



Veronese Workshop (Possibly Gabriele Caliari)

Veronese

Venetian, 1528 - 1588

Gabriele Caliari

Venetian, 1568 - 1631

Saint Lucy and a Donor

c. 1585/1595

oil on canvas

overall: 180.6 x 115.3 cm (71 1/8 x 45 3/8 in.)

framed: 207.3 x 141.6 x 13.3 cm (81 5/8 x 55 3/4 x 5 1/4 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection 1961.9.48

ENTRY

The saint is identifiable as Lucy by the attributes she holds in her left hand, consisting of a martyr's palm and a single eye (rather than the usual two) on a rod or stick. This latter attribute refers to a well-diffused legend about the saint, which told of how she plucked out her eyes because their beauty had attracted an unwelcome suitor, but God then restored them as a reward for her virtue and courage. Lucy consequently became a patron saint of sufferers from eye disease.

[1]

The early history of the painting has recently been elucidated by Mauro Lucco, who recognized a painting in the church of San Francesco in Montagnana, near Padua, as a copy. [2] Since this copy was recorded in the mid-19th century by the local historian Giacinto Foratti on the side wall of the former Abriani Chapel in the Duomo of Montagnana, [3] Lucco convincingly deduced that the present painting was originally painted for this chapel, situated to the right (facing) of the chancel. The painting must then have been removed at the time of the refurbishment and rededication of the chapel in the 1720s and sold off, leaving the copy on the wall. As Lucco also pointed out, the figure of the kneeling donor almost certainly therefore represents a member of the Abriani family. From all of this, it may further be inferred that the original dedication of the chapel was to Saint Lucy and that the painting served as its altarpiece. [4]

Half a century later, in 1782, a subsequent owner of the painting, Vincenzo Ranuzzini, apostolic legate to Venice, sent it to his native city of Bologna, as an

intended gift to Pope Pius VI; according to a letter announcing the arrival of the picture, the owner declared the donor to be a self-portrait of the artist. [5] When publishing this letter, Fabio Chiodini compared the portrait with various other supposed portraits of the painter and expressed some sympathy with this identification. However, these supposed portraits represent very unreliable sources of evidence; and as Chiodini himself pointed out, the donor figure looks older than 60, the age at which Veronese died in 1588. Ranuzzini's identification may be dismissed, in fact, as pure invention.

Represented in profile in the immediate foreground, in a gesture of prayer, and cut off at the waist by the lower edge of the picture, the donor figure conforms to a convention closely associated with Veronese's native city of Verona, dubbed by André Chastel "le donateur 'in abisso'" (the donor in the abyss). [6] This convention, which found particular favor in the years circa 1470–1530, was adopted by the artist in one of his earliest works, the Bevilacqua-Lazise altarpiece of circa 1547–1548 (Museo del Castelvecchio, Verona) for the church of San Fermo Maggiore. Although even by this date it had become archaic, the painter or a member of his shop may well have revived it as late as the 1580s, perhaps in response to a specific request by the patron. In this connection it may be noted that the town of Montagnana is situated well to the west of Padua, on one of the main roads to Verona.

The striking disjunction of scale between the saint and the donor should not be interpreted as miscalculation, but as a deliberate means to express differing degrees of reality, contrasting the ideal, divine nature of the saint with the humble supplicant, living in the here and now. Indeed, the difference of scale is complemented by a contrast in the pictorial handling between the two figures, with the draperies of the saint executed broadly and freely, and the head of the donor painted much more minutely. Even so, the somewhat empty rhetoric of the saint and mechanical quality of the execution fall below the standard of Veronese himself, and ever since the picture entered the Gallery, there has been general critical agreement that it is at best a work of collaboration with the master, but is more probably by a member of the studio. A possible candidate, proposed by Remigio Marini, Rodolfo Pallucchini, and Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, [7] is Veronese's younger brother Benedetto Caliari (1538–1598), who is recorded as his assistant by 1556, and who continued to perpetuate the externals of his style for a decade after his death. It is suggested here, however, that Benedetto was possibly responsible for the Gallery's *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, datable to circa

1575/1585, in which case, the stylistically rather different *Saint Lucy* may be by another member of the family workshop and artistic heir, namely Paolo's son Gabriele (1568–1631). [8] One of the very few surviving works definitely known to have been painted by Gabriele is the signed *Immaculate Conception* in the church of Liettoli di Campolongo, near Padua [fig. 1], a work in which the figure of Saint Anne is very close to that of Saint Lucy in her somewhat vacuous facial expression and stiff rhetorical pose. Furthermore, Veronese's biographer Carlo Ridolfi, who was a friend of Gabriele's son Giuseppe, noted that Gabriele painted "many portraits," implying that he was a specialist in the genre, and perhaps even that his portraits—as here—were of a higher quality than his religious figures. The painting is unlikely, in any case, to date from before about 1585, as may be judged from the fractured highlights on the draperies, which may be interpreted as an attempt to approximate the handling of Veronese's late works. Similarly, the donor's collar may be related to male fashions of the 1580s and 1590s rather than earlier.

It would have been very natural for any patron in Montagnana to look to Veronese or to a member of the family workshop when commissioning an altarpiece. In 1555 the master had painted the *Transfiguration* for the high altar in the neighboring chancel of the Duomo (in situ), apparently through the agency of the Venetian patrician Francesco Pisani; and a decade later he had painted one of his greatest works, the *Family of Darius before Alexander* (National Gallery, London), for Francesco's residence the Villa Pisani, just outside the city walls. [9] When commissioning their own, modestly scaled altarpiece in the 1580s or 1590s, the local Abriani family could evidently not hope to compete with such masterpieces, but it could perhaps aspire to derive from them some reflected glory.

Peter Humfrey

March 21, 2019

COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Gabriele Caliari, *Immaculate Conception*, c. 1560/1570, oil on canvas, Chiesa parrocchiale di San Lorenzo, Liettoli. Parrocchia di San Lorenzo di Liettoli (Pd)

NOTES

[1] George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art, Vol. 1: Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Art* (Florence, 1952), 650; Maria Chiara Celletti, “Lucia, santa, martire di Siracusa (iconografia),” in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, ed. Istituto Giovanni

XXIII nella Pontificia Università lateranense (Rome, 1967), 8: col. 252.

- [2] Letter (email) from Mauro Lucco to David Alan Brown, dated Jan. 22, 2011, in NGA curatorial files.
- [3] Giacinto Foratti, *Cenni storici e descrittivi di Montagnana* (Venice, 1863), 2:124 (“Si rimarca pure sopra una parete un quadro, che rappresenta Santa Lucia, onde diede il modello Paolo Veronese. Era anche questo altare dei suddetti conti Abriani”).
- [4] In a MS opinion of 1926 (NGA curatorial files, quoted by Fern Rusk Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XVI–XVIII Century* [London, 1973], 40; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings* [Washington, DC, 1979], 1:528), Detlev von Hadeln suggested that the original site of the picture was the church of Santa Croce in Belluno, where Carlo Ridolfi in 1648 had recorded an image of Saint Lucy by Veronese. But it now turns out that Ridolfi was referring rather to the Gallery’s *The Martyrdom and Last Communion of Saint Lucy*, 1984.28.1.
- [5] Fabio Chiodini, “Una sosta bolognese per una tela di Paolo Caliari e indizi per un possibile autoritratti dell’artista,” *Arte Cristiana* 93 (2005): 116 (“un quadro di insigne pennello, e cioè di Paolo Veronese rappresentante una S. Lucia in figura di naturale grandezza con appiedi il mezzo busto del Pittor sud[de]t]o”).
- [6] André Chastel, “Le donateur ‘in abisso’ dans les ‘pale,’” in *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Lucius Grisebach and Konrad Renger (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977), 273–283.
- [7] Remigio Marini, *Tutta la pittura di Paolo Veronese* (Milan, 1968), 125; Rodolfo Pallucchini, letter of Jan. 1971 in NGA curatorial files; Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese: catalogo completo dei dipinti* (Florence, 1991), 336.
- [8] For Gabriele Caliari, see Luciana Crosato Larcher, “Per Gabriele Caliari,” *Arte veneta* 18 (1964): 174–175; Hans Dieter Huber, *Paolo Veronese: Kunst als soziales System* (Munich, 2005), 114–123. For Benedetto Caliari, see Luciana Crosato Larcher, “Note su Benedetto Caliari,” *Arte veneta* 23 (1969): 115–130; Cecil Gould, “Caliari, Benedetto,” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. Alberto Maria Ghisalberti (Rome, 1973), 16:700–701; Luciana Crosato Larcher, “La bottega di Paolo Veronese,” in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 256–265; Diana Gisolfi, “Caliari. (1) Benedetto Calieri (2) Carlo Caliari,” in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York and London, 1996), 5:431–432; Hans Dieter Huber, *Paolo Veronese: Kunst als soziales System* (Munich, 2005), 33–48.
- [9] See Nicholas Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings, Vol. 2: Venice, 1540–1600* (London, 2008), 365–367.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support is a tightly woven, medium-weight, plain-weave fabric. There is a vertical seam approximately 15 centimeters from the right edge. This smaller area is made up of three pieces of fabric joined with two horizontal seams. The support has been lined, but cusping around all four edges indicates that the painting retains the original dimensions.

The fabric was prepared with an off-white ground, covered by a transparent reddish-brown imprimatura. Infrared reflectography (Vidicon) [1] revealed no sign of underdrawing. The appearance of the paint surface is compromised by overall abrasion and scattered paint losses, resulting in a flattening of the forms. In the most abraded areas, the ground is visible to the naked eye. The face of the saint has been extensively retouched, and the position of the ear now appears spatially confused. Mario Modestini removed a discolored varnish and inpainted the painting in 1955. The varnish applied at that time has discolored.

Joanna Dunn and Peter Humfrey based on the examination report by Michael Swicklik

March 21, 2019

TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Hamamatsu c/1000-03 Vidicon camera and a Kodak Wratten 87A filter.

PROVENANCE

Probably commissioned for the Abriani Chapel, Duomo, Montagnana, near Padua.[1] Vincenzo Ranuzzini [1726-1800], apostolic legate to Venice; sent by him 1782 to Bologna.[2] David John Carnegie, 10th earl of Northesk [1865-1921], Longwood, Winchester, Hampshire; (sale, Sotheby's, London, 30 June 1915, no. 108, withdrawn).[3] A.M. Lever;[4] (sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 9

February 1925, no. 128); purchased by Kendal, possibly for (Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, Rome and Florence); sold 1954 to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York;[5] gift 1961 to NGA.

[1] E-mail from Mauro Lucco to NGA curator David Alan Brown, dated 22 January 2011, in NGA curatorial files. Lucco recognized a painting in the church of San Francesco in Montagnana, near Padua, as a copy of the NGA painting. Since the copy was recorded by the local historian Giacinto Foratti in the mid-19th century hanging on the side wall of the former Abriani Chapel, Lucco deduced that the NGA painting was originally painted as the altarpiece for this chapel, situated to the right (facing) of the chancel, and that the figure of the kneeling donor probably represents a member of the Abriani family. The painting must then have been removed at the time of the refurbishment and rededication of the chapel in the 1720s and sold off, leaving the copy on the wall. See Giacinto Foratti, *Cenni storici e descrittivi di Montagnana*, 2 vols., Venice, 1862-1863: 2(1863):124 ("Si rimarca pure sopra una parete un quadro, che rappresenta Santa Lucia, onde diede il modello Paolo Veronese. Era anche questo altare dei suddetti conti Abriani").

Detlev von Hadeln suggested (in a 1926 manuscript opinion, in NGA curatorial files) that the painting was the one described in 1648 by Carlo Ridolfi as having been painted by Veronese for the church of Santa Croce in Belluno (Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell' arte*, 2 vols., Venice, 1648: 1:303; Berlin edition, 1914-1924, ed. by Baron Detlev von Hadeln, 1[1914]: 317). The same text is also found in Ridolfi's earlier *Vita di Paolo Caliari Veronese*, Venice, 1646: 23. Citing Florio Miari (*Dizionario storico-artistico-letterario bellunese*, Bologna, 1843: 140), von Hadeln noted that the church was torn down in the early 19th century and that the painting had disappeared; he located it again in Contini-Bonacossi's collection. It now turns out that Ridolfi was referring instead to NGA 1984.28.1, Veronese's *The Martyrdom and Last Communion of Saint Lucy*.

[2] Fabio Chiodini, "Una sosta bolognese per una tela di Paolo Caliari e indizi per un possibile autoritratti dell'artista," *Arte Cristiana* 93 (2005): 116-117. The painting was an intended gift to Pope Pius VI. Chiodini kindly shared with NGA his discovery of the previously unpublished document that recounts this transfer, which is in Ms. B 2382, pp. 270-271, Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna; see his e-mails of 13 and 30 September 2004, in NGA curatorial files.

[3] Lot number 108 is crossed out in the copy of the sale catalogue held by the library of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (copy in NGA curatorial files). The sale catalogue indicates that the painting was part of the property removed not from the earl's Scottish seat of Ethie Castle near Arbroath, but from his English residence of Longwood, Winchester.

[4] This name is provided by the Getty Provenance Index, Getty Research Center, Los Angeles.

[5] On 7 June 1954 the Kress Foundation made an offer to Contini Bonacossi for 16 paintings, including the Veronese. In the draft of a document prepared for the count's signature in connection with the offer this painting is described as one "which came from my personal collection in Florence." The count accepted the offer on 30 June 1954; the final payment for the purchase was ultimately made in early 1957, after the count's death in 1955. (See copies of correspondence in NGA curatorial files and The Kress Collection Digital Archive, <https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/1871>).

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1960 Loan to display with the permanent collection, Allentown Art Museum, Pennsylvania, 1960.

1996 Obras Maestras de la National Gallery of Art de Washington, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, 1996-1997, unnumbered catalogue, 50-51, color repro.

2022 Out of the Kress Vaults: Women in Sacred Renaissance Painting, Fairfield University Art Museum, Fairfield, CT, 2022, no. 13, repro.

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- 1956 *Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection Acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation 1951-56*. Introduction by John Walker, text by William E. Suida and Fern Rusk Shapley. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1956: 194, no. 77, repro.
- 1957 Berenson, Bernard. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Venetian School*. 2 vols. London, 1957: 1:134.
- 1959 *Paintings and Sculpture from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1959: 210, repro.
- 1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 136.
- 1968 Marini, Remigio. *Tutta la pittura di Paolo Veronese*. Milan, 1968: 125 no. 251.
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- 1972 Fredericksen, Burton B., and Federico Zeri. *Census of Pre-Nineteenth Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*. Cambridge, Mass., 1972: 40, 426, 510.
- 1973 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools, XVI-XVIII Century*. London, 1973: 40, fig. 77.
- 1975 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1975: 364, repro.
- 1976 Pignatti, Terisio. *Veronese*. 2 vols. Venice, 1976: 2:no. A405.
- 1979 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*. 2 vols. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1979: 1:527-528; 2:pl. 367.
- 1984 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Rev. ed. New York, 1984: 215, no. 264, color repro.
- 1985 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985: 423, repro.
- 1991 Pignatti, Terisio, and Filippo Pedrocco. *Veronese: Catalogo completo dei dipinti*. Florence, 1991: 336, no. 85A.
- 1995 Pignatti, Terisio, and Filippo Pedrocco. *Veronese*. 2 vols. Milan, 1995: 2:527 no. A97.
- 2005 Chiodini, Fabio. "Una sosta bolognese per una tela di Paolo Caliari e indizi per un possibile autoritratti dell'artista." *Arte Cristiana* 93 (2005): 115-120.
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