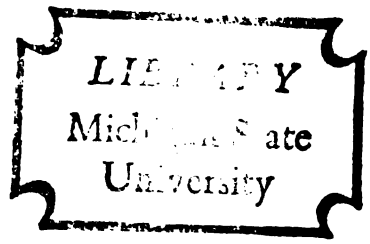
"LIVING" STATUARY IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE PAINTING

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
ARLENE ARDAY GARRETT
1969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ABSTRACT

"LIVING" STATUARY IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE PAINTING

By

Arlene A. Garrett

Many examples of statuary which seem to possess the essential qualities of real, living beings are to be found in the paintings and drawings of the Renaissance, especially those dating from the sixteenth century. By the Cinquecento, one finds the examples tending to fall into several quite distinct categories--such as those involved with idol worship, illustrations of mythological or religious stories, enlivened niche figures, and so forth. I intend, first, to show examples of these categories, and thus indicate the abundance and variety of "living" statuary in sixteenth century painting. Then, I will suggest what ideas and developments, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, brought about this abundance and variety.

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Arlene Arday Garrett

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art and Art History

1969

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Professor Webster Smith for his interest, help and guidance, I express my sincere thanks.

Arlene A. Garrett

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"Living" Statuary in Italian Renaissance Painting

Statuary abounds in the paintings of the Italian Renaissance, particularly those of the sixteenth century. Thus the Renaissance clearly responded to the impressive accounts given by Pliny and Vitruvius of the vast amount of statuary in the Ancient World and the vital role it played in the lives of Greek and Roman citizens. Because of the abundance of genuine statuary everywhere, ancient Greece and Rome did not require a programme of painted illusions of statuary. There are a few examples of statues represented in pot paintings. One of these shows Athena modelling a horse out of clay, and another shows a shield of Athena on which is painted a picture of the sculpture group of the Tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton (which was the first portrait statue group officially erected in Athens). There are also several examples in fourth style Pompeiian paintings, such as the small but rather lively statue on top of a column in the Sacrifice of Iphigenia from the House of the Tragic Poet. This abundance began to be missed in the Early Renaissance. Charles Seymour notes that "as the 15th century advanced and revealed the true fact of the dearth of opportunity to recreate, on a heroic scale, a romantic vision of Antique statuary, one outlet occurred...in paintings of

views of statuary."[1] The most common usage of statuary in Renaissance painting takes the form of ornamentation of architectural settings all'antica. Many examples may be cited, such as Piero di Cosimo's picture depicting the building of a palace, in which numerous statues are being used to adorn a building, or Veronese's Cana Wedding, in which statuary is also used as an architectural adornment. The motif of the free standing column bearing a figure remained a frequent image in Quattrocento painting to express a taste for archaeological vestigia of Antiquity, as seen, for example, in an urban view by Mantegna in the Camera degli Sposi, Mantua, and over and over again in the sketch books attributed to Jacopo Bellini. The statue on a column occurs frequently also as a symbol of pagan idolatry, as in Filippino Lippi's Martyrdom of St. John the Evangelist in S. Maria Novella, in Botticelli's Death of Lucretia, in the Flagellation scenes by Piero della Francesca and Signorelli, and in Vivarini's St. Catherine Casting Down a Pagan Idol.

Of particular interest, however, are those representations of statues that seem to possess the essential qualities of real, living beings--fleshy bodies, animated poses,

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[1] Charles Seymour, Jr., Sculpture in Italy, 1400-1500 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 7.

an evident interest in the action and even the ability to exercise power over other figures in the scene, and sometimes what appears to be an active participation in what is going on: veritable "living" statues. Many examples are to be found in the paintings and drawings of the Renaissance, especially those dating from the sixteenth century, and the practice continues well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as seen in the works of Rubens, Watteau, and Fragonard. By the sixteenth century, one finds the examples tending to fall into several quite distinct categories--such as those involved with idol worship, illustrations of mythological or religious stories, enlivened niche figures, and so forth. I intend, first, to show examples of these categories, and thus indicate the abundance and variety of "living" statuary in Cinquecento painting. Then, I will suggest what ideas and developments, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, brought about this abundance and variety.

A copy of a lost picture by Giorgione, The Horoscope, dating from the early sixteenth century, shows a below life-size, but very lifelike, statue elevated above the other figures in a niche in the dead center of the picture. Her sinuous softness, very human expression, and the fact that one foot projects beyond the niche, might well deceive one into mistaking her for a real woman, were it not for the fact that she is much smaller than the human figures and has one arm broken

off just below the shoulder in the antique manner. In contrast to fifteenth century examples of "living" statuary, which tend to be connected with Christianity (e.g. religious images or allegorical figures) or with pagan idolatry (a reflection of the medieval superstition to the effect that sensuous pagan images possessed evil powers), the sixteenth century paintings often intend to recreate the spirit as well as the forms of antique statuary, and show even an apparent fondness for the theme of idol worship in particular. An enlivened and elevated statue is the focus of attention in Beccafumi's Cult of Vesta, in which all pictorial elements are so arranged as to lead the eye to the idol. Her dominant importance in the composition is emphasized by her central position, the elaborate enframing architecture around her, the reverent approach of worshippers from all corners of the scene as they incline themselves toward her, and the emphatic gesture of a very large female figure at the lower right who stares out of the picture and points to the statue, as if to invite the viewer to participate in the homage. A very prominent and fleshy monochromatic statue of Venus dominates Titian's Feast of Venus (sometimes entitled the Worship of Venus). Elevated above a crowd of playful cupids, the statue of the goddess gazes calmly and majestically down upon the festivities going on in her honor; she holds a wine vessel in her hand, which further serves to make her a vital participant in the scene. Although monochrome, she is rendered with

the same vibrant brushstrokes as are the pigmented cupids, and her eyes contain dark pupils and appear to be focussed with interest on what is going on.

There are a number of paintings in the sixteenth century which illustrate pagan myths and thus give artists the opportunity to paint enlivened statues. Although the myth of the Promethean creation of man must have been generally known in Athens in the fourth century (it is incidentally mentioned by several authors of that time), it did not inspire Greek artists, and was not represented by them in any form. The thread of medieval iconoclasm is present in the Book of Wisdom, where the first deviser of idols is made indirectly responsible for the spread of idolatry, providing an excellent Biblical parallel to the legend of Prometheus "plasticator"; the natural outcome was therefore to condemn him as the maker of the first idols. The learned Pomponio Gaurico lists Prometheus as the first sculptor in his De Sculptura, and the familiarity of Renaissance authors with the Prometheus myth probably accounts for the increased popularity of the subject as an independent story in painting. But although a number of artists dealt with this theme, only Piero di Cosimo, in his two panels in Munich and Strassbourg showed the first men as statues in a fully statuesque way. The Munich panel shows the handsome triumphant statue of the new man modelled by the old Titan; and in the left foreground of the Strassbourg panel, we see Prometheus

applying his torch to the heart of the statue--a very graphic representation of a creator imparting the spark of life to the inert creature he has just modelled. Olga Raggio maintains that Piero evidently borrowed the details from Boccaccio's Genealogiae, and also derived some inspiration from the illustrated Italian edition of Ovid, printed in Venice in 1497. The Mannerist, Beccafumi, also illustrated the Prometheus story as part of a series of frescoes dealing with themes from classical mythology. In his version, Prometheus appears to be in the final stages of modelling his man, who sits languidly and mindlessly on a large pedestal, awaiting the spark of life. Another mythological story which called for the depiction of a living statue was the tale of Pygmalion and Galatea. Quite statuesque is the version by Pontormo and Bronzino, which shows Galatea, apparently having just been transformed into living flesh by Aphrodite, still postured the way Pygmalion had fashioned her, while the enamored sculptor kneels before her with rapture and wonder.

Another category consists of "living" statues placed aloft on columns. The motif is well illustrated in the work of Pontormo, as in two of the scenes from his series concerned with the story of Joseph. In The Baker Taken to Execution and the Butler Restored to Office, a small but highly animated statue atop a Roman column points vehemently at the dramatic scene being enacted below him, as if he were indeed aware of

what was happening; and in the picture of Joseph in Egypt, there is a triumphantly-posed, flesh-toned statue on a column towering over the scene and a very animated figure of a child, presumably living, placed on top of a column in the manner of a statue.

There was an idea widely held in the Renaissance to the effect that a painted image was more powerful than a sculpted one; this may have been a holdover from the medieval superstitious faith in the magic of wonder-working ikons of the Madonna. According to the tenets of Neoplatonism, man is a step removed from the ideal reality; thus sculpture is a step less real than man, and painting (by extension) in its lack of three-dimensionality, is still another step farther removed. Although it is true that several Renaissance statues were so realistically rendered as to seem alive, notably Donatello's Zuccone (which the artist reputedly struck, demanding that it speak) and the works of Michelangelo (in which Pater sees the creation of life itself in the cold lifeless stone), painted illusions of statuary can often be far more "living" than their sculpted counterparts. This situation can be partially explained as stemming from the very nature of painting. Whereas the viewer can walk around a piece of sculpture (which is likely not to be equally imposing from all angles) and see it from its weaker points of view as well as from the optimum angle, a painting (which can

only be viewed from the optimum viewpoint contrived by the painter) can hold one arrested in its grip. The pictorial version of a statue can also benefit from the greater fluidity of the paint medium and from the context of the scene in which it appears: the relationship which the painter is free to suggest between the statue and human figures. A Florentine, contemplating the supple, soft curves of Michelangelo's Bacchus, once said that Michelangelo could not have sinned more with the chisel, implying that this sensuously-carved statue was such a close imitation of living human flesh that it might become an object of desire. However, a certain Renaissance sketchbook (now in Trinity College, Cambridge) contains a drawing of Michelangelo's Bacchus which is considerably more fleshy and lifelike in appearance than the statue itself; indeed, the drawing with its soft and sensitive transitions of modelling, resembles a studio life drawing. Vasari, in his Life of Baldassare Peruzzi, describes a Peruzzi drawing which he considers to be a most fanciful invention, and which may be construed as a Renaissance answer to some of the fantastic things that were done to statues in antiquity:

> It represents a Piazza entirely filled with arches of triumph, colossal statues, obelisks, temples... after the manner of the ancients. On a pedestal in the midst of these edifices, is a figure of Mercury, and around him are thronging all sorts of alchemists with bellows, some large and others small, crucibles, retorts and other instruments used in distillation, proposing to administer an enema to the statue, to the end that he, the said Mercury, might be delivered

> from peccant humors...a ridiculous and fantastic delineation, but a singular idea and very well executed.[2]

The Renaissance concept of "living" statuary would appear to have roots ultimately traceable back to ancient and medieval beliefs and traditions. Although the majority of living statues in Renaissance painting seem to derive from knowledge and appreciation of ancient precedents, we also find some that apparently reflect the medieval tradition, or a combination of the two sources. The impressive accounts of ancient statuary--often of an enlivened nature--and of the vital role it played in the antique city environment and in the lives of Greek and Roman citizens contained in the writings of Pliny and Vitruvius were a source of inspiration to the thinkers and artists of the Renaissance. Manuscripts, and, later, printed editions, of their writings became available during the Quattrocento. Also available were editions of treatises by Renaissance humanists who had studied and interpreted the ancients. To describe antique grandeur in all its force, Pomponio Gaurico of Padua declared that at one time in Rome, imaginary people in the form of statues (populus fictus) were the equals of living men; and that "this view of ancient Rome as possessing two populations, one of extraordinary human beings of flesh and blood

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[2]Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (London, 1912-15), vol. 5, p. 74.

and the other of marble and bronze, appears to have greatly stimulated early Renaissance imaginations."[3] Charles Seymour maintains that "somewhere along this line of thought, the two kinds of 'man' may have seemed almost to merge."[4] According to the humanist, Poggio Bracciolini, the fragmentary remains of antique statuary that he found in Rome around 1430 lacked only breath and the power of speech to seem completely "alive," to be animated reincarnations of ancient Roman Virtus. This attitude implies more than a parroting of ancient clichés or a naive view of antique sculpture as simply a remarkably life-like imitation or transcription of outward appearances. In order to understand this exciting Renaissance concept of ancient statuary, one ought to consider it in the light of the evidence they were able to glean from the writings of Vitruvius and Pliny, evidence which does in fact give even the modern reader the impression that the boundary separating man from his heroically sculpted image was rather blurred in the minds of the ancients. Vitruvius says that all the altars of the gods should look to the east, so that persons undertaking vows may look upon the temple and the eastern Heaven and "the very images may seem to rise up and gaze upon those who make vows and sacrifices."[5] In another passage, he presents the concept of the cult statue as an idol which must be

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[3] Seymour, p. 5.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Vitruvius Pollio, On Architecture (London & New York, 1931, 1934), vol. 1, p. 231.

physically and dramatically elevated above common men. He also implies that the statue should be so contrived as to invite at least the illusion of interaction between itself and its human worshippers. We might wonder to what extent the cult image, in the superstitiously-grounded minds of its worshippers, became in effect the god itself. Some rather extraordinary examples of "living" statuary may be gleaned from the writings of Pliny. He reports that there was a statue of Hercules which was actually dressed in triumphal vestments on the occasion of triumphal processions. Lysippus' Apoxyomenos, which Marcus Agrippa had set up in front of his warm baths, was unusually beautiful and the emperor, Tiberius, was remarkably fond of it. Although at the beginning of his principate, he kept some control of himself, in this case he could not resist the temptation, and had the statue removed to his bedchamber, putting another one in its place at the baths. But the public was so opposed to this that they raised an outcry at the theatre, shouting, "Give us back the Apoxyomenos!", and Tiberius, though he had fallen quite in love with the statue, had to restore it. According to Pliny, Praxiteles' statue of Venus made Cnidus a famous city. The shrine in which it stands is entirely open so as to allow the image of the goddess to be viewed from every side, and it is believed to have been made this way with the blessing of the goddess herself, for the statue is equally admirable from every angle. There is a story to the effect that a man once fell in love with it, and,

hiding by night, embraced it, leaving a stain on the marble which betrays his lustful act. Praxiteles also did a naked Cupid at the colony of Parium, a sensuously "alive" statue which was similarly the object of indecent assault, having aroused the passion of one Alcetas, a man from Rhodes.

Another factor contributing to the idea of "living" statuary was a strong popular superstition about statues possessing special powers. The Florentines of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when they went into battle, carried images with them.[6] Even Savonarola, though he was supposedly an enemy of art, had a Donatello Infant Jesus borne in the procession on the day of the Bonfire of the Vanities. Among the people, it was believed that spirits were imprisoned in statues. The statue of Neptune by Ammannati, despite its starkly cold whiteness and pretentious size, was considered a "living" statue by the uneducated people, who called it "The Great White Man." They used to say he was the mighty river god of the Arno turned into a statue because, like Michelangelo, he spurned the love of women. According to the story, when the full moon shines on him at midnight, he comes to life and walks about the Piazza conversing with the other statues.[7] Many stories were told in Florence of beautiful maidens turned into pure white marble statues. Four or five centuries before the Renaissance, the statue of Mars in Florence had been crowned with flowers every

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[6] Mary Mc Carthy, Stones of Florence (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1959), p. 20.

[7] Ibid.

March if the season was good, and smeared with mud if not. In this way, people actually thought they were getting "revenge" against the god.[8] During the Middle Ages, an actual liveliness was often attributed to statues which was rather frightening. In thirteenth century Florence, the statue of Mars became the reputed cause of factional strife, when an unfaithful suitor was murdered in the shadow of that image on a certain time and date (which a chronicler attributed to the demonic power of the statue). In a similar vein is the story related by Ghiberti about the Sienese who put up a Venus statue in a public fountain, whereupon the city suffered a series of calamities; thinking that their misfortunes were the result of the evil powers of this pagan image, they carried it off and buried it on Florentine soil. Another aspect of the Italian tradition regarding activated images stems from the medieval belief that painted and sculpted religious images actually contained spiritual powers and were capable of miraculously exhibiting signs of life on certain momentous occasions. Stories were told of weeping madonnas, of speaking Crucifixes, of a figure of Christ coming to life in a priest's hand.

The earliest example known to me of an enlivened sculpture in a painting occurs ca. 1305-10 in Giotto's Allegory of Justice (in the Arena Chapel). This fresco, one of a series of grisailles of the Virtues and Vices, shows a monochromatic figure of Justice (quite typical of Giotto in its bulky monumental-

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[8] Mc Carthy, p. 44.

ity, and static dignity) holding a very small "living" statuette in either hand; the statuette in her right hand reaches out energetically, draperies flowing out behind it, to perform a sacrifice. There is a striking contrast between the liveliness of these two little statues and the gravity of most of Giotto's human figures.

A second early example of "living" statuary in painting occurs in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Martyrdom of the Franciscans in Morocco (ca. 1330), in which enlivened monochrome statuettes are used as architectural ornamentation. In this painting Lorenzetti decorates the pinnacles of a Gothic structure with small, energetic figures of Minerva, Mars, and Venus. In addition to their decorative function, these little pagan figures symbolize the Roman idolatry which lead to persecution of the Christians.

To my knowledge, the practice of imitating large scale sculpture in painting begins with Gentile da Fabriano, who, according to Bartolomeo Fazio, painted five life-size Prophets in the church of St. John Lateran in Rome (1427) in such a way that they appeared to be wrought from marble. Because Fazio stresses their marmoreal character and does not suggest they have anything fleshly about them, these figures were probably not made to seem like "living" statues. Their importance lies in the fact that they are the first Italian examples known to me of painted illusions of statuary of life-size. Although

Fazio does not say whether these Prophets were placed in niches, it is quite possible that they were.

A corollary to the placement of grisaille imitations of statuary in niches was the practice--destined to become very widespread--of placing human figures in architectural niches in the posture and manner of statues, presumably to enhance their dignity and prominence. By the late fourteenth century, if not earlier, the ostensibly life-size figure in full color standing in a niche appears, as seen in a painting by an anonymous artist of the late Trecento (located in La Sagra, Carpi). This figure recalls contemporary polychrome images of saints. Fra Angelico, during the first half of the Quattrocento, painted full-length figures of St. Nicholas and St. Michael on two panels on the frame of the S. Domenico di Fiesole altarpiece, contriving to turn the panels illusionistically into austere, dark-backgrounded niches, indicating a limited depth of floor space beneath the feet of the saints as well as the effects of shadow that the forms cast on the ground.

After scattered examples in the fourteenth century, the earliest instance known to me of enlivened sculpture in painting in the fifteenth century is found in Masolino's fresco, St. Catherine Pleads with the Emperor to Remove the Idols, dated 1428-31 (Rome, S. Clemente). In this picture,

we see one of these idols represented as a rather lively statuette standing aloft on a short Corinthian column which is placed on a pedestal, and it is significant to note that this little statue is a good deal more limber and "living" than Masolino's somewhat wooden people (thus recalling the examples by Giotto and Lorenzetti, which are similarly more enlivened than the human figures by these painters).

Quite similar in spirit, and also related to medieval notions about suspected evil powers residing in pagan statuary, is Fra Angelico's painting of Sts. Cosmos and Damian Before Lysias Proconsul, in which a flesh-colored and very enlivened, but again under life-sized, pagan statue stands on a pedestal overlooking the scene. This example, particularly by virtue of its flesh-color, is the most sensuous and "living" painted representation of a statue to date. We see another confrontation between religious personages and an "evil" pagan image--again, flesh-colored and enlivened, although under life-size--in Vivarini's iconoclastic St. Catherine Casting Down the Idol of Bacchus (ca. 1455).

In Fra Angelico's Annunciation (Museum, Cortona), dated 1430-35, we see a very animated, but, again, small, and only half-length, grisaille figure of God reaching out of the roundel which encloses Him to release the Dove of the Holy Spirit; by virtue of this action, the figure spans two planes of reality--that of the architectural decoration and that of a living par-

ticipant. Indeed, the little grisaille is the most animated figure in the picture, calling to mind Giotto's fresco of Justice, in which the small statues are considerably livelier than the allegorical figure holding them in the palm of her hand, and also recalling the examples by Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Masolino, in which extra animation is again seen in the statuary. The Annunciation has some precedent in Lorenzetti's use of enlivened grisailles as architectural ornamentation. One finds Fra Angelico using the motif of a medallion containing a grisaille figure of God in two other paintings--the Annunciation of 1432 (Prado) and Pope Sixtus Giving the Treasures of the Church to St. Lawrence--although in both instances, the grisailles are of a rather static character and the living figures take no notice of them.

The patronage of sculpture in the Renaissance, far more than in the case of painting, had to cope with the heavy expense of materials and of workmanship, and both Uccello and Castagno were called upon to render painted substitutes for equestrian statuary. Significantly, these painted monuments were the next full scale painted illusions of statuary known to me after Gentile da Fabriano's marmoreal Prophets of 1427. Uccello's portrait of Sir John Hawkwood (1436) is a careful simulation of sculpture, as also are the four prophet heads he painted as though they were emerging from roundels in the corners of the rectangle framing the great clock in the cath-

edral of Florence. In contrast to the stiff stoniness of the Hawkwood monument, Castagno's fresco portrait of Niccolò da Tolentino (1456) exhibits a greater sense of movement, which is enhanced by the fluttering draperies, and more muscular detail, probably reflecting the influence of Donatello's bronze sculptures as well as the characteristic vigor one usually finds in Castagno's paintings. The animated, life-size Tolentino monument may be viewed as a kind of summary, and a bringing together, of the two dichotomous concepts of painted statuary to date: the life-size but static and marmoreal concept very likely embodied in Gentile da Fabriano's Prophets, and the enlivened but diminutive statuary pictured by Giotto, Masolino, and Fra Angelico. Castagno also picked up the thread, already seen in the works of the anonymous Trecento painter from Carpi and Fra Angelico, of ennobling human figures by placing them in niches. This is seen in his imposing array of famous men and women, painted to decorate a room in the Pandolfini Villa in Florence (c. 1445-50), set in a continuous series like statues against the dark paneled background of the wall. The last quarter of the fifteenth century saw an efflorescence all over Italy of persons set in niches, and in the Cinquecento, statuesquely-posed figures in niches recur in the work of Andrea del Sarto, Fra Bartolommeo, Beccafumi, and others. According to Vasari, practical considerations entered into Fra Bartolommeo's decision to use the niche to enframe his religious personages. Since Fra Bartolommeo was vexed to see how much of his work was hidden under the massive cornice of

picture frames, he often painted architectural niches around subjects in the manner of sculptural treatment in order to be able to dispense with picture frames. In his Salvator Mundi, the fine nude figure of Christ standing in a niche approaches the characteristics of monochrome sculpture, so little do the flesh tints differ from the warm yellowish tinge of the background.

The last quarter of the fifteenth century saw an increasing variety of types of "living" statuary, with a number of new types appearing in addition to the well-established themes of polychrome niche figures and iconoclastic confrontations between saints and pagan images. The iconoclastic thread, already seen in the works by Masolino and Vivarini previously cited runs through one of Signorelli's now ruined frescoes in the Cloister of Monte Oliveto, illustrating events from the life of St. Benedict. In the second picture of the series, St. Benedict converts the inhabitants of Montecassino to Christianity, while the friars pull down a pagan statue which stood as an object of worship in a Renaissance temple; such a statue may be considered "living" statuary of a sort in that it is the focal point of the composition, with the living figures reacting violently against its "evil" powers. But a revivalistic attitude toward the pagan aspects of antiquity also began gathering momentum during the late Quattrocento, perhaps stimulated in part by the publication of Vitruvius's treatise on architecture, first printed in 1486, and we see the

introduction of the first Renaissance portrayal all'antica of a pagan idol worship ritual in a painting entitled A Tribute to Apollo, dating from the late fifteenth century and attributed to the "Master of the Apollini Sacrum" (Kress Collection, K 77), in which offerings are being made to Apollo, with no Christian and no apparent moralizing overtones present. The theme was enthusiastically picked up in the sixteenth century, culminating in Parmigianino's drawing, The Worship of Jupiter, in which the cult statue is rendered of virtually the same substance as are his worshippers, with fluid contours and agitated lines suggestive of power-charged animation in every detail, from his commanding gesture right up to the unruly hair. André Chastel says that the taste for animated ornaments flowered towards 1460, and cites Botticelli's Calumny of Appelles as an extraordinary effort to transform decoration into living symbols. This is seen in the "living" quality of the niche figures in this painting. Although they are monochromatic and under life-size, these statues are very prominent. In overall quantity, the picture is about equally divided between the alert although relatively calm statues inhabiting the rear plane and the agitated figures which activate the front plane; perhaps the figure of Truth, in her very statuesque posturing, may be viewed as a transitional figure linking the two planes of reality. The niche statues represent the famous giant-slayers; Judith and David, St. George the Dragon Slayer, and other models of virtù, and are seen in a state of triumphant repose, having completed their victories over evil forces. This offers a con-

trast to the living figures in their agitated process of action. Although these statues do seem to be on a separate plane of reality from the living figures, they nevertheless appear to be watching the course of action with interest in the manner of overseers or witnesses. By placing the trial of Innocence against a foil representing the triumph of good over evil forces, Botticelli implies the eventual triumph of good over evil. Niche statues with living qualities appear many times in the sixteenth century, as in Raphael's scene of St. Paul Preaching in Athens, or in the School of Athens, where the niche statues, although larger than life and monochromatic, seem to be almost on the same plane of reality as the living figures (who are grandly and statuesquely posed), and one notes a carefully contrived congruence of stance between the upward-pointing Plato and the niche figure at the right.

Perhaps the most extraordinary example of "living" statuary in the Early Renaissance is the figure of Mars in Filipino Lippi's Miracle of St. Philip (1489-1502), in which St. Philip is shown exorcising the deadly dragon of the god Mars. The focal point of the picture is not the saint, but a remarkably lifelike, polychromatic, "magic" statue of Mars, who, by virtue of his natural coloration, supple and energetic pose, dynamic interest in what is going on, and elaborate costume all'antica, looks very much like a living man standing on a pedestal; the statue, and the animated caryatids and ornaments decorating his altar (which reflect the new taste for enlivened

decoration) grimace menacingly at the saint. Kathleen Neilson, speaking more as an archaeologist than as one with a sensitivity to the Renaissance way of thinking, criticizes the artist for not doing a closer imitation of Roman sculpture, as well as for ceremoniously dressing the statue in fifteenth century leg defenses, which are archaeologically inaccurate because the Romans never wore any kind of metal protection on their feet. But the statue's living quality is, of course, enhanced by the fact that he is rendered more in terms of contemporary Filippino Lippi types than out of a strict antiquarian interest in ancient statuary and details. Insofar as Mars is virtually on the same plane of reality as the living figures, approximating real life in size as well as in coloration and animation (in contrast to all previous flesh-toned "living" statues, which were considerably under life-size), this painting comes close to the purposeful ambiguities between "living" statues and real people which one finds in the works of the Mannerists.[9] Thus, the dynamic form of the statue and his decorative accessories are exciting and new. One recognizes, to be sure, the essential kinship in spirit between this picture and earlier scenes depicting the confrontation of a malevolent pagan statue and religious personages (cf. Masolino and Fra Angelico), but the confrontation here is far more dramatic; the statue "fights back," as it were. This painting may be viewed as both a summary of the main fifteenth century developments in "living"

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[9]Cecil Gould, An Introduction to Italian Renaissance Painting (London: Phaidon Press, 1957), p. 62.

statuary--the flesh-toned and demonically enlivened pagan image (cf. Fra Angelico and Vivarini), set within the curved enclosure of an altar (which, by virtue of its enframing function, suggests a niche); the two enlivened grisaille statue groups surmounting the altar (cf. the lively finial figures by Ambrogio Lorenzetti); the animated architectural decorations (cf. Botticelli)--and a preview of such sixteenth century developments as the Mannerist practice of placing deceptively human-looking statues upon high pedestals.

In the sixteenth century, one finds restatements and elaborations of a number of the types of "living" statuary that had been introduced in the preceding century, as I have already pointed out. It is interesting to note that High Renaissance examples of "living" statuary tend to be less lively than those of the Quattrocento, in keeping with the Cinquecento taste for classical balance and dignified grandeur. Although one rarely finds a human figure statuesquely-posed upon a pedestal in fifteenth century painting, the motif is stated over and over in the sixteenth century. It is particularly common in the late works of Bellini, Cima, Signorelli and his followers, and Andrea del Sarto (e.g. The Madonna of the Harpies). A most extraordinary example is found in Piero di Cosimo's Story of Prometheus (the exact date of this work is unknown, but it is thought to date from the early sixteenth century), in which the first men are shown as statues in a fully statuesque way, triumphantly posed on pedestals. Also

by Piero di Cosimo is a painting of The Immaculate Conception with Saints, in which Mary is statuesquely posed on a pedestal. A bizarre anecdote about a veritable "living" pedestal figure is told by Vasari, in the Giunti edition of his lives, to the effect that Jacopo Sansovino's model for the marble Bacchus, a certain Pippo del Fabro, went mad either from overwork or from standing too long in the hot sun with his head uncovered. His insanity took the form of climbing into strange places--finding pedestals, in short--and posing, often in the nude, in the pose of an apostle, or a saint, or a warrior, but most frequently in the pose of Sansovino's Bacchus, which he could never forget.

Also peculiar to the sixteenth century is the Mannerist indulgence in playful ambiguities between real people and "living" statues. An early instance is Pontormo's Joseph in Egypt, where we see Michelangelo's marble Bacchus transformed into a flesh-colored "living" statue, aloft on a pedestal, tipsily hovering over the scene, and also a very animated figure of a child, ostensibly living, placed on top of a column in the manner of a statue (this, again, recalls a particular statue--Verrocchio's Putto with Dolphin). Ambiguities of an equally mannered, but less playful, nature are seen in Bronzino's Martyrdom of St. Lawrence, in which humans and statues seem to have switched places with regard to the boundary between man and his sculpted image: the artist has contrived to make his statues look almost human, and to make his living figures

look like living "statues." Veritable "living" statues took part in a bizarre Renaissance procession in which boys were gilded with gold paint to make them look like statues. The date of this procession is uncertain, but it is quite probable that it took place during the Mannerist phase of the sixteenth century, and it shows the extreme to which the taste for "living" statuary was carried.

Plate I

Plate II

Plate III

Plate IV

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