

## Catherine Whistler: Introduction

The field of Venetian drawings studies has been extended in thought-provoking ways by the range of recent research represented in this volume, where a new generation of scholars questions traditional concerns and opens up areas for investigation. It is evident that connoisseurship – meaning judgements based on the close scrutiny and comparison of the visual and material aspects of drawings - is thriving, and is being further enriched through collaboration with conservation scientists in the exploration of relationships between drawing and underdrawing in paintings. Meanwhile the rhetorical strategies of the artist in the act of making a visible (and indelible) drawing in ink or chalks come to the fore, as comparisons arise with the indicative marks of underdrawing, made to be concealed beneath the painted surface: here the essay by Emma Holter demonstrates the value of such comparisons. Beyond the immediate artefact, the wider historical context of sophisticated perspectives on *disegno* in Venetian artistic practice and the centrality of the concept in Venetian intellectual life are threads linking several essays in the volume, such as Gabriele Matino on Domenico Tintoretto's deliberate responses to his father's practice, Maria Aresin on Palma Giovane's self-consciously experimental approach, John Witty on the ambitions of Cennino Cennini and Pisanello in relation to *disegno*, and Irene Brooke on *disegno* and the nature of mathematical humanism.

One vexed question relates to the very term 'Venetian'. In the past, the term has been used loosely to embrace a wide practice of drawing from Brescia to Verona – centres that came under Venetian rule at different times, often for long periods. Taxonomy is always problematic, not least in drawings studies: how does one put order on a vast array of primary material, much of which cannot be securely identified, without at least 'placing' the sheets geographically and chronologically? The traditional overarching divisions of 'Lombard', 'Venetian', or 'Emilian' Schools are of course constructs whose artificiality has been pragmatically accepted by scholars, including the stylistic characterisations embedded within them. How does one understand the category 'Venetian School' in logical terms – is it determined by birthplace, by working life, or by self-definition? Already, the erudite Pietro Summonte, in a well-known letter from Naples on 20 March 1524 to Marcantonio Michiel,

mentioned the ‘docta scola veneta’, an early articulation of the idea of a distinctive artistic ‘school’.<sup>1</sup> Generations of scholars included the art of Verona in the category of ‘Venetian art’, since the city was part of the Serenissima for almost four centuries. As a major hub on the crossroads between Milan and Rome, Verona stands out as an artistic centre with its own proud history, rooted in antiquity: ‘disegni veronesi’ have long been the subject of detailed attention, and in recent studies the graphic work of Stefano da Verona or Paolo Farinati no longer appear as ‘Venetian drawings’. But the important question remains of the relationships not only between metropolis and satellites, but between many different smaller centres: when does it become necessary to delineate as distinctive the styles and practices in graphic production of artists based in cities or towns such as Treviso or Bassano, and when is it acceptable to denote these practices as Venetian?

It is inevitable that ‘Venetian drawings’ will continue to form a major category for study, simply because of the primacy of the Serenissima in European art history. As the cosmopolitan centre of a trading empire, Venice was a densely-populated and uniquely constructed urban space, marked by networks of knowledge and by constant exchanges of ideas and objects. Despite wars and hostile alliances, Venice as a centre stands out in the early modern period as a European metropolis with spheres of influence in the Adriatic as well as the eastern Mediterranean, and despite its political conservatism, it also stands out for its intrinsically multicultural and innovative culture, both in literary and visual terms. The impact of Venetian art – including drawings – on northern European and British art was profound.

However, the question of centres and satellites need no longer be a leading one if we shift our perspective to considerations of mobility, knowledge exchange and comparative workshop practices across regions. In considering peripheries, Stephen Campbell has unpicked the streamlined ‘axis’ or hierarchical Rome-Florence-Venice geography articulated by Giorgio Vasari, which effectively overlaid and obscured the actuality of a multi-centred network of relations, of vectors of connections, artistic, literary and patronal. Campbell has

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion see Bremenkamp 2020, who cites at note 3, p. 601 Ferdinando Bologna’s opinion that this is the first time that the concept of an artistic ‘scuola’ is articulated, together with the relevant passage: “Ebbimo poi in questi proximi anni un iovene vostro veneziano, [detto] Paulo de Augustini, che ben mostrava venire dalla istituzione e docta scola veneta”.

argued instead for a dynamic understanding of place, and of its radical particularity.<sup>2</sup> And as Bernard Aikema suggests in this volume, patronage networks such as those of the Dominican order offer different ways of thinking about artists' careers and identities. Recognizing that particular workshops can themselves be centres of innovation and varied production is another path that can cut through traditional taxonomies. Jean-Luc Nancy acutely observed that every line or mark in drawing is made by a gesture that itself is freighted with its own culture and experience of the world.<sup>3</sup> The artistic distinctiveness of an individual or an enterprise may ultimately be more fruitful to investigate, without the need to align them with specific regional characteristics. Thus, the Montagna family enterprise in Vicenza has yielded stimulating findings as a nexus of practices, as research by Genevieve Verdigel and by Bryony Bartlett-Rawlins has shown.<sup>4</sup> In this volume, the essay by Luca Siracusano demonstrates the complexities of artistic networks and exchanges between painters and sculptors in later sixteenth-century Vicenza, while in many ways, Alberto Maria Casciello takes us beyond the question by defining Savoldo's character as essentially Venetian in his multiculturalism.

Other taxonomic questions arise in relation to the drawing as an object of study. Are drawings to be categorized by function, by character, by medium or by support? Part of the fascination of drawing is its open-ended nature, from a few scribbled marks on a sheet of paper to an elaborately layered autonomous work of art.<sup>5</sup> We define drawing by its hand-made, gestural quality and by its (generally) monochrome media – pen, ink, chalks, charcoal or graphite. In museum or collecting contexts, drawing is also defined by the support, since works on paper are kept in certain conditions and locations separate from paintings or objects (even though the monochrome marks inscribed on other surfaces such as unfired terracotta have a claim to be regarded as drawings). Meanwhile, the history of collecting in the sixteenth century largely proposes a character for drawings as works that can be placed in books or portfolios, thus within a conceptual framework that suggests a relationship with texts. But this placement also reflects the owner's visual and tactile use and appreciation of drawings as leaves to be viewed and turned over, within an intellectual, social or

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<sup>2</sup> Campbell 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy 2013, pp. 101-102.

<sup>4</sup> In the doctoral theses of Verdigel 2019 and Bartlett-Rawlins 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Petherbridge 2010 remains an important study.

educational context - notably that of the *studio* or *camera* where coins and medals, and small sculpture and antiquities as well as books would also be kept and handled. Side by side with this association with the intimacy of the *studio*, we have already in the sixteenth century considerable evidence for the fact that drawings and prints were also hanging on walls like small pictures, to be viewed by the household and its wider networks. They were often described in inventories as 'quadretti'.<sup>6</sup> In Renaissance Venice, where the Aristotelian tradition prevailed in humanist and elite education, the idea that an understanding of drawing was linked to discernment and good judgement no doubt filtered through to collecting practices, having being articulated in the well-known writings of Pomponio Gaurico and Baldessar Castiglione in his *Libro del Cortegiano*.<sup>7</sup> The fact that drawing had a place in humanist and then wider education additionally points to an area for further investigation, that of the Venetian amateur, the art-lover who practised drawing as an accomplishment and who might also have used it as a professional tool, for example in a military career.<sup>8</sup>

In early modern Venice, as elsewhere, drawing had essentially three linked purposes – educational; preparatory (including exploratory); and demonstrative. The viewers of drawings were the artists who made them, their students and associates in the workshop, and those who frequented the workshop including friends and longstanding patrons or specific clients. Beyond this, drawings would circulate amongst artists and art-lovers, particularly the educated elite. In the training of artists in the Venetian workshop, drawing was a pedagogic tool for developing skills of observation and analysis; it was central to the study of the antique, and to the study of the work of other artists, all crucial elements in the formation of the artist. Drawings provided a graphic record of the developing artist's response to, and interpretation of, external stimuli. An important exercise was that of the close copying of the master's drawings, thereby ensuring the internalization of a communal graphic language that would further the artistic output of the workshop. Preparatory functions embrace the initial inventive sketch, the working up of motifs and compositions

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<sup>6</sup> For various sixteenth-century references to drawings in frames see Whistler 2016, pp. 182, 187, 194 -196, and Windows 2013, also on 'quadretti', Henry 2011.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Gauricus [1504] 1999, p.127; on Gaurico and *disegno*, see Irene Brooke's essay in this volume; Castiglione 1528, ed. Preti 1965, pp. 80-81; Castiglione's work was mainly composed by about 1513.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Marc' Antonio Barbaro was a talented draughtsman, encouraged by Veronese, see Howard 2011, pp. 3-5.

and the detailed study of salient elements such as figures, drapery and expressive heads. Demonstrative purposes involve sheets made for presentation or viewing, perhaps quite elaborate in handling or in detail but certainly intended to reveal the artist's capability and often intended to have the value of an independent work. There is considerable overlap between these areas, so that drawings made for preparatory purposes could come to be regarded as autonomous, and kept as exemplary works in the studio or as possible gifts, or works for sale.

Until relatively recently, scholars have tended to characterize Venetian Renaissance drawings as having a purely utilitarian or pragmatic function, employed mainly in relation to painting. This traditional perspective, inflected by the longstanding view of the lack of interest of Venetian artists in *disegno* or drawing practice, disregards on the one hand the fact that many artists made drawings - such as landscape and portrait drawings, or models for prints – as actual or potentially autonomous works, and on the other, the wide-ranging evidence for the acquisition and ownership of drawings by Venetians at different levels of society. Although documentary evidence may be lacking, Venetian artists were undoubtedly aware of the value of their drawings as testimonies of inventiveness or of virtuosity. Moreover, a level of experimentation is seen in a range of early sixteenth-century preparatory drawings that goes beyond the purely functional: I am thinking here of Carpaccio's truly innovative use of pen and brown ink with red chalk from the 1490s, deriving from Bellini studio practice,<sup>9</sup> as much as of Titian's pursuit of expressiveness in his use of black chalk and charcoal in preparatory drawings so eloquently discussed by Matthias Wivel in the present volume. And, the drawing traditionally attributed to Giorgione featuring an airy, extensive landscape with the contemplative figure of a traveller or shepherd, is extraordinary as a demonstration of artistic virtuosity, whether or not related to a potential painting; indeed its very survival relates to its perceived value as an autonomous work of art (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> Although attempts have been made to identify the specific location – scholars have seen the fortified town as Castelfranco, and more recently as Castel San Zeno, Montagnana – this seems less important than the fact that we view a distinctively Veneto landscape with trees and a flowing river near a town, typical of the new

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<sup>9</sup> Whistler 2016, pp. xvii and 107-108, and Whistler 2018a.

<sup>10</sup> Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen inv. I.85, red chalk, 20.3 x 29 cm, see Rearick 2001, pp. 16-20 for a discussion of the difficulties of attribution and of the subject-matter, and Holberton 2021, I, p. 260.

genre of the poetic landscape inhabited that was taking shape at this time in paintings by and inspired by Giorgione.<sup>11</sup> The solitary figure acts as an attribute or signifier for the landscape, a space in which to wander and meditate. It seems appropriate that warm-toned red chalk is used here to evoke mood and atmosphere, by contrast with the luminous effects and clarity of detail found in contemporary pen and ink representations of landscape by Giulio Campagnola or Titian (fig. 2); there, comparisons are invited with prints.<sup>12</sup>

As many of the contributors to this volume recall, revisionist approaches have altered our perceptions of the importance and the profile of drawing and *disegno* in late fifteenth and sixteenth-century Venice. In particular, Irene Brooks persuasively reveals the centrality of concepts of *disegno* in late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento Venetian intellectual life in an illuminating paper that traces the intersection of visual thinking and mathematical humanism through *disegno*. Thomas Dalla Costa reminds us how the distinguished Venetian *cittadino originario* Agostino Amadi relished his knowledge of types of drawing in describing a visit to Titian's studio, in an important document published by Michel Hochmann. Lorenzo Buonanno deftly analyses Vasari's familiar views, using the lens of climate and health to sharpen our understanding of his strategies in presenting Venetian *disegno*, and emphasising, as does Matthias Wivel, the prevalence of fresco painting in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Venice, with the clear requirement of extensive advance preparation in drawings. The survival of evidence complicates art-historical interpretation, and this is acute where the fresco paintings have been largely lost. Yet some fascinating evidence has survived in the form of *sinopie*, allowing John Witty to reflect on Pisanello's creativity and working practice in underdrawing and in drawing, using observations on theory and practice from Cennino. Other contributors look to underdrawing for insights into the nature or development of an artist's graphic style, including Emma Holter, Karolina Sgraja and Matthias Wivel. Indeed, the field of drawings studies has been re-defined thanks to a growing body of technical data deriving from the examination of paintings. But as Jill Dunkerton has urged, considerable caution is necessary in relation to the understanding and interpretation of images of underdrawing – marks made visible only because of imaging methods such as infra-red reflectography, but with digital images of paintings in museums

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<sup>11</sup> On this evolving genre, see Holberton 2021, I, with many references.

<sup>12</sup> London, British Museum, inv. 1895,0915.817, Titian, *Landscape with two musicians*, pen and brown ink over black chalk, 22.3 x 22.6 cm; the attribution to Titian is surely right, see London 2016, cat. 25.

coming from different equipment and sources.<sup>13</sup> Our knowledge is further advancing as the result of the examination of drawings using sophisticated imaging techniques and non-invasive analytical investigation, enabling the greater understanding of the layered nature of early modern drawings.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly our understanding of the history and potential of blue paper as a support has been deepened in recent years with the work of Thea Burns, Iris Brückle and Iris Brahms, as Alexa McCarthy records. The traditional, perhaps simplistic association of blue paper with Venetian Renaissance drawings has been diluted owing to investigations into the production and use of blue paper in other centres; though it remains striking that Venetian artists of the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento favoured tonal studies on blue paper in their design processes rather than metalpoint studies on coloured grounds as was common in central Italian workshops. Nevertheless, the use of colour in other ways such as colour washes as well as chinks provides a fascinating area for study, as essays in this volume attest.<sup>15</sup> This use of colour need not be read within the artificial binaries of ‘disegno’ and ‘colore’, concepts that only became oppositional as part of the rhetoric of a developing literary discourse: for early modern Venetian artists, *disegno* like *colore* was more likely understood as a desirable value in painting, while their own drawings might range from the linear to the tonal and the painterly depending on function and purpose. Complementary contributions in this volume by Alexa McCarthy and Thomas dalla Costa explore the uses of blue paper and of coloured chinks and coloured grounds in drawing. Colour also appears as an important strand in Larissa Mohr’s nuanced investigation of Giovanni da Udine’s practice, and in Maria Aresin’s presentation of Palma il Giovane and the use of gold or a golden colour in his drawings. Other welcome directions involve less developed areas of study, notably the question of drawings and sculpture, and Luca Siracusano’s close scrutiny of an intriguing sheet of studies raises broader issues on sculptors’ attitudes to drawing and on connoisseurship in this area. Similarly, the scrupulous study by Gianmarco Russo of a drawing by Lorenzo Bastiani, and the illuminating observations of Alberto Casciello on

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<sup>13</sup> See the observations by Jill Dunkerton regarding the difficulty of making, understanding and interpreting infra-red images in Dunkerton et al, 2018, pp. 9-11

<sup>14</sup> The scientific investigation of fifteenth-century British Museum drawings by Mantegna and other artists described in London 2010 was a landmark in drawings studies.

<sup>15</sup> See also Verdigel 2020 on coloured washes in Quattrocento drawings.

Savoldo's practice remind us of the continuing need in Venetian studies for the essential work of identifying and understanding drawings by particular artists through connoisseurial skills as well as through an analysis of the material qualities of the artefact.

Moving beyond the significance of 'drawing' as an English word to that of Venetian 'disegno' obviously opens up the enormously varied area of print culture in terms of design, production, dissemination and reception. The sixteenth-century use of the term 'disegni a stampa' from at least the 1520s, attested by Marcantonio Michiel, creates a spectrum of appreciation of the graphic arts, and of the capacity for realizing a design in a linear, monochrome form on paper.<sup>16</sup> Many artists engaged actively with print culture, viewing it as a medium for dissemination of their capacity in *disegno*, from Andrea Mantegna to Titian; others collaborated with engravers, such as Tintoretto and Veronese who were happy to have their work re-interpreted by Agostino Carracci, while Giacomo Franco enjoyed a fruitful association with Palma il Giovane. In his petition for a *privilegio* dated 16 July 1514, apart from stressing the value of an innovative technique, Ugo da Carpi significantly identified a market of those who derive pleasure from *disegno* (he described his "modo di stampare chiaro e scuro, cosa nuova, et mai più non fatta, et [esta] cosa bella et utili a molti chi haverà piacer di disegno"). His use of language is telling, since his words - albeit in a legal document - were carefully chosen to ensure the positive reception of his application by a group of Venetian Senators with whom the concept of delight or pleasure in drawing would properly resonate; Ugo himself was from a patrician background.<sup>17</sup>

Advocating fluidity between the previously rather fixed boundaries of the print specialist and the drawings specialist, or the graphic arts scholar and paintings and sculpture scholars, is a characteristic of this *Venetian Disegno* volume, as well as of the conference that preceded it. In her examination of Nicoletto da Modena and his relationship with Paduan humanist circles, Bryony Bartlett-Rawlings emphasises the nature of Nicoletto's copying and emulation of Mantegna, themes central to contemporary literary discourse, that also recall the centrality of copying through drawing in the education of the artist. Given the sophisticated appreciation of inventiveness by the art lovers in Venice who avidly collected

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<sup>16</sup> Michiel, ed. de Benedictis 2000, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Griffiths, 2018, p. 55 notes that Ugo da Carpi unusually did not specify subject-matter in his petition as was conventional.

the work of Mantegna and Dürer, Kristin Love Huffman explores the virtuosity embodied in Jacopo De'Barbari's prints, through themes of metaphorical and literal reflection.

Undoubtedly, the concept of *disegno* can be fruitfully explored in Venetian print culture; however as Giorgio Vasari, Federico Zuccari and other writers on art remind us, it also fuelled painting, sculpture and architecture, so that further research on Venetian art might look more broadly at how *disegno* in sculpture and architecture was identified and judged.

The case studies of individual drawings that follow will illuminate some of the themes and questions I have already raised and should act as portals for other areas of study. My first case is of a drawing on blue paper that has retained much of its freshness, a salutary reminder of the original intensity of this blue as a colour, as a tonal value and as an evocation of space (fig. 3).<sup>18</sup> It also features a type of fine paper of the sort that Aldus Manutius would have used for printing books on blue paper in the 1500s, that is, separate from the cheaper *carta da straccio* or the textured, fibrous paper often chosen by artists. The quality of finesse that this paper brings had an impact on the type of drawing, itself a refined and elegantly-handled work. Rather than being an accurate observational drawing of an astronomical instrument, this presents a creative response or indeed, an inventive representation. The study probably had a preparatory function, and stylistically it must date from about 1505-20. Although the hand-held armillary sphere turns up in a range of Venetian paintings in the first decades of the sixteenth century, while also appearing in earlier manuscript painting, a precise correspondence has not been found.<sup>19</sup> The sheer assurance of the portrayal, in the way that the instrument takes shape with fluid strokes of tonal washes and white heightening, in fact led to its attribution to Paolo Farinati, although Carpaccio is a more likely candidate.<sup>20</sup> In his maturity Carpaccio had the capacity to make elegant drawings of this chiaroscuro type, although we do not have anything directly

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<sup>18</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1948.86, brush and brown wash over black chalk with white heightening on blue paper, laid down, 20.7 x 12.6 cm. I am grateful to Dr Stephen Johnson, History of Science Museum, Oxford for his discussion of the dating and typology of this instrument.

<sup>19</sup> Many Venetian artists depicted such instruments often as the attributes of scholars, as in manuscript illustrations by the Pico Master, active in Venice in the 1470s and 1480s, or in works by Giorgione or his pupils such as the Casa Pellizzari frieze and notably, the double portrait of *Giovanni Borgherini and his Tutor* of c. 1506-10 in Washington (for which see Brown 2013); later Bernardino Licinio took up the motif in a fantasy group portrait of c. 1525, deriving from Giorgione (Kress Collection, Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami).

<sup>20</sup> Parker 1956, cat. 50 considered the drawing to be close to Carpaccio; Gere 1957 proposed an attribution to Paolo Farinati. In Sara Menato's opinion (email exchanges with the author), the drawing is too freely-handled to be by Carpaccio at the time of the Scuola degli Schiavoni commission.

comparable. His study of a youth in armour, as though on horseback, reveals an interest in reflections on metallic surfaces but is drawn in a more vigorous mode (fig. XX), however a compositional drawing of the *Adoration of the Magi* with a lavish use of brown wash speaks of his free handling of the media around 1505.<sup>21</sup> The armillary sphere cannot be connected with St Augustine's possessions seen in the painting at the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, but the study may relate to the artist's thinking about scholarly paraphernalia when he was preparing for the St Thomas Aquinas altarpiece of 1507 (Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie) since that features an open cabinet, revealing a variety of instruments and books.

In any case, the drawing stands out as a type of study that demonstrates a knowledge of geometry and perspective – and Carpaccio was celebrated for his expertise in those areas – alluding to the themes explored by Irene Brooke in this volume. It reminds us of other kinds of studies – technical, mathematical or design drawings – that were produced in a wider landscape of Venetian *disegno*, also embracing print culture. One thinks of ornament drawings with designs for ceramics or metalware, and of *grotteschi* designs often associated with artists as varied as Nicoletto da Modena and Giovanni da Udine. Beyond this lies an array of specialist designs made for Venetian embroiderers or lacemakers, where Giovanni Antonio Tagliente in his 1527 embroidery manual invoked mastery and inventiveness in relation to *disegno*.<sup>22</sup> As Larissa Mohr notes in her essay, it is significant that Giovanni da Udine's patronym, Ricamatore, signals his upbringing in a family of embroiderers.

A second case study involves a remarkable compositional drawing that evokes issues of centre and periphery in its previous potential association with Giovanni Cariani and Bergamo (fig. 4).<sup>23</sup> The type of 'dramatic close-up' theatrical subject was popular in Venetian painting, although the composition has been interpreted as an unusual *sacra conversazione* with St George and possibly hermit saints. It is almost certainly a secular subject, with the

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<sup>21</sup> Respectively, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 54.119, brush with grey wash and white bodycolour on blue paper, 19 x 18 cm, and Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums, inv. 1932.281, pen and brown ink and wash over black chalk, squared, 22 x 31.5 cm.

<sup>22</sup> See further Whistler 2016, p. 20, also noting '*disegnadore*' as a category of practitioner in the painters' guild.

<sup>23</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1947.230, pen and brown ink over traces of black chalk with white heightening (partially oxidized) and a border in ink drawn by the artist, on blue paper, laid down, 27 x 43.5 cm. Parker 1956, cat. 51, interpreted this as a *sacra conversazione*, with references to Giovanni Cariani while classifying the drawing as anonymous.

woman and child in contemporary costume and the swashbuckling soldier as a dramatic foil. The blue paper is drastically discoloured, but the vigorous and lavish handling of the dark washes and the white highlights creates a powerful chiaroscuro drawing, where the integral framing lines denote the eventual boundaries of the painting. The wear and tear on the drawing recalls its use first in the studio, where it may have been pinned up as a model to follow, but the various inscriptions and collectors' marks bring us to its subsequent history where it may have been framed for display but not glazed, hence its stained and dirty appearance.<sup>24</sup> This afterlife of visual appreciation takes place in a culture receptive to Venetian *disegno*. That is, running alongside the literary and rhetorical discourse on *disegno* and *colore* is an alternative history of the status of *disegno* and drawing in Venice, signalled by the on-the-ground reception and appreciation of drawings. A prominent early inscription indicates that this drawing was collectable: the attribution is given in a specifically Venetian form, 'Nadalini da Morano', which suggests local knowledge of a respected artist rather than the wishful thinking of agents who would have ascribed this to Titian or Giorgione, as generally occurs in later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century inscriptions on drawings. The attribution brings us into the Titian workshop, since Natalino da Murano appears in the documentary record and was associated with Titian from the 1530s to the 1550s, although little is known of his production.<sup>25</sup> Hence the drawing also reminds us of the many artists working in Venice and the Veneto who must have produced drawings – though we may have none by them; and of course the problem of survival, which is endemic to drawings, given their inherent vulnerability.<sup>26</sup>

An arresting portrait drawing, probably a self-portrait given the frontality of the pose and the direct gaze, provides my third case study (fig. 5).<sup>27</sup> Again on discoloured blue paper, this attests to its lengthy exposure to light, therefore to extensive viewing; the sheet came to England probably in the 1620s, as it bears the marks of Nicolas Lanier (1588-1666). Considerable time was invested in this substantial drawing – notice the sensitive modelling

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<sup>24</sup> Chris Fischer, visiting the Ashmolean in 2019, noted traces of insect damage on the surface, evidence of the drawing's lengthy exposure, probably hanging on a wall unglazed.

<sup>25</sup> Fossaluzza 2015, with references; my thanks to Alberto Maria Casciello for discussing this and other Ashmolean Venetian drawings with me.

<sup>26</sup> Mason 2007, pp. 25-37, calls attention to the large numbers of drawings appearing in the documentary record, notably in seventeenth-century inventories, that have not survived.

<sup>27</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1863.625, here attributed to the studio of Bernardino Licinio, black and white chalks on discoloured blue paper, 37.5 x 26 cm; Parker 1956, cat. 60.

of the features in black and white chalks, including the careful shading of the background to give an even greater sense of volume and *rilievo* – which also suggests that it was made as an autonomous drawing. Inevitably, Lotto's portrait drawings come to mind, but the handling and approach are different; the artist may be an otherwise unknown draughtsman. Some awkwardness seen in the structure of the head and the relation of head to neck points to this being an early work, perhaps by a young artist showing his mettle, albeit on a large scale. The informal costume, including the type of hat datable to the 1530s, recalls the soberly-dressed students in the background in Bernardino Licinio's group portrait of an artist and his students in the Duke of Northumberland collection at Alnwick Castle. As Licinio's painting takes Venetian *disegno* as a theme, including the importance of mastering the art of *disegno* which is a difficult one, I have previously discussed this work in considerable detail.<sup>28</sup> Only one secure drawing by Licinio has been identified, in the Yale University Art Gallery, together with a second similar figure study plausibly attributed to him, however we can certainly discern in those sheets his sensitive and meticulous use of grainy black chalk with white chalk on blue paper.<sup>29</sup> I would suggest that the Ashmolean self-portrait may be from Licinio's workshop, made by a talented, advanced student emulating the master's refined and judicious use of the media.

The group portrait of a master and pupils also presents to its viewers the study of antique and modern sculptural models through drawing as a familiar mode of learning. Again, it reminds us of what has not survived: an enormous number of drawings after sculpture of the type represented in the painting. Licinio's portrayal is of particular interest in relation to materials and technique, since we are shown two types of studies. One is in red chalk perhaps on white or blue paper (in the oil painting, which will have undergone changes over time, the paper appears to be grey) and the other is in the chiaroscuro technique with pen, wash and white heightening on blue paper so characteristic of drawing in the Veneto. The fact that Venetian artists drew extensively in red chalk has gone largely unrecognized, perhaps because of the keen interest in blue paper on the part of both artists and modern

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<sup>28</sup> Whistler 2016, pp. 17-19, 69-71, and 92-93; see Vertova 1975, cat. 1, p. 410, although for reasons of style and of costume the date is more likely to be c. 1530 than c. 1535.

<sup>29</sup> Yale University Art Gallery, Egmont collection, inv. 1961..65.46, *Seated woman with a vase*, black and white chalks on blue paper, 21.4 x 14.7 cm; Berlin, Kuperstichkabinett, inv. KdZ 17238, *Seated woman*, black and white chalks on blue paper, 27.8 x 21.3 cm, see Weston-Lewis 2005, with references.

art historians.<sup>30</sup> A small group of drawings in the Uffizi that came to the collection in the later seventeenth century carry early attributions to Pordenone, whom Vasari had confused with Licinio, a mistake that persisted until modern times. Quite possibly, a study in red chalk on white paper of a sculptural model – an antique-style torso – modelled with fine hatching and gently rubbed to achieve soft effects, with an early seventeenth-century inscription giving it to Pordenone, comes from Licinio's studio and represents this type of student work after sculpture.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, because the essays in this volume do not specifically explore the theme of landscape, it is worth recalling the extensive production of pen and ink landscape drawings in early modern Venice (fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> Finely or robustly executed with vibrant and luminous effects, this mode of drawing was pioneered by Giulio Campagnola, taken in new directions by Titian, and given impetus by the poetic paintings of Giorgione. This graphic production is closely related to print culture, in that the inked line is deployed with great accomplishment, and also because motifs often derive directly from eye-catching details - notably trees, or picturesque buildings - seen in northern European prints, which were rapidly disseminated in Italy. Such prints brought novelty in presenting inventive monochrome images intended for close scrutiny. Essentially this innovative art form occupied a liminal area unbounded by traditional conventions, affording imaginative and sometimes idiosyncratic subject-matter that could become widely known. Landscape drawings – less expensive and time-consuming than paintings - could also be experimental in subject or in execution. Veneto scenes inhabited by figures yet without an obvious 'poetic' import became part of Domenico Campagnola's repertoire especially in his early career in Venice, including drawings with signatures such as one in the British Museum of youths in contemporary dress in a landscape, and another in the National Gallery of Art, Washington of a similar youth fishing while travellers emerge from woodland behind, dating from c. 1516-17 (fig. 6).<sup>33</sup> Although some early landscape drawings are quite pithy in their graphic language, with expansive

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<sup>30</sup> Highlighted in Whistler 2016, e.g. pp. 107-108, 120 and 265; Rearick 2001, p. 13, felt that red chalk was a rare technique in Venice; see now Verdigel 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Florence, Uffizi inv. 1744 F, red chalk, 14.8 x 12 cm, unpublished.

<sup>32</sup> On the wider context for the development of landscape drawing, Brooke 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. 1950.20.1, pen and brown ink, with a signature in the same ink, . Do. / Campagnola, 16.4 x 24.7 cm; and London, British Museum, inv. 1895,0915.836, pen and brown ink, with a signature in the same ink, *Dominicus/ Campagnola*, 18.2 x 27.3 cm; see Robison in Venice 2014, cat. 12, pp. 54-56 regarding the early dating of these drawings and the fact that they carry signatures; also Whistler 2018.

areas of paper left deliberately blank to evoke space and light, on the whole they tend to emulate prints in filling the visual field with dextrous lines and strokes, variegated in width and tonality. The imaginative world of Venetian landscape in the early 1500 and the intersection of paintings, prints and drawings with classical, Petrarchan and modern poetry is a fascinating topic now addressed in a magisterial study by Paul Holberton. This will give impetus to further research on landscape and drawing, as part of the wider concerns with naturalism and expressiveness that together embody the dynamic and creative character of Venetian *disegno*. It is with this depth of characterization that the present volume is so fruitfully concerned.

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