

INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK FOCUSES ON THE ITALIAN PAINTER PIETRO PERUGINO (Pietro di Cristoforo Vannucci, ca. 1450–1523) and his school, tracing Renaissance workshop practices primarily in Perugia and greater Umbria, but also including the master’s activity and that of his studio in the major centers of Florence and Rome from the 1480s to ca. 1540. I will conclude with Raphael Santi (1483–1520) and one of the Perugian artists with whom he interacted most closely in his early career, Domenico Alfani (1480–after 1553). Born in the Umbrian hamlet of Città della Pieve, Pietro Vannucci is called “Perugino” due to the number of years he lived and worked in the city of Perugia. He directed sizable workshops in both Perugia and Florence during his prolific career, in which he trained numerous students and associates to paint in his own style. A comprehensive consideration of Perugino’s Perugian workshop, including members, structure, patronage, and artistic output, together with his associations with Raphael, Bernardino Pintoricchio (ca. 1456/60–1513), and other artists, offers important and far-reaching implications in the study of artistic collaboration and workshop practices in Renaissance Italy. Specifically, this book aims not only to highlight Perugia as an important center for Renaissance art but to shift our usual focus for art-historical analysis on individual artistic creativity alone to collaboration and workshop production which were both arguably as or even more significant in Renaissance Italy.

As the first book-length study of Perugian Renaissance painting, it intends to fill a void that is essential for a complete understanding of Italian

Renaissance culture. Artistic development in Perugia has received very little scholarly attention compared with that in Florence, Rome, Venice, and Siena, all of which are far better understood. The broad discussion of the workshop tradition in Perugia in these chapters will more accurately establish the Umbrian role in the transition from the Early to the High Renaissance and forward to the Mannerist style, a subject not yet satisfactorily explored. This book will effectively trace the development of Renaissance art through the mechanism of the workshop from Perugino's early commissions in Rome in the 1480s and his collaborators there, including Pintoricchio, through the emergence of Raphael from the orbit of these artists into a full High Renaissance style, and on to the Mannerist interests of painters such as Domenico and Orazio Alfani (1510–83) working in Perugia up to the mid-sixteenth century.

Indeed, the craftsman's workshop was a vibrant center of medieval and Renaissance activity, both determined by and an indicator of the cultural, social, and economic status of a given city or region. The economics of artistic production as a function of rising material consumption in early modern Italy was central to Richard Goldthwaite's influential *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600*.¹ According to Goldthwaite, there was an increasing demand during the Renaissance, particularly in Italy's urban centers, for various types of religious art, including frescoes, altarpieces, and other liturgical objects and furnishings, due to a new interest in a "world of goods."² Goldthwaite's theory has found wide acceptance and should be considered fundamental in providing a context for how we interpret artistic production during this period, especially communal artistic production. But how does this translate to an analysis of pictures and decorative art in various media made by artists working daily in Italian Renaissance workshops? To understand these concepts, it is instructive to consider specifically how artists' enterprises were organized and how they managed their manufacture and output, increasing them to meet this rise in demand for material goods. A case study of the central Italian city of Perugia, focusing on the key artists working therein, adds significantly to our understanding of how workshops were structured, how artists interacted with each other both within the shop and among other artisans in their community and beyond, and the various mechanisms through which they fulfilled the expanding number of commissions at this time. A provincial hub, Perugia developed its own artistic tradition, but local artists increasingly absorbed new stylistic trends imported from Florence and Rome, especially after the turn of the sixteenth century.

Several important studies of Italian Renaissance painters' workshops have emerged over the past few decades. These publications mostly concern Italian shops in general or, more specifically, those in Tuscany, primarily Florence. One example of the former is Bruce Cole's groundbreaking *The Italian Renaissance Artist at Work*, which was published in 1983 and has served as

a foundation for the research of a generation of scholars.³ To date, however, no focused, monographic studies of workshops or workshop practices in Renaissance Umbria have appeared, yet Perugia provides an excellent locus for such an analysis. As a possession of the Papal States, it was a city supported by the Church, and ecclesiastical commissions were numerous, providing opportunities for resident and visiting artists alike. Renowned painters spent significant periods of time there, including Perugino, Pintoricchio, and Raphael, and, earlier in the fifteenth century, Piero della Francesca (ca. 1415–92) and Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro, Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, ca. 1395/1400–55), and they all created major works for patrons in the city. Paintings by and in the style of Perugino, often referred to as “Peruginesque,” were in great demand both in Perugia and throughout the Umbrian province. Perugino was among the most distinguished Italian artists in the later Quattrocento, as Raphael’s father Giovanni Santi (ca. 1435/40–94) even equated him with Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) in the 1480s.⁴

In addition to Perugino, Pintoricchio, and Raphael, a large number of skilled local painters and woodworkers were active in Perugia. Their names are not well known today, but they were associated with these major masters and they also collaborated extensively and freely with one another over long periods of time. In fact, it was these artists who formed much of the fabric of the city’s artistic production. This book foregrounds a number of these lesser-known but very important artisans in Renaissance Perugia who were vital to its success as a thriving artistic center and who were also often actively engaged in civic affairs. The description of Perugia as “one large *bottega*” is accurate and borne out by the numerous archival documents that survive from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵ Much archival, stylistic, and cultural evidence suggests that the city’s artistic community was tight-knit and that working arrangements for artists’ shops were flexible, according to Goldthwaite’s observations on Italian workshops, rather than following a more rigid hierarchical system, as has traditionally been thought.⁶ Even though the documentary record for Perugia is rather extensive, it may nonetheless serve as a model for similar analyses in other, less well-documented central Italian centers that flourished during this time.

An Etruscan foundation, Perugia was one of the twelve cities of the Etruscan Confederation. It sprawls amongst the hilltops high above the Tiber River in north-central Umbria. The city was protected due to both this enviable topographical position and the construction of sizable fortifications, as the Etruscan walls and city gates are well preserved. Notable amongst the latter on the north side of the city is the massive Arco Etrusco, or Arco d’Augusto, the “Etruscan Arch,” or “Arch of Augustus,” the product of three historical periods: the Etruscan base from ca. 250 to 200 BC with its cyclopean travertine blocks; the Roman addition above, distinguishable in the more refined

stonework and archway inscribed “Augusta Perusia,” as the city was renamed in honor of the emperor who rebuilt it after a siege in ca. 40 BC resulted in significant destruction; and the much later sixteenth-century Renaissance addition at the summit in the form of an arcaded loggia, whose elegance contrasts greatly with the arch’s formidable base. On the city’s south side is the Porta Marzia, also of Etruscan date, ca. 250–200 BC, and together with the Arco Etrusco, it framed the north–south axis of the Etruscan city. The Porta Marzia was likewise later inscribed with “Augusta Perusia” and “Colonia Vibia” during the Roman era, the latter in commemoration of Gaius Vibius Trebonianus Gallus (reigned 251–3 AD), who decreed the city as a Roman colony.⁷ Perugia’s rich and at times tumultuous history unfolded between these imposing gates and within its protective walls, which were expanded in the fourteenth century in order to incorporate the neighborhoods that had sprung outward from its core, and these medieval walls delimit the irregular star-like shape of the historic center even today.

Perugia is a university town, and has been for centuries, as its university dates to the end of the 1200s. It was officially founded in 1308 via a papal bull issued by Pope Clement V (Raymond Bertrand de Got, reigned 1305–14). From this same time period, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, date several of the city’s most important churches, including San’Agostino, San Francesco al Prato, San Domenico, and the Cathedral of San Lorenzo. Major civic monuments from this era commissioned by the *comune* (city government), the chief patron of both art and literature at the time, include the Palazzo dei Priori of 1293–7 and the Fontana Maggiore of 1275–8, one of the grandest city fountains in Italy. The marble for the latter was carved by father and son Nicola and Giovanni Pisano (ca. 1220/25–ca. 1284, and ca. 1245/50–ca. 1319, respectively), Tuscan sculptors of great renown, but whose origins were much farther south in Apulia. Medieval Perugia flourished, both agriculturally and commercially – major industries included leather and wool – with an estimated population of 33,000–34,000 citizens in 1285.⁸ Yet, most of the artists working in the city on various commissions prior to 1440 came from elsewhere, such as Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, Duccio di Buoninsegna (active 1278–1318), Meo da Siena (active 1319, d. ca. 1334) and Taddeo di Bartolo (ca. 1362/3–ca. 1422) from Siena, Arnolfo di Cambio (active 1265, d. 1302) and eventually Fra Angelico from Florence, Gentile da Fabriano (ca. 1385–1427) from the eponymous town in the Marche, and Domenico Veneziano (active 1438, d. 1461) from Venice. Sarah Blanshei observed that although Renaissance Perugia overall was much smaller demographically and far less economically viable than medieval Perugia, with most of its wealth in the hands of a few powerful families, it was only during the Renaissance that the local citizenry made significant contributions to art and literature.⁹

From the mid-fourteenth through the mid-fifteenth century, the population of Perugia declined markedly. The cause of this significant population loss from the medieval to the early Renaissance period is likely due to a combination of factors, including the Black Plague, which decimated much of central Italy in 1348, the papacy's increasing control of the city and subsequent suppression of commerce and industry, and internal conflicts between the formidable Baglioni family and their rivals, primarily the Degli Oddi.¹⁰ In the second half of the Quattrocento, according to one model, the population of both city and countryside rebounded, and by 1500, there were once again almost as many persons living within the city walls – 27,500 – as there were two centuries prior.¹¹ At this time, powerful noble families, such as the Baglioni, Degli Oddi, Ranieri, Crispolti, Della Corgna, and Alfani, dominated all aspects of city life and culture – political, economic, religious – as well as artistic patronage, even that of the guilds. To solidify their commanding presence in the city, the nobility commissioned local artists, who would then become their political supporters, resulting in an increased demand for works of art and a growing number of native Perugian artists to produce it. The shift in patronage from the *comune* in the medieval era to the nobility in the Renaissance thus directly affected artistic patronage in the city.¹²

It was only from the mid-fifteenth century onward that we see the development of a local school of painting in Perugia. Earliest was Benedetto Bonfigli (ca. 1420–96), master of the fresco cycle of ca. 1454–80 that illustrates the lives of the city's patron saints Herculanius and Lawrence and is still preserved in the Priors' Chapel of the town hall (now part of the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria). This pictorial cycle is remarkable for its accurate and precise rendering of the city and is undoubtedly Bonfigli's most important work amongst other *gonfaloni* (painted banners) and altarpieces, the earliest of which date from 1445. Bartolomeo Caporali (ca. 1420–1505) and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (ca. 1445–1522) then rise to prominence. Both of these artists produced key works throughout the city and Fiorenzo especially was active in Perugia's political and civic life. His style was the most pervasive amongst local painters prior to Perugino, whose first commission in Perugia dates to 1475, now lost works executed for the council chamber of the Palazzo dei Priori.¹³ Although born in Perugia and usually thought to have been a pupil of Bartolomeo Caporali or Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, Pintoricchio's most important early works were realized in Rome, initially in the Sistine Chapel alongside Perugino in 1481–2, and then subsequently in his first major independent commission, the Bufalini Chapel frescoes at Santa Maria in Aracoeli, painted in the mid-1480s.

By 1511, Perugia had expanded to ca. 13,000 inhabitants as part of a general period of growth from the later fifteenth century forward, demonstrated not only by a significant rise in the number of households but also by an increase in

building activity. Perugino's Perugian workshop together with the collaborative endeavor of the five artists who comprised the so-called Society of 1496, consisting of at least two of his former pupils together with other local artists, can be considered in connection with the increased industry and enterprise seen in the city from the late Quattrocento into the early Cinquecento.

This study of Renaissance painting in Perugia unfolds in five chapters, each focused on a specific artist, or group of artists, active in Perugia: Perugino, Giannicola di Paolo, the Società del 1496, Raphael, and Domenico Alfani. Pintoricchio maintained regular contact with his native city throughout his life; however, most of his work – with the exception of the commanding *Santa Maria dei Fossi Altarpiece* – was executed elsewhere, primarily in Rome as mentioned previously, but also in Siena, Spello, and Spoleto. He was a highly productive artist, best known for extensive, decorative fresco cycles at the Vatican and in prominent Roman churches and palaces, together with the aforementioned locations in Tuscany and Umbria. Pintoricchio's works, their stylistic importance, and his interactions with Perugino, Raphael, and local Perugian artists will be interwoven throughout the narrative.

The first chapter considers Perugino's artistic career up to the year 1500, and his workshops in Florence and Perugia, with considerable concentration on the latter. Here and in subsequent chapters, Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550, 1568) provides an important basis for our study. Vasari lists the names of many of Perugino's assistants, some of which have been confirmed in archival records concerning Perugino's commissions – such as Eusebio da San Giorgio (ca. 1465/70–1540) and Giovanni di Pietro, called Lo Spagna (ca. 1450?–1528) – but others who have not, such as Raphael or Giannicola di Paolo (ca. 1460/65–1544). The analysis moves chronologically, with special consideration of Perugino's Roman and Perugian periods, and the artists associated with the master particularly at the time of the Sistine Chapel commission in Rome (1481–2), the execution of the *San Pietro Polyptych* for the eponymous Perugian church (1495–1500), and the Collegio del Cambio in Perugia (1496–1500).

Giannicola di Paolo, a Perugian native who worked as a collaborator with Perugino (and perhaps also Pintoricchio) in the generation before Raphael, prior to embarking on his own lengthy career, is the subject of the second chapter. An incredibly well-documented artist, an analysis of his life and major works provides insight into patterns of patronage as he was active in Perugia, Florence, and Rome and was commissioned by ecclesiastic, civic, and private entities. According to at least one noted scholar of the period, Giannicola was the most important artist working in Perugia at the start of the 1500s.¹⁴ The rich trove of archival records sheds informative light on Giannicola's workshop, including details regarding the purchase of materials, provision for assistants, relations with patrons, payments received, and collaboration with other artists.

These documents reveal fascinating particulars regarding the life, artistic output, and activity of a local painter who although he lacked the innate skill of Perugino, was successful, highly sought-after, and very active in communal affairs. The historical record establishes that Giannicola was clearly well respected in both the local artistic and civic arenas.

The Società del 1496 (Society of 1496), discussed in the third chapter, was a rather unique painters' cooperative consisting of five local artists established in this year: Ludovico d'Angelo (doc. 1481–1525), Sinibaldo Ibi (ca. 1475–1548), Berto di Giovanni (doc. 1488–1529), Lattanzio di Giovanni (doc. 1484–1534), and Eusebio da San Giorgio. Their formation, structure, communal artistic output, engagement with other local artists, and operation of their enterprise enable our comprehension of various relevant economic and cultural factors in Renaissance Perugia. These artists most likely organized in order to pool their diverse talents, resources, and connections, and supply the increasing demand for pictures in the style of Perugino, from whose workshop two of them had recently emerged. The mid-to-late 1490s was an especially busy time when the master was producing some of his most notable and influential compositions, likely motivating these artists' collaboration. Although "minor" artisans working in a provincial location, the group of five were able to develop lasting and profitable relationships with the major, more famous painters of the day including Perugino, Pintoricchio, and Raphael. The Società members each also maintained a high civic profile in Perugia through holding public office and playing active roles in the local community. That a group of artists could form a successful endeavor by imitating the signature style of a famous artist is not only indicative of the practice of emulation inherent in Renaissance art, but it also demonstrates that innovation in the Renaissance often sprang forth within the framework of tradition.¹⁵ This is a recurrent theme in this book and it will also be further discussed in the Conclusion, in which, for example, Leonardo da Vinci's own training under the Florentine master Andrea del Verrocchio (Andrea di Michele di Francesco Cioni, 1435–88) will be mentioned.

The fourth chapter considers the early career of Raphael, with a focus on his interactions with Perugino and local Perugian artists, including two of the Società painters. Vasari asserted that Raphael studied under Perugino in Perugia in the mid-to-late 1490s. While the veracity of Vasari's account is accepted by some scholars and discredited by others, the marked similarity in style between Raphael's early works and those of Perugino is undeniable. It is also known that Raphael accepted a joint commission with Berto di Giovanni, Perugino's former apprentice and Società member, and that he shared compositional drawings with less-skilled artists in Perugia, such as Berto, Domenico Alfani, and likely also Eusebio da San Giorgio. Raphael's rapport with these painters merits much further scholarly attention in order to increase our

knowledge of his artistic training, development, and interrelationships with his Umbrian peers prior to his better-known Florentine period, which began by 1505. While the styles of Perugino and Pintoricchio firmly adhered to the conventions of the fifteenth century, Raphael quickly departed from the Peruginesque idiom upon his move to Florence. Through exposure to the works of Leonardo, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), and Fra Bartolommeo (Baccio della Porta, 1472–1517), all active in Florence during Raphael's sojourn there, he then laid the foundation for a grand manner that would be fully realized in Rome in the second decade of the 1500s and that would define the remainder of his extraordinary career.

The Perugian native Domenico Alfani, subject of the final chapter, represents the next generation of artists after Perugino, Pintoricchio, and Giannicola. His works transition Perugian Renaissance painting both chronologically and stylistically from the Quattrocento Peruginesque tradition into full Cinquecento Mannerism. Close in age and of comparable high social status, Domenico and Raphael's friendship was not only professional but also personal. Domenico's early career is strongly marked by the influence of Raphael and Fra Bartolommeo and he painted pictures based on the former's designs. Yet, by the 1520s, Domenico's increasing awareness of the Florentine Mannerist progressives Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530), Rosso Fiorentino (Giovanni Battista di Jacopo Rosso, 1494–1540), and Jacopo da Pontormo (Jacopo Carucci, 1494–1556) becomes readily apparent in his works, even to the point of exaggeration. While Giannicola incorporated the *sfumato* and tonal effects of Leonardo and Il Sodoma (Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, 1477–1549) in his later paintings, he never ventured into Mannerism in as dedicated and as thorough a way as Domenico. In what is perhaps a revealing example of the new generation superseding the former, one of Domenico's final major works was a monumental double-sided altarpiece representing the *Adoration of the Magi* and the *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth*. He accepted the commission upon Giannicola's relinquishment of it in 1544 due to failing health as he was likely by then about eighty years old and consequently passed away only a few months later. Domenico's *Adoration* employs a compositional drawing by del Sarto, whereas the *Visitation* is a reduction of Pontormo's innovative fresco of the same subject in the cloister at the Santissima Annunziata, Florence, indicating a complete assimilation of Florentine style into Perugian art by the middle of the Cinquecento.

NOTES

1. Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
2. *Ibid.*, 1.

3. Bruce Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work: From Pisano to Titian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983). See also Anabel Thomas, *The Painter's Practice in Renaissance Tuscany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Issues of demand are addressed in the recent work of Michelle O'Malley; for example, O'Malley, "Quality Choices in the Production of Renaissance Art: Botticelli and Demand," *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 1 (2013): 4–32, and Michelle O'Malley, *Painting under Pressure: Fame, Reputation, and Demand in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
4. Giovanni Santi, *La vita e le gesta di Federico di Montefeltro, Duca d'Urbino: poema in terza rima (Codice Vat. Ottob. lat. 1305)*, ed. Luigi Michelini Tocci, 2 vols. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1985), vol. 2, 674, lines 373–75.
5. Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, *Raphael, His Life and Works*, 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1882–85), vol. 1, 75, 110–12; Sylvia Ferino Pagden, "The Early Raphael and His Umbrian Contemporaries," in *Raphael before Rome*, ed. James Beck. Studies in the History of Art 17 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1986), 95.
6. Richard Goldthwaite, "Economic Parameters of the Italian Art Market (15th to 17th Centuries)" in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th–17th Centuries*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: F. C. Panini, 2003), 423–44.
7. The Arco Etrusco also bears the "Colonia Vibia" inscription. The Porta Marzia was dismantled during the sixteenth-century construction of the Rocca Paolina, the imposing fortress designed by Antonio dal Sangallo the Younger (1484–1546) and constructed during the pontificate of Pope Paul III in 1540–3 in order to exercise control over the Perugians who had rebelled against his new taxes on salt. The upper section of the Etruscan gate was carefully inserted by Sangallo into the fortification walls of the Rocca in a manner that reflects its original orientation, the lighter travertine of the gate contrasting with the darker brick of the fortress; part of the Etruscan construction, specifically the jambs, can still be discerned in the Rocca's interior. Refer to Massimo Montella, ed., *Perugia: Musei, città, luoghi dell'Umbria* (Perugia: Electa Editori Umbri, 1993), 42–43, 58, 106–7; and *Umbria*, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, 6th ed. (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1999), 135–36, 143.
8. Sarah Rubin Blanshei, "Population, Wealth, and Patronage in Medieval and Renaissance Perugia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1979): 599, 614–15; the author further states that Perugia was the only city in Umbria at this time following the Tuscan "commercial-industrial" model. See also Pietro Scarpellini, "Perugia," *Grove Art Online*, 2003. James R. Banker, in "The Social History of Perugia in the Time of Perugino," in Joseph A. Becherer, ed., *Pietro Perugino: Master of the Italian Renaissance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids Art Museum, 1997), 39, writes that in 1300, the population within the city walls was 28,000 inhabitants, with another 48,000 in the surrounding rural territory; see also Alberto Grohmann, *Perugia*, 3rd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1988), 20–21.
9. Blanshei, "Population, Wealth, and Patronage," 618–19.
10. Scarpellini, "Perugia"; Banker, "The Social History of Perugia," 39.
11. Banker, "The Social History of Perugia," 39; this estimation conflicts with Blanshei, "Population, Wealth, and Patronage," 599, who posited ca. 12,000 inhabitants in 1498.
12. Blanshei, "Population, Wealth, and Patronage," 615–18.
13. Recorded in a document of July 21, 1475; Fiorenzo Canuti, *Il Perugino*. 2 vols. (Siena: Editrice d'Arte La Diana, 1931; reprint, Foligno: Editoriale Umbra, 1983), vols. 2, 9, and 120, doc. 105.
14. Filippo Todini, *La pittura umbra dal Duecento al primo Cinquecento*, 2 vols. (Milan: Longanesi, 1989), vol. 1, 78.
15. Bruce Cole, *Piero della Francesca: Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Art* (New York: Icon Editions, 1991), xii: "This ability to be innovative within the framework of tradition is foreign to twentieth-century concepts of art, but it was an integral part of the making of art in the Renaissance."