolation and exaltation of the sacrament of which we have spoken.<sup>11</sup>

Part of the evidence of the seminal importance of Vecchietta's statue is the fact that it must have been among the chief inspirations for the next great isolated sculpture of the Resurrected Christ, that executed in marble in the second decade of the sixteenth century by Michelangelo for the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome (fig. 14). Some years before, Michelangelo had presumably visited Siena in connection with a commission he had for sculptures in the Cathedral, and Vecchietta's funerary

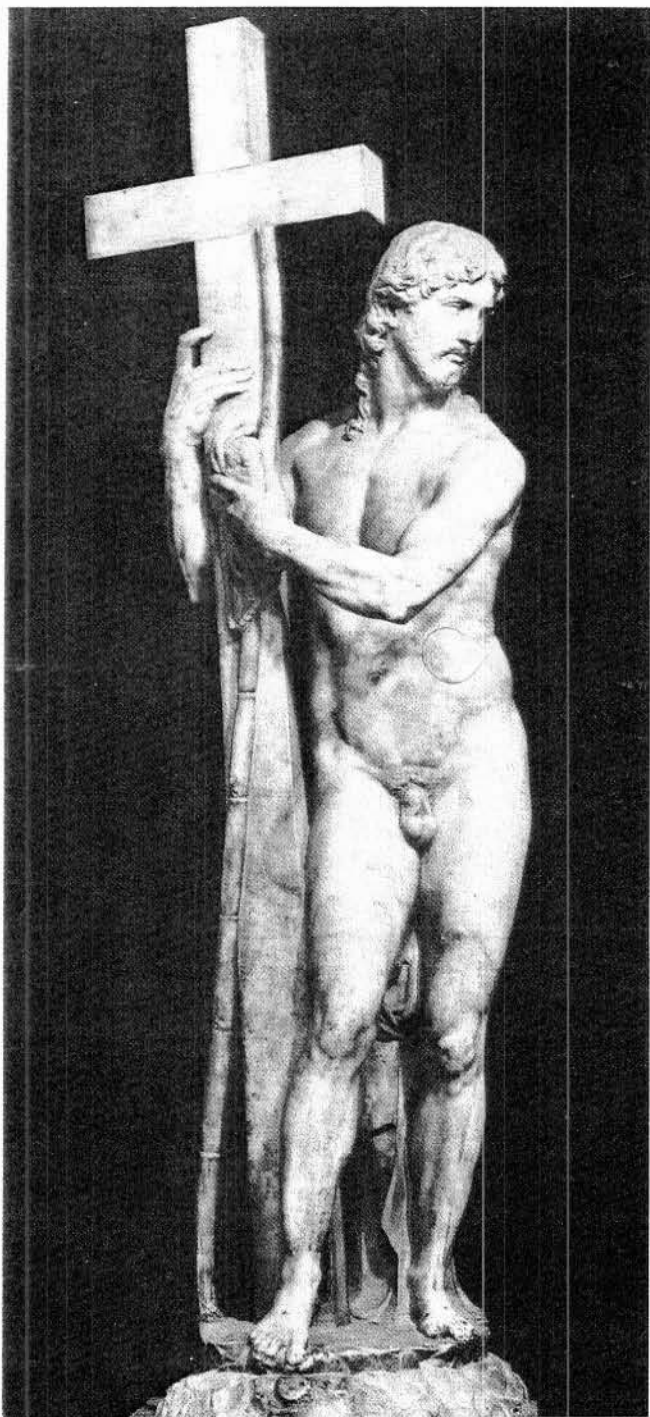
<sup>11</sup> For recent surveys of this and related themes, see M. E. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century. A Study in the Iconography of the Early Counter-Reformation*, unpub. diss., U. of Chicago, 1965, pp. 67-81; C. Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows in Italy," *Art Bulletin*, LI, 1969, pp. 107-18, 233-46; G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 2 vols., New York, 1971-72, II, pp. 205-7.

On the Bellini, see M. Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Earlier Italian Schools*, London, 1971, p. 60f., no. 1233.

Vecchietta's ciborium was commissioned in 1467 and is signed and dated 1472 (cf. Vigni, *Vecchietta*, p. 81f.); it was moved to the high altar of the cathedral in the early sixteenth century and replaced by the Risen Christ from Vecchietta's funerary chapel. For detailed photographs, see Del Bravo, *Scultura*, pls. 301ff.

The place of Vecchietta's ciborium in the history of such monuments is noted by H. Caspary, *Das Sakraments-tabernakel in Italien bis zum Konzil von Trient*, Munich, 1965, pp. 62-65.

Vecchietta's adaptation of the type from the purely sacramental tradition is accompanied by a subtle shift toward eschatological content. In the figure for his funerary chapel the chalice on which the ciborium Christ stands is replaced, as it were, by the maiden-headed serpent which Christ crushes underfoot as a sign of his victory over original sin.



14. Michelangelo, *Risen Christ*, S. Maria sopra Minerva, Rome  
Photo: Alinari

chapel must have greatly impressed him — affecting not only his early Minerva Christ but also, much later, his own idea for a tomb monument.<sup>12</sup>

Vasari tells us that Michelangelo made the Pietà now in Florence Cathedral for an altar in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where he intended to be buried (fig. 15).<sup>13</sup> The familiar facts that Michelangelo represented himself in the guise of Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea who supports the limp body of Christ, and ultimately tried to destroy the group in a fit of rage when an importunate servant pressed him to finish it, seem an integral part of the sense of

<sup>12</sup> Vecchietta's figure has also been cited as precedence for that of Michelangelo by Schiller, *Iconography*, II, p. 204, n. 30; Eisler, especially, has related the Minerva Christ to the sacramental tradition ("Golden Christ," p. 242ff.).

Michelangelo was required to visit Siena by the terms of his contract of 1501 for the Piccolomini altar in the Duomo (cf. the summary in C. de Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 5 vols., Princeton, 1943-60, I, p. 228).

<sup>13</sup> In his life of Baccio Bandinelli, "... per metterlo in Santa Maria Maggiore alla sua sepoltura" (G. Milanesi, ed., *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, 9 vols., Florence, 1878-85, VI, p. 189). The altar and the funerary intent are mentioned elsewhere by Vasari, "... dovessi servire per la sepoltura di lui, a piè di quello altare dove e' pensava di porla" (P. Barocchi, ed., *Giorgio Vasari. La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, 5 vols., Milan-Naples, 1962-72, I, p. 83; cf. also Vasari's letter to Lionardo Buonarroti after Michelangelo's death, quoted in *ibid.*, III, p. 1439) and Condivi, "Fa disegno di donar questa Pietà a qualche chiesa, ed a piè dell'altare, ove fia posta, farsi seppellire" (A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelangiolo*, ed. Florence, 1938, p. 128). Cf. also a letter of March 18, 1564, from Giovanni di Simone to Lionardo Buonarroti, "... la volonta sua era di voler essere sepolto sotto la dicta pietra ed appresso dell'ossa della buona memoria di Iodovico suo padre ..." (G. Daelli, *Carte michelangiololesche inedite*, Milan, 1865, p. 52).



15. Michelangelo, *Pietà*, Cathedral, Florence  
Photo: Alinari

pathos the work evokes;<sup>14</sup> indeed, it has always been understood as a deeply moving and highly personal statement on last things by the aging artist whose poems and letters show that he had been preoccupied, even obsessed, by the idea of death nearly all his life. What has not been appreciated is precisely its relationship to the mortuary tradition that concerns us, which sheds much light on the innovative character of the work, both in content and in form.<sup>15</sup>

According to Vasari, Michelangelo at the end of his life did not draw up a formal will but instead, in his usual lapidary fashion, "left his soul to God, his body to the earth, and his property to his nearest relations."<sup>16</sup> Michelangelo had drawn up a formal will many years before, however, on the occasion of an almost fatal illness. We do not know the text of the will, which is mentioned in a letter of January 9, 1546, to Michelangelo's nephew from a friend who had brought the artist into his house and nursed him during the emergency; but it

was clearly a complete document, lacking only the notary's signature, never carried out because Michelangelo's health improved. A variety of quite independent considerations suggests that Michelangelo began the Pietà at about this time, that is, when he was 70, and it seems obvious that this near escape from death spurred him to think seriously of his own tomb.<sup>17</sup> The fact that Michelangelo wrote a will is important in another sense, as well, for it illuminates a passage in one of his latest and most troubled sonnets about death, which begins:

Certain of death, but not when it will be,  
Life's short, and I have little of it left . . .<sup>18</sup>

The opening phrase, "Certain of death, but not when it will be," is immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with notarial documents of the period as a formulary in wills; it occurs over and over again as part of the introductory rationale for drawing up the document. "I, the testator, considering that nothing is more certain than death and nothing more uncertain than the time

<sup>14</sup> The old man was already described as a self-portrait by Vasari who, like Condivi, refers to it as Nicodemus; visually, however, there is nothing to distinguish the figure from Joseph of Arimathea, with whom he has often been identified by modern writers. The problem has been discussed by W. Stechow, "Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus?" in W. Lotz, ed., *Studien zur toskanischen Kunst. Festschrift für Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich zum 23. März 1963*, Munich, pp. 289-302.

<sup>15</sup> Michelangelo's attitude toward death has been related to the *Ars Moriendi* tradition and Savonarola by A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, Turin, 1957, p. 317f.; cf. De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, V, pp. 15, 97.

<sup>16</sup> ". . . con conoscimento grandissimo fece testamento di tre parole, che lasciava l'anima sua nelle mane de Iddio, il suo corpo alla terra e la roba a' parenti più prossimi . . ." (Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, I, p. 116).

<sup>17</sup> ". . . Michelagnolo, quale certo ha hauto gran male et si è degniato venire qui in casa come l'altra volta, dove di già è tanto migliorato che si può dire guarito, e statene di buona voglia; confessossi et comunicossi et ordinò il testamento quale io scrissi; poi non lo ha rogato per notaro per essere tanto migliorato che non ci è più pericolo . . ." (Luigi del Riccio to Lionardo Buonarroti, E. Steinmann, *Michelangelo e Luigi del Riccio*, Florence, 1932, p. 57). Concerning Michelangelo's illness on this occasion (he had also fallen sick and been taken in by Del Riccio in the summer of 1544), see E. H. Ramsden, *The Letters of Michelangelo*, 2 vols., London, 1963, II, p. 269f.

The dating of the Pietà has been most thoroughly discussed by A. Perrig (*Michelangelo Buonarroti's letzte Pietà-Idee*, Bern, 1960 [Basler Studien zur Kunstgeschichte, N.F., I], pp. 37-46), who concludes that the work was begun in 1547, essentially in agreement with previous opinions; it seems that heretofore only Perrig (p. 44, n. 16) has referred to the illness in this connection, albeit incidentally.



and place of its occurrence, etc. . . ."<sup>19</sup> In Michelangelo's sonnet the fatal conundrum of absolute opposites expressed by this usually banal cliché — certain promise, uncertain fulfillment — becomes the paradigm for the enigma of faith and the mystery of salvation itself. The last verses read:

When will it be, O Lord, what we await,  
Your true believers? . . .  
What good to promise men so great a light  
If death comes first, pinning us just the way  
We are attacked, with no escape at all?

There had been a tradition for giving Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea the features of a real man, but Michelangelo was the first to make the figure a self-portrait.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, Michelangelo introduced a new element of

ambiguity, since according to legend Nicodemus had been a sculptor, and according to the gospels Joseph of Arimathea had provided his own tomb for Christ's interment. The subject of the group is equally ambiguous: the body of Christ is displayed as in a traditional lamentation, but the only precedents in which Nicodemus or Joseph holds Christ in this way, that is, frontally from behind, relate to the entombment (fig. 16).<sup>21</sup> I have no doubt, in fact, that Michelangelo deliberately fused these two themes in order to express visually that same kind of suspended animation, or rather suspended inanimation, which in the poem relates the paradoxical natures of death and salvation. When one considers that Christ may be thought of as descending not simply into his "ordinary" tomb, the altar,<sup>22</sup> but into that of Michel-

<sup>18</sup> I quote from the translation of C. Gilbert, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo*, (ed. R. N. Linscott), New York, 1970, p. 164f., no. 293. The Italian text is as follows:

Di morte certo, ma non già dell'ora,  
la vita è breve e poco me n'avanza;  
diletta al senso, è non però la stanza  
a l'alma, che mi prega pur ch'i' mora.

Il mondo è cieco e 'l tristo esempro ancora  
vince e sommerge ogni prefetta usanza;  
spont'è la luce e seco ogni baldanza,  
trionfa il falso e 'l ver non surge fora.

Deh, quando fie, Signor, quel che s'aspetta  
per chi ti crede? c'ogni troppo indugio  
tronca la speme e l'alma fa mortale.

Che val che tanto lume altrui prometta,  
s'anzi vien morte, e senza alcun refugio  
ferma per sempre in che stato altri assale?

(E. N. Girardi, ed., *Michelangelo Buonarroti. Rime*, Bari, 1960 [Scrittori d'Italia, CCXVII], p. 138f., no. 295)

<sup>19</sup> E.g., the wills of Mantegna, March 1, 1504, "Considerans naturam conditionemque Mortalium fragilem esse, atque caducam, nilque esse certius morte, et ejus hora incertius . . ." (G. Moschini, *Della origine e delle vicende*

*della pittura in Padova*, Padua, 1826, p. 50, n. 1), Cosimo Rosselli, November 25, 1506, "Quum nihil certius est morte nihilque incertius hora eius . . ." (G. Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, 3 vols., Florence, 1839-40, II, p. 457, n.), Cellini, December 18, 1570, "Cum nihil in hac vita praesenti sit morte certius, et hora morte nihil incertius . . ." (F. Tassi, *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini*, 3 vols., Florence, 1829, III, p. 226).

A fundamental contribution to the study of such documents is M. Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1973, including (pp. 657-72) a survey of French notarial formularies for testaments.

<sup>20</sup> Vasari identifies as a portrait of Michelozzo the figure of Nicodemus in Fra Angelico's Deposition from S. Trinità (cf. Stechow, "Joseph," p. 300).

<sup>21</sup> I.e., the sarcophagus is always shown; see the material assembled in Stechow, "Joseph." I reproduce (fig. 16) the example which De Tolnay (*Michelangelo*, V, pp. 86, 151) regards as closest to Michelangelo.

<sup>22</sup> John Shearman has suggested that the dead Christ in Pontormo's S. Felicità altarpiece of the late 1520's is being lowered into the "altar-tomb" below (*Pontormo's Altarpiece in S. Felicità*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1971 [Charlton Lectures on Art, no. 51], p. 22).

angelo himself, it begins to become apparent what being an artist and dying meant to him.

Another aspect of the Pietà that can be specifically related to its function is that, so far as I can discover, it is the first isolated, monumental, multi-figured group cut from a single block since antiquity. Multi-figured groups had often been carved from single pieces of stone, but never in isolation and on this scale; conversely, large, isolated monolithic groups were common by this stage in the Renaissance, but not with so many figures.<sup>23</sup> Much of the significance of this point lies in the fact that the technical feat of carving big, complex monolithic groups is one of the frequent topoi in classical literature on art. Pliny notes with admiration that this or that work was carved *ex uno lapide*, and this idea, like those generally of free-standing sculpture and grandness of scale, became a major field for emulation of the ancients and an important aesthetic ideal.<sup>24</sup> Pliny makes this statement about two of the most famous of all ancient sculptures, both of which were rediscovered in Michelangelo's lifetime, and both of which were found instead to be pieced together from several blocks. The first of the works in question, now in the Vatican museum (fig. 17), shows Laocoon and his two

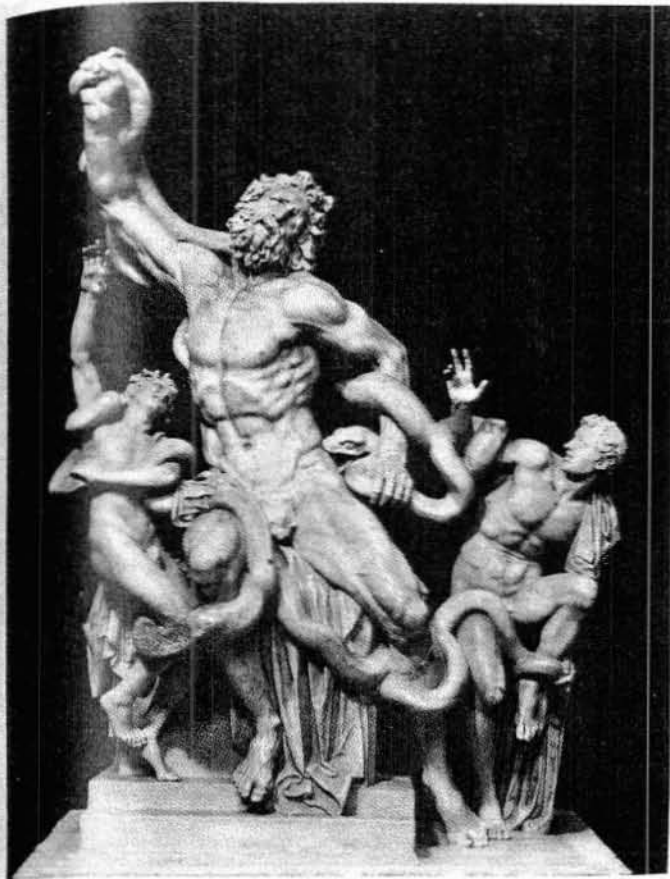


16. Attributed to Fra Filippo Lippi, *Entombment of Christ*, Musée, Cherbourg

Photo: Arch. Phot. Paris S. P. A. D. E. M.

<sup>23</sup> Michelangelo's group is 226 cm. high. Dr. William Forsyth has called my attention to the monolithic character of certain under life-size, multi-figured sculptures that form part of French Entombment groups (W. H. Forsyth, *The Entombment of Christ, French Sculptures of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, cf. p. 51, fig. 63). In Italy perhaps the nearest precedent would be Andrea Sansovino's and Francesco da Sangallo's groups of St. Anne, the Madonna and the infant Christ, from the first quarter of the century (Pope-Hennessy, *High Renaissance*, pp. 349f., 356).

<sup>24</sup> On this theme, cf. V. Bush Mockler, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento from Michelangelo to Giovanni Bologna*, Diss., Columbia U., 1967, p. 25f.



17. Laocöon, Museo Vaticano, Rome  
Photo: Alinari



18. Baccio Bandinelli, *Laocöon*, Uffizi, Florence  
Photo: Alinari

sons being strangled by Athena's serpents; Pliny describes it as a collaborative achievement of three sculptors who carved it from one block. It is no exaggeration to say that one of the great events in the history of European culture was the accidental rediscovery of the Laocöon in Rome on January 14, 1506. The impact was meteoric — here at hand was one of the fabled masterpieces described by a hallowed writer of antiquity. Its influence was immediate and vast, and many scholars have emphasized its effect on Michelangelo's work. He was, we know, among the first to see the new prodigy, which he is said to have declared a "miracle of art"; he may

have used the term advisedly, since an absolutely contemporary account tells us that Michelangelo pointed out that it was not carved from one block at all, but was adroitly composed of some four pieces. Indeed, it was said to be impossible "to make secure three life-size statues, joined in a single block with so many and such wonderful groups of serpents without artificial means." We know today that there are at least seven parts. Copies were made by many artists, one of whom, Baccio Bandinelli, claimed that he would surpass the original. His copy (fig. 18), which dates from 1520-25 and is now in the Uffizi, is full-scale; in a sense, it certainly does surpass the

original: it consists of only three pieces.<sup>25</sup>

The second sculpture of this kind is again one with which Michelangelo was closely involved — the group now in the Naples Museum, known as the Farnese Bull (fig. 19). This huge "mountain of stone," as it was called, was discovered in Rome in early January of 1546 at the very moment Michelangelo was

deathly ill. Later that year he became the architect of the Palazzo Farnese and had the work restored as a fountain and installed in a courtyard of the palace. In this case we have no direct evidence that Michelangelo realized it was pieced together, but we do have the indirect report that someone who knew him well was perfectly aware of its true nature.<sup>26</sup>

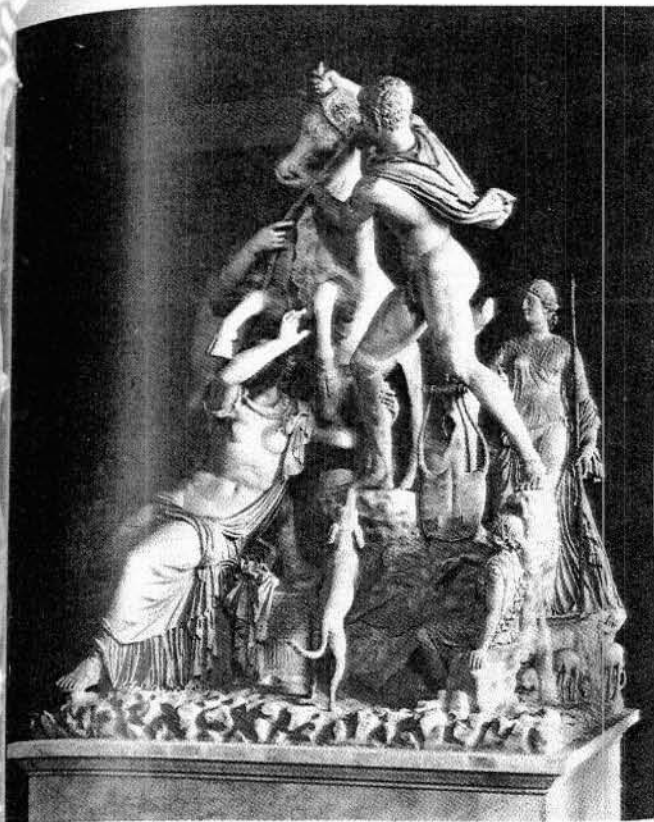
<sup>25</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXVI, p. 37; cf. K. Jex-Blake and E. Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, Chicago, 1977, p. 208f. On the Laocoon see Helbig, *Führer*, II, pp. 162-66, no. 219 (height with raised arm, 242 cm.), and the rich collection of material in H. H. Brummer, *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere*, Stockholm, 1970 (Stockholm Studies in the History of Art, no. 20), pp. 75-119; the early sources concerning the discovery are conveniently summarized by C. C. van Essen, "La découverte du Laocoon," *Akademie van Wetenschappen, Amsterdam. Afd. Letterkunde. Mededelingen*, XIV, no. 12, 1955, pp. 291-305. I quote the relevant passage from a letter of June 1, 1506, by Cesare Trivulzio (in which the names of Michelangelo and Giancristoforo Romano are garbled): "Questa statua, che insieme co' figliuoli, Plinio dice esser tutta d'un pezzo, Giovannangelo romano, e Michel Cristofano fiorentino, che sono i primi scultori di Roma, negano ch'ella sia d'un sol marmo, e mostrano circa a quattro commettiture; ma congiunte in luogo tanto nascoso, e tanto bene saldate e ristuccate, che non si possono conoscere facilmente se non da persone peritissime di quest'arte. Però dicono che Plinio s'ingannò, o volle ingannare altri, per render l'opera più ammirabile. Poichè non si potevano tener salde tre statue di statura giusta, collegata in un sol marmo, con tanti, e tanto mirabili gruppi di serpenti, con nessuna sorta di stromenti" (G. Bottari and S. Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, 8 vols., Milan, 1822-25, III, 475).

Michelangelo's dictum is reported in J. J. Boissard, *Romanae urbis topographiae et antiquitatum*, 2 vols., Frankfurt 1597-1602, I, p. 13f.: "Hanc Michael Angelus dicit esse miraculum artis singulare: in quo divinum artificum debeamus suspicere ingenium potius quam ad imitationem nos accingere" (cited from Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, IV, p. 2101).

Bandinelli's boast is recorded by Vasari, ed. Milanese,

VI, p. 145, "Baccio rispose che, non che farne un pari, gli bastava l'animo di passare quello di perfezione." On Bandinelli's copy of the Laocoon, cf. D. Heikamp, ed., "Vita di Baccio Bandinelli," in P. della Pergola, et al., eds., *Giorgio Vasari. Le Vite . . .*, Milan, 1962ff., VI, p. 27, n. 1. The work was damaged during the fire in the Uffizi in 1762 and extensively restored; I am indebted to Michael Mezzatesta for determining that the three figures are carved from separate blocks. This is the point of an evidently derisive allusion in a letter of February 11, 1520, from Leonardo Sellaio to Michelangelo: "Avete a sapere chome Bac[i]lo à fatto un chartone d'uno Laoconte, e menò Bastiano a vedello; e Bastiano mi dice che nonn.à paura più di nesuno, se non di voi. Àllo a fare di marmo, e fallo di pezzi" (italics mine; G. Poggi, *Il carteggio di Michelangelo*, Florence, 1965ff., II, p. 216). Perhaps related to such criticisms is the complicated impresa with the motto CANDOR ILLESVS (whiteness unsullied) sculptured in relief on the sides of the pedestal of Bandinelli's group; the impresa was employed in defense of his reputation by Clement VII, at whose behest the work was completed, and by the noble Bandinelli family of Siena, from which the sculptor claimed descent (cf. J. Gelli, *Motti divise imprese di famiglie e di personaggi italiani*, Milan, 1916, p. 142ff.; A. C. Minor and B. Mitchell, *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, Columbia, Mo., 1968, p. 126; H. W. Kaufmann, "Art from the Wedding of Cosimo de' Medici and Eleonora of Toledo (1539)," *Paragone*, XXI, 1970, no. 243, p. 57). A drawing for the impresa reliefs is among the Bandinelli papers in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, Acquisti e doni, filza 141.

Dott.ssa Silvia Meloni Trkulja of the Soprintendenza at the Uffizi has been most helpful with my various inquiries concerning Bandinelli's Laocoon.



19. *Farnese Bull*, Museo Nazionale, Naples  
Photo: Alinari

<sup>26</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXVI, p. 34; Jex-Blake and Sellers, *Chapters*, p. 205f.; A. Ruesch, ed., *Guida illustrata del Museo Nazionale di Napoli. I. Antichità*, Naples, 1911, pp. 80-83, no. 260. On Michelangelo and the Farnese Bull, cf. H. von Einem, *Michelangelo*, Berlin, 1973, pp. 173, 180f., 228. It seems that only von Einem (p. 228) has clearly perceived the technical achievement of the Florentine Pietà in this sense, and he relates it to the Farnese Bull. Pope-Hennessy makes an analogous point concerning Giovanni Bologna's *Rape of the Sabines* (1582; cf. *High Renaissance*, p. 53).

The reference to the pieced-together nature of the Farnese Bull occurs in a letter from Giacomo Carrara to Giovanni Bottari (June 19, 1768), published in the latter's *Raccolta di lettere*, VI, p. 238f.: "Circa il Toro Farnese . . . dirò una cosa, che sicuramente le riuscirà nuova, e molto strana, ed è che detto gruppo non è altrimenti d'un pezzo solo, come si crede, ma di più pezzi, in alcuni luoghi commessi a perfezione, tale che difficilissimamente

Thus, just as Michelangelo began to plan his own monument, the heroic claim of antiquity to have created multi-figured monolithic sculpture had received another serious blow. This is what Michelangelo achieved (or presumably would have achieved had he not broken it) in the Florentine Pietà, at the cost of immense labors of mind and body. We tend to appreciate mainly the work's formal and expressive qualities, and its unfinished state; Michelangelo's contemporaries understood it in the present context, as well. Vasari already saw the point in the first edition of his life of Michelangelo, published in 1550, which must have been written not long after the Pietà was begun: "One can suppose that this work, if he should leave it to the world finished, would outstrip all his other works for the difficulty of extracting from that block so many perfect things." Ascanio Condivi, whose biography of Michelangelo was published in 1554, calls it a "cosa rara," a "rare thing and among the most laborious works he has done so far." Ultimately indeed, it was this aspect of the sculpture

si può riconoscere. Ciò io ho sicuramente letto, non sono due anni, in una lettera stampata di scrittore del secolo XVI, il quale avvisava come nuova tale scoperta da eccellenti scultori di quei tempi fatta ad un suo corrispondente, il quale, se non erro, si era il sig. *Gabrio Sorbellone*; pur della persona, cui era diretta quella lettera, non m'accerto: bensì sono certissimo dell'asserzione che detto gruppo del Toro fosse commesso: onde falsa viene ad essere la commune credenza. Di ciò con diligente esame di uomo perito si può scoprire la verità, sempre che si voglia." *Gabrio Serbelloni* (1508-80) was a cousin of Pius IV and overseer of the Papal fortifications; he is mentioned in Vasari's life of Michelangelo (Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, I, p. 114f.; cf. U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 37 vols., Leipzig, 1907-50, XXX, p. 105). I have not been able to identify the publication to which Carrara refers.

that sanctified it as a work of art; so Vasari intimates in his second edition, published in 1568 after Michelangelo's death: "A laborious work," he says, "rare in one block, and truly divine."<sup>27</sup>

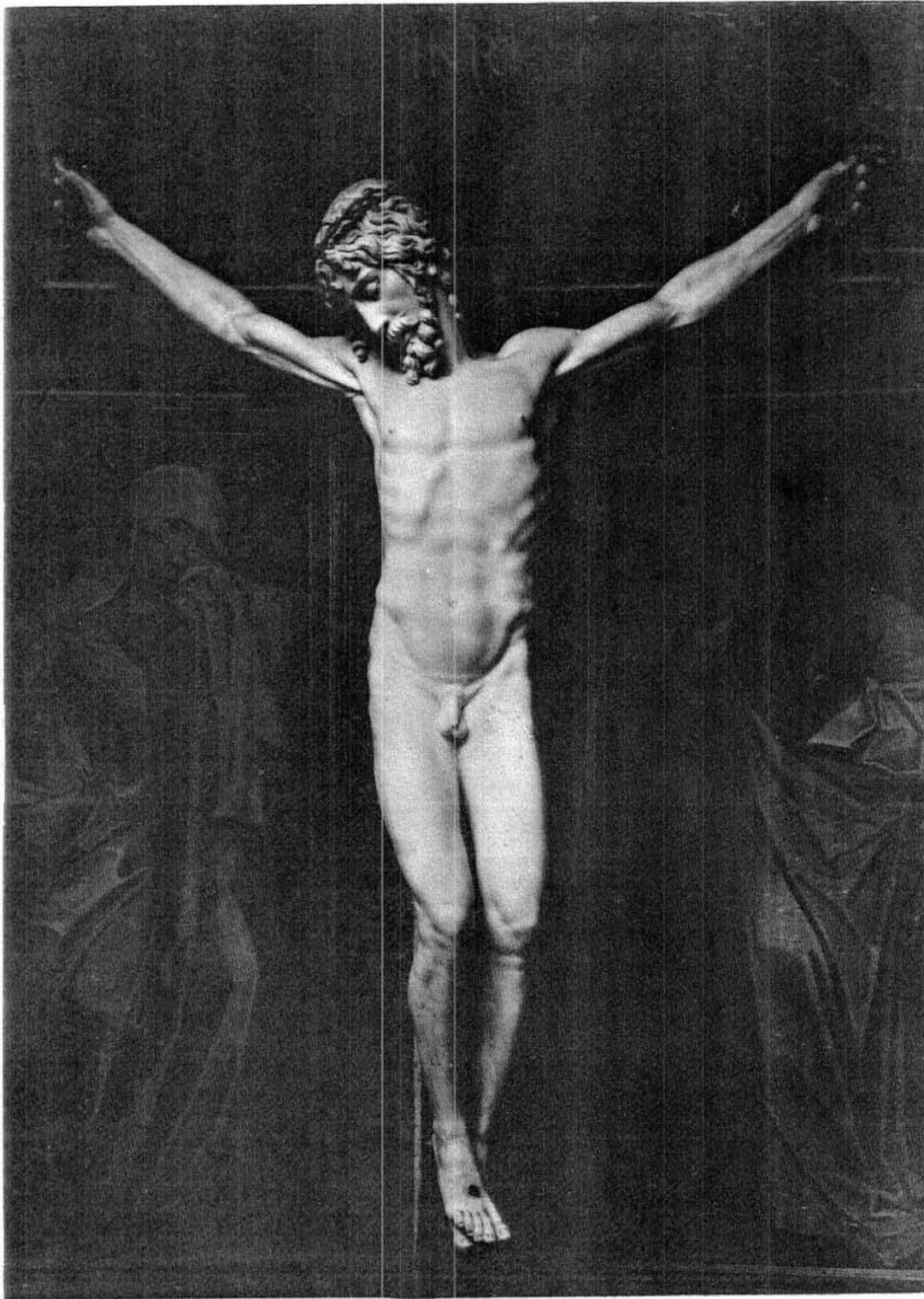
The remaining two sculptures we shall consider might be described as doubly interrelated, since they were conceived in direct emulation of Michelangelo and in direct competition with each other. One of these is the life-size crucifix with the body of Christ in white marble and the cross in black, now in the Escorial in Spain, signed and dated by Benvenuto Cellini in 1562 (fig. 20 and cover). The work had a rather picaresque origin in a vision Cellini received in 1539, while he was imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo, and described in his autobiography. The crucified Christ appeared to him in his miserable cell, as did the Madonna and Child, accompanied by two angels and St. Peter. He made a record of the vision at the time in a drawing and in a wax model, but we first hear of it as a tomb project in a will Cellini drew up on August 10, 1555, during an illness when he was 54. His plan was to execute the crucifix in marble and to affix it to a pier in the church of Santa Maria Novella, facing the famous painted wood crucifix of Brunelleschi, which had helped to inaugurate the Renaissance more than a century before. He stipulates that should he die before he could carry out the work, it be executed by the best available sculptor, expressly forbidding that the commission be given to any children, descendents or associates of his arch-rival, Baccio Bandinelli. Above the marble version of

what Cellini fondly and repeatedly referred to as "il mio bel Cristo" (my beautiful Christ), there was to be placed a large marble relief tondo representing the Virgin and Child with an angel and Saint Peter; on the ground below there was to be a small marble coffin ("un poco di cassoncino") for his body. The original wax model of the crucifix was also to be installed, in a glass case. The tomb project underwent innumerable changes thereafter and ultimately failed completely. Cellini never did get a tomb of his own; when he died, in 1571, he was buried in the common grave of the Florentine artists' Academy in Santissima Annunziata. He persevered only in the execution of his "bel Cristo" and the black marble cross; in the end he sold it to Duke Cosimo de' Medici, intending to make another one for himself. Cosimo's son in turn presented it to the King of Spain. Perhaps because of its nudity, it was installed in the retro-choir of the Escorial; its arms were broken, evidently in the Spanish war of independence.<sup>28</sup>

Ironically, these last two points, which contribute to the poignancy of the crucifix's history, also reflect essential features of its greatness. Cellini was literally impassioned by the work, far more so than by anything he had done before, and he constantly speaks of it, in his autobiography, his treatise on sculpture, his letters, his diaries, and his innumerable wills. Let me quote some of these passages to give you an idea of how he conceived it. "I have begun for pleasure," he says in the autobiography, "to make one of the

<sup>27</sup> "... la quale opera può pensarsi che, se da lui finita al mondo restasse, ogni altra opera sua da quella superata sarebbe per la difficoltà del cavar di quel sasso tante cose perfette" (Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, I, p. 123). "Vo' ben dire ch'è cosa rara, e delle faticose opere che egli fino a qui abbia fatte" (Condivi, *Vita*, p. 127). "Opera faticosa, rara in un sasso e veramente divina" (Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, I, p. 83).

<sup>28</sup> See the summary in Pope-Hennessy, *High Renaissance*, p. 371f. The history of the Crucifix was reconstructed in detail by P. Calamandrei, "Inediti celliniani. Nascita e vicende del 'mio bel Cristo,'" *Il Ponte*, VI, 1950, pp. 378-93, 487-99 (reprinted in C. Cordiè, ed., *Piero Calamandrei. Scritti e inediti celliniani*, Florence, 1971, pp. 55-98).



20. Benvenuto Cellini, Crucifix, Escorial  
Photo: MAS

most laborious works that has ever been made in this world: this is a crucifix of whitest marble, on a cross of blackest marble, large as a living man . . . no one has ever undertaken a work of such extreme laboriousness; even I would never have agreed to do so for any patron, for fear of shaming myself." In a petition to the administration of Duke Cosimo for payment, he describes it as "the crucifix I made of marble three and a quarter braccia high on a cross of black marble, at my own expense and for my own satisfaction, solely to see whether I could with my art surpass all my predecessors, who never attempted such a work; if they did, and as I more than once heard, they failed; whereas I succeeded, with the Lord's help and my extreme labor, and also at my great expense, by the grace of God." In his treatise on sculpture he speaks of the work as "among the

most difficult one can do in the art, that is, dead bodies. This was the image of Jesus Christ our Saviour hanging on the cross, to which I devoted the greatest study, laboring on this work with the affection proper to the subject, and the more eagerly for knowing that I was the first to execute a crucifix in marble . . . And I placed the body of the Crucified on a cross of black Carrara marble, a stone most difficult to manage because it is very hard and very prone to shatter."<sup>29</sup>

We are struck perhaps first of all by the sensuous quality of Cellini's feeling for the beauty of the sculpture, which goes beyond the starkly elegant contrast of the white figure against the black cross. He was in love with his "bel Cristo" as he loved the body of Christ, that is, the Eucharist, itself. Old photographs show that the loins of the figure were once covered with real drapery,

<sup>29</sup> ". . . io mi sono preso per piacere di fare una delle più faticose opere che mai si sia fatte al mondo: e questo si è un Crocifisso di marmo bianchissimo, in su una croce di marmo nerissimo, ed è grande quanto un grande uomo vivo . . . una cotale opera nessuno uomo mai non s'è messo a una cotale estrema fatica; né manco io non mi sarei ubbrigato affarlo per qualsivoglia Signore, per paura di non restarne in vergogna" (*Vita*, Bk. II, ch. 100, ed. G. G. Ferrero, *Opere di Benvenuto Cellini*, Turin, 1971, p. 566f.); "Il Crocifisso fatto da me di marmo, quale è di grandezza braccia 3 1/4, in su una Croce di marmo nero, fatto a tutte mia spese e a mia soddisfazione, solo per mostrare se con la forza dell'arte mia io potevo trapassare tutti i mia maggiori, i quali non si erano mai provati a tale impresa; e se pure e's'erano provati, e come più volte presentii non era loro riuscito, per essermi, mediante la Maestà d'Iddio, e mie estreme fatiche, e inoltre con grandissima mia spesa e tempo di tre anni, per la Iddio grazia, riuscitami . . ." (*Tassi, Vita*, III, p. 193f.); "Quantunque da me sieno state fatte più Statue di Marmo con tutto ciò per brevità non intendo di far menzione se non d'una, per essere delle più difficili che nell'arte si facciano il che sono i corpi morti. Questa fù l'immagine del Salvator nostro Giesù Christo pendete in Croce nella quale posi grandissimo studio lavorando in dett'opera con quella diligenza, & affezione che meritava tanto simulacro,

è tanto più volentieri quant'io sapeva d'essere il primo che in marmo havesse lavorato Crocifissi . . . Et posi il corpo del Crocifisso sopr'una Croce di marmo nero Carrarese pietra molto difficile da lavorare per essere durissima, & facilissima à schiantare" (*Della scultura*, Bk. II; cf. Cellini, *Due trattati*, Florence, 1568, fol. 56 verso).

The Marciana manuscript of the *Trattato* contains some interesting differences from the version published in 1568: ". . . io cercai di scerre di detta arte una opera la più difficile, la qual opera mai per altro uomo in prima si era fatta. E questa si è un Crocifisso di marmo, il quale io mi messi a fare della grandezza d'un uomo vivo, di bella statura, e lo posi in su una croce di marmo nero, pur di Carrara medesimamente, il qual marmo è molto difficile da lavorare, si per esser duro e molto fragile, che volentieri si stianta. Questa difficile opera io l'avevo destinata per un mio sepulcro e meco medesimo mi scusavo che, se l'opera non mi fussi riuscita in quel bel modo ch'era il mio desiderio, almanco arei mostro la mia buona volontà. E potette tanto la gran volontà che io avevo di far tal opera, insieme con i grandi studi, che questi soprafecero le difficoltà grandissime che erano in tale opera; di modo ch'io satisfeci di sorte al mondo, ch'io mi contento di non allegare altra opera, se bene ne ho fatto qualcun'altra che questa, quanto al marmo" (Book II, ch. 6, ed. Ferrero, p. 787f.).

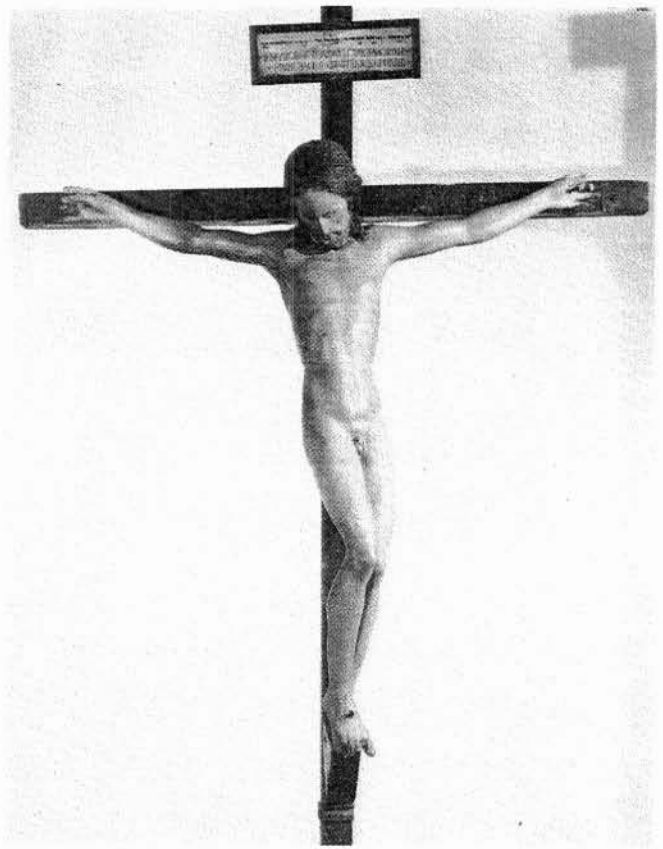




21. Rohan Master, *Crucifixion*, Bibl. Nationale, Paris, MS Lat. 9471, fol. 27  
Photo: Bibli. nat. Paris

and we know that this had long been a common practice. But I have no doubt that Cellini intended his Christ to be seen nude. There were in fact various traditions that seem to converge in Cellini's figure. Christ might be shown nude on the cross as a sign of his humiliation (fig. 21); a medieval legend told that the Virgin used her own veil to cover him. In the Renaissance the ancient concept of heroic nudity came to signify moral perfection and was brought to bear by Michelangelo in his recently rediscovered early

crucifix of polychromed wood for Santa Spirito, which I feel sure was also meant to be seen undraped (fig. 22). One of my reasons is precisely the influence upon Cellini of its pioneering, contrapposto design, with the head falling to the left and the body twisted to the right. This paradoxical combination of humility with divine innocence and perfection is evident in another work of Michelangelo's we know was originally conceived nude, his Risen Christ in Santa Maria sopra Minerva (fig. 14). Finally, we may recall a series of late crucifixion drawings by Michelangelo (fig. 23) and his Rondanini Pietà (fig. 24), in



22. Michelangelo, *Crucifix from Santo Spirito*, Casa Buonarroti, Florence  
Photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Sopr. Gallerie, Firenze

which Christ is shown nude while the other figures are draped. Cellini's is the first nude marble crucifix, and in it he merged the ideals of perfect beauty and perfect love to express the nature of the Eucharist.<sup>30</sup>

Cellini's sculpture is also, as he repeatedly emphasized, the first monumental figure of the crucified Christ carved in the round in a single block of stone. Cellini has always been treated as an incorrigible braggart, a classic exemplar of the unabashed egoism that was one of the quainter byproducts of the recovery of individual pride and self-esteem in the Renaissance. Already in the eighteenth century, and consistently thereafter, his claim regarding the crucifix was dismissed,

<sup>30</sup> For the nude Christ on the Cross and the related legend, cf. P. Thoby, *Le crucifix des origines au Concile de Trente. Étude iconographique*, Nantes, 1956, p. 191; M. Brisson, "An Unpublished Detail of the Iconography of the Passion in *Le chastel perilleux*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXX, 1967, pp. 398-401; W. O. Hassall, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, London, 1954, p. 134, cf. fols. 32f.; R. Haussert, *Michelangelo's Kruzifixus für Vittoria Colonna*, Opladen, 1971, p. 26, n. 79.

M. Lisner, the discoverer of the Santo Spirito Crucifix, assumes that here — and generally when the figure was carved nude — a loincloth of real material was to be added; even so, she does attribute some significance to the nudity of Brunelleschi's Santa Maria Novella Crucifix (*Holzkruzifix in Florenz und in der Toskana*, Munich, 1970 [Italienische Forschungen, Dritte Folge. IV], p. 117, n. 3; cf. p. 56).

The Minerva Christ was described as nude already in the first contract; all copies from the sixteenth century on, and older photographs, show it with drapery added (De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, III, pp. 93, 177).

For the Crucifixion drawings, *ibid.*, V, figs. 224-26; cf. also figs. 211-12, 216. Condivi describes the Pietà Michelangelo made for Vittoria Colonna as "ignudo" (*Vita*, p. 147).

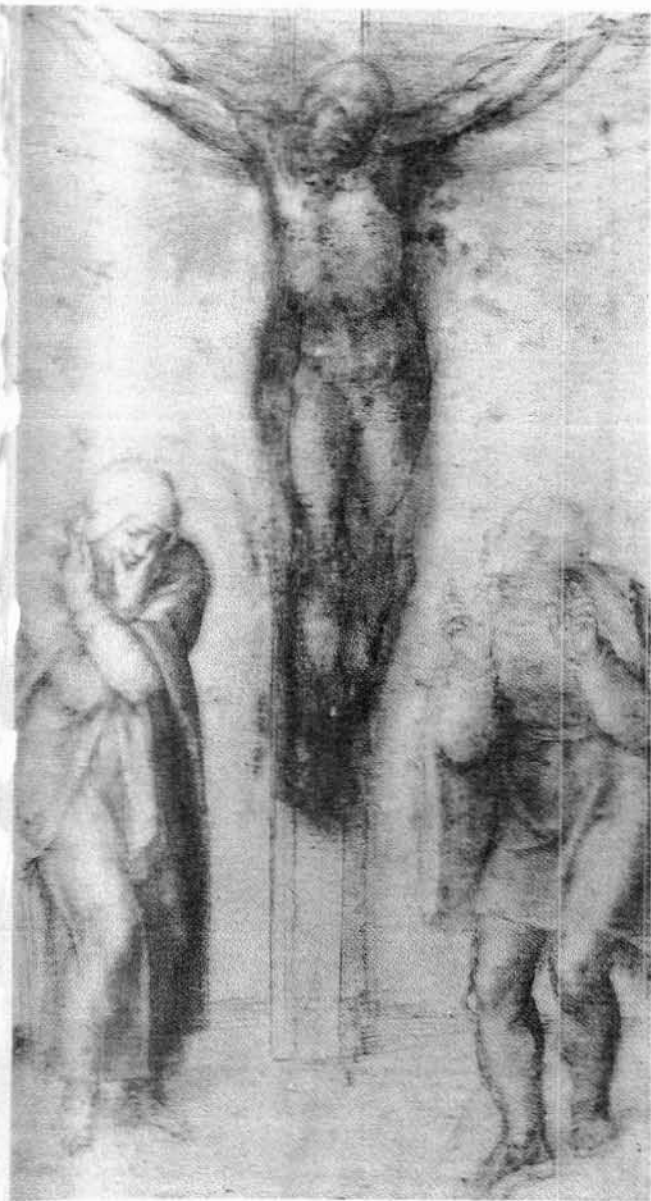
In general, for a view of the matter similar to my own, see D. de Chapeaurouge, "Aktporträts des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XI, 1969, p. 169f.

several instances that were presumed earlier being cited in evidence. In fact, none of the precedents is relevant; indeed, they betray a certain volition to discredit Cellini: one was a crucifix made of wood, not marble; a second turns out to have been executed much later; a third and fourth show that Cellini's claim was misunderstood, since they are not crucifixes at all but standing figures of Christ. Cellini knew exactly what he was saying; so far as I can determine, he was the first to achieve this extraordinary feat of daring and painstaking craftsmanship. I suspect that one of his motives for using marble of a contrasting color for the cross was to underscore the accomplishment.<sup>31</sup>

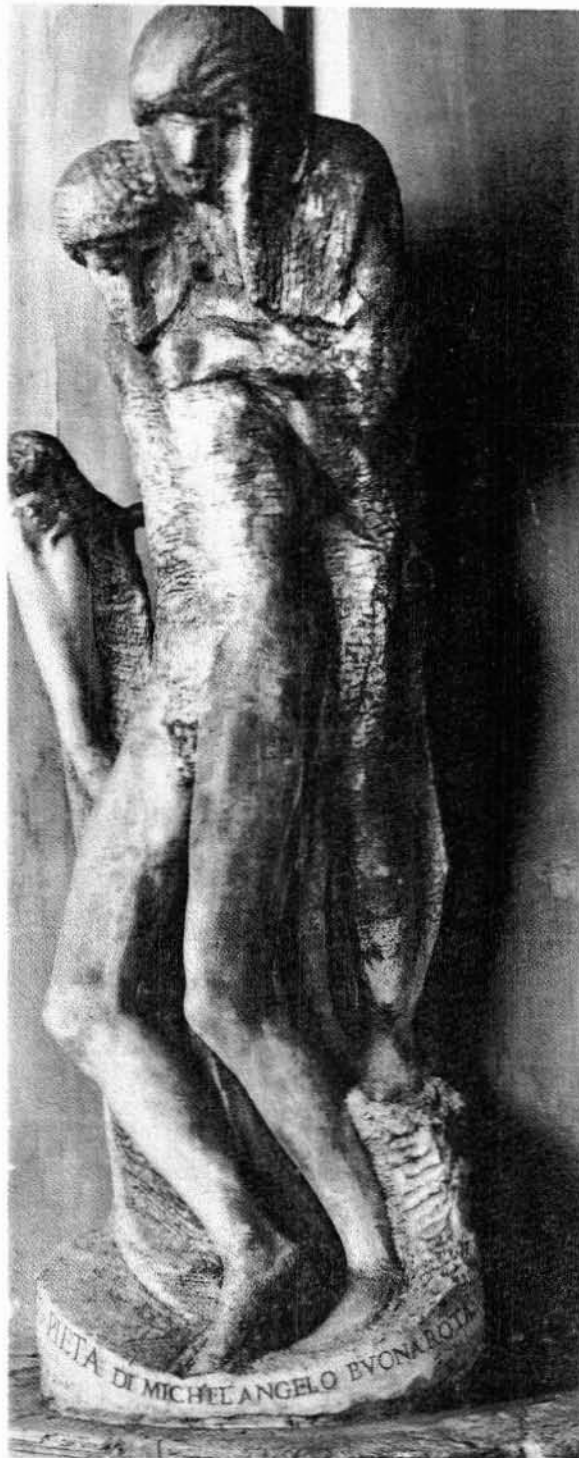
<sup>31</sup> It seems that the confusion was introduced by D. Moreni, *Delle tre sontuose cappelle medicee situate nell'imp. basilica di S. Lorenzo*, Florence, 1813, p. 232: "... come potrà mai sostenersi dal Cellini il vanto, ch'ei s'arrogava di essere stato di tutti il primo a scolpire un Cristo di marmo? Sappiamo pure esservene uno nella Chiesa maggiore d'Orvieto sculto da Raffaello da Montelupo figlio del predetto Baccio, nato circa il 1496; altro in Bologna all'Altare principale della Chiesa de' Servi di Maria fatto circa il 1533 dal nostro Montorsoli, ed altro finalmente scolpito in Roma dal nostro Iacopo Sansovino nato circa al 1479, per la Confraternita del Crocifisso di S. Marcello."

The work by Raffaello da Montelupo is a standing figure of the Risen Christ of 1552 (L. Fumi, *Il duomo di Orvieto e i suoi restauri*, Rome, 1891, p. 317); the Bologna altar of Montorsoli, 1558-61, includes a Crucified Christ in relief on the back and a free-standing Risen Christ on the front (A. Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, 11 vols., Milan, 1901-40, X, pt. 2, figs. 128f.). The Crucifix by Sansovino was of wood (Vasari, ed. Milanesi, VII, p. 497). Moreni also attributes the marble crucifix on the high altar of San Lorenzo in Florence to Baccio da Montelupo, whereas in fact it dates from the seventeenth century (W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, 6 vols., Frankfurt a. M., 1940-54, II, pp. 496, 561f., n. 191, p. 589f., n. 294).

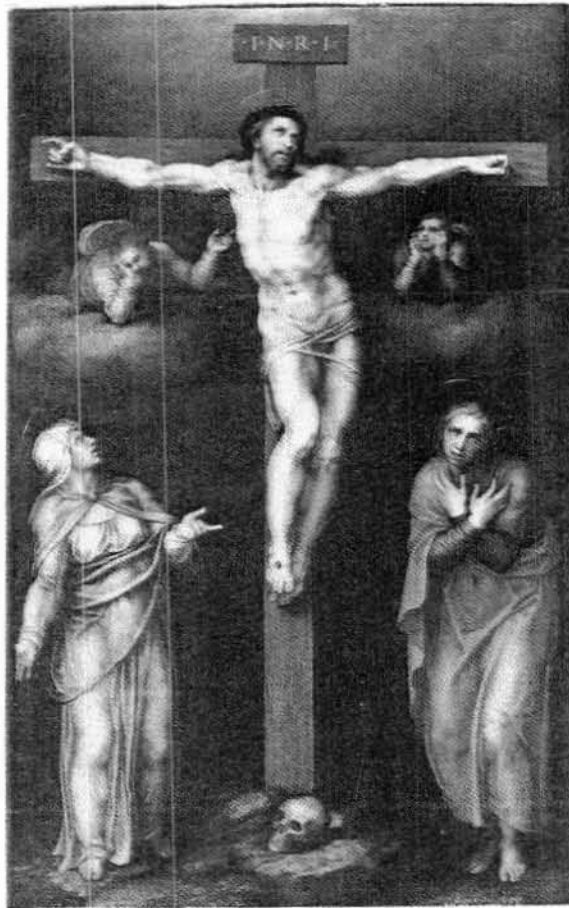
L. Cicognara, *Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia fino al secolo di Canova*, 7 vols., Prato, 1823-25, V, p. 198, correctly limits Cellini's claim to crucifixes, but cites the same precedents.



23. Michelangelo, *Crucifixion*, drawing, Windsor Castle  
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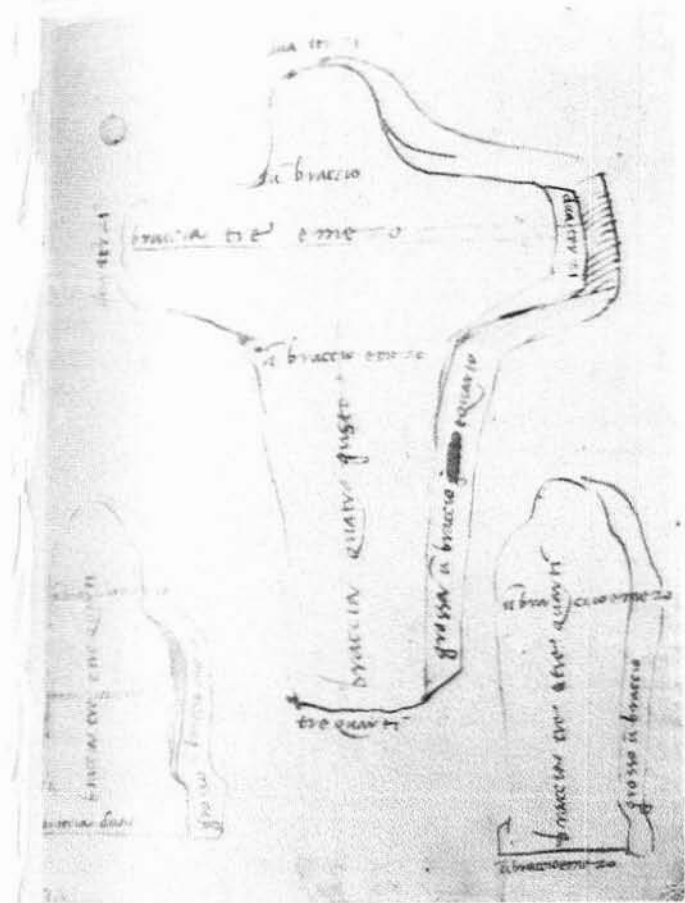
24. Michelangelo, Rondanini *Pietà*, Castello Sforzesco, Milan  
Photo: Alinari



25. Marcello Venusti, *Crucifixion*, Uffizi, Florence  
Photo: Alinari

It is important to realize, however, that while Cellini was the first to accomplish the feat, he was not the first to think of it. Among the drawings made by Michelangelo for his intimate friend and spiritual companion, Vittoria Colonna, mentioned frequently in the correspondence between them around 1540, was a crucifixion in which Michelangelo returned to the long obsolete medieval tradition of showing Christ alive on the cross. The whole composition, which was to include the Virgin and St. John standing beside the

Cross, is known only from copies (fig. 25). The correspondence with Vittoria Colonna refers to a drawing, but a sketch by Michelangelo giving the shapes and dimensions of the blocks to be ordered from the quarry proves that he also intended to execute the composition in marble (fig. 26). It would have been an enormous work: the figure of Christ nearly seven feet high, those of the Virgin and St. John about six and a half. It would thus have recalled the great Calvary groups that were among the first monumental sculptures produced



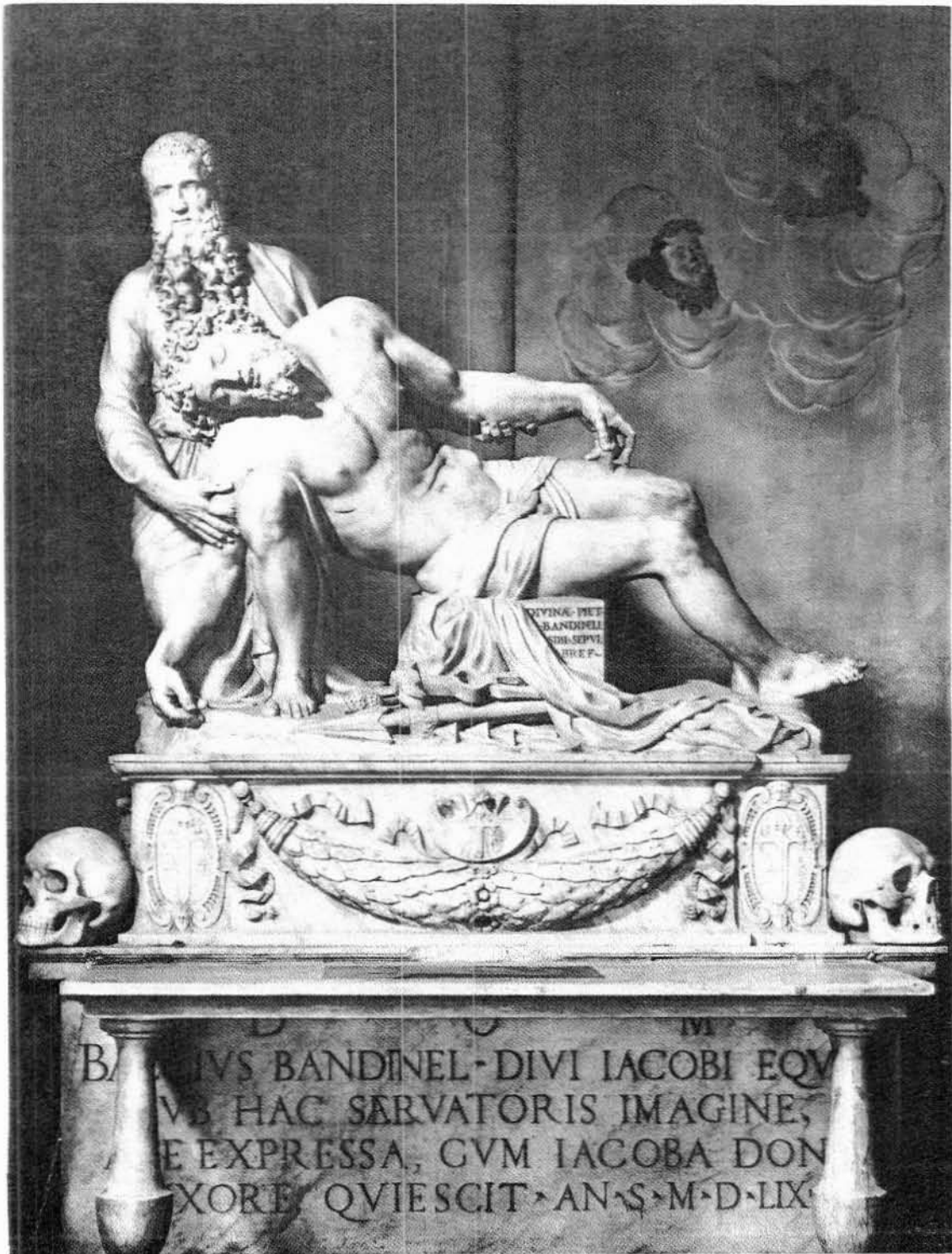
26. Michelangelo, sketch of blocks for a crucifixion group, Casa Buonarroti, Florence  
 Photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Sopr. Gallerie, Firenze

at the end of the Middle Ages, with one crucial difference. The relative sizes of the blocks in Michelangelo's sketch show that the figure of Christ was to be carved in the round, that is, separately from the cross and, of course, from a single block. The sketch cannot be dated accurately, but since the composition was designed for Vittoria Colonna, the plausible suggestion has been made that the project was conceived as a memorial of some sort after her untimely death, one of the saddest tragedies Michelangelo suffered. She died in February of 1547, just a year after Michelangelo's own near-fatal illness, and it is truly awesome to imagine him brooding over this project and that for his own tomb at the same time. From a somewhat later period we have the record, again in the form of a block sketch, of still another project by Michelangelo for a monolithic crucifix.<sup>32</sup>

No doubt Cellini knew of Michelangelo's crucifix ideas, as he did of the Pietà, and I also presume he was referring to Michelangelo's unfulfilled ambition in the passage I quoted where he says that previous attempts at such a work — and he had heard of some — had failed. Cellini maintained that all he knew he learned from Michelangelo (though he had never been his pupil),<sup>33</sup> and the Escorial Crucifix, which follows Michelangelo in its composition, its nudity and its technical grandeur and virtuosity, is perhaps his most profoundly Michelangelesque work. These references, far from unconsciously betraying an impoverished mannerism, are deliberate evocations of the master; through them Cellini was

<sup>32</sup> On the theme of the Colonna crucifix composition, see Haussherr, *Kruzifixus*. On the Casa Buonarroti block sketch, see De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, IV, p. 155, fig. 174, V, pp. 60, 132, who also suggests the connection with Vittoria Colonna's death. For the second marble crucifix project (with a Y-shaped cross), see *ibid.*, IV, p. 155, V, p. 223, no. 253.

<sup>33</sup> "... io mi fido tanto delli mia faticosi e disciplinati studii, che io mi prometto di quadagnarmi la palma, se bene e' ci fussi quel gran Michelagnolo Buonaroti, dal quale, e non mai da altri, io ho imparato tutto quel che io so" (*Vita*, Bk. II, ch. 100, ed. Ferrero, p. 567).



27. Baccio Bandinelli, *Pietà*, SS. Annunziata, Florence  
Photo: Alinari

able to say in sculpture, as he did in words, with justifiable pride and due humility, that he had succeeded where *all* others had failed.

The final monument of our series is the group of the Pietà placed by Baccio Bandinelli at the tomb he provided in a chapel in Santissima Annunziata in Florence, for himself, his wife and his parents (fig. 27). Bandinelli is easily the most maligned and misunderstood of all the artists of this period. He, too, had the temerity to compete with Michelangelo, and Vasari reports that Bandinelli conceived the project after learning of Michelangelo's plans for his tomb in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. Cellini, on the other hand, claims that Bandinelli, his great antagonist and *bête noire*, was inspired after hearing about the crucifix he had undertaken. The Pietà had been begun from Bandinelli's model by his young son, Clemente; the two quarreled, however, and Clemente went to Rome in 1555, where he died before the year

was out. Bandinelli had entered into negotiations with the church by 1558. He hoped to place the work before the high altar with the Holy Sacrament, but instead was ceded the altar of a nearby chapel, which was rededicated to the Pietà. Bandinelli closed in the altar and adapted it as a pedestal for the sculpture, shortly before he died at 66 in February, 1560.<sup>34</sup>

Bandinelli's brutal image is as extraordinary in its way as were Michelangelo's Pietà and Cellini's "bel Cristo" in theirs. He shows Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea supporting the upper part of Christ's body on one knee while the lower part extends laterally, the buttocks resting on a block which bears an inscription that includes the artist's name and a reference to his tomb. This painful cube, before which the instruments of the passion are gathered in a kind of still-life, recalls the stone inscribed with the artist's initials, on which the despairing Man of Sorrows sits in the title page of Dürer's *Small*

<sup>34</sup> On Bandinelli's Pietà, which was first to be accompanied by (now lost) figures of Sts. John and Catherine of Siena, see the summaries in Pope-Hennessy, *High Renaissance*, p. 364f., and Heikamp, *Vita* (cited in n. 25 above), p. 75f., n. 3.

A passage in Bandinelli's will, which he made out on May 9, 1555, shows that he was already planning a monument in Santissima Annunziata, although there is no reference to the Pietà:

"In primis quidem animam suam humiliter recommendavit omnipotenti Deo eiusque gloriosi [*sic*] semper Virgini Matri Marie totique curie coelestiali Paradisi quando a corporis nexibus separari contingerit. Eiusque corporis sepulturam elegit et esse voluit in ecclesia Annunziata de Florentia, in tumultu, per eum construendo. Et quando tempore mortis non foret constructum, voluit et gravavit infrascriptos eius heredes de faciendo unum sepulcrum ad usum

chassonis marmoris, erectum seu elevatum a terra per spacium conveniens, cum suis basis et ornamentis, in quo voluit sepelliri eius cadaver et sue uxoris. Et ad pedes ipsius construi voluit aliud sepulcrum subterraneum pro filiis et descendantibus dicti testatoris. In quibus omnibus expendi voluit et mandavit ad minus florenis ducentis [*sic*] auri largis [*sic*], de libris 7 pro floreno. Et in funeralibus dicti testatoris voluit fieri illa impensa de qua prout videbitur infrascriptis suis heredibus."

(Florence, Archivio di Stato, Notarile Antecosimiano, notaio Piero di Lodovico Gemmari, filza G 103, 1554-56, fols. 44-47, cf. fol. 44 verso; I am indebted to Prof. Giuseppe Pansini, Director of the Archivio di Stato of Florence, for his help in locating this document, and to Dr. Gino Corti for the transcription).

Cellini's reference occurs in the *Vita*, Bk. II, ch. 101, ed. Ferrero, p. 569.

**Passio Christi ab Alberto Durer Au-**  
 renbergenli effigiata cū varij generis carmi-  
 nibus Fratris Benedicti Chelidonij  
 Musophili.



O mihi tantorum, iusto mihi causa dolorum  
 O crucis O mortis causa cruenta mihi.  
 O homo sat fuerit tibi me semel ista tulisse.  
 O cessa culpis me cruciare nouis.  
**Sum privilegio.**

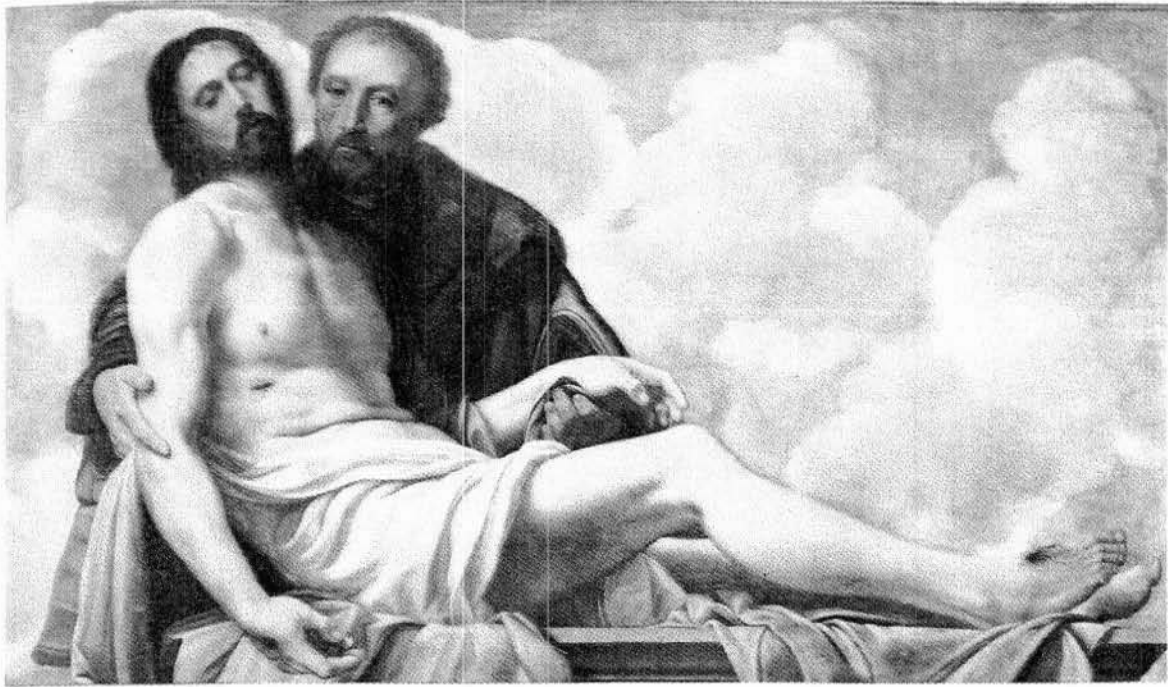
28. Albrecht Dürer, *Seated Christ*, woodcut, frontispiece to the *Small Passion*

*Passion* (fig. 28). According to Vasari, the features of the old man are Bandinelli's own, and the observation is confirmed by a self-portrait in relief which appears, along with one of the artist's wife, on the back of the altar. This must be thought of as alluding as much to the precedent of Michelangelo and to the art of sculpture generally, as to Bandinelli himself.

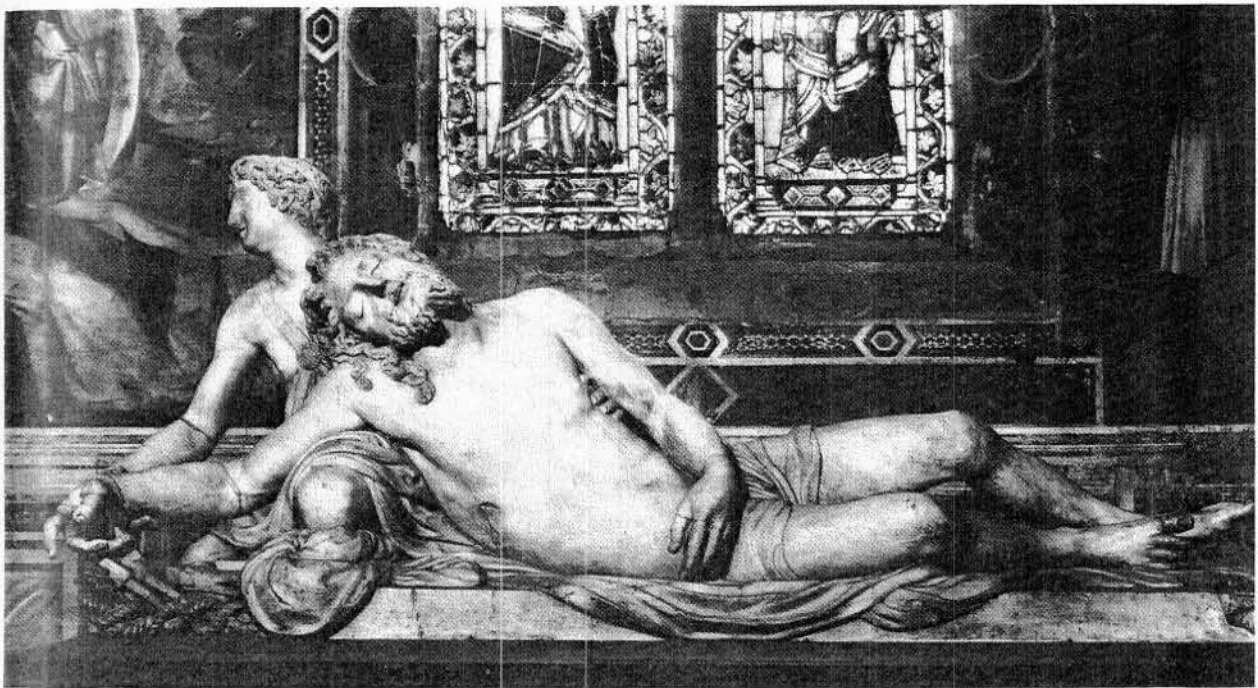
From both a formal and technical point of view, Bandinelli's *Pietà* is again best understood against the tradition of monumental, monolithic multi-figured groups that became a major theme in sixteenth-century sculpture. Such groups tended to be conceived as compact, massive agglomerations of forms, as we saw in

Michelangelo's *Pietà*, or else the composition might develop vertically, as in Michelangelo's earlier *Victory group* (fig. 2). In either case, the sense of a coherent rectangular block, at least as high as it is wide, remained. In defiance of all tradition Bandinelli created an altarpiece in which the composition is asymmetrical and the width exceeds the height. The type had existed in painting, as in a work of the 1520's by Girolamo Savoldo in the Cleveland Museum (fig. 29), and Bandinelli had himself adopted it some years before, in a *Pietà* with the body of Christ supported by a kneeling angel for the high altar of Florence Cathedral (fig. 30); this was not in fact an isolated image, but was seen

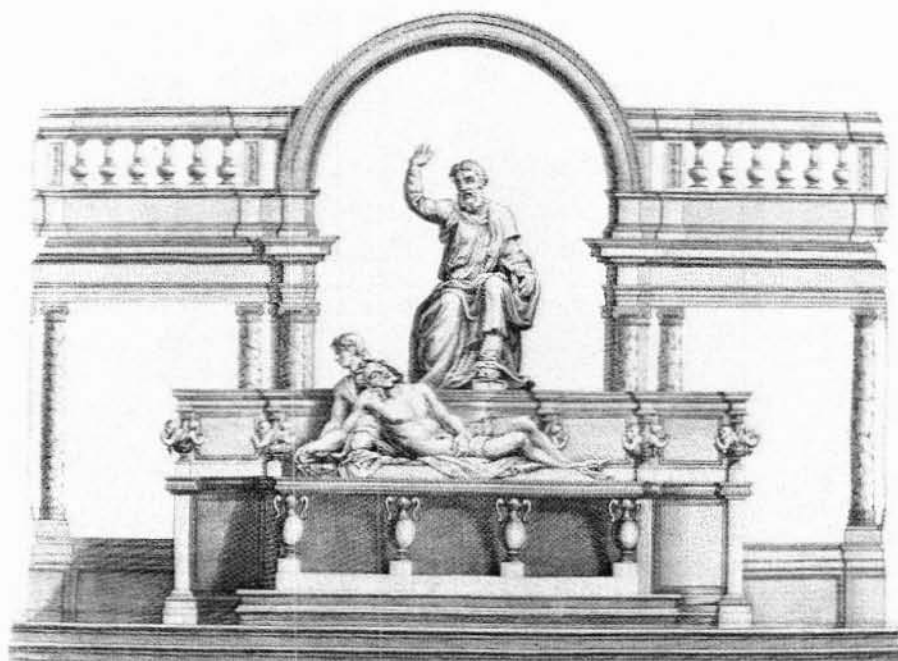




29. Girolamo Savoldo, *Dead Christ with Joseph of Arimathea*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Hanna Fund 52.512



30. Baccio Bandinelli, *Pietà*, S. Croce, Florence  
Photo: Alinari



31. Choir of Florence Cathedral, engraving (after B. S. Sgrilli, *Descrizione e studi dell'insigne fabbrica di S. Maria del Fiore*, Florence, 1733, pl. XV)

with a seated figure of God the Father placed behind it on the altar (fig. 31). The most relevant sculptural context in which such an asymmetrical, horizontal format occurred was in tombs, for which the old classical type of the semi-recumbent figure had been revived not

long before (fig. 32). This reference again seems deliberate, suggesting as it does the dual nature of the monument, which served for the artist's own tomb and that of Christ, as well.<sup>35</sup>

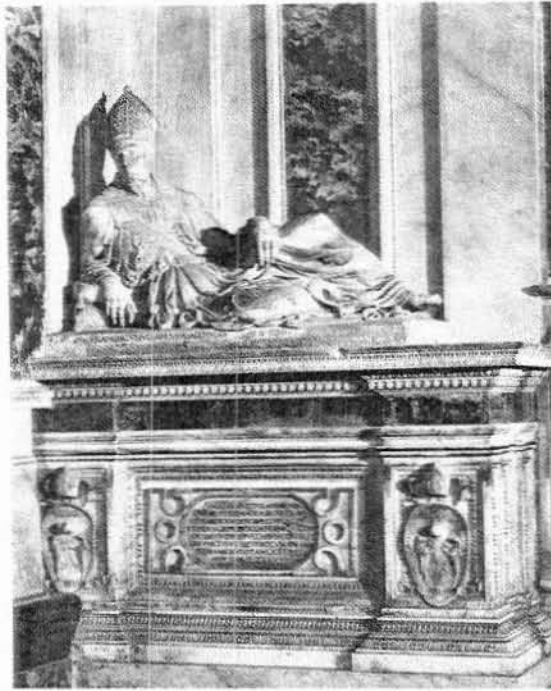
One major formal distinction between Bandinelli's Pietà and its predecessors also has a

<sup>35</sup> Savoldo's composition was cited as precedent for Bandinelli's by Stechow, "Joseph," p. 298. Bandinelli's works for the choir of Florence Cathedral have been studied by D. Heikamp, "Baccio Bandinelli nel Duomo di Firenze," *Paragone*, XV, 1964, no. 175, pp. 32-42; summary in Pope-Hennessy, *High Renaissance*, p. 365f. It may be noted that the Pietà for the Duomo also contains a personal reference: the band supporting the angel's garment is decorated with scallop shells and daggers, emblems of the Order of St. James, in which Bandinelli had been awarded a knighthood.

On the type of Christ supported by an angel, in a related context, see P. Askew, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXII,

1969, p. 291f. On Francesco da Sangallo's tomb of Angelo Marzi in Santissima Annunziata (1546), see Pope-Hennessy, *High Renaissance*, p. 356f.; on the tomb type, see recently W. Gramberg, "Die Liegestatue des Gregorio Magalotti — ein römisches Frühwerk des Guglielmo della Porta," *Jahrbuch der hamburger Kunstsammlungen*, XVII, 1972, pp. 43-52.

The inscription on the base of the Annunziata Pietà introduces a curious, and I suspect deliberate, double allusion to the self-portrait and to the image of Christ; in the third word of the third line, the second and third letters have alternates superimposed so as to allow two equally correct readings: . . . SVB HAC SAL[ER]VATORIS IMAGINE, /A SE EXPRESSA, . . . (Vasari, ed. Milanese, VI, p. 190, gives only the SERVATORIS reading).



32. Francesco da Sangallo. tomb of Angelo Marzi.  
SS. Annunziata, Florence

Photo: Alinari

technical aspect. This is what might be called its open composition. In contrast to Michelangelo's *Pietà*, empty space is at least as important as solid mass; perforations under the torso, left arm and legs of Christ leave daringly large portions of the marble unsupported. Indeed — and this Bandinelli's *Pietà* shares with Cellini's crucifix — the original block seems to have disappeared, as if by some "miracle of art."

I use that phrase here in order to recall the

Laocoon, which is in some respects perhaps the chief precedent for Bandinelli's *Pietà*: it was said to be impossible to execute such a work in a single block, not only because of the figures, but also because of the coils of snakes that hang free and bridge the spaces between them.<sup>36</sup>

The works we have discussed are the first major monuments since antiquity produced by sculptors to commemorate themselves.<sup>37</sup> As such,

<sup>36</sup> See p. 21 and n. 25 above.

<sup>37</sup> One work omitted from our main discussion deserves special notice, the monument of the Tasso family of woodcarvers in Sant' Ambrogio, Florence, mentioned by Vasari — a wall tabernacle with a niche containing a life-size wooden figure of St. Sebastian by Leonardo del Tasso (born 1466). An inscription on the tomb slab in the pavement before the tabernacle recorded Leonardo as the author of the statue and the date, 1500. It is not clear that Leonardo himself

prepared the memorial, nor that he actually made the statue for this purpose. Nevertheless, the use of an ideal figure type and the theme of the *Pietà*, which appears in the predella beneath the niche in a drawing in the Louvre (substituted by an *Annunciation* in the final execution), relate to the works considered here; also, the form of the monument, without an altar, anticipates Cellini. (For bibliography on the Tasso monument see Paatz, *Kirchen*, I, 31, 40, n. 53.)

they bear eloquent testimony to the development whereby the Renaissance artist emerged from the medieval craft tradition. This being said, however, three additional factors which they share must be considered in order to see the development in a just, if somewhat paradoxical perspective.

First, the group includes no tombs or sarcophagi, properly speaking; we are dealing almost entirely with altarpieces. The artist was simply buried in the pavement. The only exception is Cellini's crucifix, which was to be attached separately to the wall, with just a "poco di cassoncino" for himself on the ground below. This is in striking contrast to the usual funerary conventions of the period, and to the tombs provided for themselves by sculptors of the next generation, like Alessandro Vittoria and Giovanni Bologna. Second, in each case the work clearly represents an unprecedented effort on the artist's part to innovate in form, in content, in technique. He sought to outdo his forerunners, his contemporaries, and especially himself, through what can only be described as a supreme self-sacrifice. The third point is that all the works have a common theme in the sacrifice of Christ. Patronymic saints, and even the Virgin, play only a secondary role, while other subjects do not exist. The focus is overwhelmingly on the Lord's body, that is, the Eucharist. This reflects, but is not fully explained by, the general tendency of the period to isolate and emphasize this central mystery of the faith.

I believe these factors, disparate as they appear, have a common link in that same medieval tradition which seems the very antithesis of our notion of the Renaissance artist. I am not suggesting, as to the first point, that these artists were inhibited by modesty, but that the idea of making for themselves the kinds of tombs they made for other people simply never occurred to them — and precisely because they were artists.

The artist was unique, after all, in that he claimed the status of a liberal art for his activity, and yet he worked with his hands. This anomalous situation is reflected in the anomalous phenomenon of commemorative devotional monuments without commemorative tombs.

To this tradition may also be traced the thread of technical *tour-de-force* that runs through the monuments. The artist went to excruciating pains not only as a form of self-expression but as a form of deliberate self-abnegation, as well. Cellini said of his crucifix that he undertook it with the thought that even if it failed, he would at least have shown his good intention. It sounds like a modern, almost tragic version of the charming medieval story familiar from Anatole France and Massenet of the *Jongleur de Nôtre Dame* who, having no other gifts to offer the Virgin on her feast day, approached the altar and performed his juggling act with such fervor and devotion that his prayer was heard.

Finally, the element of personal sacrifice involved not merely the generic effort to perform a difficult task, but again the very fact of being an artist and therefore tending to identify with Christ's sacrifice in a special way. The metaphor linking God and the artist is an ancient one, deeply ingrained in the Christian tradition. God the painter, God the sculptor, God the architect of the world, are ideas that occur frequently in medieval theological treatises to illustrate divine creativity. In the Renaissance the relationship became something other than metaphorical, expressing a special bond between the supreme creator and the artist. The reference underwent a crucial reversal: whereas before the artist was used to illustrate God's creativity, now in the flood of sixteenth-century treatises on art, the artist's creativity was likened unto God's. And as the Eucharist was God's supreme creative act, so its representation became the noblest and

most demanding task the artist could perform — particularly the sculptor, who claimed that his work was most God-like, mainly for two, inter-related reasons: it was most three-dimensional, and it was most difficult. Michelangelo and Bandinelli portrayed themselves as they did in their Pietàs because, both literally in the action of the work and figuratively in their capacity as sculptors, it is they who display the body of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

What has all this to do with old age? Although I fear it will seem like reducing the sublime to the ridiculous, the answer, I think, lies in the reasons for which these works were made. We have direct testimony only in the cases of Michelangelo and Cellini, but their evidence is

significant because it is consistent. Vasari reports that Michelangelo undertook his Pietà for “pleasure and to pass the time and, as Michelangelo himself said, because exercising with the mallet kept his body in good shape.” Cellini in his autobiography says that he undertook in his crucifix one of the most difficult works ever made in this world, “for pleasure.”<sup>39</sup> I think we should take such statements seriously; indeed, they focus on what in the final analysis is perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of these sculptures — they were created exclusively for the artist’s own benefit, and in this sense constitute our first “pure” works of art. For the men who conceived and executed them, old age and death were truly an end in themselves.

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<sup>38</sup> To my knowledge, the artist-God metaphor has not been thoroughly studied, but see E. Panofsky, *Idea. A Concept in Art Theory*, Columbia, S.C., 1968, esp. p. 125; E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler*, Vienna, 1934, pp. 47-65; E. R. Curtius, *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages*, New York and Evanston, 1953, pp. 544-46; J. Gadol, *Leon Battista Alberti. Universal Man of the Early Renaissance*, Chicago and London, 1969, p. 140f.

On the nobility of sculpture see, for example, the ironic passage in Michelangelo’s letter to Vasari on the comparison of the arts, “. . . se maggiore giudizio e difficoltà, impedimento e fatica non fa maggiore nobiltà, . . . la pittura e scultura è una medesima cosa . . .” (P. Barocchi, ed., *Trattati d’arte del cinquecento fra*

*manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari, 1960-62, I, p. 82). “Giudizio” here certainly relates to the three-dimensionality of sculpture, as do the concept of multiple-viewpoints (L. O. Larsson, *Von allen Seiten gleich schön. Studien zum Begriff der Vielansichtigkeit in der europäischen Plastik von der Renaissance bis zum Klassizismus*, Uppsala, 1974) and the notion that God, in making man in his own image, was acting as a sculptor (Barocchi, *Trattati*, I, pp. 48, 68, 381, n. 13).

<sup>39</sup> “. . . facendo in quello Cristo morto, per dilettazone e passar tempo e, come egli diceva, perché l’esercitarsi col mazzuolo lo teneva sano del corpo” (Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, I, p. 82); the Cellini passage is quoted in n. 29 above.