INTRODUCTION

WHEN CHARLES II WAS restored to the English throne in 1660, after the death of Oliver Cromwell and the end of the English Interregnum, the States of Holland and West Friesland sent the new monarch valuable presents in hopes of securing his favor. Having ascertained that Charles, like his father before him, was partial to Italian pictures and ancient statuary, the Dutch assembled a collection of twenty-eight paintings and twelve sculptures, which together with a luxurious yacht named Mary comprised the so-called "Dutch Gift." Although the sovereign "thanked them for so worthy a Present, and express'd his willingness to enter into a neerer Alliance with them," the tribute did little to preserve peace between the two maritime powers, who were back at war several years later.[1]

Among the paintings shipped from Rotterdam to London in October 1660 was a sixteenth-century Italian portrait depicting a man surrounded by antique statuary and other collectible items (Fig. 1). Soon thereafter, the painting was hanging in the "Green Chamber next to the Bed chamber" at Whitehall. The inventory reads: "Lorenzo Lottie. A man sitting and holding a small head in one Hand w[i]th severall statues by Him. He being an Antiquery."[2]

Although the painting came to England properly attributed (it is in fact signed and dated), whether accidentally or willfully, within about twenty years the artist's name was obscured. By about 1687 it was said to be a self-portrait by Giorgione; not long after an attribution was made to Correggio, which endured until the middle of the nineteenth century.[3] In the eighteenth and nineteenth

Fig. 1 Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*, 1527, Royal Collection Trust. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

centuries, both Giorgione and Correggio were much better known than Lorenzo Lotto, who had been more or less forgotten after his death.

As doubts about the attribution began to mount, a crucial turning point came in 1858 when Charles Eastlake (1793–1865), the first director of the National Gallery, London, sent Richard Redgrave (1804–88), Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, a quotation from a text then known as the "Anonimo" or the "Anonimo Morelliano."[4] This one-of-a-kind manuscript had been discovered in Venice by the director of the Marciana Library, Jacopo Morelli (1745–1819), who published it in 1800 under the title *Notizia d'opere di disegno nella prima metà del secolo XVI esistenti in Padova, Cremona, Milano, Pavia, Bergamo, Crema e Venezia scritta da un anonimo di quel tempo*. Composed between ca. 1521 and 1543, the manuscript comprises approximately one hundred folios with descriptions of works of art in public locations and private collections in the aforementioned Italian cities. Although the author of these notes had been identified within twenty years of their publication as the Venetian nobleman Marcantonio Michiel (1484–1552), for complex reasons it took a long time for this to be recognized, and as a result even today this fundamental resource is still occasionally referred to as "the Anonimo."[5]

The passage from Michiel's notebook that Eastlake sent to Redgrave reads: "Works in Venice ... in the House of Messer Andrea Odoni, 1532 ... in the bedroom upstairs ... the portrait of Messer Andrea himself, half-length, in oil, who contemplates ancient marble fragments was by the hand of Lorenzo Lotto."[6] Under Eastlake's supervision the painting was restored in 1863, at which point the signature "Lorenzo Lotto/1527" was discovered in the

lower left quadrant of the painting (see Fig. 131).[7] This felicitous conjunction produced not only the correct attribution and date, but also the identification of the sitter, the painting's provenance, and even its original placement.

This book is only possible due to that coincidence: that Lotto signed and dated the painting, that Michiel was in the habit of writing fairly detailed descriptions of what he saw when he went to people's houses, and crucially, that when he visited Odoni's residence, contrary to his usual practice, he recorded in what rooms he saw particular works of art. Two further documents create almost an embarrassment of riches for a scholar working on early sixteenth-century art: an inventory of the Odoni house made in 1555, which is also organized by room and is in some aspects more complete than Michiel's notes, and a letter by the famous writer Pietro Aretino addressed to Andrea Odoni (dated 1538).

In this letter Aretino compliments Odoni's collecting practices, creating a remarkable synchronism with both Michiel's notes and Lotto's portrait. Aretino's description of the house begins: "But whoever wishes to see how clean and candid his [Odoni's] spirit is should look at his face and his house, look at them, I say, and you will see as much serenity and beauty as one can desire in a house and in a face."[8] The writer's contention that Odoni's house was essentially a portrait of its owner, a parallel to Lotto's actual likeness, is the launching point for this book. The association between Odoni, his house, his collection, and his portrait also figures in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*. In the edition of 1568, Vasari not only recorded the portrait by Lotto but also gave an extended description of the frescoes by Girolamo da Treviso on the façade.[9] But most revealing is the very short statement he included only in the 1550 edition: "Lotto . . . painted Andrea de gli Odoni, whose house in Venice is full of painting and sculpture."[10]

Although Vasari's mention of Odoni's house indicates how well known the collection was in his lifetime, the ensemble did not last long. The works of art it contained were dispersed by the end of the seventeenth century, if not earlier, and the house itself was transformed beyond recognition in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the extraordinary confluence of sources (there are several others that will be discussed later) allows me to piece together and imagine the contents and decoration of his home, and as a result, to explore Odoni's identity through his possessions. The detail provided in the documents and comparison with similar works of art and architecture that do survive, along with the few extant works owned by Odoni, especially the portrait, provide rich materials from which to draw my own "portrait of Andrea Odoni."

The study of Odoni's life, house, and collection also enables me to examine Lotto's compelling portrait with new eyes. The painting is far from being a straightforward "portrait of a collector" – in fact, as scholars have long known, the objects in it bear little relation to Odoni's actual possessions. Instead, the portrait presents an imaginary collection, concocted by artist and patron together to depict collecting as a means of transmuting the self, of transforming a variety of material things into "higher gold." My interpretation of the portrait demonstrates how both men conceived the power of objects to form the self.

Exactly when the painting left the Odoni household is not known. A copy of the head and bust alone was likely made for the family in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in order to preserve their ancestor's likeness when they sold his portrait.[11] By about 1622, the original was probably already in the collection of the Dutch merchant Lucas van Uffelen, who lived in Venice from 1616 to the early 1630s. Uffelen's portrait by Anthony van Dyck, dated ca. 1622, is often thought to be inspired by Lotto's composition (Metropolitan Museum, New York).[12]

Uffelen brought Odoni's portrait back to his house in Amsterdam, where he also exhibited

Fig. 2 Raphael of Urbino, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, 1514–15, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

another famous Renaissance portrait, Raphael's *Baldassare Castiglione* (Fig. 2).[13] After Uffelen's death, Odoni's portrait was purchased in 1639 by another Amsterdam collector, Gerard Reynst, and while in the Reynst collection, it was engraved by Cornelis Visscher.[14] At Gerard's death, it passed to his widow, who sold it, together with other prime pieces from the collection, to the Dutch government to create the "Dutch Gift."[15] While in Amsterdam, the painting was seen by various artists, including Rembrandt, who made use of it in several of his compositions.[16]

By this time, however, the identity of the sitter was long lost, only to be recovered, thanks to Morelli's publication of Michiel's notes in the nineteenth century. Luckily, the memory of Andrea Odoni himself had not been entirely erased in Venice. For his publication of Michiel's notes, Morelli gathered information about the Venetian collector.[17] His compilation was significantly augmented by the indefatigable Venetian scholar Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna (1789–1868) in volume 3 (1830) of his six-volume *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*. Cicogna provided more information about the family and visited the still-standing house with a contemporary descendant of the Odoni family.

Although Morelli and Cicogna were unaware that the portrait by Lotto had survived, their research formed the basis of future scholarship. In more recent years, a few facts have been corrected, additional primary sources have been discovered, and Odoni's biography has been fleshed out, above all by Georg Gronau,[18] Donata Battilotti and Maria Teresa Franco,[19] Rosella Lauber,[20] and the present author,[21] but no monograph has yet been published on the collector.[22] Although the portrait itself has received scholarly attention over the years, it continues to puzzle its interlocutors. As John Shearman, echoing Jacob Burckhardt, correctly surmised in 1983, "the picture is conceptually and psychologically more complex than a simple portrait of a collector."[23]

Lotto's portrait is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished and innovative of the Italian Renaissance – perhaps the best portrait by a painter known for his profound and idiosyncratic approach to the genre. Recent exhibitions devoted entirely to Lotto's portraiture at the Prado Museum in Madrid and the National Gallery in London (both of which featured the Odoni painting) have further solidified his modern fame. It thus comes as some surprise to learn that the man Lotto depicted was not particularly talented, nor well educated, nor exceptionally wealthy. Odoni was no Castiglione. The son of a recent immigrant to Venice and a member of the nonpatrician class of *cittadini* (citizens), he lived in a smallish house on the outskirts of the city, and was known to his contemporaries primarily as a government bureaucrat who collected the state tax on wine. Odoni is an unexpected collector, and a surprising subject for such an ambitious and intellectually provocative portrait.

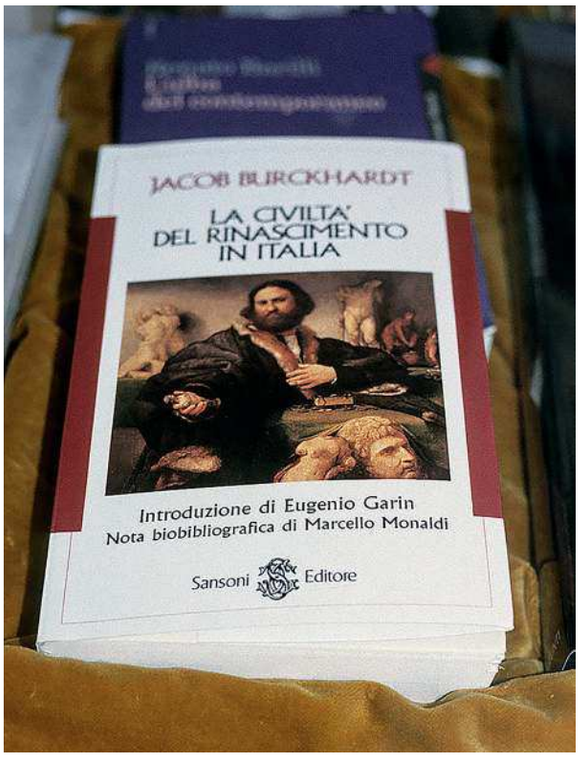

Fig. 3 1996 Sansoni edition of Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in the window of a bookshop in Venice, 1997. Photo: author.

In 1996, the Florentine publisher Sansoni used Lotto's portrait of Odoni as cover art for a new edition of Burckhardt's classic text, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (first published in 1860) (Fig. 3). While the choice is not meaningful in and of itself, the juxtaposition of Odoni's portrait and Burckhardt's text is thought-provoking. In essence this book questions what happens when we do indeed consider Odoni as a prototypical "Renaissance man."

AIMS OF THE STUDY

I argue that there is much to be learned from the analysis of Odoni, his house, his collection, and his portrait. It is quite unusual to have such a convergence of sources that describe a single house in Venice in the early sixteenth century. While Renaissance domestic art and architecture has been the topic of many academic books and articles as well as museum exhibitions of late, these studies do not have the specificity and comprehensive detail that is possible in this case – to examine how urban design, architecture, space, furniture, domestic objects, and works of art of various kinds and media worked together to create an effect, and how the placement of works of art in particular influenced the way they were seen and understood. In her foundational study, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice* (2004), Patricia Brown encouraged future scholars to expand upon her thematic overview of Venetian domestic art and space. This book is in part a response to that call, an attempt to dig deeper into an exceptionally rewarding case study of a Venetian house and collection.[24] What emerges is a vivid sense of one sixteenth-century house, set in the context of broader collecting and display practices.

With its wide range of comparative material, however, the book is not only about Odoni's residence and collection. The history of collecting in Venice has been studied for many generations. Drawing on this historiography, as well as on original archival research, I evaluate to what degree Odoni's practices were typical or unusual. While previous studies have generalized collecting "in the sixteenth century,"[25] I address the transformation of practices over the course of the century. In this regard, I have been inspired by Kathleen Christian's detailed study of collecting in Rome (*Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350–1527* [2010]), which traces how and why collecting changed over time. Although this book is necessarily focused on a relatively short period of time, when possible I set Odoni's practices in a historical trajectory.

Scholars have often assumed that because the nobles in Venice were the political elite (although, as we shall see, not necessarily the monetary elite)

they spearheaded artistic trends and determined aesthetic tastes.[26] As I will demonstrate, however, Odoni was particularly interested in foreign trends, styles, and artists, and in numerous instances, far from trying to imitate Venetian patricians, he aimed instead to set himself apart. His highly unusual portrait by Lotto is "exhibit A" in this regard. Although Odoni has been recognized as "the most adventurous collector of modern sculpture on record in Venice in his time,"[27] the full extent of his "very remarkable individualism"[28] has not been explored before. It is a mistake to simply identify Odoni as a social climber emulating the nobility. Such an outlook fails to take account of the complexity of Venetian society in the early sixteenth century and the particular position of the *cittadino* class, and it flattens the identity that Odoni forged for himself and his family. As Renata Ago put it in her study of seventeenth-century Romans and their things: "the concrete possession of goods, by making visible and communicable the identity of the individual, contributed more than any legal title to establishing the social status of the owner . . . However, it was not necessarily true that the end goal of this accumulation of objects was to transcend one's social class and live like an aristocrat."[29] In sixteenth-century Venice, it was possible to argue through one's possessions that "nobility" was not just a matter of birth, but also, or more importantly, a matter of living in a particular manner, what we moderns might refer to as "lifestyle."[30]

If Venetian nobles have received more scholarly attention than *cittadini*, this is in part because it is quite difficult to grasp *cittadini* identities due to a relative lack of sources. The major studies of the social group written by historians – Andrea Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati a Venezia in età moderna: I cittadini originari (sec. XVI–XVIII)* (1993), Anna Bellavitis, *Identité, mariage, mobilité sociale: citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVIe siècle* (2001), and James Grubb, ed., *Family Memoirs from Venice (15th–17th centuries)* (2009) – do not consider works of art in their evidence. A number of articles investigate *cittadini* as patrons and collectors (including by this author), as does one book-length study, Blake de Maria's *Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice* (2010). My study complements de Maria's in that it covers a slightly earlier period and provides more detailed examination of works of art and practices of display, rather than an overview of patronage.

In the traditional historiography of Venice, the three strata of society, the *nobili*, *cittadini*, and *popolo* were presented as rigidly constituted, but in Chapter 1, drawing on the most recent research, I demonstrate that this was not the case in the early sixteenth century, when the *cittadini* were a varied and imprecisely defined group. While in some contexts they were constructed as inferior to the nobility, in others they were considered to be their peers. During Odoni's lifetime there was notable social fluidity, and in fact, in some ways citizens were less constrained in their actions and modes of self-presentation than nobles. The blurred ideas about class in Venice have important implications for understanding not only Odoni himself, but the artistic patronage of the "middling" group more generally. Although Odoni was not a typical *cittadino* (arguably there was no such thing), an examination of his house, collection, and portrait provides unprecedented access to the identity of a lesser-known, but highly ambitious individual, for whom collecting and displaying art were the chief means of creating distinction in his adopted homeland, and it shows us what was possible at this moment of Venetian history for a man who was not part of the patrician elite.

The first two chapters of the book examine Venetian history and culture during Odoni's lifetime (1488–1545) and the biography and

background of Odoni and his family. Political and social historians have long considered the early sixteenth century to be "the great turning point in Venice's history,"[31] while cultural and art historians see it as a "golden age" of scholarship and the arts. Odoni, whose niece was married to the son of Venice's most renowned publisher Aldo Manuzio, provides an unusual view into this moment in history, demonstrating how one individual made a name for himself and his family by participating in the city-state's redefinition of itself as a "cultural capital." I do not see Odoni either as the heroic "Renaissance individual" outlined by Jacob Burckhardt and his followers, or as a complete "social construction" lacking agency.[32] My findings are in line with the recent study by the literary historian Douglas Biow, which demonstrates how some Renaissance men "used the discursive and representational strategies available to them to articulate a notion of what constituted the individual in light of their identities as men within their culture."[33] While Odoni was certainly not a "free agent," he wanted to be recognized as a special individual.

Conceivably a man like Odoni was only possible in Venice due to the city's particular government, political ideology, and class structure. Although he was the son of an immigrant from Milan, he benefited from the specific social and historical circumstances of his adopted homeland. Nonetheless, it is possible to see him within the broader context of Renaissance Italy, and especially in relation to the role of collecting and portraiture, and consumption more broadly, in "fashioning" the self.[34] In *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600*, the economic historian Richard Goldthwaite argued that Renaissance Italy saw an unprecedented increase in the production and importance of luxury goods, and "heralded the advent of one of the most characteristic features of modern life – the culture of consumerism."[35] For Goldthwaite one of the chief ways Renaissance men foregrounded their "individuality" was through their dynamic, personal relationship to things, as expressed through "taste." As he put it, "People entered a realm where possessions became an objectification of the self for the first time."[36] Goldthwaite's arguments have had a resounding impact in the field of art history, stimulating increased study of material culture and Renaissance domestic art and architecture. The idea that in the Renaissance "people constructed identity through things" is now often claimed,[37] but less often analyzed in the kind of detail I pursue here.

Recent scholarship, again largely derived from the social sciences, has opened new avenues for thinking about *how* "people constructed identity through things," or perhaps more appropriately, how things constructed people's identities. The political theorist Jane Bennett, for example, has proposed a reconceptualization of the relationship between what were traditionally defined as "objects" and "subjects" and asks us instead to think about things (even more broadly "nonhumans") as "actants" or having agency.[38] In applying related theories to the material culture of homes around the world in the late twentieth century, the anthropologist Daniel Miller suggests we think not only about "what we do with homes," but also "what the home does with us. The concern is with the agency of the home itself."[39] Although this book is focused on a *human* agent, I consider not just how Odoni may have expressed his identity through the material culture he lived in and with, but also how all that "materiality" constituted him – impacted, transformed, affected his sense of self.[40] As we shall see, sixteenth-century individuals had their own theories of "thing-power," couched especially in relation to contemplative practices, hieroglyphic assemblages, and alchemical processes (I address these issues most directly in Chapter 7).[41]

That being said, the notion that homes were representations of individuals and families was

often voiced in the early modern period, and it is at the core of Aretino's letter to Odoni. Using Aretino as a starting point, I will demonstrate that through the various parts of his house and the way he arranged his "things" Odoni projected various different selves to the general public through his façade and to increasingly intimate visitors through his courtyard, garden, salon, chambers, and portrait. Chapters 3 through 6 lead the reader though an evocative tour of the residence, space by space, illuminated in part through archival documents, in part through comparisons to other houses, and in part through surviving works of art either owned by Odoni or similar to those he possessed.

At first glance, Odoni would seem to be the "poster boy" for Goldthwaite's argument. Here is a man who literally fashioned his identity through the possessions that surround him in his portrait: a man who was, the documentary sources concur, famous for his possessions. Examining the portrait in detail in the final chapter of the book, I argue that it does not celebrate consumption along the lines of Goldthwaite's thesis. On the contrary, it is a complex reflection upon man's vexed relation to things and to collecting, and ultimately, I argue, a highly original pictorial formulation regarding the power of art to act as conduit between the material and the immaterial. I discuss the portrait last in the book in part because I understand it to be a metacommentary on the entire project of collecting.

Goldthwaite's encomium to Renaissance consumption has been questioned by scholars such as Evelyn Welch, Patricia Allerston, and Stephen J. Campbell, who have provided a more nuanced view, revealing the complex, often contradictory, attitudes toward material things and consumption in Italian Renaissance society.[42] As Campbell notes, "From the panoramic perspective of Goldthwaite, Italians largely seem to have overcome such scruples [about the investment in superfluous material goods]; at the level of the closer view and the case study, however, they can be found to linger, and to have stimulated extraordinary acts of creativity on the part of artists and indeed of collectors."[43] Odoni's collection, and above all his portrait, is without question one of these "acts of creativity." The painting poses, in ways that have often surprising resonance with contemporary discussions of materiality, the inextricable entanglement of things and selves.

Aretino's letter to Odoni illuminates the complexity of attitudes toward what we might call "conspicuous consumption." The letter appears to be laudatory, and this is the way it has almost always been read by modern scholars.[44] Aretino pronounces that the "kindness of the good Udone is so full of goodness that whatever he does is without ceremony and without arrogance." The "serenity and beauty" of the house reflect Odoni's "clean and candid mind." From all the statues and antiquities on view, "one judges on the evidence of such a worthy and regal spectacle the greatness of your generous and magnificent spirit. Truly the pleasure of such carvings and castings does not issue from a rustic breast or an ignoble heart." Aretino's reading of the house as a set of signs about Odoni's character would seem to be flattery, pure and simple.

The missive, however, at some points reaches such a level of hyperbole that it flips back on itself into irony and implied criticism. In fact, Aretino begins on a slightly peevish note, apparently annoyed by a slight on Odoni's part: "your delay and your promptness injured me twice, and then shamed me, considering that your service to me – that is owed to me – caused me embarrassment."[45] This seems to have had something to do with the invitation to see the house, reflecting the social tension of such a visit.[46] Even Aretino's compliments have an edge to them. He compares "the chambers, the salon, the loggia, and the garden of the apartment in which you live to a bride who awaits her relatives coming to

attend her wedding."[47] Aretino's friend, Sebastiano Serlio (who also worked for Odoni), made similar comments comparing a man's house to his wife. According to Serlio:

> You also see, from time to time, men of very moderate means but generous of spirit, who spend the major part of their fortune on a house. The fact is there are in truth two fleeting things which bring men happiness, namely a beautiful and well-appointed house and a beautiful and fine-mannered wife who is accommodating to the man's desires.[48]

Aretino is saying it is a beautiful house, but he is also saying that it is a house for show – not a wife, but a bride. "She" (here he does attribute a kind of agency to the house) is prepared (or has prepared herself?) to be seen. Aretino continues "it [*ella*] is so well-kept, tapestried, and splendid. I myself never visit that I do not fear to tread there with my feet, its floors are so exquisite. I don't know what prince has such richly adorned beds, such rare paintings, and such regal decor."[49] It is just a bit too precious, too overreaching, Aretino hints while still maintaining the charade of compliments.[50] Although written in the form of a letter, Aretino's pronouncements were made public in the second volume of his epistles, published in 1542, three years before Odoni's death.

Being known for one's house was potentially problematic. As the Venetian Giovanni Caldiera wrote in the second half of the fifteenth century:

> What is truly appropriate to the houses of citizens is utility not splendor . . . the householder should rather make himself worthy of admiration because of the virtue by which he excels than because of the sumptuous home by which he has desired to be conspicuous. Not the house but virtue makes men immortal and equal to the gods.[51]

Caldiera, and others like him, were echoing the famous words of Cicero: "a man's dignity may be enhanced by the house he lives in, but not wholly secured by it; the owner should bring honour to his house, not the house to its owner."[52] Such social concerns were arguably particularly stringent in Venice, where the republican ethos of *mediocritas* (the idea that single individuals or families should not stand out too much from the rest) played an outsized role. It is possible though that as a *cittadino*, Odoni may have been less bound by such social constraints than his patrician friends and colleagues.

An important humanist text that advanced expenditure as a virtue was Giovanni Pontano's "On Splendor," but Pontano's text is full of caveats. Pontano commences "In the furnishing of a house, in the care and the ornamentation of the body, great expense can be spent on one's domestic goods. (We find that many are not satisfied with goods which are merely necessary unless they are also numerous and most excellent.)" But he continues, "In this type of expenditure, *it is possible to err* . . . One should always seek the mean that is that which is measured, 'mediocritas'."[53] Aretino's letter suggests that, in his view at least, Odoni did perhaps "err." There were, however, other ways to view Odoni's house and collection. In his portrait of Odoni, Lotto also presents the relationship between a man and his things, but in the end, he lends a transcendent value to the *cittadino*'s practices. We must come to terms with Odoni, his portrait, and his palace in the context of a society invested in, but at the same time, deeply conflicted about its attachment to a wide array of material goods.