MAY **APOLLO** 1978

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS · EDITED BY DENYS SUTTON

APOLLO MAGAZINE

Editorial and Advertising Office:
22 Davies Street, London W1S 1LH
Tel: 01–629 3061/3.
Telegrams: Apollomag London W1.
Circulation and Subscription Offices:
Bracken House, 10 Cannon Street,
London EC4P 4BY. Tel: 01–248 8000

U.S.A. Office: Apollo Publications Inc.,
75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019
Tel: (N.Y.) (212) 489 8400

Advertising: Mrs. V. Allan
11549 Chiquita Street, N. Hollywood, Cal. 91604
Tel: (LA) (214) 764-7674 Cables: Apollomag, Los Angeles

Price: £2·00: $6·00 U.S.

Annual Subscription:
U.K. £25·00 Overseas £28·00 U.S.A. $56·00 by air-speeded delivery

Vol Number CVII

No. 195 (New Series) May 1978

Cover Plate

Seated Buddha, Chinese, Northern Ch'i dynasty, Six Dynasties period. White marble, with traces of polychromy and gilding, height 64·5 cm. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.53.42

Page

The June issue of APOLLO will also be devoted to the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University and will contain articles dealing with Rembrandt, American art, Japanese prints and Théodore Gericault

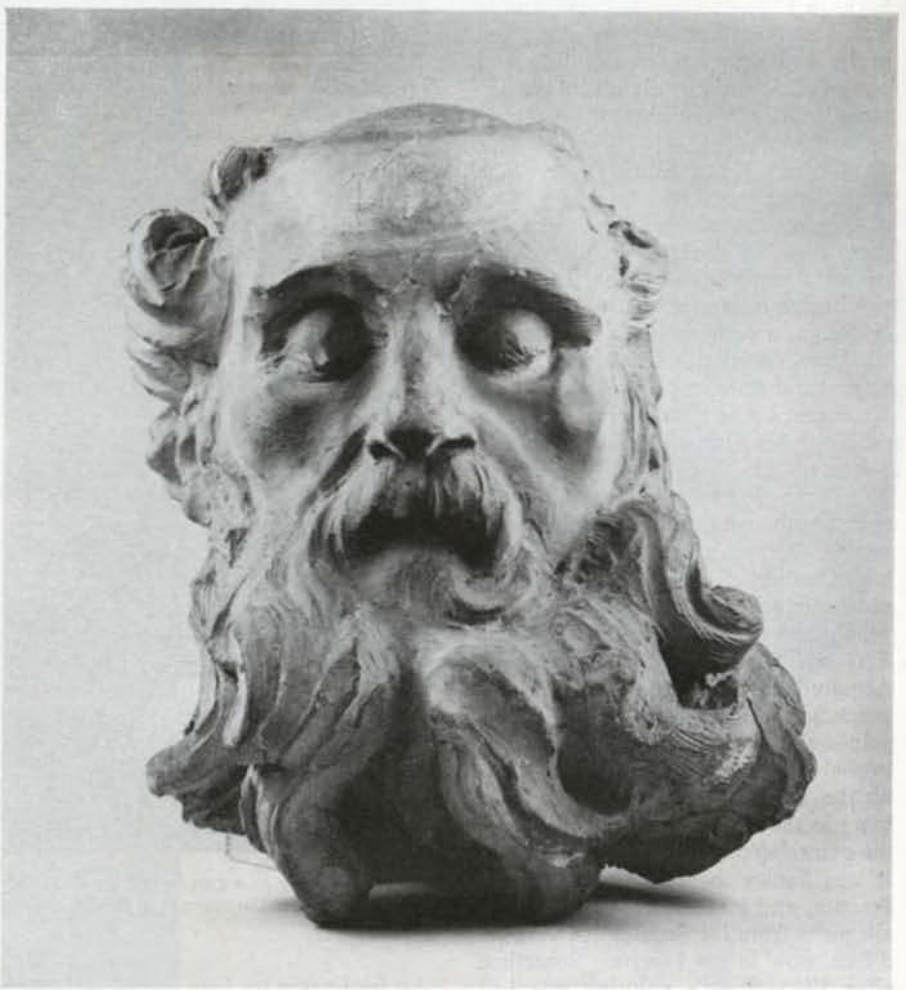
Calculated Spontaneity

Bernini and the terracotta sketch

IRVING LAVIN

Of all the treasures in the Fogg Museum perhaps the rarest and the richest is the series of clay preparatory sketches, or *bozzetti*, by the great Roman baroque sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Bernini was over eighty when he died and he was extremely prolific; along with a continuous stream of drawings, he must have made many hundreds of these small and fragile terracottas, of which only some forty survive. The Fogg has by far the largest and most important collection, with fifteen pieces by the Master. Since they cover nearly the whole of Bernini's creative life and include instances of multiple studies for the same project, they offer a unique opportunity to follow the generative process that yielded his famous sculptures in marble and bronze. Their main interest, however, lies not in their rarity, nor yet in the insights they provide into the sequence of Bernini's visual ideas. Rather, it is their quality as works of art that primarily commands attention, and this for one reason above all others—their astonishing freshness and spontaneity. Not only do the figures represented act with profound emotion and vivacious movement, the clay itself is worked with the fingers and modelling tools in deft touches and rapid strokes that record the artist's handiwork, literally—for he left his finger-prints everywhere—as well as figuratively. They bespeak a kind of perfervid creative energy that is virtually without parallel in the history of sculpture.[1]

The Bernini *bozzetti* are part of a group of twenty-seven models purchased by the Museum in 1937 from Mrs. Edward Brandegee of Brookline, Massachusetts, whose husband had bought them in 1905 from Giovanni Piancastelli, along with a portion of Piancastelli's large collection of Italian baroque drawings.[2] Piancastelli (1845–1926) was a well-known



1. *Head of St. Jerome, c.* 1661. Terracotta, height 35·7 cm. 1937.77. A study for the marble figure of St. Jerome executed in 1661–63 for the chapel of Pope Alexander VII in Siena Cathedral

The works illustrating this article are by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), and except for Figure 2, are in the Fogg Museum. Purchase Alpheus Hyatt and Friends of the Fogg Fund.

painter and collector who was then Director of the Borghese Gallery in Rome. When and where he obtained the terracottas is a mystery. The chances are that he had not owned them for long when he sold them to the Brandegees: a major exhibition of Bernini's work was held in Rome in 1899, which included a number of Piancastelli's drawings; but none of the models is mentioned in the reviews of the show, nor do any of them appear in the large biography of Bernini published by Stanislao Fraschetti in 1900. They must have surfaced not long afterwards, and very probably as a group, since it is difficult to imagine their being assembled from disparate sources in such a relatively short period.

Piancastelli is known to have acquired the entire contents of artists' studios from their heirs. Perhaps they had been brought together by some previous collector, but it is tempting to suppose that those by Bernini had always been together and that they originally came from the artist's own studio. In the inventory of Bernini's possessions taken in 1681, shortly after his death, it is in fact noted that a large number of such models were found in the attic studio of the house; a second inventory taken in 1706 records that many of the models had in the meantime been destroyed, but also that a number of them had been given to the artist's favourite assistant in his later years, the sculptor Giulio Cartari.[3] It seems a fair guess that Cartari's collection formed at least the nucleus of that now in the Fogg; this would offer a plausible explanation for the unique character of the group—its size, its wide chronological range and its inclusion of several studies for individual projects.

Although the making of models in preparation for works in sculpture might seem to be a natural, and is in fact a very ancient practice, it does not by any means enjoy a continuous history.[4] Many Egyptian sculptors' models are preserved, and the use of models in classical antiquity is amply documented. In the Middle Ages, however, the practice was replaced by the method commonly described as 'direct carving', that is, the work was conceived and executed simultaneously, as it were, without advanced preparation of this sort; the creative process, born of a millenial craft tradition, was unified, internal and automatic. The sculptural model was reborn in the Renaissance, when it acquired new forms and vitality it had never had before. Its reappearance, both as an integral part of the sculptor's working

Plate V. *St. Longinus*, 1630–31. Terracotta, height 52·7 cm. 1937.51. One of the terracottas for the colossal marble figure of St. Longinus in one of the niches in the piers that support the dome of St. Peter's in Rome

2. *Angel with the Crown of Thorns,* 1668–69. Marble, over life-size. Church of Sant' Andrea della Fratte, Rome. Originally intended for the Ponte Sant' Angelo, but considered too fine to remain outside

procedure and as an aesthetically appreciated art object, went hand in hand with the emergence of a coherent theory of the creative process itself. In the sixteenth century elaborate treatises, notably by Vasari and Benvenuto Cellini, lay considerable stress upon successive stages in the preparation of a work, and directions for making a sequence of models are set forth in detail. From the same period, and beginning especially with Michelangelo, various model-types are preserved which correspond more or less with these prescriptions: the small, rapidly executed *bozzetto*; the more carefully finished intermediate study; and the full-scale model of which the final work is essentially the duplicate in a permanent material. Paradoxically, therefore, the record of the artist's spontaneous creative activity emerged as the creative process itself became more discrete, external and deliberate.

While obviously rooted in this heritage, Bernini's models differ from those of his predecessors in a variety of ways. One of these is in their number. Even the most stringent count leaves far more extant by him than by any previous sculptor; and to judge from the report of a contemporary witness who was astonished to see in Bernini's studio no fewer than twenty-two small models for the figure of St. Longinus (the one now in the Fogg, the only one preserved, may have been among them),[5] there can be little doubt that he actually produced many more such studies than had been customary.

Other notable features of Bernini's preparatory sculptures concern their physical character, that is, their relative scale, material and degree of finish. Except under certain special conditions largely external to the imaginative process—when a try-out of the projected work was called for, when it was to be submitted to a patron, when it was to serve as a prototype for execution by assistants or when it was to be cast in bronze—Bernini seems to have largely foregone the earlier system of bringing the work to completion through stages of increasing scale and precision. To an unprecedented degree, the small, rapidly executed terracotta sketch was his characteristic instrument of creation in three dimensions. His preference for clay, which may be worked rapidly but soon dries out, also contrasts with the frequent earlier use of wax, which remains soft but must be laboriously modelled.

There are concomitant differences in technique from prior tradition. Earlier models were generally built up

by adding material and working with the fingers, modelling tools being used to help achieve a relatively uniform surface. Bernini continued to work partly in this way, but mainly he gouged, scraped, poked and clawed away from a mound of clay, as if it were a block of stone that had somehow become malleable, creating infinitely more varied effects. Bernini's *bozzetti* are also novel in that they are normally worked only from one side. Heretofore, the sculptor's model was almost always executed 'in-the-round', with the back as fully developed as the front. The final works for which they were made were concieved to be seen from all sides; indeed, one of the great achievements of the sixteenth century was precisely this kind of sculptural self-sufficiency. By contrast, Bernini's sculptures have a dominant viewpoint, and he tended to leave the backs of his models rough, sometimes finishing them off into a smooth pillar of clay that sufficed to buttress the figure.

The sum of all these innovations is again paradoxical. On the one hand it is clear that Bernini greatly increased the absolute quantity of preparation for a work in sculpture, in the specific sense of trying out—and rejecting—ideas in three dimensions. On the other, it is also evident that he did all he could to 'streamline' the creative mechanism, reducing every aspect of conception and manufacture to the barest minimum. His goal in this two-fold method can only be understood from the relation of the models to the finished products.

Among the earliest and most important of the Fogg terracottas is that for the colossal marble figure of St. Longinus which the artist made in the 1630s and '40s for one of the niches in the piers that support the dome of St. Peter's in Rome (Plate V). The model documents the birth of one of Bernini's most revolutionary conceptions—a figure with both arms outstretched, and therefore in utter defiance of the self-contained silhouette and closed form that had been conventional for the monumental standing figure in marble. The work alludes to the Roman centurion's sudden conversion at the moment when he pierced the side of Christ on the Cross with his lance. The event itself is not represented, however; instead, Bernini created an ideal moment of self-realization in the crucifixion, to which the saint bore double witness, as it were, through his actual participation and ultimately through his own martyrdom. The shield and helmet at Longinus's feet refer to his subsequent

3. *Angel with the Inscription,* 1667–68. Terracotta, height 28·3 cm. 1937.69. This and Figure 4 are models for the first version of the *Angel with the Inscription*

4. *Angel with the Inscription,* 1667–68. Terracotta, height 29·2 cm. 1937.67

5. *Angel with the Crown of Thorns,* 1667–68. Terracotta, height 33·7 cm. 1937.58. This and Figure 6 are models for the Angel illustrated in Figure 2

6. *Angel with the Crown of Thorns,* 1667–68. Terracotta, height 44·5 cm. 1937.57

rejection of his violent worldly profession in favour of the religious life of peace. The pose not only imitates the crucifixion, but everything in the composition strains upward in great, sweeping diagonals toward the cross that was placed atop the baldachino over the high altar. Technically the study is unusual among those remaining by Bernini. It is 52·7 cm. high, rather larger in scale than the very small sketches, which average around 30 cm.; it is smoothly finished and gilt, with the texture of the armour carefully indicated by little pin-pricks; and it is hollowed at the back for firing (the others must have been lightly baked, but would have cracked under very high temperatures). All this indicates that the model had a special purpose; perhaps Bernini used it to demonstrate his novel idea for the figure to the governing body of the works at St. Peter's.

Another unusual model type is represented by the life-size (35·7 cm. high) head of a bearded old man, which is a study for the marble figure of St. Jerome Bernini executed during 1661–63 for the chapel of Pope Alexander VII in the cathedral of Siena (Fig. 1). The lowered eyelids and open mouth express the saint's utter devotion to the small crucifix he holds close to his cheek in the final work. From a technical standpoint it is one of the richest of all the studies, displaying in a kind of close-up view the subtly modulated shapes and myriad textures Bernini achieved with his fingers and tools of different sorts—not only the forms themselves but also highlights and shadows, even the tonal values of colours. This is especially evident in his use of the toothed rasp: fine parallel lines evoke the feel and sheen of hair in the beard, eyebrows, etc., as well as the reddening of the skin at the cheek-bone; a stroke of a coarser rasp gives life to the depression at the left temple. Bernini was acutely aware of the inherent colourlessness of sculpture and emphasized, particularly in the matter of portraits, that it was often necessary to distort natural form in order to render the effect of a change in hue. The Fogg terracotta is not a portrait, but the relationship is pertinent since, so far as we know, it was only in preparing for portrait busts that Bernini modelled separate studies of the head from life. The work belongs in another context, as well. Artists' studios at this period were filled with sculptural fragments of the human anatomy such as hands, feet and heads; but mostly these were pieces or casts from earlier sculptures, usually antiques, which served as

7. *Angel for the Sacrament Altar,* 1673. Terracotta, height 29·2 cm. 1937.65. One of the *bozzetti* for Bernini's first version for the angels of the altar of the Holy Sacrament in St. Peter's

8
9

8. *Angel for the Sacrament Altar,* 1673. Terracotta, height 29 cm. 1937.62

9. *Angel for the Sacrament Altar,* 1673. Terracotta, height 28·5 cm. 1937.64. This and Figures 10–11 are *bozzetti* for the final work of the altar

reminders and as examples to be copied by aspiring apprentices. The Fogg model is the earliest monumental study-head that has come down to us, and as such it anticipates the deliberately fragmentary portraits of Rodin.

The chief pride of the collection are the two series of studies for angels, one standing, the other kneeling. The four standing figures form part of Bernini's personal contribution to a project of the late 1660s in which, under his general supervision the balustrades of a bridge across the Tiber leading to the Holy City were decorated with ten over life-size statues in marble of angels carrying the instruments of the Passion. Bernini's basic conceit was to represent the figures as if they had just alighted from the blue sky against which they are seen, bearing their mementos of Christ's sufferings. Bernini initially executed two angels, those carrying the inscription on the cross and the crown of thorns; they were regarded as too fine to be installed on the bridge and are now to be seen in the church of Sant' Andrea della Fratte (Fig. 2). An assistant's copy of the angel with the crown was installed on the bridge, along with a second version of the angel with the inscription by Bernini himself. The Fogg possesses two models for the first version of the angel with the inscription (Figs. 3, 4) and two for the angel with the crown (Figs. 5 and 6),[6] while several more are preserved in other collections. The studies of these ethereal figures swathed in weightless draperies document in extraordinary detail Bernini's development of a complex counterpoint of forms and emotions to suggest the cruel irony of the mock-regal insignia imposed on the King of Kings.

The pose of the angel with the inscription was established at the outset and remained essentially unchanged. The main evolution in this figure took place in the treatment of the drapery, which initially fell in long undulating curves but became more voluminous, more deeply undercut and more complicated. This difference has its counterpart in the handling of the material; in the earlier of the two *bozzetti* a narrow scoop was used to gash deep furrows with sharp, linear edges, while in that which followed the folds are rounder and more softly modelled. The nude study of the angel with the crown represents an early stage in the planning, where Bernini conceived of the two figures almost as mirror images.

Ever since the Renaissance it had been common practice for artists to study in the nude the disposition of figures intended eventually to be draped. For the most part, however, such studies were fleeting sketches which served to establish the action of the figure, rather than the physique itself. Bernini's terracotta, instead, is a highly developed and delicately finished essay on the male nude—in which there is a subtle consonance between soft, ephebic flesh and a twisting, unstable pose. (The even, slightly granular surface was produced by brushing on a thin coat of watered clay.) Subsequently, the pose shifts, so that while the upper parts of the bodies and the draperies at the legs remain mirror images, the stances of the figures become parallel. The proportions become lither and more angular and, while the drapery retains a strong linear component, the swinging movement of the nude acquires a distinct forward thrust. The figure now strides toward the spectator in order to display his emblem; in comparison the angel with the inscription seems retiring. By their complementary but contrasting natures these twin invaders from another world characterize the messages they bear—the aggressiveness of the one expressing the physical pain of the crown of thorns, the inward withdrawal of the other, the moral and intellectual wound inflicted by the taunting inscription.

The Fogg's series of five kneeling angels preserves successive steps in the development of one of Bernini's last major undertakings (1673–74), an altar for St. Peter's surmounted by bronze figures with a container to honour the Holy Sacrament. Such altars had a long tradition, which included as a kind of reliquary for the Host, an architectural tabernacle alluding to the sepulchre of Christ, and adoring angels. Since the Reformation the motif had become a veritable triumph of the Eucharist, with the angels shown carrying the tabernacle aloft in exaltation. Bernini's first project, for which there are two *bozzetti* (Fig. 7), was based on this idea. The angels were to half-kneel on the altar, one hand holding a candlestick, the other lifting a round tempietto, its dome topped by a cross signifying the dominion of the Church. The open gestures, the transitory poses and the sweeping masses of loosely modelled drapery, present the mystery of the Eucharist as a momentary action, a miraculous elevation of the Host.

In the final work, for which there are three *bozzetti* (Figs. 8, 9 and 10), a radical transformation took place. The tabernacle rests directly on the altar and the cross is replaced by a figure of Christ rising from His tomb, an explicit reference to the Holy Sepulchre. The angels now crouch on both knees and once again adore the Sacrament, although in distinctive ways. One, completely self-absorbed, inclines his head inward and down toward the altar, hands joined together in prayer; the other looks out toward the approaching worshipper while pressing his crossed hands to his breast in supplication. The arrangement is thus no longer transitory and visionary but stable and devotional. These changes from the first project signify a fundamental shift in emphasis, from the triumph of the Eucharist to a much older theme that was revived with new urgency in the Counter-Reformation, that of the real and abiding presence of the body of Christ in the Host.

A related alteration occurs in the treatment of the angels' draperies. These no longer reflect a mechanical action, but seem to envelop the bodies with streaks and flashes of pure energy—the power of faith. Especially in the second study for the praying angel (Fig. 9), the forms seem dissolved by a pattern of striations on the surface and jagged scoops in depth; yet each craggy and seemingly chaotic shape appears in the final work as a lucid fold of material. The feverish excitement conveyed by these late terracottas is the more to be wondered at because one of them bears the traces of an unprecedented method of control that helped ensure accurate transfer of the qualities of the study to the final work: at the side of the base of the angel with crossed hands is a series of parallel incisions marking equal intervals (Fig. 11). Bernini was apparently the first sculptor to provide his models with such measured scales to serve in the system of proportional enlargement. He left nothing to chance. Indeed, Bernini's finished sculptures seem so inspired and unpremeditated that one grasps the paradox of his painstaking yet efficient procedure. Through it he succeeded in all but eliminating the difference between *bozzetto* and final execution.

[1] The Fogg terracottas were first published by R. Norton, *Bernini and Other Studies*, 1914, pp. 44–49; Bernini's models were the subject of a dissertation by the writer (*The Bozzetti of Gianlorenzo Bernini*, 1955), who is preparing a critical corpus of these works for publication. Frequently discussed in the specialized Bernini literature, they are also noted in the catalogue of the standard monograph on his sculptures by R. Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, 1966.

[5] Piancastelli's drawings, later reunited, are now in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York.

[3] '*Nel d.o studio vi sono alcune quantità di teste di gesso et altre parti humane con alcuni modelli di creta*' (27 January, 1681); Rome, Archivio di Stato, Not. A.C. Mazzeschus, Istrumenti, Busta 4246, fol. 501 *verso*.

'*Nelli soffitti di sopra, in una vi è una quantità di modelli di creta della b. m. del Sig.r Cav.re . . . et altre robbe . . . per la casa di poco valore, q.li robbe, cioè modelli di creta col trasportarli in altre stanze, e per il tempo di anni 25. si sono rotti . . .*' (17 January, 1706); *ibid.*, Not. A. C. Francischinus, Istrumenti, Busta 3249, fol. 78 *recto*.

'*Nel d.o studio vi erano alcune teste di gesso, et altre parti humane con alcuni modelli di creta mezzi rotti, quali tutti per esser' stati trasportati in guardaroba, si sono rotti,*

10. *Angel for Sacrament Altar,* 1673. Terracotta, height 34 cm. 1937.63. Another view of Figure 11, this shows incised calibrations on the base

11. *Angel for the Sacrament Altar,* 1673. Terracotta, height 34 cm. 1937.63

e spezzati, e non vi sono più, e qualche portione ne fù donato al Sig.r Giulio Cardarè allievo del Sig.r Cav.re per esser cose di poco rilievo'; *ibid.*, fol. 67 *recto* (published by S. Fraschetti, *Il Bernini*, 1900, p. 431 n.).

[4] For what follows, see the writer's essay, '*Bozzetti* and *Modelli*. Notes on Sculptural Procedure from the Early Renaissance through Bernini', in *Akten des* 21. *internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte* (1964), 1967, pp. 93–104. The standard collection of sixteenth-eighteenth century examples is that of A. E. Brinckmann, *Barock-Bozzetti*, 4 vols., 1923–25. For a general survey of the history of sculptural procedure, see recently R. Wittkower, *Sculpture. Processes and Principles*, 1977.

[5] Cf. J. von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie*, Nürnberg, 1675, ed. A. Peltzer, 1925, p. 286. Sandrart notes that other sculptors made only one or two models. He mentions that the studies were all three spans high (*c.* 68 cm.) and made of wax; the material seems doubtful, since this would be the unique instence of Bernini studying in wax.

[6] One of the Fogg *bozzetti* (1937.68), sometimes identified with the angel with the crown, is actually a study by Bernini for the angel with the scourge, which was executed by another sculptor.