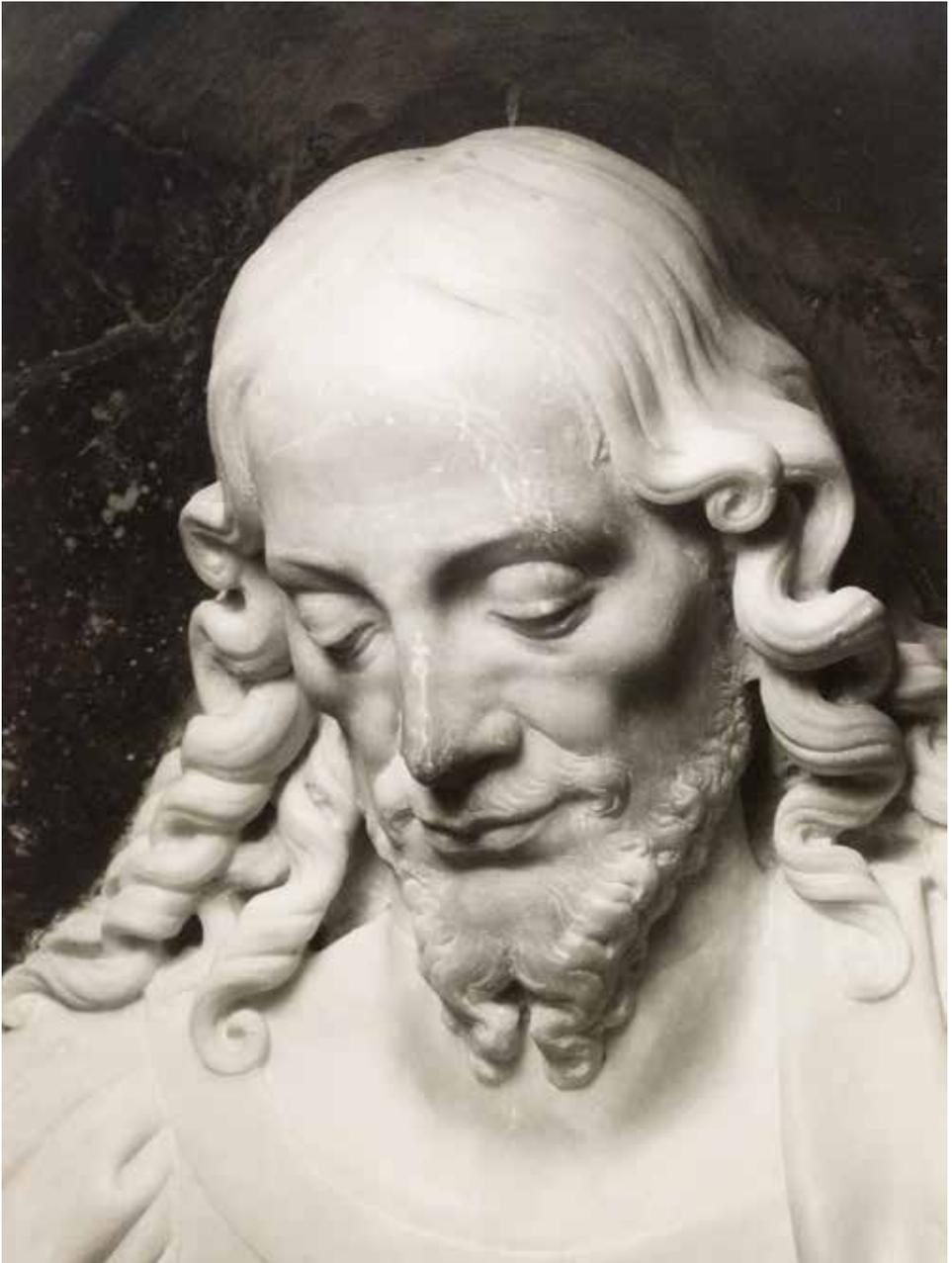


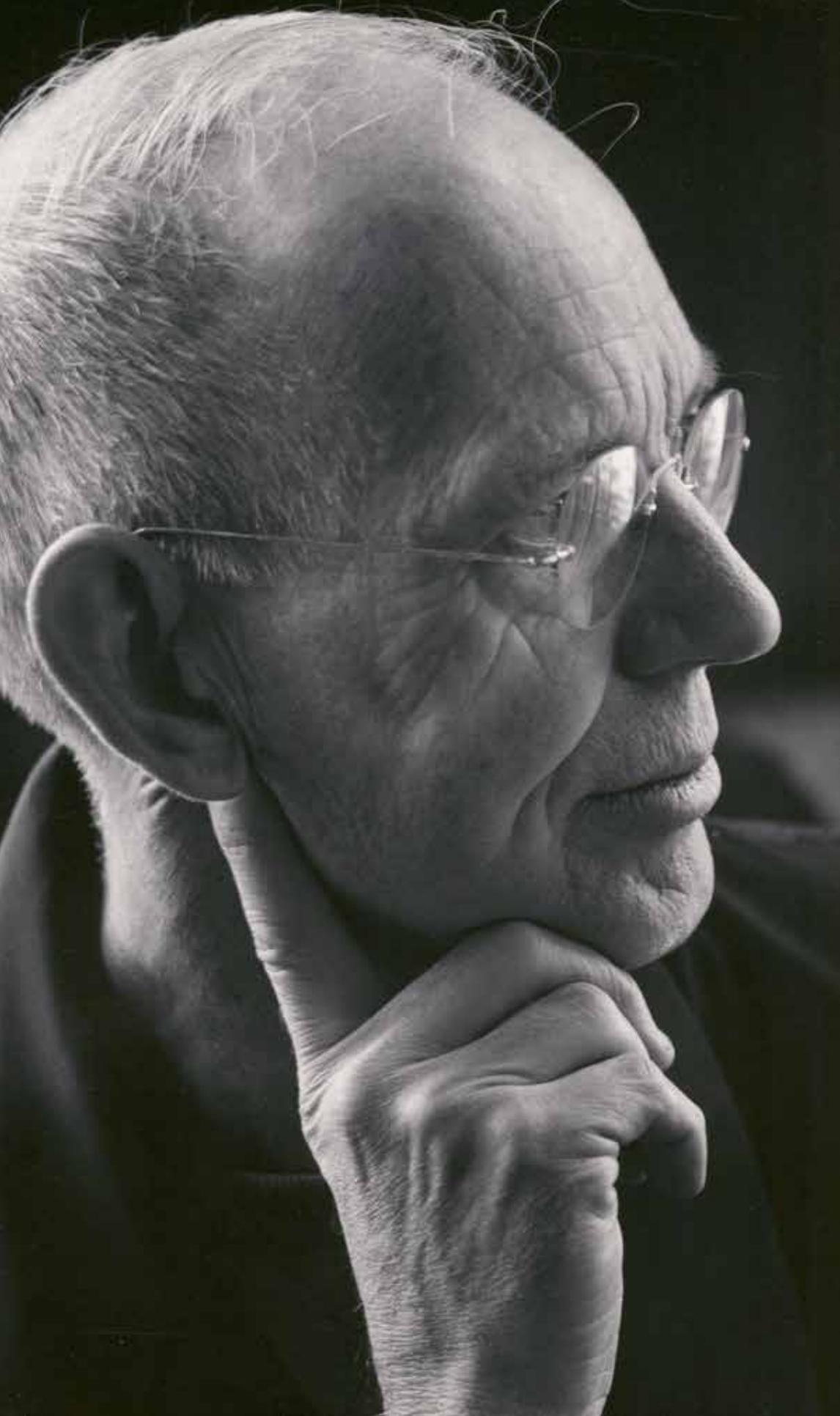
# In the Library

## Verrocchio, Connoisseurship, and the Photographs of Clarence Kennedy

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# Verrocchio, Connoisseurship, and the Photographs of Clarence Kennedy

Clarence Kennedy (1892–1972), an art historian at Smith College and self-proclaimed “scholar-photographer,” revolutionized documentary art photography with subtle and illuminating details of Italian Renaissance sculpture. The limited photographic resources available for teaching art history in the early 1920s led Kennedy to pursue photography, eventually resulting in his seven-volume photographic series *Studies in the History and Criticism of Sculpture*. Sculptors with large workshops, such as Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488) and Desiderio da Settignano (c. 1429–1464), particularly inspired him. His exquisitely detailed photographs allowed him to compare motifs, methods, and styles to propose distinctions between the master’s hand and the work of his assistants.

The first six volumes in Kennedy’s *Studies* were portfolios of loose photographs, averaging 50 plates each without accompanying text. These included surveys on the ancient Greek Erechtheion and the Siphnian Treasury, but Kennedy later turned to quattrocento Florentine subjects with volumes on portraiture and relief sculpture, as well as monographic surveys of Desiderio’s *Marsuppini Tomb* (Santa Croce) and *Tabernacle of the Sacrament* (San Lorenzo). He also planned and partially completed a portfolio on the *Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal* by Antonio Rossellino (San Miniato al Monte).

In 1932 Kennedy published volume seven: *The Unfinished Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio to the Cardinal Niccolò Forteguerra at Pistoia*, which unlike its predecessors is bound and contains text. The text was written by his student Elizabeth Wilder, originally as her master’s thesis, and was supported with documents discovered by Italian art historian Pèleo Bacci. Kennedy photographed the monument from 1930 to early 1931. The result focused new attention on a major work long dismissed as a workshop production.

The Forteguerra cenotaph is nearly three stories high, with life-size figures including Christ surrounded by four angels with the virtues Faith, Hope, and Charity positioned above putti and a bust of the cardinal. Verrocchio received the commission in 1476 but left it incomplete in the hands of his workshop assistants when he moved to Venice in 1486 to work on a different commission. The monument’s precise

location in the Pistoia Duomo was not decided until after Verrocchio's death, and its initial installation was significantly altered in the 16th and 18th centuries. Charity, the bust, and the flanking putti are all later additions. These modifications, as well as the monument's placement high on the wall in a dark aisle, made it nearly impossible to study properly before Kennedy's campaign.

Photographing marble sculpture in situ requires a light source bright enough to illuminate the sculptures without obliterating the details and producing dark shadows. Kennedy solved this problem with his "pencil of light" method, where a light source was moved continuously over the object during a long exposure. He explained, "Many of the effects, indeed, we did not ourselves see in their completeness until the film was developed and the print was made, for they are a composite of passages of light and shadow . . ." <sup>1</sup> This process revealed details that allowed Kennedy, Wilder, and subsequent scholars to study and compare the details within this monument and throughout Verrocchio's oeuvre.

The Gallery would like to thank the Harvard Fine Arts Library, the repository of Kennedy's negatives and professional papers, for the loan of plates from their unbound deluxe edition of the Forteguerra monograph. They are displayed alongside other Kennedy Verrocchio photographs from the Gallery's collection, including images of his *Silver Altar* relief and sculptures from the Gustave Dreyfus Collection photographed for the art dealer Joseph Duveen. The juxtaposition of these images, often interpreted here through Wilder's text, illustrates Kennedy's roles as connoisseur, thoughtful art historian, and innovative art photographer.

All photographs illustrated in the brochure are by Clarence Kennedy and from the department of image collections, National Gallery of Art, Washington, unless otherwise noted. All Forteguerra plates displayed in the exhibition are from a deluxe, unbound copy of the album, including an additional twenty-six details, in the Harvard University Fine Arts Library, Cambridge, MA.



**above** *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, 1932, gelatin silver print; **left** *Forteguerri Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, Duomo, Pistoia, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

1 Ansel Adams, *Clarence Kennedy*, 1955, gelatin silver print, © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

Kennedy was highly regarded by both art historians and photographers. Among his closest friends were Polaroid founder Edwin Land and Ansel Adams. Adams made this portrait during a visit to Kennedy's home in 1955. He described Kennedy's photos as revealing "not only his perception of the varied subjects but his extraordinary ability to record the glow of marble and the sheen of bronze in breathtakingly beautiful prints."<sup>2</sup>

2 Clarence Kennedy, Elizabeth Wilder, and Pèleo Bacci, *The Unfinished Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio to the Cardinal Niccolò Forteguerri at Pistoia*, vol. 7, *Studies in the History and Criticism of Sculpture* (Northampton, 1932)

Kennedy published 100 copies of his Forteguerri monograph. He made presentation copies for influential patrons; this one is inscribed to Joseph Widener who later donated it to the Gallery. These bound volumes included thirty-two full-page details and nine small photographs tipped into the text. Kennedy was seldom interested in overall views, as evidenced by the small image of the whole monument included only for context.

3 *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist by Andrea del Verrocchio*, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, 1932, gelatin silver print

The National Gallery's department of image collections owns the only known copy of Kennedy's portfolio on the *Silver Altar of San Giovanni*, which includes eight images of Verrocchio's panel. Kennedy carefully manipulated the light source to balance the many levels of relief and the highlights of the silver without losing the delicate details in the chasing, particularly evident in the soldiers' armor. In this project Kennedy continued his efforts to work out what he called "the Verrocchio tangle."

4 *Christ as the Redeemer: Head*, detail of *Forteguerri Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print (front cover)

The Forteguerri figure of Christ is the most finished on the monument and one of the few consistently considered as by Verrocchio. Kennedy's details of the face, hair, hands, and feet reveal a sensitivity typical of the master. Christ hovers several stories above the viewer, making such detailed analysis impossible before this publication.

5 *Saint John the Baptist*, detail of *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist by Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1932, gelatin silver print

Despite their different media, the Forteguerri Christ and the Saint John from the Silver Altar have many similarities, especially in the sinuous locks of hair and sharply defined cheekbones. Both figures have a powerful presence and exude an inner strength.





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**6** *Christ as the Redeemer: Left Hand*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The powerful concentration and intensity of the Baptist's clenched hands are echoed in the monumentality of this detail of the Redeemer. His arm is also modeled with deep drapery folds reminiscent of Saint John.

**7** *Christ as the Redeemer: Right Foot with Drapery Drawn across the Ankle*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

This detail, not included in the smaller edition, conveys vitality and elegance. It also captures the beauty of the undulations of the cloak while still suggesting the form underneath.

**8** *Christ as the Redeemer: Head of Cherub from the Side*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The head of a cherub at Christ's feet is also considered to be by Verrocchio. Chisel marks in the ears and eyes indicate a slightly less finished state. This photo also conveys the cramped composition of the monument, a result of the reinstallation by Gaetano Masoni in 1753–1754.



9

9 *Putto Poised on a Globe* by Andrea del Verrocchio, National Gallery of Art, 1930, gelatin silver print

In 1930 Kennedy was summoned to Paris by his intermittent employer, the art dealer Sir Joseph Duveen, to take photographs of his newly purchased Gustave Dreyfus collection, including this *terra cruda* putto. Its details are closely related to Verrocchio's *Putto with a Dolphin* in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, as well as the Forteguerri cherub. The rounded cheeks, hooded eyes, and broad forehead are all extremely similar.



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10 *Faith: Head, Not Quite in Profile to the Right, as Seen from in Front*, detail of *Forteguerri Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

After the figure of Christ, Verrocchio's hand is most prevalent in the draperies of the virtues of Faith and Hope that hover in the bottom half of the monument. The unfinished state of their heads has led to debates regarding their attributions. However, the subtleties of Faith's mouth and eyebrows, as well as a perceived understanding of her bone structure, convinced Wilder that her face was by Verrocchio. This quiet detail isolates her from the cacophony of the composition and aims to support that argument.



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**11** *Faith: Drapery behind the Right Thigh*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

Verrocchio's intricately and deeply carved drapery depends on "mass and movement" and stands in direct opposition to the flat treatment of the angels above.<sup>3</sup> Kennedy carefully lit the marble to highlight the dramatic composition of the folds that echo Christ's. While perhaps executed by an assistant, the complicated design of the drapery is undoubtedly Verrocchio's.

**12** *Faith: Left Hand, with the Drapery over the Arm*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The folds of the robe over Faith's arm quietly echo the beautiful curve of her hand in this carefully chosen detail.

**13** *Hope: Head, Facing Nearly Left, as Seen from in Front*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

The vapid look on Hope's puffy face, as well as the formulaic treatment of her hair and bodice compared to other figures, have led her to be ascribed to Verrocchio's workshop. Wilder calls the sculpting "timid," but not "sketchy," which would indicate a finished work by a less accomplished sculptor.<sup>4</sup>



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**14** *Hope: Hair, Veil, and Wing*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

This detail further illustrates Hope's designation as a workshop piece. Even if Hope's wings are only roughed out, the monotonous uniformity of the feathers discourages an attribution to Verrocchio.

**15** *Hope: Drapery below the Waist*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

As in the case of Faith, Hope's voluminous drapery below her waist is much closer to the hand of the master. This detail of the area below her right elbow reveals the deep, dramatic cutting of the marble more typical of Verrocchio.

**16** *Upper Angel to Observer's Left: Head, Looking to the Right, as Seen from in Front*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The four angels supporting Christ's mandorla are all inferior to the other Verrocchiora figures on the monument. The angel at the upper left is particularly awkward and weak. She is the least finished figure on the monument, perhaps because of her high placement. The presence of Christ's blessing hand so close to her face is a result of the eighteenth-century reinstallation.





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17 *Soldier*, detail of *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1932, gelatin silver print

The Forteguerra angels' heads are formulaic, loosely based on a sweet Verrocchio type embodied by this soldier on the *Silver Altar*.

18 *Lower Angel to Observer's Left: Head, Facing Slightly Right, as Seen from in Front*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The angel at the lower left is highly finished and characterized by Wilder as the most successful copy of Verrocchio's models.

19 *Lower Angel to Observer's Left: Drapery below the Waist*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

The deeply cut, complicated folds of drapery, such as seen in this detail, are extremely successful and were likely the result of Verrocchio's direct supervision.

20 *Lower Angel to Observer's Left: Right Wing*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

Verrocchio's hand may also be seen in the beautifully intricate and organic wings on this angel. Kennedy's careful lighting reveals the subtle layers of built-up relief.



22

**21** *Lower Angel to Observer's Right: Head, Facing Slightly Right as Seen from the Left, detail of Forteguerri Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print*

Chisel marks can still be seen on the lower right angel's face. The hair, however, is highly finished but the simplistic treatment of the upper bodice is indicative of a less skilled artist. Such varied degrees of finish in the same figure may suggest that different sculptors were responsible for particular elements, such as hair or drapery.

**22** *Lower Angel to Observer's Right: Drapery below the Waist, detail of Forteguerri Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University*

The drapery on this angel appears to be a workshop creation based on Verrocchio's models. The folds are linear and overly erratic, creating a mass of forms unrelated to the shapes or movement of the figure.

**23** *Inscribed Slab: Two Putti Upholding the Inscription, detail of Forteguerri Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print*

While inconsistencies of style and ability throughout the monument make it indisputable that Verrocchio's workshop participated, the only identifiable collaborator generally recognized is Verrocchio's probable assistant, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci, for the putti at the base of the monument. He utilized a nearly identical motif in tombs in Forlì and Montefiorentino.



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**24** *Putto* by Francesco di Simone Ferrucci, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, c. 1949, gelatin silver print,

The chubby putti resemble a marble figure acquired by the De Young Art Museum in 1949 as by Verrocchio. Kennedy photographed it while collaborating with the curator Walter Heil on its attribution. It is now attributed to Francesco di Simone Ferrucci. The De Young putto's surface is pitted and coarse, evidence that it once was kept outside. This photo is part of a large group of test prints donated to the Gallery by Kennedy's granddaughter, Amy DeSalvatore.



25

**25** *Inscribed Slab: Legs and Feet of the Putto to Observer's Right*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print, Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University

There are many parallels between the treatment of the De Young and the Forteguerra putti's playful feet and round, stubby fingers.

**26** *Inscribed Slab: Head of the Putto to Observer's Right*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by *Andrea del Verrocchio*, 1930/1931, gelatin silver print

The handling of the heavily lidded eyes, slightly open smallish mouths, and folds of fat are also comparable.

**27** Clarence Kennedy negative printed by Ansel Adams, *Putto by Francesco di Simone Ferrucci*, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, c. 1965, gelatin silver print. Reproduced with permission from the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. All rights reserved.

Ansel Adams and Edwin Land planned an unrealized monograph on Kennedy for which Adams printed Kennedy's negatives. He said, "I have had some grave difficulties trying to match the original tone, values and 'feeling' of the Kennedy prints."<sup>5</sup> This photo was part of a gift to the National Gallery of seven Adams/Kennedy prints from Adams's former assistant, Mary Alinder and her husband Jim.





28

28 *Giuliano de' Medici* by Andrea del Verrocchio, National Gallery of Art, 1930, gelatin silver print

Kennedy described another view of this bust, photographed for Duveen in the same sitting, as “the longest exposure I have ever made. Made on slow panchromatic film, I opened the shutter at 5 o'clock of a summer day and shut it again at 8 the next morning.”<sup>6</sup> The rising and setting sun served as Kennedy's pencil of light, glancing off a dark, glossy, nineteenth-century coating that has since been removed.

29 *Giuliano de' Medici: Breastplate* by Andrea del Verrocchio, National Gallery of Art, 1930, gelatin silver print (back cover)

Kennedy's long exposure allowed him to capture the many layers of detail in this dark terracotta bust, resulting in what he called a “thick” negative.

30 *Bust of a Young Woman* by Andrea del Verrocchio, The Frick Collection, 1930, gelatin silver print

Kennedy's photo captures the Frick bust's elegant serenity with his choice of viewpoint and subtle lighting. This bust was among the Dreyfus sculptures purchased by Duveen, who sold it to John D. Rockefeller.



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## Notes

- 1 Clarence Kennedy in Clarence Kennedy, Elizabeth Wilder, and Pèleo Bacci, *Studies in the History and Criticism of Sculpture* (Northampton, 1932), 3.
- 2 Ansel Adams with Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: An Autobiography* (New York, 1985), 296.
- 3 Elizabeth Wilder in Clarence Kennedy, Elizabeth Wilder, and Pèleo Bacci, *Studies in the History and Criticism of Sculpture* (Northampton, 1932), 48.
- 4 Wilder 1932, 42.
- 5 Memo, Adams to Mark Sewall, Land et al., 8/18/6 (The Polaroid Consultant Photographer Records, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Ansel Adams letters).
- 6 Clarence Kennedy, "Sculpture Photography," *The Complete Photographer*, ed. Willard D. Morgan, (Chicago, 1943), 9: 3195.

## Further Reading

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Lemke, Melissa Beck. "The mysteries of Desiderio's 'Saint Jerome' revealed by Clarence Kennedy." *The Burlington Magazine* 150 (November 2008), 755–757.

Lemke, Melissa Beck. "A connoisseur's canvas: the photographic collection of Clarence Kennedy." In *Photo archives and the photographic memory of art history*, edited by Costanza Caraffa, 323–333. Berlin, 2011.

McGavin, Laurie. *Clarence Kennedy: Scholar Photographer*. Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, MA, 1980.

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Brochure of the exhibition *In the Library: Verrocchio, Connoisseurship, and the Photographs of Clarence Kennedy*, September 16, 2019 – January 10, 2020 © Board of Trustees. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Brochure text written by Melissa Beck Lemke.

For more information, please visit [nga.gov/verrocchiokennedy](https://www.nga.gov/verrocchiokennedy)

**front cover** *Christ as the Redeemer: Head*, detail of *Forteguerra Monument* by Andrea del Verrocchio, 1930 / 1931, gelatin silver print; **back cover** *Giuliano de' Medici: Breastplate* by Andrea del Verrocchio (detail), National Gallery of Art, 1930, gelatin silver print

