

‘I am only here as a learner’: Katherine Read in Italy, 1750-53

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The Scottish artist Katherine Read travelled to Italy in the 1750s to hone her skills as a portraitist and capture some of the bustling market for Grand Tour portraits. Combining details from letters written during her time on the Continent with various archival sources, this article presents details of her personal experience alongside a working list of her early portraits.

For over twenty years, between her arrival in 1753 and leaving for India in 1777, Katherine Read (1723-78) was a renowned portraitist in London. Born into an Episcopalian family with Jacobite leanings, she was arguably the first professional woman painter from Scotland. She received commissions from the British royal family, was invited to Versailles to paint the future king’s brother and sister, exhibited in London at the Society of Artists of Great Britain (1760-72) – of which she was one of the first women ‘honorary members’ –, the Free Society of Artists (1761-68) and the Royal Academy of Arts (1773-76).¹ Read’s career took her from Dundee to France, Rome, London and Madras. She died onboard ship between ‘Negapatam’ and the Cape of Good Hope as she attempted to return to Europe in order to escape ‘this firey furnace or rather, these Infernal Regions’ after a challenging stay in India.²

The early training received by Read, a provincial Scotswoman neither born nor married into an artistic dynasty, is unknown. To date, partial quotations from a handful of (untraceable) letters that she and the abbé Peter Grant³ (1708-84), the Scots agent in Rome, wrote to her brother Alexander (‘Sandy’) Read of Logie (1716-89), the commander of a custom house sloop, have been the chief sources available to consider her formative years in Italy.⁴ Drawing on a range of documents, from the

¹Preparatory work for this article was carried out when I was lucky enough to be a Senior Anniversary Fellow at IASH (Edinburgh) and a History Fellow (spring 2023) at the Bogliasco Foundation. My heartfelt thanks to the administrators and my fellow researchers at both institutions, to Vicky Coltman at the University of Edinburgh, to James Holloway, Duncan Thomson and Richard Torrance, as well as to the staff of the National Library of Scotland and the Bodleian Library, to Jasmin Oberleitner at the Haus Hof und Staatsarchiv in Vienna and to Neil Jeffares.

In the absence of a catalogue raisonné or monograph, Neil Jeffares’s online catalogue entry ‘READ, Katherine’ is the most reliable source, available at www.pastellists.com/Artists.htm#Re, accessed 20th November 2025. All references in this article preceded by ‘J.’ refer to the Pastellists.com online catalogue.

² City archives, Dundee, GD 131/25/3/18, letter from Katherine Read to Charles Wedderburn, ‘Ennore about 10 Miles from Fort St George’, 10th[?] July 1778.

³ On Peter Grant, see M.C. Cola: ‘Scottish agents in Rome in the eighteenth century: the case of Peter Grant’, in S. Braken and A. Turpin, eds: *The Art Market, Agents and Collectors: Collecting Strategies in Europe and the United States, 1550-1950*, London 2021, pp.102-12.

⁴ Thanks to Richard Torrance for his transcription of Katherine Read and of Peter Grant’s (unlocated) letters to Alexander Read. All quotations from these letters are drawn from this collection (hereafter RT) and identified by date. Differences in spelling (e.g., ‘Porto’ for ‘Porta’ or ‘Gabriella’ for ‘Gabrielli’) may be due to transcription errors. For previous references to these letters, see A.F. Steuart: ‘Miss Katherine Read, court

State Papers to parish records and the correspondence both of residents of Rome and of Grand Tourists, this article sketches in details of Read's Italian sojourn and presents elements of her early corpus. Her sex, which created many hindrances but also occasional opportunities, and her origins as a Lowlander of Jacobite extraction – a member both of a persecuted diaspora and of a family with sufficient means to bankroll her time abroad – are key to our understanding: paradoxically, the presence of many exiled supporters of the Stuarts enabled Read to spend time on the Continent as a single woman pursuing an ambitious professional goal.⁵

After the execution of her maternal uncle John Wedderburn for Jacobitism in November 1746, Read moved to France, possibly to copy Stuart portraits for propaganda purposes and study with Maurice Quentin de La Tour (1704–88).⁶ Her departure for Italy in 1750 is implicitly shown as precipitated in letters from George Innes, principal of the Scots College in Paris. He wrote to abbé Grant:

M[istress] Reid [*sic*] a Gentlewoman of our Country is on her way to Rome, I'm truly sorry I knew it not in time to send by her some bundles of papers for M. Lumisden but those will certainly go some time hence by M. Macleod one of our sufferers in the late affair [. . .]. I entreat you'll show M[istress] Reid and him all manner of kindness.⁷

To James Edgar (1688–1762), the Pretender's secretary, he observed:

I was sadly disappointed, not knowing in time Miss Reads departure, which would have been an excellent occasion for transmitting papers to Mr Lumisden [. . .]. They were left with Mr Syke's Br[other] in Law, who of all the portraits I ever saw of the Prince [Charles Edward Stuart], has made the completest one in

paintress', *The Scottish Historical Review* 2, no.5 (1904), pp.38–46; V. Manners: 'Catherine Read: "The English Rosalba"', *The Connoisseur* 88 (1931), pp.376–86; *idem*: 'Catherine Read and royal patronage', *The Connoisseur* 89 (1932), pp.35–40; and *idem*: 'Catherine Read: the last phase', *The Connoisseur* 89 (1932), pp.171–78.

⁵ On the importance of Read's involvement with Jacobite circles, see especially M. Morgan: 'Jacobitism and art after 1745: Katherine Read in Rome', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27 (2004), pp.233–44.

⁶ See E. Corp: 'Portraits of the exiled Stuarts by Scottish painters', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 165 (2023), pp.140–52 and 'A recently identified Scottish portrait of Bonnie Prince Charlie by Katherine Read', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 167 (2025), pp.1012–15; Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1) observes: 'Claims that Read was responsible for copies of La Tour's portrait of Charles Edward in oil and in pastel c.1748 seem to be based on her being in Paris around that time and having some association with La Tour rather than on secure documentation or stylistic analysis of her production.' See also www.pastellists.com/Essays/LaTourCopyists.pdf, accessed 20th November 2025.

⁷ University of Aberdeen, Scottish Catholic Archives, SK6.13, letter from George Innes to Peter Grant, 18th October 1750. Thanks to Clotilde Prunier for identifying Alexander McLeod, aide-de-camp to the Young Pretender and son of the advocate John McLeod of Muiravonside.

the judgment of all who have compar'd it with others made of HRH in this town.⁸

Innes and, by extension, Grant, Edgar and his assistant Andrew Lumisden (1720–1801), considered Read trustworthy and could identify her, even if they had never met. Scottish connections remained essential to the artist's professional and social frequentations throughout her life. Her hasty departure suggests that she seized an opportunity to travel with others. This was frequent even for male tourists and artists who sought companionship and a reduction in expense. Additional questions of propriety, however, intervened for women.

Eighteen months before Read's arrival in Rome (in January 1752 she mentioned having already spent a year there), the artist James Russel (1720–63) noted: 'there are now here of English and Scotch, painters and sculptors, to the number of sixteen'.⁹ Like the Grand Tourists, they met at the Café Anglais, by the recently constructed Spanish Steps,¹⁰ read the papers, discussed business and received their letters there.¹¹ Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Patch lived on Piazza di Spagna. Giovanni Battista Piranesi's shop, Pompeo Batoni's house and the *Académie de France* lay a few blocks away.¹² It was a short walk to the Palazzo del Re, home to the exiled Stuarts, where in 1752 Read would partake of Christmas goose pie.¹³ Apart from permanent residents, Grant, who dwelt on Piazza Navona, and the Jacobites Edgar and Lumisden, as well as William Wagstaffe, the Stuarts' Protestant Chaplain, Read spent time with David Fordyce, the Aberdeen professor who drowned on his way home, William Chambers, George Chalmers (Cosmo Alexander's brother-in-law), Thomas Hudson and other expatriates.¹⁴

Read, who spoke French, also frequented members of the *Académie de France* (then headed by Charles-Joseph Natoire), located in the Palazzo Mancini.¹⁵ She wrote to her brother: 'I am sitting to a very

⁸ Windsor, Royal Archives, State Papers, Stuart Papers (hereafter SP), MAIN 312/30, letter from George Innes to James Edgar, 25th October 1750.

⁹ See J.M. Kelly: 'Letters from a young painter abroad: James Russel in Rome, 1740–63', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 74 (2012), pp.61–164, at p.105.

¹⁰ See L. Salerno: *Piazza di Spagna*, Naples 1967, *passim*.

¹¹ R. Brinsley Ford: 'The letters of Jonathan Skelton written from Rome and Tivoli in 1758 together with correspondence relating to his death on 19 January 1759', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 36 (1956–58), pp.23–84, esp. p.38. Peter Grant, Ozias Humphry and Robert Strange all had letters addressed there.

¹² Batoni lived on 'Piazza di Spagna, secondo traversale (Via Bocca di Leone), verso Strada Fratina, da Strada delle Carrozze', E. Debenedetti et al.: *Artisti e Artigiani a Roma, III: Dagli Stati delle Anime del 1700, 1725, 1750, 1775*, Rome 2013, p.282. Piranesi had his shop on Via Sistina, where William Chambers lodged.

¹³ National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (hereafter NLS), Acc.11328, Andrew Lumisden's letter book (hereafter AL), letter from Andrew Lumisden to John Edgar, 26th December 1752. All quotations from Andrew Lumisden's letters are drawn from this letter book and identified by date.

¹⁴ AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 17th October 1752: 'Miss Read & Chalmers heartily thank you for your kind remembrance, the former continues here till the spring, when her brother comes to carry her home. I hear Hudson was very fond both of her & Chalmers performances'.

famous french Man, one Blanchet,¹⁶ for my Picture, who visits me often and is my present master' – the whereabouts of a likeness of the young artist (which perhaps remained unfinished) by Louis-Gabriel Blanchet (1701–72) are unknown.¹⁷ Blanchet had Jacobite credentials, like La Tour – he had painted the Stuart princes, although much of his output at the time consisted of religious pictures. Despite being barred from attending as a day-student, as Allan Ramsay had a few years earlier, Read could emulate aspects of the education given to the Palazzo Mancini residents: they had opportunities to copy masterpieces – notably the Vatican Raphaels – to develop visual and practical skills and (although this was frowned upon) to establish a clientele. Blanchet lived in the Academy but taught Read in her apartment.

The *Status animarum* parish censuses are notoriously incomplete, particularly for foreigners, but they place Read, at least during part of her stay, in the heart of the *ghetto degli Inglese*. The 1752 S. Lorenzo in Lucina register lists, without a surname, 'Sig[nor/norin]a Caterina Scozzese Pitt[oress]a', a non-Catholic, in the same house as Marcantonio Foschi, *biccheraio* (a maker or seller of glassware) and his family.¹⁸ Confirmation that the tenant absent when the priest knocked was Read is offered by her nationality – Scottish – and characterisation as a 'paintress', but also by the 1753 census, which records 'Caterina Rid', this time including her surname, with the spelling following the Italian pronunciation. The 1752 ledger indicates that she was known as *Signor[in]a Caterina*, a gendered form: a foreign man's patronym would have been used, preceded by *Monsù*. Read dwelt on Volta Piazza di Spagna verso la Selciata (now Salita di San Sebastianello).¹⁹ As she observed to her brother, lamenting the expense, she was 'oblig'd to wear good Clothes tho' not fine, and have a tolerable genteel apartment' for high-born sitters to feel at ease.²⁰ External prompts like her garb and address could help convince clients of her social and artistic value.

Writing to Alexander six months after her arrival, the artist struck a positive note: 'you know so well the necessity there is for staying a while in Italy that I need not enlarge on the subject. I apply so constantly and take every decent method of improvement that I think it next to impossible that I can miss'.²¹ She decreed the charm of home to be unrivalled, 'notwithstanding my being more happy at present than ever I was before, and my meeting with more Civility, and People to take notice of me, than I could possibly have expected'. Her gamble was paying off. 'I

¹⁵ See M. Bayard, E. Beck-Saiello and A. Gobet, eds: *L'Académie de France à Rome. Le palais Mancini: un foyer artistique dans l'Europe des Lumières (1725–1792)*, Rennes 2016.

¹⁶ See O. Michel: 'Un pittore francese a Roma, Louis-Gabriel Blanchet', *Strenna dei Romanisti* 57 (1996), pp.467–86.

¹⁷ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

¹⁸ Archivio Storico Diocesano, Rome, *Libro dello Stato dell'Anima di San Lorenzo in Lucina*, 1752, f°59v°. Thanks to Maurice Whitehead of the Venerable English College for his immensely helpful suggestions about different parishes and Foschi's occupation.

¹⁹ Thanks to Antonella Pampalone for identifying the modern street to which Read's address corresponds.

²⁰ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

²¹ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

am but in a manner beginning to be known here': commissions were trickling in.

'Miss Read is very well, & applying & improving in her business very fast', Edgar assured the loyal Jacobite Elizabeth Fotheringham.²² Lumisden made a similar comment to his brother-in-law, the engraver Robert Strange, a month later: 'Miss Read from Dundee, who was sometime at Paris w[i]t[h]La Tour, has been here these 9 months: she has made great advances in her business: she paints both in oyl & pastille and has done some portraits that are thought little inferior to Vandyke himself'.²³ On 1st September 1751 Grant informed MacDonnell of Glengarry that 'Miss Read [. . .] exceeds him [Cosmo Alexander] much in the art of Painting, & at doing of Portraits all the Greatest Masters here'.²⁴ These effusive expressions of admiration from loyal friends may be sincere; however, they also constituted early efforts to broadcast Read's renown as a talented artist.

Lumisden's allusion to Anthony Van Dyck is significant. Read mentioned a work by the artist in the Stuarts' Roman palazzo: 'I have lately copied a very famous picture done by van Dike of three children of King Charles the 1st. of England, there is another of the same subject, and Master at Kinsinton, this is reckoned one of the finest of it's kind in Rome'.²⁵ Hall'i'th'wood's *Children of Charles I* (Fig.1) after Van Dyck may be Read's first extant Italian work.²⁶ Such copies were appreciated for artistic reasons - and as signs of Jacobite allegiance. Later painters who copied this portrait include James Nevay, Anne Forbes and Philip Wickstead.²⁷

In June 1751 Read met Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779), 'a great connoisseur [who] has one of the most valuable collections in Rome'.²⁸ Some thought him a Hanoverian spy. On the strength of the pictures she had painted, the cardinal opened his collection to Read. Choosing four heads by Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757),²⁹ the most famous woman artist of her day, she set to her task. She borrowed works from

²² SP MAIN 323/75, letter from John Edgar to Elizabeth Fotheringham, 20th July 1751. The Fotheringhams had Forfar connections in Dundee and Powrie; they were related to the Wedderburns, Read's maternal family, and the artist may have frequented Elizabeth during her time in France. James Edgar was also from Forfar.

²³ AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 3rd August 1751.

²⁴ Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham, Ne C 2089, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander MacDonnell, 1st September 1751. A note adds: 'Miss Read is a Scotch Woman, & sister to Cap[tai]n Read, Commander of one of the Custom House Sloops in Scotland'. MacDonnell (Alasdair Ruadh MacDomhail) was the double-agent 'Pickle the Spy', who later betrayed the Elibank plot.

²⁵ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

²⁶ Thanks to Matthew Watson, curator of Art and Social History for Bolton Museum, for providing a photograph and searching for details of the picture's provenance.

²⁷ The commission of a copy of the same picture by Anne Forbes and Philip Wickstead is mentioned in letters from Father John Thorpe to Henry, 8th Baron Arundell, in the 1780s, quoted in P.B. Kerber: 'The art of Catholic recusancy: Lord Arundell and Pompeo Batoni', in D.R. Marshall, S. Russell and K. Wolfe, eds: *Roma Britannica: Art Patronage and Cultural Exchange in Eighteenth-century Rome*, London 2011, p.78. My thanks to Hilary Wilkie for showing me James Nevay's painting in the Wemyss collection (Gosford House).

²⁸ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

other acquaintances including Emilio Carlo Altieri, prince Viana (1723–1801; later Prince of Oriolo), an amateur antiquarian and ‘a kind of a Painter himself’.³⁰ As other artists complained of the difficulty of having access to originals, Read’s comment that Viana accompanying her through his palazzo and offering to lend her any picture to copy was ‘a favour seldom or never granted’ rings true.³¹ She borrowed a *Magdalen* by Guido Reni, her ‘favourite master’ and wanted to copy ‘some very fine heads’ by the artist, wryly adding that there was hardly anything worth picking from Viana’s works.³² She noted elsewhere that ‘there are not a great many good Portraits in it [Rome], in comparison of what’s in England’, which suggests that she had visited British collections.³³ Read appears to have been concentrating on women with bowed heads or uplifted eyes. This resonates with a remark by Grant regarding her talent for figures like ‘Angels, Saints, Magdalens, Cleopatras’.³⁴

Read’s June 1751 letter to her brother evokes her artistic endeavours: ‘The Picture of the English Gentlemen is now finished and another figure of one Mr Stephens put into the Groupe but Mr Turner the owner has not seen it since it was done as he has some time been at Naples’. As Margery Morgan demonstrated, the ‘Picture of the English Gentlemen’ refers to *British gentlemen in Rome* (Fig.2), a painting previously attributed to Nathaniel Dance, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Patch and James Russel.³⁵ With its architectural backdrop and full-length grouped figures, it is unusual within Read’s corpus.³⁶ Read, who mentioned several of the sitters – identified by Morgan as Lord Bruce, Lord Charlemont, Thomas Kennedy, William Lowther, Thomas Steavens and Charles Turner – portrayed some of them separately, including Thomas Brudenell-Bruce (1729–1814), in pastel (Fig.3), ‘greatly to his satisfaction’, as Grant noted.³⁷ While Bruce was painted both among the

²⁹ Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.1, surmises that Read borrowed ‘the Cleopatra J.21.1793 and three muses Albani had acquired from Rosalba in the 1740s’.

³⁰ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752. On Viana, see S.R. Pierce: ‘Thomas Jenkins in Rome’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 45 (1965), pp.200–29.

³¹ Skelton, who wanted to copy Poussin landscapes, complained that nobody would take them down and lend them to an artist. See Brinsley Ford, *op. cit.* (note 11).

³² RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16th June 1751.

³⁴ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 11th January 1752.

³⁵ Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, inv. no.B1981.25.272. See M. Morgan: ‘“British connoisseurs in Rome”: was it painted by Katherine Read?’, *The British Art Journal* 7, no.1 (2006), pp.40–44; and S. Benedetti: exh. cat. *The Milltowns: A Family Reunion*, Dublin (National Gallery of Ireland) 1997, pp.48–49, where the picture is attributed to a ‘British artist, probably Thomas Patch’.

³⁶ The other work depicting a group of figures *en plein air* attributed to Read is *A lady and her children by a cottage in a landscape*, included in sale, Christie’s, London, *British Pictures 1500–1850*, 30th November 2001, lot 24.

³⁷ Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.2, observes ‘an elongated elegance reminiscent of Blanchet’; and exh. cat. *British Paintings & Works on Paper*, London (Lowell Libson) 2013, p.66, refers to the portrait as ‘one of only a handful of pictures Read completed in Rome in 1751’ https://www.libson-yarker.com/downloads/files/Lowell_Libson_Ltd_-_2013_Catalogue_-_large_file.pdf accessed 25 September 2023. It would be more accurate to refer to it as one of a handful of Read’s surviving portraits from Rome. There were clearly many more.

British gentlemen and separately as a head in crayons, a recent identification by Neil Jeffares facilitates a comparison between a pastel of Dr James Mackenzie (Fig.4), a tutor or 'bear-leader', and his likeness in a long misattributed double oil portrait alongside young Lord Fortrose and his dog (Fig.5) – the first in a long series of animals used by Read to hint at the sensitivity of her sitters. Mackenzie's double chin and bags under his eyes, visible in both portraits, bear witness to Read's talent for capturing resemblances.

Read's compatriots constituted one of the foundations of her Italian activity. Un- or misattributed Grand Tour portraits also doubtless survive. Precise knowledge of visitors to Rome might help identify 'an English young lady a twenty thousand pounder', travelling with her father and brothers, portrayed by Read in January 1752. The same letter adds that in 'a very little time' Read intended to do 'a very great deal of work'. Tourists sat for Read, no doubt for a fraction of the cost of likenesses by Batoni, 'the best Portrait Painter', as his Scottish client Roger Robertson wrote, and who already charged far less than artists in Britain.³⁸ She also undertook other commissions. Charlemont, one of the connoisseurs depicted in the group portrait, entrusted her with a secret task: to paint the profile of 'the greatest beauty in Rome, nay, I may safely say, in the World, [. . .] the Marchesa Gabriell[i], a Lady of high distinction'.³⁹ Charlemont was involved in supporting the (short-lived) all-male British Academy in Rome.⁴⁰ Read missed out on aspects of the artistic confraternity's sociability, which saw male tourists buy statues or have (often sexually allusive) pictures painted, and traded more or less authentic ancient sculptures or old master paintings. The Irish peer may have chosen Read to portray Caterina Trotti (d.1755), Marchesa Gabrielli, precisely because, as a woman, she was excluded from many collective activities and therefore his request was more likely to remain confidential.

The essential figure in Read's Roman sojourn was abbé Grant. He arranged meetings, negotiated with clients and accompanied her when she needed an escort. They took tea together most afternoons and she often had some 'male Visitors or other for an hour or two' but kept most evenings free to work. Read recognised her debt to Grant, writing to Sandy: 'besides him being one of the best men in the universe, he is a very learned, sensible man, knows the world and mankind very well, consequently extremely capable of giving an advice, whatever success I have had here I owe it all to him'.⁴¹ He repaid her trust, saluting her talent, hard work and impeccable behaviour. Defending her desire to spend another year in Italy, Read added: 'there's no part of my history

³⁸ NLS, Acc.12244, Letters from Roger Robertson, 26th January 1752.

³⁹ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752. See C. Hervey: *Letters from Portugal, Spain, Italy and Germany, in the Years 1759, 1760, and 1761*, London 1785, III, p.280: 'While he was at Rome he [Steavens] had the pleasure of being in the good graces of the prettiest lady that was then in this town [...] the marchioness Gabriele'.

⁴⁰ For a summary of Lord Charlemont's involvement, see Kelly, *op. cit.* (note 9), p.67.

⁴¹ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

unknown to him [Grant] but my reluctance at going too soon home, for if I am forced to it, I may at least seem to go Contentedly’.

While fellow British artists chased tourists for commissions, Read developed Roman networks. Her knowledge of French, the aristocrats’ *lingua franca*, and her social standing, evidenced by her proximity to the court in exile, facilitated encounters with the elite. Among foreign diplomats, the French ambassador the duc de Nivernois was well-disposed towards the Jacobites – and instrumental some years later in Read’s invitation to paint a young prince and princess at Versailles.⁴² In 1751 Read offered ‘Count Port[a] who is a very great friend of mine’, a bust portrait in crayons (Fig.6).⁴³ The back of the frame bears the inscription: ‘Opera di Miss Caterina Read / In segno di Perpetua [. . .] / Bruto Marcello Porta l’Anno 1751’ (‘Work of Miss Katherine Read/ In sign of Perpetual [...] / Bruto Marcello Porta the Year 1751’), in spite of which it was recently auctioned with the attribution ‘*école française*’.⁴⁴ The count wears a pearly blue silken jacket and a dark cap, his flesh magisterially rendered with the hint of a five o’clock shadow. Like the portrait of Mackenzie, which employs similar artistic vocabulary, it is an informal likeness of an individual, rather than a staged picture of an important man. After Albani introduced Read to Princess ‘Gigia’, his niece,⁴⁵ whose portrait she was due to start in June 1751, the artist offered ‘to paint a lady who this Cardinal has a great friendship for’, asserting ‘there can be no harm in being known’. Her next letter returned to the ‘head in crayons’ of ‘a Roman lady, a great acquaintance of my patron Cardinal Albani’. (6 January 1752) This was Countess Cherofini, who was rumoured to be the cardinal’s mistress. The use of the term ‘patron’ here suggests a confident, established relationship and a measure of the artist’s success.

Sitters posing in Read’s studio were sometimes accompanied by their entourage – when painting Countess Cherofini, for example, she reported that ‘the old body [the sixty-year-old Cardinal] came here twice with her himself’. Such visits were forms of publicity. Marchesa Massimo

⁴² Paris, Archives Nationales, O/1/1910/2, fol.164: ‘Mad[emois]elle Read Anglaise peint en portrait. Elle a été introduite par M[onsieur]r le duc de Nivernois qui l’a connue en Angleterre’ (‘Miss Read, who is English, paints portraits. She was introduced by the duc de Nivernois, who knew her in England’). It is likely that Nivernois and Read had already met in Rome.

⁴³ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752. According to the *Rime per la Nascità del Serenissimo Principe Friderico Augusto di Sassonia* (Dresden 1751), Francesco Maria Porta (1625–1724) was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber of the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, and a member of the *Accademia degli Arcadi* under the name ‘Nisalgo Diagono’. In 1725 his wife, Marta Isabella, was recorded as living with her sister Isabella Quintilli, her sons Bruto Marcello and Ferdinando and two servants. The present author thanks Alexander Stewart for information regarding the Porta family.

⁴⁴ J.612.401 [olim J.612.496]. Sale, Paris, Drouot, *L’Huillier*, 11th June 2021, lot 10, which suggested an erroneous identification of the sitter as Carle Van Loo. The picture was subsequently offered for purchase by the Galerie de Bayser in 2022 with Read correctly identified as the artist.

⁴⁵ Giulia Augusta, daughter of Carlo Albani, prince of Soriano nel Cimino, and wife of Agostino Chigi, prince Farnese. I disagree with Margery Morgan who identifies the sitter as countess Cherofini’s daughter.

—probably Maria Bernadina Ferretti (1707-1777), whom Read referred to as ‘Maximy’—was called upon by Prince Viana and Livia Borghese, Princess Viana (1731-1802), while she was sitting to Read in 1751.⁴⁶ Porta accompanied the artist to the Vianas’ palazzo, where Read was lent Guido’s *Magdalen*. Social intercourse provided inestimable returns: satisfied sitters showed off their portraits and the gift of works of art opened literal doors. Grant noted that Read was determined ‘to go to palaces where the best pieces [. . .] are kept, in order to copy some of the choicest of them with a view to having several of them by way of models’.⁴⁷ He referred to ‘the honour and profit she may reap from it [the loan of paintings] but likewise for the help it will be to her for portraits’. Her performances acted both as templates for future works and as advertisements of her talents.

There is palpable excitement in Read’s letter to her brother relaying that she has portrayed two princesses. She wrote: ‘I have the honour to be the first from our Island that ever painted an Italian above the rank of priest or Abbe, whereas I have painted the very first Princess in Rome’ – possibly Princess Borghese.⁴⁸ Read also distinguished herself by ‘rendering immortal’ Albani in ‘a very excellent likeness’. Underscoring the cardinal’s rank as ‘Protector of the Empire and Ambassador here to his imperial majesty’, Grant stressed to Alexander that his sister was ‘the first foreigner that ever one of such [personages] vouchsafed to sit to’.⁴⁹

Read was anxious to make a career of her art. She wrote to her brother regarding financial matters:

I am sorrow to hear you have been obliged to contract more debt especially as it has been occasioned by my heavy demands which I would fain hope are now near at an end, the last £50 I have not yet touched, although I have had no money but from you since I came abroad. [. . .] I am obliged to board, otherwise I could live at a third the expense, this you may believe is no small vexation.⁵⁰

The artist referred subsequently to hoping ‘to get as much money’ from future clients as to ‘make the burden not very heavy’ on Alexander.⁵¹ In 1758 ‘Young Englishmen, students in Painting here’ advised Jonathan Skelton that one could not ‘live for less than £60 a year’.⁵² Read’s board and decent lodgings would increase the cost. Mentioning Marchesa Gabrielli’s portrait, the painter noted ‘as this is for L[ord] Char [. . .]d [Charlemont] I shall have money for it’; however, regarding the likeness of Albani’s niece, she remarked, ‘as this is designed a very great honour

⁴⁶ ‘he carried me t’other day to see the Palace of Prince Viana, who is a kind of a Painter himself, he and his Princess had been at my apartment when I was doing Maximy’s Picture’

⁴⁷ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 11th January 1752.

⁴⁸ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

⁴⁹ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 17th January 1752.

⁵⁰ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6th January 1752.

⁵² Brinsley Ford, *op. cit.* (note 11), p.34, letter dated 11th January 1758.

done me, I must take it as such and make a present of the Picture'.⁵³ She returned to the subject six months later, having received medals for her paintings of two princesses. These are reminiscent of prizes awarded by academies to replace monetary with reputational value. The same goes for other trinkets like a ring from 'a monsignor', designed to save the face of both sitter and artist by suggesting mutual appreciation, not a commercial transaction. Read's present from Marchesa 'Maximy' was 'a very curious Casket or Box of Ebony, [. . .] finely Ornamented with oriental Stones, in imitation of fruits, flowers, birds'. Believing it to be worth '40 or 50 Guineas', she planned to 'convert it into money'.⁵⁴ A well-brought up young woman could be hosted by the Italian nobility. Were she to demand payment, she would risk being seen as a tradesperson rather than a talented guest welcomed on friendly terms, thereby forfeiting her relationship with her aristocratic circle. Having been asked to paint the portrait of prince Cesarini's brother, Read remarked 'the Italians despise people so much that are obliged to do anything for money that Mr. Grant thought it proper to name no price when the question was ask'd', before modestly recalling that she was still learning.⁵⁵ As on other occasions, the abbé would step in and serve as intermediary for commissions entailing prestige even without direct remuneration.

Gaining respect instead of receiving payment was not the only concern for artists such as Read. Clients would fail to return after one or two sittings, making it impossible to finish portraits and causing cashflow problems. Read touched on the difficulty of financial planning and the hand-to-mouth existence this would suppose, were her brother's capital not available.

She also weighed up the cost of her stay and the advantages it might procure, showing herself ready to return to Britain (even against her wishes) should Alexander request this.

We know little of Read's activities beyond painting. In June 1751 Benedict XIV's absence afforded her a welcome opportunity and occasioned a characteristic proto-feminist jibe: 'as the Pope is now in the country, Petticoats have ye Liberty to enter his Gate'.⁵⁶ Like many tourists and artists she made a trip from Rome to Naples - from 1750 the '*pensionnaires*' at the French Academy could ask to spend a month there. Unsurprisingly, when she arrived in March 1753 in the company of another Briton and a domestic servant, Read's main wish was to see the pictures; she railed against the 'superstitious Biggots' in the Carthusian monastery who refused to allow women access to their works of art.⁵⁷ She undertook typical tourist excursions to the Palace at Portici, down a shaft into the excavated underground rooms at Herculaneum and up

⁵³ RT, letters from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752 and 16th June 1751.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6th January 1752.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 16th June 1751.

⁵⁷ Archivio di Stato, Napoli, CRA 1257, 20th March 1753. The fellow traveller of '*Cathalina Read*', '*Guillermo Rigg*', has not been identified. RT, letter from Katherine Read, 6th April 1753.

Mount Vesuvius, but said little of her impressions of Naples other than having been scandalised by expressions of popular piety.

Rome was a major step on Read's path to professionalisation, which she pursued assiduously. Grant praised her persistence in the face of the obstacles presented by being a woman painter:

Was it not for the restrictions her sex obliges her to be under, I dare safely say, she would shine wonderfully in history painting [. . .], but as it is impossible for her to attend public academies or even design or draw from nature, she is determined to confine herself to portraits, and one branch of history which consists of single figures, and for this she seems to have a very happy turn.⁵⁸

The choice was sensible as Read was aiming to settle in England, a country with little call for religious pictures, although she herself admitted:

I am afraid to come home and appear in London where there are so many good face-Painters, of this I am so much afraid that could I get as much money here as keep me I would not set my foot on British ground these couple of years to come and then I should expect to make a shining figure in England, and besides profit, have for reward, *Eternal fame*'.⁵⁹

Tourists often wanted mementoes of their stay as much as portraits, which is where Batoni carved out a successful niche.⁶⁰ Read, by contrast, appears not to have been interested in anecdotal accessories. Instead, her aim was to capture individual likenesses, as her pictures of Porta or Mackenzie demonstrate. Her first letter to Alexander mentions a particular talent: 'I am allowed to excell in colouring, which is a very material point in portrait painting'.⁶¹ Six months later she recounted her activities:

I have lately painted several Heads in Crayons meerly to try experiments and occupy fancy, I have succeeded beyond my expectation and do not despair of doing something yet before I die that may bear comparison with Madame Rosalba, or rather La Tour, who, I must own is my Model among all the Portrait Painters I have yet seen.⁶²

⁵⁸ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 11th January 1752.

⁵⁹ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752, emphasis in original.

⁶⁰ In 1752 Roger Robertson chose 'the head and two hands with something Pitoresque as is common' (Document cited at note 35); for the portrait, see E.P. Bowron: *Pompeo Batoni: a Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, New Haven 2016, no.156. Robertson is portrayed with a red chalk drawing. - The reference invites us to reconsider the dates of some Batoni portraits since the doxa is that he started including picturesque elements for tourists from the mid-1750s.

⁶¹ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6th January 1752.

Read was sent 'colours' from Paris in the spring of 1752, and she would later engaged in discussions with Carriera and other artists about the techniques for drawing with and fixing 'crayons'.⁶³ Contemporary critics were fulsome in their praise of Read's pastel portraits. Grant reported:

at the rate she goes on I am truly hopefull she'll equal if not excell the most celebrated of her profession in Great Britain, particularly in crayons for which she seems to have a great talent, having done already several portraits of that kind with incomparable success.⁶⁴

Although she never gave up using oils – for example, for pictures of her own family painted towards the end of her life (Fig.7) – much of Read's output was in pastels. Works in this medium were quicker (and therefore cheaper) to realise than oil paintings. Read may have sensed the potential of concentrating on these types of portraits. As a result, rather than being compared to the sisters Maria Felice (1707–70), Teresa and Isabela Tibaldi, all of whom were painters active in Rome at the time, she was instead likened to Carriera. In the spring of 1752 Robertson assured Cosmo Alexander that Read's pastel portrait of him, painted 'for fun', was perfect, adding 'I think Miss Re[a]d will be another Rosalba for Pastel'.⁶⁵ Again, this helped to establish her budding fame.

Artists returning from Rome or former tourists may have sustained Read's awareness of the London art scene. Meticulous thought fed into her strategy for success long before she moved. In January 1752, nearly eighteen months before settling in England, she was considering her options and possibly already aiming for the market segment that would offer her the most lucrative pool of subjects: aristocratic women and children. Regarding the precious casket from Marchesa 'Maximy', she told Alexander that 'some people advise me to make a present of it to the princess of Wales'.⁶⁶ She discounted the idea in the same letter but remained conscious of the value of the reputation she was building in Italy: 'as I have staid one year in Rome for Improvement, I must certainly stay in it another for Name, and then you'll see I'll top it with the best of them'. Grant informed Alexander that the artist's works did her 'immense honour [. . .] not only in the judgement of the generality of people but in that of the greatest masters and best connoisseurs in this place'. The abbé was keen to help curate Read's fame in both Italy and Britain. He added an anecdote, implicitly inviting its circulation:

⁶³ AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 12 June 1753. For Read's 'colours' from Paris, see SP MAIN 331/91, letter from George Innes to James Edgar, 9th May 1752. Read's methods for fixing pastel and samples were submitted to the committee of the Society of Arts in 1764, but Sébastien Jurine's technique was preferred. See *The Public Advertiser* (6th September 1766) and the Society of Arts's minutes quoted in Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1).

⁶⁴ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 11th January 1752.

⁶⁵ 'Miss Re[a]d sara credo un'altra Rosalba per il Pastel', NLS, Acc.12244, Letters from Roger Robertson, fol.116. Thanks to Marion Amblard for help deciphering the text.

⁶⁶ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

I carried the most celebrated painter now alive [Pompeo Batoni] to see her and her work and though he had seen what she could do a year ago and had heard much of her performances, yet he was extremely surprised and declared seriously that he did not expect to find nearly so great progress as she had made this last year, averring at the same time that mighty few of the ablest masters in Italy can pretend to compete with her and that for British he has never known one these thirty years past do near so well as she has done.⁶⁷

Batoni's endorsement was precious, and Grant's promotion of it was a welcome amplification of Read's reputation. Robertson, addressing his father in imperfect French, echoed the abbé's sentiment: 'We have a Paintress here, Miss Re[a]ld, who has made great progress in the art of painting and who is esteemed by all the Connoisseurs here and, if truth be told, she paints well and catches the likeness'.⁶⁸ Other important voices also acted as relays. The British painter and politician Nathaniel Dance-Holland, one of the founders of the Royal Academy, assured that 'the acquaintances one makes with English noblemen in Rome are of very great consequence when one meets them in England. Their having known you abroad makes them interest themselves for you more than they would otherwise think of'.⁶⁹

Aware that Alexander might be unable to fetch his sister, the abbé assured him that many reputable people could accompany her to Britain. Nearly a year before her departure, he had 'a person of character and strict honour and who will take all possible care of her' in mind.⁷⁰ He had possibly already earmarked Anthony Langley Swymmer, MP for Southampton, who was on his way, with his wife, Arabella, to visit 'James III', as an ideal chaperone.

The group departed in spring 1753 via Florence and Bologna. In Venice, while her travelling companions enjoyed the Ascension-tide festivities, Read fulfilled her desire to meet the most renowned woman painter alive at the time.⁷¹ In mid-June, Andrew Lumisden reported their friend's activities to his brother-in-law Robert Strange:

⁶⁷ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 17th June 1752.

⁶⁸ '*Nous avons ici, une Peintrisse Madam[oisel]le Red, qui a fait beaucoup de progres dans l'art de peinture, et qui est estimé par tous les Connoisseurs ici, et pour dire la verité Elle peint bien et touche le Resemblance*', NLS, Acc.12244, Letters from Roger Robertson, 12th January 1752.

⁶⁹ Quoted in B.C. Skinner: 'Some aspects of the work of Nathaniel Dance in Rome', THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE 101 (1959), pp.346-49, at p.348.

⁷⁰ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 17th June 1752, 'their are always a great many British repairing home [. . .] several can be found who will be very proud of her company back, I mean as she can safely and decently travel with'.

⁷¹ See RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752, 'La Tour [...] I must own is my Model among all the Portrait Painters I have yet seen. I am told by several Connoisseurs that I would change my opinion were I at Venice to see Rosalba's best works, this has rais'd my curiosity to such a great degree that if I leave Italy without being some weeks at Venice I am sure I shall all my life time regret it and think I have learnt nothing for coming to Rome.'

Miss Read by this time has left Venise where she rec'd great civilities from Mad[am]e Rosalba who is so celebrated for painting in pastel. This Lady, although now blind has given Miss Read several valuable instructions with regard to that sort of painting, and has made her a present of some of her curious drawings. She has allowed Miss Read to do her portrait.⁷²

During her time in Venice, Read herself sat for another woman artist,⁷³ and undertook to try and resolve a financial issue for Carriera which led them to exchange letters.⁷⁴

With the personal, political and professional support of her Roman network, Read had prepared her return to Britain carefully. Lumisden sent an introduction to his sister Isabella Strange (1719–1806).⁷⁵ Grant, who entrusted her with Neapolitan soap and pomatum, wrote to George Keith, Earl Marischal (1693?–1778), in Paris, presenting Read as well-born, modest and talented:

She having a prodigious genius for painting, came to Rome for her improvement in that art, and I may safely say that there never was any body either Scots or English ever came near her in portrait-painting.⁷⁶

Albani asked George Bubb Doddington (1691–1762), the politician and collector with unrivalled access to Hanoverian London, to converse with the artist, who may have been entrusted with a confidential message, and to act as her protector. The cardinal sent the Englishman his portrait by Read – a gift to illustrate (and advertise) her talent.⁷⁷

In Rome, Read reflected on her status as an outsider. Her background was more distinguished than that of many British residents – her equals would, she presumed, 'despise [her] for being a Paintress'.⁷⁸ Other artists were expatriates, learning new skills, but she wrote of constraints as a woman:

I cannot help looking on myself as a Creature in a very odd situation tis true, we are all but Strangers and Pilgrims in this

⁷² AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 12 June 1753.

⁷³ See Katherine Read to Rosalba Carriera, 20th Aug. 1753: 'Permettez moi de faire mes compliments à la Demoiselle qui a fait mon Portrait'. Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Ashb. 1781, vol.III, cc.286–7. Read's letters to Carriera are published (with a few errors in the transcription) in R. Carriera: *Lettere, diari, frammenti*, B. Sani ed., Florence 1985, vol.II, pp.729–34.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 29th April 1753: 'As I have had, my d[ea]r S[iste]r, frequent opportunities of mentioning to you the merits of the bearer, Miss Read, this serves only to introduce her to your personal acquaintance.' The document confirms that Read cannot have painted a portrait of Isabella before her departure for Italy, as is sometimes claimed.

⁷⁶ SP MAIN 341/73, letter from James Edgar to George Keith, Albano, 12th June 1753.

⁷⁷ Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Rom Vatikan, I 156 includes a draft of the letter. A brief excerpt of it is quoted (in translation) in L. Lewis: *Connoisseurs and Secret Agents in Rome*, London 1961, pp.160–61.

⁷⁸ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

world, and I ought not to think myself more so than others, but my unlucky sex lays me under Inconveniences which causes these Reflections.⁷⁹

Despite this, Read used her time wisely, training her eye and hand, developing her networks, acquiring a reputation and building up a portfolio. She brought back to England samples of her work and models for future projects. In her lodgings, she left pictures 'done merely for her improvement and at her idle hours' believing them unworthy of the expense of transportation. Grant mentioned them to Alexander:

These very pieces, having been seen lately accidentally by an Irish gentleman of exquisite good taste and ample fortune, were so liked by him that he immediately purchased them from the Landlady of the house and sent them to Ireland in order to make their appearance in a good collection he is possessed of, [. . .] he ha[d] seen nothing done by modern masters that he could judge equal to them for delicacy of taste and strength and liveliness of expression.⁸⁰

The 'Irish gentleman' was probably the Grand Tourist and collector Henry Hutchinson O'Hara (1735–63), who had spent several years in Italy for health reasons. His 'fine Collection of Capital Italian Pictures', which he 'personally and judiciously chose in the city of Rome and other parts of Italy', was auctioned in Dublin in 1771.⁸¹

There are traces of Italian influence in the portraits Read made during her time in Rome (Appendix) like allusions to Raphael, in her double portraits of mothers and children (Fig.8) or to Domenichino's sibyls and the supposed likeness of Beatrice Cenci in paintings formerly attributed to Guido Reni – but the Scotswoman had developed her own style. Read rarely painted full length figures, preferring bust portraits against plain backgrounds, often in feigned ovals. She sought to show individuals rather than types, sometimes in sentimental poses—a mother embracing a baby, siblings together, or a child with a favourite pet. The sitters' heads tend to be gently inclined and they rarely look straight out at the viewer. The colours are usually soft, but never lack intensity, and particular attention is often paid to the flesh tones and to details of lace or gauze in the costume. Writing from Rome a year after her departure, Grant summarised the latest news from London: Read had 'exceeded all the commendations' he had given her and 'succeeded to admiration in the portraits of some ladies of high rank whose likeness had defied the greatest masters there', including Lady Strafford.⁸² A fashionable artist about town, she would paint the royal princes and princesses (Fig.9),

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 16th June 1751.

⁸⁰ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 24th April 1754.

⁸¹ See Brinsley Ford's archive (online version under 'O'Hara, Henry Hutchinson'). <https://www.grandtour.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Detail/ohara-henry-hutchinson/22271125?item=22288137> accessed on 27th November 2025. Thanks to Brendan Rooney, who pointed out that the wealthy Irishman was a collector from an early age.

⁸² RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 24th April 1754.

along with many other socialites in the coming years. She was more than worthy of such commissions, if Grant is to be believed: 'all her friends here rejoice greatly in the encouragements she meets with and join with me in thinking her superlatively deserving of all the justice that is done her singular talents and unblemish'd conduct'.

Appendix

Katherine Read's Italian corpus

Katherine Read was extremely productive during her time in Rome. The following list includes the elements of her output - both commissions and personal exercises - currently held in public or private collections or lost and known of only through written sources. Where applicable, reference numbers for pastels listed in Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1) are included. While some of her works will not have survived, it is probable that others, considered anonymous or attributed to Read's contemporaries, remain to be (re)discovered.

Works by Katherine Read known to have survived

Children of Charles I, after Anthony van Dyck. 1751. Oil on canvas, 122 by 143 cm. (Hall'i'th'Wood, Bolton; Fig.1).

Madonna and Child, after Raphael. Date. Oil on canvas, dimensions. (From Jeffares, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.1).

British gentlemen in Rome. 1751. Oil on canvas, 94.6 by 134.6 cm. (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Fig.2).

Count Bruto Marcello Porta. 1751. Pastel on laid paper, 61 by 46 cm. (credit; J.612.401; Fig.6).

Thomas, 2nd Baron Bruce, later 1st Earl of Ailesbury. c.1751. Pastel on laid paper, 46.7 by 36.8 cm. (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; J.612.108; Fig.3).

Thomas Steavens, 'by an unknown hand'. c.1751. Materials, dimensions. (Private collection).⁸³

Lord Fortrose and Dr James Mackenzie. 1752. Oil on canvas, dimensions. (Private collection; Fig.5).

Dr James Mackenzie. 1752. Pastel on laid paper, 52 by 42 cm. (credit; J.612.355; Fig.4).

David Crighton. c.1753. Materials, dimensions. (credit; J.612.201).⁸⁴

⁸³ Morgan, *op. cit.* (note 35), p.41, fig.3, as by Read; and Benedetti, *op. cit.* (note 35), p.49, fig.10, as 'British School, 18th century'.

⁸⁴ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 24th April 1754. The stylistic similarity to the portrait of James Mackenzie and the fact that Crighton is described as a particular friend of Read and her parents, but not of her brother, suggests she had been

Prince Charles Edward and Cardinal of York, after unknown Stuart artist. Date. Materials, dimensions. (Private collection).⁸⁵

Works by Katherine Read that have currently unknown locations

Magdalen, after Guido Reni. Late 1751 or early 1752. Materials. (Lent by Prince Viana; J.612.506).

Several heads as experiments. Late 1751 or early 1752. Crayon on laid paper.

Copy of four Rosalba heads lent by Albani. 1751. (See N. Jeffares: 'CARRIERA, Rosalba - Mythological subjects 2', available at www.pastellists.com/Articles/Carriera2a.pdf, accessed 25th November 2025; J.612.505).

Marchesa Gabrielli in profile. 1751-52. (Painted for Lord Charlemont; J.612.261).

Copy of paintings by Guido Reni. 1752. (Lent by 'a prince').

Lord Charlemont.⁸⁶

Portrait of Matthew Bretingham. Pastel. (J.612.143).⁸⁷

Profile of Andrew Lumisden with his own hair. 1752. (Last listed at Eriviat Hall in Denbigh; J.612.349).

Francesca ('Cecca') Gherardi, Countess Cherofini. 1752. Pastel. (For Cardinal Albani; J.612.178).⁸⁸

Cardinal Albani. 1752. (Sent by the sitter to Bubb Dodington; J.612.11).⁸⁹

acquainted with him during her time on the Continent.

⁸⁵ Sale, Christie's, Glasgow, *The Jacobite Sale*, 12th June 1996, lots 189 and 190. Said to have belonged to the Dawney family, both are attributed to Read in the catalogue. See note 6 for discussion of the attribution to Read of copies of Stuart portraits.

⁸⁶ There are no letters from or references to Read in Charlemont's papers, now in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. Thanks to Anita Cooper, Assistant Librarian, for confirming this.

⁸⁷ In 1754 Matthew Bretingham sent back to his father 'My portrait by Miss Read', J. Kenworthy-Brown: 'Matthew Bretingham's Rome account book 1747-1754', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 49 (1983), pp.37-132.

⁸⁸ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 16th June 1751 and again in 6th January 1752.

⁸⁹ RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 17 June 1752; and note 78 above. For the portrait, see S. Pasquali: 'Alessandro Albani, Winckelmann, Cavaceppi e Piranesi', in C. Gaspari, ed.: *Villa Albani Torlonia: Architetture Collezioni Giardino*, Milan 2022, pp.30-47, esp. p.38. Thanks to Vicky Coltman for providing the present author with a copy of the volume.

Large half-length of Marchesa Massimo. Before 6th January 1752. (J.612.36).

Small whole length of Marchesa Massimo. Before 6th January 1752. (J.612.361).

Two princesses. Before 6th January 1752. (probably two pictures rather than a double portrait. One may have shown Princess Borghese, 'the very first Princess in Rome'. The other could be Princess Chigi, listed below).

Giulia Augusta Albani, Princess Chigi. (J.612.179).

Brother of Prince Cesarini. 1752. (J.612.169).⁹⁰

Roger Robertson. 1752. Pastel.

A monsignor. 1752.

A head in crayons of 'an English young lady a twenty thousand pounder'. 1752. Pastel.⁹¹

Thomas Needham, 9th Viscount Kilmorey. 1752. Pastel. (J.612.336).⁹²

Lady Mary Shirley, Viscountess Kilmorey. 1752. Pastel. (J.612.337).⁹³

Portrait of Andrew Lumisden with a wig. 1752 or 1753.⁹⁴

Portrait of Rosalba Carriera. May 1753. (J.612.168).

CAPTIONS

1. *Children of Charles I*, by Katherine Read after Anthony van Dyck. 1751. Oil on canvas, 122 by 143 cm. (Hall'i'th'Wood, Bolton).

2. *British gentlemen in Rome*, by Katherine Read. 1751. Oil on canvas, 94.6 by 134.6 cm. (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven).

3. *Thomas, 2nd Baron Bruce, later 1st Earl of Ailesbury*. c.1751. Pastel on laid paper, 46.7 by 36.8 cm. (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; J.612.108).

⁹⁰ RT, letter from Katherine Read to Alexander Read, 6th January 1752.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² RT, letter from Peter Grant to Alexander Read, 17th June 1752.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ AL, letter from Andrew Lumisden to Robert Strange, 25th July 1752 and 22 January 1753.

4. *Dr James Mackenzie*, by Katherine Read. 1752. Pastel on laid paper, 52 by 42 cm. (credit).

5. *Lord Fortrose and Dr James Mackenzie*, by Katherine Read. 1752. Oil on canvas, dimensions. (Private collection).

6. *Count Bruto Marcello Porta*, by Katherine Read. 1751. Pastel on laid paper, 61 by 46 cm. (credit).

7. *Helena Beatson*, attributed to Katherine Read. c. 1777. Oil on canvas, 92.2 by 72.2 cm. (Private collection).

8. *Anna Vernon, Lady Berwick (1744-1797) and her son Thomas Noel-Hill, later 2nd Baron Berwick of Attingham (1770-1832)*, by Katherine Read. c.1771. Pastel on paper, 89 by 74 cm. (Attingham Park, Shropshire).

9. *Princess Louisa Anne (1749-1768)*, by Katherine Read. 1765. Pastel on paper, 61 by 48.3 cm. (Royal Collection Trust).