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Two Cardinal Portraits by Scipione Pulzone in the Harvard Art Museums and their Related Versions

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11. Two Cardinal Portraits by Scipione Pulzone in the Harvard Art Museums and their Related Versions

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Abstract
Since the sixteenth century, Scipione Pulzone's portraiture has been admired for its psychological intensity, exquisite attention to detail, and illusionistic settings. Throughout his career, Scipione painted at least six cardinals. These paintings exist in multiple versions, yet the issue of how Scipione went about creating them has remained little examined. This study focuses on the portraits of Cardinals Giovanni Ricci and Michele Bonelli (both housed in the Harvard Art Museums), and their related versions to contend with Scipione's artistic practice. It considers the function of these and other multiple cardinal portraits by Scipione with regard to their collection and display. It also draws attention to the central role of portraits of cardinals and Scipione's lasting contribution to this genre.

Keywords: Scipione Pulzone; cardinals; portraits; copies; Counter-Reformation

Scipione Pulzone da Gaeta was hailed by his contemporaries as the undisputed leading portraitist in Rome. In his Riposo of 1584, Raffaello Borghini wrote that Scipione was ‘excellent at making portraits from life, so much so they that they appear alive’.1 Giovanni Baglione also noted that Scipione was particularly gifted in painting portraits, which he described as ‘so lifelike and [painted] with such diligence, that all the hairs could be counted, and especially the draperies [...] seemed truer than their originals’.2 Similarly, Giulio Mancini in his Considerazioni sulla

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2 ‘e si vivi li faceva, e con tal diligenza, che vi si sarieno contati fin tutti i capelli, in particolare li drappi, che in quelli ritraeva, parevano del loro originale più veri, e davano mirabil gusto’; Baglione, Le vite, 2013, p. 233.

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pittura (1617–1621) claimed that Scipione’s portraits were so perfect that he did not leave out even the smallest aspect of nature.3 For the discerning Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, one of the artist’s sitters, Scipione surpassed all other living portraitists.4 According to these and other critics, Scipione painted many illustrious sitters in Rome, including members of the nobility, popes, secular rulers, and ‘all of the Cardinal Princes of the Roman Court’.5 Among these many portraits, a great number represent cardinals, and these exist in multiple versions. Borghini notes that Scipione’s portraits are too numerous to list, but he does single out those of cardinals Farnese, Granvelle, and Medici.6 Scipione’s reputation extended beyond the borders of Rome to the courts of Naples and Florence, where he was invited to work, but also to Venice, Sicily, and Spain, where he sent his paintings. His influence was international in scope and lasted well after his death.

Although Scipione was widely celebrated in his own time, he has attracted relatively little attention from modern scholars. The first monographic study of the artist’s work was published by Federico Zeri in 1957 but focused on Scipione’s religious painting, largely overlooking the portraits.7 Zeri grappled with where to situate Scipione, an artist working during the Counter-Reformation who does not sit comfortably in either the Renaissance or the Baroque eras. More recently, Scipione studies have gained momentum with Alexandra Dern’s catalogue raisonné of 2003, the first solo exhibition of the artist’s work at the Museo Diocesano in Gaeta in 2013, and Alessandro Zuccari’s edited volume on the artist.8 Together with the growing literature dedicated to cardinals and their role in early modern Europe,9

3 ‘nel ritratto fu eminente e nel finire usò gran pacienza, quale, nel condurre a perfettione le sue opere, non lasciò cosa minima che sia nel naturale che non esprimesse; Mancini, in Petrucci, Pittura di ritratto a Roma, 2008, p. 3.
4 In a letter of 10 February 1578, the Spanish ambassador, Juan de Zúñiga, wrote to King Philip II of Spain: Granvela aprueva mucho a Hieronimo Monciano para hazer design y a Marcello [Venusti] para dar colores y para retrettar al natural a un Scipion de Gaeta y tambien dize, que es muy buen official todo lo de pinzel un Pierre de Argeum, que esta en Borgoña’ (‘the cardinal approves much of Girolamo Muziano as a draughtsman, and Marcello Venusti as a painter, and to render portraits from life, Scipione Pulzone da Gaeta’); Leone de Castris, ‘Le cardinal Granvelle et Scipione Pulzone’, 1996, p. 175.
7 Zeri, Pittura e Controriforma, 1957.
a clearer picture has been formed both of Scipione as the favoured portraitist of later sixteenth-century cardinals and of the function and display of these paintings in the hands of their owners.

Cardinals commissioned portraits for dynastic reasons as well as to communicate the power of their office, often either on the occasion of their investiture or in commemoration of an important diplomatic accomplishment. Portraits of cardinals proliferated after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), and Scipione eventually specialized in this genre. Little is known about Scipione’s workshop and how he managed the production of so many portraits of cardinals alongside his numerous other commissions. Although documents and technical evidence have taught us more about Scipione, his patrons, and his oeuvre, much remains to be discovered about the artist’s working practices. Specifically, what was the impetus behind the additional versions of cardinal portraits? How were they carried out and to what extent were assistants involved? How were they disseminated and displayed? In addition to his attention to detail and ability to capture his sitters’ likenesses faithfully, what was it about Scipione’s portraits in particular that so appealed to his patrons and viewers? This study aims to offer some answers through a consideration of primary source material, close visual analysis, and technical evidence.

Two portraits of cardinals by Scipione, those of Giovanni Ricci and Michele Bonelli, are now in the Harvard Art Museums and offer a point of departure. These two paintings span nearly two decades of Scipione’s artistic activity and provide representative examples of the types of portraits Scipione repeatedly created with only a few exceptions: the bust- and three-quarter-length seated portrait. An in-depth examination of these works sheds light on other paintings by Scipione, making it possible to draw conclusions about this artist’s working practices, the characteristics of his style, and how he contributed to the conventions of portraiture in his own time and beyond.

Scipione’s Early Beginnings and Training

Although the exact date of Scipione’s birth is uncertain, he was born in the town of Gaeta around 1540–1542. We have no evidence of his early training, but he presumably left his hometown as a young man in search of a career as an artist in Rome, where he is recorded paying tax in 1562.10 There Scipione was a pupil of the Florentine artist Jacopino del Conte (1510–1598), who ran a workshop in Rome from about 1538.11 Also known for his portraits, Jacopino painted popes, high-ranking

papal and military officials, members of the Roman nobility, and perhaps most notably, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1534). Scipione also painted members of the Colonna family and probably introduced Scipione to them; in 1568 Scipione began receiving payments from the Colonna who became lifelong patrons of the artist. Like Jacopino, Scipione began his career in Rome painting portraits. Although we know little about Scipione's artistic formation, we may assume that he adopted some of his working practices from his master, who in turn had been trained by Andrea del Sarto in Florence. Giorgio Vasari, who also studied with Andrea, noted in his Lives that the master asked his assistants to copy a single painting as many as four times. Andrea employed cartoons and modelli in his workshop so that his assistants could carry out commissions quickly. His workshop ran so efficiently that it was still in business a full decade after his death. However, Jacopino's formation under Andrea may have been overstated, as he probably spent very little time in his workshop. We have no evidence that Jacopino or Scipione used similar methods of transferring designs in their respective workshops, but they both created a remarkable number of portraits in numerous variant versions that often recycle poses, perhaps suggesting that Jacopino passed down some of his working practices to Scipione.

Portraits of cardinals by both Scipione and Jacopino are part of an established tradition codified by the previous generation of artists working in Rome. Oft cited prototypes are Raphael's Cardinal Bibbiena (c.1516), Sebastiano del Piombo's portrait of Cardinal Giovanni Salviati (c.1531), and Cardinal Pietro Bembo by Titian (c.1540; see Plate 2), to name only a few. While portraits of popes and heads of state were often full length, these cardinal portraits are in bust- and three-quarter lengths. The cardinals in these paintings are portrayed seated and dressed in their finest regalia. As in papal portraits, cardinals are often shown holding in one or both hands objects including books, letters, the edge of the chair, or gloves. In almost every example, the cardinal is positioned at a slight angle to the picture plane and looks directly out at the viewer. As explored further below, Scipione retained many

13 Scipione also received a monthly stipend and board from the Colonna through June 1571; Amendola, ‘Cronologia e fonti’, 2013, p. 194.
18 For Titian’s portrait of Bembo, see Irene Brooke in this volume.
of these conventions, but also added new features that would soon come to define the norm for cardinal portraiture.

In 1567, Scipione was listed among the members of the Accademia of San Luca, indicating he was an independent artist. Although Scipione’s standing as an artist was established by this point, Jacopino continued to be extremely influential, even vital to his student’s early career. Numerous commissions for portraits soon followed, including one of Pope Pius V Ghislieri (c.1570). This portrait secured the artist’s status as official court portraitist. To arrive at such a lucrative commission so early in his career, Scipione must have had help. In addition to training Scipione, Jacopino may have also introduced him to cardinals and other future clients in Rome besides the Colonna. It is this close network of patrons that helped to establish Scipione as the preferred portraitist in both lay and ecclesiastic circles, surpassing even his own master. By the mid-1570s, Scipione had so many commissions that he called on Jacopino to assist him. This is significant for two reasons: first, it provides documentary evidence suggesting that Scipione may not have worked alone and his paintings might have been executed by multiple hands; second, it demonstrates the high demand for portraits at the time.

Scipione’s success as the leading portraitist in Rome had much to do with being in the right place at the right time. The Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Church’s response to it at the Council of Trent had altered the religious climate in Europe. When Martin Luther attacked the pope in his ‘95 Theses’, the entire hierarchy of the Church was also at stake. In direct response to Luther and his followers, popes began to address issues such as the granting of indulgences. Post-Tridentine popes also encouraged cardinals to conduct modest lives and redirect what they would spend on their courts toward the patronage of art and architecture in service of the Church. At the same time, cardinals followed the pope’s lead and sought to reassert their authority as Church leaders. Their status as ‘apostles’ to the Christlike role played by the pope necessitated an official public image, which required wide

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21 Among the versions of this painting that still exist are those in the Galleria Colonna in Rome, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, and in the Palazzo Arcivescovile of Olomone; Dolz, ‘Ritratto di Pio V’, 2013, p. 303, and Nicolai, ‘Ritratti di Pio V Ghislieri’, 2013, p. 255.
22 This is recorded in a letter from 11 February 1576 from Curia chamberlain Hortensio Cyriach to William V, Duke of Bavaria, who wished to commission a series of portraits from Scipione; Dern, Scipione Pulzone, 2003, pp. 33–34.
23 Pope Pius V outlawed indulgences with the Etsi Dominici gregis bull of 1567; Schirrmacher, Indulgences, 2012, p. 43.
dissemination. Family ambitions were passed down from popes to their cardinal nephews to create a sense of legitimacy to the papal seat, which was made explicit in portraiture. Hence there was a new demand for cardinal portraits. Perhaps in direct response to this need, Scipione’s portraits effectively communicated a sense of the importance and power of their sitters. With their haunting lifeliness, Scipione’s portraits simulated a real presence, as noted by his biographers. It also relates to the curious episode of Scipione’s portrait of Bianca Cappello that had such a presence, it was treated like a real person. This feature of Scipione’s portraiture as being extremely lifelike may have been the key to his success.

The Harvard Portrait of Cardinal Giovanni Ricci: A Lifelike Presence

Among Scipione’s earliest commissions is the Harvard Art Museums’ portrait of Giovanni Ricci (1497–1574) from 1569, often considered to be the painter’s first cardinal portrait. This half-bust portrait portrays the cardinal dressed in the uniform of his office, a brilliant scarlet mozzetta, white collar, and on his head, a bright red biretta (Fig. 11.1). The moirée patterned silk, white beard, and tiny skin tag below the left eye are painted with striking naturalism, evoking Baglione’s praise of this artist’s superior ability to paint drapery and his precise attention to detail. The impenetrable gaze of Cardinal Ricci is arresting. The individualized features of aged skin lend him a sense of authority, while accurately portraying his age of 72 years old. Furthermore, the cardinal’s character is captured in this portrait which is at once intimate in its proximity to the viewer and distanced through the painted ledge. Its inscription, ‘Io Riccius Card. Politianus’ not only clearly identifies the name and place of origin of the cardinal from Montepulciano (nicknamed Cardinal Montepulciano), but also identifies the cardinal by his name, Io[annes]. An additional inscription located just above the cardinal’s left proper shoulder (as opposed to the viewer’s left) records a signature and date: ‘Scipio facie[bat] An Dm 1569’. Nothing more is known of its commission or why the cardinal wished to be depicted at this particular moment.

26 The idea that cardinal portraits could stand in for the physical presence of the sitter is explored further by Arnold Witte in this volume.
Cardinal Giovanni Ricci has been characterized as ‘a major figure in papal finance, administration, and diplomacy for some three decades in the mid-sixteenth century’. Born in the Tuscan town of Chiusi, Giovanni Ricci grew up in the nearby town of Montepulciano. Ricci rose from modest beginnings and had a rudimentary education, both of which set him apart from the cardinals who hailed from
prominent families and had humanist educations. As a young man of fifteen, Ricci travelled, under the protection of the Montepulciano nobleman Tarugio Tarugi to Rome, where he was soon well-positioned for an ecclesiastic career. In Rome, Ricci benefitted from the papacy of two Tuscan popes, Leo X and Clement VII de’ Medici, finding support in Tuscan cardinals and others who would later prove to be important contacts. Ricci first resided with Cardinal Antonio Maria Ciocchi del Monte as his maestro di casa (majordomo) and later, he was the treasurer to the cardinal’s uncle, Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte, the future Pope Julius III (1550–1555). Ricci later acted as major-domo to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the future Pope Paul III (1534–1549). Ricci became active in the Apostolic Camera, demonstrating his talents in administration and managing finances. Eventually, he became a cardinal under Pope Julius III in 1552 and carried out diplomatic missions as papal nuncio to Spain and Portugal. Ricci’s early connections set the foundations for his ecclesiastic career despite of his lack of training in theology.

Perhaps to compensate for this deficiency, as archbishop of Pisa he founded a Collegio in 1567 to house eight students from Montepulciano.

The portrait of Ricci portrays him as an aged man and marks the culmination of a long and distinguished career. Ricci served seven popes and was generally well-liked. However, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo blocked him from ascending to the papacy during the 1565 conclave because he had fathered a son. As Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga noted, ‘Montepulciano could have been pope if Borromeo so wished, but he abhors him like the plague.’

Scipione’s portrait of Ricci soon followed this failed attempt to achieve the papacy. Only a few years later, Ricci helped to finance the Christian fleet that defeated the Turks at Lepanto. Perhaps this portrait served to gain favour with his opposers and garner support for this important mission. As discussed below, like other cardinals during this time, Ricci seems to have considered the victory at Lepanto among his greatest accomplishments. A painting of the battle hung in the gran salone of the cardinal’s newly constructed villa (now the Villa Medici), and interestingly, it would eventually become part of the collection of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga in the eighteenth century. The portrait also coincides with Ricci’s purchase and renovation of the villa on the Pincian hill. Alongside the other important artistic

31 Spanish ambassador Luis de Requesens noted that Ricci was not educated (‘no tiene ninguna letras’) – as cited in Deswarte-Rosa, ‘Le cardinal Giovanni Ricci’, 1991, p. 112, n. 4.
34 Andres, Villa Medici in Rome, 1976, p. 70, n. 147.
36 For the provenance of this painting, see Dern, Scipione Pulzone, 2003, pp. 91–93.

Andres, Villa Medici in Rome, 1976, p. 68.
commissions for which Ricci is remembered, including his funerary chapel in San Pietro in Montorio, the decoration of his Vatican apartments, his extensive collection of antiquities, and a fresco cycle in his palazzo on the Via Giulia, his villa is perhaps his most significant. As perhaps the first cardinal to employ Scipione, Ricci understood the delicate balance required of an official portrait to represent the dual role of the cardinal. On the one hand, it needed to represent the new responsibilities of Church fathers as decreed by the Council of Trent, but also to stress the import of the office. In short, Scipione succeeded in creating the ideal image of the post-Tridentine cardinal.

Additional Versions of the Ricci Portrait

The Harvard Ricci portrait is widely considered the first of as many as five painted versions of Cardinal Ricci, all attributed to Scipione. Perhaps it was painted from life and later served as a model for other portraits of the cardinal. These various portraits range from bust- to three-quarter-length and were likely created as gifts for family members or political supporters. At first glance, the Harvard portrait appears to be identical to the version on panel in the Barberini collection (Fig. 11.2). The dimensions of these two paintings are almost the same: 66.7 × 51.4 cm and 64.5 × 49.8 cm, respectively. In fact, most bust-length portraits of cardinals by Scipione average 55 × 70 cm. The measurements of individual features of the two faces are either very close or, in some cases, identical. Such exactitude might suggest that Scipione or his assistants employed a technique for transferring the original disegno (design or drawing) to create later versions.

40 For more on portraits of cardinals as gifts, see Thomas-Leo True in this volume.
41 I am thankful to Chiara Merucci who measured the Barberini panel. The two paintings shared the same measurements of the width of the mouth, the width of the nose, the distance nostril to nostril, the height of the proper left eye from eyebrow to the lower edge of the ‘bag’ of the eye, the height of proper right eye from the top of the brow to the lower edge of the eye bag, the width of the proper right eye, the distance between top of the forehead from the lower edge of the hat to the lowest part of the beard. Almost exact dimensions, differing only by a centimetre or less, were recorded in both paintings from the top of the proper right shoulder to the right edge of the painting, from the bottom of the mozzetta to the top of the hat, from the proper right edge of the face to the top of the proper left ear, from the top of the hat to the edge of the beard or first button to the height of the proper left ear, the length from eye to eye, the height of the top of the bridge of the nose to the bottom of the mouth, and the width of proper left eye.
However, when examined more carefully, small differences begin to emerge. The folds and patterns in the drapery are not identical, and the beards appear to have a slightly different texture. These subtle changes may also be observed in Scipione's other cardinal portraits that exist in multiple versions, namely those of cardinals
Savelli, Granvelle, and Medici which will be discussed below. As we shall see, other differences between Scipione’s multiple versions of cardinal portraits include the backgrounds and objects held by the sitter, even though the faces often appear to be derived from a common prototype.

A larger portrait in the Massimo-Ricci collection in Rome shows the cardinal in three-quarter length, seated and holding a letter. Presumably, each of these portraits was destined for different settings and therefore varied accordingly in size and support. The function and intended locations of these paintings also likely had a bearing on the extent to which Scipione was involved in their production. Of the three extant Ricci portraits, the Massimo-Ricci version is of lesser quality. Furthermore, Scipione often included his signature and the date of the portrait on the letters held by his sitters, but in this case, this information is absent. Instead, the existing text records his foundation of the Collegio Ricci: ‘Ill.mo ac R.mo Jo. Riccio / card.li Politiano fund.ri/ Collegio Nri’. The letter provides a clue to the painting’s original place of display to honour its benefactor. In spite of its large size, the audience for this painting was likely not as important to Ricci, and therefore a variant of the original, perhaps painted by an assistant, could suffice.

In addition to what can be observed with the naked eye, more information lies beneath the surfaces of these paintings. Although both the Harvard and Barberini pictures contain few pentimenti, the X-radiographs of these canvases further reveal subtle differences in the way they were created. An area of reserve around the beard and head is visible only in the X-radiograph of the Harvard version. Artists often left such areas temporarily unfinished as they continued to work out their composition, allowing for the possibility of adding more detail at a later stage. This feature does not appear in the Barberini panel, suggesting that it was based on the

42 Zuccari believes this painting to be a good workshop copy. Zuccari, ‘Anacronismi e modernità’, 2015, p. 9. According to a tesi di laurea (akin to a master’s thesis) by Augusto Donò (1984), the Massimo-Ricci version of the Ricci portrait was in Rome in the Casa Marchesa Ricci in Piazza de’ Ricci, where Roberto Longhi saw it in 1973. This does not appear to be the same painting Alexandra Dern identifies in the Ricci-Paracciani collection, also in Rome. For the most recent examination of this painting, see De Marchi, ‘Ritratto del cardinale Giovanni Ricci’, 2013.

43 I did not have the opportunity to study this painting in person, nor do I have any information about its current condition or if any technical analysis has been carried out. I rely here on the most recent catalogue entry by Andrea G. De Marchi, who suspects that Scipione must have employed help in creating the two Roman versions of this portrait; De Marchi, ‘Ritratto del cardinale Giovanni Ricci’, 2013.

44 Ibid., p. 247.

45 I am indebted to Kate Smith, Conservator of Paintings and Head of Paintings Lab, and Anne Schaffer, Paintings Conservation Fellow, in the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies at the Harvard Art Museums for conducting the technical analysis of the two Harvard portraits and for discussing the results with me at great length. I also would like to acknowledge Chiara Merucci from the Laboratorio di Restauro at Palazzo Barberini, Gallerie Nazionali d’Arte Antica di Roma for sharing technical information on the Barberini Ricci portrait.
Harvard prototype. There is no technical evidence to prove that Scipione or his workshop assistants employed tracing techniques or cartoons. Rather, the small differences that are consistent across these multiple versions suggest that each was created individually, either by Scipione or in collaboration with his assistants.

As already observed, Scipione had trouble meeting his deadlines and called on Jacopino to help him carry out his commissions. At that time, Scipione was working for the Colonna, Boncompagni, and Medici families. While Scipione was highly praised for his meticulous paintings, he was also described as notoriously slow and extremely busy. A letter of 17 April 1580, from the ambassador of Urbino, Baldo Falcucci, to Duke Francesco Maria della Rovere, praises Scipione as ‘pittor eccellentissimo’ (‘most excellent painter’) but also reports that one must wait a long time for him and pay a high price. A subsequent letter between these two men notes that Scipione was too busy to accept a new apprentice into his workshop. Indeed, during the two years that elapsed between the time of the first and second letters (1580–1582), Scipione was simultaneously working on at least four commissions: the portraits of Cardinal Ferdinando de’ Medici (discussed below), Virginio Orsini, and Marcantonio Colonna, as well as two paintings for the latter that would be sent to Sicily, a Way to Cavalry (later sent to Spain) and a Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. At least one of these, the Colonna portrait, would not be delivered on time. Yet, if Scipione was producing his cardinal portraits by himself, then he may have been working rather quickly.

Another illuminating piece of information that emerges from these letters is that Scipione ran a workshop in Rome. How it was organized, however, and the names of the artists he employed have yet to come to light. It would have been standard practice at the time for any artist to begin a portrait with a study drawn from life: this could be copied by workshop assistants to create subsequent versions. In order to paint drapery and other props, a model could have stood in to replace the sitter. Alternatively, Scipione himself could have painted multiple versions of his own portraits. This second hypothesis might be substantiated by a letter in which Scipione agrees to paint two copies of his portrait of Marcantonio Colonna: one for his wife, Princess Felice Orsini Colonna, and the other for his sister, Geronima, in Naples. In Scipione’s own words: ‘I supplied that one and I made a copy similar

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48 Ibid., p. 204.
49 In a letter from May 1575, Nicolò Pisacane communicates to Marcantonio Colonna that Scipione will not be able to deliver the painting until September; Amendola, ‘Cronologia e fonti’, 2013, pp. 198–200.
to it for Lady Gironima’. It is important to note here that Scipione implies that he painted both versions of this portrait, and that the second version or *copia* for Geronima is not exact, but similar, perhaps explaining the subtle differences among his portraits. Specifically, at least one viewer, Paolo Gallo, described two paintings of this recently deceased sitter as appearing so realistic ‘that upon seeing them one must weep, because they make it appear as if he were alive’; the implication is that there was little difference in their quality even though one was a second version based on the original. At this point, it seems entirely possible that Scipione painted both the originals and subsequent versions of the Ricci portrait and other paintings, if not entirely, at least in part.

The Gaeta Portrait of Cardinal Michele Bonelli: The Portrayal of an Office

Following the portrait of Cardinal Ricci, the next commission to Scipione for a cardinal portrait came from Cardinal Michele Bonelli (1541–1598), and is today housed in the Museo Diocesano in Gaeta (Fig. 11.3). The Bonelli portrait is similar to the large-scale portrait of Ricci and others of a similar format, in which the cardinal is seated nearly in full length, all averaging about 130 × 100 cm in size. When Scipione painted this portrait in 1572, Bonelli was living next door to the painter in the Palazzo Colonna at Santi Apostoli in Rome. The two might have met either through their common ties to the Colonna family or thanks to Scipione’s aforementioned portrait of 1570 of Bonelli’s great uncle, Pope Pius V Ghislieri. In fact, this portrait of the pope, shown in full length, seated, holding a letter and a book, and facing toward the right, may have inspired the portrait of Bonelli, who is also seated (though not in full length), holds a letter, and faces to the left. As discussed below, Bonelli possibly intended his portrait to be a pendant to that of his papal uncle.

Born in Bosco Maregno, near Alessandria, Bonelli was therefore known as Cardinal ‘Alessandrino’. He was named after Antonio Ghislieri, his mother’s uncle, who

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52 ‘che in vederli bisogna piangere, perché par che sia vivo’; ibid., p. 212.
53 For the biography of Michele Bonelli with bibliography, see Prosperi, ‘Bonelli, Michele’, 1969. For more on Bonelli, see Thomas-Leo True in this volume.
55 The portrait of Pius V was not recorded in the inventory of Marcantonio Colonna of 1586, compiled soon after his death, and therefore could not have been commissioned by Colonna. However, it does appear in a later Colonna inventory of 1636; Nicolai, ‘Ritratti di Pio V Ghislieri’, 2013, p. 255.
later took the name Michele when he joined the Dominican order. Following in the footsteps of his great uncle, Michele also became a Dominican monk in 1560. After Ghislieri rose to the papacy in 1566, he named Bonelli a cardinal, giving him the titular church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.\(^5^6\) Despite this nepotistic appointment,

\(^{56}\) See Witte, ‘Cardinals and their Titular Churches’, 2020.
Pius V was among the popes who most rigorously enforced the reform of the Catholic Church according to the Council of Trent, and his great nephew followed suit. For example, Cardinal Bonelli wore his Dominican habit as a sign of his humility and carried out religious art and architectural commissions, as recommended by the pope. Consequently, Bonelli’s red biretta remains the only sartorial marker of his office in the portrait.

At the same time, Bonelli was aware of his social status as a cardinal and great nephew to the pope. By the time this portrait was painted, Bonelli had carried out several urban projects, both in Rome and in his native Bosco and its environs. His high-ranking position is communicated through his pose and the setting of the painting. One arm rests on the opulent leather and gold-studded chair, while the other is on a table covered in red cloth, with a large reliquary on top. In his right hand, he holds a letter which identifies him to the viewer, along with the name of the painter (‘All. Ill.mo Rmo Card. Alessandrino aetatis suae XXX Scipio faciebat’). The reliquary also bears an inscription indicating the date of the painting as created in the seventh year of the papacy of Pius V Ghislieri, or 1572 (‘ECCE. A. DEI. QUI. T. PIUS. V. PON. M. A. VII.’). This exquisite reliquary crafted in crystal, ivory, and ebony, also bears the ox of the Bonelli family crest and, in the centre, the Agnus Dei. This object occupies a prominent position in the painting, and Scipione clearly took pains to render it in extreme detail. As Benedetta Montevecchi has convincingly argued, the artist’s ability to paint luxury items is one of the features of his work for which he was celebrated. Such accoutrements had been typical of cardinal portraits since the early sixteenth century and were often included to highlight certain aspects of the office of the cardinal or his character. This particular object deserves further attention as it may offer clues about the motivation for the portrait and the character of its sitter.

In the months prior to the date of the portrait, Bonelli had definitively returned to Rome from his diplomatic mission to France, Portugal, and Spain, where he served as papal legate. Bonelli assisted in the Holy League against the Turks, organized by Pope Pius V to take control of the eastern Mediterranean from the Ottomans. The portrait therefore marks an important moment in the life of the cardinal, while also drawing attention to his familial connection to the pope. Given Bonelli’s recent fight against the Turks, the reliquary is a strong reminder of the supremacy of the Catholic Church, and the value it placed on relics in post-Tridentine Europe. The object physically resembles a monstrance, with the Agnus Dei alluding to the

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58 The Via Alessandrina and Via Bonella, commissioned by Bonelli and constructed in Rome between 1566 and 1570, were both named in his honour; Perin, ‘Pio V e il collegio cardinalizio’, 2004, p. 111.
60 Ibid., p. 197.
Eucharist. The thirteenth session of the Council of Trent, dedicated entirely to the Eucharist, had upheld the Catholic Church's belief that the body of Christ is present in the Eucharist; a point denied by Protestant leaders such as Ulrich Zwingli. It is reminiscent of other such reliquaries manufactured in a style known as *alla Spagnola* (in the Spanish style), fashionable in European courts where Bonelli had spent time. The reliquary thus becomes symbolic of the cardinal himself. It not only echoes the colours of Bonelli's Dominican black and white habit, but it also makes explicit the connection to his diplomatic mission in Spain and his dedication to defending the Church.

**The Harvard Portrait of Cardinal Bonelli: A Display of Power**

Fourteen years after the Gaeta portrait, Bonelli commissioned a second version from the artist, today in the Harvard Art Museums (Plate 10). According to the letter that Bonelli holds in his hand, Scipione painted this portrait in 1586 (‘All. Ill.mo et R.mo Sig.or Il. So. Card. Alessandrino Scipione Gaetanus Facie […] 1586’), even though the sitter shows no visible signs of ageing since the earlier portrait. The later painting was likely commissioned for display in the cardinal's palazzo at Santi Apostoli, as cited in the Bonelli inventory of 1593. The cardinal soon parted with the painting, as it no longer appears in his inventory of 1598, the year of his death. These two paintings may have been conceived as pendants. Both subjects are posed seated at half length and would have faced each other at opposite angles. These two paintings are described as being by the hand of Scipione, with similar dimensions and frames. The pairing of these two portraits, which visually mirror each other, would have underscored the familial bond between these two men and their dynastic ambitions. The provenance of the paintings records the way in which cardinal portraits were circulated, displayed, and made to function.

The paintings are likely to have entered the Bernerio collection in 1607, when Bonelli oversaw the wedding of his niece Flavia Torelli to Bernerio's nephew and heir, Girolamo. Thus, the two paintings of the pope and his great nephew were probably

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presented as diplomatic gifts from one cardinal to the other in order to reinforce the new relationship between their families. The paintings were kept together as pendants when they passed by inheritance to Monsignore Clemente Merlini to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, who recorded them in 1642. It is interesting to note that the paintings passed from cardinal to cardinal and remained in the possession of noble families that each included ecclesiastic members. Assuming they were displayed together, these portraits would have celebrated the privileged relationship between a pope and his cardinal-nephew and upheld the continuation of a familial dynasty within the Church. Other versions of the Cardinal Bonelli portrait are also mentioned in inventories of prominent families, including the Farnese, further demonstrating the dissemination of these portraits as images of power.

The Painted Curtain in Scipione’s Portrait of Cardinal Bonelli

The two paintings of Bonelli in Gaeta and Harvard belong to a category of portraiture known as the *ritratto da parata* (ceremonial portrait). Such paintings include rich details to delight the eye and to communicate the importance of the sitter. Simply put, these paintings were intended to be admired by viewers, presumed guests of the cardinal, who were almost certainly of comparable status and intellectual sophistication. Despite the markedly different states of conservation of the two Bonelli portraits, these paintings are nearly identical. The main difference between them lies in their *mise en scène*. The Harvard painting does not contain the table with the reliquary, but in an equal display of artistic ostentation a swath of red cloth is draped over what appears to be a painting within the painting. While the curtain does not appear in the first portrait of Bonelli, the later painting created for his palazzo certainly would have delighted the cardinal and his guests. Both the reliquary and the curtain in the Bonelli portraits draw attention to this artist's illusionistic skills that set him apart from other portraitists, while also customizing these paintings to their respective contexts.

The Harvard painting is one of the first of many examples of portraits by Scipione that feature fictive curtains. We know from the 1593 inventory of the Bonelli collection that the Harvard portrait itself was originally covered by a red curtain.

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69 ‘Quadro uno del ritratto del Cardinale Alessandrino per mano di maestro Scipione gaetano con cornice di noce cortina di cremisino con frangie di seta et oro cordoni due et due fiochi di seta et oro n. 1 [Scipione Pulzone detto il Gaetano]’; Cola, *Palazzo Valentini a Roma*, 2012, pp. 79, 187.
As an indication of the special status of this painting, the curtain would have been pulled back for viewing to dramatic effect and echoed by the painted curtain. This feature would later become a hallmark of Scipione’s portraiture, and draws attention to his ability to paint with extreme naturalism. As we have already seen, the ability of this artist to paint images that seemed ‘real’ was a topos in the writing of his contemporaries. In the margins of Baglione’s biography of the artist, Giovan Pietro Bellori wrote that he had to touch paintings by Scipione to make sure the images depicted were not real.

To the educated viewer, this *trompe l’oeil* effect would have called to mind the competition between the ancient painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius as recounted in the *Natural History* by Pliny the Elder. This story was a touchstone for Renaissance painters who sought to emulate the ancients and engage in similar rivalry. As the story goes, Parrhasius challenged Zeuxis to a painting competition. Zeuxis created a painting of grapes that was so realistic, it attracted birds that pecked at it. Meanwhile, Parrhasius painted a curtain which Zeuxis ordered to be pulled back to reveal the work of his rival, leading him to recognize his mistake and admit defeat. By including realistic curtains draped on paintings within his paintings, Scipione aligned himself with the ancient artist, declaring himself the ‘new Parrhasius’. These curtains also pose the question to the viewer of whether what they are seeing is reality or a painted illusion, underscoring the virtuosity of the artist.

When the proverbial curtain of the painted layer is pulled back, X-radiographs reveal that the Harvard Bonelli portrait contains very few pentimenti and not much revelatory technical information. This is perhaps not surprising, as it is known to be the later version of the painting. The Gaeta painting, however, tells quite a different story. When examined in both raking light and in X-radiographs, the painting reveals evidence that a smaller rectangular area was cut out of the larger painting, perhaps to create a bust-length portrait (Fig. 11.4). This unfortunate intervention remains undocumented, and it is not known when, how or why it occurred. It is interesting to note that the dimensions of this smaller area within the larger painting are approximately 73.2 × 60.5 cm. When compared to other bust-length canvases by Scipione, such as the Harvard Ricci painting (66.7 × 51.4 cm) and the Corsini’s *Cardinal Giacomo Savelli* portrait (68 × 51 cm), all of these works appear to conform


72 I would like to acknowledge Lino Sorabella of the Museo Diocesano in Gaeta for granting me access to the museum to study the portrait of Bonelli.

73 I am grateful to Chris Martone for assisting me in calculating these dimensions based on the ratio of the smaller rectangular area to the larger picture plane.
to roughly similar dimensions (Fig. 11.5). These bust-length portraits seemed to have been in high demand, as nearly all of the larger seated paintings by Scipione also exist in bust form and in multiple examples.\textsuperscript{74} Alternatively, the smaller painting may

have been easier to sell on the market at a later time in the painting’s history. The provenance of this painting is unclear and does not offer any additional explanation as to the various contexts in which it was displayed. We may never know why the attempt to create a smaller portrait of Bonelli from the Gaeta painting failed, but the canvas was eventually reconstituted, much to the detriment of the painted surface.
The Art of Self-Fashioning: Scipione’s Portraits of Cardinals Granvelle, Savelli, and Medici

Other portraits of cardinals by Scipione that exist in multiple versions include (but are not limited to) the portraits of Cardinals Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517–1586), Giacomo Savelli (1523–1587), and Ferdinando de’ Medici (1549–1609, Figs. 11.5, 11.6, and cover). A brief examination of these paintings, with reference to the above discussion of the Ricci and Bonelli portraits, reveals a similar strategy employed in Scipione’s other cardinal portraits to establish patterns within his working practices. We must take into account that Scipione was producing multiple paintings of the same sitter alongside his many other commissions. Whether the many versions of cardinal portraits make the case that Scipione must have required assistance, or that he was exceptionally prolific, remains to be determined.

This particular group of cardinal portraits also reveals similarities among the sitters, which may help explain their reason for choosing Scipione as their portraitist. As observed by Pierluigi Leone de Castris, the artist appears to be the point in common among the primary protagonists of the anti-Turkish alliance that led to the victory of Lepanto, namely Don Juan of Austria and Marcantonio Colonna.75 Besides living in the same place and time, Scipione’s cardinals were also each noted for the role they played in reforming the Church. Additionally, Ricci, Bonelli, Granvelle, Savelli, and Medici were all experienced diplomats with close ties to Spain. This point of commonality may help to explain their selection of Scipione as their portraitist, as well as their requirement of portraits for use as diplomatic gifts. In each case, these cardinals all had a need to prove their legitimacy as cardinals in the eyes of the pope and others, either because of their noble families or the dubious acts they had committed. The portrait thus served as a way to establish their public identity as pious and exemplary Church leaders in the eyes of the viewer.

The portrait of Cardinal Granvelle is known in at least two versions: one in the Musée du Temps, Besançon, and the other in the Courtauld Gallery of Art in London (Fig. 11.6).76 In the Courtauld version, the bareheaded cardinal holds a book with his left hand parallel to the picture plane, revealing a ring on his index finger, and a painted blue curtain is draped across the upper right corner. The portrait presents the image of a man who is resolute, learned, pious, and sophisticated – characteristics for which Granvelle is still remembered.

76 According to Pierluigi Leone de Castris, the Courtauld painting dates to the last year of Granvelle’s position as viceroy of Naples, while he believes the Besançon picture was painted in the same year or just after; Leone de Castris, ‘Le cardinal Granvelle et Scipione Pulzone’, 1996, p. 176. Instead Pierre Curie believes the Besançon painting is the first version; Curie, ‘Portraits intemporels’, 2017, p. 83.
Granvelle was born at the crossroads of Italy, France, Spain, Flanders, Germany, and Switzerland, in Franche-Comté near Besançon. Following in the footsteps of his father Nicolas, Antoine spent his career serving the Spanish monarchy. He received

77 Ibid., p. 88.
a humanist education and soon occupied prestigious positions in both the Church and in the Habsburg administration as a diplomat. In 1561, Pope Pius IV made him a cardinal. Like Ricci and Bonelli, Granvelle played a part in preparations for the Battle at Lepanto. He represented King Philip II of Spain in the Holy League against the Turks and worked to position the king’s half-brother, Don Juan, as admiral of the Christian fleet.  

Perhaps to reward Granvelle for his diplomatic efforts in helping to secure the victory at Lepanto, the king named him viceroy of Naples – a post that he held from 1571 to 1575. It is precisely during this period that Scipione painted the Courtauld portrait of Granvelle. Perhaps Granvelle needed a new public portrait of himself to accompany his new office. The cardinal may have summoned Scipione from Rome to paint his portrait or may have found him already working in Naples for Don Juan of Austria. We know from Baglione’s biography of Scipione that Don Juan invited the artist to Naples soon after his victory at Lepanto in order to have him paint his portrait, which he intended to send to his sister Margaret of Austria, as stated in a letter from 26 June 1573. The Courtauld portrait, dated 1576, could also have been painted in Rome since the cardinal was already residing there by then. In either case, it coincides with two of the cardinal’s greatest achievements: the victory at Lepanto and his subsequent viceregency.  

By now, it will not be surprising to find that the two Granvelle portraits by Scipione are not identical. Both are painted in oil on copper, a support that lent itself particularly well to Scipione’s love of detail, crisp lines, and verisimilitude. The Courtauld picture is signed and dated (‘Scipio Caietanus faciebat a.n D.ni 1576’) and is slightly larger in size (81.7 × 61.6 vs. 73 × 56 cm). The two differ in their backgrounds, handling of drapery, and the position of the sitter’s hands. The Besançon painting has a darker background, the cardinal holds his book up closer to his body, and he has a much fuller beard. Pierre Curie surmised that these many differences do not indicate a copyist but an artist taking creative liberties, whether a workshop assistant or Scipione himself. Even though the Besançon version seems to be of a slightly lesser quality (perhaps due to its state of conservation), it is important to note it was recorded in the Granvelle palace in an inventory of 1607 and has remained in the same town ever since, and is therefore considered

79 Curie, ‘Portraits intemporels’, 2017, p. 82.  
82 The Courtauld painting was the subject of an informative technical study; Higgs and Noelle, Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, 2014.  
Similar to the Bonelli portrait, it was likely commissioned directly by the cardinal from Scipione and captures the likeness as well as the character of the cardinal; or at least how he wished the world to see him.

Granvelle was highly cultivated and amassed one of the greatest collections of art in late sixteenth-century Europe. Approximately 60 portraits of him were painted throughout his life by the most sought after artists of his day, including Titian, Anthonis Mor, and Willem Key. Theorist and artist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo called the portrait of Granvelle Scipione’s finest: ‘we see all the most beautiful aspects of nature, as rendered in the dignity of his face, which exudes magnificence’. It is therefore highly unlikely that Granvelle would have settled for a second-rate copy by an artist other than Scipione himself.

Perhaps in the same year that Scipione painted Granvelle, he painted another cardinal portrait believed by many scholars to represent Cardinal Giacomo Savelli in at least two versions (Fig. 11.5). Similar to the two three-quarter-length Ricci portraits discussed above, the Palazzo Corsini painting corresponds to the same the formula of the cardinal set against a neutral background in his official dress, body turned at a slight angle, and staring out at the viewer. No record of a commission or payments for his two portraits survive; this has led to debate among scholars regarding the identity of the cardinal and the dates of the paintings. Most scholars now agree that the sitter is Giacomo Savelli (1523–1588), rather than Silvio Savelli (1550–1599), based on the mention of four portraits of ‘Savelli’ in the inventories of both Giacomo Savelli and the Corsini family, and the absence of such mention in the inventory of Silvio. The Corsini picture is said to date to 1576 to coincide with the cardinal’s time as Vicar General of Rome (1560–1587) under Pope Gregory XIII, who, with Pius V, was a staunch reformer. Regardless of the identity of the sitter, two bust-length portraits of the same cardinal – one on copper in the National Gallery, London, and a smaller version on canvas in the Corsini Collection – present the cardinal in varying formats and sizes (94.3 × 71.8 vs. 51 × 68 cm). In the London version, the cardinal is seated, his arms resting on a chair, and the image is cropped just below his waist. It is difficult to determine which is the earlier of the two versions, or if both were created after a lost original. It is noteworthy that the

86 ‘vediamo tutto il più bello della natura, come la dignità del volto in quello, ed in questo la magnificenza’; Lomazzo, Trattato dell’arte, 1844, pp. 374–375.
88 Sivigliano Alloisi argues for Silvio Savelli as the identity of the sitter. Alloisi, Personaggi e interpreti, 2001, p. 68; for a series of drawings of cardinals, including Silvio, see Bonaccorsi and De Crescenzo, ‘Note ai ritratti di cardinali’, 2006, pp. 62–63, fig. 58.
Corsini version, showing only the head and shoulders of the cardinal, is strikingly similar in format and size to the Harvard Ricci portrait. Unlike the other examples, these two portraits appear to correspond almost exactly in terms of their facial features, drapery, and even the beards. Could this be the hand of a single copyist or of Scipione himself?

Savelli was born in Rome to the noble Savelli and Bentivoglio families, which included several important military leaders. He was named a cardinal by his cousin, Pope Paul III Farnese in 1539. Among his many titles and offices, Savelli served as the deacon of several churches and acted as papal legate for Pope Julius III. Under Pope Pius V Ghislieri, he was Vicar General of Rome and became Camerlengo of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Following the Council of Trent, Savelli aided in reforming the Church by seeking to restore a sense of morality. Perhaps he is best remembered for forbidding Roman Jews to visit places of Christian worship. Also in strict adherence to the recommendations of the Council of Trent, Savelli commissioned several works of religious art, employing the leading artists of the day. In the 1580s, he commissioned Giacomo della Porta to decorate the chapel in the left transept of the church of the Gesù to house his tomb and that of his father. This extravagant chapel, dedicated to the Crucifixion but never realized, would have included coloured marble walls, columns, paintings, gilded stucco decoration, and a gilded life-sized crucifix for the altarpiece.

Savelli died before the chapel was complete, but it was the site of his lavish funeral. On the date of his death, his body was accompanied to the Gesù by a household of 200 people and three weeks later, 31 cardinals attended his funeral. The funeral, comparable in extravagance to that of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, demonstrated that Savelli was among the wealthiest cardinals living in Rome at the time. Similar to Scipione’s portrait of Cardinal Ricci, the official image of Savelli balances his steely gaze with his sumptuous scarlet mozzetta to portray the two aspects of his office.

A later cardinal portrait on canvas of Ferdinando de’ Medici in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (signed and dated 1580, 185 × 119.3 cm) represents the cardinal seated in a similar format to the two Bonelli paintings (cover image). The Medici portrait, however, is distinctive from other cardinal portraits and in several ways is more akin to papal portraits. It places the cardinal at a greater distance...
from the viewer, is in full length, and shows the cardinal seated at a table covered in red velvet in the act of writing. Perhaps the cardinal was in his *scrittoio* (study), a favourite retreat of his.\(^95\) As a member of the Medici family, Ferdinando himself was unlike other cardinals in that he had political aspirations both within the Church and beyond.\(^96\) He hoped to place himself in the lineage of the great Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, and to bring ecclesiastical glory back to his family.

Ferdinando was the fifth son born to Cosimo I and Eleonora of Toledo de’ Medici. His three brothers Francesco, Giovanni, and Garzia gave Ferdinando little hope of ever ascending to the head of the family. Upon his birth, Cosimo’s astrologer predicted Ferdinando would one day replace his father – a prophecy that Cosimo chose to keep secret.\(^97\) The eldest Medici son, Francesco, was therefore groomed to continue the Medici dynasty, while Giovanni entered an ecclesiastic career as a cardinal. When Giovanni, Garzia, and their mother unexpectedly died of fever in 1562, Ferdinando resumed his studies with a view to replacing his brother Giovanni as the family’s cardinal. This was largely orchestrated by Cosimo, who was awaiting the papal conferral of his title of Grand Duke of Tuscany. By 1563, Pope Pius IV named Ferdinando a cardinal at the age of only 14, despite protests from church leaders who wished to adhere to the recommendations of the Council of Trent that such high offices be awarded on the basis of morality and intellectual ability rather than noble blood.\(^98\) Cardinal Bonelli was opposed to Ferdinando’s nomination and that of other members of noble families becoming cardinals at such a young age, including Ercole Gonzaga and Luigi d’Este.\(^99\)

Like Ricci, Ferdinando had not reached a high level of education or taken religious vows, but he had access to Medici tutors and supporters in Rome, such as Ricci himself. In a letter of 10 January 1563,\(^100\) from the Grand Duke Cosimo to Ricci, we learn that Cardinal Ricci was like a father to Ferdinando, helping him to find a home and more importantly, ensuring that he would become a cardinal.\(^101\) By the time Scipione painted his portrait in 1580, Ferdinando had proven himself as a cardinal. He had secured strong ties to Spain and a year later he would be named protector of Spain.\(^102\) Around this time, he also carried out several acts of charity and acted

\(^{95}\) Andres, *Villa Medici in Rome*, 1976, p. 246.
\(^{96}\) For a recent examination of Ferdinando’s ‘Contrasting priorities’, see Butters, ‘Contrasting Priorities’, 2009, pp. 185–225.
\(^{98}\) Caldwell, ‘Between Council and Court’, 2004, p. 140. According to Stefano Calonacci, the Council of Trent determined that cardinals had to be 30 years old. Furthermore, Carlo Borromeo lied that Ferdinando was 16, when he was in fact 13: Calonaci, ‘Ferdinando dei Medici’, 1996, p. 647.
\(^{100}\) For the published letter, see Jedin, ‘Kardinal Giovanni Ricci (1497–1574)’, 1949, p. 334. n. 57.
\(^{101}\) Nova, ‘*Occasio pars virtutis*’, 1980, p. 49, n. 5.
as a patron of art. Perhaps he is best remembered for purchasing Cardinal Ricci’s aforementioned villa on the Pincian hill in 1576 where he undertook renovations and decorations, as well as expanding the property, turning it into one of the most enviable residences in Rome. As noted by Suzanne Butters, Ferdinando behaved more like a prince than a cardinal.

The portrait represents Ferdinando’s dual roles as cardinal and Medici prince, which he held simultaneously from 1587 to 1589. A smaller bust-length version of this portrait is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and appears to have been derived from this larger painting. The Adelaide picture, probably the first version, also contains the drape in the upper left corner of the canvas. This portrait was one of many that Scipione provided to the Medici family and is the subject of a description by Giovanni Baglione: ‘[Scipione] was so accurate, that in the portrait of Ferdinando de’ Medici, then cardinal, one could see inside the small pupil of the eyes the reflection of the glass windows of the room and other things worthy of wonder […]’. This passage recalls a similar observation of Baglione, perhaps borrowed from earlier biographers, when describing Caravaggio’s Lute Player, in which the vase of flowers contains a reflection of the window and other objects in the room. The biographer used these and other paintings as examples of the apex of naturalistic painting, praising the artists’ minute attention to detail. Scipione turned his attention to providing portraits for members of the nobility, including Ferdinando de’ Medici (now, Grand Duke of Tuscany) and his wife Christina of Lorraine, both painted in 1590. This and other portraits by Scipione set a new bar to which artists would aspire in the art of painted portraiture.

Conclusion

Scipione continued to paint portraits until the end of his life, even alongside more lucrative commissions for large-scale public altarpieces. As much as Scipione excelled as a religious painter and diligently upheld the recommendations to artists first proposed at the Council of Trent, his portraits of cardinals encapsulate his most

important contributions to early modern painting. We may deduce two main reasons why Scipione excelled in portraiture and why he continued to attract such distinguished patrons, especially cardinals, throughout his career. First, Scipione was fortunate to live at a time and place where public image was indicative of one's social status. This artist aided cardinals and others who occupied privileged positions to construct their identity for public consumption. The portraits of cardinals in particular are a window onto not only the men behind the scarlet robes, but the ideals of the institution they represented at a time when those same ideals were being questioned. Secondly, Scipione's portraits strike a delicate balance of naturalism and artifice that was praised during his lifetime and beyond. His love of detail, opulence, and exacting naturalism captured the likeness of the sitter, in both body and soul. To borrow from Borghini's description of this portraitist, Scipione created paintings that evoked a sense of wonder. He was, in a word, maraviglioso (wonderful).\textsuperscript{107}

Scipione's ability to produce cardinal portraits quickly (contrary to what his contemporaries said of him) and in great numbers necessitated a technique that will only be understood with further technical research.\textsuperscript{108} While the question of his working practices has come into better focus, there is still no firm evidence allowing us to comprehend fully how Scipione managed his workshop and to what extent it was involved in the production of his portraits. As we have seen, there is good reason to believe that this artist likely produced secondary versions of his own paintings himself, perhaps depending on the status of his patron. In other cases, it appears he was more willing to rely on his assistants for help, especially if the context in which his paintings would be displayed was not particularly distinctive. Cardinal portraits by Scipione were originally created for the individual cardinal, his family, and his supporters, but eventually they transcended their original function as they passed through many important collections to become status symbols in their own right.

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\textsuperscript{108} It is my understanding that technical studies of Scipione's paintings are already under way at museums which house his paintings, including the National Gallery in London, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.


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